

Personal Rule in Africa: The Case of Botswana Under General Ian Khama

B Seabo

University of Botswana, Botswana

Abstract: Personal rule has been a defining feature of African politics since independence. Plurality politics were shunned by leaders who either assumed power through military coup, liberation struggle or elected but later abolished multiparty politics. For most of the post-independence era, Botswana and Mauritius were an exception to the trend, and Botswana was held in high regard as an example of democracy in Africa. This paper assesses personal rule in Africa using the case of Botswana under the reign of General Ian Khama. It shows how a once celebrated beacon of democracy declined in several fronts due to personal rule type of leadership. The paper argues that although procedural elections and presidential transitions continue to define Botswana's democracy, the country was governed by 'personal rule' of autocratic type during the reign of General Ian Khama. During Khama's reign, some elements of personal rule that have characterised some African regimes post-independence were commonplace. Even though Botswana cannot be categorised or placed on the same scale with Africa's most extreme personal regimes, some indicators of personal rule such as corruption, human rights abuse, and 'big man' politics were the hallmarks of the Khama regime.

Keywords: Africa, Autocracy, Botswana, Personal rule, Political regimes

1. Introduction

Africa's rich diversity and resource endowment has been a subject of scholarly interest (Schraeder, 2004; Maathai, 2010; Harbeson & Rothchild, 2013; Rotberg, 2013). The continent is vast in size and boasts abundance of mineral resources (Poku & Mdee, 2011; Rotberg, 2013). Despite this abundance of resources, Africa remains the poorest and least developed continent in the world. Most African countries' development has been stunted by amongst others rampant corruption and looting of state resources, weak state institutions and dependence on mono crop economies. That Africa's present problems cannot be detached from its historical development and its structural position in the world economy is perhaps an understatement. The ravages of slave trade and colonial legacy in the continent continue to haunt Africa to date. Not only is Africa suffering from a colonial hangover, the economic exploitation of the continent by erstwhile colonisers also continues (Taylor & Williams, 2004). Be that as it may, very little has been achieved by African leaders to turn the fortunes of the continent around (Maathai, 2010). Most African countries have so far been led by corrupt leaders who personalised power and ruled their countries using various forms of authoritarian leadership styles. This "Big men" politics has

manifested in the form of military dictatorships, single party regimes and autocratic leadership (Jackson & Rosberg, 1982; Southall & Melber, 2006). However, Botswana followed a different political trajectory by retaining multi-party democracy upon gaining independence from Britain in 1966. The country earned a reputation as an example of democracy in Africa partly due to an uninterrupted spell of holding multiparty elections that were hailed as free and fair by international observers. However, this article shows that Botswana fell under personal rule type of leadership under the regime of Ian Khama from 2008 until 2018. The paper postulates that while Botswana is not by any measure comparable to some African countries that experienced personal rule, the country's democratic credentials regressed as personalistic politics dominated under the reign of Lt General Seretse Khama Ian Khama. As the paper shows, fundamental principles of democracy such as consultation, accountability and the rule of law declined under Khama while media freedoms and labor relations deteriorated during his reign. For example, Khama circumvented established institutions and ruled by directives as demonstrated by his decision to ignore the Judicial Services Commission's recommendations in appointment of judges, disdain for private media and arrests of journalists during his tenure. It was during

the reign of Khama that corruption escalated to levels unprecedented probably in the history of Botswana, even as international indices such as Transparency International continued with their out of tune 'least corrupt African country' chorus. For example, as the paper shows, the misappropriation of funds from the National Petroleum Fund and Afrobarometer's findings that Botswana perceived corruption to be increasing and high among the president and government officials are indicative of corruption as a feature of personal rule. The paper shows that rule by directives displaced one of Botswana's traditional democratic practices of consultation. Consultation only served as platforms to issue directives instead of soliciting and embracing alternative views. In this way, Khama entrenched his personal rule by strategically choosing to interact and engage with the rural, less educated and poor citizens while avoiding audience with the urban, educated middle class and private media. The choice of his constituency was strategic given Khama's traditional authority as paramount chief of Bangwato tribe and as it is customary, chiefs command immense influence and their word is almost always considered.

The paper adopts a qualitative research design and it is primarily a desktop-based study. It relies on secondary sources of data including reports, books, newspapers and journal articles. The article is essentially discursive and uses a case study approach. The paper is structured in this way: the section that follows briefly explains the theoretical framework. Next, the paper provides an overview of African personal regimes in the post-independence era and narrows down to the context of Botswana as a case study. The paper briefly reviews the leadership of Khama's predecessors and considers personal rule during Khama's reign before drawing a conclusion. The article argues that Botswana bore hallmarks of personal rule under the Khama regime.

2. Theoretical Framework

Personal rule is a type of political system that is centered on a leader or a select few elites who control and monopolize state power (Jackson & Rosberg, 1982). It is far removed from institutional rule that is based on formal rules and processes as well as constitutionally ascribed functions. In conceptualizing personal rule, Jackson and Rosberg refer to Machiavelli's characterization of The Prince. They posit that:

"Machiavelli assumes that the Prince is a self-interested, rational actor who desires to acquire and hold a principality. But the principality is not a national society of mobilizable groups and classes whose interests command the attention of the Prince; and the Prince is not primarily concerned to promote the welfare and conciliate the conflicts of an underlying national society upon which his legitimacy depends..." (Jackson and Rosberg, 1984:423).

On this basis, personal rulers tend to be self-centered and seek to control state apparatus. In so doing, the primary motive of personal rulers is not much about the interest of the nation other than achieving their own self-centered objectives. As Jackson & Rosberg (1982:18) put it, "personal politics are systems insofar as they function to regulate power in the state and thereby provide political goods or carry out political functions (such as peace, order, stability, and non-material security), but they are not systems of public governance or a rationalist decision-making". Typically, personal rule is an elitist political system composed of the privileged and powerful few in which the many are usually immobilised, unorganised, and therefore relatively powerless to command the attention and action of government (Jackson & Rosberg, 1984:423-424). Thus, unlike in functioning democracies with pluralistic politics, political power tends to be dominated and monopolised by few political elites in personal regimes. In this way, a leader rules by decree and consults with his most trusted loyalists.

The exercise of power by personal rulers is often not done within the remit of the law and as Jackson & Rosberg (1984) argue, personal rule is a distinctive political system where leaders try to stay afloat in an unrestrained way. As a result, in such political systems, government and administration are likely to be highly personal and permeated with patronage and corruption (Jackson & Rosberg, 1984). In such political systems, established and effective political institutions and mechanisms of accountability are largely absent and those that exist are rendered ineffective. In this vein, Arriola (2009) postulates that formal institutions tend to be generally too weak to perform their functions in personal regimes. In the same light, Jackson & Rosberg (1982) aver that non-institutionalised government is the opposite of institutional rule, and in the former, persons take precedence over rules and they are not bound by office but can change

its authority for their personal or political expediency. The state therefore tends to be subjected to the control of men as opposed to laws. It is also significant to underscore that personal rule bears authoritarian features where a leader uses laws and coercive instruments of the state to expedite his own purposes of monopolising power and denies the political rights and opportunities of all other groups to compete for that power (Jackson & Rosberg, 1982). It is in this vein that Roessler (2011:310) asserts that in personalist, authoritarian regimes the incumbent's use of his discretionary power to make appointments and eliminate real or perceived rival's increases anxiety within the government.

Personal regimes take various forms and include princely rule, autocracy, prophetic rule and tyrannical rule. There is a blurred line between these types of leaders as certain features overlap and generally, personal regimes tend to be characterized by rule from the top and state institutions dominated by the leader. A prince is an astute and manipulative leader who rules jointly with other oligarchs and cultivates their loyalty, cooperation and support (Jackson & Rosberg, 1982). On the other hand, despotism is a government by an absolute ruler unchecked by effective constitutional limits to his power (Arora, 2007). Similarly, "autocracy is a system of government in which supreme political power to direct all the activities of the state is concentrated in the hands of one person, whose decisions are subject to neither external legal restraints nor regularized mechanisms of popular control" (Arora, 2007:38). Tyrannical rule entails a form of government in which one-person rules arbitrarily. The next section briefly reviews the literature on some of personal regimes in Africa.

3. An Overview of Personal Rule in Africa

The 1950s and 60s ushered in the first wave of independence of African countries from colonial rule. Almost immediately, an emergence of personal rule in several African countries was experienced where previous impersonal bureaucratic systems instituted by colonizers were replaced by highly personalized regimes. Maathai (2010:25) states that dictatorships, military juntas, kleptocracies and Big Men have bedeviled many nations in the world, as they have in Africa. As Jackson & Rosberg (1984:421) show, indicators of personal regimes in

sub-Saharan Africa consist of coups, plots, factionalism, purges, rehabilitations, clientelism, corruption, and succession maneuvers.

Perhaps except for Botswana, Mauritius and the Gambia (later fell under military regime) most African countries either pursued single party systems (Malawi, Zambia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania) or fell under military dictatorships (Nigeria, Guinea, Libya, Ghana, Niger, Liberia, Mali etc). In the case of Botswana, Rotberg (2013:201) states that when other African leaders created single-party rule and rationalized autocracy, the founding president of Botswana Seretse Khama held to unfashionable notions of democracy, including independent judiciary, free speech and respect for human rights. In their quest to monopolise control of state power in the post-independence period, most African rulers adopted practices of authoritarianism withering national politics and promoting private power (Jackson & Rosberg, 1982). For instance, in Uganda, even after the reintroduction of elections to elect government, opposition parties were restricted from fielding candidates for those elections (Kasfir, 1998). In some countries, 'paradoxically, the one-party system was described as a democratic system, even by those such as Siaka Stevens in Sierra Leone and Kamuzu Banda in Malawi who denied citizens fundamental human rights, such as the rights to vote, free speech and freedom of association' (Zack-Williams, 2001:216).

Single party governments were justified on several grounds. First, multi-party systems militated against nation and consensus building. Unlike the divisive nature of western multiparty systems, single party systems were hailed for promoting the African tradition of consensus building in which the voices of citizens are considered (Schraeder, 2004). Multiparty systems were viewed as not affordable at a time when Africa was faced with mammoth developmental challenges (Joseph, 1997; Herbst, 2001; Shraeder, 2004). Examples of single party regimes included Zambia under Kenneth Kaunda, Malawi under Kamuzu Banda and Kenya under Jomo Kenyatta.

Military coups and military rule were a recurring phenomenon in African politics in the post-independence age. MCGowan (2003) records that about thirty Sub-Saharan African states (62.5%) have experienced at least one successful coup and 18 (37.5%) have suffered multiple coups; Benin, Burkina Faso

and Nigeria lead the pack with six each. Military takeovers displaced civilian governments and the military monopolized the means of coercion and terminated fledgling democratic enterprises to institute ruthless dictatorships (Ihnovbere, 2007). Perhaps with the notable exception of Ghana under Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings and Burkina Faso under Captain Thomas Sankara, most of Africa's military regimes did little or nothing to develop their countries and improve the socio-economic livelihoods of citizens (Shraeder, 2004). General Sani Abacha came to power through a coup and led Nigeria with an iron fist from 1993 until 1998 during which he committed human rights atrocities and Mobutu Sese Seko presided over a kleptocratic Zaire, looting the economy and publicly executing opponents (Rotberg, 2013).

Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe ruled the country nearly four decades and was the presidential candidate for Zanu-PF for the next elections until his ousting in 2017. Since independence from Britain in 1980 Mugabe led Zimbabwe using autocratic rule to quell opposition dissent and clamped down on private media. In typical autocratic style, "Mugabe brought people close to his power centre, but expelled them as they posed a threat (for example, the Tongogara mystery, Edgar Tekere's expulsion and Minister of State for Information and Publicity in the Office of the President and Cabinet, Professor Jonathon Moyo, along with long-time security aficionado Emmerson Mnangagwa, when they got too close to the vice-presidency" (Moore, 2006:133).

Nevertheless, repressive and authoritarian regimes that defined Africa in the post-independence period lost favor and these political systems became unpopular in the 1980s as they failed to spur economic development (Joseph, 1997). Internal opposition to single party rule and military dictatorships by civil society movement mounted pressure to embrace competitive multiparty democracy. In October 1991, Kaunda lost elections, sending a message heard around the continent that the single-party system was endangered (Joseph, 1997). Moreover, external pressure exerted by International Financial Institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund compelled countries to implement political reforms as a condition for loans (Schraeder, 2004; Maathai, 2010; Taylor & Williams, 2004; Harbeson & Rothchild, 2013).

Eventually, the fall of the Berlin Wall culminated in a period of decline of single party rule and

receding military rule as multiparty systems were re-introduced in what came to be referred to as the Third Wave of democracy. To date, personal rule leadership continues unabated in several African countries and it is commonly exercised through extension of presidential term limits. For instance, Pierre Nkurunziza successfully presided over a constitutional reform that extended his term of office until 2034 amid protests from opposition and civil society. In Uganda, Museveni promised to step down after his second term elapses, but "just two years into his 'second and final term' Museveni called for Article 105(2) of the Constitution to be revisited. In March 2003, the national conference of the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) or 'Movement' resolved to scrap the constitutional two-term limit for a president" (Tangri, 2006:177). However, in the case of Rwanda's Paul Kagame, the majority of Rwandese extended his term of office in a referendum mainly because Kagame is credited with engineering Rwanda's turnaround from a war-ravaged, ethnically divided country to a united and successful nation (McVeigh, 2015).

4. The Unique Case of Botswana: 1966-2008

Perhaps before personal rule in the case of Botswana is considered, a brief trajectory of the country under democratic leadership is worth examining. The practice of democracy that is rooted in multi-party politics, inclusive government, respect for human rights and freedoms, participation and consultation dates to 1966 when Botswana gained independence from her erstwhile colonial power Britain. In fact, democracy was not a new concept because a form of direct democracy was practiced through the *kgotla* institution in the pre-colonial era. The *kgotla* has been compared to the Athenian polis and the consensus-seeking big man system in Papua New Guinea (Good, 2002).

In terms of leadership, the founding president of Botswana Sir Seretse Khama and his successor Sir Ketumile Masire were revered leaders who espoused democratic principles. Khama and Masire established from the onset an open, multi-party system, in which the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) immediately predominated (Good & Taylor, 2008). In his address to a seminar hosted by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and the Scandinavian Institute of African Studies in Uppsala, Sir Seretse Khama noted that "... the attitudes of the people

are more important than money hence our concern with democracy and institutions which permit consultation and consent" (Khama, 1970:14). Seretse's understanding of the democratic principles was demonstrated by his apprehension against his supporters' request for him to declare Botswana a one-party state claiming Botswana was a poor state, arguing that opposition criticism was useful as it guards against abuse of power (Dubbeld, 1992). According to Rotberg (2013:201), "Khama was an exponent and promoter of a national democratic political culture that ultimately allowed strong institutions to rise on the foundation he laid".

Seretse Khama's successor, Quett Masire, oversaw a period of tremendous development and steered Botswana into its place alongside Norway as a counterexample to the "resource curse" (Gavin, 2018). Just like his predecessor, Masire espoused democratic principles, even though his administration would later be mired in corruption scandals. Good (2016) writes that during Masire's tenure in office, a series of corruption scandals were revealed in key ministries and agencies, with Masire owing National Development Bank (NDB) P546000, P640000 owed by Minister Ponatshego Kedikilwe while other two ministers had loans more than a million Pula each. Then Masire was succeeded by Festus Mogae who, besides his efforts to combat the HIV/AIDS scourge, earned a reputation for his stance in debate and free speech. Though extremely powerful, each of these leaders oversaw the development of strong governing institutions, including an independent judiciary, aimed at serving the country long after they left office (Gavin, 2018).

The three leaders together took Botswana from the bottom of nearly every development index at independence in 1966 to the upper middle-income status it enjoys today, peacefully and with integrity (Gavin, 2018).

5. Personal Rule of General Ian Khama: 2008-2018

In 1998, General Ian Khama resigned from the military to join active politics and then President Festus Mogae appointed him vice president acting on the recommendations of the Schlemmer report to save the BDP from factionalism. "The report advised that for the BDP to improve its chances of winning the 1999 elections, it needed to bring into its fold a person with 'sufficient dynamism', who was

untainted by factional fights" (Molomo, 2000:101). To some extent, Khama's would-be authoritarian tendencies were *aided and abetted* by Mogae, who immediately granted Khama sabbatical leave and permitted him to fly Botswana Defence Force aircraft. In this vein, Good (2016:5) describes the way Khama entered politics as "retrograde and undemocratic, a throwback to pre-independence hereditary politics...".

There was a widespread sentiment within the country, not without foundation, that Ian Khama possessed decidedly authoritarian tendencies, valued allegiance over merit, and was politically inexperienced to boot (Good & Taylor, 2006).

Upon ascending to the helm of the presidency in 2008, Khama surrounded himself with trusted loyalists most of whom were drawn from the army and strategically placed in key bureaucratic institutions. To some extent, Khama's autocratic rule is attributable to the excessive executive powers vested upon the president. Good (2016, p5) argues that "General Khama's more overt autocracy was founded upon established presidential power". Section 47 of the Constitution of Botswana empowers the president to exercise executive powers including the power to make key appointments. However, Khama almost militarized the bureaucracy with his appointments of former soldiers. "Khama's ascendance to the presidency opened the 'floodgates' to an unprecedented military influx into civilian offices and partisan politics" (Richard, 2014:120). Good sufficiently catalogues some of the military appointments into the bureaucracy thus:

"General Merafhe became Vice-President, the former Captain Kitso Mokaila became Minister for Environment, Wildlife and Tourism, and, as noted, Brigadier Ramadeluke took over at Justice, Defence, and Security...The appointment of military men reportedly cascaded downwards, with retired Lieutenant-Colonel Moakohi Modisenyane as general manager of the Central Transport Organization and Colonel Silas Motlalekgosi as head of the Prison Service..." (Good, 2009:322).

It is perhaps fundamental to underscore that these appointments bore all the hallmarks of unwavering loyalty to the leader, which is a defining feature of personal rule. As former army general and commander in chief of the armed forces, Ian Khama knew very well that to *captain the ship*, he needed

unquestionable loyalty. The downside of this development on Botswana's democracy was that strict militaristic discipline carried out in the form of directives displaced consultation as one of the cornerstones of Botswana's democracy (Richard, 2014). For example, this must be taken into context in respect of then vice president Lt General Mompoti Meraphe's utterances in which he stated that sometimes the regime will have to borrow from some military codes to enforce discipline in society. As Richard aptly puts it, "when army generals take control of the country, participatory democracy gets assaulted; inclusive governance is dealt a hard blow, civil liberties get eroded...and ultimately autocratic rule displaces and overthrows democratic rule" (2014:128). This is exemplified by Khama's unilateral pronouncement of public salary adjustment at a kgotla meeting while negotiations with unions at the Public Bargaining Council were ongoing.

Another defining feature and indicator of personal rule noted earlier is factionalism. It is significant to recall that Khama was roped into the BDP to save the party from possible destruction due to factionalism. According to Nasha (2014:96), "when the former president Mogae failed to end the deeply entrenched factions within the BDP, he decided to bring in a disciplinarian from the army, in the person of General Ian Khama to help dismantle the factions". The BDP was torn into two factions, *Barataphati* (loosely translated as those who love the party) and the A Team (Lotshwao & Suping, 2013; Maundeni & Seabo, 2014; Richard, 2014). But instead of bringing harmony to the party, Khama took decisions that purged the *Barataphati* faction. For instance, in the wake of a BDP congress in 2009 at which members of Khama's faction lost to *Barataphati* faction, Khama unilaterally appointed several members of the A Team in the central committee without consulting the central committee (Lotshwao & Suping, 2013). Those who challenged his leadership style and his decisions were disciplined and suspended from the party. As Richard (2014) writes, Khama used his hegemonic powers to frustrate and ultimately expel the cartel he abhorred in the central committee. In an unprecedented move, the expelled group broke away and formed the Botswana Movement for Democracy, the first ever splinter party since the establishment of the BDP in 1962 (Lotshwao & Suping, 2013; Nasha, 2014; Richard, 2014).

Personal leaders in some African countries have depended on their lust for power and been

supported by their loyalists and ordinary citizens who held them as heroes. However, Khama's autocratic tendencies found support within the party he led and the majority of Botswana particularly in the rural areas. This is demonstrated by Nasha (2014) blaming members of the BDP for creating an authoritarian leader in Khama, recalling that, during a BDP congress, democrats ululated and cheered at the pronouncement of a constitutional reform recommendation that empowered Khama to expel a member accused of wrong doing without due process prescribed in the constitution.

6. Limited Freedoms and Fear Stricken Society

The rise of Khama to the presidency heralded an era of fear in society and overt affront on individual freedoms. The genesis of this state of fear has got all to do with the introduction of the Intelligence and Security Services Bill in parliament in 2007 which stimulated adverse reactions from the society (Molomo, 2012). According to Good (2016), the Directorate on Intelligence and Security (DIS) is the institution which typified General Khama's dominance. The DIS earned a reputation for extra judicial killings and for allegedly spying on prominent opposition members (Richard, 2014). As Good (2016) proves, the role of the DIS gained public prominence when a wanted criminal suspect John Kalafatis was shot down dead in Gaborone in 2009. The killing of Kalafatis in public execution style was one of several other reported killings at the hands of the DIS without following due process in courts of law. This is illustrated by the fact that "there had been 12 shootings in which 8 people died between April 1 2008 and March 2009, and according to the Law Society of Botswana 'immense fear' existed in the nation" (Good, 2016:6). It is perhaps significant to emphasize that never before in the history of Botswana has violence occurred at such rates perpetrated by state security agencies (Richard, 2014). The fear that engulfed the once peaceful society permeated even state institutions and government officials that former minister of trade under Khama's regime confessed that the whole executive lives in fear of the DIS. Responding to a Public Accounts Committee's inquiry on the National Petroleum Fund saga, the former minister cried that:

"The money was moved to DIS. Expenditure was spent but people have now been charged with

money laundering. It's unfortunate that we all know now where the money is. But there is this fear, there is this fear, there is this fear we have on the DIS which we all fear. Directorate on Crime and Economic Crime (DCEC) also fears DIS. Equally I do. And so there is any other Minister that I know." (Kaelo, 2018).

Khama and the DIS were feared to the extent that former speaker of the National Assembly Dr Margaret Nasha painted a picture where members of the BDP were extremely fearful to even complain openly about Khama's leadership style in the BDP and would rather do so behind closed doors (Nasha, 2014). Moreover, Media Institute for Southern Africa (2009) noted that during Ian Khama's reign, a cloud of fear had descended on civilian life in Botswana, impacting on freedom of expression and the constitutional provisions guaranteeing freedom of expression are not respected by government. The media ostensibly suffered the brunt of Ian Khama's autocratic rule. To ensure that only government programmes are aired in public media, the Department of Broadcasting was strategically placed under the Office of the President to closely monitor its programming. To this end, the opposition decried abuse of state media by Khama and the ruling Botswana Democratic Party. A study conducted by the Ombudsman found that the ruling BDP enjoyed disproportionate coverage by Botswana Television. The report shows that BDP enjoys 82 percent of coverage as compared to 18 percent shared by the rest of the opposition parties and out of 89 activities, only 16 from opposition were found to be newsworthy by BTV compared to 73 from the BDP (Mokwena, 2017).

Private media endured a sour relationship with Khama as he deemed private journalists as unpatriotic. The highlight of his disdain for private media was his decision to shun press conferences, not even addressing a single press conference during his tenure as president. The affront on media and journalists' freedoms as well as their existence was to worsen when the BDP government imposed an advertising ban on private media, stifling newspapers advertising revenue. Typical of autocratic rule where freedom of information is curtailed, private media was punished for allegedly reporting negatively on the BDP government particularly exposing corruption scandals. To this end, Freedom House noted that:

"While Botswana has a robust media sector, authorities in 2016 sought to suppress reporting on the opposition and on issues related to corruption. In February, the government confirmed that state media outlets had been ordered not to report on some opposition activities, which officials described as failing to meet editorial policies; in one instance, reporters had covered an opposition rally but did not broadcast it after being told by superiors that it was not newsworthy." (Freedom House, 2017).

Previously alien to Botswana, arrests and detainment of journalists had become a regular occurrence and some, fearing for their lives fled the country. For instance, in one of the incidents, a private journalist fled to South Africa fearing for his life after security agents reportedly harassed him for writing a series of stories about the executive arm of government (MISA, 2014). In March 2016, freelance journalist Sonny Serite was arrested and held overnight at a police station in Gaborone, where he was denied access to a lawyer; Serite had recently published a series of stories about corrupt contracts involving the national railway (Freedom House, 2017).

7. Autocratic Rule Displaces Institutions

In his inauguration speech, Khama pledged that his administration would be guided by among other pillars, democracy (Khama, 2008). However, Khama's leadership typified autocracy where a leader dominates state institutions. Good (2009:320) postulates that "two characteristics of Khama's highly personalised rule during the period 1998-2009 stand out –his reliance on edicts or directives, and decision by caprice". For instance, whereas consultation in policymaking lies at the center of a democracy, Khama unilaterally pronounced policy positions. In this respect, Good (2009:323) avers that "president Khama's apparent reliance on close loyalists influenced his leadership style, elevating his military and dynastic personality, and excluding others and especially established institutions and processes from the running of the country". To illustrate, in 2008, Khama imposed a 30% alcohol levy without prior due consultation with all stakeholders involved. In so doing, Khama alienated captains of industry and civil society which is an anathema to due consultation in the policy making process.

As if that was not enough, Khama unilaterally pronounced a salary adjustment of 3% in 2010 at a

kgotla meeting while a consultative process at the bargaining council was underway. As noted earlier, Khama strategically chose his audience, and abhorred engaging with the unions, let alone allow a legally constituted bargaining process to unfold. A personal ruler circumvents institutions and legitimizes his decisions by appealing and endearing himself to a specific group of people, something that Khama mastered excellently. Moreover, the independence of the judiciary came under attack as Khama unilaterally made judicial appointments disregarding the Judicial Services Commission. The Judicial Services Commission that is charged with among other functions recommending judicial appointments has not had it easy with Khama. Richard (2014) writes that Khama personalised judicial appointments and according to some commentators some of the appointments were politically motivated. In the same spirit, Good (2016) posits that there are serious limitations in the independence and strength of the judiciary and secrecy prevailed in the appointment of judges by the president on the recommendation of the Judicial Service Commission. For instance, among cases of secretive appointments is a fairly recent case in which the Judicial Service Commission had recommended the appointment of Omphemetse Motumise as a high court judge. President Ian Khama ignored the recommendation of the JSC and disclosed not his reasons for not appointing him. In granting Motumise appeal, Lord Arthur Hamilton "I am of the view that the President acted unconstitutionally in declining to appoint the second appellant to the office of a Judge of the High Court and that, in that respect, the appeal must succeed" (Mmegi, 2017). Even though the president eventually budged and grudgingly appointed Motumise as judge, his initial refusal to do so without divulging the reasons justified that indeed Khama personalized appointments.

8. Corruption and Public Financing of a Lifestyle

As noted, corruption is not a recent phenomenon in the politics of Botswana, but under the Khama regime it sowed to levels where Botswana even put it at 81% (Molomo, Molefe & Seabo, 2014). It is perhaps during Khama's reign that the status of Botswana declined according to reputable international indices such as Transparency International, Freedom House and The Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance. What is unique about Khama's presidency is that the president used state institutions

and or resources to finance his private life. The construction of an airstrip in his private property and subsequent constructions apparently carried out by the military using military resources is illustrative. According to a Sunday Standard report, Botswana Defence Force constructed an airfield in Mosu on a private piece of land owned by President Ian Khama. Once completed, the airfield will form part of the president's elaborate array of holiday resort infrastructure (Sunday Standard, 2013). Characteristic of African personal rulers who amassed wealth at expense of public resources, on the eve of his departure from power, Khama prevailed over BDP MPs to pass a bill to amend the pensions and retirement benefits which was viewed by the opposition as attempts to sustain the president's lifestyle. The list of Khama's retirement benefits is probably a far cry from what his predecessors are entitled to.

"In addition to other benefits, new clauses permitted the president to work in government while he continued to earn 80% of his monthly salary and even to choose his preference of location for retirement home. Moreover, the president, a pilot by training, could fly government aircraft, use boats or any other preferred mode of transport." (Chida, 2017).

Even though some of the benefits including flying government aircraft have since been reversed under the new administration, it is notable that just like African personal rulers Khama exhibited a character of a personal ruler and was willing to go miles to achieve whatever he wanted. The reversal and curtailment of Khama's luxurious package of benefits have lately caused consternation between Khama and his successor president Masisi, who unexpectedly moved swiftly to isolate Khama.

9. Conclusion

Personal rule has been a defining feature of several political systems on the African continent. For most of the post-independence era, Botswana resembled a unique case of democratic practice and good leadership. However, the ascendance of Ian Khama to state power in 2008 heralded an aura of fear, abuse of freedoms, autocratic rule at the expense of institutional governance, and increased corruption, all of which are the hallmarks of personal rule. The paper argued that while Botswana continues to uphold multiparty democracy and respects presidential transitions, Khama weakened fundamental precepts

of democratic rule and entrenched personal rule. The paper observed that personal leadership of Khama was in part created by some ruling party loyalists and to some extent unsuspecting citizens in rural areas. This paper concludes by noting that Africa needs leadership regeneration with the active participation of civil society. According to Maathai (2010), people and their organizations must become more involved in decision-making processes as this will be the only way to check the betrayal, corruption, excesses, and opportunism of the state and political elites.

References

- Arori, P. 2007. Dictionary of Political Science. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons.
- Arriola, L.R. 2009. Patronage and Political Stability in Africa. *Comparative Political Studies*, 42(10):1339-1362.
- Chida, D. 2017. Debate on Khama's Benefits Rages on. The Voice. Available at: www.thevoicebw.com/. Accessed on 9 June 2018.
- Dubbeld, G. 1992. They Fought for Freedom: Seretse Khama. Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman.
- Freedom House, 2017. Freedom in the World: Botswana. Available at: www.freedomhouse.org/ Accessed on 10 June 2018.
- Gavin, M.D. 2018. Bucking Authoritarian Trend, Botswana Welcomes Its Fifth New President. Africa in Transition. Available at: <https://www.cfr.org>.
- Good, K. 2002. Rethinking Non-accountability and Corruption in Botswana. *Africa Insight*, 32(3):11-18.
- Good, K. & Taylor, I. 2006. Unpacking the 'model': presidential succession in Botswana. *Leadership Change and Former Presidents in African Politics*, 51.
- Good, K. & Taylor, I. 2008. Botswana: A minimalist democracy. *Democratization*, 15(4):750-765.
- Good, K. 2009. The presidency of General Ian Khama: The Militarization of the Botswana 'Miracle'. *African Affairs*, 109(435):315-324.
- Good, K. 2016. Democracy and development in Botswana. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 35(1):113-128.
- Kaelo, G., 2018. I feared DIS – Former Minister Kebonang. Available at: www.mmegi.bw/. Accessed on 10 June 2018.
- Khama, I. 2009. Inauguration Address by His Excellency the President of the Republic of Botswana Lt. General Seretse Khama Ian Khama, 20 October 2009. Available at: www.gov.bw.
- Kasfir, N. 1998. "No-Party Democracy" in Uganda. *Journal of Democracy*, 9(2):49-63.
- Ihonvbere, O.J. 1997. Democratization in Africa. *Peace Review*, 9(3):371-378.
- Harberson, J.W. & Rothchild, D. (eds) 2013. Africa in World Politics: Engaging a Changing Global Order. Westview Press.
- Herbst, J. 2001. Political Liberalization in Africa after ten years. *Comparative Politics*, (33)3:357-375.
- Jackson, R.H. & Rosberg, C.G. 1982. *Personal rule in Black Africa: prince, autocrat, prophet, tyrant*. California: University of California Press.
- Jackson, R.H. & Rosberg, C.G. 1984. Personal rule: Theory and practice in Africa. *Comparative Politics*, 16(4):421-442.
- Joseph, R. 1997. Democratization in Africa after 1989: Comparative and theoretical perspectives. *Comparative politics*, 29(3):363-382.
- Khama, S. 1970. Botswana – A Developing Democracy in Southern Africa. Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.
- Lotshwao, K. & Suping, K. 2013. The 2010 split of the Botswana Democratic Party. *Pula: Botswana Journal of African Studies*, 27(2):343-360.
- Maundeni, Z. & Seabo, B. 2015. Management and Mismanagement of Factionalism in Political Parties in Botswana, 1962-2013. Botswana Notes and Records, 45.
- Maathai, W. 2009. The challenge for Africa: A new vision. *The Canadian Cartographer*, 55(3):391-396.
- McGowan, P.J. 2003. African military coups d'état, 1956-2001: frequency, trends and distribution. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 41(3):339-370.
- McVeigh, T. 2015. Rwanda Votes to Give President Kagame Right to Rule Until 2034. *The Guardian*.
- Media Institute for Southern Africa. 2009. African Media Barometer: Botswana 2009. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES). Windhoek.
- Media Institute for Southern Africa. 2014. Sunday Standard Senior Reporter Edgar Tsimane Granted Asylum by South African Government. Available at: www.misa.org/. Accessed on 9 June 2018.
- Mmegi. 2017. Khama Must Implement Motumise Judgement. Available at: www.mmegi.bw/. Accessed on 9 June 2018.
- Molomo, M.G. 2000. Democracy under siege: The Presidency and executive powers in Botswana.
- Molomo, R. 2012. Democratic deficit in the Parliament of Botswana. Cape Town. Creda Communications.
- Molomo, M.G., Molefe, W. & Seabo, B. 2015. Amid perceived escalating corruption, Botswana demand officials account and declare assets. Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 19. Available at: www.afrobarometer.org.
- Mokwena, N. 2017. Ombudsman Slams Btv's Biased News Coverage. Mmegi Online. Available at: www.mmegi.bw. Accessed on 8 June 2018.
- Moore, D. 2006. 'When I am a century old': why Robert Mugabe won't go. In Southall, R. and Melber, H. (Eds) Legacies of power: *Leadership change and former presidents in African politics*. Nordiska Afrikainstitutet; HSRC Press.
- Nasha, M.N. 2014. Madam Speaker, Sir! Breaking the Glass Ceiling: One Woman's Struggles. Diamond Educational Publishers.
- Poku, N. & Mdee, D.A. 2013. *Politics in Africa: A new introduction*. Zed Books Ltd.

- Richard, K. 2014. *The Scandalous Murdering of Democracy*. Gaborone: Botswana Library Cataloguing in Publication Data.
- Roessler, P. 2011. The enemy within: Personal rule, coups, and civil war in Africa. *World Politics*, 63(2):300-346.
- Rotberg, R. 2013. *Africa emerges: Consummate challenges, abundant opportunities*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Schraeder, P.J. 2004. *African politics and society: A mosaic in transformation*. Belmont CA.
- Southall, R. & Melber, H. 2006. (Eds) *Legacies of power: Leadership change and former presidents in African politics*. Nordiska Afrikainstitutet; HSRC Press.
- Sunday Standard. 2013. *Khama's Mosu Built with Public Funds*. Available at: www.sundaystandard.info/. Accessed on 9 June 2018.
- Tangri, R. 2006. Politics and presidential term limits in Uganda. In Southall, R. and Melber, H. (Eds) *Legacies of power. Leadership change and former presidents in African politics*, pp.175-196. Nordiska Afrikainstitutet: HSRC Press.
- Zack-Williams, A.B. 2001. No democracy, no development: reflections on democracy & development in Africa. *Review of African Political Economy*, (28):213-223.