

A REPORT OF THE CSIS
AFRICA PROGRAM

Botswana

ASSESSING RISKS TO STABILITY

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

This report is part of a series examining the risks of instability in 10 African countries over the next decade. The 10 papers are designed to be complementary but can also be read individually as self-standing country studies. An overview paper draws on common themes and explains the methodology underpinning the research. The project was commissioned by the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM).

The recent upheavals and revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa reinforce the value of taking a hard look at underlying social, economic, and political conditions that have the potential to trigger major change and instability. Few observers predicted the events that have unfolded with such speed in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya since the turn of 2011. But a close analysis of the underlying fault lines in those countries may have offered some clues, uncovering a range of possibilities that would have given U.S. policymakers a head start in framing responses and devising contingency plans. Similarly, an examination of political crises and conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa, such as postelection violence in Kenya in 2007–2008 and the presidential standoff in Côte d’Ivoire in 2010–2011, uncovers patterns of behavior, common grievances, and social dynamics that can help inform assumptions about other countries on the continent. The purpose of these papers is to delve below the surface of day-to-day events and try to identify the underlying structural vulnerabilities and dynamics that help to drive and explain them.

The papers in this study are not meant to offer hard and fast predictions about the future. While they sketch out some potential scenarios for the next 10 years, these efforts should be treated as thought experiments that look at how different dynamics might converge to create the conditions for instability. The intention is not to single out countries believed to be at risk of impending disaster and make judgments about how they will collapse. Few, if any, of the countries in this series are at imminent risk of breakdown. All of them have coping mechanisms that militate against conflict, and discussions of potential “worst-case scenarios” have to be viewed with this qualification in mind.



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BOTSWANA

David W. Throup¹

Key Stress Points

- Botswana's economy remains highly dependent on diamond revenues, and repeated efforts to create alternative types of economic growth and job creation have failed. Although this presents only a limited threat in the short term, because the diamond supply is expected to continue being available for decades, Botswana's narrow economic base will be a serious source of fragility in the longer term.
- In the short term, Botswana's main vulnerability is its dependence on regional dynamics. As a landlocked and agriculturally unproductive country, Botswana is economically dependent on South Africa for its critical needs such as food, petroleum, and electricity. Thus, an economic or political crisis in South Africa would have significant subsequent effects in Botswana.
- Botswana's ruling political party is in long-term decline. Although the potential for social upheaval is minimal, a change in the political balance of power is possible during the next decade.

Overview

Botswana is rightly regarded as the great success story of postindependence Africa. Its GDP per capita has risen from \$140 in 1966 to \$13,100 today. It has a pluralist, democratic, Westminster-style political system in which the president is the leader of the party with the largest number of members of Parliament. There have been nine peaceful, multiparty contested elections since independence was gained on September 30, 1966. The current ruling Botswana Democratic Party has never seriously been challenged, although its share of the vote has de-

1. David W. Throup is a veteran of 35 years of political and economic research on sub-Saharan Africa during a career as an academic and British diplomat. Among his diverse experiences, he has lived and worked in Kenya and Zimbabwe for several years. This study is the product of desktop research, telephone interviews, and face-to-face meetings in Washington, D.C., and in Botswana. Interviews were conducted with some 40 Botswana in Gaborone during a visit in February 2011, including senior figures in the ruling Botswana Democratic Party, members of Parliament, opposition party leaders, permanent secretaries and other senior civil servants, the editors of three leading newspapers, academics, and representatives from civil society and the private sector. The author also met with both the U.S. ambassador and British high commissioner to Botswana. Those interviewed covered a representative spectrum of political opinions. The author would like to thank Jennifer Cooke for her help in writing this report and to acknowledge her hard work, patience, and good humor. Its merits owe much to her; any mistakes remain the author's responsibility.

clined from more than 80 percent in 1965 to just above 50 percent at the last three elections. The opposition since the late 1990s has been fragmented, and there are currently three almost equally supported opposition parties, which together control one-quarter of the parliamentary seats. The media, trade unions, and judiciary are free from government control and are highly regarded; Transparency International has judged Botswana to be the least corrupt state in Africa. Ethnic, regional, and sectarian divisions are of little importance in a country where the Tswana ethnic group forms 75 to 80 percent of the total population, and other ethnic groups are politically and socially well integrated.²

Despite the achievements of the government since its independence in 1966, Botswana's prosperity is fragile. It is heavily reliant on revenues from the country's diamond mines, which provide 55 percent of government revenues and are in turn vulnerable to global fluctuations in demand for gemstones. With few resources, a small population, and little manufacturing base, it is heavily reliant on regional neighbors, particularly South Africa, for trade and essential commodities. And in the coming decade, it will grapple with rapid growth in urban centers and concomitant demand for employment and services.

Botswana's stability is maintained by the distribution of rents from the diamond sector. Redistribution principally takes the form of welfare payments to the largely subsistence population of the arid countryside and to the growing underclass of the expanding urban areas. Despite the provision of social welfare services to the rural and urban poor, Botswana's development paradigm needs to be fundamentally reassessed, but government staff members—both ministers and civil service technocrats—demonstrate little inclination to change their ways. Benefits from the country's macroeconomic success have “trickled down,” but they have created a culture of dependency rather than of entrepreneurship or job creation.

The pressure on the country's small area of land that can be cultivated is intense, and both crop-growing and pastoral areas are extremely vulnerable to drought. Botswana's natural environment is very hostile. The state not only sustains the rural population with regular welfare services but also has efficiently distributed food supplies imported from neighboring states when food insecurity has threatened. As long as the macroeconomy continues to thrive, the state will be able to afford such services and satisfy rural communities. Protests in urban areas are also likely to be few, because urban residents are provided with an extensive network of social services and short-term job- or income-generating projects.

Botswana is likely to remain stable at the national level in the coming decade. Since achieving independence, it has built a strong record of open political discourse and competition as well as prudent fiscal management that, despite income disparities, has given priority to the well-being of the citizenry, and has fostered an open, stable, and transparent investment environment that makes it, according to the World Economic Forum, one of the most economically competitive nations in Africa.

But much depends on the continuing prosperity of the diamond sector, which itself depends heavily on global demand and factors beyond Botswana's control. A protracted global recession—with a prolonged drop in diamond prices and in demand—or a major crisis in South Africa, which provides so many of Botswana's essential commodities, could trigger significant economic and

2. The Tswana are a people group; the language spoken by this group is Setswana. Tswana people are also referred to as “Batswana,” a term that is sometimes used to describe all people from Botswana. For the purposes of this paper, “Tswana” refers to the ethnic group, and “Batswana” refers to the people of Botswana.

social disruption. A prolonged recession within Botswana, combined with a major food or water crisis, would deplete the extensive government-financed social safety net on which many Batswana have come to rely. With expectations for basic goods and services unmet, and few opportunities for productive employment, the most likely manifestation of these pressures would be widespread urban social protests, an exodus to other countries in the region, and protracted hardship for the rural poor. These pressures might accelerate new political coalitions and unseat the politically dominant Botswana Democratic Party, which has led the country since independence, but new political configurations would likely be achieved peacefully.

Botswana at a Glance

GDP per capita	\$13,100 (2010 estimate)
Unemployment	17.5% (2010 estimate) ^a
Life expectancy	58.05 years (2011 estimate)
Population	2,065,398 (2011 estimate)
Population growth rate	1.656% (2011 estimate)
Median age	22.3 years (2011 estimate)
Urban population	61% of total population (2010 estimate)
Urbanization rate	2.3% annually (2010–2015 estimate)
HIV/AIDS adult prevalence rate	24.8% (2009 estimate)
Literacy rate	81.2% (2003 estimate)

Source: U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook 2011* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, 2011).

^a Botswana Ministry of Finance official statistic.

Background

Botswana covers an area the size of Texas, and it is sparsely populated, with fewer than 2 million inhabitants, who are concentrated along the borders with South Africa and Zimbabwe. About 60 percent of the population is defined as “urban” and is concentrated in the capital, Gaborone; in Francistown; and in the main diamond- and copper-mining centers. The urban population is growing at 2.3 percent a year, which is considerably higher than the relatively modest overall growth rate of 1.7 percent, because young people are leaving the countryside for the urban areas. Only 0.7 percent of the land receives sufficient rain to cultivate crops, and agriculture contributes less than 3 percent of GDP. Droughts are frequent and, without an efficient state, famine would be a regular occurrence. The country’s ecosystem is fragile and highly vulnerable to desertification, which has been exacerbated by the westward expansion of communal grazing areas during the past three decades and the large-scale overstocking and degradation of vegetation. The vast majority of the rural population is extremely poor, with 80 percent subsistence smallholders or pastoralists, who depend on state welfare and subsidies from urban relatives.

A Brief History

The region that was to become the future Botswana was disrupted in the first half of the nineteenth century by the Mfecane³—a period of widespread conflict originating in South Africa’s Indian Ocean coastal strip, driven by the rise of an aggressive and expansive Zulu empire. During the 1830s and 1840s, the Tswana people were pushed by fleeing Ndebele northward toward the Kalahari Desert and into what is now Botswana. Conflict with the earlier residents—the Kalanga to the north, and the Ndebele to the south—continued into the 1860s, when advancing Afrikaners, themselves fleeing British control, pushed the Ndebele northeastward into Zimbabwe. Britain established a protectorate in 1885 over what was then known as Bechuanaland.

For much of the colonial era, it was assumed that Bechuanaland would be economically unviable over the long term and would eventually be absorbed into South Africa. The territory was administered remotely by British authorities based in Cape Town and Mafeking, who relied on Tswana chiefs or *dikgosi* to exert control. In the 80 years of British rule, the *dikgosi* were able to transform themselves from migratory lineage heads into powerful leaders of settled stable communities and to acquire personal control over vast areas of land and cattle. In the 1950s and 1960s, much of the country’s communal land was transferred to the Tswana elite under individual title,

most often purchased with generous loans from the colonial state.

...the advent of a single high-value commodity in an otherwise resource-poor setting has not resulted in the political upheavals and machinations that have characterized many other African states.

Only in 1964, less than three years before independence, did the British resident commissioner assume direct responsibility for the territory. By then, two coalitions had emerged. The first coalition, which eventually formed the basis of the Botswana People’s Party (BPP), was dominated by Tswana who had worked in South Africa and had been active in the

African National Congress. The second coalition, which eventually become the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), comprised Tswana *dikgosi*, Batswana “cattle barons,” and Afrikaner commercial farmers who were concentrated along the eastern frontier with South Africa—and because this coalition was fearful of the more radical politics espoused by the BPP, it launched the BDP in October 1961, under the leadership of Seretse Khama and Quett Masire.

The formation of the BDP under Seretse Khama ensured that the new party would be invincible. Khama was widely considered the *kgosi* of the Bangwato *morafe* (or “tribe”), the largest subgroup, forming one-third of the Tswana population and one-quarter of the country’s total population. The new government wrote off the debts incurred by the Tswana elite in its land purchases of the 1950s and transferred ownership of the Botswana Meat Commission to the state, further consolidating the position of the chiefs and the large cattle barons who formed the BDP’s constituent base.

Botswana’s economic prospects at independence looked dim. The discovery of diamonds

3. “Mfecane”—literally, “the crushing” or “the scattering”—is the term used by the Ngoni-speaking peoples of Southern Africa—the Zulu, Xhosa and Swazi—to describe the turmoil and war that disrupted much of the region from the 1770s to the 1860s. The Sotho-speaking peoples of the high veldt in the interior, who include the Batswana, called it the “Difaqane.” Modern historians, however, invariably refer to the Mfecane, and the Sotho term is rarely used.

in 1967 at Orapa, which proved to be the world's second-largest diamond pipe, was to launch a transformation of the country's economy. But the advent of a single high-value commodity in an otherwise resource-poor setting has not resulted in the political upheavals and machinations that have characterized many other African states. The economic interests of the Batswana cattle barons in the private ownership of large tracts of land, coupled with the precolonial tradition of consensus politics, epitomized by the *kgotla* or "tribal assembly" and the Setswana saying that "the highest form of war is dialogue," have ensured that respect for private property and democratic norms have remained firmly entrenched since independence.

The Political Environment

Politically, Botswana has a unique record in Africa as a multiparty democracy. The country has a Westminster-style, first-past-the-post political system. Parliament has 57 elected members and 4 specially elected members, who are selected by the directly elected members of Parliament. The president, who serves a five-year term, is elected by members of Parliament and has always been the leader of the majority party. There is a 35-member House of Chiefs, which has little power as a separate chamber, although individual chiefs remain influential figures in the local communities.

Political life since independence has been dominated by the ruling BDP, although its support has declined from 80.4 percent of voters in the immediate preindependence election in 1965 to a low of 51.7 percent in 2004. Over time, various opposition coalitions have emerged to challenge the BDP, but it has never failed to win less than two-thirds of the parliamentary seats.

Beginning in the late 1960s, in the wake of the preindependence BPP's disintegration, the Botswana National Front (BNF) emerged as the BDP's main challenger. The BNF was originally conceived as a neo-Marxist challenger to the landed BDP leadership, but the BNF split in 1998, as its moderate social democratic elements, exasperated by the authoritarian tendencies of its founder, Kenneth Goma, launched the Botswana Congress Party (BCP). The BNF has so far largely come out on top against the BCP in the contest on the left of the Botswana political spectrum, but membership in Parliament is now fairly even, and the BCP's leaders are confident that they will emerge as the dominant party of the left in the 2014 elections.

Opposition politics has become further complicated by the splitting of the Botswana Movement for Democracy from the BDP in 2009. This split was provoked by the authoritarian style of the new president, Ian Khama, and by his reluctance to tolerate factions within the ruling BDP, despite the fact that these have existed for the past two decades. Thus, at the BDP conference in 2009, when members of the more technocratic faction, supported by President Khama, were defeated in a vote on BDP leadership, the president overrode the delegates' decision and imposed his preferred team as the BDP executive. Younger members of the defeated faction, several of whom represented urban districts where the BDP was losing ground, were unwilling to tolerate such high-handed intervention and quit the party. The ruling BDP looks increasingly old and rural based and appeals to traditionalists rather than to the younger generation in urban areas.

Transparency International has judged Botswana the least corrupt African state, and the government has consistently respected the rule of law and individual liberties. The print media is high quality, unfettered, and outspoken, although television and the majority of radio stations are under state control—there are only two independent FM radio stations, both established fairly recently. The judiciary is also seen as largely independent and free from corruption, although the slowness of the legal process has been criticized by some, including the semi-independent Directorate on

Corruption and Economic Crime. The court system has not hesitated to rule against the government, as has recently been demonstrated in the Court of Appeal's ruling about the rights to water of the River Basarwa in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR). Political pressure, however, is widely believed to expedite certain prosecutions, and judges who are known to favor the government are allocated politically sensitive cases.

The government has provided an open, stable, and transparent investment environment that makes Botswana, according to the World Economic Forum, one of the most economically competitive nations in Africa.

Ethnicity has not played a significant role in postindependence politics in Botswana. Approximately 75 percent of the population is of the Tswana ethnic group, which is divided into eight *merafe* or “tribes.” The largest is the Bangwato, which makes up 30 percent of the Tswana population. Historically, these *merafe* were territorially independent lineages, although non-Tswana were incorporated into the traditional political culture through the

merafe and have played a full part in modern politics. Their *dikgosi*, or chiefs, remain influential figures in shaping public opinion, but since independence they have not exercised executive power. Membership of the *merafe* has never been ethnically exclusive, and non-Tswana groups—such as the Bakalenga, Bakgalagadi, Bayeyi, and Babirwa—have been absorbed into whatever particular Tswana *morafe* controlled the local region where they lived.

Botswana's first president, Seretse Khama, refused succession as *Kgosi* of the Bangwato, and both he and his successor, Quett Masire, maintained a careful balance of ethnic and regional interests within their respective cabinets. Their successors—President Festus Mogae and the current president, Ian Khama—have tended to favor the North, which since 1999 has enjoyed a quite disproportionate share of ministerial and senior civil service positions. So far this has not created serious political problems, but many Batswana believe the Bangwato have been unduly privileged for the last 13 years.

The Economy

Botswana has been considered one of Africa's great economic and development success stories since it secured independence in 1966. Then, it was among the poorest countries on the continent, with a per capita GDP of \$140; today, it is an upper-middle-income country and one of the wealthiest, with a per capita GDP at more than \$13,000. Its economic growth averaged more than 9 percent annually from 1966 to 1999, and has been accompanied by significant achievements in social well-being. In 1970, only 35.9 percent of children completed elementary school; today, the rate is more than 99 percent. The government has provided an open, stable, and transparent investment environment that makes Botswana, according to the World Economic Forum, one of the most economically competitive nations in Africa.

Sound fiscal and macroeconomic policy and a focus on human development needs have been critical drivers of Botswana's economic and development success. But diamonds have been the key to the transformation of the country's economic prospects and society during the past 40 years. Its economy is dominated by diamonds, especially gem diamonds. Industrial diamonds make up 80 percent of production, but the other 20 percent, which are deemed of “gem” quality, generate 80 percent of the profits and revenues. The diamond-mining sector contributes 75 to 80 percent of

export revenues, 55 percent of government revenues, and 35 percent of GDP.⁴ By 1984, the diamond mines were yielding 13 million carats and reached 34.3 million carats in 2006, when exports were valued at an all-time high of \$3.41 billion. In 2010, Botswana exported 23.1 million carats, or \$3.01 billion, roughly two-thirds of De Beers' total world output. The Botswana government has a 50 percent equity share in De Beers Botswana (Debswana) and has exercised full control since 1992. It has also acquired a 15 percent ownership share in the De Beers Corporation. Currently, there are six diamond mines in operation, and two new ones are being developed, including one in the CKGR by Gem Diamonds. Europe, particularly the United Kingdom, is the primary destination for exports.

Outside the mining sector, Botswana's economy remains underdeveloped. Tourism is a small but significant source of income. Agriculture contributes less than 3 percent of GDP. The arid environment has prevented agricultural commercialization, apart from a restricted number of cattle barons who are closely associated with the ruling BDP. Manufacturing and construction remain poorly developed, and even the informal sector is small. The country remains heavily reliant on imports from the surrounding region, particularly South Africa, which accounts for about 80 percent of total imports—including food, petroleum, and manufactured goods—and 70 percent of Botswana's electricity supply.

For all its macroeconomic success, the government has so far failed to develop microeconomic strategies to translate growth into job creation.

For all its macroeconomic success, the government has so far failed to develop microeconomic strategies to translate growth into job creation. Botswana's natural environment is hostile, and the vast majority of the rural population remains extremely poor, eking out a living as subsistence cattle herders or smallholder cultivators. Some 40 percent of rural inhabitants do not own cattle, and one-fifth of the rural population has no visible means of support and survives on government welfare payments—although urban residents frequently send money to their parents and relatives in the countryside, linking them to the urban economy.

Despite its prominence in providing revenues, the diamond sector employs fewer than 8,000 workers.⁵ The government remains the country's largest formal employer, accounting for 40 percent of jobs. The urban population has risen dramatically during the past three decades as younger members of rural communities have flocked to the towns in search of employment. Few of them have the skills to find well-paid jobs in the civil service or the supporting financial sector. Official figures claim that the urban unemployment rate is about 17.5 percent, but unofficial estimates, which are probably more accurate, suggest that the rate may be more than double that. Large numbers of people in the poor neighborhoods of Gaborone and other cities and towns either find it difficult to survive with their families on their low wages or depend on state support and periodic job creation efforts.

4. As components of GDP, government services are second at 32 percent, and tourism a distant third at 10.5 percent.

5. John D. Holm, "Diamonds and Distorted Development in Botswana," CSIS, February 2007, <http://csis.org/blog/diamonds-and-distorted-development-botswana>.

Social Services and the “Welfare State”

The government has employed diamond rents to create an extensive social welfare network that serves the largely subsistence population of the arid countryside and the growing underclass of the expanding urban areas. The government and the ruling BDP have provided real benefits to the population in both rural and urban areas. Paved roads have been constructed, linking not only the major cities and towns but also the main villages. Electricity, water boreholes, free education up to the university level, free health services (including free antiretroviral treatment for those Botswana suffering from HIV/AIDS), and agricultural extension services are provided by the state.

HIV/AIDS hit Botswana extremely hard. In 2002, UNAIDS estimated that Botswana had the world’s highest adult prevalence rate of 38.8 percent, although the 2009 estimate of 24.8 percent is significantly lower, with signs that the rate of new infections is slowing. The government’s response to the epidemic was robust, with an early commitment to provide free universal access to antiretroviral therapy to all those in need, with significant support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Merck Company Foundation, and other private partners.

...Botswana’s prosperity and political stability are more fragile than is frequently recognized.

In total, the health budget absorbs 22 percent of government expenditures, with prevention, treatment, and care for HIV-infected persons forming the base of an expanding health care system.

Country Assessment

Despite the significant achievements of its government since 1966, Botswana’s prosperity and political stability are more fragile than is frequently recognized. At the core of this fragility are three current realities: a population that is highly dependent on social welfare programs provided by the state; a state that is heavily reliant on a single commodity, diamonds, that is highly sensitive to fluctuations in the global economy; and a narrow economic base that leaves the country deeply tied to that of neighboring South Africa. But how well the government manages and influences these domestic realities will determine whether Botswana’s successes thus far can be sustained in the decades to come. In the short term, exogenous shocks are the most plausible threat to Botswana’s national interest and well-being.

Vulnerabilities

Fragile population dependent on state welfare. Botswana’s rural populations will remain highly vulnerable and dependent on state services. Botswana’s natural environment is arid and hostile, and pressures on the small areas of land that can be cultivated or used for grazing are likely to intensify, accelerated by population growth, environmental degradation, and the impact of climate change. The state not only sustains the rural population with regular welfare services but has also efficiently distributed food supplies when famine looms. Crop growing and pastoral areas will remain extremely vulnerable to drought and the recurrent cycles of food insecurity that threaten Southern Africa. The country has periodically experienced prolonged periods of drought that have resulted in crop failures of more than 80 percent for multiple consecutive years. So long as the macroeconomy continues to thrive, the state will be able to afford welfare services and satisfy rural communities.

At the same time, Botswana's urban population, now growing at 2.3 percent annually, will continue to expand, with rising demands for state services including health, education, sanitation, and job creation programs. The government's long-standing success in providing for the basic needs of its citizenry may prove a double-edged sword. The breadth of state programs has created heightened expectations, and demands will be compounded as the population grows. Pressure for spending on public health, already 22 percent of annual expenditures, will rise as more and more HIV-infected individuals become eligible for antiretroviral therapy and add to the cumulative number of people receiving government-provided treatment.

Beyond rising pressures on public expenditures, Botswana's development paradigm may have a longer-term, more pernicious effect. Reliance on government largesse, many Botswana acknowledge, has sapped the country of any vigorous entrepreneurial culture, and the jobs and investment opportunities that are available are often snapped up by far more hungry and ambitious newcomers, including South African and Chinese companies, highly skilled economic refugees from Zimbabwe, and migrants from other neighboring states. The country has reached an equilibrium that has so far endured and that is comfortable for both the government and its citizenry. There are thus few pressures for public or private innovation or for a dramatic new development strategy.

The government's long-standing success in providing for the basic needs of its citizenry may prove a double-edged sword. The breadth of state programs has created heightened expectations, and demands will be compounded as the population grows.

The state's overdependence on diamonds. Botswana's overdependence on the diamond sector is the most serious problem facing the government and the country's greatest weakness—along with its greatest blessing. The state's achievements in human development, and indeed the social compact on which the country's stability is based, are maintained by the distribution of rents from the diamond sector as welfare payments to the largely subsistence rural population and the growing underclass of the expanding urban areas. This leaves the state highly dependent on a single export commodity—gem diamonds—that itself is highly susceptible to fluctuations in the world economy.

Global recessions have hit the diamond industry hard; exports severely declined during the global economic crisis of the early 1980s, and in 2008–2009 they fell to 300,000 carats a month compared with nearly 3 million carats a month in 2006, a drop of 90 percent. Such drops have a dramatic impact on government revenues because the diamond sector, as noted above, accounts for more than half of government revenue. As a result of the 2008–2009 global financial and economic crisis, Botswana faced a 14 percent budget deficit in 2010 and was forced to postpone new development projects, halt civil service recruitment, and cut back on social welfare spending.

The international demand for diamonds is also sensitive to changes in taste, and the diamond "image" is an important factor in marketing. Survival International, a London-based nongovernmental organization, has launched a campaign to stigmatize Botswana's diamonds as "blood diamonds" because of the government's alleged maltreatment of the Basarwa community in the CKGR. Although the Court of Appeal has recently ordered the government to provide the Basarwa with water boreholes, the decision seems unlikely to stop the government from forcibly resettling them so that diamond mining can commence in their reserve. The government has taken

such action in the past against Batswana communities, but Survival International's defense of the Basarwa community's allegedly traditional way of life may resonate with Western consumers and impair the reputation of Botswana's gems, inflicting a certain amount of damage on the demand for its diamonds.

The government of Festus Mogae demonstrated its sensitivity on this issue by deporting Kenneth Good, the long-serving Australian professor of political science at the University of Botswana, from the country in 2006 after he conducted research for Survival International on the battle between the Basarwa in the CKGR and the diamond-mining interests. Given the international oversupply of gem diamonds—which is carefully regulated by De Beers through the Central Selling Organization, a De Beers' subsidiary, which sells between 70 and 80 percent of total world production of rough diamonds to sight-holders who send the diamonds to cutting facilities and then to distributors—the industry is highly sensitive to bad publicity and to major fluctuations in demand.

Susceptibility to regional dynamics. Botswana is also susceptible to regional dynamics. A further exodus of Zimbabwean refugees, provoked by an even more disastrous situation in that country, or a political or economic disintegration in South Africa would pose significant challenges to Botswana's continuing political stability. The collapse of Zimbabwe during the last decade has had disruptive effects, although these seem to have been weathered quite well. Nevertheless, Botswana takes the illegal immigration issue extremely seriously. The numbers of illegal Zimbabweans in Botswana has been estimated at various times

In many respects, the Botswana economy is an offshoot of South Africa's rather than an independent entity, and any problems there would have immediate consequences.

at between 100,000 and 200,000, and illegal migrants have been subject to broad-scale roundups and deportations, with some reports of police brutality. The military was deployed in 2002 to stop further refugee infiltration, and a 300-mile-long electric fence was erected along Botswana's north-eastern border.

Illegal Zimbabweans were widely blamed for the outbreak of foot-and-mouth livestock disease in January 2003, which required thousands of cattle to be slaughtered, severely hitting the Botswana beef industry. Zimbabweans are often blamed for a rise in crime, and there have been a number of small-scale outbreaks of xenophobic violence. Most Batswana, however, currently believe that conditions are improving in their northeastern neighbor and consider it unlikely that even a sharp deterioration in Zimbabwe would have much effect on Botswana, although the number of refugees might rise and there might be renewed instances of xenophobia.

South Africa is a different story. Botswana is so economically dependent on its southern neighbor for investment, food supplies, manufactured commodities, and even essential requirements, such as electricity, that turmoil in South Africa would have an immediately disruptive impact. In many respects, the Botswana economy is an offshoot of South Africa's rather than an independent entity, and any problems there would have immediate consequences. Botswana's electricity supply—70 percent of which is imported from South Africa—is already regularly disrupted when South Africa's creaky public electricity utility Eskom cannot meet demand. Turmoil in South Africa resulting in a shutdown of Eskom would have a devastating effect on the Botswana economy. The disruption of food and consumer durable supplies from South Africa would also

create serious inflationary pressures and shortages, which would hit the poor particularly hard and destabilize Botswana's welfare culture.

Trends to Watch

Efforts to broaden the economic base. The government of Botswana is aware of the country's vulnerabilities but still seems to believe that continued macroeconomic growth, generated by diamonds and other minerals, such as coal, will sustain the economy. Certainly, diamond production seems to be sustainable at current levels for the next 30 to 40 years. Botswana has large unutilized deposits of coal and methane, which with an investment of \$1.5 billion could be used to generate electricity for the domestic market and for South Africa. Exploration is also under way for natural gas and uranium. There are small deposits of nickel and copper, although the current copper mines are coming to the end of their productive life. If these alternatives could be exploited, the government could sustain its welfare culture, although continuing demand for gem diamonds will remain the critical requisite.

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The BDP in its manifestoes during the past 50 years has repeatedly stressed the need for Botswana to diversify its economy and to reduce its dependence on diamonds by promoting commercial agriculture and manufacturing. In reality, although it has successfully promoted macro-level growth and dampened social tensions, it seems incapable of fundamentally adjusting its strategy.

The current "hub" program promoted by presidents Mogae and Ian Khama is the most recent in a series of policy initiatives that have so far failed in their efforts to diversify the economy or to generate jobs. This program, which is part of the "Botswana Excellence Strategy" launched in 2008, proposes six "hub" projects that have the potential to boost diversification by promoting sustainable new economic activities—the diamond hub, innovation hub, health hub, agriculture hub, transport hub, and education hub. The strategy recognizes that the government has to be prepared to amend or even abandon unsuccessful development policies and that Botswana should embrace trade, investment, and the free flow of technology and skills as it becomes even more incorporated into the global economy. The strategy acknowledges that foreign direct investment has been low and declining, that the privatization of parastatals begun in 2000 has been only partially successful, and that the private business sector remains too dependent on state contracts.

The "hub" initiative is designed to provide the infrastructure for increased production and enclave agricultural commercialization, and to foster the government's ambitions to transform Botswana from a mineral economy to a knowledge-based, service economy during the next two decades, but this amounts to more of the same. The fortunate, the educated, and the privileged will prosper, but the poor, the urban unemployed, and subsistence cultivators are becoming increasingly desperate. The government has identified the problems it faces, and the "hub" development program is well intentioned, indeed vital—it needs doing—but it will almost certainly fail to create many unskilled jobs, which is what Botswana needs in both the rural and, perhaps especially, the urban areas. The development of enclave commercial agriculture—based on irrigation from the Okavango and Zambezi rivers in the North, and the processing of cattle hides—will, at best, gener-

ate only 2,000 jobs. It will not staunch the flow of young people from the countryside to the towns and mining centers. The new jobs created in urban areas will primarily benefit educated rather than unskilled workers and the unemployed.

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the "Botswana Excellence Strategy" fails to address this essential problem. The Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency, which began operating in June 2001, was established to address this issue. It aims to provide funding for capital expenditures, stock, and working capital to small, medium-sized, and large enterprises. It attempts to provide training and mentoring and operates a continuous process of needs assessment and project monitoring; but after a decade, it has issued few loans to

informal enterprises. Informal-sector entrepreneurs, along with small, formal-sector businesses—the engines of job creation—still find it difficult to secure capital to expand their enterprises.

It is difficult to see what the government can do about this problem. Closer economic integration is the official answer, but the advantage would seem to lie with South Africa and perhaps a revitalized Zimbabwe rather than Botswana. It would be difficult to sustain manufacturing industrial activities in the face of South African opposition. The Botswana market is too small, the cost of labor is too high, and the quality of products is too low to compete in the international market or even to be exported to South Africa or Zimbabwe. Chinese and Zimbabwean construction companies have largely undercut the domestic construction industry during the past five years, sending many Botswana-owned companies into bankruptcy. The Chinese invariably bring in labor from their homeland and employ few Botswana. The attempt by Hyundai to establish a car-manufacturing plant in the late 1990s failed because of South Africa's reluctance to permit imports, despite the Southern African Customs Union. In 2006, the plant was closed and then reestablished in South Africa. Few Botswana manufacturing companies survive longer than five years.

Because it has a population of only 2 million, Botswana's domestic market is too small to produce any economies of scale. The country's past as a subsistence, pastoralist economy and its postindependence emergence as a world diamond-mining economy has created a culture of dependency among its population, and the Botswana have never developed an entrepreneurial culture. Ambitious, well-educated Botswana hope for a job in the civil service, then to rise through the state bureaucracy, and perhaps eventually to become politicians with the ruling BDP. The state is by far the largest employer; it is a consumer of wealth rather than a creator, absorbing some 32 percent of GDP. And the state is sustained by diamond rents. The development of other minerals may help diversify the economy, but only marginally. There seems to be little that the government can do to promote micro-level employment opportunities. As a landlocked state in a very arid region, with relatively poor and extended communication lines by rail or road to the coast, without diamonds Botswana would be a classic "hopeless case." Its well-educated population gives it a head start in the campaign to establish a knowledge-based economy, as envisaged in President Khama's "Excellence Strategy," but this initiative too seems unlikely to create a large number of low-skilled jobs.

The power of the presidency. The office of the president in Botswana wields considerable power, controlling the appointment of all ministers, senior civil servants, parastatal heads, military commanders, the selection of nominated members of Parliament, and the leaders of a diverse range of executive agencies. Although so far no president has egregiously abused this prerogative, the possibility for abuse of office remains. Parliament exerts few checks on the president's powers, and only the minister of finance, who presides over an agency with a prestigious reputation, based on its successful management of the economy during the past four decades and the technical nature of its tasks, possesses any real political autonomy.

President Ian Khama, who took office on April 1, 2008, has been a divisive figure. Traditionalists and many poor Batswana respect him because of his royal ancestry, while the educated middle class are more skeptical and suspicious of his autocratic tendencies. He spent 26 years in the Botswana Defence Force (BDF), and was promoted to brigadier general and deputy commander of the BDF at the age of 24. He remains surrounded by soldiers, and several of his former military subordinates have now entered politics and serve in the Cabinet or have been appointed to key executive positions, such as director of the Intelligence and Security Service. Critics claim that Khama has brought a more dictatorial style to political life. This provoked a split in the ruling BDP, with a cohort of younger, better educated members of Parliament forming the Botswana Movement for Democracy. The new party has adopted a very hostile attitude toward the president.

However, criticism of Khama predates the BMD split. In 2008 and 2009, there was a spate of extrajudicial killings, which opposition leaders allege were organized by the Directorate for the Intelligence and Security Service and carried out by members of the BDF. The cases appear to have involved local criminals, against whom the police could not find sufficient evidence to bring cases before the courts but whom the government is alleged to have wanted out of the way. In February 2011, three ex-soldiers were tried for the murder of John Kalafatis, a prominent burglar. Questions in Parliament revealed that there had been nine such killings, and the BCP leader Dumelang Saleshando claimed in 2009 that since the inauguration of President Ian Khama there had been "one state-sponsored killing a month."

Many educated Batswana not only saw this as totally unacceptable but were also concerned that the country was moving toward a police state. They feared to speak openly on the telephone, in case their conversations were to be intercepted by the security service. The newspapers, however, played a key role, investigating and publicizing the incidents, provoking a backlash among the educated classes against the government. Under such pressure, the government backed off, and there have been no subsequent cases. Botswana's media, civil society, and judicial institutions seem to have persuaded the government to reconsider. Some civil society activists and opposition leaders remain concerned and fear that if the BDP were to lose the 2014 election, Ian Khama might use the military to hang on to power. Most people, however, consider that although the president would see defeat as a personal humiliation, democratic norms are so entrenched in Botswana that he would accept the result and resign.

Many Batswana are concerned about the rising power of the Directorate of the Intelligence and Security Service, under President Khama's friend Isaac Kgosi, which has been allocated one-fifth of the recurrent defense and security budget to investigate domestic and transnational threats. The new Directorate seems to be having difficulties determining the importance of the information it is gathering, and it may be promoting a climate of exaggerated concern about state security. Even more worrying is the passing in December 2008 of the Media Practitioners Act, which imposes stringent training and reporting standards on professional journalists and requires

them to be registered through a government-appointed Executive Press Council. Journalists have denounced the act for introducing statutory regulation and have condemned it as a step toward censorship through “a media licensing and registration bill.”⁶ The Masire and Mogae governments had attempted to introduce similar legislation in 1997 and 2003 but had ultimately backed down. The new legislation has been condemned by the opposition parties and has even created dissension among BDP backbenchers, a contributing factor in the breakaway of the BMD, but the law has had little impact on press freedom.

Rumors of corruption lurk around the president’s younger twin brothers and the current minister of defense, the president’s cousin, who is widely believed to have long benefited from insider knowledge of military contracts and is currently standing trial for directing contracts to

companies in which he had a financial interest. Opposition politicians and civil society representatives suggest that fear of his own prosecution or that of close family members might make President Khama unwilling to stand down if he were defeated or when his two five-year terms end in 2018. It is likely that a non-BDP government would investi-

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gate the Khama family’s business interests and their role in defense contracts since the 1980s with considerable zeal.

Challenges to BDP domination—messy or ordered? As yet, there are few signs, even in the urban centers, of deep dissatisfaction with the government. The BNF’s hopes of urban revolt within the next five years seems improbable, and the relatively marginal Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin Movement, which fielded candidates in five constituencies in 2009, drew virtually no support, despite its leader’s claim that its influence was spreading “like a veldt fire across the nation.” A revolution in Botswana remains far from imminent, although there are increasing social tensions. These do not take the usual African form of ethnic, regional, or sectarian rivalries but are clearly class based—the poor and the unemployed against the rich and those with secure, remunerative employment. The BNF and BCP held discussions on forming an alliance to challenge the governing BDP before the last two elections but failed to reach an agreement.

Discussions are already under way to establish an opposition alliance to fight the BDP in the 2014 election. These negotiations are complicated by the emergence of the BMD; by the belief in certain quarters of the BCP that it would emerge as the dominant party of “the left” if it ran on its own in 2014; and by the BNF’s continuing resistance to participate in any alliance, especially if the alliance were to include the recently formed and untested BMD. A united opposition would almost certainly sweep the urban and mining center constituencies in 2014 and would pose a very serious challenge to the BDP’s continuation in power. It would meet strong resistance, but it is unlikely that the BDP would resort to intimidation or rigging. Democratic norms are too well established. The ruling BDP is a waning force, which is becoming increasingly restricted to its rural base and dependent upon the more traditional elements of Botswana society. More likely, it will attempt to encourage dissent among the opposition parties, knowing that its best hope of winning urban seats rests upon a fractured opposition. An opposition victory—either by a united

6. COFEX Botswana, “The Coalition for Freedom of Expression Botswana,” <http://cofex.wordpress.com/about/>.

opposition alliance in 2014 or by the BCP on its own in 2019—would not produce major changes in policy, or upheaval in the civil service, which is highly regarded for its technocratic competence and political neutrality.

Scenarios

As long as international demand for diamonds remains high, the Botswana “miracle” can not only be sustained but, in macroeconomic terms, will continue to produce rapid growth. Politically, even if the three main opposition parties were able to unite—and, as noted, this remains unlikely—and capture power in 2014, or more likely in 2019, it would not produce a major shift in policies. For the past 45 years, the BDP has operated an essentially statist economy along social democratic lines, providing by African standards lavish welfare programs to the electorate. This would not change if a BCP–BDM alliance were to capture power—with or without the participation of the BNF. Ideological differences are slight, and Botswana’s economic agenda is set more by civil service technocrats than by politicians.

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The threat of social and state collapse during the next 10 years comes far more from exogenous rather than endogenous shocks—from a protracted international recession hitting demand for gem diamonds, or from social and political turmoil in South Africa. Both shocks are probably fairly remote. In the longer term, the next 20 to 30 years, domestic economic grievances will pose a more serious challenge. The Botswana state is less secure than it seems. The dangers of increasing differentiation—and social cleavages have grown significantly during the past 20 years—is a real threat to its long-term stability and a major blot on its development record.

The Best-Case Scenario: Continued Macroeconomic Growth

The most likely prospect for Botswana during the next decade is one of sustained growth, with GDP growing between 6 and 8 percent a year. Demand for gem diamonds has already largely recovered from the 2008–2009 global financial and economic crisis, and export figures have almost returned to 2006 levels. With increasing consumer demand from China and India, it seems likely that demand for diamond jewelry will remain solid, benefiting Botswana, which produces one-quarter of the world’s diamonds. Revenue from the diamond sector will underwrite the government’s ambitious “hub” program, which plans to develop six key focal points in the economy: agriculture, innovation, diamonds, education, health and transport. This strategy will ensure that GDP will continue to rise fairly rapidly, perhaps doubling in the next 10 years.

Beef marketing will be improved, and irrigated horticulture and sorghum production—the staple food—will be developed in enclaves close to the Okavango and Zambezi and will increase agriculture’s share of GDP above 3 percent. New roads and the construction of a rail link to the Atlantic Ocean coast of Namibia will facilitate both food and mineral exports to Europe and North America, reducing dependence on South Africa’s ports. More money will be spent on sustaining the health system, continuing the provision of free antiretroviral drugs. Increased expenditures

on education and the “Botswana innovation hub” will generate employment for the educated elite. Diamond rents and the conservative values of the rural poor, an increasingly ageing group, will sustain the regime.

The domestic political battle between the BDP and the three main opposition parties should produce few problems or any major shifts in Botswana’s alignment or economic policies. Botswana has a well-trained and surprisingly large army—the Botswana Defence Force—of 15,000 men. It is involved in antipoaching activities in the country’s vast arid interior and might play an important role in famine relief, although it has never been called upon to perform such a task.

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The BDF should be encouraged to participate in international peacekeeping activities. Yet, despite President Ian Khama’s quarter-century career in the BDF, and the fact that he has appointed a number of ex-military colleagues to high political and executive offices, there is little danger of Botswana being “militarized.” Democratic norms are too well established, the middle class is too vocal, and the rule of law is too entrenched for military intervention to pose a risk under normal conditions.

Botswana will continue to be praised for its macroeconomic performance, its upper-middle-income country status, and as a model of democracy and respect for the rule of law; but just below the surface, there will be festering discontent, especially in Gaborone, Francistown, and the declining copper-mining centers. The grievances, however, will not explode in the next decade. And perhaps the government’s analysis is right and Botswana will be able to switch from a mineral-based to a knowledge-based economy, creating large numbers of new jobs in the communications and financial services sectors.

The Worst-Case Scenario: World Recession or South African Turmoil

The worst-case scenario is that the government’s “hub development” program will have minimal returns, generating few unskilled jobs, and that a protracted world recession and/or turmoil in South Africa will severely disrupt the demand and operation of the diamond sector. This will forestall development projects; discourage investment in coal, uranium, natural gas, and oil exploration; and require major cutbacks in government expenditures as revenue from diamond mining collapses.

Cutbacks in welfare services might quickly produce protests among the urban poor and, if coinciding with another severe drought, might lead to widespread famine in rural areas, destabilizing the state. Any contraction of state welfare services would endanger the cohesion of Botswana society and quickly erode the government’s legitimacy, and could well produce a serious humanitarian disaster in the arid countryside. Recruitment to the civil service would be halted, as it was for four months in 2010, exacerbating the problem of unemployed graduates from the University of Botswana, which is already causing concern, and curtailing spending on social services and welfare payments to subsistence cultivators and the urban masses. Without a domestic manufacturing sector and with a very small informal sector, and little tradition of entrepreneurship or small-scale, job creation activities, Botswana could rapidly disintegrate if diamond production were disrupted and its rents ran dry.

Conclusion

Botswana is quite unlike any other African state. It is essentially a rentier state that is dependent on its mineral wealth. But unlike most African rentier states, its revenue from diamonds has been well spent on improving the road network, providing schools and health clinics, boreholes and barbed wire, and an extensive network of social services and short-term employment-generating activities. GDP per capita is now 100 times higher than it was at independence. This is a real achievement. An arid, poverty-stricken, landlocked state has been turned into one of the wealthiest societies on the African continent. Moreover, Botswana is a true nation, endowed with a strong sense of pride in its achievements, rather than a state without any political legitimacy. By virtually any criteria, Botswana has been well ruled for the past 45 years. Democracy and open political debate are firmly entrenched and defended, and it is not riven by ethnic or sectarian cleavages.

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In comparison with the other countries in this study, this places Botswana in a fortunate circumstance. Under normal conditions, few indicators suggest that the current development strategy will not work for the next 10 years. Growth will continue. Botswana will be widely regarded as a model for the continent. It will not implode or even face serious problems. There are few political and virtually no ethnic pressures posing a serious challenge within that time frame. But over a longer period, Botswana will have to grapple with serious social difficulties and make fundamental economic decisions. The tried-and-tested development paradigm is coming to the end of its utility. A new, microeconomic, job-generating approach is essential. Without it, disaster lies ahead, but not until the 2020s or 2030s or, if Botswana is lucky, the 2040s—and by then the world will have been transformed and the day of reckoning may never come.

Postscript

At the time of this writing, Botswana is in the midst of its largest labor dispute since independence. A strike involving 100,000 public-sector workers has exposed some of Botswana's structural frailties, notably the destabilizing degree to which its economic success is tied to the price of a single export—diamonds—and the difficulties of maintaining adequate living standards for the majority of the population when global demand for this commodity slumps, as it has done since the international financial crisis of 2008–2009.

The strike that broke out in April 2011 involved teachers, hospital doctors, nurses and support staff, civil servants, and firefighters. Their initial demands for a 16 percent pay increase reflected the scale of their economic distress. Since the global recession struck, wages have remained static, while the cost of living has risen by 40 percent.

The government's response was uncompromising. President Khama declared that essential workers had no right to strike and insisted that they take their case to arbitration. The trade unions refused, leading to a six-week standoff that brought the public sector to a standstill. Hospitals were badly affected, while at the public schools, the end-of-year examination period was seriously disrupted. Mounting frustration led to outbreaks of violence in nearly 20 towns—a rare phenom-

enon in Botswana—and calls by the opposition for Khama to step down. The president, however, refused to budge. He insisted that the government could not afford to increase public-sector wages unless it cut pensions and welfare spending. A “no work, no pay” strategy was announced, and salary checks were withheld from strikers’ bank accounts.

It is still too early to determine the scale of the political damage suffered by the president and the BDP. At the time of writing, Botswana’s main union coalition had verbally accepted a 3 percent pay increase from the government, although the strike was continuing. Even if the immediate crisis is resolved, however, Botswana has been badly shaken by the scale of the unrest. The protests have highlighted the precariousness of trying to sustain a welfare state through the profits of a volatile export commodity. Botswana’s “culture of dependency” is under serious strain. The events have also exposed the paucity of ideas at the heart of the government. Ian Khama’s flat-footed response and lack of empathy with the economic distress of his citizens has illustrated in the clearest terms yet that he is increasingly out of touch with the mood of the public.



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