

Social Cleavages and Political Parties in Botswana: An account of a Pre-  
dominant Party System

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## **Abstract**

While the socio-economic history and political parties of Botswana reveal a social structure that can be analyzed in terms of cleavages, parties are cleavage related only up to a limited extent. The Botswana Democratic Party has more support in the north region than in the south while the Botswana National Front has more support in the south than in the north. The BDP is more popular among the unemployed than the employed people while the BCP is more a party of the employed than the unemployed. The BDP is supported more in the rural areas than in the urban areas while the BNF and the BCP receive more support in urban areas than their support in rural areas. The BPP is the least cleavage related party due to its small regional confinement. Support for the BDP tends to cut across the cleavages and this shows the extent to which the party is embedded in the society which results in a dominant party system. There seems to be no strong evidence in favor of ethno-linguistic cleavage and generational voting due to similar degree of support received by parties from the groups. The findings of this work raise important questions for future research on this area especially the social groups that are likely to share similar social characteristics to constitute a cleavage.

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## Table of Content

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
List of Tables.....	iv
List of Figures.....	iv
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Theoretical Framework.....	6
2.1. <i>Dimensions of Cleavages</i> .....	7
2.2. <i>The Concept of Cleavage</i> .....	11
2.3. <i>Hypotheses</i> .....	15
2.4. <i>Methodology</i> .....	16
2.4.1. Data Source.....	17
2.4.2. Variables.....	17
2.4.3. Statistics.....	18
3. Socio-Economic Background and Cleavages.....	19
3.1. <i>Socio-Economic history</i> .....	19
3.2. <i>Cleavages</i> .....	24
3.2.1. Center-Periphery Cleavage.....	25
3.2.2. Ethno-linguistic Cleavage.....	29
3.2.3. Employed-unemployed cleavage.....	32
4. Development of political parties in Botswana.....	35
4.1. <i>Parties at a glance</i> .....	35
4.2. <i>Political Parties in Botswana</i> .....	36
4.2.1. Ideological profiles of parties.....	40
5. Analysis: Parties and Cleavages.....	45
5.1. <i>Regionalism and Center-periphery Cleavage</i> .....	45
5.2. <i>Ethno-linguistic cleavage</i> .....	49
5.3. <i>Employment Status</i> .....	52
5.4. <i>Age</i> .....	55
5.5. <i>Discussion</i> .....	57
6. Conclusion.....	62
Appendix.....	65
References.....	70

## List of Tables

Table 1: summarizes the origin of parties and their ideological profiles.....	41
Table 2: Party identification by region .....	49
Table 3: Party identification by ethnic group .....	51
Table 4: Party identification by employment status .....	54
Table 5: Party identification by age group .....	56
Table 6: Variables .....	68
Table 7: Party identification by language .....	69
Table 8: Party identification by rural, urban and semi-urban.....	69

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Two dimensional cleavage structure .....	8
Figure 2: Election trends .....	22
Figure 3: Party support in north region .....	46
Figure 4: Party support in south region .....	48
Figure 5: Map of Botswana showing north-south divide.....	65
Figure 6: Party identification among Non-Tswana.....	66
Figure 7: Party identification among Tswana (%).....	66
Figure 8: Support among unemployed (%).....	67

## 1. Introduction

Despite the fact that research on parties in Botswana has attempted to provide an account of a dominant party system of the country, less effort has been made to analyze parties and the party system in terms of the underlying social structure. Recent literature has focused on factionalism and persistent party dominance (Poteete, 2012, Osei-Hwedi, 2001, Maundeni et al, 2006), weakness of opposition parties (Lotshwao, 2011), internal organization of parties (Maundeni and Lotshwao, 2012, Lekorwe 2005) and political party funding (Molomo and Sebudubudu, 2005). An extensive study of political parties was carried out by Gloria Somolekae under the direction of Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA) in 2005. More recently, the Institute for Democracy in Africa initiated an index for Assessing the Quality of Governance in Botswana that culminated in the publication of a report co-authored by Alexander and Kaboyakgosi in 2012. The topic of parties and elections was given considerable coverage.

Those who write about parties offer different and sometimes overlapping explanations which account for a sustained dominance of the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP). For instance in her account of the persistent domination of the Botswana Democratic Party, Poteete (2012:75) argues that, “features of the electoral system, fragmentation of the party system, and obstacles to strategic voting behavior contribute to the BDP’s continued legislative dominance.” It should be noted that Botswana operates a First-Past-The-Post majoritarian electoral system which opposition parties decry favors the BDP. However, Osei-Hwedi (2001) contends that there has been no alternation in governmental power since independence because of the opposition’s electoral weakness. Such electoral weakness stems from, among other factors, lack of organizational capability and inadequate financial resources (Osei-Hwedi, 2001). Yet others have

explored the issue of failure of opposition unity to contest elections as one party (Somolekae, 2005).

Still others have written about the internal organization of political parties. For instance, Maundeni and Lotshwao (2012) conclude that the opposition has suffered internal instability that has prevented it from dislodging the incumbent Botswana Democratic Party from power. The authors argue that internal instability within the opposition Botswana National Front (BNF) was primarily tied to the absence of clear party rules, and from incumbent leaders who personalized party power and sought to choose their own successors while refusing to compromise with internal rivals. In contrast to the BNF the internal instability in the ruling Botswana Democratic Party was tied to a culture of adhering to party rules, enabling smooth change of leaders, mutuality between rival factions and mutual compromises between internal rivals (Maundeni and Lotshwao, 2012). While they recognize the popularity of the BDP as a factor that is often used to account for its dominance, Molomo and Sebudubudu (2005) argue that, “its electoral strength is, among other things, a manifestation of deep-seated structural problems in Botswana’s polity and electoral system. Key, among these factors, is the uneven political playing field caused by disparities in financial resources.”

However plausible the aforementioned arguments are, still not much attention has been paid to parties and their social attachments save for the work of John Wiseman who acknowledges the presence of cleavages in Botswana, but does not show how they influence the dominant party system of the country. This work analyzes the social structure in order to complement explanations that have been advanced for the dominance of the Botswana Democratic Party.

Notwithstanding the lack of attention to analyze parties and the dominant party system of Botswana in terms of social cleavages, either due to lack of overt conflicted cleavages or the presence of overlapping cleavages across parties, the mainstream literature about the socio-economic history of Botswana and political parties in Botswana gives the impression that we can attempt to analyze political parties in terms of social cleavages. Social characteristics such as age, working class, region, ethnicity, and education have infiltrated political parties in Botswana and parties have come to identify with and represent some interests within the society. Because religion is generally held to be a private matter in Botswana, church-state cleavage does not play itself out in the politics of the country.

Parties are associated with specific cleavages despite attempts to appeal to the broader electorate. In this context, the Botswana Democratic Party is the only party that has made significant strides in penetrating and drawing support from the broader society which explains the dominance of the party. The BDP has as a result dominated the elections and it has not faced any potent threat from a weak and fragmented opposition. As a consequence, a dominant party system continues to be sustained in Botswana unabated regardless of the fact that the country operates a multi-party democracy.

The main objective of this work therefore is to analyze parties in terms of identifiable social cleavages they align with. Lipset and Rokkan (1967) write that, “social cleavages either attend to party formation or parties align themselves with particular cleavages and this process determines the type of party system of a polity.” Within this framework, the analysis of parties in terms of their social structure and cleavages they align with would contribute to further understanding the dominant party system of Botswana. Therefore, this work seeks to answer the research question

of what social cleavages align with parties and contribute to sustaining a dominant party system in Botswana.

The objective of this work is threefold. First, on the basis of a literature review about the socio-economic history of Botswana, I examine what social cleavages emerged in light of Lipset-Rokkan's two dimensional cleavage structure. Next I survey literature about the development of political parties and attempt to examine patterns of alignment between parties and specific social cleavages. Finally this work makes a case for understanding the dominant party system of Botswana taking into account parties and social cleavages.

Chapter II provides a theoretical framework in accordance with Lipset and Rokkan's two dimensional cleavage structure. Within this framework, I attempt to show how processes of nation-building gave rise to territorial and ethno-linguistic cleavages of non-Tswana tribal groups that resist assimilation into the Tswana ethnic group and lobby for recognition of their culture and languages. The model also provides a framework to attempt a class analysis of the society particularly the conflict between employers and workers. It should be noted that while the Lipset-Rokkan cleavage theory applies mostly to Western Europe, it provides a framework to analyze party systems of polities to a certain extent. This holds a semblance of application as Lipset and Rokkan asserted that "the model serves as a grid in the comparative analysis of political systems: the task is to locate the alliances behind given parties at given times within this two dimensional space" (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967:11).

Chapter III takes stock of the socio-economic history of Botswana in order to provide context, then follows a discussion of cleavages that are discernible. The chapter shows how attempts to create a homogenous society by Tswana elites after the country ceased to be a British

Protectorate produced ethno-linguistic and center-periphery cleavages. Chapter IV reviews literature on formation of political parties in Botswana and then shows their social base of support. However I focus on four parties that have had an impact on the political process of Botswana and have established a social niche for support. In this way I do not deal with very small parties and new parties. Specifically, in ascending order of date of formation, Botswana People s' Party (BPP), the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), the Botswana National Front (BNF) and Botswana Congress Party (BCP) are included in this analysis.

In chapter V I make a connection between parties and cleavages and with the aid of descriptive analysis of Afro Barometer round 4 surveys, I show party identification in terms of ethnicity, language, region and employment status. The analysis further tests the hypothesis that, support for the BDP cuts across the different cleavages in the social structure which contributes to a dominant party system.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

Social cleavages and voter alignment is an important component of research in voting behavior that has captured the attention of researchers. Research on voting behavior has focused on the impact of social background on voting especially by scholars who were interested in electoral behavior in Western Europe.

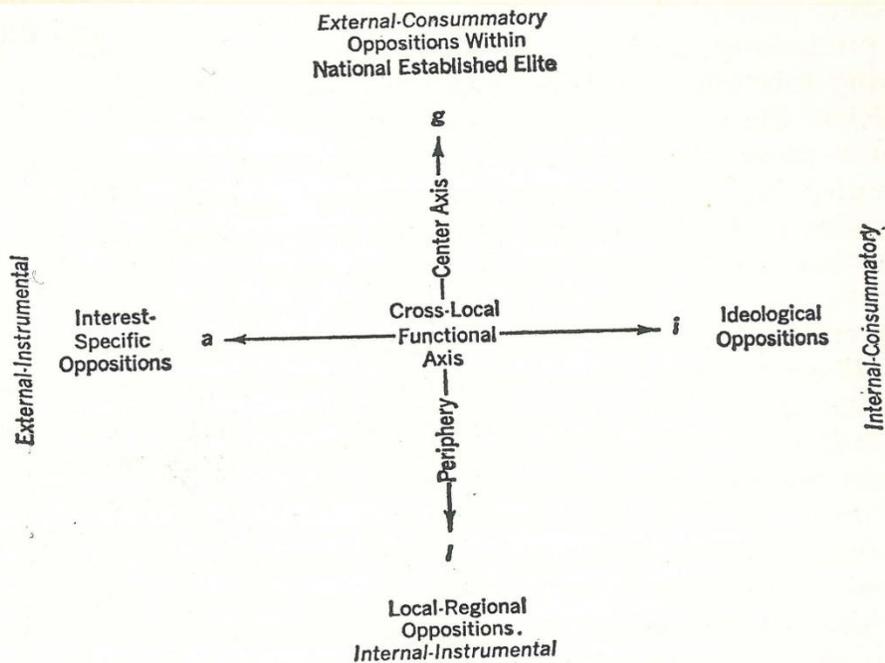
The study of the relationship between social structure and support for political parties has a strong tradition in political sociology (Andersen, 2003). Andersen posited that, “to varying degrees, social class, gender, age, race and religion have all been found to affect voting in Western democracies.” Therefore political sociologists have come to use the concept of cleavage to refer to group specific attributes or characteristics that influence party affiliation and electoral behavior.

The work of Lipset and Rokkan (1967) on party systems and voter alignments perhaps represents a classical account of how cleavages develop and how they structure party systems in Western Europe. In developing dimensions of cleavage Lipset and Rokkan built upon Talcott Parsons’ schematic representation of flows and channels of interchange among different actors in the society. However Lipset and Rokkan’s model focuses on the internal structure of territorial societies and attempt to understand what cleavages have manifested themselves prior to consolidation and in the subsequent phases of centralization and economic growth. However the Lipset-Rokkan conception of cleavage is more rooted in history and focuses on how particular social groups such as workers’ class typically attended to party formation for instance the communist parties in Eastern Europe. This is however not the case in the context of Botswana as there were no social movements antecedent to parties that later influenced party formation. The

Lipset-Rokkan model of cleavage structure is only used for convenience purposes to show how societal conflicts arose in Botswana.

### **2.1. *Dimensions of Cleavages***

Building on the Parsonian paradigm of societal interchanges, Lipset and Rokkan proposed two dimensions of cleavages namely the territorial dimension and the functional dimension. The two dimensions are represented in a basic A-G-I-L paradigm consisting of vertical L-G line representing a territorial line of the national cleavage structure and a horizontal A-I line representing a functional dimension. The figure below shows Lipset and Rokkan's two dimensional interpretation of the internal structure of Parsonian I quadrant which would be helpful in showing how cleavages along employment status, ethnicity and region developed in Botswana.



**Figure 2—A Possible Interpretation of the Internal Structure of the I Quadrant.**

Figure 1: Two dimensional cleavage structure

Source: Lipset and Rokkan, 1967

Social contrasts are spread along this two dimensional representation of cleavage structure. For instance, “at the I end of the territorial axis we find local oppositions to encroachment of the aspiring or dominant elites and their bureaucracies and here lies the reactions of peripheral regions, linguistic minorities, and culturally threatened populations to pressures of centralizing and standardization by the state.” (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967:10) As I show in chapter 3, ethnic minorities that felt dominated by Tswana ethnic groups that constitute the majority of the ruling elite expressly called for their recognition in the country’s laws.

The g end of the axis consists of “clashes over the control, the organization, the goals and the policy alternatives of the whole society typified by competing elites for power and deep

differences in the conception of nationhood.” Disagreement with the manner in which the ruling elites governed the country after Botswana ceased to be a protectorate led to establishment of parties by those who were dissatisfied.

Lipset and Rokkan contend that, “conflicts that occur along the a-i axis cut across the territorial units of the nation and they result in the formation of alliances of similarly situated or oriented subjects and households over wide ranges of localities and tend to undermine the solidarity of established territorial communities” (1967:10). The Multicultural coalition of Botswana which is a coalition of cultural associations of non-Tswana tribes is illustrative in this context for it cuts across the territory of Botswana.

It is at the ‘a’ end of the dimension that “conflicts between producers and buyers, workers and employers, tenants and owners among others are found. The authors claim that the “alignments are specific and the conflicts tend to be solved through rational bargaining and the establishment of universalistic rules of allocation” (1967:10). I show later the conflict that pitted the government against trade unions over wage and salary increase and dismissal of workers who participated in an industrial strike.

The i end of the axis consists of differences of “religious or ideological movements to the surrounding community and the conflict here is just about moral conceptions and not so much about gains or losses.” For instance, parties that were formed in post-independent Botswana such as Botswana National Front were born out of dissatisfaction among some people with the way the governing party was ruling the country as they perceived it to be pursuing capitalist policies.

According to Lipset and Rokkan the model “serves as a grid in the comparative analysis of political systems: the task is to locate the alliances behind given parties at given times within this

two dimensional space” (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967:11). In this vein the model is especially relevant for this work because it serves as a framework tool in analyzing social cleavages and political parties in different contexts despite the fact that cleavage theory is mostly specific to Western Europe. On the basis of this A-G-I-L model Lipset and Rokkan proposed four lines of cleavages that could be analyzed across various polities. The first two conflict lines are conceived through national revolution which refers to processes of nation-building.

The first conflict line is drawn between the central nation- building culture and ethnic, linguistic or religious resistance from distinct communities residing in the peripheries, summarily referred to as center-periphery. As I show in later chapters, processes of nation-building during pre-independence constitutional talks and post independence state formation resulted in ethnic and linguistic resistance from majority non Tswana ethnic group that consists of several tribes. Attempts at creating a homogenous society by national elites in the period leading to independence for instance recognizing few tribal groups as the main Tswana groups and institutionalizing Setswana as the national language left some deep seated feelings among non Tswana groups who felt marginalized from the society. Parties especially opposition politicized these issues as they persistently called for constitutional amendment as well as the amendment of the Chieftainship Act. The latter provides for a House of Chiefs which serves as an advisory institution to parliament on laws dealing with custom, and only eight constitutionally recognized Tswana tribes have a paramount chief representing his/her respective tribe. Non Tswana tribes do not have representation in the form of paramount chief and this is the source of conflict.

The conflict between the state and the church represents the second cleavage. Because religion is outside the sphere of the state and politics and remains largely a private matter, the conflict between the church and the state has not played itself out in the political process of Botswana.

Two further conflict lines are born out of industrial revolution, the first being the “conflict between the landed interests and the rising class of industrial entrepreneurs and then conflict between owners and employers on the one hand and tenants, laborers, and workers on the other hand” (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967:12). The latter cleavage would be relevant in analyzing the alignment between workers’ unions and opposition parties and the relationship between the affluent class and the governing BDP.

## **2.2. *The Concept of Cleavage***

The meaning of the concept itself has been contested with no agreement reached among scholars. Enyedi aptly stated that “still much ongoing research relies on this concept but the uncertainties that surround its meaning and operationalization indicate an acute lack of academic consensus” (2008:288).

Some researchers see cleavages as deep-seated, persistent affairs, and include value orientations as an intermediate variable through which the impact of social structure is transmitted (Knutsen, 2006). This work adopts Bartolini and Mair’s definition of cleavages as, “conflicts between organized socio-structural units that have a set of values and beliefs which provides a sense of identity and which reflects the self-consciousness of the social groups involved” (1990:215).

They note that “the problem with the concept of cleavage lies in its intermediary location between the two main approaches of political sociology: that of social stratification and its impact on institutions and political behavior, on the one hand, and that of political institutions and their impact on social structure and change on the other” (p.215).

To address the problem Bartolini and Mair suggest formulating “a theoretically autonomous definition of cleavage as a concept which links social structure and political order and which, in much the same way as the Marxist concept of class, should not be considered as a purely descriptive concept aimed at the identification of a particular reality” (p.215).

Therefore the concept of cleavage would then “incorporate three levels: an empirical element, which identifies the empirical referent of the concept and which can be defined in social structural terms”<sup>1</sup> Language or culture of a people for instance is such an empirical referent in this context that is a source of conflict which could be perceived in social structural terms between tribal groups.

The next level is the “normative element which is the set of values and beliefs which provides a sense of identity and role to the empirical element, and which reflect the self consciousness of the social group (s) involved; and an organizational/ behavioral element, that is the set of individual interactions, institutions, and organizations, such as political parties, which develop as part of the cleavage” (Bartolini & Mair, 1990:215).

Against this backdrop the concept of cleavage should indicate a dividing line in a polity which refers to a combination of all of the three. The fact that the three elements of social-structural, the normative/cultural and the political/organizational mutually influence each other in determining the behavior of a person should not be misconstrued to mean that a cleavage is a concept that exhausts the realm of all possible divisions. Instead the nature and intensity of the emotions and reactions which may accompany membership in these groups, and the kind of social and political bonds which organizationally unite the individuals who belong to them should be the guiding

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid

principle in our conception of cleavage. There is evidence that points to this observation for instance it was the nature and intensity of feelings of non-recognition of non-Tswana tribes that led them to unite and form associations through which they call for inclusion and recognition.

Once achieved, these positions become firmly established, and it is the endurance of this entrenched position in group terms which produces the image of a cleavage becoming stable over and beyond the individuals involved, creating a specific cultural background and a varying propensity to collective action (Bartolini & Mair, 1990:216). It is at this point fundamental to understand the difference between social structure that forms a cleavage and the cleavage itself. That is there is a difference between for instance religion and religious-based cleavage just as there is a difference between referring to a class and class based-cleavage. To accomplish this task, I further draw from the work of Bartolini and Mair who proposed that there are three key differences that are evident though they differ in degree per cleavage.

First they identify the historical account and they argue that “the social-structural reference of a cleavage and the cleavage itself are products of different historical phenomena: the former emerges from the processes of state and nation formation and from the development of capitalism and industrialization; the latter emerges by the coupling of these processes with those of politicization, electoral mobilization and democratization” (Bartolini and Mair, 1990:216). For instance class cleavage developed as a result of divisions that were brought about by industrialization and capitalism. In this instance it would be argued that industrialization and urbanization particularly with the discovery of diamonds in Botswana inevitably led to stratification of society into classes.

Similarly, ethno-linguistic cleavages emerge out of the long process of linguistic differentiation, migration, and state-boundary creation and specific cleavages of an ethno-linguistic nature only develop in response to modern nation-builders' attempts to effect cultural and linguistic standardization, and when the opportunities to express dissent and to organize opposition become available ( Bartolini & Mair, 1990: 217). I show for instance that the cleavage that developed along ethno-linguistic divisions in Botswana resulted from attempts by the Tswana minority ethnic group to dominate non-Tswana ethnic groups by recognizing only certain Tswana tribes as major tribes in the constitution, and recognizing Setswana as the national language.

History therefore provides an account of how different social groups emerge and how they become organized as cleavages especially with political developments such as democratization.

The second important difference is that an individual's belonging to a social basis that typically attaches them to a certain cleavage is defined by certain characteristics that are bound to change; the social basis therefore represents a set of relationships which are normally much more fluid than that constituted by the cleavage itself. However cleavages are a set of social relationships which imply some "level of external closure which is more pronounced than that of social groups," observes Bartolini and Mair. Here Mair (2006) adds that "there must be a clear sense of collective identity involved, in the sense that the groups on which the cleavage is grounded must be aware of their shared identity and interests as farmers, workers, Catholics, or whatever."

The third key difference among cleavages is that the social basis of a cleavage is not organized. For instance agencies of a class cleavage such as trade unions are not organizations of the social class but are an institutional component of the cleavage. For instance, the Botswana Federation

of Public Sector Unions, the main umbrella body of public sector unions that represents the interests of workers and have come to align with opposition parties mainly Botswana National Front, can be perceived as an institutional part of the workers cleavage.

In this vein, Bartolini and Mair contend that “the institutional nature of the class cleavage, both in terms of its social membership and organizational form, is historically and country specific precisely because it does not depend exclusively on the social class” (p.218).

It is important to realize that the manner in which the different cleavages interact and influence each other varies according to each country. For this reason it is not simple to disentangle the process leading from the development of structural prerequisites to the ideological and organizational patterning of the politicization phase. This therefore means that context matters in so far as understanding how the different cleavages in societies have developed and how they eventually influence party formation or how parties come to identify with specific cleavages.

### **2.3. Hypotheses**

The first hypothesis that this research seeks to test is whether there is a relationship between party identification and region. The null hypothesis states: **H<sub>0</sub>**: There is no relationship between party identification and region. The alternative hypothesis states: **H<sub>a</sub>**: There is a relationship between party identification and region.

The second hypothesis is on the relationship between party identification and ethnicity. The null hypothesis states that: **H<sub>0</sub>**: there is no relationship between party identification and ethnicity. The alternative hypothesis states that: **H<sub>a</sub>**: there is a relationship between party identification and ethnicity.

The third hypothesis is on the relationship between party identification and language. The null hypothesis states that: **H<sub>0</sub>**: there is no relationship between party identification and language. Alternatively, **H<sub>a</sub>**: there is a relationship between party identification and language.

Next I test whether there is evidence of a relationship between employment status and party identification. **H<sub>0</sub>**: there is no relationship between party identification and employment status. Alternatively, **H<sub>a</sub>**: there is a relationship between party identification and employment status.

The last hypothesis concerns age group and party identification. **H<sub>0</sub>**: there is no relationship between party identification and age group. Alternatively, **H<sub>a</sub>**: there is a relationship between party identification and age group.

#### **2.4. Methodology**

This research is a quantitative study that uses survey data to test theoretical assumptions about the existence or lack thereof cleavages in Botswana. First I briefly survey the literature on the socio-economic history of Botswana in order to demonstrate how certain group specific conflicts came into existence. Then I survey the literature on Botswana's political parties showing their formation and party profiles which would be helpful in establishing patterns of association between parties and specific cleavages. Using survey data from the round 4 Afro Barometer Surveys of 2008, I run contingency tables between party identification and cleavages in order to examine whether we can identify a party with a particular cleavage.

### 2.4.1. Data Source

“The Afrobarometer is an independent, nonpartisan research project that measures the social, political, and economic atmosphere in Africa.<sup>2</sup> ‘Between 28 September and 16 October 2008, the Afrobarometer surveyed a nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample of 1200 adult Batswana citizens. Face-to-face interviews were conducted by the Afrobarometer team based at the University of Botswana in two languages: English and Setswana.’<sup>3</sup>”

### 2.4.2. Variables

On the basis of the evidence from the socio-economic history that points to the existence of center-periphery, ethno-linguistic and class based cleavages, I test for evidence of a relationship between party identification and such cleavages. To this I add age to examine whether there is generational voting.

In order to test hypotheses about association between parties and cleavages, I run a chi square test of independence with the confidence level of 95%. Party identification is the dependent variable while ethnicity, language, class and age are the independent variables.

Table 6 shows how the variables were measured from the survey and how they are recoded in the analysis (see appendix for table). With respect to the dependent variable, four political parties are analyzed and the parties were chosen on the basis of their perceived association with certain groups in the society by the mainstream literature on parties in Botswana.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://afrobarometer.org/>

<sup>3</sup> 2008 ROUND 4 AFROBAROMETER SURVEY IN BOTSWANA:  
[http://afrobarometer.org/files/documents/summary\\_results/bot\\_r4\\_sor.pdf](http://afrobarometer.org/files/documents/summary_results/bot_r4_sor.pdf)

All the independent variables were recoded into categorical variables in order to satisfy conditions to run chi square test. In terms of the 5% minimum of expected frequencies the BPP is the only case that does not satisfy this condition. This is a limitation that cannot be avoided let alone corrected given the fact that the party has been reduced to a small regional party, but it cannot be dropped or merged with any other party because for purposes of this work each party has to be analyzed alone.

In terms of region, all 25 districts were categorized into north and south (see appendix for north-south divide map). Next I categorized the 8 Tswana speaking tribes into Tswana and the non-Tswana speaking into non Tswana. The same is done for language, with Setswana recoded into Tswana speaking and the rest of the languages into non Tswana speaking. Because there is no survey question that differentiates employment by occupation, which would have been helpful in identifying blue color workers and white color to test for working class versus affluent class cleavage, I use the survey question about employment status to investigate evidence for employed-unemployed cleavage. Age is not treated as a cleavage but it is analyzed in this work to investigate whether there is generational voting. I recoded age into two age groups, 18-35 and 35-80.<sup>4</sup>

### **2.4.3. Statistics**

Contingency tables are obtained to determine the percentage of support for each party among regions, ethnic group, language, employed, unemployed and age. I use a chi-square statistic to

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<sup>4</sup> The age group 18-35 was decided upon taking into account the fact that 18 is the minimum voting age in Botswana and also it is the minimum age for participation in Afro Barometer survey. 35 years is used as a dividing line between two generations because it can fall on both generations.

test whether there is a relationship between party identification and a cleavage using  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The chi-square is a relevant method since it tests for a relationship between categorical variables, nominal variables or a mix.<sup>5</sup> A party is cleavage related if it receives at least 5% more support from a social group than its support across the country, calculated as the difference between upper and lower percentage support in a cleavage.

### **3. Socio-Economic Background and Cleavages**

This chapter briefly discusses the socio-economic history of the country and identifies social cleavages that have developed. Section 3.1 briefly discusses the socio-economic history in order to provide context for discussion of parties and their social attachments. The socio-economic context and the development of parties are useful in showing the process leading from the development of cleavages to their politicization phase.

#### **3.1. Socio-Economic history**

A country's political process is rooted and should be understood within the socio-economic history. Somolekae (2005:4) noted that "in seeking to understand contemporary political developments in any country, one needs a full appreciation of the country's socio-economic context, including its history." In this sense Molomo contends that, "the development of political parties cannot be understood outside the context and nature of the state in development" (2000:p66). This therefore means that history informs a country's political process and developments.

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<sup>5</sup> See Gravetter & Wallnau, (2007) Essentials of Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences

Unlike most African states that were colonized, Botswana was never colonized but was a British Protectorate and prior to independence was officially referred to as Bechuanaland Protectorate.<sup>6</sup> Somolekae attributed the lack of colonization to the fact that the country was one of the poorest countries in the world and without mineral resources. The Bechuanaland protectorate was governed from South Africa in the town of Mafikeng. British Protection was sought by three chiefs led by Khama III, after fears of possible conquest of the territory by the mining giant British South Africa Company led by John Cecil Rhodes who wanted to expand British Empire by seeking mineral concessions from chiefs.

Different ethnic groups inhabited their territories and they were under the authority of their respective chiefs who had land allocation powers and hut and poll tax collection from their subjects. The revenue from the tax financed colonial infrastructure and it was a form of payment for the protection provided by the British.

The lack of colonization of Botswana is often used as an explanation for why the country never took up arms in its struggle for independence. Somolekae notes that the “lack of a violent struggle for independence has remained evident in the country’s lack of radical politics, and could also be a key factor explaining the lack of radical ideological tendencies in mobilizing people” (2005:4).

Constitutional negotiations ensued in the 1960s to pave way for the country’s first elections and independence. Polhemus (1983) noted that, “discussions during 1963 and 1964 culminated in a new constitution which came into effect on 3 March 1965, and this suitably amended became the constitution of the Independent Republic of Botswana in 1966.” What is important to note here is

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<sup>6</sup> Although Botswana is often referred to as a former British Protectorate, scholars still use terms such as British colony and post colonial era in reference to Botswana. The terms are used herein for convenience

that participants in the constitutional talks included Seretse Khama and Ketumile Masire who later co-founded the Botswana Democratic Party.

Upon gaining independence in 1966 Botswana was one of the poorest countries in the world, having inherited very scant infrastructure from the colonial government and to compound her situation the country was hit by a very severe drought.

It was not until the 1970s that the fortunes of the country were turned around with the discovery of diamonds. “From having been one of the world’s poorest countries, the country has flourished to the extent that its per capita income today stands at just over US\$3,000” (Somolekae, 2005:5). For this reason, Botswana was classified as a middle income country by the World Bank and in the 1990s a number of donors ceased assistance and relocated to other countries where assistance was most needed.

The remarkable economic growth recorded has been translated into socio economic development in terms of infrastructural development, investment in education and health and public enterprises to deliver essential services. For instance, “life expectancy at birth rose from 46 years in 1966 to 67.5 years in 1999, thanks to an accelerated programme of expanding access to public health services and improvements in income distribution” (UNDP, 2005). However, as I would show in chapter 3, urbanization and industrialization resulted in the stratification of society into economic classes.

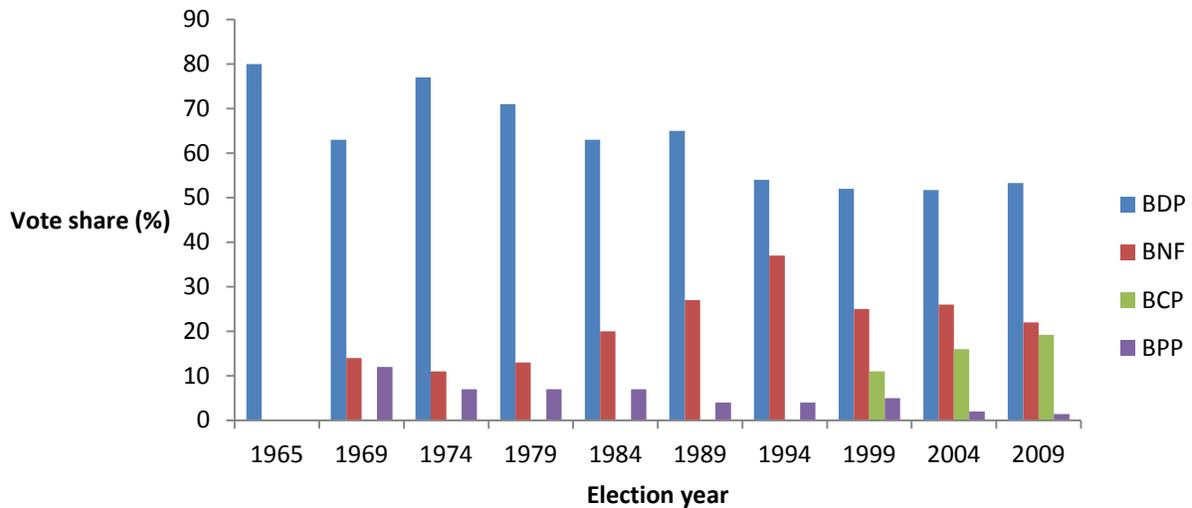
At the political level, Botswana deviated from the pattern followed by most African countries that instituted one party regime post colonial rule, and she embraced multiparty democracy. The country holds elections every five years under relatively free environment and citizens aged at least 18 are entitled to vote and there have never been political prisoners let alone harassment of

opposition activists. The country boasts a good track record of human rights protection and relative political stability recognized and acclaimed in Africa and beyond.

Notwithstanding the success recorded thus far, the country's democracy is faced with some challenges. Since independence the political scene has been dominated by the Botswana Democratic Party that has won every election with popular vote and formed government. In spite of the regular free elections, opposition parties and the civil society have often decried the unfairness of elections due to the fact that the BDP has more resources to campaign than other parties. Somolekae maintains that what compounds this situation is the fact that the political playing field is not level. "The BDP has more resources and enjoys the other benefits of being an incumbent party" (2005:6).

To illustrate the dominance of the Botswana Democratic Party, the figure below shows election trends of vote shares in parliamentary elections from 1965 to 2009.

Figure 2: Election trends



Sources: Poteete 2012 & IEC 1999

The graph clearly illustrates the extent of the dominance of the BDP despite a noticeable decline in its popular vote. The party has only been seriously challenged in the 1994 elections by the BNF with the latter winning a total of 13 seats and its vote share reaching an unprecedented 37%. The persistence of this scenario obliterates democratic consolidation for the reason that chances of alternation of power between competing parties remain bleak.

The country has also attracted negative publicity in its handling of minority groups and their linguistic and cultural rights, despite having been praised for a good record of human rights. For instance the government has in different occasions been at loggerheads with human rights campaign organization, Survival International for alleged forceful relocations of the Basarwa community from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve which the latter claim to be their ancestral land.

Moreover, the country still have majority of its citizens lingering in poverty despite having recorded a strong economic growth after the discovery of diamonds. For instance the Minister of Finance and Development Planning stated in the 2004 foreword of the *Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Report* that “*too many Batswana, an estimated 46.7% of the population in 1994 and a projected 36.7% in 2000, live below the poverty line*”(Somolekae, 2005:6).

In a nutshell, the country is not without challenges albeit the success it has recorded on the social, political and economic fronts. In this vein Somolekae (2005) contends that, “it is correct, therefore, to say there are people who feel aggrieved in Botswana, who believe that the prosperity for which the international community hails Botswana has actually bypassed them.”

Accordingly parties have identified with specific sects in the society and politicized their problems to broaden their support base. The next section traces the cleavages that can be identified from the social and economic historical background and taking into account Lipset-Rokkan’s two dimensional cleavage structure.

### **3.2. Cleavages**

This section discusses the various cleavages that can be discerned as a result of processes of nation-building and urbanization in Botswana. The section builds upon Lipset and Rokkan’s two dimensional representation of cleavage structure to trace the development of socio-economic cleavages that are discernible in Botswana. As Panebianco (1988:3-4) has noted that, “the activities of parties are the product of the ‘demands’ of social groups, and that more generally, parties themselves are nothing more than the manifestations of social divisions in the political arena,” to some extent parties in Botswana reflect socio-economic divisions albeit not exclusively due to criss-crossing cleavages.

The section proceeds as follows. First I show how regionalism or the north-south divide became salient in post independent Botswana and how it produced what can be perceived as center-periphery cleavage. A discussion of ethnicity follows in order to illustrate the manifestation of ethno-linguistic cleavage. It is important to note that center-periphery and ethno-linguistic cleavages are a result of nation-building as the Lipset-Rokkan model shows.

Subsequently I show how post independence economic growth and urbanization resulted in employed-unemployed cleavage. While it is almost inconceivable to have a party that represents a specific age group at least in the context of Botswana, opposition parties have mobilized youth particularly the unemployed and students. As Lipset and Rokkan let alone Bartolini and Mair do not include age as a cleavage, in this work party identification by age group is examined in terms of generation.

### **3.2.1. Center-Periphery Cleavage**

Initially, during the pre-independence era, the issue of regionalism or the north-south divide had no political and economic significance. Makgala observes that, “*it appears the north-south designation during the colonial period in Botswana was made purely for administrative convenience*” (2009:p229).

However notwithstanding this observation, there were few instances of tribal skirmishes that manifested themselves along the north-south dimension. For instance the abstention from participation in Native Advisory Council by chiefs from the two major Tswana tribes from the North, Batawana and Bangwato was one of the early manifestations of the north-south divide.

The former tribal group is from further northern part of the country and its representatives could not attend the NAC forum to discuss issues of tribal interests because of long distance and poor

transportation. However the latter tribal group did not attend because it's Chief, Khama III stated that the reason for his abstention was because chiefs from the south did not put enough effort to fight against alcohol consumption in their areas.

The influence of the institution of chieftainship significantly contributed to the manifestation of center-periphery cleavage as chiefs still command relative loyalty and authority in their tribal territories. Jones (1983:134) plainly argues that, "chiefs in Botswana have retained certain important responsibilities as they continue to administer customary law, to resolve personal disputes and grievances, and to articulate local interest at the Kgotla."<sup>7</sup> For her part, the leader of one of the associations representing minority ethnic groups Nyati-Ramahobo (2008) writes that, "in Botswana chiefs are viewed as the custodians of the culture of the people. Formal recognition of a tribe, therefore, is recognition of the culture of the people" (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2008:2).<sup>8</sup>

The laws of Botswana however only recognize only eight Tswana tribes that can have representation in the House of Chiefs. Nyati-Ramahobo (2008) contends that since independence, none of the non-Tswana tribes have had their chief recognized. She further notes

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<sup>7</sup> "In addition they can advise both government and parliament on issues of national importance through the House of Chiefs. Such functions have been underpinned by a continuing respect for chieftainship and for traditional institutions amongst the Batswana." Jones, D.S (1983) p.134.

Kgotla refers to a traditional conflict resolution institution or a village assembly; see Osei-Hwedie, B. Z. (2010). Botswana: Indigenous Institutions, Civil Society and Government in Peace Building in Southern Africa< Articles>. 16(2), 115-127.

<sup>8</sup> "It means that the tribal group can designate a chief, in accordance with their customs at the district level and the minister will then recognize him or her at a traditional ceremony. This chief can be consulted on matters that affect the well-being of the people and through the permanent membership to the House of Chiefs provided for in sections 77 to 79 of the Constitution, they are able to advise parliament on tribal matters." p2

that recognized tribes enjoy linguistic and cultural rights not enjoyed by the non-recognized tribes.<sup>9</sup>

Nyati-Ramahobo saw regional disparities in terms of unequal distribution of developmental programmes. She claims that the non-Tswana reside mainly in smaller and more rural villages and the infrastructure-roads, electricity and clean water-is generally poorer, and the economic opportunities are limited (2008:5).<sup>10</sup> Moreover the dominance of the Tswana ethnic group upon non-Tswana ethnic groups is reflected in forceful relocations of the latter from their land. Nyati-Ramahobo (2008) aptly states that the territorial power of the Tswana meant that the non-Tswana could not claim collective land rights and they could be moved from their ancestral locations to other places as the administration wished without their consultation.<sup>11</sup>

Center-periphery conflict can also be understood in terms of territorial line of conflict. Nyati-Ramahobo (2008) writes that, “land, territory and identity form the core of recognition of tribes in Botswana. The Tribal Territories Act of 1933 created boundaries called tribal territories which are currently referred to as ‘districts’.<sup>12</sup> The Territories were named after the recognized Tswana Tribes and the Chiefs of the eight Tswana tribes reside in major villages or towns within each territory, which are officially identified and referred to as belonging to these tribes” (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2008: 3).

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<sup>9</sup> “These include access to the institution of chieftaincy, permanent membership to the House of Chiefs as of right, group rights to land, territorial and ethnic identity, a celebration of one’s culture in the public domain and the use of one’s language in education and the media.” p5

<sup>10</sup> “They come to the main villages to seek employment opportunities and other services such as appeals on cases tried at the village kgotla” (ibid).

<sup>11</sup>“ For instance, the Batawana removed the Wayeyi and the River Bushemen from their ploughing area which is now the Moremi Game Reserve in 1963, without compensation.”

<sup>12</sup> Tribal Territories Act-1933 Cap 32.03

For instance according to a Botswana Review of Commerce and Industry report Maun is the tribal capital of Batawana.<sup>13</sup> However the reality is that, “Maun- the tourism capital of Botswana and the administrative center of the northern Ngamiland district-is dominated by the Wayeyi tribe and significant numbers of other tribes such as the Herero and Mbukushu can also be found there.<sup>14</sup> However, in accordance with the assimilation policy, they are not recognized and since its inception in 1915, Maun is seen to belong to the recognized Batawana tribe” (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2008:3).

The non-recognition of non-Tswana tribes is further exacerbated by the fact that it is embedded in the country’s constitution. For instance Nyati-Ramahobo notes that, “all tribal territories as defined in the Tribal Territories Act and old Chieftainship Act, were transferred into Section 77 (1) of the amended Constitution and each territory resumed the names of the eight Tswana speaking tribes, thus making their supremacy both cultural and territorial” (2008:3).

As a consequence, the marginalized non-Tswana ethnic groups formed associations to advocate for their rights. For instance the Kamanakao Association representing the Wayeyi tribe in the North West was formed in order to advocate for their recognition. Nyati-Ramahobo, founder of the Kamanakao Association notes that, “another form of agitation for recognition was the formation of ethnically based associations” (2008:7). Presently there are about 13 such organizations and they have since 2002 coalesced to form RETENG: The Multi-cultural Coalition of Botswana. The coalition advocates for the rights of minority groups at the national and international levels.

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<sup>13</sup> Botswana Review of Commerce and Industry 20007/2008 p.24 B&T Directories in cooperation with the Ministry of Trade and Industry

<sup>14</sup> Existing tribes in Botswana RETENG (2005), [www.reteng.org](http://www.reteng.org)  
History of Ngamiland, p.9, T. Tlou, Gaborone, Longman (1985)

It therefore follows that in light of Mair's conception of cleavage, the desire for recognition "provides a sense of self identity which reflects the self consciousness of the tribal groups involved."

### **3.2.2. Ethno-linguistic Cleavage**

The Lipset-Rokkan model overlooks the significance of party leaders and their social base in determining voter alignment. In most African countries party leaders who spearheaded liberation movements in their struggle for independence came to be associated with specific parties and often had large following from major ethnic groups. This has led to a growth of literature on the salience of ethnicity in voter alignment as it underpins party formation and party strategies.

Randall (2006) posited that ethnicity, whatever exactly is understood by this term, has much greater social salience than social class (except perhaps in South Africa) or, hitherto, than religion. There is evidence that tends to support Randall's observation in the context of Botswana. According to Makgala, "the population of Botswana is composed of the Tswana speaking tribes, the nomadic Basarwa (Bushmen or San) and numerous other tribal groups mostly found in Tswana ruled tribal territories. He further observes that some of these groups were either original inhabitants of these territories but fell under Tswana suzerainty after defeat in wars or by voluntary submission as a result of natural calamities" (2008:88).

Nyati-Ramahobo's work on Minority Tribes in Botswana: the Politics of Recognition gives more insights in the dynamics of ethno-linguistic conflicts. She writes for instance that "about 37 other tribes exist in Botswana, though the state does not recognize them. Scholars have estimated the

total population of non-Tswana tribes at about 60 per cent.<sup>15</sup> Therefore the ethnic and linguistic minorities are the numerical majority.”

“The Tswana elite have dealt with the issue of non-Tswana ethnic identity by framing it in negative terms” (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2008). She claims that, “those who raise these issues are perceived as fomenting ‘tribalism’ and traditionally viewed as divisive by Botswana’s Presidents.” Tswana elites have thus used assimilation of non-Tswana tribes to effect their domination. For instance, “former President Mogae is reported to have said that all people who live in the Central District should consider themselves Bangwato.”<sup>16</sup> The President’s utterances clearly sought to impose “Ngwato hegemony over tribes such as Basarwa, Bakalanga, Babirwa, Batswapong and others who reside in the various sub-regions of the Central District.”

According to Cook and Sarkin (2008), this Tswana dominance has led to the continued marginalization of minority groups to the extent that they have slim chances of making their presence felt in social and political spheres. These tribes face discrimination and have as a result suffered the erosion of their culture and invisibility as citizens. Alexander and Kaboyakgosi (2012) observe that in recent years, some groups in Botswana have contested nationhood. For example, in the alternative report to the Human Rights Committee on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, RETENG (the Multicultural Coalition of Botswana) argues that whereas all ethnic groups of citizens are identified as Batswana, not all of them – particularly not non-Tswana speakers – feel that their culture, customs and traditions, and therefore their

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<sup>15</sup> See Nyati-Ramahobo, L. (2008). *Minority tribes in Botswana: The politics of recognition*. London: Minority Rights Group International. p4

<sup>16</sup> Blame tribalism on the constitution by Mohwasa, M p.9 Mmegi Newspaper, 9-15 January 1998

identities, are recognized by the national territorial and legal State. The report claims that even simply referring to citizens of Botswana as ‘Batswana’ implies that non-Tswana are not recognized and are expected to assimilate themselves into ‘Tswanadom’, ultimately leading to the disappearance of their ethnic identities, culture and languages (RETENG 2007).

Lack of recognition is also revealed in no attempts made to recognize and include other tribal languages in the constitution. “Botswana’s language policy provides another mechanism for reinforcing Tswana hegemony over other ethnic groups, observed Nyati-Ramahobo” (2008:4). “The debate in 2002 was part of a larger concern by the country's minority tribes (through their tribal associations) who felt that the Constitution of Botswana recognized only Tswana speakers” (Makgala, 2008:). The position of Setswana as the overarching national language was also perceived as marginalizing other groups’ cultures and languages.

Nyati-Ramahobo maintains that none of the other tribal languages is permitted in public life for instance in education, media, the Kgotla and other services. Against this backdrop a number of ethnically based organizations were formed for instance the Society for the Promotion of Ikalanga Language (SPILL) and in 2002 they coalesced to form RETENG: The Multi-cultural Coalition of Botswana. Nyati-Ramahobo (2008:7) concludes that, “*in the period between 1995 and 2008, their activities as individual associations and as a collective, raised the voice for the recognition of non-Tswana tribes, promoted multilingualism and called for a shift towards unity in diversity.*”

It is evident therefore that the facts stated above could provide leading insights in search for existence of ethno-linguistic cleavage. This is true when taking into account Bartolini and Mair’s assertion that ethno-linguistic cleavages emerge out of the long process of linguistic

differentiation, migration, and state-boundary creation specific cleavages of an ethno-linguistic nature only develop in response to modern nation-builders' attempts to effect cultural and linguistic standardization, and when the opportunities to express dissent and to organize opposition become available (Bartolini & Mair, 1990: 217).

### **3.2.3. Employed-unemployed cleavage**

The Lipset-Rokkan model implies that, with economic development and national integration, increasingly the class based cleavages will come to the fore (Randall, 2006). In this vein I attempt to demonstrate the rise of workers class versus employers' class. The economic development realized in post independent Botswana brought with it socio-economic classes that structure the political and social process in the country. The percentage of the population in rural areas declined from 82.3% in 1981 to 54.3% in 1991 and 45.8% in 2001.<sup>17</sup> Equally dramatic changes in economic activities also occurred particularly with the discovery and mining of diamonds in the 1970s. Agriculture, which used to be the mainstay of Botswana's economy, plummeted in terms of its contribution to GDP from 42.7% in 1966 to 5.6% in 1985 and 1.8% in 2005.<sup>18</sup> In the late 1980s and early 1990s, services such as construction, tourism and finance emerged as important economic sectors.<sup>19</sup> All these changes have had implications upon the social and political landscape of Botswana. For instance, Poteete (2012) notes that education, urbanization and a variety of legal changes decreased the influence of traditional leaders over vote choices.

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<sup>17</sup> Republic of Botswana. 2003. National Development Plan 9: 2003-2009. Gaborone: Government Printer

<sup>18</sup> Bank of Botswana 2010; ROB 2003: 29).

<sup>19</sup> Poteete 2009, Bank of Botswana 2010; ROB 2003:29

In this context Wiseman (1998) observed that extremely low levels of urbanization and industrialization have resulted in the comparatively peripheral importance of organized labor in the political process in Botswana. The employed has overtime coalesced under different union movements in accordance with their professions in order to articulate their interests. The teaching profession proves to be the most significant unionized sector. “The teachers’ unions, the Botswana Teachers Union (BTU) with 11 000 members, the Botswana Federation of Secondary Teachers (BOFESETE with 3 000 members and the Botswana Primary Teachers association (BOPRITA) have flourished” (Maundeni, 2005:186).

The Botswana Public Employees Union (BOPEU, formerly Botswana Civil Service Association) represents civil servants. It should be noted that it was not until 2008 that unionization of civil service was legalized.<sup>20</sup> The 2008 Public Service Act paved the way for the public service to unionize and as a result, BCSA unionized and transformed into BOPEU (Makgala & Maundeni, 2010). The Botswana Teachers Union (BTU) also became a real union while Botswana Unified Local Government Association (BULGASA) also transformed into Botswana Land-Board and Local Authority Workers Union (BLLAWU).<sup>21</sup> So four public sector unions were formed simultaneously, and BOPEU cooperated with the Manual Workers Union to form the Botswana Federation of Public Sector Unions (BOFEPUSU), a public sector federation.<sup>22</sup>

The union movements under the auspices of BOFEPUSU have been at loggerheads with their employer the Botswana government on wage and salary increment to offset the effects of inflation. The fallout between government and BOFEPUSU culminated into the country’s ever

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<sup>20</sup> Civil service includes law enforcement agencies such as the police, the army, prisons services, intelligence services which are however exempted from unionization because they are considered as essential services.

<sup>21</sup> Makgala, C.J & Maundeni, Z (2010) History of Botswana Public Employees Union: 1885-2009

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

industrial strike in 2011 after the former could not accede to the latter's demand of a 16% salary adjustment. What workers demanded was a fair and equal distribution of the country's wealth, noted BOFEPUSU secretary general.<sup>23</sup>

Since the industrial strike, the government and BOFEPUSU have been involved in a series of law suits after the former allegedly expelled some of essential services workers such as nurses who participated in the strike.<sup>24</sup> The duo has also been pitted against each other over the government's decision to declare among other services the teaching and veterinary services as essential services contravening ILO statute on the definition of essential services.<sup>25</sup>

The above evidence points to a socio-economic class division that can be located at the end of the "a" axis of the Lipset-Rokkan model where "conflicts between producers and buyers, workers and employers, tenants and owners among others are found" (1967:10). The extent to which a workers-employer cleavage can be conceived lies in how political the issues are manifested and the extent of workers' alignment with parties that owe allegiance to the interests of the workers' class. The next chapter discusses the formation of various parties and their profiles.

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<sup>23</sup> Baputaki, C (2011) BOFEPUSU launches strike countdown. Mmegi. 31 March 2011 | Issue: Vol.28 No.48

<sup>24</sup> BOFEPUSU took government to court over unfair dismissal of essential services employees who were fired after defying a court order to return to work following the April-June public sector strike (Morewagae, 2011).

<sup>25</sup> "Government came up with a proposal to amend the Trade Dispute Act schedule on essential services to add veterinary and teaching services, a move viewed as an open declaration of war on public sector unions" (Gabathuse, 2011).

## **4. Development of political parties in Botswana**

This chapter reviews the literature on the formation of the different political parties and their profiles. The chapter begins with section 4.1 that gives a general overview of parties and the fundamental functions parties perform. Section 4.2 delves into discussing the evolution of political parties in Botswana in light of the historical developments leading to independence and post independence processes of state formation and nation building. The chapter ends with subsection 4.2.1 that presents the profiles of the parties consisting of ideology defining the party, principles and goals that each respective party is founded upon.

### **4.1. *Parties at a glance***

Although they are an invention of the modern age, political parties are fundamental for the functioning of any representative democracy. It was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that they emerged as central organizing features in many countries' politics (Scarrow, 2006:16). Their fundamental role in building democracies has been notable especially with the expansion of the franchise and transfer of power to legislatures in Europe and North America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Scarrow noted that as the electorate grew so too did the seeming inevitability of party organized competition.

Parties perform some functions that typically set them apart from other interest groups and parties have come to be defined in terms of their functions. In general, parties are supposed to represent, which refers to their capacity to respond to and articulate the views of both members and the voters (Heywood, 2002). Parties formulate collective goals that are often reflected in their programmes and party manifestos through which they seek votes. In connection with goal formulation parties articulate and aggregate different interests in the society including but not limited to workers, religious interests, ethnic, and minority interests. On the socialization and

mobilization function Heywood (2002) writes that, “through internal debate and discussion, as well as campaigning and electoral competition, parties are important agents of political education and socialization. The issues that parties choose to focus on help set the political agenda, and the value and attitudes that they articulate become part of the larger political culture” (Heywood, 2002:255). Parties form governments and accordingly foster cooperation between the executive and legislative arms of government. Moreover political parties keep government in check both inside parliament and outside parliament particularly opposition parties that criticize government’s actions and inactions.

#### **4.2. Political Parties in Botswana**

The need to have a party system in Botswana was highlighted during the Legislative Council’s constitutional talks by one LD. Raditladi who led the short lived and otherwise insignificant Bechuanaland Protectorate Federal Party in 1959. Polhemus notes, “The Federal Party’s submission on the Legislative Council argued that a ‘party system is...a democratic machinery which should be introduced together with the Legislative Council. It anticipated that a ‘party system may be bitterly opposed by the chiefs and old-school politicians, because of these are representatives of traditional authority” (1983:398).

The Federal Party was of the view that introduction of a party system would keep people informed of their “educational, economic, political and social developments as parties would act as media through which the aspirations of the people would find united expression. Parties would also reduce tribalism as they would draw support across the different tribes.”

First, as Somolekae (2005:8) has rightly pointed, “the history of political parties in Botswana is rooted in the broader history of the Southern African region, particularly developments in the then Southern Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa.”

The aftermath of the Sharpeville massacre saw some former African National Congress and Pan African Congress activists moving into Botswana. Some of the activists were influential in the formation of the first political parties. Polhemus (1983:399) observed that “several of Botswana’s party founders had links with South African movements. The pursuit of independence motivated the formation of the first political party the Botswana People’s Party under Kgalemang Motsete in 1960. Penultimate of the BPP’S 13 aims and objectives, stated so mildly as to escape notice, was the goal of independence” (Polhemus, 1983:399).

Partly due to the radical influences of the ANC the BPP adopted a radical approach in its call for an end to British colonial rule. Somolekae (2005:8) noted that “the BPP was a pan-African party, and very radical in its messages calling for the abolition of chieftainship, and it also called for an immediate end to colonial rule and an immediate granting of independence.”

However not long after its inception the BPP was mired in internal leadership struggle that led to the split of the party. Nohlen et al (1999) observes that the BPP remained peripheral in the long run because of its internal rivalries leading to several splits. These gave birth, among others to the Botswana Independence Party (BIP, 1964) and also the Botswana National Front (BNF, 1965). The latter was to become the main opposition party in the politics of Botswana.

The radical approach of the BPP prompted moderate leaders with the support of the colonial administration to form the Botswana Democratic Party in 1962. Lekorwe (2005:124) claims that

the “formation of the BDP was encouraged by the colonial administration which was anxious that a suitable national leader be identified to whom the mantle of power could be handed over.”

Among the founders of the BDP were Seretse Khama and Quett Masire, both of whom were members of the Legislative Council. It is perhaps fitting to note here that the Legislative Council which was established in 1961 along with an Executive Council and an advisory African Council participated in the constitutional talks that culminated into a new constitution for the independent Republic of Botswana in 1966.

Seretse, heir to the throne of the largest Tswana tribes was a man of stature with a law education from London. The traditional status of Seretse Khama and his leadership cult made him the preferred choice to lead the BDP. Masire was the first Secretary General of the Party and he was later to succeed Seretse as the second president of Botswana after the death of Seretse in 1980.

It is important to realize that Seretse’s role in nation-building and the very fact that he was an heir to the chieftaincy of the largest Tswana tribes translated into electoral gains for the BDP.

The Botswana National Front appeared in the political scene in 1965 and it was formed as a result of dissatisfaction with the policies of the BDP government post 1965 elections. “Following these elections, there were some people who were unhappy about BDP policies and a meeting was called in Mochudi by Kenneth Koma who had just returned from the University of Moscow with a doctoral degree in Political Science,” observes Lekorwe (2005:128). Initially the Botswana National Front was to unite all opposition parties together, but failed attempts at doing so resulted in the emergence of a fully fledged political party.

The BNF became very influential in opposition politics of Botswana as it entrenched itself as the main opposition party surpassing the BPP. Its highest achievement came in the 1994 elections when the party garnered 13 of the 40 parliamentary constituencies. However the BNF's success as the main opposition party was short lived as the party became one of the worst to be plagued by internal strife and factionalism. These factional disputes often pitted leadership members against each other either over differences regarding elections or for control of the party and resulted in the party splitting and several parties formed.

However the most interesting splinter party that is relevant for my analysis is the Botswana Congress Party due to its electoral performance and the fact that it is mostly followed by young people. Formed in the wake of violent factional fights in the BNF between the social democrats faction and 'Concerned Group' led by veteran Kenneth Koma prior to 1999 elections, the Botswana Congress Party has evolved into a competitive party in the politics of opposition of Botswana. Somolekae (2005:11) notes that, "following the acrimonious Palapye meeting, 11 members of parliament defected from the BNF, with 100 councilors from the party, to form the BCP."

Structurally, Polhemus (1983) observes that Botswana's political parties are branch parties with mass membership. Each of the political parties introduced seeks support from wherever they can penetrate. However the Botswana Democratic Party is the only party that has become a national party owing to its electoral dominance since independence. Contrasting them to the BDP, Polhemus (1983:402) observes that "the BIP and BPP had been reduced to regional parties making but token showings off the home ground of their leaders."

#### 4.2.1. Ideological profiles of parties

On the ideological front, parties project themselves as ideologically different because of their policy and programmatic outlook. However, some authors have contested the lack of clear ideological differences among the parties. Nengwenkhulu (1979:75) states that, “a major feature about party ideologies in Botswana has been the absence of acute ideological differences which he attributes to the fact that the four parties (BDP, BNF, BPP and BIP) had been formed for the sole purpose of mobilizing nationalist feelings and the creation of an independent state.”

Some authors believe that the parties cannot be simply arrayed against each other on a left-right political spectrum. Molomo (2000:69) posits that “if by ideology we mean a set of theoretical assumptions that represent a guiding philosophy for political parties, then its lack of vigor raises important questions for the Botswana situation, that is does ideology play an important role in the politics of the country?”

Nonetheless these parties do define themselves according to ideological labels and some differences are observable notwithstanding questions raised about their lack of acute ideological differences. It is perhaps accurate to argue that the term ideology is rarely used by parties in their campaign messages and rallies, partly because lay people are more likely not to understand such messages. However, in terms of the parties’ elites and to some extent members, it is clear to them which ideology defines the party and it is also reflected in the parties’ founding documents. For instance, preamble to the Botswana Congress Party’s Constitution states,

*“We, the members of the Botswana Congress Party united in common purpose, realizing that our country is facing acute social, economic and political problems and affirming the need to mobilize all patriotic and social democratic forces for the purposes of resolving these issues;*

*observing that the social and economic life of our country is dominated by the remnants of feudalism, neo-colonialism and the resultant conditions of illiteracy, unemployment, poverty and other vices....*”<sup>26</sup>

In the same vein, “the BNF is a progressive democratic movement that embraces within itself diverse political and ideological tendencies whose unifying platform is the social democratic programme.”<sup>27</sup> Therefore, while I agree that radical ideological approach is not adopted by parties to mobilize supporters, it should not be misconstrued to mean that parties are not ideologically different.

Table 1: summarizes the origin of parties and their ideological profiles

Party	History	Ideology	Motto
<b>BPP</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formed in 1960</li> <li>Influenced by Pan Africanism and South Africa’s ANC and PAC</li> <li>Formerly Bechuanaland People’s Party</li> </ul>	Socialism	‘Lefatshe la rona’ Meaning ‘our country’
<b>BDP</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formed in 1962</li> <li>Founders were in mainstream of establishment politics in the protectorate.</li> <li>Formerly Bechuanaland Democratic Party</li> </ul>	Conservatism -Right-wing	“Kagisano” meaning peace
<b>BNF</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formed in 1965</li> <li>Prominent founder was Kenneth Koma with a Soviet doctorate in Political Science</li> </ul>	Social Democracy- Center-left	“Kopano” meaning Unity

<sup>26</sup> Constitution of Botswana Congress Party (1998)

<sup>27</sup> Botswana National Front Constitution, (2005)

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<b>BCP</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formed in 1998</li> <li>• Split from the BNF, with most of the BNF's sitting Members of Parliament joining the new party after a leadership dispute with Kenneth Koma</li> </ul>	Social Democracy	“Kgololesego ya sechaba” meaning Freedom of the nation
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*Sources:* Somolekae 2005, Lekorwe 2005, IEC, [www.iec.gov.bw/political parties](http://www.iec.gov.bw/political%20parties)

The BDP espouses principles of liberalism with a commitment to “protection of fundamental human rights and to tolerate no forms of discrimination on grounds of race, color or creed as enshrined in the party’s constitution,” (Polhemus, 1983:402). This has by and large helped the party to penetrate the society and enabled it to appeal to a broader constituency of voters in spite of the criticism it has attracted for discriminating against minority ethnic groups as a governing party.

On the other hand the Botswana People’s Party subscribes to principles of socialism. According to a BPP “document designed to explain the ‘Party’s Ideological Concept’, independence is nothing but ‘a mockery of our people’ built on ‘white politics’, and ‘socialism is the better system of life and must therefore prevail and be the order of the day” (Polhemus, 1983:404-405). The BPP’ socialism is very extreme as reflected by the party’s insistence on nationalization of the country’s resources and putting them under state control.

For the BPP, “socialism means ‘seizure and retention by the people through their state of the basic means of production-the land and its natural resources, all its industry, transport and communications, finances, external and social services” (Polhemus, 1983:405). The BPP’s message has not appealed to a broad constituency and as such it has been reduced to a regional party among the Kalanga tribe in the North East. Moreover the BPP does not bode well with Tswana tribes because of its radical campaign against the institution of chieftainship as a puppet of the colonial government.

Influenced by the Marxist ideas of its founder Dr Kenneth Koma, the Botswana National Front is the most ideological party. Polhemus observed that “Koma, who writes in a Marxist vein, argues that independence under the BDP has brought the masses of the African people...only three things namely flag, national anthem and continued and unabated exploitation by the African bureaucratic bourgeoisie who have replaced white exploiters in a way or act as their intermediaries” (1983: 406).

With the fall of communism, the BNF changed from being a socialist party into a social democratic party due to propaganda that was peddled by the BDP that communism under the BNF would include sharing property, including cattle.

As a result of being discredited the BNF lost appeal to peasants and foreign investors who were wary of potential nationalization of private property under BNF government. Drawing from the Social Democratic Programme, “the BNF subscribes to an economy based on a strong public sector and private ownership of the means of production” (Molomo, 2000:71). It should be noted that the BNF is a typical mass party which according to its constitution trade unions and other

social movements can affiliate under.<sup>28</sup> For this reason the party has projected itself as a champion for workers rights.

By all intents and purposes the Botswana Congress Party is a social democratic party. Molomo observed that, “at pains to make an ideological distinction between the BCP and the BNF, Dingake, then leader of the BCP, said, ‘the BCP and the BNF espouse social democracy’ and went on to say that BCP is pragmatist while the BNF is theorist” (2000:72).

Therefore on the basis of the reflections made on the ideological dispositions of parties and what parties purport to stand for in terms of their economic policies, I conclude that despite questions that have been raised about their lack of acute ideological conflicts, parties appear to be ideologically different. In the next chapter I show the social base of the political parties, that is where parties draw their support from and the groups they align with.

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<sup>28</sup> To guarantee its mass character, the BNF allows progressive mass organizations, trade unions, educational clubs to affiliate under the party (Botswana National Front Constitution, 2005).

## 5. Analysis: Parties and Cleavages

This chapter provides an analysis of the social background of parties and tests whether there is evidence of a relationship between cleavages and party identification. A party is considered to have support from a social group if the margin of support from that social group is at least 5% more than the overall support of that party across the country. A chi square test is used to test whether there is strong evidence of a relationship between party identification and social group at 95% confidence level.

### 5.1. *Regionalism and Center-periphery Cleavage.*

Despite the first president's attempts at nation building, political developments that unfolded including the formation of political parties, inevitably though not always consciously occurred along north-south division. The Botswana Democratic Party was formed by Seretse Khama, heir to the throne of the largest tribal group the Bangwato from Central district. To this end Makgala (2009) observes that, "Seretse was a hugely popular but uncrowned chief of the Bangwato in Central district, the biggest and most heavily populated one in Botswana." The figure below illustrates parties' support in the north region which includes the central district according to the north-south divide map (See appendix for Botswana Map). It should be noted that historically, the north-south division places the Central district on the northern part of the country.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> See Makgala, (2009) History and perceptions of regionalism in Botswana, 1891-2005

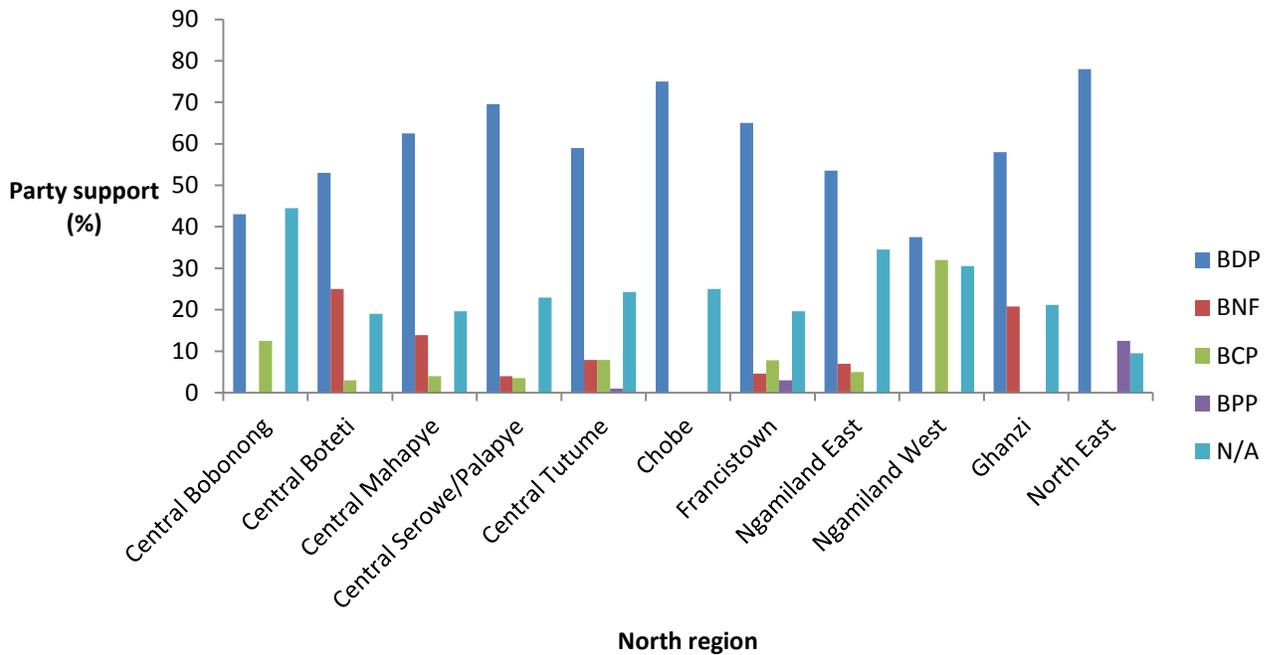


Figure 3: Party support in north region

The graph clearly shows that the BDP has a strong support base in the northern region relative to the other parties. The Botswana People’s Party’s main support base is in north-east among the non Tswana Speaking Kalanga tribe. The BPP became and remains a regional party, retaining parliamentary representation because of Kalanga support in Francistown and North East (Charlton, 1993). However Francistown was lost to the BDP in 1979 and a decade later North East constituency also fell into the BDP. Notwithstanding the loss, the BPP still ran second in both constituencies in 1989 (Charlton, 1993). In the north, the BCP is strong in Ngamiland West which is an area that consists of largely non-Tswana speaking tribes.

Conscious of the influence of Seretse in the support for the BDP in the Central district, the Botswana National Front established a niche for itself in the southern part of the country. In this vein, Somolekae (2005) writes that;

“In a move intended to neutralize Seretse Khama’s traditional appeal, the BNF brought into its ranks the paramount chief of the Bangwaketse, Kgosi Bathoen Gaseitsewe.

He subsequently defeated Quett Masire, the then vice president, in the 1969 Ngwaketse district elections where Kgosi Bathoen reigned. Up to today, the BNF remains strong in the southern part of Botswana” (Somolekae, 2005:8).

The north-south delineation as a result found the BDP commanding support from rural areas especially in the Central district and the BNF controlling major urban towns and the capital city.

The unwavering support from the large, rural population has helped the BDP to win rural constituencies in post-independence general elections (Osei-Hwedie, 2001). The author further observes that the BDP has not been able to win the loyalty of majority of urban constituencies, especially in the 1990s. A number of factors explain the limited support of the BDP in urban areas and the domination of the BNF. A combination of dissatisfaction with unemployment, poverty, corruption scandals and the government’s refusal to grant workers’ request for annual increase may have resulted in the BDP’s loss of seats in urban areas to the BNF in the 1994 general elections (Osei-Hwedie, 2001). The following figure shows parties’ support in the south region, which consists of some major towns and the capital city Gaborone.

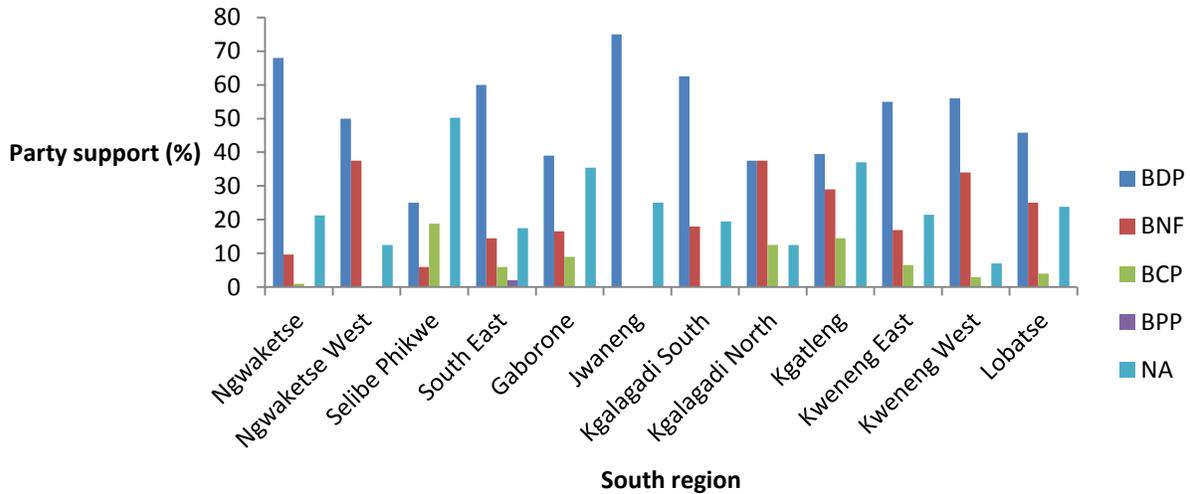


Figure 4: Party support in south region

Although the BDP appears to have a significant support even in the south region, the BNF has gained some ground and challenged the BDP in areas such as Ngwaketse West, Kgalagadi North, Kgatleng and Kweneng West. The BNF has been able to win the support of Kgalagadi partly because of the marginalized non-Tswana tribes that reside in the Kgalagadi area.

In the town of Selibe Phikwe, which is a mining area the BCP poses a strong challenge to the BDP. However, that a center-periphery cleavage can be proven to exist depends primarily on the margin of parties' support between regions. Table 2 presents cross tab results of party support in the north and south regions. A Chi Square test was also run to test whether there is evidence of a relationship between party identification and region. The result of the Chi Square test is  $p < 0.001$

Table 2: Party identification by region

Party	North region	South region	Difference (%)
BDP	79.4	66.3	13.1
BNF	9.5	24.2	14.7
BCP	9.5	9.2	0.3
BPP	1.6	0.2	1.4

The null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between party identification and region. On the basis of the p value obtained, I reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is strong evidence of a relationship between party identification and region. This is because of the **13%** more support for the BDP in the north region than in the south. The BNF appears to have a strong support in the south region compared to other parties as it receives **14.7%** more support in the south than in the north. This therefore confirms the findings of the mainstream literature about the party ‘support in the south.

## **5.2. Ethno-linguistic cleavage**

It is perhaps important to first distinguish tribes and ethnic groups in the context of Botswana. According to Wiseman (1998), “a tribe is a political unit based on allegiance to a particular chief whereas an ethnic group has a cultural identity. Tribes are multi-ethnic and ethnic groups are multi-tribal,” Wiseman further notes.

Even though the country is perceived to be a largely mono-ethnic society due to the dominance of the Tswana speaking ethnic group, the existence of the non-Tswana speaking ethnic group constituted by various tribes reveals underlying societal diversity. Parsons (1985) argues that, “Botswana is only a mono-ethnic state insofar as a Tswana minority has imposed its culture on a majority population of extremely diverse ethnic origins.”

Although the Tswana have plurality, there are a large number of other smaller ethnic groups within the population. These include Kalanga, Bakgalagadi, Europeans, Bushmen, Bayei and more (Wiseman, 1977:73).

The Tswana, who are divided into eight distinct tribes in order of size and importance, the Bangwato, Bakwena, Bangwaketse, Batawana, Bakgatla, Bamalete, Barolong and Batlokwa, are constitutionally recognized as major tribes each with a paramount chief in the House of Chiefs.

Although ethnic divisions do not dominate the political process in the country, parties have either by design or coincidence found support from particular ethnic groups. Commenting on the electoral strength of the ruling party, Holm (1987:138) posited that the BDP commands majority support nationwide, drawn primarily from the Tswana speaking tribes, the Bangwato and Bakwena who make up 50 per cent of the population. Figure 7 illustrates parties’ support among the Tswana ethnic group (See appendix for the chart).

In an attempt to broaden its support base the Botswana National Front associated itself with non-Tswana speaking ethnic groups and sought to represent their concerns. Wiseman (1998) stated that, “in recent years the BNF has increasingly shown itself able to expand its support base by organizing and politicizing the non-Tswana ethnic groups.”

The BNF penetrated remote rural areas and sought to establish organizational structures of the party in districts such as Ngami, Ghanzi, Boteti and Kgalagadi (Wiseman, 1998). In the 1989 elections the party garnered 34 per cent of the vote which rose to 46% in the 1994 general elections.

The Botswana People’s Party has been able to win the support of the Kalanga in Francistown and North East. Osei-Hwedie (2001) writes that, “the North West is the stronghold for the BIP with the support of the Bayei, the North East for the BPP among the Bakalanga, and the South for the BNF with Bakgatla support.” Figure 8 displays the share of parties’ support among the non-Tswana ethnic group (see appendix for chart).

Contrary to the above reflections, the charts reveal that the BDP is rather strong among the non-Tswana with 1.6% more than the support it received from the Tswana. The BNF on the other seems to be strong among the Tswana (4.6%). The BCP appears to be strong among the non-Tswana (2.1%) while the BPP has a paltry 0.5% more support from the non-Tswana than the Tswana. Table 3 summarizes the parties’ support among the two ethnic groups.

Table 3: Party identification by ethnic group

<b>Party (%)</b>	<b>Tswana (%)</b>	<b>Non-Tswana</b>	<b>Difference (%)</b>
BDP	71.8	73.4	1.6
BNF	19.6	15	4.6
BCP	7.9	10	2.1
BPP	0.7	1.2	0.5

A Chi Square test produced a p value of **0.189**. The margin of support for parties between non-Tswana and Tswana is quite insignificant (below 5% threshold). The null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between party identification and ethnic group. In this case I do not reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no strong evidence of a relationship between party identification and ethnic group.

It therefore appears that the evidence of an ethnic cleavage is rather weak based on the results obtained. Support for parties seems to be more or less the same across the Tswana and the non-Tswana. It appears that parties also seem to receive the same level of support across Tswana speaking and non Tswana speaking as revealed by results of cross tabulation of party identification by language (See table 7 in appendix). On the basis of the p value (**p=0.181**), there is no strong evidence of a relationship between party identification and language.

Based on the results, there seems to be weak evidence in support for ethno-linguistic cleavage contrary to what the literature seems to suggest.

### **5.3. Employment Status**

Like Lipset and Rokkan's model for dimensions of cleavage showed, the class cleavage is a result of industrialization which is responsible for segmenting society into classes.

The divisions along economic class have manifested in the form of unemployed-employed cleavage. The Botswana Democratic Party has capitalized support from the rural unemployed people who are mostly poor. Chart 3 shows party support among the unemployed (see appendix).

The BDP' support among the unemployed is greater than its share among the employed partly due to arguments advanced about incumbency which confers resource advantages to the party in terms of reaching out to voters particularly those in the rural areas. This is further reflected in the party's unwavering support base in rural areas as shown in table 8 (see appendix).

However the socio-economic dynamics including rural-urban migration have reduced the influence of traditional leaders in determining vote choice and have created openings for the opposition (Poteete 2009). The BNF's vision of an egalitarian society has helped the party to maintain the support of the working class and the underprivileged, which accounts for its popularity in urban areas (Osei-Hwedie, 2001). Osei-Hwedie noted the performance of opposition parties in local government, with the BNF in control of urban areas including Gaborone City Council where it won 24 of the 25 seats, ten out of 11 seats in Lobatse, all 13 seats in Selibe Phikwe, and all seven seats in Jwaneng, a mining town, after the 1994 elections (2001:72). See table 5 in appendix for party identification in urban, semi-urban and rural.

For all intents and purposes the BNF is a worker's party in its outlook. The electorate perceives the BNF as a good opposition because it is an effective watchdog which is protective of interests of workers and the less privileged (Osei-Hwedie, 2001).

The Botswana Congress Party also stands for the interests of the workers and the unemployed youth as reflected in its policies and programmes. As a party that espouses principles of social democracy, the BCP disparages the economic policies of the governing BDP as failed attempts at addressing poverty and high levels of unemployment.

On the other hand, the Botswana People's Party does not purport to represent let alone can one associate it with any particular class in society. As a socialist party it puts emphasis on the

ownership of state resources by the people. This is reflected in the party's constitution and guiding ideology. Table 4 displays party support among the unemployed and the employed. A chi square test statistic resulted in a p value of  $p < 0.001$ .

Table 4: Party identification by employment status

Party	Unemployed (%)	Employed	Difference (%)
BDP	75.1	65.8	9.3
BNF	16.7	18	1.3
BCP	6.9	16	9.1
BPP	1.2	0	1.2

Based on the p value reveals it can be concluded with 95% confidence that there is strong evidence of a relationship between party identification and employment status. The results appear to be consistent with some of the observations above particularly with respect to the BDP and the BCP. The BDP is more of a party for the unemployed as it receives **9.3%** more from the group than the employed. The BCP emerges as a party for the employed owing to **9.1%** more support from the group than the unemployed. This is manifest in its campaign messages and when the party rallied behind government employees along with other opposition parties during the industrial strike in 2011.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> See Mmegi online, BCP backs proposed govt. workers' strike. 15 February 2011. Vol 28: No.22 www.mmegi.bw

However the BNF's share of support seems to be relatively distributed and as such the party is not cleavage related with respect to employment status. The results presented above further shows rather weak relationship between identification with the BPP and employment status.

Therefore, other than being a regional party it is difficult to associate the BPP with a particular economic class, at least based on the literature reviewed on political parties in Botswana and the results obtained.

#### **5.4. Age**

As Lipset and Rokkan do not write about age as a cleavage, party support along age group is analyzed in terms of generation. The voting trend is such that young generation particularly in post independent Botswana, tend to support opposition parties while the old, that is those who belong to the independence era, tend to be conservative and support the ruling BDP.

Although support for parties cuts across the different age groups and all political parties have organizational structures and youth leagues, the issue of age became salient especially for opposition parties when the BNF called for amendment of the Electoral Act to lower the voting age from 21 to 18. Somolekae (2005) claims that, "the BNF believed at the time that its support base was among young urban residents, including mine workers in South Africa, and students. It saw the BDP's refusal to lower the voting age as a ploy to prevent the BNF from winning more seats, particularly in urban areas, where many young people reside." Nonetheless, along with other reforms the voting age was eventually lowered from 21 to 18 and implemented for the first time in the 1999 elections.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> See Osei-Hwedie, (2001) The Political Opposition in Botswana: the politics of factionalism and fragmentation

Table 5 presents results of cross tabulation of party identification by age. The age groups are divided into 18-35years and 35-80 to indicate the two generations.<sup>32</sup>

Table 5: Party identification by age group

Party	18-35years (%)	35-80years (%)	Difference (%)
BDP	71.8	72.2	0.4
BNF	17.1	17.7	0.6
BCP	10.9	8.7	2.2
BPP	0.3	1.4	1.1

A chi square test of evidence of a relationship between party identification and age group gave a p value of **0.228**. I fail to reject the null hypothesis which states that there is no evidence of a relationship between party identification and age group. Though the mainstream literature seems to suggest that there is a relationship between party identification and age group, parties receive relatively similar degree of support across both generation with very small difference. This therefore suggests that it is inconceivable to speak of generational voting since support for the parties cuts across all the age groups. The BCP comes across as the party whose support among the 18-35 age group is more than the percentage it receives from 35-80years compared to the other parties, though it is still insignificant to mention. The party boasts some following from the youth mostly university students not least because it is splinter party from the BNF but also

because of the strategic location of the University of Botswana in one of its main stronghold constituencies.

The BPP receives a paltry 1.1% more support among 35-80 years age group than 18-35 age group.

### **5.5. Discussion**

Although on the basis of the literature review on parties and socio-economic history it seems as if parties can be identified with particular cleavages, the results obtained from the cross-tabs on party identification and identifiable cleavages suggest that cleavages are not particularly important in the politics of Botswana. Parties are based on cleavages only to a limited extent, particularly center-periphery and employed-unemployed cleavages. The chi square p value (**P<0.001**) for party identification and region suggests that the results are consistent with the data, that there is strong evidence of a relationship between party identification and region. This is illustrated by a higher support for the BDP in the north region (**13.1%** margin) than in the south compared to the other parties. Meanwhile, the south region gives **14.7%** more support to the BNF than the country as a whole compared to the other parties.

These findings are consistent with the arguments that have been advanced before in the mainstream literature that the BDP' support base is in the northern region while the BNF has a support ground in the southern region of the country. The BDP's dominance of the north region is accounted for by the fact that the central district, which is the most populous and home to the Bangwato tribe of first president Seretse Khama, is part of the north region. The BNF owes its

support from the south to the fact that most of the urban and semi-urban areas such as Kanye, Lobatse, Selibe Phikwe and the capital city Gaborone are in the south (see appendix for map).

That notwithstanding, the BDP still dominates both the regions in terms of its share of support from the north and the south as graphs 2 and 3 clearly reveal. The BCP and the BPP do not have a strong regional base of support as reflected by rather insignificant margins of support between the regions. This is true in spite of the fact that the BPP is perceived to have a regional support in the north east, which might be explained by the **1.4%** more support from the north than the south.

Nonetheless, to the extent that a north east cleavage can be conceived depends on whether the BPP' support in the region is at least 5% more than its total support across the whole country. On the basis of the results obtained, the support for the BPP in the north is far from the reach of the 5% threshold.

On the other hand, there seems to be no strong evidence in favor of an ethno-linguistic cleavage. This is reflected by a more or less common trend of support for parties among Tswana and non Tswana ethnic groups. No single party has a significant (at least 5%) support among any of the ethnic groups more than the other. The p value (**p=0.189**) obtained from a chi square test of independence reveals no strong evidence of a relationship between party identification and ethnic group. The same holds a semblance of truth in respect of language as parties tend to receive the same degree of support across Tswana speaking and non Tswana speaking groups. Therefore while on the surface of the works of those who have written about ethno-linguistic conflict it appears as if there are ethno-linguistic cleavages, the evidence points to negative conclusions.

The BDP appears dominant across both Tswana and non Tswana ethnic groups with 71.8% support from the former and 73.4% from the latter. This is consistent with the popularity of the party across the country partly because of the legacy of Seretse Khama and the fact that the BDP has the governed the country well in terms of prudent economic management.<sup>33</sup> The BDP has also handled chieftaincy carefully well under its government during transition period at independence. Though chiefs have been stripped off some of their powers such as the power to allocate land, they still retain the power to adjudicate on customary law and through the House of Chiefs, they advise parliament on matters of policy that affect their respective tribes.<sup>34</sup>

The BPP has not had a good reception within the mainstream ethnic groups since its inception partly due to its anti chieftaincy message and its persistent calls for the abolition of chieftainship.<sup>35</sup>

This is puzzling though because one would expect that the non-Tswana ethnic group and by extension non-Tswana speaking groups to forge strong cooperation with the opposition parties in order to change the system and be recognized. The results show the extent to which the BDP is embedded within the broader society notwithstanding the conflicts that are discernible among the non-Tswana ethnic group. Perhaps the intensity of the emotions that Bartolini and Mair refer to, which accompanies coalition of groups into a unit, has not reached the level of consciousness and/or dissatisfaction that is sufficient to change the complexion of the social structure. Opposition parties have not fully mobilized among the said marginalized groups to the extent

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<sup>33</sup> For the latter observation, See Osei-Hwedie (2001) *The Political Opposition in Botswana: the politics of factionalism and fragmentation*

<sup>34</sup> See Jones (1983) *Traditional Authority and State Administration in Botswana*. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol.21, pp.133-139

<sup>35</sup> See Polhemus (1983) *Botswana Votes: Parties and Elections in an African Democracy*. Cambridge University Press

that an ethno-linguistic cleavage can be achieved. This observation complements those who advance arguments in favor of a weak and fragmented opposition and a good financial position of the BDP that confers electoral advantages to the party.

In terms of the employed-unemployed cleavage, there seems to be some degree of evidence of a relationship with party identification. The p value ( $p < 0.001$ ) is less than 0.05 thus the null hypothesis that there is no strong evidence of a relationship between party identification and employment status must be rejected. 75% of unemployed people identify with the BDP and the party receives **9.3%** more support from the group than the employed group. On the other hand, the BCP has an edge of **9.1%** more support from the employed than the unemployed, compared to the other parties. The BNF only receives 1.4% more support from the employed relative to the unemployed group. The BPP is very weak across both groups partly because of its radical socialist messages that have not been well received among the society.

The BPP's weakness across all the groups is partly due to its poor acceptance by the society at the time of its inception because of its radical messages to nationalize all the country's resources. The BDP's support cuts across the unemployed, the employed, rural, semi-urban and urban areas (See appendix for table 4). The implication of the results is a weak opposition-trade union movement linkage as forces of mobilization despite observations made about them having successfully mobilized workers. However as noted elsewhere, the opposition especially the BNF has dominated local government councils in major towns and the capital city, that is notwithstanding the results displayed herein.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> See Osei-Hwedie (2001:pg71-72) on this point

In terms of generation, party support cuts across both the age groups as reflected by more or less similar degree of support from both the age groups. However the BDP's pattern of dominance is still visible even among the young generation with a tiny 0.4% more support from the 35-80 age group. While it is perceived as a conservative party with large following from the rural old people, the party has managed to appeal to the young generation through policies designed for the unemployed youth such as Young Farmers Fund and out of school youth grant.

Based on the discussion above, it appears that cleavages are not particularly important in the social and political landscape of Botswana, save for the center-periphery and employed-unemployed cleavages which only apply to a limited extent.

## 6. Conclusion

While the literature on parties and socio-economic history of Botswana seems to point to identifiable social cleavages, the reality on the ground is that cleavages do not structure the political parties. Some of those who write about the socio-economic and political issues portray a picture of a deeply divided society that can be described along cleavage lines. While on a hunch, there seems to be some degree of evidence for divisions in the society, such divisions do not seem to dominate the political process as they do not appear to be deeply conflicted. This is manifest in the amount of support that the BDP continues to have across the society in spite of the fact that there are groups that feel marginalized.

Parties are cleavage related only up to a small degree in light of the center periphery and socio-economic class cleavages. Even then, the BDP appears dominant in the north and south regions, and also receives considerable support from the working class and the unemployed compared to all the other parties. In general, the BDP appear to be the most cleavage related party, followed by the BNF at least in terms of center periphery cleavage, and then the BCP in terms of class. The BPP does not seem to be a cleavage related party and remains only visible in the north east among the Kalanga ethnic group despite being the first of the four political parties to be founded. The party has not been able to retain a strong support base even in its perceived stronghold due to a strong challenge from the BDP. The fact that the BPP has not managed to entrench itself across the country is due to its splits and its radical approach as a socialist party. For instance, its persistent call for nationalization of the country's resources and the abolition of chieftaincy did not bode well with property owners in the former case, and tribes in the latter case.

The results appear to confirm the observation that the BDP has been successful in drawing support from the entire society relative to the other parties. The implication of the findings of this work is that support for the BDP cuts across the social structure and thus explains the dominant party system of the country. The BDP has an unwavering support across all the social groups and its presence is felt even among areas that are perceived to be the strongholds of the other parties. This reflects the extent to which the BDP has managed to mirror itself upon the society in spite of the grievances that have resulted in the formation of cleavages.

While the arguments that Botswana has sustained a pre-dominant party system because of a weak and fragmented opposition, a strong financial position of the BDP, good governance under the BDP, and the majoritarian electoral system are all plausible, studying the underlying social structure is also relevant for understanding the party system of the country. It is for this reason that this work attempted to investigate what social cleavages stand behind the parties on the basis of the socio-economic history and the development of political parties in the country. According to the theoretical framework that this work is situated in, a country's party system is determined by social cleavages that either attend to party formation, or parties align with particular social groups.

The findings of this work should however be taken with a grain of salt because there are still areas that need to be explored that this work has not managed to cover such as social groups that were excluded from the analysis. For instance, concerning ethno-linguistic cleavage, it would be enlightening to investigate respondents who consider themselves as Motswana only, and do not define themselves along their respective tribal group. Equally important is the realization that the work does not differentiate the working class according to occupation due to lack of a survey question that taps the aspect of occupation. To this end, it could be possible that the excluded

groups share similar social characteristics such as education or gender which can constitute a cleavage. The issue of opposition unity has not been explored in this work for the simple reason that it has been covered quite extensively in the mainstream literature, and to the extent that unity of opposition parties has failed on many occasions, it is irrelevant for purposes of this work.

The findings of this research therefore raise some important questions for future research in this area. To the extent that cleavages apply only up to a certain point, it still remains a puzzle why groups that are not only dominated by a small Tswana ethnic group but also marginalized in most spheres of life, do not coalesce with a party such as the BNF or form their own party to change the status quo. It remains a question of research why there is a weak opposition parties-trade union and or civil society linkage despite the fact that there are grievances within the society concerning workers and other marginalized groups. Opposition parties especially the BNF and the BCP both of which are leftist and pro workers have come forth and identified with workers and minority groups in their messages, yet such solidarity has not translated into meaningful electoral gains. These questions are important in guiding future research on the party system of Botswana.

## Appendix

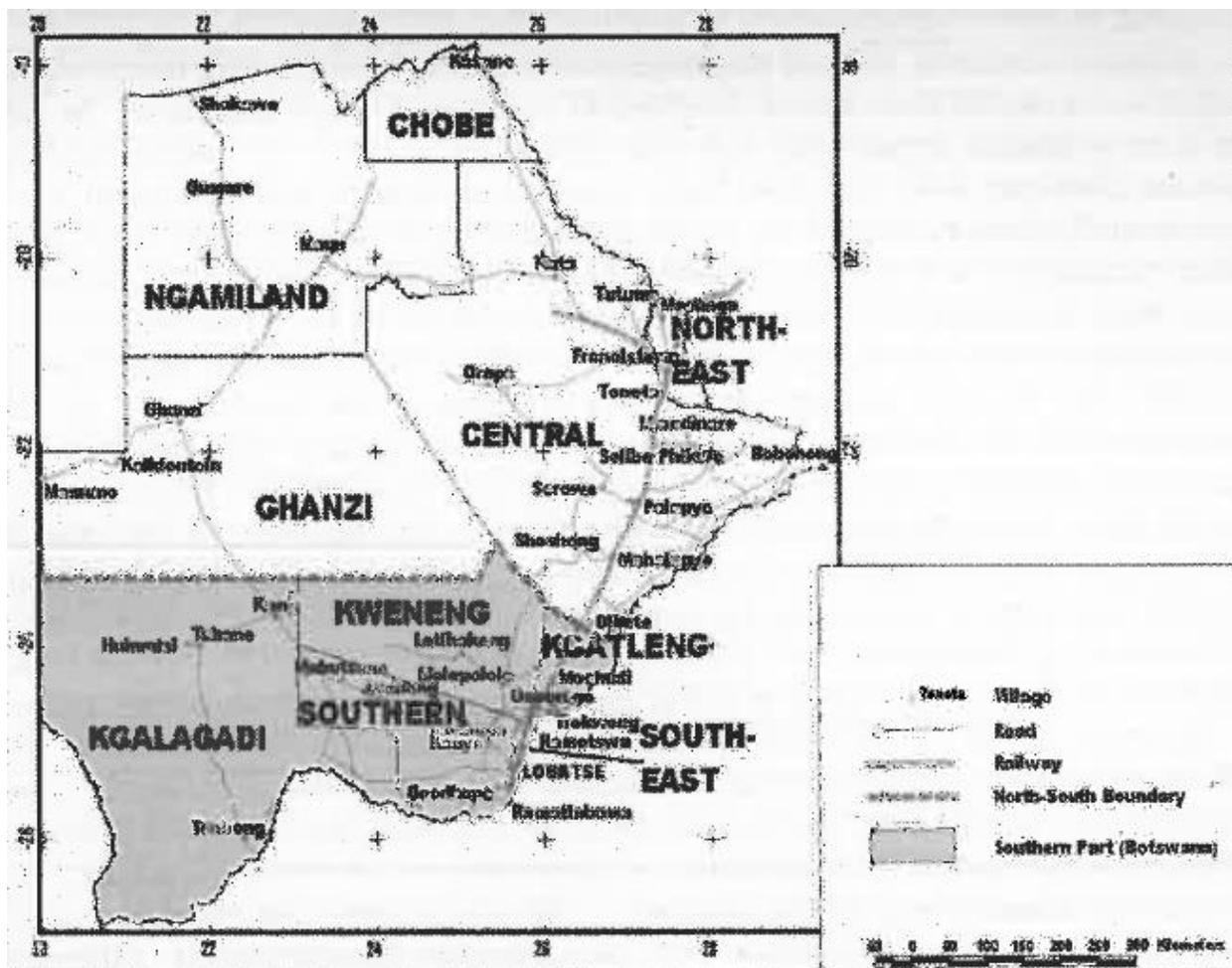


Figure 5: Map of Botswana showing north-south divide (Source: Makgala, 2009)

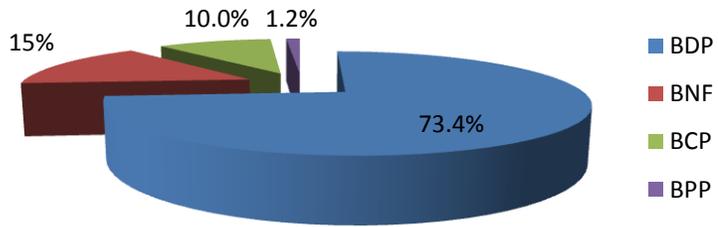


Figure 6: Party identification among Non-Tswana

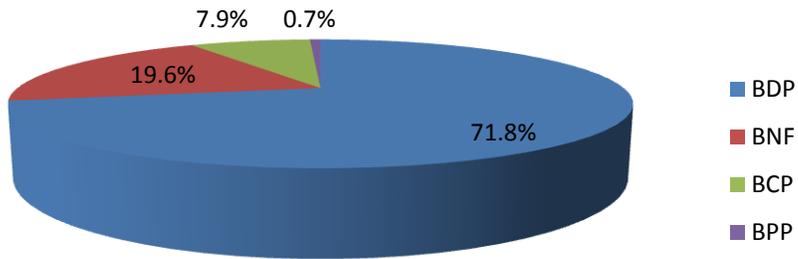


Figure 7: Party identification among Tswana (%)

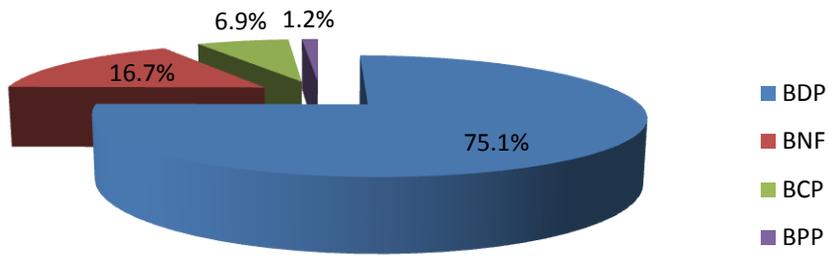


Figure 8: Support among unemployed (%)

Table 6: Variables

Variable	Survey question	Recoded variable
Party Identification	[Interviewer: if “Yes” to Q85]. “Which party is that?”	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. BCP</li> <li>2. BDP</li> <li>3. BNF</li> <li>4. BPP</li> </ol>
Region	Interviewer: “Select appropriate code for Region/Province. Write names for District and Town/Village and EA number in the boxes.”	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. North</li> <li>2. South</li> </ol>
Ethnicity	“What is your tribe? You know, your ethnic or cultural group?”	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tswana</li> <li>2. Non Tswana</li> </ol>
Language	“Which Botswana language is your home language? [Interviewer: Prompt if necessary: That is, the language of your group of origin”	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tswana Speaking</li> <li>2. Non-Tswana speaking</li> </ol>
Employment status	“Do you have a job that pays cash income? Is it full-time or part-time? And are you presently looking for a job (even if you are presently working)?”	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Employed</li> <li>2. Unemployed</li> </ol>

Table 7: Party identification by language

<b>Party</b>	<b>Tswana speaking (%)</b>	<b>Non Tswana speaking (%)</b>
BDP	72.3	73.1
BNF	18.3	13.4
BCP	8.5	12.4
BPP	0.9	0.9

Table 8: Party identification by rural, urban and semi-urban

<b>Party (%)</b>	<b>Rural (%)</b>	<b>Urban (%)</b>	<b>Semi urban (%)</b>
BDP	72.9	67.2	75.7
BNF	15.9	18.4	17.8
BCP	9.9	13.2	6.3
BPP	1.2	1.1	0.3

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