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Internal Organisation of Political Parties in Botswana

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Internal Organisation of Political Parties in Botswana

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Abstract - Unlike in some other African countries, Botswana's political opposition was never out-lawed after independence in 1966. However, the opposition has suffered internal instability that we argue prevented it from dislodging the incumbent Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) from power. This article argues that internal instability within the opposition Botswana National Front (BNF) was primarily tied to the absence of clear party rules, to incumbent leaders who personalised party power and sought to choose their own successors and refused to compromise with internal rivals. The article also argues that internal stability 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.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This article focuses on the internal organisation of both the opposition Botswana National Front (BNF) and the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP). It seeks to demonstrate that internal instability is not inevitable, but contingent upon certain conditions, primarily the absence of party rules and a culture of following them, or what is here referred to as party constitutionalism. Party constitutionalism is also defined as codifying and legitimising political processes and actors through constitutional arrangements, rules and prior agreements, that are approved by legitimate structures, and their observance by the party structures, leaders and activists.

The first section is a literature review that provides methodological direction. The second section focuses on the BNF showing how that party failed to develop clear party rules and how its leaders have personalised power, failed to promote a culture of following party rules, sought to choose their own successors by supplanting party structures, and failed to compromise with internal rivals. The third section looks at internal organisation of the BDP, particularly the promotion of a culture of following party rules, smooth leadership succession and mutual accommodation between internal rivals. The fourth section focuses on the new BDP (1998 to the present) and the rise of

personalised rule, the disregard for party rules and the worsening internal rivalry. The final section is the conclusion, whose primary finding is that the promotion of a political culture of adhering to party rules and to smooth succession processes, minimise internal instability in a party, and that failure to follow rules, leads to the personalisation of power, to factional rivalry and to political suppression of internal opponents.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The internal organisation of political parties is an issue that has long attracted the attention of researchers¹. Michels and Duverger have made enlightening observations that are still valid today. In his criticism of socialist parties, Michels claimed the impossibility of direct democracy and observed the iron law of oligarchy by which every party has an inner circle of administrators who constitute the executive committee of the party and who come to dominate it². More important for our purpose is the observation that internal instability and repression are common within political parties. Internal instability of parties occurs in 'the struggle which arises between the leaders, and their mutual jealousies'³, threatening to tear the party apart. Michels enumerate instances under which such struggles occur:

The inevitable antagonism between the "great men" who have acquired a reputation in other fields, and who now make adhesion to the party, offering it their services as generals, and the old established leaders, who have been socialists from the first; often conflict arises simply between age and youth; sometimes the struggle depends upon diversity of social origin, as when there is contest between proletarian leaders and those of bourgeois birth; sometimes the difference arises from the objective needs of the various branches of activity into which a single movement is subdivided, as when there is a struggle between the political socialist party and the trade-union element, or within the political party between the parliamentary group and the executive; and so on.

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¹. Michels, Political Parties; Duverger, Political Parties; Sartori, Parties and party systems; Caramani, Nationalisation of Politics; Deschouwer, 'Political parties'.

². Michels., 7.

³. Michels., 166.

This suggests that internal conflict and the suppression of opponents occur if the leadership is allowed to age, if the party has no clear succession rules, if new entrants ignite competition with the old guard, if the recruitment drive attracts a large youthful following that then starts to assert itself but is given little room to do so, and if the party recruited members of other social groupings that challenge the existing ones in the party. According to Michels, all parties characterised by the above, must experience internal instability and internal suppression due to the fact that those who already occupy party offices (the aged, the old guard, and ideologues, members of the dominant class) 'are great zealots for discipline and subordination, declaring that these are qualities indispensable to the very existence of the party.'⁴ Yet in Botswana, we have observed historical internal conflict and internal suppression in the BNF and recent internal conflict and suppression in the ruling BDP that has historically been stable. We hold the view that internal instability is a strong characteristic of those parties in Botswana that failed to develop clear party rules, allowed their leaders to age in office, to personalise power, to either violate party rules or enforce them blindly, and failed to accommodate members of rival factions within the party.

In contrast, Duverger while seeing parties as tied to their origins sees them as consisting of leaders (the inner circle), militants, members, supporters and electors with different levels of participation in party activities⁵. He sees a natural rivalry between parliamentary representatives and militants (who see to the party's organisation and operations, directs its propaganda and general activities) who often side with the leader in internal struggles. This article observes no such competition within the ruling BDP until recently, but acknowledges its historical existence within the BNF where there has been consistent struggles between the leader and party activists on the one hand, and parliamentary deputies on the other hand. In addition, Duverger sees leaders as constituting the executive of the party or the inner circle or the oligarchy that directs things. In this regard, political instability is linked to issues of renewing this inner circle. '...All oligarchy tends to age. The problem of the renewal of the leading strata in parties, of the rejuvenation of the inner circle, consists in the struggle against this natural tendency'.⁶ He adds that the history of political parties that allows their leadership to age in office and fail to rejuvenate the inner circle, shows two tendencies: the increase in the authority of the leaders and the tendency towards personal forms of authority.⁷ While succession struggles

have been intense in the opposition BNF that allowed its leadership to age in office, they have been muted in the ruling BDP that has a system of systematic succession. In addition, while an increase in the authority of the leader has been observable in the BNF whose leaders historically failed to develop and follow party rules, it was absent in the BDP until recently (2008) when Ian Khama took over the presidency of that party and violated its rules of appointment and succession.

Duverger notes that this increase in personal authority is linked to the increase in obedience of party members, their psychological docility, the discipline imposed on them and expulsions, and ideological decline.⁸ However, evidence in Botswana points to the contrary, with resignations and revolts more pronounced. Duverger further notes that the increase in personal authority of the party leader is contradicted by the presence of parliamentary deputies who naturally favour decentralisation which allows them to dominate the party. There is evidence in Botswana that supports his observation. In this regard, Duverger predicts conflict between the personalised authority of the leader on the one hand, and parliamentary deputies on the other hand. We will show that this observation is correct about the opposition BNF which experienced serious conflicts between its long standing President Kenneth Koma and parliamentary deputies who broke off in 1998 to form the Botswana Congress Party (BCP). However, Duverger's observation is wrong about the BDP where the first three presidents and parliamentary deputies enjoyed cordial relationships.

There is an emerging literature on political parties in Botswana and in the Southern Africa region. This literature has focused on parties and democratisation⁹, one party dominance¹⁰ and elite conflict¹¹. The Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA) organised a series of workshops from 2004, on 'dialogue on political parties and governance in Southern Africa', producing two publications. EISA treated countries as the unit of analysis, focusing on bringing dialogue between opposition and ruling parties to address electoral violence. Another initiative was undertaken by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (Mozambique Office) that sought to study the phenomenon of dominant parties in Southern Africa. This initiative treated parties as the unit of analysis, looking at their support base, funding and electioneering. Both these initiatives avoided looking closely at the internal organisation of political parties. John Makgala's research on *elite competition* in Botswana came close to discussing the internal

⁵ Ibid., 170.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 160.

⁸ Ibid., 168.

⁹ Durverger.

¹⁰ EISA, Dialogue on political parties and governance in the SADC region.

¹¹ Maundeni et al. dominant political parties: the case of Botswana.

¹² Makgala, elite conflict in Botswana.

organisation of parties. We are seeking to add to this continuing debate.

III. INTERNAL INSTABILITY AND REPRESSION IN THE BNF

Our observation is that internal conflict and internal repression have defined the history of the opposition BNF. This view is shared by Otsweletse Moupo (former president of the BNF) and Akanyang Magama¹² (former secretary general of the BNF). It is also shared by other researchers such as John Makgala¹³. The BNF has been torn apart by factionalism and the struggle for the control of the party between the parliamentary deputies on the one hand, and the leaders and activists on the other hand. As one of the authors observes elsewhere, 'factionalism is two pronged as it can enhance internal party democracy by encouraging self criticism, self renewal, reform and constant debate but can also destroy political parties if it combines with intolerance, factional fighting and factional suppression'.¹⁴ Why has the BNF suffered so much instability and repression from within the party?

To begin with, political power in the BNF was personalised. Otsweletse Moupo is quoted arguing that 'the BNF's failure to develop a solid organisational and administrative structure and sustain a programme of political education which would have enabled it to train a politically sophisticated cadre facilitated the development of KK's (Koma) cultism'¹⁵. Akanyang Magama adds that 'Koma from time to time revised Pamphlet No. 1 without consulting other members of the BNF'¹⁶. In these instances, the party rules were sufficiently vague, allowing Koma to entrench his cult and to alter party documents without input from the party structures.

Second, the veterans (that is those who rose through the ranks) in the BNF have been hostile towards newcomers, whom they saw as threats to their positions, in the process labelling the newcomers as 'opportunists'.¹⁷ The veterans have tried to use ideology to legitimise their clinging to party positions, claiming that new men are not adequately initiated into the traditions of the party. The struggles for entry into the inner circle of BNF executives, for the authority to appoint leaders, and for fair internal party elections, have paralysed the party in the sense that party rules

were not sufficiently developed, and expulsions and resignations became the order of the day.

The BNF leadership (including Otsweletse Moupo) has also explained the party's internal instability in terms of ideological conflict emanating from the party's mass character. Its former president, Otsweletse Moupo argues that 'the incoherent multi-class character of the BNF endows it with an organizational complexity which imparts some level of instability'.¹⁸ What he means is that the BNF is characterised by associational membership such as trade unions, student associations and others who do not necessarily share the same social origin and conflicted for the dominance of the party. Our observation is that the entry of new men in a party that failed to develop party rules was most likely to trigger competition and rivalry.

Whether BNF internal instability is a product of personalised rule, competition between new men and the old guard, class conflict and multi-class, the issue is that party executives have simply failed to design clear rules that they could adhere to. The absence of clear party rules allowed party activists to unleash violence on their internal opponents. Rather than resolve the factional disputes in a constitutional manner by clarifying party rules and adhering to them, the BNF executives exacerbated internal instability by taking sides in party primary elections, in regional party elections and in making some unapologetic if not irresponsible utterances, in the process rendering factional compromises and reconciliation impossible. This factional mismanagement continues with a devastating weakening of the BNF.

A few examples will suffice to demonstrate that failure to develop and to clarify party rules enabled the personalisation of power that has a long history in the BNF. In 1969, a traditional chief, the elderly Bathoen II of Bangwaketse ethnic group, quit chieftainship and joined the BNF, immediately becoming its aging leader in 1970. Bathoen's election was supported by the party founder - Kenneth Koma and activists who supported him. The entry of a new man straight into the BNF presidency without the requirement to fulfil minimal conditions, clearly shows the absence of a strong culture of adhering to rules. But as Houten¹⁹ points out, leaders can threaten the political career of regional leaders and of those in the other camp. Bathoen II's authoritarian style worked against the adherence to rules, and fuelled factionalism within the BNF.²⁰ Among others, Bathoen II suppressed and marginalised most of the leftists within the party and prevented them from joining its inner circle.²¹ With Kenneth Koma's approval,

¹³ Moupo and Magama organised a faction that took over power in the BNF after Koma had retired.

¹⁴ Makgala, J. 'Dr Kenneth Koma and the Botswana Democratic party'.

¹⁵ Maundeni, 'Majority rule, life presidency and factional politics', 379.

¹⁶ Makgala, 'The Relationship between Keenth Koma and the Botswana Democratic Party', 310.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Maundeni, 'Majority rule, life presidency and factional politics', 381-382.

¹⁹ Sunday Standard.

²⁰ Houten, 'Multi-Level Relations in Political Parties'.

²¹ Makgala, 'So Far So Good'; *Elite Conflict*.

²² Maundeni, 'Majority rule, life presidency and factional politics', 381-382.

Bathoen II allegedly altered the party manifesto and changed the scheduled venue of the congress to his traditional capital, Kanye.²² Rather than resolve these issues by referring to rules, the BNF executives and activists tolerated and encouraged Bathoen's style of leadership. For instance, party founder Kenneth Koma dismissed the complaints against Bathoen II's leadership style and argued that 'a few more chaps would have to go for the BNF to advance.'²³ Thus, chances were missed, and party rules were never developed, clarified and adhered to.

In protest against Bathoen's leadership style and his marginalisation of internal rivals, many veterans quit the BNF²⁴ while the urban constituencies refused to campaign for the party so long as he led it.²⁵ As more and more people quit the BNF, among them its interim President Ray Molomo and its interim Deputy Daniel Kwele, both of whom joined the ruling BDP in 1976 citing BNF's loss of direction, the then party Secretary General Mareledi Giddie stated that 'every serious political party strengthened itself by occasional purge, expulsion and resignations of misplaced individuals, a process he referred to as 'purification by elimination'.²⁶ Thus, the BNF was expected to grow, not by improving its adherence to party rules and retaining members and leaders, but by purification by elimination. Unfortunately, Secretary General Giddie who popularised this misguided philosophy later became its victim when he was ignored after alleging the rigging of primary elections. He too quit the BNF.

A more recent example of failure to develop and adhere to party rules was the election of attorney Duma Boko in 2010. He allegedly belonged to the faction that formed the New Democratic Front (NDF) a splinter group from the BNF. This allegation was made by Olibele Gaborone, Moupo's deputy who wanted to contest for the BNF presidency. It was also made by the BNF's youth wing that actually took the matter to court as shall be shown later.

The absence of a political culture of developing party rules and promoting the adherence to those rules, promoted the politics of rivalry, intolerance, and internal instability. BNF's internal instability led to the formation of several splinter parties such as the Botswana Freedom Party (1989), Botswana Workers Front (1993), United Socialist Party and Secretary General Giddie's Social Democratic Party (both in 1994). However, the most devastating split spearheaded by parliamentary deputies came in 1998. Parliamentary deputies sought to reform the party in order to assert their control over it and clashed with their aging president and party

activists who sought to block the reforms. In the build up to this split, the BNF was polarised into rival executives, one group of executives comprised of those opposed to reforms (the party president and veteran activists) while the other comprised of reformers (most parliamentary deputies and their activists).²⁷ The party's old guards who resisted reforms were labelled as conservatives, while the Parliamentary deputies who spearheaded the reforms, were labelled as progressives.²⁸ While the reformers had emerged victorious over the conservatives in the party's 1997 leadership elections, the aging party leader Kenneth Koma, who openly supported the non-reformers, told the former to leave and form their own party if they did not want him as the BNF leader.²⁹ Out of frustration, and after a violent power struggle that saw windows and buildings being destroyed in the Palapye Township, the reformers quit the BNF and formed the Botswana Congress Party (BCP). While the BNF had performed exceptionally well by Botswana standards in the 1994 elections, winning 13 or 37 % of the 40 contested parliamentary seats, the 1998 split severely weakened it as it won just 6 or 15 % of parliamentary seats in the 1999 general election.³⁰ It was only able to send 6 deputies to parliament after the 2009 elections. The party has never recovered and ceased to be a viable project in electoral terms.

The aging Kenneth Koma (he had even become physically blind by this time) finally stood down as BNF leader in 2001 but tried to control his succession, another clear sign of the absence of party rules or poor adherence to them. Rather than let the delegates decide his successor in accordance with the party rules, Koma backed and publicly campaigned (the party rules were silent on this) for a candidate (Peter Woto) who lost the leadership contest to Otsweletse Moupo. The losing group, without citing the violation of any rules, refused to accept the results and started destabilising the party. After destabilising the party for two years, in 2003, Koma, Woto, and allegedly Duma Boko and their militants quit the BNF and formed the New Democratic Front (NDF). This later became the contention of the BNF youth wing that claimed that Boko never rejoined the BNF and wanted him disqualified from standing for its presidency in 2010.

While the subsequent BNF leader (2001-2010), Otsweletse Moupo (a lawyer by training), had campaigned on a platform of reforming the party and its constitution, he equally proved unable to develop and follow party rules in an environment characterised by deep party divisions. Moupo's new inner circle quickly fractured, with a splinter faction led by his own Deputy Kathleen Letshabo, an academic with the local

²³ Makgala, 'So Far So Good', 54; *Elite Conflict*, 130.

²⁴ *Botswana Daily News*, January 21, 1970.

²⁵ Makgala, *Elite Conflict*, 130.

²⁶ Holm and Darnolf, 'Democratizing the Administrative State in Botswana', 124.

²⁷ Maundeni, 'Majority rule, life presidency and factional politics', 382.

²⁸ Molomo, 'Understanding Government and Opposition', 81.

²⁹ Makgala, 'So Far So Good', 58.

³⁰ *Mmegi*, May 1-7, 1998.

³¹ Report of 1999 Elections.

university. This time around (2007 onwards), the BNF executives and militants were equally divided over Moupou's personal problems, allegedly characterised by insolvency that were splashed in the media. Moupou and his activists sought to impose party discipline, something that made them authoritarian over their rivals, and embarked upon systematic suspensions and expulsion of the dissenting executives. By 2008, Moupou was nullifying primary election victories of his opponents and imposing candidates he preferred and who had lost in the party primary elections. Thus, Moupou drove the BNF further into chaos, political intolerance and internal repression.

As the 2009 elections approached the BNF spent most of the time in the courts of law as some members of the rival faction that called itself *Temporary Platform* contested the nullification of their primary election victories. On the one hand, the High Court reinstated some of their victories in the party's primary elections, but others quit the party and stood as independent candidates (one of them actually won the 2009 general elections against the BNF and the BDP, and defected in 2010 to the Botswana Movement for Democracy (BMD) – a new splinter from the BDP that will be discussed below). On the other hand, some of the suspended and expelled BNF executives such as Elmon Tafa, continued to engage the party leadership and to cause chaos for it by continuing to regard themselves as, and to address political rallies in, BNF colours. In the 2009 elections that followed, the BNF performed dismally, winning just six or 10 % of the 57 contested parliamentary seats. Initially, it almost surrendered its official opposition status to the BCP and its partners that won five parliamentary seats,³¹ and subsequently, it surrendered its status as the official opposition to the newly (2010) formed BMD that became the main opposition in parliament.

Otsweletse Moupou finally stood down from the BNF leadership in 2010, and amid allegation of the violation of party rules, the party voted for a human rights lawyer Duma Boko, to replace him. The candidacy of Boko prompted the outgoing Vice President Olebile Gaborone, who wanted to stand for the presidency, to quit the BNF, alleging that Boko was an NDF and not a BNF member. The BNF youth wing actually took Boko to court, contesting his candidature, and lost. In a recent (May 2011) BNF leadership meeting, the party youth wing complained that its members were denied the right to make comments and to ask questions as they were not chosen to speak³². It is not yet clear whether Boko would be able to develop party rules and develop a culture of following them and revive the BNF project which has almost collapsed. Whether he can institute a political culture of following rules in the BNF for the first

time and revive its lost fortunes, whether he can build and empower party structures to make decisions for the party, remain to be seen. However, it should be noted that the BNF has never had a political culture of following rules, to rely on. BNF's politics of not following rules, intolerance and internal repression calls for a tough leader and judges him by that standard. Whether Boko too, would slide into authoritarianism like his predecessors, remains a possibility.

IV. INTERNAL STABILITY IN THE DOMINANT BDP

This section looks at internal stability in the ruling BDP, noting that its political culture of developing and following party rules, of preventing leadership aging and of smooth presidential succession, promoted internal party stability. The party conducted relatively fairer primary elections and better organised congresses that might be argued, created less disgruntlement within the party. Makgala thinks that the ruling BDP benefited from incumbency (rewarding party loyalists through patronage and other mechanisms)³³. Our argument is that the BDP maintained internal stability not just through incumbency, but by promoting a political culture of developing and following party rules, practising fair processes of choosing parliamentary candidates and promoting mutual accommodation between internal rivals.

To begin with, Seretse Khama-, first leader of the BDP-, observed party rules and the constitutional rules of his country. Michael Crowder observes that 'unlike other African leaders he did not seek to manipulate the constitution to suit his own needs or that of his governing party. Rather, he seems to have taken pride in operating a constitution he had helped to design...He was unostentatious – like most Botswana, whether Chiefs or Commoners'³⁴. In addition, the BDP followed clearly laid down rules of succession. President Seretse Khama died in office in 1980. There is no doubt that the death of any president has the potential to destabilise the party and the country. However, the first BDP change of leadership was conducted within parliament in accordance with the country's constitution, and outside the party, preventing activists from politicising it. The country's constitution, which the BDP had been instrumental in drawing up, required parliament to meet within seven days to choose a new president. This constitutional provision granted appointing powers to parliamentary deputies only, excluding party activists and members, thus, helping to minimise the impact of the succession struggle. Thus, the death of the first president was turned into a constitutional rather than a political matter. The little

³². Independent Electoral Commission.

³³. Botswana Guardian, 6th May 2011.

³⁴. Makgala, *Elite Conflict*.

³⁵. Crowder, 'Botswana and the survival of liberal democracy', 463.

campaign that took place was limited to caucusing of ruling party parliamentary deputies. What resulted was a smooth change of leadership that lowered the possibility of heightened rivalry and promoted internal stability.

In addition, the fact that the vice president succeeded also minimised shocks associated with the entry of a new leader from elsewhere. The successor, Ketumile Masire had been the first president, Seretse Khama's deputy for 14 years and kept more or less the same team that he inherited. This smooth leadership change could not generate the kind of destructive factionalism that split the BNF several times as shown in the previous section.

But with the entry of new men into the party, factionalism visited the BDP in the 1990s and 2000s. Its politics have been dominated by two factions: the Kwelagobe/Kedikilwe faction that emerged after Vice President (and chairman of the BDP), Peter Mmusi and Secretary General Daniel Kwelagobe were accused of corruption in a presidential commission of inquiry that was improperly conducted (it had collected evidence in camera and not in public as required by law). Maundeni³⁵ and Makgala³⁶ believe that the presidential commission of inquiry of 1991³⁷, spearheaded by Festus Mogae (former permanent secretary to the president) and Mompoti Merafhe (former army chief), sparked factional rivalry within the BDP and may have sparked a struggle for power and wealth as well.³⁸ Vice President Mmusi and Daniel Kwelagobe who had been suspended from their positions in the party resigned their cabinet positions in order to take the government to court over corruption allegations against them. Most party activists supported them. Thus, internal instability was introduced in the BDP due to the mishandling of a presidential commission of inquiry that laid corruption charges on some of its executives.

One group of party executives consisted of the Cabinet that had approved the report of the presidential commission of inquiry. These were Vice President Festus Mogae as the driver and Lt. Gen. Merafhe (a retired first commander of the Botswana army) who became the spokesperson of the anti-corruption movement. To the delight of the media, Vice President Mogae had previously compelled Cabinet ministers (including President Masire) to pay back huge (ranging from one million Pula upwards for each of them) sums of money they owed to the government National Development Bank. Those who supported Mogae consolidated themselves into the Merafhe/Nkate faction of the BDP and were later joined by Vice President Lt. Gen. Khama in 1998-, son of the first president and

second commander of the army and a traditional chief of the largest ethnic group in the country-, the Bangwato. Lt. Gen. Khama had become the Vice President of Botswana since 1998 (President Mogae brought him into the government in order to help him fight corruption and to regain control of the factionalised party). Khama was very popular with party activists, with the ordinary supporters of the party and with the general membership.

However, the BDP relied on its old culture of developing and following party rules and reformed the country's constitution to limit the presidential term of office and to allow automatic succession of the vice president to the presidency. In actual fact, there were two constitutional amendments in 1997: first, the BDP spearheaded the amendment of the national constitution to allow automatic succession of the vice president to the presidency. Second, the BDP constitution was also amended to allow presidential elections within the party. By these measures, presidential succession was made a constitutional rather than a political matter, thus reducing its potential for divisive politics. The announcement that the presidency of the country and party was becoming vacant due to Masire's impending retirement in 1998, did not necessarily heighten factionalism as no presidential elections were impending as the party and national constitutions had been amended, promoting automatic succession of the vice president. As a result, in 1998, President Sir Ketumile Masire peacefully retired and Vice President Festus Mogae succeeded as president. In 2008, President Festus Mogae peacefully retired and Vice President Ian Khama succeeded as president. In both cases, the leadership transition was smooth.

The BDP tried to supplement the observance of party rules with a culture of political accommodation and mutuality between rival party factions. For instance, during the Masire presidency in 1997, the BDP cancelled its congress elections because the party was too divided. At the time, the party was polarised between the so-called Kwelagobe/Kedikilwe and Merafhe/Nkate factions. It was alleged that the latter camp had threatened to boycott the elections ostensibly in protest, because the former camp had reneged on an earlier deal not to challenge Mogae for the chairmanship of the party'.³⁹ Kedikilwe refused to compromise in 1997 and stood against Vice President Mogae for party chairmanship. It was then that President Masire initiated a compromise in which the election was set aside and leaders of the two factions agreed to equally share the executive positions in the party. Mogae withdraw his candidacy and Kedikilwe continued as party chairman. This was clear evidence that the BDP did not follow its constitution blindly, but supplemented it with a political

³⁵. Maundeni, 'Majority rule, life presidency and factional politics'.

³⁶. Makgala, *Elite Conflict*, 170-173.

³⁷. Republic of Botswana, 1991. Report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Land Problems in Mogoditshane and other Peri-Urban Villages

³⁸. Makgala, *Elite Conflict*.

³⁹ Molomo, 'Political Parties and Democratic Governance', 306.

culture of mutual accommodation to reduce internal political tensions. Thus, incumbency, compromises and constitutionalism led to a win-win situation between the rival factions. It was therefore not just incumbency but constitutionalism and compromises that kept the BDP internally stable.

V. THE NEW BDP AND INTERNAL INSTABILITY

Signs of disruption to the BDP's political culture started showing during the Mogae presidency (1998-2008). The BDP's political culture that promoted adherence to party rules and mutual accommodation between party factions, sometimes got disrupted. This came in many ways, such as through what may be termed constitutional fundamentalism-, insistence that constitutional provisions should be strictly followed even when they worsen political instability. Disruptions also came through new entrants wanting to introduce radical changes in the running of the party and government, and through other means.

The party started well when in 2001, the BDP factions entered into another compromise when Vice President Lt. Gen. Khama was successfully persuaded by party elders not to challenge Ponatshego Kedikilwe for the party chairmanship. Lt. Gen. Khama reluctantly agreed to withdraw his candidature due to a covert deal whose terms were that Kedikilwe would retire from the chairmanship in 2003 so that Lt. Gen. Khama could become chairman without going through an election. When the BDP's 2003 elective congress scheduled for Gantsi Township approached, Kedikilwe betrayed the terms of the previous covert deal and announced his readiness to defend his position. Party elders such as Daniel Kwelagobe and Satar Dada tried to talk him out of the race but he was insistent. This lost him the support of the party president, party activists, the party elders and supporters. For the first time, the president of Botswana openly supported and campaigned for a candidate (Vice President Ian Khama) for party position. This was unprecedented and marked the entry of new and disruptive politics that did not follow BDP party rules.

In the case of the BDP, constitutional fundamentalism-, the insistence that party rules be followed no matter the circumstances-, was born in the party. As a result, in 2003, BDP central committee elections were held in accordance with the party constitution, but amid divisions. Kedikilwe inadvertently blamed his loss on the betrayal by the faction he led and on the partisan campaigns by President Mogae, and not on the fact that he went against the political culture of the party. His loss against Lt. Gen. Khama for the party chairmanship showed that he had lost support of most of the militants, most of delegates, elders and the party president.

President Festus Mogae also went against the mutual accommodative political culture of the party by being extremely faction-driven in his choosing of Cabinet members. He overlooked members of the rival faction when choosing the Cabinet-, (none of the leading members of the Kedikilwe/Kwelagobe faction were included. Both Kedikilwe and Kwelagobe themselves were left out). This was sure to spark a round of heightened internal rivalry, making further compromises difficult to reach. For instance, between November 2004 and May 2005 President Mogae initiated a compromise deal whose intention was to set central committee elections aside as it was normal. However, the attempted compromise collapsed and factional activists took up battle positions. From the beginning of negotiations in November 2004, the two most senior party positions-, the presidency (occupied by Mogae) and the party chairmanship (occupied by Khama)-, were excluded from the proposed deal. Excluding the presidency and chairmanship of the party from the purported compromise deal faced an outright rejection by the rival faction.

The trend of diverting from the established political culture of the BDP continued with President Ian Khama. During his presidency (2008-), BDP executives sought but failed to strike a compromise before the 2009 party congress held at Kanye. President Ian Khama insisted that women should take up most of the positions in the party central committee and went ahead and campaigned for them. This was meant to prevent the rival faction from winning positions in the party. This factional approach to politics worsened factional rivalry within his party, resulting in the split that followed in 2010. The divided activists embarked on the 2009 campaign trail for party positions and turned on each other. Except for the party presidency, all other central committee positions were competed for by the two factional executives. Worse for the BDP, the rival Kwelagobe/Kedikilwe faction emerged victorious in the central committee elections, defeating the Merafhe/Nkate faction which failed to win a single position in the elected central committee positions. This means that all the women candidates supported by the president failed to win a single seat. The stage was now set for the entrenchment of constitutional fundamentalism in pursuit of factional interests.

Party leader Ian Khama devised strategies to neutralise the victory of the Kedikilwe/Kwelagobe faction. He immediately used his constitutional appointing powers in the party constitution unilaterally to nominate additional members from the Merafhe/Nkate faction, including the faction's leaders, Mompoti Merafhe and Jacob Nkate who had not stood for the congress elections. President Khama's appointments triggered anger from the Kedikilwe/Kwelagobe faction which felt that its hard fought victory was being undermined and neutralised. Its newly prominent

member, Gomolemo Motswaledi who had just been elected party secretary general publicly questioned Ian Khama's powers to unilaterally nominate additional members into the central committee. This led to President Khama suspending Motswaledi for 60 days and recalling his parliamentary candidate for Gaborone Central constituency. Motswaledi challenged his suspension and recall in the High Court and lost on grounds that Ian Khama as sitting state president had constitutional immunity from prosecution,⁴⁰ thus his decisions taken even within the party could not be challenged. Motswaledi went further and appealed against this decision to the High Court of Appeal which upheld the High Court ruling⁴¹. After the general election, disciplinary structures consisting of President Khama's activists, gave Motswaledi a hearing after which he was further suspended from the party for five years. Thus, factional rivalry, factional imbalance in which the party surrounded the president with members of the rival faction that controlled all elective positions in the central committee of the party combined with presidential sectarian appointments, and sectarian disciplinary structures, combined to create an explosive situation that threatened the very existence of the BDP government.

The BDP faced the choice of either reverting back to its old political culture of mutual compromise and of developing and following party rules, or, to continue the new trend of factional rivalry and unbalanced presidential appointments. It is clear that initially, the party leader with military background chose to confront the members of the rival faction whose reaction to the long suspension imposed on its central figure Secretary General Motswaledi, was measured at first, with some of its activists decamping to the Merafhe/Nkate faction and others resigning their positions from the party central committee. However, more confrontation followed when things took a dramatic turn with the leading members of the rival faction calling for a factional conference, inviting only activists of that faction across the country. Factional delegates (numbering over three hundred according to their own estimates) congregated just outside the City of Gaborone and decided to form a new party. The Botswana Movement for Democracy (BMD) was formed in mid 2010, with eight parliamentary deputies, scores of councillors and many more parliamentary deputies poised to quit the BDP. The BMD immediately became the main opposition in parliament.

The first BDP split initially sent shock waves throughout the Botswana politics. In the last quarter of 2010, constitutional fundamentalism characterised by

presidential factional appointments came to an end when President Khama had to make peace with leaders of the rival faction who had remained within the BDP. The political culture of mutual accommodation between the factions partially returned to the BDP and constitutional fundamentalism was watered down. As a result, defections from the party slowed down. Instead, three parliamentary deputies (two from BMD and one from BNF) defected to the BDP. But a strike organised by the public civil service unions in May 2011 saw President Ian Khama resorting to fundamentalist politics again, refusing to negotiate with the unions, alienating his Cabinet, Parliament and members of his own party. Signs of revolt within Parliament were already visible, with BDP MPs such as Tawana Moremi and Kentse Rammidi, questioning Khama's approach of avoiding the unions and of addressing rural meetings that had no relevance to the strike.

VI. CONCLUSION

Research into the internal organisation of parties has a long history. This article has sought to add to research on that topic, deploying a comparative approach centred on party organisation. Relying on evidence from Botswana's opposition BNF and the ruling BDP, it has shown that one party (BNF) suffered instability and repression-, and another (BDP) enjoyed internal stability.

The article has shown that the BNF suffered internal instability and repression primarily because it failed to develop and to adhere to party rules, allowed its leaders to personalise power, suppressed and expelled rivals from the party and favoured allies of the leaders. Such personalisation of power empowered the leader to own the party in the literal sense of the word, to block the advancement of internal opponents and to publicly favour internal allies with party positions and with wins in the primary elections or in any selection of election candidates. Personalisation of party power allows the leader to be answerable to himself only, to marginalise internal opponents and to instil fear and blind loyalty in the general membership of the party. But such politics infuriates and energises internal opponents into a permanent state of agitation and destabilisation, inviting the leader to invoke repression.

In contrast, this article has demonstrated that internal stability was enjoyed by the BDP because it established constitutionalism in its internal processes by adhering to party rules, promoted accommodation between internal opponents, regularised and depoliticised presidential succession and organised fair systems of choosing party executives and party candidates for national elections. The BDP either closed down presidential succession struggles by constitutionalising the ascendancy of the vice president into the presidency without much competition, or by

⁴⁰ Motswaledi vs BDP, case No: MAHLB-000486-09.

⁴¹ Motswaledi vs BDP, Court of Appeal case No: CACLB-053-2009.

designating a particular institution(s) to choose presidential successors.

The BDP enjoyed internal stability and created mutuality between internal opponents by developing fair mechanisms for selecting party executives and party candidates for the general elections, by building a culture of internal peace and accommodation, and by preventing leaders from taking sides in internal struggles for positions. However, the article has also shown that such a stable political party can be destabilised if its new leaders choose to disregard its historical norms, but that it can perhaps regain its balance if it restores the political culture of mutual accommodation and constitutionality.

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