

The Absence of Inter-Group Violence in Botswana: An Assessment of the Role of Development Strategies

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Inter-group violence in Botswana has been limited and sporadic despite objectively significant social divisions. There have been neither civil wars nor coups. Riots occur rarely and subside quickly. What accounts for the relatively limited mobilization around potentially important inter-group divisions, including the absence of significant inter-group violence?

This paper examines three factors that have discouraged mobilization around inter-group divisions: (1) the cross-cutting nature of those divisions, (2) sustained economic growth, and (3) development policies. I argue that ethno-linguistic background, region, and economic status have been perceived in a manner that allows for cross-cutting memberships. Consequently, “losing” groups on some issues often see themselves among the “winning” groups on other issues. Just as “a rising tide lifts all boats,” robust economic growth in the decades following independence supported improvements in living standards for a wide cross-section of society and obscured entrenched inequalities. Far from being the inevitable consequence of diamond-driven development, this outcome is the product of development policies that deliberately sought to downplay potential social divisions. Collective conflict, even violence, could become an issue in the future if (1) inter-group divisions become less cross-cutting and more reinforcing, (2) economic stagnation or contraction sharpens distributional choices, or (3) government policies or practices (e.g., corruption) concentrate benefits and costs, or are widely perceived to do so. Although existing institutions, organizations, and practices tend to be self-reinforcing, there are limits (Pierson 2004).

Botswana has experienced dramatic structural changes that have increased socio-economic heterogeneity but have not reduced its vulnerability to economic shocks (Poteete 2009a). In principle, the government remains committed to converting the revenues from natural resources into national development by extending services and infrastructure throughout the country. There is a growing perception, however, that the quality of government services and public infrastructure is deteriorating, that strategies for economic diversification have failed, and that elite corruption is becoming increasingly prevalent. In revealing the extent to which programs justified as mechanisms for equitable development actually divert state resources to elites, corruption scandals have a corrosive effect on public confidence. These concerns, as well as budgetary pressures, justify public sector reforms and quiet moves toward deregulation and privatization. To date, these reforms seem to have increased tensions within the public

sector and perceived inequalities (e.g., in wages, job security) without yielding noticeable improvements in service delivery or policy implementation.

Until recently, the unusual stability of the global market for diamonds spared Botswana the sorts of serious economic shocks typical of resource dependent countries (Auty 2001; Dunning 2005; Jerven 2010). Even diamond markets, however, felt the aftershocks of the attacks in September 2001 and the more recent global financial crisis.¹ A loosening of macroeconomic policies from the late 1990s increased Botswana's vulnerability to these shocks. Inequalities rise to the surface during periods of economic stagnation and decline. Political responses to economic challenges – including the extent and form of social mobilization – depend in part on whether government policy is perceived as distributing the pain of economic shocks equitably. In contemporary Botswana, suspicion that government elites compete to privatize state resources competes with the old confidence in the state as a mechanism for distributing the benefits of development broadly. The likelihood of greater political mobilization, violent or non-violent, hinges on the shifting balance between these alternative views. In this regard, the eight-week public sector strike in 2011 and associated violence serve as a warning against complacency.²

I develop the argument in three steps. First, I interrogate the common depiction of Botswana as a homogeneous society. I demonstrate that this conventional image reflects limited mobilization around group divisions despite the existence of significant social heterogeneity. The next section traces interactions between inter-group divisions and development policies. I distinguish among three periods, defined with reference to economic and social conditions as well as policy: (1) the foundational period (1960s – early 1970s), (2) the period of diamond dependent development (mid-1970s – mid-1980s) and (3) the apparent development plateau since the late 1980s. Structural changes and associated changes in policies and political practices suggest that politics in Botswana are becoming increasingly contentious. In the final section, I argue that inter-group conflict is likely to increase but remain non-violent until emergent biases become much more systematic and political interference reduces confidence in the courts and elections as alternatives to violence.

Objectively Important Divisions, Limited Mobilization

Botswana is often characterized as a homogeneous society, and this homogeneity as a source of economic and political stability.³ Many observers argue that shared economic interests, particularly among the elite, contributed to economic growth and political stability (Dunning 2005; Parson 1981; Samatar 1999). Cultural homogeneity has been

¹ The past stability of Botswana diamond revenues may be restored, but there is no guarantee.

² The strike began on 18 April 2011. During the eighth week of the strike, following several rounds of riots and incidents of arson, union leaders decided to suspend the strike. The suspension went into effect on 13 June 2011.

³ While there are serious limits to Botswana's political and economic development record (Good 2008; Hillbom 2008; Jerven 2010; Leith 2005; Molomo 2000), the country has been stable.

identified as another stabilizing factor (e.g., Holm 1988; Holm and Molutsi 1990).⁴ Easterly and Levine (1997), for example, described Botswana as “one of the most ethnically homogenous populations in Africa” (1218). They saw the country’s strong economic performance as consistent with a broader pattern, in which higher levels of ethnic diversity give rise to bad policies, which in turn generate higher levels of poverty and instability.

This conventional wisdom reflects some important features of Botswana’s society, but it also downplays objectively important social divisions. Botswana has enjoyed peace and stability *despite* these divisions. Two factors have prevented significant political mobilization of these divisions to date: (1) the cross-cutting nature of divisions for most Botswana and (2) the almost complete marginalization of the most disadvantaged citizens, such as Khoi-San speakers.

Ethno-linguistic diversity

It is sometimes argued that a shared Tswana culture contributes to social cohesion (Holm 1988; Molutsi and Holm 1990). Although there are no firm figures on ethnicity in Botswana, some 80% to 90% of the population is thought to be affiliated with one of the eight major Tswana tribes (e.g., Carroll and Carroll 1997; Molutsi and Holm 1990). Around three-quarters of the population report Setswana as the language spoken most frequently at home (Chebanne and Nyati-Ramahobo 2003: 4; CSO 2009a: 29).

If these data suggest a high degree of ethno-linguistic homogeneity, they coexist with sources of ethno-linguistic diversity.⁵ First, language use is not a reliable proxy for ethnicity. As Chebanne and Nyati-Ramahobo (2003) observe, the language spoken most frequently at home may not be the mother tongue, especially in settings with higher levels of ethno-linguistic diversity and multi-ethnic households. They also note that some non-Tswana respondents might understand the question as probing their ability to speak the lingua franca. Even if 85% of Botswana citizens speak Setswana, not more than 50% are Tswana in terms of ethnic lineage (Acemoglu et al. 2003: 94; see also Solway and Nyati-Ramahobo 2004).

Second, the Tswana ethno-linguistic category encompasses several organizationally distinct *merafe* (singular: *morafe*). The largest unit of Tswana political authority, the *morafe* refers to both an organizational structure for exercising authority and the set of people over whom authority is exercised. *Morafe* is variously translated into English as “tribe,” “nation,” or “polity.” It is a socio-political organization led by a hereditary *kgosi* (Setswana: chief or king; plural: *dikgosi*). Before the colonial period, rivalry within and among Tswana *merafe* had been at least as common as cooperation (Makgala 2006; Schapera 2004 [1938]; Tlou 1985). Even in the early 1900s, there was no overarching Tswana identity (Wilmsen 2002). The old rivalries could have resurfaced and intensified

⁴ Botswana’s success has also been attributed to good leadership. Most of these authors see good leadership as working in combination with social or cultural homogeneity or cohesiveness (e.g., Acemoglu et al. 2003; Leith 2005; Samatar 1999).

⁵ The probability that two individuals randomly selected from the population will be from different groups has been estimated to be as low as 0.00 and as high as 0.51 (Posner, 2004: 856).

following independence (Carroll and Carroll 1997; Poteete 2009a). Although that did not happen, inter-Tswana rivalries remain politically significant (Makgala 2006).

Third, and relatedly, ethnic identities in Botswana are multiple, nested, and flexible. Local terms for ethnicity may refer to ethno-linguistic heritage in the sense of lineage, but they may also refer to affiliation with a *morafe*. Even if the Botswana constitution only recognizes eight Tswana *merafe*, other groups also have traditional leaders and systems of authority. Membership in these groups is based on affiliation as much as bloodline or language and is non-exclusive.⁶ Historically, when members of non-Tswana groups allied with a Tswana *kgosi*, they were considered members of the Tswana *morafe* – but generally retained the affiliation with their own leader and group (Tlou 1985; Wylie 1990). Continued affiliation with the Tswana (or with a particular *morafe*) is no more inevitable than cooperative relations among *merafe*.

The situation is more complicated for groups that were historically subjugated by the Tswana. Since the late 1800s, speakers of various Khoi-San languages, the Yei or Yeyi at the margins of the Okavango Delta, the desert-dwelling speakers of diverse Bantu languages that Tswana-speakers refer to as Kgalagadi, and others were subordinated by the Tswana (Solway 1994; Tlou 1985; Wilmsen 1989, 2002; Wylie 1990). Within Tswana controlled territories,⁷ they were considered subjects of the dominant *morafe*, treated as serfs or slaves, and denied independent access to resources such as arable land and livestock. Serfdom officially ended before independence, but stigmatization and discrimination continued. The Tswana words for Khoi-San speakers and Bantu-speaking desert-dwellers lump together numerous mutually unintelligible language groups (Wilmsen 2002). These terms indicate low social status more than “ethnicity.”⁸ Many individuals from historically subservient groups would identify with clans or other smaller groups, denying association with the larger group constructed by the Tswana; many others self-identified as either Tswana or with their particular Tswana *morafe* as a way to avoid stigmatization.⁹ This began to change in the 1980s and 1990s, as non-Tswana began to mobilize for legal equality and greater protection against discrimination (Solway and Nyati-Ramahobo 2004; Werber 2004; see discussion below).

Non-Tswana groups vary tremendously in terms of both assimilation and ability to mobilize. Some, including the Kalanga, are well represented among the political and economic elite (Werber 2004).¹⁰ As a group, they have access to resources for

⁶ Compare Herbst (2000) on this phenomenon elsewhere in Africa.

⁷ The Tswana *merafe* did *not* have effective authority over all of the territory within the borders of contemporary Botswana. See discussion below and Figure 2A.

⁸ The Tswana terms even deny members of these groups recognition as being fully human. Note that broad definitions of ethnicity encompass a wide variety of groups based on ascriptive characteristics, including religious groups and castes as well as linguistic groups. According to this definition, these marginalized groups would be considered ethnic groups. Even so, the Tswana ethnic categories are problematic in that they obscure the fact that these groups are internally heterogeneous to the point that they encompass individuals who are not even able to communicate with each other.

⁹ Solway (1994) describes this phenomenon among Kgalagadi speakers in Kweneng district.

¹⁰ Some members of other groups resent this success, however, and attribute it to some sort of conspiracy (Werber 2004).

mobilization, but they also have a strong stake in the status quo. In fact, there is considerable socio-economic diversity among the Kalanga and other relatively well assimilated non-Tswana groups as well as among Tswana speakers.

On the other hand, despite an official policy of ethnic and racial neutrality, the creation of “remote area development settlements” to ease access to government services,¹¹ and legal reforms to prevent overt discrimination, speakers of Khoi-San languages remain marginalized. If anything, they are increasingly marginalized economically (Good 1993; Saugestad 2001; Wikan 2004). They are over-represented in rural areas with extremely low population densities and hardly any economic opportunities. Government restrictions on hunting licenses criminalize the main source of livelihood in these areas (Taylor 2002). Despite the establishment of “remote area development settlements” for the delivery of services since the late 1970s, access to education and other social services remains limited (Chebanne and Nyati-Ramahobo 2003; Wikan 2004). Because these settlements do not offer economic opportunities, they have become poverty traps. Children must attend residential schools far from home to access even primary education. Many families refuse to send their children to school under these conditions; many children who are sent to school refuse to stay. Given these barriers to education, it is not surprising that speakers of Khoi-San languages are under-represented in the professions and in business. These groups have long-standing and serious grievances but – scattered, poor, poorly educated, and lacking even a common language – they face serious barriers to mobilization (Solway 1994, 2002; Solway and Nyati-Ramahobo 2004).

Socio-economic diversity

At independence in 1966, Botswana was an overwhelmingly agrarian society. Almost all Batswana resided in rural areas and participated in agro-pastoral production. In 1971, five years after independence, even the largest “urban” areas had fewer than 20,000 residents (CSO nd). As late as 1981, the population was 82.3% rural (CSO 2004b). More than 60% of the population participated in agriculture as recently as the early 1990s (APRU 1992) and, even today, some 70% of rural households depend at least partially on agriculture (MFDP 2010: 183). Widespread participation in agriculture does not, however, imply socio-economic homogeneity.

Historically, Tswana *merafe* incorporated other groups through a mix of patronage and coercion, assimilation and subjugation (Solway and Nyati-Ramahobo 2004; Tlou 1985; Wylie 1990). As elsewhere in Africa (compare Ribot and Peluso 2003), authority rested on the ability to control access to valuable resources, including land, water, livestock, and wildlife. These strategies produced an intertwining of socio-economic position, ethno-linguistic categories, and socio-political integration. In Tswana-controlled areas, the *kgosi* granted access to the wide array of economic resources to allies and supporters, while subjugated groups endured serf-like conditions. Ethnic specialization remains particularly developed in north western Botswana where, although the Tswana (Tswana speakers) engage in a variety of activities, other groups are associated with specialized activities: the Herero with livestock production; the Hambukushu and the Yeyi with crop

¹¹ The government established the Bushman Development Programme in 1974. Within a few years, the name was changed to the ethnically neutral Remote Areas Development Programme.

production, fishing, and basket weaving; and Khoi San speakers with hunting, gathering, and crafts (Poteete 1999, ch. 7). Economic differentiation also occurs elsewhere, albeit to varying degrees. A survey of an area just south and slightly east of the Orapa mine, for example, found that large-scale cattle owners were disproportionately Kalanga while almost all livestock workers (“herdboys”) were Khoi-San speakers (Poteete 1999, ch. 7). The first Europeans and white Africans were missionaries, traders, and colonial officers. The contemporary white minority remains prominent in business and the professions. There is an important Asian minority of traders and, increasingly, restaurant keepers and construction workers.

A relatively small elite controlled access to capital assets such as livestock, guns for hunting during the pre-colonial and colonial periods, boreholes since the early 1900s, and, more recently, tractors (e.g., Tlou 1985; Wylie 1990). In a 1971 speech, President Seretse Khama acknowledged that some 12% of the population owned 60% of the cattle, while 23% of Batswana owned no cattle at all (cited in Tordoff 1973). The government’s Rural Income Distribution Survey of 1974/75 found that, in fact, 45% of households owned no cattle (Parson 1981: 236).¹² Traditional forms of patron-client relations created some degree of inter-dependency (Parson 1981), but also reinforced inequality.

With the development of diamond mines in the 1970s, mining soon displaced agriculture as the most important economic sector. As depicted in Figure 1, agriculture’s share of GDP fell from 42.7% in 1966 to 20.7% in 1975-76, and then plummeted to 5.6% in 1985-86 (MFDP 2003). It has hovered at around 2% of GDP for the past decade (MFDP 2010: 184). The contribution of manufacturing to GDP also declined, from around 8 – 9% in the 1970s to barely 4% since the turn of the century (Jerven 2010; Bank of Botswana 2011). High value mineral exports now dominate GDP. Mining, however, generates relatively little employment. The public sector expanded steadily and quickly became the most important employer. Currently, approximately 40% of all formal sector jobs are in the public sector.¹³ Despite growth in financial services and tourism since the 1990s, private sector development is generally seen as weak (Poteete 2009a). In rural areas, there are still few alternatives to subsistence agriculture. Botswana responded to stalled rural development by moving to urban areas. The country became majority urban between 1991 and 2001 (CSO 2004b).¹⁴

[Figure 1 about here]

Despite dramatic macro-economic growth, inequality persists and, according to several indicators, has intensified. By 2002/03, the proportion of households with no cattle had increased to 62.5%.¹⁵ Because many people no longer raise livestock or do so as a hobby (Poteete 2009a), non-agricultural assets and income offer better indicators of contemporary inequality. According to the World Development Indicators, the income

¹² Poverty affects all ethnic groups, although its prevalence varies. See discussion below.

¹³ Percentage calculated from employment statistics reported in Matambo (2010: 6).

¹⁴ Extrapolations and observations suggest that more than 60% of the population now resides in urban areas. Data are not yet available from the 2011 Census, conducted in August 2011.

¹⁵ Percentage calculated from data in CSO (2004a).

share of the highest 10% of the population climbed from 42.9% in 1986 to 51.2% in 1994, the last year for which the World Bank has data. Botswana's gini coefficient for disposable cash incomes has exceeded 0.60 for decades (CSO 1995: 60; CSO 2004a: 21), placing it among the most inequitable countries in the world.¹⁶ (See table 1).

[Table 1 about here]

Even when most Batswana lived in rural areas and relied on agriculture, this agrarian society was riven by serious inequalities. The key socio-economic divisions are no longer within the rural agrarian society but between remnants of the agrarian economy and emergent, largely urban sectors. There are increasingly apparent differences in the interests of the educated service sector, the business community, non-educated manual or unskilled workers, and agriculture.

Regional diversity

Botswana's territory is relatively small (582,000 square kilometers) yet varied. Moderate rainfall levels in the north and east (400 – 600 mm/year) give way to the aridity and deep sands of the Kalahari Desert in the center, west and south-west. In the northwest, seasonal flooding sustains the unique ecosystem of the Okavango Delta. The population has always been concentrated in the north and, especially, the eastern corridor, where agricultural production is somewhat less risky. As depicted in Figure 2A, non-agricultural economic resources are also unevenly distributed. Major diamond mines are located in Central and Southern districts, while wildlife-based tourism occurs mostly in the north west (North West¹⁷ and Chobe districts). The service sector and trading networks are concentrated in the urban centers of Gaborone and Francistown, in the South East and North East respectively. These conditions combine to create an objectively significant east-west divide in terms of economic opportunities and well-being. The contrasts are particularly stark between the dynamic urban and peri-urban centers in the east and stagnant rural areas in the west. The incidence of poverty falls below 20% in the cities and towns and in the South East. Poverty is prevalent in rural areas, with incident rates exceeding 40% in most of central, western, and southern Botswana (CSO 2008).

[Figure 2 about here]

Ethnicity also has an important spatial component. When the Tswana moved into the territory of contemporary Botswana from the south east in the 1700s, speakers of Khoi-San languages and the Kgalagadi were pushed further into the Kalahari Desert. Tswana territorial control expanded as, following succession crises, break-away groups established new *merafe* in what is now central and northwestern Botswana. The British established the Bechuanaland Protectorate in 1885 largely for geo-political reasons and, given the poverty of the desert territory, had limited interest in domestic affairs. They

¹⁶ When calculated based on all disposable income – non-cash as well as cash – Botswana's gini coefficient improves somewhat, but shows deterioration rather than improvement over time.

¹⁷ Until 2006, the North West district consisted of two sub-districts: Chobe and Ngamiland. In 2006, Chobe sub-district was upgraded to a full district. The current North West district encompasses the former Ngamiland sub-direct.

gave traditional authorities extensive autonomy over Tribal Territories based on the pre-colonial *merafe* (see Figure 2B). The British did not fully recognize the sometimes overlapping territorial claims of the various *merafe*, but neither did the Tswana *merafe* fully command those territories. Tswana authority was strongest in the south east and weakest in the north and, especially, the west. Within each *merafe*, historical settlement patterns reflected proximity to power, with the residences of relatives and allies of the leader at the center and those of less powerful or subjugated groups on the outskirts of major villages or in out-lying settlements. Those seeking to escape Tswana rule, including rivals of the *kgosi* as well as members of subjugated groups, sought refuge in wilderness areas (e.g., Tlou 1985; Wylie 1990; compare Herbst 2000).

As seen in Figure 2A and 2B, contemporary administrative districts and sub-districts follow the boundaries of Tswana *merafe* as recognized by the British.¹⁸ Self-identified Tswana speakers are concentrated in central and southern Botswana, while self-identified speakers of non-Tswana languages are most numerous in the north and west. (See Figure 2C). According to census data from 2001, Setswana is the main language spoken at home for more than 70% of respondents from five districts – Kgatleng, Southern, South East, Kweneng, and Central - and almost all urban areas (Chebanne and Nyati-Ramahobo 2003: 5). Setswana was identified as the main language spoken at home by more than half but less than two-thirds of respondents in Francistown, the North West district, and Kgalagadi (in the west). No more than half of the respondents identified Setswana as the main language spoken at home in three districts: Chobe in the north (50.0%), North East district (37.3%), and Ghanzi in the west (19.5%). Khoi-San speakers are found throughout central and western Botswana, but are particularly numerous in Ghanzi. Urban areas are multi-ethnic, cosmopolitan spaces.

The spatial ethno-linguistic groups map onto the uneven distribution of natural resources and economic opportunities. In the south east, one finds the most productive agricultural lands, the capital and most important urban center, considerable wealth, and, outside the multi-ethnic urban areas, a predominantly Tswana-speaking population. Most of the mines are in Central district, which corresponds with the territory of the Ngwato *merafe*. Jwaneng, however, is in Southern district, the territory of the Ngwaketse *merafe*. Even if these areas are associated with Tswana *merafe*, the mines are located in arid regions with low population densities and significant concentrations of non-Tswana speakers. The growing tourism sector is centered on the Okavango Delta and Chobe River in the ethnically diverse North West and Chobe districts. Ghanzi and Kgalagadi, the districts with the least favorable climatic conditions, no mineral developments, few tourist attractions, and the highest incidence of poverty, also have largest populations of Khoi San and Kgalagadi speakers.

Inter-group divisions as a base for mobilization

Inter-group divisions in Botswana have both reinforcing and cross-cutting aspects. The intertwining of ethno-linguistic identities with socio-economic activities (see discussion above) reinforces these divisions. By making access to economic resources dependent upon demonstrated loyalty to the *kgosi*, however, these practices also encouraged

¹⁸ There had been no change in district boundaries until 2006.

assimilation and the internalization of subjugation (Solway and Nyati-Ramahobo 2004). Both dominant and disadvantaged groups have ignored inter-group divisions or denied their salience. Despite repeated attempts, mobilization around inter-group divisions, whether in terms of ethnicity, region, or socio-economic inequality, has gained limited traction. Instead, as discussed below, political mobilization has focused on the role of traditional authority and rivalry between the north and south. The north-south division reflects the historical competition between the older *merafe* in the south, especially the Ngawaketse and Kwena, and the relatively younger *merafe* to north, the politically powerful Ngwato and, to a lesser extent, the Tawana. Both cleavages cut across objectively important socio-economic and ethno-linguistic divisions.

Mobilization of socio-economic and ethno-linguistic divisions has been very limited until recently. Over the past couple of decades, there has been a general maturation of civil society organizations, the formation of cultural organizations that advocate recognition and equal legal status for non-Tswana groups, and, over the past decade, the strengthening and increased activism of unions. Violence occurs, but it is not a standard or preferred form of contestation. Lobbying and negotiation are the strategies of choice, regardless of the basis for or goals of mobilization. Groups organize workshops and circulate position papers. When lobbying fails, all types of activists rely heavily on the courts to push their claims against the state. The women's movement, labor activists, and non-Tswana groups have all found valuable support from international networks. As elections become more competitive, they offer an increasingly attractive avenue for pushing issues onto the agenda. Electoral mobilization does not guarantee policy change, as non-Tswana voters who supported the opposition discovered in the late 1980s. The women's advocacy group Emang Basadi, however, achieved remarkable success in the 1990s by developing a non-partisan women's manifesto and encouraging all parties to adopt it. Most civil society groups favor this sort of non-partisan approach. In the 2009 election, for example, the Manual Workers Union campaigned against individual BDP incumbents known for their hostility to labor; several were defeated.

Groups turn to violence when their efforts to stage non-violent protests are repressed or ignored by the authorities. Legally recognized strikes, for example, involve non-violent demonstrations, presentations of petitions to political leaders, marches, and other similar activities. Violence becomes more likely when strikes are declared illegal, as in the Selebi Phikwe miners' strike of 1975, or endure for extended periods, as in the public sector strike of 2011. In both cases, violence signaled the end of a failed strike; it was not an organizational strategy.¹⁹ Likewise, student strikes and youth demonstrations occasionally degenerate into violent riots when security forces intervene. Although these episodes are generally confined to a single school, larger scale youth mobilization occurred in 1987, 1995, and 2011. In 1987 and 1995, youth turned to the streets of Gaborone (and Mochudi, the site of the murder, in 1995) to protest official inaction following the murder of children, apparently for ritual purposes; violence erupted when the police used force to restore order. Student protests in 2011 were a side-effect of the

¹⁹ This is not to say that violence associated with strikes is spontaneous and entirely unorganized. Some labor activists view sabotage, arson, and other violent tactics as appropriate when faced with state repression. The labor movement as a whole, however, rejects violence.

public sector strike, which brought instruction to a halt at many secondary schools. Like the strike itself, the protests were much more widespread and enduring than any previous youth uprising. Protests spread rapidly across the country, turning violent in at least seven of Botswana's ten districts.

Violence occurs, as the examples above illustrate, but remains rare and limited in both scope and duration. The rest of this paper examines how development policies, political practices, and the perceived performance of the Botswana government have interacted with the nature and salience of inter-group differences to influence the modes of inter-group conflict.

Development Policies and Inter-Group Relations

Development policies interact with socio-economic and political conditions, including inter-group relations, in a dynamic fashion. While policies at any given time certainly respond to conditions at that time, the direction of influence runs in both directions over time. To capture the interaction between policies and socio-economic and political conditions, the analysis examines three periods, distinguished by distinctive socio-economic and political conditions and policy responses: the foundational period (the 1960s – early 1970s), the period of diamond dependent development (mid-1970s – mid-1980s), and the apparent developmental plateau since the late 1980s. In the foundational period, policies sought to establish and consolidate the authority of both the post-colonial state and the ruling party by (1) transferring control over many important resources from traditional authorities to the state; (2) balancing appeals to a broad array of ethno-linguistic, racial, and regional groups; and (3) obstructing the growth of labor unions. The period of diamond dependent development brought new macro-economic opportunities and challenges. State-control of diamond revenues reinforced policies developed in the foundational period. The rapid rate growth allowed the government to spread the benefits of mineral development broadly in the form of government services and infrastructure development, even while building up a healthy cushion of foreign reserves. The plateau in diamond development revealed tensions between conservative macroeconomic management and a political strategy built on the centralized distribution of development projects and other benefits. Contemporary development policies involve an uneasy mix of continued infrastructure development, the slow development of social welfare programs, privatization and deregulation, public sector reforms, inconsistent labor policies, and occasional deviations from conservative macro-economic management.

Laying the Foundation: the 1960s and early 1970s

The foundational period encompasses the formation and positioning of political parties from the early 1960s onward, several rounds of constitutional negotiations leading up to independence in 1966, as well as continued institutional design immediately after independence. The most salient socio-political issues during this period concerned (1) the role of Tswana traditional authority and competition between the Tswana *merafe*, (2) the position of racial minorities in light of nationalist mobilization, and (3) the role of labor and the choice of capitalist versus socialist development strategies. In different ways, Tswana traditionalists, the nascent labor movement, and nationalism presented

opportunities and challenges for political mobilization that would influence the ability of the post-colonial state to consolidate its authority. The political parties that formed during this period adopted divergent positions on all three issues.

The first significant political party, the Bechuanaland (later Botswana) People's Party (BPP), formed in 1960. It called for immediate independence, rapid localization of the civil service, nationalization of key economic sectors (e.g. land, industry, transport, communications), and the dismantling of traditional authority (Mokopakgosi 2008; Selolwane 2002). The BPP appealed to some migrants who had worked in South Africa, the nascent labor movement, as well as to both Tswana and non-Tswana who resented the unchecked authority of Tswana traditional authorities. But the party also alienated those with power and resources – traditional authorities and their supporters, owners of cattle, industrialists and shopkeepers, and the few professionals - guaranteeing the BPP's defeat in the 1965 elections for self-governance (Selolwane 2002). If anything, the BPP's positions encouraged various elite factions to unite behind the Bechuanaland (later Botswana) Democratic Party (BDP), founded by members of the colonial era legislative council or LEGCO in 1962 (Mokopakgosi 2008). The BDP adopted a three-part strategy to *demobilize* latent divisions through moderate nationalism and appeals to potentially opposed groups. First, the BDP promised to retain but limit the role of traditional authority. Second, the BDP appealed to non-Tswana and racial minorities by expressing a principled opposition to ethnic or racial nationalism. Third, the BDP adopted a hard anti-labor posture to prevent the consolidation of the nascent labor movement. The BPP split before the pre-independence elections in 1965. Its fragments presented no electoral threat to the BDP, which received 80.4% of the vote. The BDP's three-part strategy produced policies and practices that laid the foundation for the political dominance of the BDP as well as for state institutions and economic development.

Recognition and Limitation of Traditional Authority

Differences over the role of traditional authorities shaped negotiations over the constitution and the terms of independence. Most traditional authorities assumed that they would retain power following independence. For example, Bathoen Gaseitsiwe, *kgosi* of the Ngwaketse (one of the Tswana *merafe*), pushed for a federal constitution with sub-national units based on the *merafe* and national power vested in a House of Chiefs. The BPP countered that there should be no formal role for traditional authorities. The British allied with the BDP to block the aspirations of both the traditionalists and the radical nationalists represented by the BPP (Mokopakgosi 2008). The constitution adopted in 1966 formally recognized eight Tswana *merafe*²⁰ and gave them automatic representation in the House of Chiefs, but it also established a unitary state and granted only advisory powers to the House of Chiefs (later renamed the *Ntlo ya Dikgosi*).

At independence, Tswana traditionalists represented the most significant domestic threat to the BDP and the post-colonial state. In an effort to ward off potential ethno-regional mobilization, the BDP pledged to treat mineral and other natural resources as national resources instead of resources controlled by the *merafe* or districts (Poteete 2009a,

²⁰ The eight Tswana *merafe* recognized by the constitution are the Kgatla, Kwena, Maletle, Ngwaketse, Ngwato, Rolong, Tawana, and Tlokwa.

2009b). Prior to independence, traditional authorities had controlled access to both land and sub-soil resources, including minerals. The *kgosi* allocated residential and agricultural land, giving priority to members of the *morafe*. Those interested in prospecting for minerals in an area had to gain permission from the *kgosi*.²¹ In principle, the *kgosi* acted as a trustee, managing these natural resources on behalf of the *morafe*. In practice, control over valuable resources allowed traditional authorities to consolidate their own power. After independence, a series of laws transferred control over natural resources to either the central state or district-level state institutions. The central state gained control over sub-soil mineral resources with the Mineral Rights in Tribal Territories Act of 1967. The management of land was also gradually transferred from traditional authorities to land boards through the Tribal Land Act, adopted in 1968 and amended several times over the years. The new system of land allocation weakened but did not immediately break the link between ethno-linguistic status and access to land. At least through the 1970s, for example, land boards refused to grant land to Khoi-San speakers on the grounds that they were born elsewhere and were not “tribesmen” (Wilmsen 2002; Wily 1981). Access to land became dependent on citizenship rather than status as a “tribesman” only after a 1993 amendment of the Tribal Land Act.

The nationalization of rights over sub-soil resources generated little resistance in part because the extent of mineral reserves was unknown at the time. In the 1960s, when this legislation was proposed, significant deposits of copper-nickel had been discovered in Central District. Under the old arrangement, the Ngwato could reap the proceeds for Central District. Because the leader of the BDP, Seretse Khama, was also the hereditary *kgosi* of the Ngwato, his pledge to nationalise mineral rights amounted to an offer to share mineral revenues that would otherwise flow to his own people with potential rivals in other parts of the country. Most other traditional leaders apparently opted for a share of known wealth over total control of possible but yet to be discovered wealth in their own territories. As it turns out, most subsequent mineral developments are also located in Central district, including the diamond mines at Orapa and Letlhakene. To date, the diamond mine at Jwaneng, in Southern district, is the only significant mineral development outside Central district.²² It opened during the presidency of Quett Ketumile Masire, a Tswana (Ngwaketse) from the Southern district.

In addition to defusing potential ethno-regional competition among *merafe*, these policies further reduced the formal authority associated with traditional authority. Much of the historical powers of the traditional authorities were quickly transferred to the central government and to district-level bodies such as the district administration, the land board, and the district council (Poteete 2009b). While traditional authorities had an on-going

²¹ Important mineral developments in South Africa and central Africa generated considerable interest in prospecting in Botswana. Despite numerous prospecting agreements, few mineral deposits were discovered or developed prior to independence. The most important involved gold mining within the Tati Concession in the north east, formed through a series of agreements with the Ndebele chief in 1880s. These mines soon became unprofitable, however, prompting the transformation of Tati Concession Limited into a land-holding corporation.

²² The government has acknowledged the discovery of diamond deposits in Ghanzi, but characterizes them as uneconomical to develop. More recently, economically viable copper deposits have been discovered in the North West District; mining operations are expected to get underway in a few years.

role in administration, they were not formally recognized as independent authorities. The *kgosi* was just one of several local government officials. Like other civil servants, traditional authorities were barred from participation in partisan politics unless they resigned their position. And, just as the British sometimes removed non-cooperative traditional authorities, so has the post-colonial government.

The founders of the BDP personified its balancing act in dealing with traditional authority. Seretse Khama, the first president of Botswana, was recognized as the hereditary *kgosi* of the Ngwato (in the north) despite having formally abdicated the position. His marriage to a white British woman demonstrated his commitment to non-racialism. Khama selected Quett Ketumile Masire, a Tswana from the south (Ngwaketse) and a strong opponent of traditional authority, as his vice president. A “master farmer,” Masire epitomized the BDP’s confidence in progress through technocratic means.

Many soft-line traditionalists, including non-royal Tswana, were content with the symbolism of having a hereditary *kgosi* as president and the continued formal recognition of traditional authority. But the BDP’s policies alienated hardline traditionalists and some supported the opposition. Most notably, Bathoen Gaseitsiwe resigned as *kgosi* of the Ngwaketse in order to contest elections with the opposition Botswana National Front (BNF).²³ The loss of traditionalist support pushed the BDP’s vote share down from 80.4% in 1965 to 68.3% in 1969. These results underline both the depth and the limitations of support for hardline traditionalists.

The position of racial minorities and non-Tswana groups

The BDP adopted a non-racial and non-ethnic policy and applied it broadly. Constitutional provisions and policies extended reassurance to racial minorities and non-Tswana groups. The constitution, for example, mandates the inclusion of four specially elected members of parliament (SEMPs) in the National Assembly. Justified as a means by which the government could co-opt individuals with scarce skills, this provision also allows the inclusion of racial and ethnic minorities in National Assembly and the cabinet. Khama used this provision to include prominent whites and non-Tswana in his cabinet. The non-ethnic policy justified limited use ethnic names for districts (e.g., Central and Southern districts rather than Ngwato and Ngwaketse). It also justified the exclusion of questions related to ethnicity or language from the decennial census. This practice reduced the politicization of the census relative to countries such as Nigeria and may have facilitated the collection of important data on socio-economic and demographic trends. On the other hand, the absence of census data on self-identified ethno-linguistic groups obscured the extent of socio-cultural diversity and made it more difficult for non-Tswana groups to press for greater legal recognition and privileges or, in some cases, challenge their depiction as “minorities.”

²³ The BNF formed in 1969 in an effort to unite the splinters of the BPP and others opposed to the BDP. The decision to welcome Bathoen and other hard-line traditionalists into the BNF tapped into the most salient political division of that period but also reduced the BNF’s internal coherence and limited its ability to mobilize support based on socio-economic or ethno-linguistic divisions.

A stated policy of basing bureaucratic appointments on merit rather than ethnicity or race created opportunities for racial minorities and educated non-Tswana Africans. Although the public sector was, in principle, open to all, Botswana had an extremely small pool of educated citizens at independence. Most of the few schools were in the east. Some Tswana *merafe*, including the Ngwato and Ngwaketse, began promoting formal education in the 1940s, mobilizing traditional regimes to build schools and introducing levies to hire teachers. The Kalanga also had a reputation for investing in education. Even among these groups, however, many rural families viewed extended education as a loss of agricultural labor. For many years after independence, very few citizens had the qualifications needed to advance within the public sector. Indeed, the government rejected calls for rapid localization on the grounds that it would take time to develop a sufficiently large pool of nationals with adequate formal qualifications.

For many years after independence, most senior civil servants were much better educated than most politicians. Politicians relied heavily upon the bureaucracy to develop and implement policies. Holm and Darnolf (2000) went so far as to characterize Botswana as an “administrative state.” Despite the differences in education, however, politicians and bureaucrats had broadly similar economic interests during this period. Through the 1970s and into the 1980s, the vast majority of politicians and senior administrators were livestock producers, and many had very large herds (Samatar 1999). The BDP leadership viewed senior administrators as allies who could be trusted to pursue policies in line with their shared interest in the livestock sector. Confident that a merit-based bureaucracy would promote rather than threaten its political goals, the BDP constructed a technically competent bureaucracy and granted it considerable influence over policy (Charlton 1991; Poteete 2003).²⁴

With apartheid South Africa as a threatening foil, these policies and practices had broad domestic and international appeal. The commitment to racial neutrality was particularly reassuring to racial minorities, including merchants, industrialists, and professionals. The use of meritocratic criteria for public sector employment and advancement reinforced inequalities in historical access to education, but promised opportunities for non-Tswana who invested in education. The breadth of the BDP’s early electoral majorities, even in areas with important non-Tswana groups, underlines its success in appealing to these groups.

Responding to the Nascent Labor Movement

Although Botswana’s labor movement was just beginning to coalesce in the 1960s, it was perceived as a potential threat by the government. Labor movements had played an important role in nationalist mobilization in South Africa and Zambia, and trade unionists in Botswana also leaned towards more radical nationalism. After government manual workers, meat workers, and private sector workers staged more than twenty wildcat strikes in 1968 and 1969 (Mogalakwe 1994, 168 - 169), the government erected significant legal obstacles to unionization and industrial action through legislation

²⁴ As livestock lost its position as the main economic activity, this alignment of interests declined. Developments over the past couple of decades suggest decreased political commitment to maintaining a competent bureaucracy. See discussion below.

adopted in 1969. The Public Service Act denied teachers and civil servants with permanent and pensionable status the right to unionize altogether; their existing organizations could only be legally registered as staff associations. Among government employees, only unskilled “industrial class” workers hired on a contract basis retained the right to unionize and strike. The Trade Union Act set a high organizational threshold for legal unionization by requiring the registration of unions, establishing a minimum threshold of participation for registration, and extending recognition to industrial unions but not to easier-to-organize-enterprise unions (Mogalakwe 1994, 169; Mogalakwe et al 1998, 543). And the Trade Dispute Act laid out complex procedures for the resolution of trade disputes, including mandatory arbitration procedures, and set narrow conditions for legal strikes. It also empowered the Commissioner of Labour to intervene in a trade dispute at any time and gave the minister responsible for labor broad discretion to declare ongoing strikes illegal (Mogalakwe 1994, 218 – 219). After 1969, the conditions for a legal strike were almost impossible to meet. The few strikes that occurred were declared illegal within a matter of days. Labor activists and their political allies complained bitterly about these restrictions for decades, but had neither the legal grounds nor the organizational strength needed to challenge them.

The institutions, policies, and practices of the foundational period reflected the efforts of the BDP to consolidate a position of political dominance by demobilizing potential inter-group divisions and marginalizing its critics. To a considerable extent, the BDP succeeded in marginalizing the opposition and undermining its coherence. Having consolidated its political position, the BDP government enjoyed considered freedom in developing its strategy for managing the emerging mineral economy.

Diamond Dependent Development: mid-1970s to mid-1980s

A diamond-driven economic boom was the dominant feature of the period from the mid-1970s through the mid-1980s. It elevated Botswana from one of the poorest countries in the world at independence into the ranks of middle-income countries by the 1990s. According to the World Development Indicators, Botswana experienced the highest rate of GDP per capita growth of any country in the world for the period 1960 to 2010. Figure 3 demonstrates that the most dramatic increases in GDP per capita occurred in the early 1970s, with a longer if less dramatic second boom in the mid-1970s to the early 1980s. The magnitude and precise timing of the boom should be considered approximate given the spotty availability of official GDP data and discrepancies in growth rates estimated by the Botswana government, the World Development Indicators, the Penn World Tables, and the OECD for the period prior to 1974/75 (Jerven 2010). Even if close examination of the official accounts suggests a less “explosive” pattern of growth than is sometimes claimed (Jerven 2010, 78), all data sources agree that Botswana experienced rapid and sustained growth.

[Figure 3 about here]

Commodity booms are not an unalloyed blessing. If short-term booms are treated as if they are permanent, the macro-economy will organize around the booming sector. Revenues from the booming sector flow to non-traded sectors of the economy, such as construction and real estate, public sector employment, and financial and personal services. Growth of these sectors pushes up domestic labor costs and, along with appreciation of the exchange rate, makes traded sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing less competitive. Consequently, deindustrialization – or failure to industrialize – often occurs in countries experiencing commodity booms. With these developments, macro-economic adjustments to eventual price busts or the exhaustion of non-renewable resources becomes more and more difficult. Because Botswana's diamonds take the form of kimberlite pipes, the government, in partnership with mining companies, is able to control access and rates of extraction. Nonetheless, the ability to centralize control over valuable resources offers no guarantee that they will be managed well.

Thus, the rapidly expanding mineral economy presented new opportunities, but also new challenges. Botswana's development strategy sought to balance a cautious approach to macro-economic management with efforts to spread the benefits of the diamond boom broadly and promote economic diversification. Nationalization of sub-soil resources meant that diamond revenues flowed to the post-colonial state rather than the *merafe* or districts. Diamond revenues enabled a massive expansion of the state, strengthening the central state relative to traditional authorities. The principle of treating natural resources as national resources encouraged the broad distribution of benefits in the form of investments in physical and social infrastructure. At the same time, the government sought to manage the risks of international price fluctuations, limit the reorganization of the economy around mineral extraction, and encourage economic diversification.

Management of the Mineral Economy

Discoveries of significant deposits of diamonds and copper-nickel were announced in 1967. In line with newly adopted legislation, the government and De Beers established Debswana in 1969 as a jointly owned company to manage diamond mining operations.²⁵ Production got underway at the Orapa (Central District) diamond mine in 1971; additional major diamond mines became operational in 1975 (again at Orapa), 1977 (Letlhakane, Central District) and 1982 (Jwaneng, Southern District). These mines are located in areas with sizeable non-Tswana populations, but fall within the traditional boundaries of the Ngwato and Ngwaketse *merafe*. Mineral exports – and especially diamonds – soon dominated the macro-economy and government revenues. The mining sector already accounted for about 16% of GDP by 1975 and for more than a third of government revenues by the end of the 1970s (Jerven 2010: 80, 82).

The appointment of Vice President Masire as Minister of Finance in 1966 signaled prioritization of macro-economic management. In 1970, just after the discovery of diamonds had been announced, Masire's portfolio expanded to encompass Finance and Development Planning. The Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP)

²⁵ The government also claimed a share in BCL, which managed the copper-nickel mining in Selebi Phikwe.

retained a number of key figures from the colonial period, recruited highly qualified personnel, and organized workshops and seminars both to build understanding of macroeconomic principles among politicians and encourage a problem-solving and collaborative attitude among the staff. MFDP acted as a lead ministry, with the authority to coordinate and veto the activities of other ministries through the production of five year National Development Plans and the annual budget review process.

Under the aegis of MFDP, the government adopted a set of macro-economic policies that sought to avoid exchange rate appreciation and cushion any shocks from fluctuations in export earnings. Botswana left the Rand zone and established its own currency, the Pula, in 1976 to gain greater macro-economic autonomy. The exchange rate was managed to maintain stability against the Rand, the currency of most imported goods (Poteete 2009a). During this period, the Rand depreciated against the US dollar and other western currencies. As the Pula tracked the Rand, it also depreciated against these currencies. Although depreciation of the Pula should have created space for private traded sector development, these sectors shrank in relative terms, as discussed below. To provide a cushion against fluctuations in international markets, the government also built up foreign reserves. As depicted in Figure 4, the number of months of import cover provided by foreign reserves increased rapidly, from around five months circa 1980 to more than 20 - 24 months by the end of the decade.

[Figure 4 about here]

Support for Private Investment

Gaping needs and economic conventional wisdom encouraged the transformation of diamond revenues into infrastructure. Hardly any physical or social infrastructure existed within Botswana at independence. There were only 12 km of paved road.²⁶ A railway line ran from South Africa to Southern Rhodesia through eastern Botswana. Very few schools had been established prior to independence and, as noted above, most were in the east. Since the British had administered the Protectorate from Mafikeng, in South Africa, there were not even national-level administrative buildings to inherit upon independence. Investments in public infrastructure began immediately after independence and expanded during the diamond boom. The BDP's promise to treat natural resources as national resources encouraged efforts to balance the regional distribution of these investments. For example, of the schools registered in the 1980s, 38% were in the historically disadvantaged West, Central North, and North education regions (Ministry of Education 2004). A rapidly expanding network of schools, roads and clinics soon stretched across the country (Poteete 2009a).

Through the 1980s, most Batswana lived in rural areas, agriculture remained the most important sector in terms of livelihoods, and most members of the political and administrative elite were large-scale livestock producers. There was a strong consensus in favour of supporting agricultural, and particularly livestock, production. Expansion of the road network facilitated access to markets, as did the development of a government managed network of trek routes and disease control measures (e.g., cordon fences,

²⁶ The first 5 or 6 km of paved road was constructed in Lobatse.

vaccinations). In 1965, the government established the Botswana Meat Commission (BMC) and granted it a monopoly on the export of meat. Under the Tribal Grazing Lands Policy (TGLP) of 1975, land boards around the country allocated more than 300 long-term leases with nominal rents for the development of capital-intensive ranches (Poteete 1999, 2003). The National Development Bank (NDB) provided subsidized loans to support the drilling of deep boreholes to access groundwater and ranch development. Although TGLP ranches were allocated in all districts except the North East, South East, Kgatleng, and Chobe,²⁷ demand greatly outstripped supply. Tensions rose as many ranches were allocated to well-connected applicants from other parts of the country.

While livestock producers in all districts benefited from government investments in animal health and marketing, well-connected large-scale livestock producers enjoyed disproportionate benefits, especially from TGLP and the BMC. The 1988 NDB crisis underlines the extent of the elite bias. With 70% of all ranch holders in arrears on loans from the NDB, the government forgave all interest accrued by TGLP farmers – even though consultants had estimated that more than 45% of the loans could be recovered (Poteete 2003). A number of cabinet members and other well-connected individuals benefited from the bailout, which led to the near collapse of the NDB. Despite converting large swathes of land to year-round livestock production, TGLP failed to sustain the agricultural sector. Agriculture's share of GDP declined to 5.6% in 1985-86 (MFDP 2003) and, by the late 1980s, BMC was struggling to survive (McGowan International et al. 1987). The political elite, including members of all Tswana *merafe*, and well-assimilated non-Tswana groups, had gained at the expense of small holders and the rural poor, especially the Kgalagadi and Khoi-San speakers who were displaced to make way for livestock developments (Hitchcock 1980).

Efforts to Stimulate Economic Diversification

In addition to favorable exchange rates, moderate labor costs, and steady improvements in physical infrastructure and government services, investors in non-agricultural activities also enjoyed relatively low taxes and a legal environment that granted relatively few rights to labor or unions.²⁸ The only significant strike during this period, by mine workers in Selebi Phikwe in July 1975, was declared illegal and brutally quashed.²⁹ Botswana joined the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1978 but made no move to ratify ILO labor conventions during this period. Instead, a series of legal changes in the mid-1980s reinforced the government's anti-labor position (Mogalakwe et al. 1998). Despite these business-friendly conditions, economic diversification faced many other obstacles.

²⁷ These are all relatively small, land-scarce districts. During this period, Chobe was a sub-district within the North West district.

²⁸ The modern sector attracts participation from diverse ethno-linguistic groups.

²⁹ Paramilitary units used force to end the strike; more 600 participants were arrested, with 34 eventually serving jail time; and all employees were fired and forced to re-apply for their jobs (Mogalakwe 1994, 289 - 290). Mogalakwe (1994, chapter 9) notes two smaller scale strikes in 1974: a one-week strike by approximately 700 bank workers and a three-day wildcat strike by mine workers in Orapa. These strikes were also declared illegal under the Trade Disputes Act. As Mogalakwe (1994) observes, official data on union activity are very poor during this period and there was no private media. While it is possible that additional industrial actions took place, they would have been even shorter and smaller scale than those for which records exist.

Private sector developments were (and still are) hampered by the scarcity of skilled labor and relatively expensive labor costs, barriers to trade, cumbersome regulations, the administrative allocation of land, and difficulties in accessing credit to launch or expand operations. Although the government introduced several parastatals and programs to bolster investment and spur diversification, they did not address the most important challenges.

The limited pool of even semi-skilled labor constrained private sector development. The public sector, including teachers and veterinarians as well as planning officers and administrators, grew in tandem with public infrastructure and services. Recognizing its influence as the main formal sector employer, government policy emphasized wage restraint, warning that more generous wage increases would render Botswana uncompetitive internationally in terms of labor costs. Despite these efforts, the private sector was largely unable to compete with the public sector in terms of remuneration, job security, and opportunities for advancement.

Barriers to trade represented another very serious obstacle to private sector development. The 1969 Southern African Customs Union (SACU) agreement provided for free trade among SACU members (South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, and, later, Namibia), but maintained external tariffs that favored the more industrialized South African economy. Revenues were distributed according a formula that partly compensated the smaller countries for the higher costs of imports from outside the SACU region. The government benefitted from the revenues generated by SACU, but they did not fully compensate for SACU's negative effects on the Botswana economy (Leith 1992).

Government programs sought to stimulate private sector investment and economic diversification through direct investment, financial support, and research and development. The Botswana Development Corporation (BDC), established in 1970, provided financing for the development of promising commercial and industrial projects.³⁰ To support the development and adoption of new technologies for rural development, the government launched the Rural Industries Promotion Company (RIPCO) in 1974 and the Rural Industries Innovation Centre (RIIC) in 1975.³¹ A series of subsidy programs for private sector initiatives began with the Financial Assistance Program (FAP) in 1982.³² FAP aimed to facilitate the launching and expansion small, medium, and large scale enterprises owned by Botswana citizens, especially women, as well as to generate employment, especially in rural areas. Owusu and Samatar (1997) contend that FAP succeeded in generating employment, increasing citizen involvement in manufacturing, and preventing deindustrialization even during the height of Botswana diamond boom. But FAP had serious limitations. The project review process involved a variety of government departments, from the district level to headquarters, resulting in delays and creating opportunities for corruption (Owusu and Samatar 1997). Leith (2005:

³⁰ See the official overview on the BDC website: http://www.bdc.bw/bdc_profile.html.

³¹ See the official history on the RIPCO website: <http://www.ripco.co.bw/history.aspx>.

³² Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency (CEDA) replaced FAP in 2001. See discussion below

99) argues that design flaws also made the program vulnerable to adverse selection, severely limiting its effectiveness. By the 1990s, the program was widely discredited.

The obstacles to private sector development limit economic diversification and threaten the sustainability of Botswana's economic development (Hillbom 2008; Jerven 2010). These limitations received little public attention in the 1970s and 1980s as most Botswana experienced dramatic improvements in living conditions. The broad distribution of infrastructure decreased the salience of regional and socio-economic divisions, despite continuing disparities. The non-racial policy plus expansion of economic opportunities decreased the salience of Tswana – non-Tswana and racial differences. And the growth of the state and ongoing reduction of resources controlled by traditional authorities further marginalized the radical traditionalists. Simmering tensions over the status of non-Tswana groups, especially the more economically successful Kalanga and the Yei, continued during this period but did not prompt any new mobilization, much less violence.

The most serious threat to Botswana's stability came not from regional, ethnic, or socio-economic divisions but from elite competition following the death (from natural causes) of the first president, Seretse Khama, in 1980. The constitution did not specify a clear successor and intense lobbying preceded the parliamentary vote by which Khama's Vice President, Quett Ketumile Masire, became the new president. Elite competition over leadership positions continued throughout this period and, as discussed below, intensified from the 1990s to the present. These rivalries were sometimes framed in regional terms, and sometimes with reference to the relative representation of different *merafe* within the cabinet and senior administrative posts (Makgala 2006; Poteete 2009a). Their most noteworthy feature during this period, however, may be the shifting lines of alliance. Alliances drew variably on identification based on *morafe*, region, ethno-linguistic background, and even personal relations among alumni of the same school. Consequently, rather than hardening social divisions, elite competition during this period reinforced the perception of inter-group divisions as cross-cutting, at least in comparison to other African countries.

A Developmental Plateau? The Late 1980s to the Present

In the first two decades after independence, Botswana made strong gains in terms of health, literacy, and communications as well as GDP per capita. Yet Botswana's record over the past two decades has been more mixed. Even as living conditions improved for many, deep socio-economic inequalities and vulnerability to regional and global economic shocks persisted. New challenges have emerged. Maturation of the diamond economy coincides with decreasing stability of the international diamond market, intensifying the country's vulnerability to fluctuations in international markets. Domestically, the government confronts growing societal demands and disgruntlement. Rarely heard of prior to the 1980s,³³ corruption scandals, many involving senior civil

³³ Corruption scandals did occur earlier. For example, allegations that relatives of Masire received preferential treatment in the allocation of TGLP ranches prompted an inquiry and report in 1981. Prior to

servants and cabinet ministers, have become a recurring feature of public life. The public sector is also increasingly criticized, both internally and by outside observers, as inefficient. Meanwhile, socio-economic changes set in motion a transformation of the socio-political landscape that gained momentum over the last two decades. The majority of the population now resides in urban areas. More and more Batswana strive for a career in business rather than agriculture or the civil service. Thus, the government faces increasingly diverse and forceful social demands, including bursts of mobilization related to objectively important but long dormant socio-economic and cultural divisions.

Since the late 1980s, Botswana's development strategy has involved five elements: (1) mostly conservative but somewhat inconsistent macro-economic management; (2) direct support to attract and support new investments; (3) continued infrastructure development, (4) privatization and public sector reform, and (5) development of need-based welfare programs. In many respects, the first three elements represent a continuation of past policies, in which the state played a leading role in stimulating economic development. The last two elements underline and attempt to correct the limitations of past policies, but point in opposite directions. Contradictions among the various policies respond to and reinforce tensions within both the state and society.

The Diamond Economy in Flux

Because the world market for diamonds is unusually stable compared with other commodities, Botswana has been spared the dramatic fluctuations in revenues confronted by other commodity producers. Since the 1990s, however, the global market for diamonds has changed in ways that make increased price volatility likely. Most importantly, the near monopoly position of DeBeers' long-standing diamond cartel has been challenged. Prices are now driven primarily by demand rather than the management of supply (Kojo 2010, 13). Consumer markets have also changed. As of 2000, nearly half (48%) of the global sales in diamond jewelry were to the US market (White and Mason 2011). Ten years later, that figure had dropped to 38% as demand for diamond jewelry grew rapidly in East Asia, especially China and India (White and Mason 2011). For these new markets, diamonds represent a secure and easily stored investment. Ironically, the creation of a reliable market for diamond engagement rings in the United States helped make diamonds a relatively safe investment, so that the decline of that set of consumers relative to investors may make diamonds more vulnerable to price volatility.

The 1990s were a transitional period for Botswana as well as the global market. The last major mine to open (Jwaneng) reached full production in 1985 (Kojo 2010). As production stabilized, diamond revenues became more sensitive to international market conditions. Market conditions prompted production cuts in Botswana in the early 1990s and again in 1998 (see Figure 5). Nonetheless, Botswana's revenues from diamond exports were relatively stable in US dollar terms, with a slight decline in 1992 and a sharper contraction in 1998-99 (see Figure 6). More dramatic contractions in production and dollar revenues occurred in 2001 (in the wake of 9-11) and in response to the global financial crisis, in 2007-09.

the emergence of private media outlets from the mid-1980s forward, however, the public had limited access to information about such incidents.

[Figures 5 and 6 about here]

The government could compensate for short-term declines in diamond export revenues by drawing down foreign reserves (see Figure 4). Months of import cover plunged from a peak of more than 47 in 2001 to 28 in 2002 and only 19 months of import coverage in 2004. The government managed to regain 32 months of import cover by 2006, but had to draw reserves down again in the wake of the financial crisis. The number of months of import cover reached a new low - just below 16 months - by the end of 2010, the last year for which data were available at the time of writing. Recently, the government has turned to international creditors for financial assistance. External debt increased more than fivefold between 2005/06 and 2010/11, with further increases anticipated in the 2011/12 financial year (MFDP 2011). Implementation of legally binding changes related to public sector remuneration (e.g., working hours, overtime pay, paid leaves) in the Public Service Act resulted in a 10% jump in the public sector wage bill between 2009/10 and 2010/11 (Matambo 2011, 13). These financial pressures represent an important force behind the public sector reforms discussed below.

Volatility in Botswana's diamond revenues is much more dramatic when denominated in the local currency, the Pula. From the introduction of the Pula in 1976 through the mid-1990s,³⁴ relatively stable exchange rates meant there was little difference in the degree of year-to-year change in revenues denominated in dollars and Pula (Poteete 2009a). During this period, the Pula was tied to a basket of currencies; regular, small adjustments maintained stability vis-à-vis major import and export currencies (Poteete 2009a). In the late 1990s, exchange rate adjustments became less frequent and there was significant volatility in the currencies in the exchange rate basket. The fluctuations in Pula-denominated diamond revenues reflect these changes in the management and volatility of exchange rates. Trends in dollar- and Pula-denominated revenues stabilized after the adoption of a crawling peg in 2005.

In the past, Botswana received substantial revenues from the Southern African Customs Union (SACU). A major renegotiation of the SACU agreement in 2002 lowered external tariffs and altered the revenue-sharing formula, so that revenues fluctuate more with changes in intra- and extra-SACU trade.³⁵ SACU revenues remain important, but have declined as a result of lower tariffs and are less predictable under the new formula. Ongoing negotiations for further revisions of the revenue sharing formula seem likely to reduce Botswana's SACU revenues again in the near future.

Efforts to Promote Economic Diversification

Recent volatility in diamond markets and changes in SACU underline the importance of economic diversification. In some respects, sustained growth in financial services, tourism, trade, and construction can be seen as diversification. These are largely non-traded sectors, derivative of and dependent on the mineral economy. As such, these

³⁴ Before 1976, Botswana did not have its own currency and instead used the South African Rand.

³⁵ Amendments of the SACU agreement between 1969 and 2002 did not affect the basic revenue-sharing formula.

sectors amplify rather than compensate for fluctuations in international diamond markets. Progress toward diversification into traded sectors like manufacturing is much more modest. There is broad agreement on the need for more meaningful diversification both within and beyond government circles.

Parastatal agencies and subsidized credit remain the primary mechanisms through which the government encourages new investments. The Botswana Development Corporation (BDC), Rural Industries Promotion Company (RIPCO), and the Rural Industries Innovation Centre (RIIC) continue to promote industrial developments, while several new parastatal agencies have been established to support a broader variety of investments (MTI 2010). To attract and facilitate foreign direct investment, the Botswana Export Development and Investment Authority (BEDIA) and the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) were established in 1997 and 2003 respectively.³⁶ The government replaced the much criticized FAP with the Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency (CEDA) in 2001 and the Local Enterprise Authority in 2004. To the extent that the new agencies prioritize strategic, cross-sector investments and target small and medium enterprises, they reflect a shift in thinking about how best to promote diversification. Like their predecessors, however, these agencies operate in a bureaucratic and centralized, if fragmented, manner (Conteh 2009).

More critically, these programs do nothing to lower or remove the most serious barriers to investment. In the World Bank's most recent ranking of business environments in 183 countries, Botswana numbers among the worst in terms of the difficulty and expense of cross-border trade (150th), onerous procedures for acquiring construction permits (132nd) and starting a business (90th), and the reliability of access to electricity (91st) (World Bank 2012a, 2012b).³⁷ This assessment suggests that potential investors are more likely to be thwarted by excessive regulation than by limited access to credit. Rather than reduce administrative hurdles that hinder business activities, however, each investment program involves additional bureaucratic requirements and procedures.

A perceived decline in the efficiency and productivity of the public sector aggravates the delays associated with administrative procedures. Public complaints about "deadwood" in the civil service date from at least the early 1990s. External assessments of economic conditions in Botswana increasingly highlight problems of poor work ethic and low levels of productivity (e.g., IMF 2011; World Economic Forum 2011).³⁸ Massive cost overruns, problems of quality control, and charges of corruption in the allocation of tenders are now commonplace. Interactions among two aspects of development policy contribute to these problems – and make reform politically difficult: (1) the politics of

³⁶ A merger of BEDIA and IFSC began in 2011 as part of the program for public sector rationalization discussed below.

³⁷ A business friendly tax regime (22nd) and procedures for resolving insolvency (28th) pull Botswana's overall position up to 54 out of 183 economies. Out of 46 Sub-Saharan African countries, Botswana's ranks 4th overall, after Rwanda, but only 31st for construction permits and 28th for cross-border trade. Botswana appears nine steps below Rwanda in the global ranking. Tunisia, at 46th globally, is the only North African country with a better overall business environment.

³⁸ These external assessments concern the private and public sectors.

infrastructure development and (2) highly centralized administrative procedures for the allocation of resources, including land, credit, and subsidies for investors.

A Changing Mix of Basic Infrastructure and Amenities

Even if the basic physical infrastructure is now largely in place, Botswana's development strategy still prioritizes infrastructure development as a means of supporting private sector economic activity. The 2011 budget speech, for example, highlighted ongoing projects to expand capacity for the generation of electricity, the expansion of several airports, and the construction of dams (Matambo 2011, 6). The delivery of development projects to every constituency is very important politically, regardless of economic need. Over the past decade or so, the government began upgrading administrative and social amenities with the construction of transportation hubs (e.g., bus stations), sports stadia, and larger and more modern office buildings. The relative weight of non-economic amenities relative to basic infrastructure increased while controls on spending and public consumption have loosened over the years.

Both private sector investments and public infrastructure projects require access to land and working capital. To a large extent, government agencies control access to both resources. Almost all land is allocated by either district-level Land Boards or the ministry responsible for land.³⁹ Many investors seek financing through government parastatals before – or in addition to – seeking credit from private financial institutions. And the private sector depends heavily on government tenders for business. The situation presents a textbook example of institutions and policies susceptible to rent-seeking. Indeed, with the emergence of the private media in the late 1980s, revelations of corruption scandals became a regular occurrence (Fombad 1999; Good 1994, 2008; Mokone and Mogapi 2010; Werbner 2004, ch. 4). Several of the most prominent involve the administrative allocation of land and housing and access to subsidized credit schemes. The number and severity of these scandals suggest that policies justified in the name of equity actually benefit elites as many government officials, from cabinet members and MPs to high-ranking civil servants, use their positions for private benefit.

Public Sector Reform

Public sector reforms respond to public outcry over corruption scandals as well as discontent with administrative inefficiencies.⁴⁰ To date, reforms have involved (1) the creation of several anti-corruption bodies, (2) structural reforms of the public sector, and (3) privatization.

If anything, corruption stimulates stronger political pressures, not only from the general public and the opposition, but also within the BDP. Anti-corruption efforts involve a number of agencies, including the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Crime (DCEC) (created in 1994), the Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Board (PPADB) (since 2002), and the Directorate of Public Prosecution (DPP) (since 2005). Presidential appointment of the directors of these agencies undermines their perceived autonomy, as

³⁹ Only about 4% of the land is freehold. The figure changes as government occasionally purchases freehold land and converts it to other land categories.

⁴⁰ International policy trends undoubtedly played a role as well.

does their lack of effective action against powerful elite actors. High-profile actors occasionally face investigations, but often escape legal action on technical grounds (e.g., delays in prosecution, errors in the charge sheet). Failure to rein in corruption slowly erodes public confidence in public institutions and the equitable distribution of the benefits of development.

In the 1990s, the government responded to complaints about bureaucratic inefficiency and inequalities within the civil service by reviewing the incentives arising from conditions of service, the salary structure, and criteria for evaluating performance. In 1990, the government embarked on a decompression of wages as a retention measure (Makgala 2007a, 72 – 73). In 1992, the government appointed a Presidential Commission on Public Service Salaries and Conditions of Service. It recommended a number of improvements in the conditions of service for public sector employees, including teachers. Although these recommendations sought to eliminate inconsistencies in conditions of service within the public sector and strengthen incentives for performance, the government balked at the cost implications of the suggested changes and postponed implementation. Subsequent reviews of salaries and conditions of service sought to improve consistency in remuneration and terms of service, but also emphasized performance monitoring to enhance efficiency.

Better conditions of service are supposed to create better incentives for productivity. The Public Service Act of 2005 represents the most serious effort to standardize conditions of service and remuneration within the public sector. As noted above, however, its implementation resulted in a 10% in the public sector wage bill. The coincidence of the financial crisis with implementation of the Public Service Act in 2008 meant that loans were required to balance the budget. The rapid upswing in public debt prompted a public expenditure review by MFDP and the World Bank in 2009 that highlighted duplication and inefficiencies in the public sector (Matambo 2010, 2). Efforts to reduce the public sector wage bill range from a freeze in public sector hiring, the absence of even cost of living increases in public sector salaries between 2009 and 2011, forced early retirements and an early exit program, and reorganization to eliminate duplication. Not surprisingly, these reforms have created serious tensions with the public sector, as discussed below.

The Privatization Policy of 2000 officially recognized the value of deregulation and privatization to encourage private sector development. The key implementation agency, the Public Enterprise Evaluation and Privatization Agency (PEEPA), began operations in 2005.⁴¹ Privatization is contentious in Botswana as elsewhere, and progress has been slow. The first attempted privatization, of Air Botswana, fell through in 2008. Partial (49%) privatization of the Botswana Telecommunications Corporation was approved in 2006 and expected to get underway during 2011. By the end of the year, preparations were still incomplete. Despite resistance to these high profile projects, substantial privatization and organizational streamlining has occurred since the 1990s (Greene 2010). External creditors are pushing for more aggressive public sector reforms to improve efficiency and reduce costs in the wake of the financial crisis (IMF 2011).

⁴¹ For more information, see the Public Enterprise Evaluation and Privatization Agency website (<http://www.peepa.co.bw/>).

Socio-Economic Inequality and Needs-Based Welfare Programs

Public sector restructuring is difficult, not only because it redistributes resources and opportunities, but also because many Batswana believe that the government should take a *more* active socioeconomic role. In particular, as diamond revenues grew, so have pressures to channel those revenues into social welfare programs as well as infrastructure projects. Citizens enjoy many subsidized services. Clinics and public hospitals, for example, charge nominal fees for services. In an effort to limit the damage caused by the HIV/AIDs epidemic, clinics provide free anti-retroviral drugs. School fees were abolished between 1988 and 2006; since their reintroduction, low-income families have been exempted from payment. A variety of social welfare programs cushion socio-economic risks by offering temporary help to the able-bodied while meeting the basic needs of children, the elderly, and the disabled. In the 1980s, the government introduced a drought relief program involving short-term employment on make-work projects (e.g., construction of roads and clinics) to address temporary stress in agricultural areas. As participation in agriculture declined, “drought relief” became an on-going source of livelihood for the rural poor. It was renamed the Labor Intensive Public Works programme in 2008 and Ipelegeng (self-help) in 2010 in recognition of its changing role. The portfolio of social welfare programs also includes a universal old age pension scheme (since 1996) and support for orphans (since 1999) and the very poor or destitute (since 1980). While the variety of programs may be impressive, benefits are intentionally set at a minimum level to ensure that these programs are seen as a last resort. They offer a level of support that falls well below the official poverty line. After a tightening of eligibility requirements for destitute benefits in 2010, Ipelegeng became the only welfare program for the able-bodied poor; it offers only short-term employment on a rotational basis (Ulriksen 2011, 203). There are also gaps, such as the absence of an unemployment insurance program (Werbner 2010).

Although the national incidence of poverty officially fell from 30.6% in 2002/03 to 20.7% in 2009/10 (CSO 2011, 2), fully 41% of respondents in the government’s 2009/10 survey reported that their economic situation had deteriorated over the past year (CSO 2011, 7).⁴² An increasing reliance on wage employment, persistently high unemployment, especially among the youth,⁴³ and job insecurity might account for this pattern. By 2009/10, the effects of the global financial crisis were filtering through Botswana’s economy. The decline in mineral revenues triggered increases in the VAT, other taxes, and electrical rates as well as a freeze in public sector wages.⁴⁴ Inequality among wage earners is another source tension. Salaries for senior administrators soared after the decompression of public sector wages in the early 1990s, even as those at the bottom of the public sector salary scale fell below the official poverty datum line until 2000

⁴² Only 23% reported an improvement.

⁴³ Youth unemployment is likely to become a growing source of tension. The existing government internship program is perceived as inadequate in that demand outstrips supply and exploitative in that it substitutes short-term and poorly paid internships for permanent entry-level positions.

⁴⁴ Botswana decided to replace its sales tax with a value added tax (VAT) in 2000. When the switch went into effect in July 2002, the VAT was set at 10%. It increased from 10% to 12% in 2010. Rates for electricity increased 30% in May 2010. In 2009 and 2010, civil servants received no salary increase, not even a cost of living adjustment.

(Makgala 2007a). As of 2009, high-level civil servants earned ten times as much as industrial class workers, while officials on super-scale salaries earned even more (Werbner 2010, 696).

Development policies in Botswana may have fostered socio-political cohesion during the 1960s and 1970s by ensuring that all parts of Botswana society shared in the benefits of diamond-driven macro-economic growth. An expansion of social welfare policies since the 1980s has alleviated the effects of extreme poverty. Botswana's development policies have not, however, prevented uneven socio-economic development or stimulated the sort of job creation or economic diversification required for sustainable economic development. The economic and political dominance of the state reinforced rather than attenuated elite dominance. Botswana has long suffered from high socio-economic inequality, heavy regulation, stagnant private sector investment, and elite corruption. The maturation of Botswana's diamond economy has increased macro-economic volatility, reducing the state's ability to provide at least some benefits to all sectors of society. Pressures for reform exist, even among the elite, but confront counter-pressures to maintain the status quo. The contradictions in the current set of development policies are one consequence. Difficulties in policy reform and implementation are another. Everything seems to point toward a more contentious future.

Adapting to a More Contentious Future

Immediately after independence, traditional authority structures provided an organizational base for mobilizing support, while limited access to independent sources of information and of social organization hindered mobilization around other lines of social division. A nascent civil society existed by the late 1980s (Holm et al. 1996). Over the next twenty years, the number, diversity, and vitality of civic organizations gradually, if haltingly, grew (Carroll and Carroll 1997). The same period also brought a proliferation and decentralization of sources of information. From a single weekly newspaper in the mid-1980s, the private media expanded rapidly to include one daily and several weekly newspapers, magazines, and radio stations.⁴⁵ Communication networks improved tremendously with the spread of cell phones and the internet over the last two decades. Consequently, a growing proportion of Botswana now have access to the information and resources required for mobilization.

Nevertheless, the expansion of the private media and civil society organizations is primarily an urban phenomenon. There are still areas, especially in western Botswana, beyond the reach of private radio broadcasts, cell phone networks, and the circulation of private newspapers.⁴⁶ Wealth is also concentrated in the urban east, especially in the south east. This pattern of development favors mobilization of urban-based groups more than mobilization around rural issues. To some extent, the flow of remittances and the ongoing movement of people blurs the rural-urban divide (Solway and Nyati-Ramahobo

⁴⁵ Although there is still no private TV station within Botswana, many Botswana have satellite TV.

⁴⁶ Charles (2011) gives some indication of both the severity of these problems and strategies for maintaining communication with other parts of the country during the 2011 public sector strike.

2004; Werbner 2004). Rural-urban networks raise awareness of uneven development but also buffer its effects. Economic insecurity among urban workers seems more likely than entrenched rural poverty to give rise to political mobilization. Workers, especially in urban areas, also enjoy an organizational advantage relative to historically marginalized identity-based groups, including women and non-Tswana ethno-linguistic groups.

Distributional conflicts are sharper now that the period of rapid diamond-driven growth has ended, and political contestation has become more overt. Since the late 1980s, there have been noteworthy periods of activism by unions (Makgala 2007a; Mogalakwe 1994), women's organizations (Bauer 2011), and cultural groups (Solway 1994, 2002; Solway and Nyati-Ramahobo 2004; Werbner 2004).⁴⁷ With the obvious exception of industrial action, groups usually pursue their goals by lobbying for legislative and constitutional reforms, challenging laws and practices before the courts, and, sometimes, seeking electoral support. As social groups push for changes in the legal framework or its interpretation, the direction of influence between changes in policies and social changes becomes less distinct. Social mobilization interacts with policies and public debates. Recent industrial actions and identity-based movements, for example, both respond to and influence policies related to public sector reforms, the balance between centralization and decentralization, and the basis of citizenship.

Socio-economic Mobilization and Public Sector Reforms

A wave of labor mobilization began in the late 1980s, with at least five strikes between 1987 and 1991 (Mogalakwe 1994, ch. 9). The most significant were a four-week strike involving more than 10,000 primary school teachers in 1989, a one-week strike by more than 500 employees of Barclays Bank in 1990, and a five-day strike by some 40,000 unskilled government employees represented by the Manual Workers Union (Mogalakwe 1994, ch. 9). Following precedent and empowered by anti-labor legislation, the government adopted a harsh stance. Each strike was declared illegal. More than 20,000 participants in the Manual Workers Union strike were dismissed and forced to re-apply for their jobs (Makgala 2007a; Mogalakwe 1994). A government directive in 1992 called for the conversion of industrial class employees to permanent and pensionable status, so that their right to unionize would be terminated. Likewise, the designation of banking as an essential service after the Barclays strike rendered any future strikes in the financial sector illegal. Amendments to labor laws in 1992 included a few liberalizing changes, such as the creation of an Industrial Court, but also introduced new restrictions on union membership and leadership selection and authorized ministerial interventions in internal union affairs (Mogalakwe et al. 1998; Molathlegi 1998).

The appointment of the Presidential Commission on Public Service Salaries and Conditions of Service in 1992 represented a partial acknowledgement of workers' grievances, but non-implementation of the Commission's recommendations became a new source of discontent. The official position seemed to soften in 1996, when the

⁴⁷ Youth mobilization has been sporadic, punctuated by riots in 1987 and 1995 to protest official inaction following the murder of children and by student strikes at educational institutions, often related to the food service, housing, or fees. Student strikes often degenerate into short-lived riots. Otherwise, political parties have attempted to direct the mobilization of youth into their youth wings.

cabinet reversed the 1992 directive on the conversion of industrial class workers to permanent and pensionable status, thereby restoring their right to organize (Makgala 2007a, 91). The following year, after years of internal and international pressure, Botswana ratified twelve ILO conventions and launched a review of labor legislation for consistency with these conventions.

Another burst of labor mobilization occurred between 2002 and 2006.⁴⁸ In 2002, discontent over non-implementation of salary reviews erupted in two rounds of strikes by teachers, followed by another by local government workers. Two years later, more than 2000 mine workers went on strike against Debswana.⁴⁹ Once again, the government declared the strikes illegal and, in the case of the mine workers, authorized mass dismissals. This wave of mobilization, however, coincided with legal reforms required by the ILO conventions. Amendments of TUEO Act in 2004 and 2005 reduced discretionary ministerial powers over union registration, eased restrictions on union membership, and allowed elected union leaders to work full-time for their unions (ICFTU 2003). Amendments of the Trade Disputes Act in 2004 and 2005 clarified and simplified procedures for mediation, arbitration, and authorization of a legal strike. Crucially, the amended act specifies conditions for legal strikes by essential service workers and subjects changes to the schedule listing essential services to parliamentary approval. Perhaps most significantly, the Public Service Act of 2005, as amended in 2008, extended the right to unionize to public sector employees. These reforms paved the way for legal strike action in Botswana. A quick search of the only private daily newspaper in Botswana, *Mmegi online*, found reports on one legal work-to-rule action, two legal strikes, and one illegal labor action between 2008 and 2010.⁵⁰ The legal strikes yielded more favorable outcomes for labor at the bargaining table.

Existing public sector staff associations restructured themselves as unions and, in 2008, five joined forces as the Botswana Federation of Public Sector Unions (BOFEPUSU). BOFEPUSU launched Botswana's first legal public sector strike on 18 April 2011. On May 6, the Industrial Courts ruled that, although a state-appointed mediator had authorized the strike, participation by essential services workers was illegal. Although BOFEPUSU appealed this decision, the government announced the immediate dismissal of all essential service workers who were on strike on May 16. Many continued to strike and others, outraged by the government's action, joined the strike. The conflict escalated as secondary school students protested the lack of instruction and several of their demonstrations dissolved into riots.⁵¹ Civic and political leaders attempted to broker a

⁴⁸ The strikes discussed in this section are either mentioned in the ICFTU (2003) and ITUC (2007, 2008) annual surveys, reported by individual unions in their publicity material, or known to the author as a result of media coverage.

⁴⁹ Tensions in the mining sector yielded another strike in 2006, this time at the BCL mine in Selebi Phikwe.

⁵⁰ Nurses at local government clinics launched a work-to-rule action in 2008. The other three industrial actions all took place during 2010. In September, a one-week strike by lecturers and staff at the University of Botswana yielded agreement on a process to review the salary structure. In November, workers at the Cresta chain of hotels used a one-week strike to push wage negotiations forward. Also in November, police broke up an attempted strike by non-unionized workers at a Chinese construction firm.

⁵¹ Public sector reforms since the 1990s have given rise to a host of new problems in the education sector (e.g., Mauntle and Weeks 1994)

resolution to the strike but the government rejected their proposals, triggering new waves of riots. Worried that the riots would undermine public support, the BOFEPUSU leadership suspended the strike on 13 June 2011, opting to challenge the government's actions in through the courts instead. The strike had lasted eight weeks. None of the union demands had been met and, as of mid-June, between 2460 and 3000 union members had been dismissed.⁵²

The BOFEPUSU strike and its aftermath exposed both the limits of recent legal reforms and political divisions over labor rights. The government demonstrated that it can still quash strikes and that, despite ratification of the ILO conventions, it does not fully embrace international labor law. Almost immediately, the government acted to amend the Trade Disputes Act to add teachers, veterinary services, and diamond services to the list of essential services.

Neither crushing the BOFEPUSU strike nor restricting labor rights, however, has resolved inconsistencies between workers' aspirations and international labor standards on the one hand, and the drive to make the public sector leaner and more efficient on the other. The long-simmering discontent within the public sector not only complicates the process of public sector reforms; it also threatens the government's ability to rely upon the public sector in the development and implementation of other policies. The strike did give rise to violence, including incidents of arson as well as riots. When these events began to escalate in early June (2011), union leaders acted rapidly to curtail them and, despite concerns about possible bias in judicial appointments, abandoned the picket lines for the courts. Some activists have called for a forceful electoral strategy. Given the size of their membership, the unions have the potential to swing election results – *if* the membership agrees with positions adopted by the leadership.

Identity Politics and Regime Dynamics

Traces of historical inequalities based on Tswana customary law persist in the constitution and a variety of other laws and regulations. Since the late 1980s, women and non-Tswana groups have pushed to end legal discrimination. Some legal and administrative reforms alleviated discrimination, but others reaffirmed the legal advantages of men and Tswana. Their successes, even if limited, encouraged renewed assertiveness by Tswana traditionalists. These opposing forces call into question a wide range of fundamental issues, including the basis for citizenship and the distribution of authority between the central state and the regions. Even as they challenge interpretations of the country's constitution, these groups pursue their goals primarily through the courts, elections, and lobbying for legal changes. Extra-legal and violent actions in the name of identity politics remain rare.

Women

⁵² Vice President Mompoti Merafhe reported the lower figure during a presentation to the Ntlo ya Dikgosi on June 7, 2011. The following week, BOFEPUSU claimed that at least 3000 members had received dismissal notices.

The emergence of the women's movement can be dated to the formation of Emang Basadi⁵³ following the UN Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985 (Carroll and Carroll 2004). Court battles raised awareness of legal discrimination against women - and of the need for organized action to achieve legal reforms. In 1984, an amendment to the Citizenship Act specified that Botswana citizenship could be transferred to the children of a male Botswana citizen married to a citizen of another country, but not to the children of a female Botswana citizen married to a citizen of another country. The High Court ruled in 1992 that the Citizenship Act was unconstitutional, but the government appealed the decision. Emang Basadi rallied support across party lines in the run-up to the 1994 elections. It urged women from all parties to run for elected office, provided training workshops for female candidates, and issued a women's manifesto. The 1994 and 1999 elections saw a marked jump in the number of women contesting and winning elections. The government responded with a variety of legal reforms and the appointment of women to cabinet, the high court, and other high profile positions. Activism around women's issues has waned in recent years (Bauer 2011), perhaps in part because of these successes.

Non-Tswana Ethno-Linguistic Groups

A rise in the political salience of ethno-linguistic identity can also be traced to the 1980s. The Society for the Promotion of the Ikalanga Language was founded in the early 1980s. The BNF, recognizing non-Tswana groups as an important potential constituency, began to seek their support, especially in western Botswana (Solway 1994).⁵⁴ The BNF did gain electoral support in western Botswana, but the government largely ignored the opposition's calls for an end to constitutional recognition for the Tswana *merafe*, the introduction of mother-tongue instruction in public schools, and other similar reforms.

If anything, the appointment of Ian Khama, hereditary *kgosi* of the Ngwato, as vice president in 1998 marked a rejoining of state and traditional authority. Two constitutional amendments the year before virtually guaranteed Khama's ascension to the presidency. One introduced a ten-year limit on the presidency. The second provided for the automatic succession of the vice president to the presidency in the event that the presidency became vacant before the term of office. In 1998, the incumbent president, Quett Masire, resigned some 19 months before the 1999 elections, ensuring that his vice president, Festus Mogae would become the next president and that - barring an unlikely electoral defeat for the BDP in 2004 - Khama, as Mogae's vice president, would become president in 2008. While Tswana traditionalists welcomed this development, others were more cautious.

It was against this backdrop that, in 1999, the Wayeyi cultural group Kamanakao applied to the court for legal recognition of the chief they had chosen (Solway and Nyati-Ramahobo 2004). The case underlined legal discrimination in the recognition of Tswana and non-Tswana traditional authorities. Faced with repeated procedural delays, Kamakanao brought the issue to the attention of the UN in 2000 (Solway and Nyati-

⁵³ The organization's name means "stand up women" in Setswana and comes from the lyrics of the national anthem.

⁵⁴ This followed the resignation of the Ngwaketse *kgosi*, Bathoen II, from the BNF leadership to become president of the Customary Court of Appeal.

Ramahobo 2004). The following year, the government set up the Balopi commission to develop proposals on how to address the issue. Public consultations organized by the commission stimulated heated public rhetoric (Solway 2002; Werbner 2004). Several non-Tswana cultural groups advocated constitutional reform, but their efforts were poorly coordinated; the traditionalists were better organized and more united (Solway and Nyati-Ramahobo 2004). By 2002, when eleven non-Tswana cultural groups formed an umbrella organization, Reteng,⁵⁵ the Balopi Commission had already completed its work. Constitutional amendments in 2005 expanded representation of non-Tswana groups in the upper chamber, but reaffirmed their subordinate status. The constitution still recognizes only the eight Tswana *merafe* and grants *ex officio* representation in the upper chamber to the Tswana traditional authorities; an electoral college selects representatives of non-Tswana groups. A change in the name of the upper chamber from “House of Chiefs” to the Setswana equivalent, “*Ntlo ya Dikgosi*,” drives the point home symbolically.

Khoi-San Speakers and the CKGR

During the same period, long-brewing conflicts over continued human residence in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR) intensified. Despite its name, the CKGR was established in 1961 to protect livelihoods of residents as well as the natural habitats of the Kalahari Desert (Hitchcock et al. 2011; Saugestad 2011). In 1986, however, the government decided to prioritize nature conservation within the CKGR and encourage residents to resettle elsewhere.⁵⁶ In 1997, the government adopted a more aggressive approach to resettle the remaining residents to settlements it had constructed outside the CKGR. The First People of the Kalahari, an advocacy group representing Khoi-San speakers, protested the decision and brought it to the attention of the UN and the broader international community (Saugestad 2011). The government proceeded to organize mass relocations in 1997, 2002, and 2006. After each round of resettlement, some people returned to the CKGR, despite the scarcity of water, the lack of infrastructure and services (e.g., health, education), and the threat of arrest. In 2002, as the level of intimidation increased, the First People of the Kalahari turned to the courts to stop the relocations. After numerous delays, the High Court ruled in 2006 that the removals had been coerced and were therefore unconstitutional; those who wished to do so had the constitutional right to return to the CKGR. The High Court also ruled that the government could not deny hunting licenses to residents of the CKGR who met the legal requirements, but that the government could legally terminate the provision of services to those choosing to remain within the CKGR.⁵⁷

The CKGR case attracted considerable international attention. The UN and various foreign governments followed developments closely. Survival International claimed that plans to develop new diamond mines motivated the relocations and called for a boycott of Botswana diamonds in retaliation. First People of the Kalahari allied with Survival

⁵⁵ Setswana: “we are present” or “we are here.”

⁵⁶ The decision was consistent with the government’s promotion of sedentarization in settlements and villages, which it justified with reference to economies of scale in service provision.

⁵⁷ The two sides returned to the courts in 2010 after the government denied residents the right to re-commission an existing borehole at their own expense. An initial decision in the government’s favor was overturned on appeal in 2011.

International, but other domestic groups strongly disagreed with the boycott (Saugestad 2011). Much of the public accepts the government's depiction of the entire conflict as instigated by foreign agitators who want to destroy Botswana's wealth and keep Khoi-San speakers in a sort of living museum. Although the CKGR case is more specific than the campaign for an ethnically neutral constitution and legal framework, both conflicts call for a renegotiation of relations among Tswana and non-Tswana. Hostility toward Survival International's tactics threatens the more general campaign for ethno-linguistic equality as well as cooperation among groups sympathetic with the challenges facing Khoi-San speakers.

Backlash by Tswana Traditionalists

Generational turn-over among traditional authorities and the debates surrounding the Balopi Commission reignited long-shelved debates over the legal status of traditional authorities and the *merafe*. Kgosi Kgafela II of the Kgatla pushed the issue to the forefront almost immediately after his installation in 2008.⁵⁸ A Kgatla traditional regiment raised eyebrows by flogging residents accused of petty theft and disturbing the peace. When members of the regiment destroyed a cell phone tower after Kgafela complained that it presented a health hazard, arrest warrants were issued. After initially resisting arrest, Kgafela defended his action by denying the legal supremacy of the Botswana state and arguing that his authority does not depend on the government. He filed an application with the High Court challenging the legal status of the constitution on the grounds that was adopted without adequate consultation. Following repeated clashes, the government "derecognized" Kgafela in 2011. Reactions have been mixed. Some value Kgafela's initiatives as compensating for the failures of the modern state, while others worry about his lack of concern about due process and the implications of his challenges to the central state. Since these differences cut across ethno-regional identities, Kgafela's actions seem less likely to trigger ethno-regional mobilization than to exacerbate divisions between traditionalist social conservatives and social liberals who embrace the social changes associated with modernity.

Coming to Terms with Conflict

While many analysts have assumed that socio-economic and cultural homogeneity account for the relative scarcity of violent inter-group conflict in Botswana (Dunning 2005; Holm 1988; Holm and Molutsi 1990; Parson 1981; Samatar 1999), I have documented ethno-linguistic, socio-economic, and regional divisions that are both substantively important and long-standing. Violent inter-group conflict occurs rarely in Botswana *despite* these substantively important divisions. Indeed, *non-violent* mobilization around these divisions has also been relatively limited, at least until the last couple of decades.

The limited mobilization of objectively important divisions reflects the success of efforts by the BDP to demobilize or marginalize groups that might threaten its political dominance. As discussed above, there is substantial evidence that government policies and practices favor the political and economic elite. The elite, however, cut across inter-

⁵⁸ The BaKgatla territory encompasses Kgatleng district, just north of Gaborone, and parts of South Africa. Kgafela II was a human rights lawyer before becoming Kgosi.

Tswana, ethno-linguistic, and regional divisions, reinforcing the perception of these divisions as cross-cutting. Furthermore, the BDP delivered on its promise to treat natural resources as national resources by constructing an expanding network of roads, schools, and clinics, and distributing other tangible signs of economic development throughout the country. Regional and socio-economic disparities persist and have even intensified in some respects, but even the rural poor experienced improvements in living conditions.

New tensions emerged from both maturation of the diamond economy in the late 1980s and the rapid and dramatic socio-economic restructuring since independence. The government has responded to changing economic conditions with cautious if somewhat inconsistent macro-economic management and on-and-off privatization and public sector reforms. At the same time, in response to social pressures, it continues to deliver development projects throughout the country, with an increasing emphasis on social amenities rather than basic infrastructure, and to offer subsidy programs to promote economic diversification. Development projects and subsidy schemes have become sites of repeated corruption scandals, however, raising suspicions that they do more to maintain elite patronage networks than to promote development or benefit ordinary citizens. The government also introduced a number of need-based welfare programs since the 1990s, although these programs offer a very limited level of social support. The inherent tensions in this mix of policies came to the fore in the wake of the financial crisis in 2008, as an unusually precipitous and prolonged decline in mineral revenues reduced the government's ability to distribute resources broadly, whether in the form of development projects and social services, public sector jobs, subsidized loans, or government tenders.

Politics in contemporary Botswana are more overtly contentious than during the period of rapid diamond-driven growth. Since the 1990s, mobilization has occurred along several substantively important if long dormant cleavages, including socio-economic divisions, gender, and ethno-linguistic groups. Intensification of elite competition has contributed to factionalism within the BDP, as well as a split of that party in 2010 (Poteete 2012). The public sector strike of 2011 and the associated waves of riots respond directly to the declining flow of resources into public sector salaries. Increased contestation need not signal a breakdown in social cohesion or a heightened risk of political violence. Conflict is healthy if it fosters adaptation. It is harmful only if it prompts violence and repression. Which scenario seems more likely in Botswana?

Botswana can no longer count on consistent year-to-year economic growth to support the broad distribution of resources. Much hinges on whether government policies and political practices are perceived as relatively equitable, or as pushing the costs of retrenchment disproportionately on particular groups. Perceptions are influenced as much by political practices as actual policies. In this regard, it is worrisome that the last two presidents and vice presidents have all come from Central district and that the current president, Ian Khama, is seen as favoring his relatives, close friends from the military, and politicians from his home areas of Serowe and Central District more generally when making appointments to cabinet or senior administrative posts. The proportion of cabinet members (other than the president and vice president) who hail from Central District,

which had fluctuated between 26% (in 2004) and 40% (in 1999) under Mogae, soared to 47.6% after Khama became president in April 2008. Although that figure declined to 35% immediately after the 2009 elections, it had climbed back to 42% by the end of 2011.⁵⁹ The government's commitment to distributing the benefits of development broadly were also called into question by its 2004 decision to construct Botswana's second university in Central District, between Khama's hometown of Serowe and Mogae's base in Palapye. This area has long been considered the BDP heartland. Although there are considerations that might justify this choice (e.g., access to infrastructure, population growth), the decision was all the more controversial given that a government-appointed task force had ranked Serowe-Palapye behind three other sites: Botswana's second largest city, Francistown, in the North East; the declining copper mining town of Selibe Phikwe in eastern Central District, or Maun in the North West (Makgala 2007b).

The president's ambiguous response to corruption reinforces suspicions that state resources are being privatized rather than shared broadly. Khama dropped a member of a rival faction from cabinet based on mere allegations of corruption⁶⁰ while retaining allies despite criminal charges against them. In a particularly striking example, Khama allowed his cousin, Ramadeluka Seretse, to remain Minister of Defense for eight months after the media revealed that his ministry had awarded tenders to a company owned by his wife and brother and for which he had served as a director. Although Seretse resigned when charges of corruption were brought against him, Khama held his place with "acting" ministers for more than a year and reappointed him a day after his acquittal, despite an immediate appeal of the verdict by the Department of Public Prosecutions.⁶¹ These actions undermine the authority of government anti-corruption agencies while reinforcing a public perception that the use of cabinet positions for personal gain is both tolerated and even encouraged.

For the BDP and many other Batswana, centralization is a source of national unity. In particular, as discussed above, the BDP's promise to treat natural resources as national resources justified the nationalization of sub-soil resources and the transformation of diamond revenues into a country-wide network of public infrastructure (Poteete 2009a, 2009b). Likewise, the gradual transformation of land policy to make access contingent on citizenship rather than membership in a particular *morafe* encouraged national rather than ethno-regional identification (Poteete 2009b). Centralization also means, however, that local residents have no greater claim to local resources (land, benefits from natural resources) than anybody else. The undisputable engines of growth include the diamond mines of Central and Southern districts and the wildlife-based tourist attractions in the north and north west. And yet, these resource producing regions suffer from extreme poverty and inadequate infrastructure,⁶² whereas many of the benefits go to well-

⁵⁹ By comparison, 33% of the elected MPs represent Central district.

⁶⁰ Samson Guma Moyo, from the North East, was dropped from cabinet in 2008.

⁶¹ The Finance Minister remained in office while combatting charges of corruption. He, too, was eventually acquitted.

⁶² During interviews conducted in 2009 and 2010, politicians from both the BDP and the opposition complained about poverty, unemployment, and dilapidated health facilities in the constituencies surrounding the Orapa mine. Civil servants interviewed in 2011 about the status of decentralization policies

connected elites from other parts of the country (Poteete and Ribot 2011). The principle of equal distribution based on geographic jurisdictions now underlines discrepancies between the location of economic resources (including human resources) and opportunities and the spatial distribution of government controlled benefits. It also fails to acknowledge or address spatially variable needs. Proponents of decentralization include advocates of more participatory democracy, opposition parties with localized strongholds, non-Tswana groups seeking greater recognition and autonomy, and Tswana traditionalists hoping for at least partial restoration of the historical autonomy of the *merafe*. Opponents of decentralization argue that it would threaten national cohesion. The acrimony generated by the Balopi Commission gives credence to these fears. Of course, decentralization would also threaten the ability of the urban elite to gain privileged access to land, construction permits, and other scarce sources. The very fact of centralization represents a serious obstacle to decentralization.

The sorts of political decisions and practices described above foster a public perception of elite capture, especially by political allies of the president, and a growing suspicion of bias in favor of the president's base in Central District. These emergent suspicions complicate government efforts to respond to more challenging economic conditions, whether by trimming the civil service or raising taxes. These developments erode confidence that all Batswana - regardless of ethno-linguistic background, socio-economic position, or regional origin - have a stake in the status quo, but they are unlikely to yield an abrupt change in political dynamics. Signs of bias coexist with the development of a basic welfare net and continued distribution of development projects throughout the country, and there is some ambiguity about future directions. Political contestation has already intensified as a result of structural changes, as well as the changes in policy and practice described above, but there is little risk that inter-group violence will become a serious problem in the near term. Violence is uncommon in Botswana in part because the government took advantage of sustained economic growth to support broad improvements in living conditions that obscured persistent inequalities, but also because the courts and elections represent more attractive mechanisms for managing conflicts. Inter-group violence is likely to remain rare in Botswana unless emergent biases become much more systematic *and* political interference undermines confidence in alternative mechanisms of conflict resolution.

identified lack of modern amenities as serious obstacles to recruitment and retention of staff in north. Lack of electrification was specially noted as a problem at the sub-district level in the North West. Maun, a gateway to tourism in the North West, suffers from recurring water shortages.

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Table 1:
Botswana's Gini coefficient, 1985/86 – 2002/03: Alternative Measures and Trends

Calculation for ...	1983/84	1993/94	2002/03	Trend
<i>Disposable income</i>				
Cities/Towns	0.536	0.539	0.503	Improve
Urban villages	NA	0.451	0.523	Worse
Rural	0.477	0.414	0.515	Reversal
National	0.556	0.537	0.573	Reversal
<i>Disposable cash income</i>				
Cities/Towns	0.563	0.548	0.513	Improve
Urban villages	NA	0.552	0.552	None
Rural	0.674	0.599	0.622	Reversal
National	0.703	0.638	0.626	Improve

NOTE:

The “urban village” category was introduced in 1993/94.

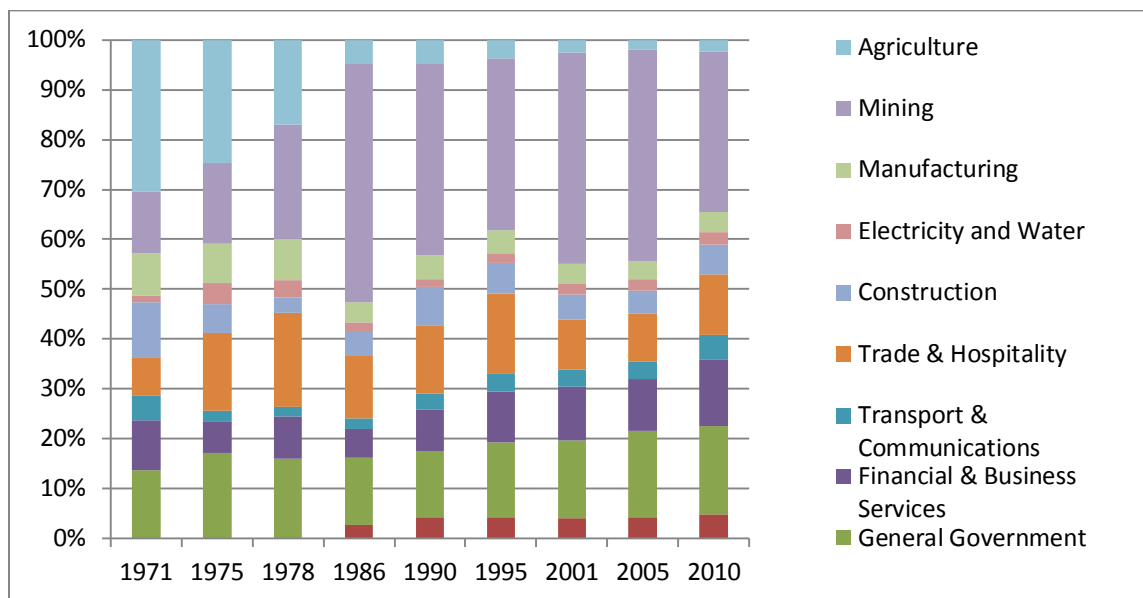
Trend:

- Improve: improvements across all three years
- Worse: deteriorations across all three years
- Reversal: partial or complete reversal in 2002/03 of improvements between 1985/86 and 1993/94
- None: no change

SOURCES:

Household Income and Expenditure Surveys, various years.
(CSO 1995, 2004a).

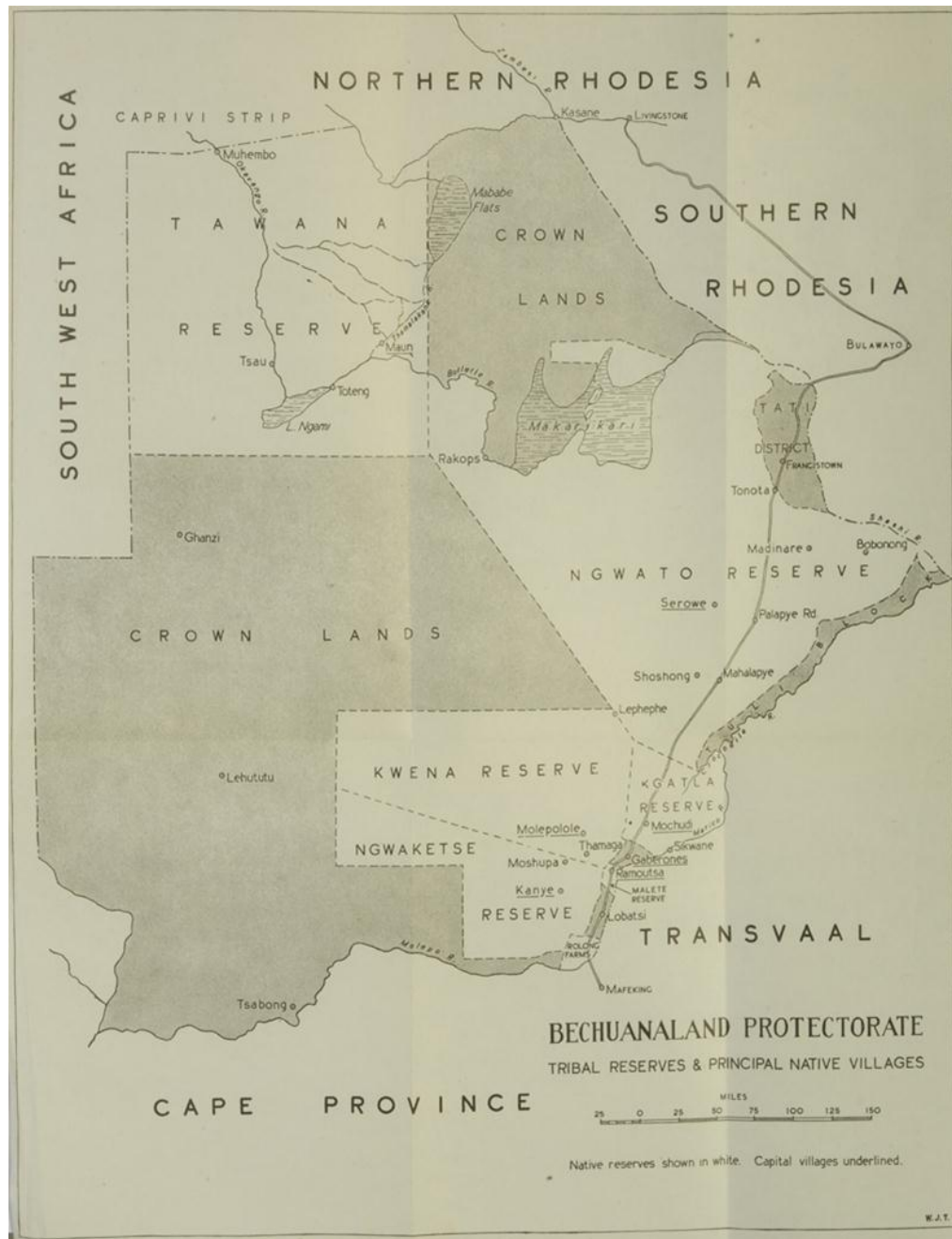
Figure 1: Sectoral Contributions to GDP, 1971 – 2010



Sources:

- Jerven (2010); Bank of Botswana (1999); Bank of Botswana (2011)

B: Tribal Reserves, Crown Lands, and Concessions, early 1900s



Source: Kgabo Bakgatla-ba-kgafela Heritage Precincts (2011)

C: Distribution of Major Languages

Self-reported Language Spoken most often at Home

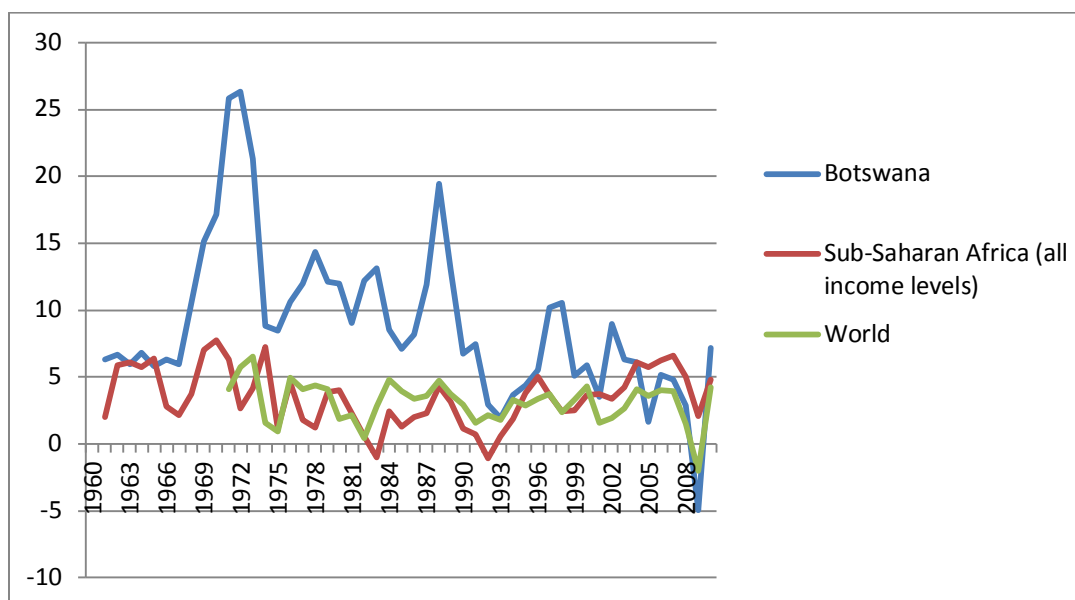
- > 80%
- 50 – 79%
- Locally important, < 50%

* NB: The Khoi-San language group encompasses several mutually unintelligible languages.

Data:
Botswana 2001 Census
Map:
http://d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=11790&lang=en

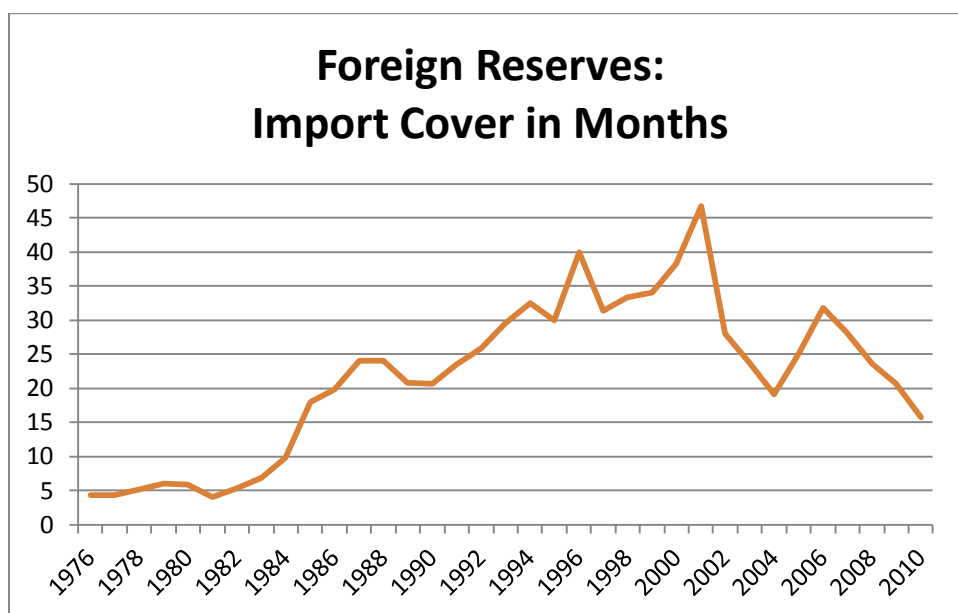


Figure 3: Year-to-year GDP Growth Rates, 1961 – 2010



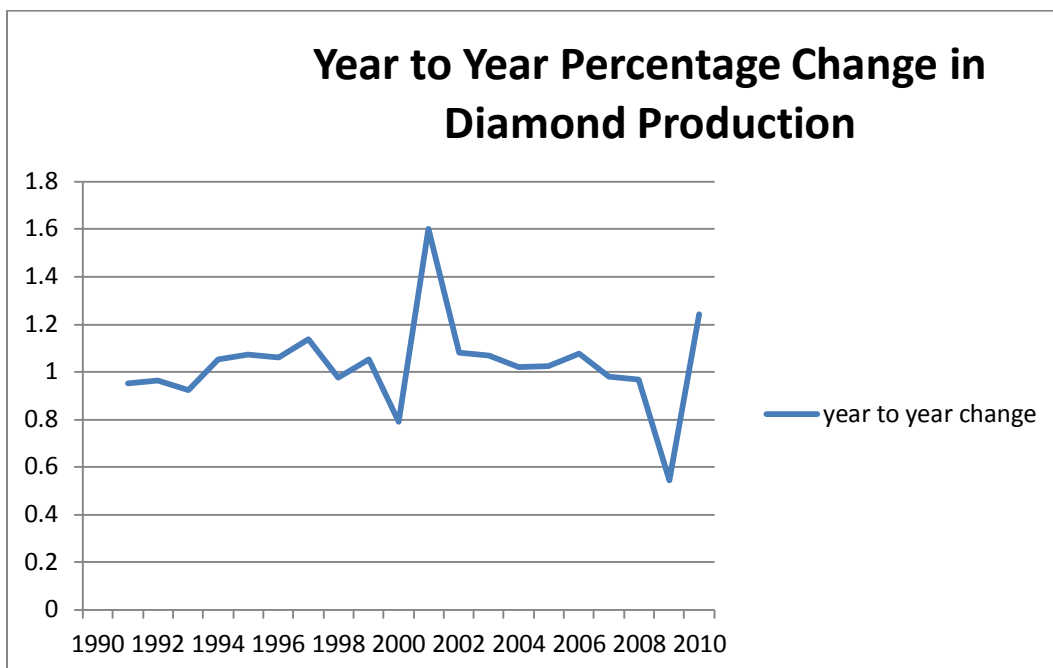
Source: World Bank (2011).

Figure 4:



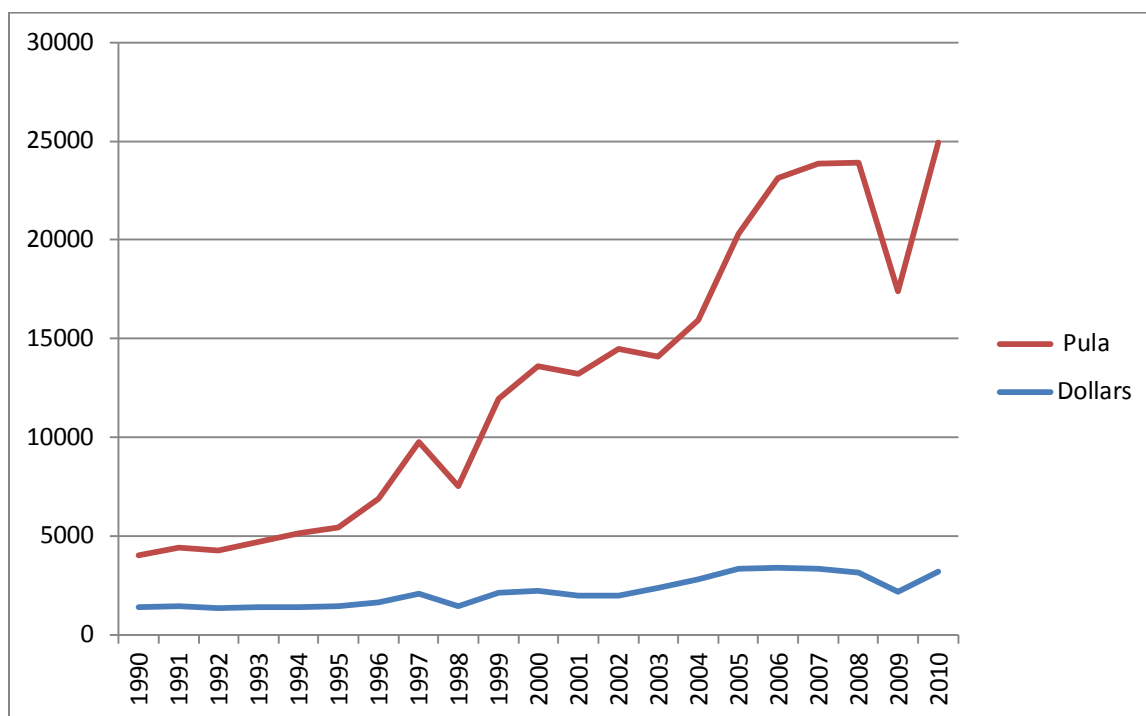
Sources: (Bank of Botswana 2005, 2011; CSO 2009b, 2010, 2011; Jeffries 1997).

Figure 5:



Source: Bank of Botswana (2000, 2010).

Figure 6: Revenues from Diamond Exports in Botswana, 1990 – 2010



Sources: (Bank of Botswana (2000, 2005, 2010)).