

# **Beacon of Hope**

## Human Rights and Decolonisation in Botswana, 1960-80



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This thesis is submitted in total fulfilment for the degree of  
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## *Abstract*

This thesis is a history of human rights and decolonisation in Botswana from 1960 to 1980. It argues that Botswana became a ‘success story’ for human rights because the post-colonial leadership interpreted these principles as conducive to the vital interests of the state. The project joins a growing list of case studies, at the vanguard of the scholarship, that unmask the contribution of small non-Western states to the international history of human rights. At independence in 1966, the country was economically underdeveloped and geographically vulnerable, surrounded by white minority regimes like apartheid South Africa and Rhodesia. To become a viable and autonomous state, Botswana used human rights idealism to attract assistance from North America and Western Europe. The investigation traces the development of President Seretse Khama’s concept of ‘non-racial democracy’, a philosophy based on international standards of human rights. By enshrining political liberties and individual protections in Botswana, he offered a model for how these principles could be applied in Southern Africa, thereby undermining the legitimacy of neighbouring white minority regimes. Western nations, especially the United States (US), gave substantial amounts of aid to Botswana as a reward for its efforts. Not restricted to a liberal-democratic version of human rights, Botswana earned respect in independent Africa for its advocacy of collective liberation in the region. This challenges the view, held by many scholars, that the movements for individual human rights and national self-determination were mutually exclusive. With the use of original archival material from Botswana, the United Kingdom, and the US, this thesis also offers a new political history of the country’s lead up to independence and its external affairs by showing the important role of human rights ideas and debates. Botswana’s acclaimed ‘success’ in human rights was an outstanding example of image-building in circumstances where survival was tied to international visibility.

## *Statement of Authorship*

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma. No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis. This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

James Kirby  
10 February 2017

## *Acknowledgements*

I am proud to share the achievement of completing this project with the scholars, researchers, and students I have encountered throughout the journey. This work was a collective effort that would not have been possible without the generous assistance of friends and colleagues. If help was not given directly, there was always a wealth of encouragement I could depend on at any moment in a time of need.

I would firstly like to credit the good fortune I had to complete my dissertation at the History Department of La Trobe University. The Department stands proudly as an institution with a long history of its own that resonates throughout the hallway. There have been many times, working after-hours, when the building was pitch-black, freezing cold or swelteringly hot (depending on the time of year), and sometimes literally falling apart. Yet, I always had a sense that the work I did in David Myers Building East formed part of a long pedigree of outstanding research that has been ongoing for decades. I owe a debt to the History staff who provided, and helped to defend, the provision of a permanent desk for higher degree research students. As a result, almost all of the writing in this dissertation was completed within the History Department. I hope that work like this can help justify further research and teaching in History at La Trobe for another fifty years and more.

The one person who deserves the most thanks is my supervisor, Dr. Roland Burke. I may not have chosen to undertake Honours in History without attending Roland's excellent undergraduate subject: 'South Africa: Apartheid, Reconciliation, and Beyond'. Even at that early stage, it inspired me to learn more about what happened further north across the border in the era of apartheid. The first signs of Roland's continuous and indefatigable support can be found in the extensive comments offered on my major assignments. When I asked for more information about Honours, Roland's advice via email was lengthy, showing a level of consideration I would later find to be consistent with all spheres of his supervision style. I cherished and sought to live up to this level of care in my own work. Roland has read countless chapter and full-thesis drafts, with a remarkable return speed on each occasion. If this work was to make a worthy contribution to the literature, it would be due to this attention to detail and personal sacrifice on Roland's own time where he went well beyond the expectations of a doctoral supervisor. The specialist guidance and expertise was at a world-class standard that I would not exchange for anything else. There were also many occasions when Roland assisted me with administrative problems that could have set back my project many months without such forceful intervention. At times of great pressure in the academic field, it was just as helpful to discuss such non-academic points of interest like: Donkey Kong, Star Trek, Indiana Jones, or Rosamund Pike. Thank you Roland!

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In looking further back at the origins of my interest in history, I thank my first brilliant History teacher, Mr. Ben Jeacocke. His Year 12 Australian History subject taught me how to organise complex historical patterns into clear-minded thoughts and to think about history in the context of today's world. The first history books I read were those I stole from my brother, Michael Kirby, where I was introduced to Niall Ferguson, Simon Schama, and Eric Hobsbawm. I am honoured to continue and extend the deep interest in history of my parents and grandparents.

I dedicate this thesis to my mother.

## *Illustration Acknowledgements*

- 1 Map of Africa, worldatlas,  
<http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/africa/lgcolor/bwcolor.htm>.
- 2 Map of Botswana, worldatlas,  
<http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/africa/lgcolor/bwcolor.htm>.
- 3 Ruth Khama and Seretse Khama, 1 April 1950, Africa at LSE,  
<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2012/04/04/question-time-with-alice-mogwe-lseafricanleadership/>.
- 4 Seretse Khama and Frank Pakenham at Independence Conference, Marlborough House, London, February 1966 in Emmanuel Kwaku Akyeampong and Henry Louis Gates (eds), *Dictionary of African Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 357.
- 5 G. Mennen Williams observing a People's Party protest led by Philip Matante, 1961, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Ge0qlOmQu8>.
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- 7 Coat of arms of Botswana, Government of Botswana, <http://www.gov.bw/en/>.
- 8 Map of Botswana, edited by author, worldatlas,  
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- 9 Seretse Khama and Gerald Ford at the White House, 9 June 1976, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library,  
[https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/whphotos/B0163\\_NLGRF.jpg](https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/whphotos/B0163_NLGRF.jpg).
- 10 Kenneth Kaunda, Josip Broz Tito, Indira Gandhi, Julius Nyerere, Milton Obote, and Seretse Khama at the Third Non-Aligned Conference in Lusaka, Zambia, September 1970, juliusnyerere.org,  
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- 11 Kenneth Kaunda and Seretse Khama, undated, Mmegi,  
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- 12 Lieutenant General Ian Khama, 7 June 2010, The Conversation,  
<https://theconversation.com/botswana-at-50-the-end-of-an-african-success-story-65349>.

*Abbreviations*

AAI	African-American Institute
ADST	The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
AI	Amnesty International
ANC	African National Congress, South Africa
BDF	Botswana Defence Force
BDP	Bechuanaland/Botswana Democratic Party
BIP	Botswana Independence Party
BLS	Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland
BNARS	Botswana National Archives and Records Services, Gaborone
BNF	Botswana National Front
Bot-Zam	Botswana-Zambia Highway
BPP	Bechuanaland/Botswana People's Party
CO	Colonial Office Papers
CPP	Convention People's Party, Ghana
CSAD	Central and Southern African Department
DBB	David Benjamin Bolen Papers
DO	Dominions Office Papers
EC	European Commission
HCT	High Commission Territory
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ITN	Independent Television News
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office Papers
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States Series, 1969-1976
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration, United States
NGO	Non-governmental organisations
NSC	National Security Council, United States
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
Oxfam	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress, South Africa
PRC	People's Republic of China
RHL	Rhodes House Library, Oxford University
RNPL	Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADCC	Southern African Development Coordination Conference
SHL	Senate House Library, University of London
Tan-Zam	Tanzania-Zambia Railway
TANU	Tanganyika African National Union
TNA	The National Archives of the United Kingdom, London
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNIP	United National Independence Party, Zambia
UNTAB	United Nations Technical Assistance Board



*James Christian Kirby*

US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
USDEL	United States Delegation
USCINCEUR	United States Commander in Chief, Europe
USUN	United States Mission at the United Nations

## Maps



1 Map of Africa. Courtesy: worldatlas.



2 Map of Botswana. Courtesy: worldatlas.

## **Beacon of Hope: Human Rights and Decolonisation in Botswana, 1960-80**

*'We have in the past nine years succeeded in laying the foundations for a non-racial society, a society in which respect for human rights has become a national ideal. For us the Universal Declaration on Human Rights is not only "a common standard of achievement for all peoples and nations" but it is more than anything else a national vehicle through which we have been able to "reaffirm our faith in the dignity and worth of the human person"'. – Seretse Khama, Human Rights Day, 10 December 1975.<sup>1</sup>*

Thirty years after the founding of the United Nations (UN), on the twenty-seventh anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the President of Botswana saw universal respect for human rights as a distant dream. In a decade later proclaimed by many scholars to be the genesis of the human rights movement, Seretse Khama observed the failure of the international community to realise the utopia outlined within the 1945 UN Charter and the 1948 UDHR. The 1970s had failed the 1940s. The people of the world had not come together united by a common ideology for the inherent rights of men and women. Rather, as the President admonished, there was a dearth of confidence and will to fulfil the hopes and aspirations of the delegates who met in San Francisco, Lake Success, and Paris. Within Botswana's own neighbourhood, Africans living under white minority regimes were being subjected to colonial domination, racial oppression, and political persecution. There were forces of freedom in the region fighting against the forces of oppression, but much of the Western world had condemned them as 'communists' and 'terrorists'. From Seretse's viewpoint, this was no breakthrough moment for human rights but a breakdown in their respect.

Seretse, understandably, would have felt betrayed. Botswana had honoured its human rights obligations, but the rest of the world had not. The UN had promised international peace and security through a commitment to these standards, but neither stability nor freedom from servitude had been brought to Southern Africa. The President had a credible platform to make such criticisms as his country had enshrined human rights in its constitutional law, national identity, and foreign policy. If the 1970s were the birth of a new

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<sup>1</sup> Seretse Khama, 'Broadcast to the Nation on the occasion of Human Rights Day, 10 December 1975' in Gwendolen M. Carter and E. Philip Morgan (eds), *From the Frontline: Speeches of Sir Seretse Khama* (London: Rex Collings, 1980), 201-3.

era of human rights, Botswana was among its luminaries, as a non-racial democracy that maintained a record that exceeded all other African post-colonial states. As the President noted, a commitment to human rights was not a new one for the country, as Botswana had been officially wedded to these principles since independence in September 1966. If state, non-state, and inter-state actors in North America and Western Europe had not fully embraced human rights until the 1970s, for Seretse, the West was still catching up with Botswana. In embracing human rights idealism at such an early stage, Botswana was about ten years ahead of the global movement. Botswana's commitment to human rights was not driven by pure idealism, but an acknowledgement of the strategic utility of these ideas for a vulnerable and underdeveloped state.

Despite the sombre tone of the Human Rights Day speech, the President had found great political dividends investing in the symbolic currency of idealism. Human rights held intrinsic worth for Seretse, but by pledging his country to these precepts, they brought international sympathy, economic assistance, and at least some security from external threats. He governed a beacon of hope in perhaps the most depressing part of the continent. At independence, the territory was landlocked between white minority regimes in South Africa, South-West Africa, and Rhodesia, and within proximity to Portuguese rule in Angola and Mozambique. Botswana was dependent on the South African apartheid regime for a trading route, and susceptible to crippling sanctions and violent incursions. Without military or economic power, Botswana attained strength in its performative moralism. As a viable model for majority rule, the country's existence and apparent achievements undermined the basic justification for minority rule: that a harmonious, integrated multi-racial society was not possible in Southern Africa. Botswana's message to the world was that it was determined to provide such a persuasive example that white populations throughout the region would change their attitudes and wish to adopt a non-racial democracy. There was an underlying strategic imperative behind this mission statement, oriented toward sustaining the independence of the country. Seretse created a narrative that would encourage vital international assistance to help Botswana secure its future. The more foreign aid the country received on its path to prosperity, it was declared, the more it would delegitimise the white minority regimes. Overtly pursuing political and economic 'success' was ultimately an act of self-protection, rather than inflated self-confidence.

Seretse's story moved hearts across the globe, if not so much within the region. He spoke eloquently of Botswana's struggle to the United Nations General Assembly, the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, the Dag Hammarskjöld Centre in Uppsala, and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Singapore. By the early 1970s, these foreign outreaches cultivated Botswana's reputation as one of the most important countries in the world for the advancement of human rights. Botswana was exceptional for building a non-racial democracy in a region divided by racial conflict, but there were further distinctions. Whilst almost all African post-colonial states had abandoned political liberties and individual protections supposedly for the sake of security and development, when facing very similar problems, Botswana had maintained such freedoms for its citizens. Furthermore, Seretse's government saw these human rights as conducive to building a more secure and prosperous state. From a position of underdevelopment and malnourishment amongst its population, the economy's record of rapid growth had disproved the 'full-belly thesis', prominent in Africa, that political and civil rights were not possible before economic rights had been satisfied.<sup>2</sup> Accolades flowed in, often followed by very meaningful forms of psychological support and material aid. The country was applauded by the local American Embassy, the State Department, and Congress, and its potential importance was recognised by Presidents Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and Jimmy Carter. At one point, Botswana was estimated to have received more aid per capita from the United States (US) than any other recipient, including a major road link to improve access across its minuscule border with Zambia to the north. Human rights were not so much a matter of ideals for Botswana as a means for survival.

Botswana held an attachment to a typically Western notion of human rights, based on political liberties and individual protections. The country also convincingly adopted another interpretation of human rights that inspired those who had lived or continued to live under colonial rule and racial oppression. In upholding both individual and national self-determination, Botswana overcame a gulf between the West and the Third World. While the former was generally ambivalent, at best, on liberation politics, the latter prioritised national

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<sup>2</sup> For example, Colonel Ignatius Acheampong, former military leader of Ghana, stated '[o]ne man, one vote, is meaningless unless accompanied by the principle of 'one man, one bread'. See Rhoda E. Howard, 'The Full-Belly Thesis: Should Economic Rights Take Priority over Civil and Political Rights? Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa', *Human Rights Quarterly* 5:4 (1983): 467-90; Howard, 'The Dilemma of Human Rights in Sub-Saharan Africa', *International Journal* 35:4 (1980): 726, 735; *Seminar on the Study of New Ways and Means for Promoting Human Rights with Special Attention to the Problems and Needs of Africa: Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania, 23 October – 5 November 1973* (New York: United Nations, 1973): 9-11.

independence. Botswana was without a significant mass movement for independence. Seretse's government, apparently devoid of the requisite anti-colonial credentials, was initially regarded with scepticism amongst fellow majority-ruled nations on the continent. Unusually for an African nationalist, Seretse only began to forcefully advocate the principle of national self-determination after independence. The leadership sought to prove the viability and strength of its autonomy from racist governments, as well as its support for liberation movements in the region. In a high-wire act between white minority regimes and independent Africa, it was Botswana's pronouncements for collective self-determination, not individual rights, that brought it credibility within the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). By proclaiming a belief in both individual and national self-determination, Botswana had a broad terminology to find commonalities with both distant and continental partners. Human rights, true to its variegated interpretations and meanings, were deployed as a strategic device with numerous uses for multiple audiences.

Human Rights Day in 1975 was a day for both celebration and solemnity. From Seretse's standpoint, if the 1970s were truly a breakthrough decade for human rights, they would have brought the international security and tranquillity it promised. The President may have been gratified by having extracted an extensive degree of strategic and material benefit from observing human rights. However, he could not guarantee the peace of Botswana as long as humankind continued to fail its vision for human rights. To the extent that Botswana benefited from its human rights record, the rest of the world had appreciated these principles. To the extent Botswana remained imperilled by racial conflict in Southern Africa, the international community was a disappointing custodian for fulfilling the dreams of 1945 and 1948.

This thesis argues that Botswana became committed to human rights idealism because it recognised it as a vital strategic asset. The origins of this are found in the 1960s, well before the West in the 1970s portrayed human rights as the leading moral ethos for humanity. Botswana experienced the political and economic advantages to be gained from a strong human rights record, as its liberal-democratic values made it a donor darling for Western nations. Unlike the professedly anti-political movement for human rights in North America and Western Europe, Botswana's use of the phraseology and philosophy was more consciously political, being overtly and inextricably wedded to the survival of the state. Unlike other African post-colonial states, Botswana saw the political capital of human rights,

not as a short-lived tool for attaining national self-determination, but as a durable instrument for sustaining it. Botswana's contribution to the evolution of human rights was to show the applicability of such freedoms in the direst geographical setting for race relations. These ideals were shown to not only be virtuous on their own terms, but also vital in furthering the imperatives of a vulnerable and underdeveloped state. Human rights were compatible with Botswana's political interests and this is why they triumphed in a region where they often tragically failed.

### **Historical Background: From Bechuanaland to Botswana**

When the territory of modern-day Botswana was fully annexed by Britain in 1885, it was known as the Bechuanaland Protectorate. The British occupied it to prevent expansionism from Boers to the south and Germans to the west, thereby securing an important access route to the north. The traditional leaders, the diKgosi, held concerns over encroachment on their land by nearby settlers and foreign powers, and feared attacks from the hostile Matabele people to the east. Some diKgosi had earlier made direct appeals to the British for protection, while others simply acquiesced.<sup>3</sup> The British never held great material or strategic interest in the territory, so there was little investment in developing Bechuanaland economically. Unlike a formal colony, the Protectorate was placed under indirect rule through the diKgosi, who were permitted to keep some of their powers. Colonial occupation was therefore not as oppressive or exploitative as other British dependencies on the continent. Rather than hold on to the land, the British continually explored ways to depart. An opportunity soon arose in the early 1890s after Cecil Rhodes, a mining magnate and head of the British South Africa Company (BSACo), established British rule in Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia. Rhodes negotiated with the British for BSACo to take over administration of Bechuanaland. He was denied after three leading diKgosi travelled to Britain in 1895 to protest, finding support from Queen Victoria.<sup>4</sup> The possibility of a transfer arose again in 1910 during the establishment of the Union of South Africa. Included in the Act to create the Union was a provision to eventually incorporate the three High

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<sup>3</sup> J. Mutero Chirenje, *A History of Northern Botswana 1850-1910* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1977), 126-8, 133; Chirenje, *Chief Kgama and His Times: The Story of a Southern African Ruler* (London: Rec Collings, 1978), 125; Anthony Sillery, *The Bechuanaland Protectorate* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952).

<sup>4</sup> Robert I. Rotberg, *The Founder: Cecil Rhodes and the Pursuit of Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979); D. M. Schreuder, *The Scramble for Southern Africa, 1877-1895: The Politics of Partition Reappraised* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); D. K. Fieldhouse, *Economics and Empire: 1830-1914* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973).

Commission Territories (HCTs) of Bechuanaland, Basutoland, and Swaziland.<sup>5</sup> For over fifty years, South African leaders requested for the British to deliver on this supposed promise, but it was delayed and ultimately rejected.<sup>6</sup>

Bechuanaland's fate over the potential transfer was tethered to the history of South Africa. While racial discrimination was prevalent in Britain and throughout the Empire, including Bechuanaland, the notion of handing over the HCTs to South Africa was politically implausible. Politicians in Britain regularly expressed concern for the racialised policies and practices of the Union government. Winston Churchill, for instance, was a long-time advocate for maintaining British 'protection'.<sup>7</sup> As they were left without any guarantee regarding their future, the diKgosi made constant appeals for Britain to maintain its presence. The more segregated South Africa became, the more abhorrent and less likely was the possibility of a transfer. The election of the National Party in 1948, establishing the apartheid regime, showed South Africa was undertaking a more regressive pathway on race relations. Racial separation in South Africa dated back well before the twentieth century and a segregationist system of government emerged at the forming of the Union. Nevertheless, apartheid was distinct as an ethno-nationalist ideology, including a significant agenda for furthering physical, economic, and even 'national' separation.

The year of apartheid coincided with the signing of the UDHR, at a time when international opinion began to rally against segregation. In the context of the Cold War, South Africa was an important strategic partner for the West as a regional bulwark against Communism. External pressure for reform was difficult for foreign governments to pursue without risking wider geopolitical ramifications.<sup>8</sup> In 1959, Henrik Verwoerd, the Prime Minister of South Africa, attempted to obscure the oppressive nature of the apartheid system by shifting to the policy of 'separate development'. The project sought the outright

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<sup>5</sup> Great Britain Office of Commonwealth Relations, *Basutoland, The Bechuanaland Protectorate and Swaziland: History of Discussions with the Union of South Africa, 1909-1939* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1952).

<sup>6</sup> On the earlier periods of British colonial rule in Bechuanaland, see Fred Morton and Jeff Ramsay (eds), *The Birth of Botswana: A History of the Bechuanaland Protectorate from 1910 to 1966* (Gaborone: Longman Botswana, 1987); Sillery, *The Bechuanaland Protectorate*; Ramsay, 'The Establishment and Consolidation of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1870-1910' in W. A. Edge and M. H. Lekorwe (eds), *Botswana: Politics and Society* (Pretoria: J. L. van Schaik Academic, 1998), 62-98; Chirenje, *A History of Northern Botswana 1850-1910*; Chirenje, *Chief Kgama and His Times*; Michael Crowder, *The Flogging of Phineas McIntosh: A Tale of Colonial Folly and Injustice, Bechuanaland 1933* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); Ashley Jackson, *Botswana 1939-1945: An African Country at War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> Ronald Hyam, *The Failure of South African Expansion 1908-1948* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1972), 191.

<sup>8</sup> Saul Dubow, *Apartheid: 1948-1994* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 50, 291.



separation of African inhabitants by providing each ethnic group with a form of pseudo national self-determination in homelands or 'Bantustans'.<sup>9</sup> An earlier study into the creation of African land reserves, the 1955 Tomlinson Commission, envisaged Bechuanaland as a Bantu homeland.<sup>10</sup> These plans arose just as the British began to adopt a policy of multiracialism in the HCTs, resulting in an even deeper reluctance to agree to their incorporation. The creation of the Republic of South Africa and its exit from the Commonwealth in 1961 signified the end of any realistic hope for the transfer option. Regardless, Verwoerd still made offers to takeover administration of Bechuanaland in the early 1960s.



**3** *Ruth Khama and Seretse Khama, 1 April 1950. Courtesy: Africa at LSE.*

Seretse's own history was closely bound up with events in South Africa, becoming perhaps the most notable victim of human rights abuse in the Protectorate. As the heir to the chieftainship of the Bamangwato people, the largest tribal group in Bechuanaland, Seretse

<sup>9</sup> Dubow, *Apartheid*, 105-9.

<sup>10</sup> Neil Parsons, Willie Henderson, and Thomas Tlou, *Seretse Khama: 1921-80* (Braamfontein: Macmillan Bolewa, 1995), 145.

caused controversy when he married a white British woman, Ruth Williams, in London. The apartheid regime was outraged and made numerous threats, including the enforcement of Britain's earlier promise of a transfer. To ease tensions, the British government forced Seretse into exile in England from 1950 to 1956. He was only allowed to return to Bechuanaland after abdicating his claim to the chieftdom. Seretse may have been one of the first cases of concern for a post-UDHR transnational campaign, led by the Seretse Khama Fighting Committee in the United Kingdom (UK). In May 1950, the Council on African Affairs, including Paul Robeson as Chairman and W. E. B. Du Bois as Vice Chairman, sent a letter of concern to the Secretary General of the UN. Robeson and Du Bois cited Britain's violation of the UDHR's provisions against arbitrary arrest, detention, or exile to accentuate the legitimacy of their protest.<sup>11</sup>

Although the exile controversy stirred political debate amongst the Protectorate's African population, it was not until the establishment of the Executive Council and Legislative Council in 1961 that the first major political parties emerged. Under the 1960 constitution, the Executive Council was filled mainly by white government officials and representatives. Its role was to advise the High Commissioner and Resident Commissioner in their executive functions. With the advice and consent of the Legislative Council, the High Commissioner was empowered to make laws for the Protectorate. The Resident Commissioner, known as the Queen's Commissioner after September 1963, was the principal administrative officer in Bechuanaland. A total of twenty-one representatives were elected to the Legislative Council, consisting of ten Europeans, ten Africans, and one Asian. As white civil servants also served as official members, Africans remained outweighed in the political system in both power and numbers. While European and Indian members were elected through a direct vote from those within their racial group, the majority of the population was represented by those elected through their local African Councils. African adult males had only an indirect involvement in the electoral process by way of political institutions and practices at the tribal level.

Such disparities did not prohibit the Legislative Council from taking at least some action to improve racial harmony. The Legislative Council set up the Select Committee on

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<sup>11</sup> Susan Williams, *Colour Bar: The Triumph of Seretse Khama and His Nation* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), 153; Gerald Horne, *Black and Red: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War, 1944-1963* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 184.

the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which operated from July 1962 to October 1963. It investigated all forms of official discrimination in the Protectorate, and recommended the removal of all racialism in government, as well as any group within civil society requiring government funding or licensing. It was filled mainly by white members of the colonial authority and the Legislative Council, thereby undermining the impartiality of the process. The Select Committee heard both oral and written testimony from political leaders, workers, union activists, intellectuals, and farmers. From an estimated total population of 540,000 in August 1965, white residents constituted around 4,000 people, which was less than one per cent of the population.<sup>12</sup> Yet, Europeans owned some of the most fertile land in the Protectorate and formed much of the skilled workforce.

Seretse, himself a member of the Legislative Council and Executive Council, established the Bechuanaland Democratic Party with fellow African representatives. Despite his deplorable treatment by the British, Seretse pursued close cooperation with the colonial authority from within the institutions of government. The Democratic Party was formed over a year after the establishment in 1960 of the Bechuanaland People's Party. Created by former anti-apartheid activists from South Africa, the People's Party demanded immediate independence, adhering to the ideologies of anti-colonialism, pan-Africanism, and African Socialism. Both parties took part in the post-colonial transition that began in 1963, when the colonial authority held a conference to discuss the 1960 constitution and set out proposals for self-government under African majority rule. Bechuanaland would transition from segregated voter rolls and representation, whereby Europeans held a commanding position in government, to a common roll with the principle of one person, one vote. After the People's Party became crippled by internal divisions and lagging support, Seretse's organisation overwhelmingly won the first multi-party elections in March 1965. With a large majority in the Legislative Assembly, the Democratic Party soon took the country to independence on 30 September 1966. The new government would face great difficulties, given the lack of economic development and the continuing tensions with South Africa.

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<sup>12</sup> Bodleian Library, Oxford University, Papers of George Ivan Smith, MS. Eng. c. 6475, fol. 97, Report of the UN Secretary-General, 'Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples: Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland', 31 August 1965. In 1961, the total number of whites was only 3,200, see Churchill Archive Centre, Cambridge University, KNNK 19/4/11, The Papers of Neil Kinnock, Halpern, 'Recent History', 1988.

After being in such a vulnerable and underdeveloped state at independence, Botswana became one of the most acclaimed ‘success stories’ of Africa. The country began with little infrastructure and a handful of university-educated citizens, with few more having completed secondary school. It was also sparsely populated, with less than 600,000 people situated on a territory around the size of France. The Kalahari Desert covered much of the country, leaving some of the most fertile parts on a stretch of land along the south-eastern and eastern border. Tens of thousands of adult males were employed as migrant labour in the mines of South Africa. Without an established defence force until 1977, relying on local police for security, Botswana could not stop the multiple incursions it faced from South African and Rhodesian forces chasing suspected freedom fighters. Two key events typified the prolongation of white rule in the region and the exacerbation of racial conflict. The first was the apartheid regime’s massacre of African protestors at Sharpeville in March 1960.<sup>13</sup> This came only a few weeks after Harold Macmillan’s ‘wind of change’ speech in South Africa, signifying Britain’s acceptance of the transfers of power sweeping the continent. The second was the announcement of a Unilateral Declaration of Independence by Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith in November 1965, which was recognised by no country and seen universally as illegal.<sup>14</sup>

However, there were some important internal advantages for Botswana. The eight principal Bechuana nations originated from the same linguistic group and maintained friendly relations, thereby minimising the risk of internal instability or conflict. A crucial asset for Botswana came with the discovery of diamonds soon after independence, generating decades of income from vast mineral wealth. Instances of corruption were limited due to Seretse’s wish to uphold an image of accountability in government and the establishment of institutional mechanisms of control, including an Auditor General and a Public Accounts Committee.<sup>15</sup> The Democratic Party proved to be effective economic managers, using the mining boom in the 1970s and onwards to create one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Even with such natural resources, Botswana still required vast amounts of aid

<sup>13</sup> Tom Lodge, *Sharpeville: An Apartheid Massacre and its Consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>14</sup> Ian Smith, *Bitter Harvest: The Great Betrayal and the Dreadful Aftermath* (London: Blake Publishing, 2001), 89-118.

<sup>15</sup> Stefan Ittner, ‘Fighting Corruption in Africa - A Comparative Study of Uganda and Botswana’ (PhD dissertation, Deutschen Hochschule für Verwaltungswissenschaften Speyer, 2009), 60; Riccardo Pelizzo, ‘Public Accounts Committees in the Commonwealth: Oversight, Effectiveness, and Governance’, *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 49:4 (2011): 528-46; Parsons, Henderson, and Tlou, *Seretse Khama*, 380.

throughout the 1960s and early 1970s to provide public goods.<sup>16</sup> In the late 1970s, the government had a long list of proposed development projects that needed external development assistance and loan financing to become feasible. This thesis focuses on the political side of Botswana's 'success', as it maintained the strongest human rights record on the continent, and attracted vital support from the West and the OAU. Without such sympathy, Botswana's prospects for survival, let alone success, would have been bleak.

### Outline and Methodology

The key objective of this research is to determine how it came to be, on 10 December 1975, that an African leader could make such an affirmative statement on human rights from a credible platform. This thesis also evaluates the wider significance of Botswana for human rights history. Many scholars reiterate the leadership of the West in outwardly diffusing notions of human rights in this 'breakthrough' decade. Yet, Botswana presents a challenge to many common assumptions about human rights and its relationship to anti-colonialism, as advanced by eminent historians like Samuel Moyn, Jan Eckel, and Reza Afshari.<sup>17</sup> If the typical African nationalist movement spoke out in favour of human rights in the 1950s and 1960s, these scholars contend, it was to solely achieve the right to national self-determination, without an equivalent belief in political or individual freedoms. Human rights were only popularly adopted in the 1970s, they argue, because the promise of anti-colonialism had been proven to be a false god and national self-determination merely a shield against external interventions on human rights abuses. Botswana presents a counter-narrative. It enshrined political liberties and individual protections at independence, remained committed to them in the post-colonial era, welcomed international scrutiny of its domestic record, and only found legitimacy in the OAU as a supporter of national self-determination in the 1970s.

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<sup>16</sup> Even Dambisa Moyo, a forceful critic of foreign aid, recognises Botswana's need for external assistance in its early years. However, she ignores their continued appeals for help over the following decades. See Moyo, *Dead Aid: Why Aid is Not Working and How There is a Better Way for Africa* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2009), 38, 76.

<sup>17</sup> Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 84-119; Jan Eckel, 'Human Rights and Decolonisation: New Perspectives and Open Questions', *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 1:1 (2010): 111-35; Reza Afshari, 'On Historiography of Human Rights Reflections on Paul Gordon Lauren's "The Evolution of International Human Rights: Visions Seen"', *Human Rights Quarterly* 29:1 (2007): 1-67.

Much of the current literature on human rights is too sweeping to recognise or explain local abnormalities to the perceived general trend. Botswana has remained entirely invisible within the history of human rights. The name of the country has not been mentioned in key books and articles in the field, even as recent studies have begun to uncover the stories of other small states with debatably equal or lesser significance in human rights history.<sup>18</sup> The typical story of post-colonial disillusionment has been well accommodated in the literature. This has left Botswana to be treated, not as a refreshing contrast, but a complication on the periphery that is too marginal to have an obvious role within the grand academic narratives. In a finely detailed case study, Botswana offers new insight on the relationship between human rights and anti-colonialism. The country had legitimacy in both movements in a region of geopolitical significance.

The timeline for the thesis will begin in 1960-61, the years when the country first began to develop its own political parties, and finish in 1980, the year of Seretse's passing on 13 July. In building a political history of human rights in Botswana, there are two research questions that guide the analysis. The first is to consider why Seretse and the Democratic Party promised to uphold human rights before independence. More specifically, this thesis investigates why the Democratic Party became so tied to political liberties and individual protections, rather than the more common anti-colonial pillars of national self-determination, economic and social rights, and African communalism. The second is to ask what the strategic significance was for Botswana in having a strong human rights record. The research reveals the consequences of Botswana's human rights commitment for its international posture toward the West and within the OAU.<sup>19</sup> In answering both research questions, the thesis shows how the leading conceptualisation of human rights in Botswana was developed in response to alternative frameworks, ideals, and ideologies. Before the 1965 election, the Democratic Party's preference for liberal-democratic freedoms was made in opposition to the People's Party's call for immediate independence, socio-economic rights, and African entitlements to white-owned land. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Seretse

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<sup>18</sup> Meredith Terretta, "'We Had Been Fooled into Thinking that the UN Watches over the Entire World': Human Rights, UN Trust Territories, and Africa's Decolonisation', *Human Rights Quarterly* 34:2 (2012): 329-60; Terretta, 'From Below and to the Left? Human Rights and Liberation Politics in Africa's Postcolonial Age', *Journal of World History* 24:2 (2013): 396-8; Steven L. B. Jensen, *The Making of International Human Rights: The 1960s, Decolonisation and the Reconstruction of Global Values* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

<sup>19</sup> Frank Gerits has recently called for more historical accounts of Africa that recognise the 'complex strategies that diplomats from (former-) colonies pursued', especially in the context of the Cold War. See Gerits, "'When the Bull Elephants Fight': Kwame Nkrumah, Non-Alignment, and Pan-Africanism as an Interventionist Ideology in the Global Cold War (1957-66)', *The International History Review* 37:5 (2015): 964.

articulated a vision for non-racial democracy in juxtaposition to the racist ideas followed by the neighbouring white minority regimes. In each instance, the Democratic Party's human rights agenda was propelled by a strategic imperative for the wellbeing of the state, as well as its own political self-interest. Human rights idealism may have offered a clear and inspiring vision for the Democratic Party, but it was underpinned by a realist understanding of what Botswana needed to do to survive.

The first research question investigates the internal political developments before independence, while the second research question assesses the external ramifications after the transfer of power. Nonetheless, even a study of the domestic context during the colonial era must appreciate, for instance, the influence of well-known rights proclamations elsewhere, and the transmission of ideas between local political actors and their foreign allies or audiences. After 1960, the internationalist mindset of many local politicians, and the state's visibility on the world stage, meant such transnational connections became increasingly well-developed. This made up for decades of relative isolation from wider political forces on the continent. In addition, an analysis of Botswana's foreign policy should acknowledge the synergy between philosophies articulated by the government to domestic audiences and their recitation on the international stage. External actors played a part in the lead up to independence in Botswana, just as the ruling party recognised its popularity among domestic voters depended on its ability to acquire foreign assistance to fulfil its development plans.<sup>20</sup>

Botswana's experience was unusual for an African post-colonial transition, given the absence of a significant social movement for the right to national self-determination. The first chapter examines the contrast between the two parties on their outlook towards Bechuanaland's colonial liberation. On the one hand, the People's Party advocated for a rapid transfer of power in alignment with calls from African delegates at the UN and other anti-colonialists. On the other hand, the Democratic Party preferred close cooperation with the colonial authority, advocated a gradualist transition, and avoided mass mobilisation toward independence. Bechuanaland was disengaged from the predominant anti-colonial

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<sup>20</sup> This follows a broader scholarship that acknowledges the intersection between the local and the global, see Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 17, 252-3; Håkan Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 2-3, 57; Jamie Miller, *An African Volk: The Apartheid Regime and its Search for Survival* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 6-7, 12.

orthodoxy of the time which tended to prioritise self-determination as ‘the first right’.<sup>21</sup> Many internal observers expressed concerns over constitutional change without sufficient political, economic, and social development. The Democratic Party aimed to appease such fears under an electoral slogan of upholding ‘responsibility’ in government. Seretse believed a more pragmatic and cautious approach to independence would best ensure internal stability, external security, and economic development. The People’s Party exerted the most extreme rhetoric in the Protectorate, including threats to use violence. Although various corners of the Third World favoured the People’s Party’s radical posture and phraseology, as shown in the electoral result, it failed to gain nationwide sympathy before independence. The People’s Party fractured from internal rivalries while the Democratic Party won an overwhelming majority of voters. Nonetheless, with broad favourability and close connections within the OAU, the People’s Party remained the most popular organisation among African majority-ruled states. When the Democratic Party first entered government, it encountered suspicion and disfavour from around the continent. Seretse would only gain credibility in the post-colonial world as an advocate for the right to self-determination in the 1970s, well after Botswana attained its independence.

The lead up to independence saw other contests over human rights. This was a context where both parties outlined their post-colonial agenda and participated in the framing of a constitutional bill of rights. The second chapter reveals the divide between the Democratic Party’s emphasis on political liberties and the People’s Party’s promises of economic and social rights. The issue of racial discrimination played an integral part in the debate. The Democratic Party’s dream of a non-racial democracy, based on political and civil rights, was argued in juxtaposition to the People’s Party’s concerns for addressing inequality, including a set of socio-economic freedoms. The third chapter scrutinises a related political disagreement over race relations, but with greater ramifications for the development of a bill of rights in the territory. Botswana is a significant case study to assess as the only former British dependency in Africa to have retained, largely intact, its independence constitution and bill of rights. The outcomes of these constitutional discussions over the bill of rights would have a unique and ongoing legacy for the country. As the Democratic Party called for

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<sup>21</sup> Brad Simpson, ‘Denying the “First Right”: The United States, Indonesia, and the Ranking of Human Rights by the Carter Administration, 1976-1980’, *The International History Review* 31:4 (2009): 798-826; Simpson, “‘The First Right’: The Carter Administration, Indonesia, and the Transnational Human Rights Politics of the 1970s’ in Akira Iriye, Petra Goedde, and William I. Hitchcock (eds), *The Human Rights Revolution: An International History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).



individual protections without racial discrimination, the People's Party outlined a plan for African communalism, involving the nationalisation of white-owned land and capital. Seretse's mastery over image-building was shown in the way he characterised the bill of rights, a document that served to appease white minority interests, as evidence of 'non-racialism' in Botswana.

In chapters two and three, the Democratic Party justified the establishment of a non-racial democracy, built upon political liberties and individual protections, because of its alignment with the practical needs of the state. There was an awareness before independence of the potential moral force of human rights on the international stage, but Seretse's focus was on the domestic need for internal stability, economic prosperity, and social harmony. The Democratic Party argued their proposal for a non-racial democracy, attached to a liberal-democratic framework of rights, could meet such imperatives. These two chapters explain a key premise of the thesis that 'non-racial democracy' is a philosophy of human rights based on internationally defined standards like the UDHR. Despite the pragmatic rationale for adopting such human rights, the non-racial society envisioned by the Democratic Party would occupy a more extravagant pretension in the post-colonial era.

As President, Seretse built an image of himself as an idealist on human rights in both rhetoric and practice. The fourth chapter traces the origins of Botswana's wider symbolism in the colonial period, when the British framed the Protectorate as an outpost of imperial trusteeship and an attractive shopwindow for racial harmony. Hardly anyone was persuaded by Bechuanaland's virtues, given its exceedingly poor state at independence. In a search for aid, Seretse rejuvenated the shopwindow-imagery to great effect in the post-colonial era. The moment of Botswana's ascendance on the world stage was marked by Seretse's address to the UN General Assembly on 24 September 1969. The speech featured the most articulate expression of Botswana's narrative: every portion of foreign aid and each step gained towards national 'success' would debase the legitimacy of the surrounding white minority regimes. Seretse emerged as distinct from other Third World or African post-colonial leaders, expressing a faith in the transformative potential of liberal-democratic and non-racial values, all in a voice of moderation. From the early 1970s, the discourse of hope shifted in tone to one more of desperation, as instability in the region became increasingly perilous. Botswana gradually moved its focus away from claims of transforming the region to preserving the freedoms that were in jeopardy from an escalation in racial conflict on its borders. Human

rights, evolving from its domestic articulation in constitutional and party-political terms, became an internationalist language that served the strategic considerations of the state. These values represented the national life and ideals of the country, becoming a source of inspiration for those on the global level who thereby saw an interest in Botswana's preservation and success.

No bilateral relationship demonstrates this better than the one between Botswana and the US. The appeal to successive American administrations, as the fifth chapter will show, brought substantial returns in psychological support, material aid, and the construction of the Botswana-Zambia road project. After Seretse's 1969 address to the UN, American officials, politicians, and policy-makers saw great potential in building symbolic ties with Botswana. US aid was given to reward and encourage Botswana's human rights record. Americans identified with Botswana's respect for political and civil rights, and sympathised with Seretse's wish to offer a model for non-racial democracy. US-Botswana relations also reveal the maximal limit of using human rights idealism for strategic gain. Beyond supporting Botswana as an island of peace and majority rule, the Americans missed numerous opportunities to develop their relations to a more comprehensive level. Henry Kissinger, America's Secretary of State, saw little practical role for Botswana while seeking a peaceful settlement in Rhodesia. Carter claimed to place human rights as a central consideration for American foreign policy, but there was not necessarily a commensurate increase in Botswana's importance within US priorities in the region. Without more vital strategic objectives at stake in the country, Botswana would not see greater support from the US. Botswana was most useful to Washington, not as a transformative influence within the region, but as a bridge builder for improving US relations further north. Nevertheless, even when the US was not entirely committed to its professed values, Seretse used human rights idealism to build links with what would become Botswana's most important aid partner in the 1970s.

America's attempt to sustain ties with both white minority regimes and independent Africa resembled a similar challenge confronted by Botswana. Seretse's government had to walk the same high-wire act, but the risks of overstepping towards one side or the other were much greater. The Democratic Party maintained an equilibrium between, on the one hand, the political demands of OAU members and liberation groups in the region and, on the other hand, the economic constraints of being intrinsically linked up with South Africa as a

trading route. The sixth chapter is a strong counterpoint to the first chapter, whereby the most conservative party on colonial liberation, the Democratic Party, was expressing much of the same rhetoric they had formerly refuted in their opponents, the People's Party. Botswana's political liberties and individual protections would not provide sympathy amongst African leaders in the same way it had done in the West. Instead, it threatened to be an obstacle as the country sought to find common values with abusers of such rights. The country became a self-confined, but constructive, partner in the quest for majority rule in the region. Botswana offered an open acceptance of refugees and vocal support for freedom fighters, but with only physical assistance to the former, not the latter. In its early years after independence, Botswana's autonomy from South Africa was questioned by the OAU. With the support of Zambia and Tanzania, despite their differing outlooks on human rights, Botswana's was eventually recognised as a legitimate African state and a fellow proponent of national self-determination. Most radically, in a point of distinction from the views of many Western governments, Seretse expressed an understanding for the use of violence by freedom fighters in the region. Botswana could acquire praise from the growing human rights movement in the West, by protecting political and civil rights, and the anti-colonial movement, by advocating collective liberation.

This thesis draws upon an extensive collection of original archival material that has either been rarely or never cited. A large body of the research was acquired at the Botswana National Archives and Records Services (BNARS) in Gaborone, the capital. Many of the files are only available at BNARS and have been scarcely examined by historians, particularly those on the 1962-63 Select Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and the constitutional talks between 1960 to 1966. BNARS currently offers very little documentation about Seretse's government after independence. The research was therefore broadened to sources in the UK, including acquisitions from the National Archives of the UK (TNA), London; the Senate House Library, University of London; the London School of Economics; the Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge University; and the Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies at Rhodes House, Oxford University. Many sets of files available at TNA have been totally ignored, including the reports of British Intelligence, the correspondence of senior colonial officials before independence, and the records of the British High Commission after independence. The findings from the UK were essential for understanding Botswana's internal political development and methods of diplomacy.

In the study of US-Botswana relations, this thesis is the first research project to utilise digitalised file sets from the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). This includes correspondence between the American Embassy in Gaborone and the State Department. The project also draws upon the papers of David Benjamin Bolen, the American Ambassador to Botswana from 1974 to 1976, at the Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University. These files have not been cited before in a history of Botswana and provide a unique source for investigating the country's ties with the US. Additional findings include collections from the Official Document System of the UN, the African Activist Archive, the Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library and Museum, and the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum. In addition to these archival findings, further material was collected from the Hansard of the Legislative Council, Legislative Assembly, and National Assembly; published government documents and reports; and the memoirs of political leaders, colonial officials, and activists.

The sources collected primarily feature the viewpoints of the colonial authority, the Democratic Party, foreign diplomats, and the UK and US governments. The perspective on offer in these records is from the 'top-down'. The methodology behind this collection of sources is based on an awareness that the development of human rights in Botswana largely occurred at the level of government. This thesis does not claim to offer a national 'history from below'. While more of such studies are needed on Botswana, there is little evidence, for now, of a significant 'bottom-up' human rights movement in the territory, whether for national self-determination, political liberties, or individual protections. However, the case study of Botswana offers a 'bottom-up' perspective on the wider history of human rights, as a country that has been marginalised within the scholarship's sweeping international narratives.

This thesis does not seek to write a comprehensive history of the period before independence on the British or either of the political parties, but to analyse the significance of the declarations for human rights made by the Democratic Party and the People's Party. These were acquired, for example, in copies of party speeches, records from constitutional discussions, and newspaper articles. Given the omission of these archival sources amongst scholars of Botswana, a lot of new information is discussed related to race relations, party politics, and the post-colonial transition. Colonial reports were biased in favour of the Democratic Party's prospects of success, mistrustful of the People's Party, and written with

an overtone of condescension towards Africans. The origins of the 'intelligence' disclosed is unclear, leaving no details on the identity of the informants, along with their motivations or agendas. Yet, with an appropriate level of caution, these boxes and folders are crucial for explaining key events and outcomes during Bechuanaland's lead up to independence. The aim is not to pass judgement on either party but to outline the political discourse during the lead up to independence.

The correspondence featuring diplomats from the UK and US places a heavy consideration for the interests of their home country, rather than those of Botswana. At the same time, these files and telegrams offer a critical insight for understanding why Botswana was so appealing to these foreign powers based on their common values, ideals, and objectives. The analysis of the post-colonial era showcases the role of the ruling Democratic Party, without an assessment of opposition parties like the Botswana National Front. Outside of government, such political groups had little influence over Botswana's prevailing human rights discourse in the same way as the People's Party before independence, when the constitution and bill of rights were still being negotiated. Botswana was a non-aligned state, and relations were eventually established with the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China (PRC) during the 1970s. This research project does not use sources from such localities because Botswana's liberal-democratic framework offered greater appeal amongst Western donors. There was little basis for a common standpoint on human rights with powers from the East. Regardless, this is the first history of Botswana to utilise records from such a wide range of British and American collections. It offers unique in-depth analysis of Botswana's capacity to build a powerful reputation on the world stage and the benefits it would bring.

The sources used are almost entirely textual, accepting the difficulty of acquiring interviews from those who held prominent positions of power. The current residence of those mentioned in this thesis, for those still alive, is divided between multiple continents. Unlike many histories of East Africa or West Africa, where newspaper sources are prevalent, Botswana did not have a vibrant print media culture during the time period.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless,

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<sup>22</sup> The newspaper sources available often reaffirmed the perspective of colonial officials or the post-colonial government. See James J. Zaffiro, 'The Press and Political Opposition in an African Democracy: The Case of Botswana', *The Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 27:1 (1989): 51-73; Zaffiro, 'Twin Births: African Nationalism and Government Information Management in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1957-1966', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 22:1 (1989): 51-77.

the papers of Jack Halpern, a South African writer and journalist, offer a refreshing commentary on the political developments throughout the 1960s. As the first and only history of human rights in Botswana, additional sources would be welcomed to add further to the research. Yet, the documents found for this thesis are the most vital to assess for filling in this gap of knowledge in the historiography of both human rights and Botswana.

Seretse Khama is a fruitful source for historical study, given his numerous speeches articulating his political policies and philosophy. However, these have only been published in partial segments and the President did not release a memoir. This may be why Seretse is a relatively forgotten African leader in numerous fields of scholarship, especially with the abundancy of readily attainable writings by contemporaries like Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah, and Jomo Kenyatta.<sup>23</sup> As one of the most important Africans for the development of human rights discourse, his story is indispensable for furthering this field of history. Seretse plays a predominant role as the main architect behind Botswana's development as a non-racial democracy. Nonetheless, the entire leadership group of the Democratic Party deserves recognition for their influence and commitment to the same ideals, including Quett Masire, Archibald Mogwe, Gaositwe Chiepe, and Moutlakgola Nwako. There have been a handful of accounts on Seretse's political and personal life, many focused on his exile.<sup>24</sup> There is no appreciation for his later contributions toward the field of human rights, and it is this aspect of his life that the thesis will uncover.

The thesis does not aspire to provide a full-scale examination of Botswana's human rights record. As much as possible, the analysis seeks to avoid the self-limiting labels of 'success' or 'failure' for constructing narratives of the past. The emphasis is on finding out why the notion and perception of 'success' in human rights was important for Botswana. The research is not only part of the relatively new and exciting field of human rights history, but contributes by providing a further desperately needed study at the national level in contrast to the numerous global perspectives. Rather than treat the state as simply either the greatest protector or abuser of domestic human rights, the thesis considers how a government can

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<sup>23</sup> For the only widely published collection of speeches, see Carter and Morgan (eds), *From the Frontline*. A memoir was released by Quett Masire, Botswana's first Vice-President and second President, see Stephen R. Lewis Jr. (ed), *Quett Ketumile Joni Masire: Very Brave or Very Foolish? Memoirs of an African Democrat* (Gaborone: Macmillan Botswana Publishing, 2006).

<sup>24</sup> Williams, *Colour Bar*; Parsons, Henderson, and Tlou, *Seretse Khama*; John Redfern, *Ruth and Seretse: 'A Very Disreputable Transaction'* (London: Gollancz, 1955); Michael Dutfield, *A Marriage of Inconvenience: The Persecution of Ruth and Seretse Khama* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990).

harness these ideas for various agendas in national, regional, and global terms. By furthering an understanding for why Botswana preserved such a high standard for human rights, the thesis may unearth ways to further such freedoms and protections in the present.<sup>25</sup>

Botswana's ability to align human rights idealism with its strategic and economic imperatives provides a powerful alternative to other African leaders who attempted to justify or rationalise human rights violations. This case study may offer some reasons to reconsider the full-belly thesis and cultural relativist objections to universal human rights.<sup>26</sup> If some African governments violated human rights for the purported sake of development or security, their views should be considered alongside the experience of Botswana. Far from undermining their autonomy, Botswana found its often fragile sovereignty reaffirmed by its human rights record. National independence was assured, not by dismissing human rights as a ploy for Western foreign intervention, but by embodying them to legitimise the authority of the state. The safeguarding of Botswana's independence through its attachment to universal ideals indicated the presence of a promising, but often wasted, strategic utility for human rights observance. Human rights may claim to be moralistic and above politics but, at least in this small state with physical and material weaknesses, Botswana shows human rights can prosper as an idealism when used as a positive, progressive, and productive form of instrumentalism.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> A similar ambition for this field of study can be seen in Bonny Ibhawoh, *Imperialism and Human Rights: Colonial Discourses of Rights and Liberties in African History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 3-4; Alice L. Conklin, 'Colonialism and Human Rights, A Contradiction in Terms? The Case of France and West Africa, 1895-1914', *The American Historical Review* 103:2 (1998): 441-2; Kathryn Sikkink, 'International Pressure on US Human Rights Matters Now More Than Ever', openDemocracy, 11 November 2016, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/openglobalrights/kathryn-sikkink/international-pressure-on-us-human-rights-matters-now-more-than-eve>.

<sup>26</sup> Howard, 'The Full-Belly Thesis'; Roland Burke, *Decolonisation and the Evolution of International Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 143-4.

<sup>27</sup> Some scholars are more pessimistic about the moral authority of human rights when these principles are advanced through state power. See Stephen Hopgood, *The Endtimes of Human Rights* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), xii-xiii, 171.

## Literature Review

The case study of Botswana, despite its modest size, has much to contribute to the historiography of human rights and its connection with decolonisation, whilst the use of a human rights lens can further the local history of the country. Within the modern historiography of Africa, Botswana has received little attention over the past few decades.<sup>28</sup> Much of the history that exists relies on texts written in the 1980s based on Marxist, dependency, and 'labour reserve' theories.<sup>29</sup> These writers have been criticised by Ashley Jackson as 'misleading', given their lack of sufficient nuance.<sup>30</sup> Ronald Hyam and Peter Henshaw have similarly argued against 'economic determinism' and 'overly speculative or theory-bound work'. In their study of the relationship between Britain and South Africa, they contend '[i]ntensive primary research is absolutely essential if history is not to succumb to the dangers of relying on abstract formulations'.<sup>31</sup> This thesis does not directly contend with the economic theorists, but a very different understanding emerges when undertaking empirically based research. As mentioned earlier, for methodological reasons, the sources used in this thesis offer a largely 'top-down' perspective in the local context of Botswana. This method is original in a scholarship that thoroughly critiques the British and the Democratic Party, while offering little critical analysis of the People's Party. The documentation offered in this thesis offers an alternative to the poorly substantiated allegations presented by many historians of Botswana.

With scant evidence, a large group of scholars have contended the British manufactured the Democratic Party and its subsequent victory. The colonial authority, according to this narrative, initiated the formation of the Democratic Party to 'destroy' the People's Party, funded the Democratic Party's political campaign through the Oxford

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<sup>28</sup> For instance, between 1960 and 2016, the *Journal of African History* published only four articles on Bechuanaland or Botswana. In the same time period, it published approximately twenty-six on Tanzania and Tanganyika, and forty-three on Ghana and the Gold Coast.

<sup>29</sup> Louis A. Picard, *The Politics of Development in Botswana: A Model for Success?* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1987); Jack Parson, *Botswana: Liberal Democracy and the Labour Reserve in Southern Africa* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984); Wazha G. Morapedi, 'State Assistance to White Freehold Farmers in the Tuli Block and Underdevelopment in Adjacent Areas, 1930-1966', *Pula: Botswana Journal of African Studies* 22:1 (2008): 5-22. Dependency theory is regarded by many contemporary scholars as outdated. See Paul Nugent, *Africa Since Independence: A Comparative History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 5.

<sup>30</sup> Jackson, *Botswana 1939-1945*, 18-9, 190. See also Peter Fawcus, *Botswana: The Road to Independence* (Gaborone: Pula Press, 2000), 40.

<sup>31</sup> Hyam and Peter Henshaw, *The Lion and the Springbok: Britain and South African since the Boer War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 4, 7. See also Giacomo Macola, "'It Means as If We Are Excluded from the Good Freedom': Thwarted Expectations of Independence in the Luapula Province of Zambia, 1964-6", *The Journal of African History* 47:1 (2006): 43-4.



Committee for Famine Relief (Oxfam), and bribed chiefs with Oxfam money to support the Democratic Party.<sup>32</sup> Although not always appropriately cited, these accusations rely on accounts by People's Party members or conjecture.<sup>33</sup> There are examples of the literature either neglecting a sufficient investigation into available archival material or misreading it. As a result, any new history of Botswana can find only limited assistance in the current scholarship, particularly when targeting a form of analysis as thorough as that currently produced on countries like Tanzania and South Africa.<sup>34</sup> The Democratic Party's legitimacy as the first ruling party of independent Botswana has been contested by some, despite its electoral success in 1965.<sup>35</sup> This segment of the literature upholds the view that the People's Party was unfairly denied any chance of winning power by the corrupted, deceitful, and unlawful Democratic Party. However, without credible evidence, these assertions should be viewed with scepticism. Ironically, such allegations distract from the very real and open support for the Democratic Party by the colonial authority, allowing them to gain credit during key moments of reform on race relations and constitutional change. Far from an underhanded conspiracy, the Democratic Party advertised its cooperation with the Protectorate administration as an electoral asset. This thesis offers a more balanced perspective on the period leading up to independence, relying entirely on archival evidence, but exercising appropriate caution when using colonial and government sources.

None of the localised histories of Botswana have focused on the usage or the evolution of human rights concepts in the country.<sup>36</sup> As the historical study of human rights is relatively new, unavoidably, the much older literature on Botswana is not sensitised to the

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<sup>32</sup> Randwezi Nengwekhulu, 'Some Findings on the Origin of Political Parties in Botswana', *Pula: Botswana Journal of African Studies* 1:2 (1979): 63, 68-9; Ørnulf Gulbrandsen, *The State and the Social: State Formation in Botswana and its Pre-Colonial and Colonial Genealogies* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 95; Picard, *The Politics of Development in Botswana*, 138-41; Roger Charlton, 'The Politics of Elections in Botswana', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 63:3 (1993): 342; Ramsay and Parsons, 'The Emergence of Political Parties in Botswana' in Edge and Lekorwe (eds), *Botswana*, 139; Kenneth Good, 'Interpreting the Exceptionality of Botswana', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 30:1 (1992): 72-3; Parsons, Henderson, and Tlou, *Seretse Khama*, 221.

<sup>33</sup> The Africa Institute, 'Political Developments in the Bechuanaland Protectorate', *International Bulletin* 2:2 (1964): 52; Fish Keitseng, *Comrade Fish: Memories of a Motswana in the ANC Underground*, compiled by Ramsay and Barry Morton (Gaborone: Pula Press, 1999), 103.

<sup>34</sup> Botswana's history is devoid of the in-depth research and conceptual analysis seen in recent texts on Tanzania and South Africa. See, for example, Emma Hunter, *Political Thought and the Public Sphere in Tanzania: Freedom, Democracy and Citizenship in the Era of Decolonisation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Priya Lal, *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania Between the Village and the World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Vivian Bickford-Smith, *The Emergence of the South African Metropolis Cities and Identities in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

<sup>35</sup> Brian T. Mokopagosi, 'The 1965 Self-Government Elections and the Transfer of Power in the Bechuanaland Protectorate', *South African Historical Journal* 60:1 (2008): 85-102.

<sup>36</sup> Ramsay, Morton, and Part Themba Mgadla, *Historical Dictionary of Botswana* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2008).

significance of these ideas.<sup>37</sup> Because human rights played such a key role in Botswana's external relations, and therefore its survival, this thesis offers a new and important lens for understanding the country's history. A human rights study offers an innovative perspective on Botswana's reception in the West, and its delicate balancing act between white minority regimes to the south and independent African states to the north.<sup>38</sup> US-Botswana relations have been overlooked by researchers in recent decades and no writer has highlighted the importance of human rights in their relationship.<sup>39</sup> The vibrant political debates on human rights, coursing throughout the lead up to independence and the development of the constitution, have also been disregarded as a key distinguishing feature between the Democratic Party and the People's Party. There has been no study to assess how the political parties developed distinctive views on human rights in response to racial discrimination, and no examination into the development of the Democratic Party's concept of non-racialism.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Previous writings on human rights in Botswana generally do not engage with the contemporary historiographical debates, often because they precede this new literature by many years. These texts do not fully consider the important role of these principles in the party politics leading up to independence nor the foreign policy of Botswana. See David R. Penna, 'Continuity and Change in Levels of Respect for Human Rights: Botswana and Lesotho in the Traditional, Colonial and Independence Periods' (PhD dissertation, University of Denver, 1993); Steven Neff, *Human Rights in Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland: Implications of Adherence to International Human Rights Treaties* (Roma: Institute of Southern African Studies, 1986); Lone Lindholt, *Questioning the Universality of Human Rights: The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights in Botswana, Malawi and Mozambique* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997); Nengwekhulu, 'Human Rights, Development and the Rule of Law in Post-Colonial Botswana' in Edge and Lekorwe (eds), *Botswana*, 351-62; Richard F. Wiesfelder, 'Human Rights in Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Malawi', *Pula: Botswana Journal of African Studies* 2:1 (1980): 5-32; Amelia Cook and Jeremy Sarkin, 'Is Botswana the Miracle of Africa? Democracy, the Rule of Law, and Human Rights Versus Economic Development', *Transnational Law & Contemporary Problems* 19:2 (2010): 453-89.

<sup>38</sup> There have been many significant contributions to the history of Botswana's foreign policy, but none of these discuss its symbolism, idealism, or discourse on human rights. There has also been little investigation into the full strategic importance of Botswana's image-building and perceived moral power. See Richard Dale, *Botswana's Search for Autonomy in Southern Africa* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995); Henderson, 'Independent Botswana: A Reappraisal of Foreign Policy Options', *African Affairs* 73:290 (1974): 37-49; Ian Taylor, 'Botswana's "Independent Foreign Policy": Gaborone-Beijing Relations', *Botswana Notes and Records* 30 (1998): 79-86; Zaffiro, 'African Legislatures and Foreign Policy-Making: The Botswana Case', *Botswana Notes and Records* 25 (1993): 39-58; Bertha Z. Osei-Hwedie, 'The Role of Botswana in the Liberation of Southern Africa since 1966' in Edge and Lekorwe (eds), *Botswana*, 425-39; Mgadla, '"A Good Measure of Sacrifice": Botswana and the Liberation Struggles of Southern Africa (1965-1985)', *Social Dynamics: A Journal of African Studies* 34:1 (2008): 5-16; Morapedi, 'The Dilemmas of Liberation in Southern Africa: The Case of Zimbabwean Liberation Movements and Botswana, 1960-1979', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 38:1 (2012): 73-90.

<sup>39</sup> See Zaffiro, 'US Relations with Botswana: 1966-1989', *TransAfrica Forum* 9:3 (1992): 57-74; Zaffiro, 'The US and Botswana in the 1990s: Eroding Continuity in a Changing Region', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 10:1 (1991): 18-44; Dale, 'The Implications of Botswana-South African Relations for American Foreign Policy', *Africa Today* 16:1 (1969): 8-12.

<sup>40</sup> There have been numerous important writings on Bechuanaland's political history from 1960 to 1966, but their conceptual framework, areas of interest, and primary sources are limited and outdated. For example, see James H. Polhemus, 'Botswana Votes: Parties and Elections in an African Democracy', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 21:3 (1983): 397-430; Ramsay and Parsons, 'The Emergence of Political Parties in Botswana', 134-50; Mokopagosi, 'The 1965 Self-Government Elections and the Transfer of Power in the Bechuanaland Protectorate'; Mpho G. Molomo, 'Political Parties and Democratic Governance in Botswana' in M. A. Mohamed Salih (ed), *African Political Parties: Evolution, Institutionalisation and Governance* (London: Pluto Press, 2003), 293-318; Charlton, 'The Politics of Elections in Botswana'; Zibane Maundeni, 'The Struggle for Political

Only two articles have been written on the history of racial discrimination in the Protectorate. The most recent, that of Part Themba Mgadla, lamented ‘the dearth of published material concerning racial discrimination in colonial Botswana’.<sup>41</sup> Some legal histories have been written, but none of these probe the development of the constitution or the bill of rights before independence with any depth.<sup>42</sup> Whilst this thesis is primarily a history of human rights in Botswana, given some of the deficiencies in other aspects of the historiography, the research can contribute an original viewpoint toward a better understanding of the country and its wider significance. Botswana is a special case study to behold as a state that relied uniquely on human rights idealism to craft its external relations, in a setting where strategically sound, foreign policy-making was unusually critical in shaping the fate of the country.

In the scholarship of Botswana, the most extensive historical debate is between those who characterise the country as a ‘success story’ and those who highlight the areas of ‘failure’. The country has drawn the attraction of many Western political scientists and economists, often seeking to find a positive test-case to substantiate their wider prescriptions for ‘success’ in democracy and development. Botswana provides reassurance to these authors, who find in it a mirror for their ideological presuppositions. Such writers self-select their own measurements for success, but not necessarily those of Botswana. The state is an enticing candidate to be included as proof for a theoretical argument. Botswana is Africa’s oldest democracy, and has maintained one of the highest rates of growth per capita in the world since independence, efficiently utilising its vast diamond wealth and foreign aid. The diagnosis for Botswana’s apparently thriving health as a country normally highlights its ‘good’ leadership, ‘good’ policies, and ‘good’ institutions.<sup>43</sup> This narrative has been contested by

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Freedom and Independence’ in Edge and Lekorwe (eds), *Botswana*, 118-33; Nengwekhulu, ‘Some Findings on the Origin of Political Parties in Botswana’.

<sup>41</sup> Mgadla, ‘Racial Discrimination in Colonial Botswana: 1946-1965’, *South African Historical Journal* 66:3 (2014): 486-503. See also Christian John Makgala, ‘A Survey of Race Relations in Botswana, 1800-1966’, *Botswana Notes and Records* 36 (2004): 11-26.

<sup>42</sup> Justice Akinola Aguda, ‘Legal Development in Botswana from 1885 to 1966’, *Botswana Notes and Records* 5 (1973): 52-63; Bankie Forster, ‘Introduction to the History of the Administration of Justice of the Republic of Botswana’, *Botswana Notes and Records* 13 (1981): 89-100; J. H. Pain, ‘The Reception of English and Roman-Dutch Law in Africa with Reference to Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland’, *The Comparative and International Law Journal of Southern Africa* 11 (1978): 137-67; I. G. Brewer, ‘Sources of the Criminal Law of Botswana’, *Journal of African Law* 18 (1974): 24-36.

<sup>43</sup> For accounts of Botswana’s ‘success story’, see Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty* (New York: Crown Business, 2012); J. Clark Leith, *Why Botswana Prospered* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005); Abdi Ismail Samatar, *An African Miracle: State and Class Leadership and Colonial Legacy in Botswana Development* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1999); Scott A. Beaulier, ‘Explaining Botswana’s Success: The Critical Role of Post-Colonial Policy’, *Cato Journal* 23:2 (2003): 227-40;

other economists and political scientists. Whilst many critics acknowledge the robust political and economic development of Botswana, they underscore the persisting levels of inequality, the deplorable treatment of indigenous minorities like the San, and the manifestation of corrupt and authoritarian tendencies, particularly in the years after the death of Seretse.<sup>44</sup> This thesis does not dispute the concerns raised by more pessimistic analysts. Some of the reasons for why Botswana is less distinguished on issues of socio-economic and collective rights may be discovered in this human rights history.

The major deficiency in the debate is within those who write about the ‘success story’, as they ignore one of the most important areas of achievement in Botswana’s history. The more hagiographical accounts miss the point about why the perception of ‘success’ is important for Botswana, and how they themselves may be an indirect product of the government’s effective appeal for international sympathy. Rather than assess whether Botswana should be ascribed the arbitrary label of ‘success’ or ‘failure’, the aim will be to uncover why the government strived so forcefully to be seen as successful in terms of its human rights record, as well as its political stability and economic growth. The answer suggested in this research shows the country needed to stand out as a beacon in terms of its principles to attract foreign aid and assistance. Seretse’s claim to donors was that if they could help Botswana become truly successful it would help to undermine the legitimacy of neighbouring white minority regimes. Yet, underlying these declarations was the awareness that Botswana needed to be recognised as a viable and legitimate state to avoid being destabilised and overrun by either South Africa or Rhodesia. Despite the appeal of

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Beaulier and J. Robert Subrick, ‘The Political Foundations of Development: The Case of Botswana’, *Constitutional Political Economy* 17:2 (2006): 103-15; Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and Robinson, ‘An African Success Story: Botswana’ in Dani Rodrik (ed), *In Search of Prosperity: Analytic Narratives on Economic Growth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 80-119; Robinson, ‘Botswana as a Role Model for Country Success’ in Augustin K. Fosu (ed), *Achieving Development Success: Strategies and Lessons from the Developing World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 187-203; Dickson A. Mungazi, *We Shall Not Fail: Values in the National Leadership of Seretse Khama, Nelson Mandela, and Julius Nyerere* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2005). For the latest popular rendition, see Kevin Bloom and Richard Poplak, *Continental Shift: A Journey into Africa’s Changing Fortunes* (London: Portobello Books, 2016), 51-89.

<sup>44</sup> For important counter arguments to the ‘success story’ narrative, see Parson, ‘Cattle, Class and the State in Rural Botswana’, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 7:2 (1981): 236-55; Good, ‘At the Ends of the Ladder: Radical Inequalities in Botswana’, *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 31:2 (1993): 203-30; Good, ‘Corruption and Mismanagement in Botswana: A Best-Case Example?’, *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 32:3 (1994): 499-521; Good, ‘Interpreting the Exceptionality of Botswana’, Parsons, ‘Botswana: An End to Exceptionality?’, *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 85:325 (1993): 73-82; Taylor, ‘As Good as It Gets? Botswana’s “Democratic Development”’, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 21:2 (2003): 215-31; Gulbrandsen, *The State and the Social*; Ellen Hillbom, ‘Diamonds or Development? A Structural Assessment of Botswana’s Forty Years of Success’, *Journal of Modern African Studies* 46:2 (2008): 191-214; Maundeni, ‘The Politics of Poverty in Botswana’, *Botswana Notes and Records* 35 (2003): 99-109.

Botswana's model for non-racial democracy, the human rights scholarship has not noticed the country's significance. As will be noted in the conclusion to the thesis, Botswana's ability to survive with its sovereignty, institutions, and integrity intact - the end goal of its utopian narrative - may be its most tenable claim to 'success'. The point about Botswana's 'success' in human rights is not that it simply maintained a strong record, but its perception of 'success' played an essential role in the state's self-preservation.

In recent years, human rights historians have been compelled to grapple with the revisionist account of Moyn and his monumental work, *The Last Utopia*. He contended there had not been an authentic movement for human rights until the 1970s.<sup>45</sup> Moyn delivered an incisive critique of many previous human rights histories. These preceding works, Moyn argued, overstated the deep historical origins of human rights and mistakenly interpreted, through a simplistically linear framework, their intellectual development.<sup>46</sup> While previous iterations of rights were fundamentally related to the matter of domestic citizenship, for Moyn, the contemporary model expressed concern for the harm done to fellow global citizens.<sup>47</sup> Botswana was a notable beneficiary of the efflorescence of these principles in the 1970s. However, Moyn's account does not necessarily explain the state's relatively early engagement with human rights ideas. By demarcating the 1970s as the definitive period, Moyn too easily dismisses prior human rights claims as 'irrelevant'. Before the end of Bechuanaland's colonial rule in 1966, the term human rights, and the content of the UDHR,

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<sup>45</sup> Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 8, 121-2. See also Kenneth Cmiel, 'The Emergence of Human Rights Politics in the United States', *The Journal of American History* 86:3 (1999): 1232-3; Moyn, *Human Rights and the Uses of History* (London: Verso Books, 2014), 82-3; Eckel, 'Human Rights and Decolonisation', 125, 130; Eckel, 'The Rebirth of Politics from the Spirit of Morality: Explaining the Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s' in Eckel and Moyn (eds), *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 227; Barbara J. Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue: The Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 1-2; Daniel Sargent, 'Oasis in the Desert? America's Human Rights Rediscovery' in Eckel and Moyn (eds), *The Breakthrough*, 125; Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 7, 69, 99; Eckel, 'The International League for the Rights of Man, Amnesty International, and the Changing Fate of Human Rights Activism from the 1940s through the 1970s', *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 4:2 (2013): 197, 202-4.

<sup>46</sup> For these earlier works, see Kirsten Sellars, *The Rise and Rise of Human Rights* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2002); Paul Gordon Lauren, *The Evolution of International Human Rights: Visions Seen* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 1-3, 269-70. However, concerns have been raised as to whether this is a 'straw man' argument, see Jenny S. Martinez, 'Human Rights and History', *Harvard Law Review Forum*, 126 (2013): 237; Gary J. Bass, 'The Old New Thing', review of *The Last Utopia*, by Moyn, *The New Republic*, 11 November 2010, 36.

<sup>47</sup> Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 12-3, 20, 42-3. See also Moyn, 'Personalism, Community, and the Origins of Human Rights' in Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (ed), *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 86; Moyn, 'Substance, Scale, and Salience: The Recent Historiography of Human Rights', *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 8 (2012): 128, 132-3; Hoffmann, 'Genealogies of Human Rights' in Hoffmann (ed), *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*, 3.

were frequently referenced in party platforms and constitutional discussions. When the colonial authority invited both African and European residents to submit their own bills of rights for the constitutional conference, or to provide oral and written testimony on racial discrimination, humanistic values and rights-phraseology were prolific. Far from seeking to unearth minor documents and folders with only vague references to human rights, the research stumbled across frequent and often stunning affirmations of these principles. Botswana provides a lesson for the applicability of Moyn's hypothesis by showing the 1970s 'explosion' should not, by inference, mean no one knew or cared about human rights in the preceding years, even in seemingly marginal settings.<sup>48</sup>

Botswana's success in using human rights norms to defend its state sovereignty challenges a key premise of *The Last Utopia*. The narrative of the 1970s 'breakthrough', by necessity, must diminish the importance of 1950s and 1960s anti-colonialism for advancing human rights.<sup>49</sup> As the greatest champions of national freedom, according to Moyn and Eckel, activists in Africa and Asia had no ambition to premise their sovereignty on observing individual freedoms. Without a genuine human rights consciousness, anti-colonialism merely evoked these principles as a means of acquiring the state power that could eventually infringe them.<sup>50</sup> The absence of a belief in human rights was obvious in the post-colonial era, these

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<sup>48</sup> For counter-arguments to Moyn, see Simpson, 'The First Right', 180; Simpson, 'Self-Determination, Human Rights, and the End of Empire in the 1970s', *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 4:2 (2013): 240; Philip Alston, 'Does the Past Matter? On the Origins of Human Rights', review of *The Slave Trade and the Origins of International Human Rights Law*, by Martinez, *Harvard Law Review* 126:7 (2013): 2066; Robert Brier, 'Beyond the Quest for a "Breakthrough": Reflections on the Recent Historiography on Human Rights' in Sarah Panter (ed), *Mobility and Biography* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 172; Hoffman, 'Human Rights and History', *Past and Present* (2016): 4, 20, viewed 8 September 2016, doi: 10.1093/pastj/gtw013; Jensen, *The Making of International Human Rights*, 2, 11, 277; Christopher McCrudden, 'Human Rights Histories', *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 35:1 (2015): 181, 186-7, 211; Alston, 'Does the Past Matter?', 2052; Mark Philip Bradley, 'Approaching the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' in Iriye, Goedde, and Hitchcock (eds), *The Human Rights Revolution*, 337; Bradley, 'Writing Human Rights History', *Il Mestiere di storico* 3:2 (2011), 14-7, 27; Burke, "'How Time Flies": Celebrating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the 1960s', *The International History Review* 38:3 (2016): 413-4; Burke, 'Human Rights Day after the "Breakthrough": Celebrating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the United Nations in 1978 and 1988', *Journal of Global History* 10:1 (2015): 148-9, 169-70; Antony Anghie, 'Whose Utopia? Human Rights, Development, and the Third World', *Qui Parle* 22:1 (2013): 70-1; Seyla Benhabib, 'Moving beyond False Binarisms: On Samuel Moyn's *The Last Utopia*', *Qui Parle* 22:1 (2013): 82, 88-9.

<sup>49</sup> This argument is made in direct opposition to scholars who framed anti-colonial struggles as movements for human rights. See Ibhawoh, *Imperialism and Human Rights*, 5, 12; Lauren, *The Evolution of International Human Rights*, 83-4, 242-3.

<sup>50</sup> Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 86-7, 107; Moyn, 'Imperialism, Self-Determination, and the Rise of Human Rights' in Iriye, Goedde, and Hitchcock (eds), *The Human Rights Revolution*, 160-1, 172; Moyn, 'Substance, Scale, and Salience', 134; Eckel, 'Human Rights and Decolonisation', 121. See also A. W. Brian Simpson, *Human Rights and the End of Empire: Britain and the Genesis of the European Convention* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 300.

scholars claim, in the way national liberators became rights violators.<sup>51</sup> Reza Afshari has similarly argued these campaigns were so narrowly focused on national self-determination, they could not behold a multi-dimensional concept of rights.<sup>52</sup> The decolonisation and human rights movements were seemingly anathema to each other, as the acquisition of sovereignty served to guard against attempted external interventions.<sup>53</sup>

More recent scholarship on human rights in the Global South is beginning to challenge the supposed exclusivity between the two movements. Meredith Terretta's research into the UN Trust Territories of the British and French Cameroons reveals 'many anti-colonial activists *did* consider collective liberation and individual rights to be interrelated'.<sup>54</sup> Steven Jensen has surveyed how larger Cold War powers were given a 'master class' in human rights diplomacy and international law-making in the 1960s by many small non-Western states, including Jamaica and Liberia.<sup>55</sup> Among such luminaries in the Third World, Botswana is a leading example as a state that held a sustained commitment to individual self-determination, especially in periods where its national self-determination was under threat. This new research builds a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between decolonisation and human rights.

Botswana complicates the assertions of Moyn, Eckel, and Afshari in two ways. Firstly, the government's instrumental use of human rights idealism to maintain, and not merely attain, state sovereignty after independence shows the anti-colonialism and human rights movements were not necessarily inimical, but could intersect harmoniously and constructively. Secondly, Botswana adopted multiple identities and postures on human

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<sup>51</sup> Afshari, 'On Historiography of Human Rights', 44, 51. See also Andreas Eckert, 'African Nationalists and Human Rights, 1940s-1970s' in Hoffmann (ed), *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*, 300. Lauren addresses this point, but only very briefly, see *The Evolution of International Human Rights*, 257-8, 300; Hitchcock, 'The Rise and Fall of Human Rights?: Searching for a Narrative from the Cold War to the 9/11 Era', *Human Rights Quarterly* 37:1 (2015): 93-4. For a more nuanced assessment of this period, see Burke, 'How Time Flies'.

<sup>52</sup> Afshari, 'On Historiography of Human Rights', 44-5. See also Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 84-5, 116-7.

<sup>53</sup> Moyn, *Human Rights and the Uses of History*, 93-4.

<sup>54</sup> Terretta, "'We Had Been Fooled into Thinking that the UN Watches over the Entire World', 343. See also Terretta, 'From Below and to the Left?', 396-8; Talbot C. Imlay, 'International Socialism and Decolonisation during the 1950s: Competing Rights and the Postcolonial Order', *American Historical Review* 118:4 (2013): 1108, 1130-1; Ibhawoh, 'Human Rights and National Liberation: The Anticolonial Politics of Nnamdi Azikiwe' in Baba G. Jallow (ed), *Leadership in Colonial Africa: Disruption of Traditional Frameworks and Patterns* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 55-59, 64-5.

<sup>55</sup> Jensen, *The Making of International Human Rights*, 5-9, 277-80. See also Jensen, 'Decolonisation - Not Western Liberals - Established Human Rights on the Global Agenda', 29 September 2016, openDemocracy, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/openglobalrights/steven-l-b-jensen/decolonization-not-western-liberals-established-human-rights-on-g>, viewed 30 September 2016.

rights, revealing there was more than just one human rights movement to subscribe to, without bringing contradiction or hypocrisy.<sup>56</sup> The country could find legitimacy in both the 1970s human rights movement, championing political and civil rights, and Third World anti-colonialism, calling for independent majority rule in the rest of Southern Africa. Botswana's story is informative for revealing how the separation between national self-determination and other human rights was not inevitable nor even as ubiquitous as currently thought.

While anti-colonialists were often selective, political, and hypocritical in their use of human rights, the West displayed similar tendencies.<sup>57</sup> Campaigners in North America and Western Europe had a discriminatory concern for human rights, tending to prioritise political, civil, and individual rights, to the exclusion of economic, social, and collective ones. In the latter half of the 1970s, as observed by Brad Simpson, compared to violations in the Soviet Union and Latin America, the appeal for self-determination in East Timor barely resonated amongst the American public, Western non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and the US government. The fate of political prisoners in Indonesia was held in preference to calls for 'the first right' of those affected by the Suharto regime's mass atrocities.<sup>58</sup> The concern of Western advocates and governments was also not consistent across geographic spaces. Amnesty International was reluctant to affiliate itself with the plight of human rights advocates, including Nelson Mandela, who advocated the use of violence.<sup>59</sup> Even in the US

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<sup>56</sup> Frederick Cooper, 'Afterword: Social Rights and Human Rights in the Time of Decolonisation', *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 3:3 (2012): 477. See also Brier, 'Beyond the Quest for a "Breakthrough"', 173; Simpson, 'Denying the "First Right"', 799; Terretta, 'From Below and to the Left?', 396-7; Simpson, 'Self-Determination, Human Rights, and the End of Empire in the 1970s', 253; Pamela Ballinger, 'The History of Human Rights: The Big Bang of an Emerging Field or Flash in the Pan?', *New Global Studies* 6:3 (2012): 3. Moyn insists that a polycentric view of human rights concepts and movements must recognise 'which one of the versions has prevailed and enjoyed dominance'. The danger of this approach, however, is that it may glorify the history of 'winners' while marginalising other stories. See Moyn, 'The End of Human Rights History', *Past and Present* (2016): 15-6, viewed 8 September 2016, doi: 10.1093/pastj/gtw038.

<sup>57</sup> Ibhawoh, 'Testing the Atlantic Charter: Linking Anticolonialism, Self-Determination and Universal Human Rights', *The International Journal of Human Rights* 18:7-8 (2014): 845; Ibhawoh, 'Human Rights and National Liberation', 56-7; Eric D. Weitz, 'Samuel Moyn and the New History of Human Rights', review of *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*, by Moyn, *European Journal of Political Theory* 12:1 (2013): 89-91; Wendy Brown, "'The Most We Can Hope For...': Human Rights and the Politics of Fatalism", *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103:2/3 (2004): 453, 461; Sellars, *The Rise and Rise of Human Rights*, xiii-xiv; Lauren, *The Evolution of International Human Rights*, 301; Susan Waltz, 'Reclaiming and Rebuilding the History of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights', *Third World Quarterly* 23:3 (2002): 444, 446; Waltz, 'Universalising Human Rights: The Role of Small States in the Construction of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights', *Human Rights Quarterly* 23:1 (2001): 65.

<sup>58</sup> Simpson, 'Denying the "First Right"', 799, 824-5; Simpson, 'The First Right', 181, 187; Bradley, 'Writing Human Rights History', 25-6.

<sup>59</sup> Simpson, 'The First Right', 186-7; Simpson, 'Self-Determination, Human Rights, and the End of Empire in the 1970s', 253; Patrick William Kelly, "'Magic Words': The Advent of Transnational Human Rights Activism in Latin America's Southern Cone in the Long 1970s" in Eckel and Moyn (eds), *The Breakthrough*, 90. Amnesty's claim to be completely anti-politics has been critiqued by some scholars. See Sellars, 'Human Rights and the



itself, during the critical period of the 1970s, Mark Philip Bradley has shown how ‘human rights were almost never imagined to have resonance for domestic rights questions in the 1970s’.<sup>60</sup> Jimmy Carter’s inauguration in 1977 has been depicted by Moyn and Barbara Keys as transformative for the prominence of human rights terminology.<sup>61</sup> Yet, his administration did not usually criticise or punish strategically cooperative regimes in the Third World for violations.<sup>62</sup> If instrumentalism invalidates anti-colonial campaigns as a ‘genuine’ human rights movement, there would be little causes, if any, that could be framed in such terms.<sup>63</sup>

The human rights movement must not be seen by scholars as just a Western or an American one, but a truly transnational one with unique, though often underappreciated, contributions from those in Africa and the Third World.<sup>64</sup> The revisionist scholarship is often characterised by an unapologetic focus on the US, as the hegemonic centre, radiating human rights to the rest of the world.<sup>65</sup> At the same time as recognising ‘Africa and Asia are

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Colonies: Deceit, Deception and Discovery’, *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 93:377 (2004): 709-24; Eckel, ‘The International League for the Rights of Man’, 204-5.

<sup>60</sup> Bradley, ‘American Vernaculars: The United States and the Global Human Rights Imagination’, *Diplomatic History* 38:1 (2014): 20; Bradley, *The World Reimagined: Americans and Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 7, 113, 123-5.

<sup>61</sup> Moyn, *Last Utopia*, 4, 149-61; Keys, *American Virtue*, 1-2.

<sup>62</sup> Joshua Muravchik, *The Uncertain Crusade: Jimmy Carter and the Dilemmas of Human Rights Policy* (Lanham: Hamilton Press, 1986), 113-154, 216-7; Hitchcock, ‘The Rise and Fall of Human Rights?’, 98-9; Simpson, ‘Denying the “First Right”’, 798-9, 824; Kenton Clymer, ‘Jimmy Carter, Human Rights, and Cambodia’, *Diplomatic History* 27:2 (2003): 246, 254-5, 277-8. For a more favourable assessment of Carter’s human rights policy, see Jason M. Colby, ‘“A Chasm of Values and Outlook”: The Carter Administration’s Human Rights Policy in Guatemala’, *Peace & Change* 35:4 (2010): 582-4; David F. Schmitz and Vanessa Walker, ‘Jimmy Carter and the Foreign Policy of Human Rights: The Development of a Post-Cold War Foreign Policy’, *Diplomatic History* 28:1 (2004): 122-4, 134-5; Joe Renouard, *Human Rights in American Foreign Policy: From the 1960s to the Soviet Collapse* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016): 13-4, 17-8.

<sup>63</sup> Moyn concedes this point in a forthcoming publication, see Moyn, ‘Human Rights in Heaven’, 3 May 2014 in Adam Etinson (ed), *Human Rights: Moral or Political?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming), Social Science Research Network, <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2432448>, viewed 14 April 2016, 3, 25, 28-9. Moyn has been critiqued for setting up a ‘false binary’ between morality and politics, see Benhabib, ‘Moving beyond False Binarisms’, 82, 86-7. In his response, Moyn admits he did not achieve sufficient clarity on this point. Human rights activists were not apolitical, he clarifies, but they presented themselves as apolitical. See Moyn, ‘The Continuing Perplexities of Human Rights’, *Qui Parle* 22:1 (2013): 103-4.

<sup>64</sup> Even the leading scholars that focus on the West commonly recognise the need for further research into non-Western localities, particularly in regard to anti-colonialism. See Eckel, ‘Human Rights and Decolonisation’, 112, 129; Moyn, ‘The Return of the Prodigal: The 1970s as a Turning Point in Human Rights History’ in Eckel and Moyn (eds), *The Breakthrough*, 11; Sarah B. Snyder, ‘Human Rights and US Foreign Relations: A Historiographical Review’, *Passport* 44:1 (2013): 19.

<sup>65</sup> Simpson, ‘Denying the “First Right”’, 799. For an example of this narrative, see Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America’s Vision for Human Rights* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 3-6, 251, 285; Muravchik, *The Uncertain Crusade*, 216, 221, 227; Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue*, 1-14; Moyn, ‘The Return of the Prodigal’, 9-10; Carl J. Bon Tempo, ‘Human Rights and the US Republican Party in the Late 1970s’ in Eckel and Moyn (eds), *The Breakthrough*, 146. Moyn has briefly pointed out how human rights history is mostly written by American historians, see Moyn, ‘Substance, Scale, and Salience’, 136. See also Hopgood, *The Endtimes of Human Rights*, xi-xii, 97. For a refreshing alternative that decentres the role of the US in human rights history, see Bradley, *The World Reimagined*, 9, 113, 123-5.

deplorably under-researched regions', Eckel proclaims it is 'safe to say that human rights did not acquire the same prominence there as in Western countries'.<sup>66</sup> Such claims risk prematurely dismissing promising areas for further inquiry before they are ever pursued. For example, Eckel has confidently stated 'no government in the Global South drew as heavily on human rights rhetoric to justify its foreign policies as some Western states did'.<sup>67</sup> This exposes a shortcoming in the current understanding, as Botswana's example offers at least one important exception, with the potential for more, where human rights played a pivotal role in the foreign policy of a Third World state.

In studying an idea that claims to transcend national borders, it seems the natural inclination has been to build an internationalist narrative, often across broad space and time.<sup>68</sup> As a case study, this research project seeks to begin with a localised analysis and conclude by adding another chapter, running in parallel to a wider transnational story of human rights, for which we are yet to fully comprehend. One of the best ways to contribute to the history of human rights is not to simply incorporate non-Western spheres in the narrative, but as Brad Simpson has explained, to 'take local sources and conceptions of human rights as their starting point'.<sup>69</sup> By writing a history from the 'bottom-up', with great care for understanding local particularities, this thesis is part of what Bradley has newly defined as 'a second generation of human rights history'.<sup>70</sup> Only by unmasking histories of human rights at the sub-global level, in under-researched regions like Africa and Asia, can the scholarship begin to appreciate the role of those in the colonial and post-colonial world in the evolving transnational human rights movement.

This thesis on the history of human rights in Botswana contributes to the wider historiography on human rights in four key ways. Firstly, Botswana showcases the powerful capacity of a strong human rights record to build an attractive international reputation. The use of human rights idealism for image-building exposed Botswana to the world stage, allowing it to make its own contribution to the developing human rights movement, despite

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<sup>66</sup> Eckel, 'The Rebirth of Politics from the Spirit of Morality', 238. See also Moyn, 'Substance, Scale, and Salience', 133.

<sup>67</sup> Eckel, 'The Rebirth of Politics from the Spirit of Morality', 239.

<sup>68</sup> Moyn's call for 'scalar histories' is not one for more localised investigations but more transnational ones, see Moyn, 'Substance, Scale, and Salience', 129-32. See also Moyn, 'The Return of the Prodigal', 12-3.

<sup>69</sup> Simpson, "'Human Rights Are Like Coca-Cola': Contested Human Rights Discourses in Suharto's Indonesia, 1968-1980' in Eckel and Moyn (eds), *The Breakthrough*, 187.

<sup>70</sup> Bradley, *The World Reimagined*, 9.

its lack of physical or economic power. This case study shows how leadership on human rights, in the critical 'breakthrough' period of the 1970s, could come at times from small non-Western states. Secondly, Seretse articulated a distinct vision of human rights for the context of Southern Africa based on the concept of non-racial democracy. In this part of the world, the discourse of human rights was especially transfixed on the issue of race relations. The President saw political liberties and individual protections as essential for building internal social harmony and regional stability. The lesson this offers is that human rights ideas, when adopted, are shaped by local and regional conditions. Thirdly, Botswana's ability to attain credibility in respecting both individual and national self-determination defies the thinking of many scholars that the human rights and decolonisation movements were mutually exclusive. Far from being wedded to just a Western or Third World conceptualisation of human rights, Botswana crossed the ostensible gulf between these two political platforms. This shows that there was much greater potential, than has so far been recognised in the literature, for those in the colonial and post-colonial world to contribute to the evolving transnational human rights movement. Finally, this thesis offers a case study of an African government expertly using human rights idealism from a realist foreign policy framework. Botswana's acclaimed 'success' in human rights was an outstanding example of image-building in circumstances where survival was tied to international visibility.

### **‘What has Ghana got that we haven’t?’: The Absence of a Movement for Self-Determination in Bechuanaland**

After independence in September 1966, Botswana established an external identity based on an idealism for individual human rights. In regard to the right to collective self-determination, however, Seretse’s government struggled in its early years to gain legitimacy in its respect for this cause within the OAU. Botswana was initially detached from what had, by the early 1960s, become a common Third World standpoint on human rights. Leaders of African nations and liberation movements generally prioritised national self-determination as ‘the first right’.<sup>71</sup> The March 1965 electoral result overwhelmingly favoured the Democratic Party, who pursued close cooperation with the colonial authority and a gradual movement to independence. The OAU had greater sympathy for the People’s Party, who demanded immediate independence and adopted a radical anti-colonial posture. The party’s rhetoric matched the voices of anti-colonialism at the UN Special Committee on Decolonisation and international NGOs. The People’s Party was the most willing flagship for a mass social movement for independence, but it was crippled when it could not maintain its own cohesion and split along factional lines. While never opposed to national self-determination, the Democratic Party followed an electoral slogan of ‘responsible’ government, where sustaining independence was the priority, and not simply attaining it. Seretse was less concerned with the evils of colonialism than the doubts over the country’s future territorial integrity and economic welfare. His leadership appealed to the interests of the Protectorate administration, who were doubtful about transferring power to the People’s Party. Seretse used national self-determination as an instrument for acquiring legitimacy in OAU circles when in power, but not as a single issue ideological cause for colonial liberation. The Democratic Party did not embrace anti-colonialism before independence, for either ideological or strategic reasons, because unlike the People’s Party it saw it as unsuited to Bechuanaland’s circumstances.

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<sup>71</sup> Simpson, ‘Denying the “First Right”’, 799, 824-5; Simpson, ‘The First Right’, 181, 187.

### **‘Independence is the only solution’: The People’s Party’s Campaign for Colonial Liberation**

From the 1950s, anti-colonialists from around the world began to express concerns over the HCTs and their freedom from British rule. In July 1955, a joint delegation of the Anti-Slavery Society and the Africa Bureau arrived at the Colonial Office demanding greater political advancement.<sup>72</sup> In the following decade, the HCTs became a recurrent topic of debate at the UN Special Committee on Decolonisation. Aside from Britain, the US, Australia, Italy, and Denmark, the common consensus at the UN was for ‘immediate independence’.<sup>73</sup> In May 1962, for instance, the Soviet delegate called for national self-determination by the end of that year. Concerns over the territorial and economic integrity of the HCTs were acknowledged at the UN, but they sat paradoxically with a demand for a swift transfer of power. The Ethiopian representative recognised Bechuanaland faced ‘a hostile and unfriendly government at the doorstep’, who could threaten to physically overwhelm or impose sanctions on the local economy. However, the delegate rejected ‘any reservation whatsoever which would hamper the speedy progress...on acceding to independence’. For most UN representatives, economic development was also not an important precursor to independence or a valid excuse for delay. The Guinean representative trumpeted ‘[i]ndependence was the only answer, even for the smaller territories which were not economically viable’.<sup>74</sup> This transnational discourse, with a priority for colonial liberation above concerns for security or economic development, was closely replicated in Bechuanaland by the People’s Party.

They were self-declared to be Bechuanaland’s mass party for independence, equivalent to the successful nationalist campaigns seen further north in Africa. Vijay Prashad, an Indian historian, has described nationalism in the Third World as having ‘an internationalist ethos, one that looked outward to other anticolonial nations as their fellows’.<sup>75</sup> The People’s Party was typical for an anti-colonial nationalist party in reaching out to likeminded African governments and liberation groups. Yet, the local experience of this

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<sup>72</sup> The National Archives of the United Kingdom, London (TNA) DO 35/4495, note of meeting between Colonial Secretary and joint deputation from the Anti-Slavery Society and Africa Bureau, 15 July 1955; TNA DO 35/4495, Memorandum by Anti-Slavery Society and Africa Bureau, 15 July 1955.

<sup>73</sup> Summary Records of the UN Special Committee on Decolonisation, 57<sup>th</sup> meeting (109<sup>th</sup> session), 23 May 1962, A/AC.109/SR.57.

<sup>74</sup> Verbatim Records of the UN Special Committee on Decolonisation, 294<sup>th</sup> meeting (109<sup>th</sup> session), 26 Oct. 1964, A/AC.109/PV.294.

<sup>75</sup> Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People’s History of the Third World* (New York: The New Press, 2007), 12-3.

particular nationalist organisation was atypical. Whilst the People's Party's narrative was appealing to anti-colonialists and the post-colonial world, it failed to gain much support amongst domestic voters. The People's Party's problem was that it was a radical African nationalist party for a territory with very few radical African nationalists, under a form of colonial occupation that was not as oppressive when compared with British rule, for example, in Kenya or Tanganyika.<sup>76</sup>

Many of the arguments used by foreign delegates within the Decolonisation Committee were based on questionable accounts presented by People's Party leaders. In the 1950s and 1960s, the UN was regularly used as a platform for justice by anti-colonialists.<sup>77</sup> Through resolutions, petitions, and personal representations, the People's Party depicted an image of life under British colonial rule that was 'most inhuman, brutal and unjust'.<sup>78</sup> The local inhabitants were claimed to be holding mass rallies to abolish the 1961 constitution and suffering under widespread political persecution. A key example of colonial oppression referred to by Philip Matante, the party's domineering Vice-President, was the August 1962 arrest of seven youths from the People's Party. One point he failed to mention was that all were alleged to have threatened to kill and commit arson against supporters of a rival faction within the party. The judicial trial culminated in political protests outside the courthouse in Francistown, involving 200 People's Party followers, and an attempted assault on a police station.

The party seized on any such instance of coercion by the police, hoping to have found additional proof of the destructive consequences of being denied national self-determination. At the UN, they alleged that the colonial authority's use of teargas and a thunder flash showed how Bechuanaland had turned into a 'Police State' against 'peaceful demonstrators' for independence.<sup>79</sup> Based on this single localised incident, followed by a ten-day ban on public meetings in the vicinity, Matante described to Fenner Brockway, a British activist on colonial freedom and human rights, how the 'Political Leadership is being

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<sup>76</sup> Caroline Elkins, *Britain's Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya* (London: The Bodley Head, 2014); Ullrich Lohrmann, *Voices from Tanganyika* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2007).

<sup>77</sup> Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, 104.

<sup>78</sup> TNA CO 1048/113, People's Party's conference resolutions, copied to UN Secretary General, 30 December 1962.

<sup>79</sup> Botswana National Archives and Records Services, Gaborone (BNARS) S. 348/3, Matante to Secretary of the UN Special Committee on Decolonisation, 24 October 1962.

threatend [sic] with arrest...our Political meetings are banned without reasons or warrant'.<sup>80</sup> His version of events almost completely contradicted the account of the colonial authority, British Intelligence, and print media.<sup>81</sup> For the purpose of gaining external sympathy for Bechuanaland's colonial liberation, the People's Party framed the Protectorate's status as equivalent to archetypical examples of colonialism elsewhere on the continent.

The People's Party, in line with anti-colonial voices on the world stage, called for national self-determination without delay. After its founding in December 1960, the organisation demanded the unconditional withdrawal of 'protection', the grant of immediate independence, and the removal of any means of British influence upon the future post-colonial government.<sup>82</sup> More precisely, in January 1962, Matante called for independence by the end of that year or early 1963.<sup>83</sup> Internal stability was claimed to be under threat, not because of the uncertainties of having viability as a state, but because the perpetuation of British rule was causing internal disharmony and discontent towards government.<sup>84</sup> Matante acknowledged how territorial integrity was at risk from neighbouring regimes, but exclaimed to the UN that the British as protectors were not doing enough to prevent external infiltration and 'could no longer protect people against oppression and exploitation'.<sup>85</sup> Concerned over poverty and the territory's lack of development, People's Party demonstrators carried placards reading 'Independence is the only solution to our economic problems'.<sup>86</sup> By presenting self-determination as a cure for all local difficulties, the People's Party was free to create inflated expectations in regard to what independence would bring.

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<sup>80</sup> TNA CO 1048/113, Matante to Fenner Brockway, 5 and 10 September 1962. While initially sympathetic to the socialist philosophy of the People's Party, Brockway's views on Botswana under the Democratic Party's leadership were positive, see Brockway, *African Socialism* (Chester Springs: Dufour Editions, 1963), 61; Brockway, *This Shrinking Explosive World: A Study of Race Relations* (London: The Epworth Press, 1967), 10, 17-20; Brockway, *The Colonial Revolution* (London: Hart-Davis, 1973), 480-2; Brockway, *Towards Tomorrow* (London: Hart-Davis, 1977), 161-2.

<sup>81</sup> Matante dubiously claimed to Brockway the protestors numbered over 1,000. TNA CO 1048/113, British Intelligence report, August 1962; TNA CO 1048/113, R. Mothapo, 'Bechuanaland Tension', *Contact*, 6 September 1962.

<sup>82</sup> TNA CO 1048/407, P. D. Maruping and Matante to High Commissioner, 11 September 1963.

<sup>83</sup> TNA CO 1048/113, British Intelligence report, January 1962. The 1958 All-African Peoples' Conference in Accra, Ghana, set 1963 as the target date for national freedom in Africa. See Ryan M. Irwin, *Gordian Knot: Apartheid and the Unmaking of the Liberal World Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 38.

<sup>84</sup> BNARS S. 348/3, Matante to Secretary of the UN Special Committee on Decolonisation, 24 October 1962.

<sup>85</sup> TNA CO 1048/531, Matante to Secretary of the UN Special Committee on Decolonisation, 15 April 1964; TNA CO 1048/113, British Intelligence report, May 1962.

<sup>86</sup> TNA CO 1048/531, 'Demonstrators Greet British Visitors', *Contact*, 7 March 1963.

Yet as a self-defined nationalist movement, the People's Party handicapped itself by premising their political campaign on gaining *immediate* independence. Their prospects began to diminish once the first constitutional conference in Lobatse was concluded in 1963, setting a pathway for elections and self-government in 1965 with independence to follow. The primary purpose of the party was made redundant. On the one hand, the People's Party broke their commitment to attain independence by 1963, and on the other hand, the colonial administration and the Democratic Party took the initiative in achieving steady, but substantial, progress in their pathway toward self-rule. At the conference, both the Democratic Party and the People's Party were united in agreeing to a more gradual, constitutional approach toward attaining self-government. 'Not one of the parties or groups asked for independence at the talks', according to Peter Fawcus, the presiding Resident Commissioner and later Queen's Commissioner, 'nor did they seek to set a date for independence' as all agreed to 'a period of adjustment' under British guidance.<sup>87</sup> When included in an official colonial forum that made genuine progress, holding an 'awkward negotiating position', the People's Party was left with little more to extract from the colonial rulers.<sup>88</sup> The 1963 constitutional conference thereby marked a turning point for the prospects of the People's Party.

Thereafter, the People's Party was discredited in achieving less for the nationalist cause than the colonial rulers themselves. However, the party refused to alter their ideology of radical anti-colonialism. Chief Linchwe II of the Bakgatla, an advocate of traditional institutions who later developed links with opposition politicians, credited the People's Party's efforts in building political consciousness and nationalism within the territory.<sup>89</sup> Regardless, he insisted colonialism was no longer an issue, and 'it is now necessary only to work for independence and not to fight for it'.<sup>90</sup> As long as the People's Party remained firmly attached to doctrines of the more extreme Third World ideologies, to a degree, they became detached from realities and expectations at home. The party's intensive engagement with the wider anti-colonial movement, ironically, had damaged its wish to be at the

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<sup>87</sup> TNA CO 1048/405, Fawcus to Duncan Sandys, 8 January 1964. The office of the Resident Commissioner was replaced at the end of September 1963 by the office of Her Majesty's Commissioner. The change meant the highest office in Bechuanaland would have direct communications with the Colonial Secretary, rather than the High Commissioner. See Matlapeng Ray Molomo, *Democratic Deficit in the Parliament of Botswana* (Cape Town: The Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society, 2012), 87-8.

<sup>88</sup> TNA CO 1048/404, Fawcus to Hugh Stephenson, 24 July 1963.

<sup>89</sup> For more on Chief Linchwe II, see Sandy Grant, 'A Chronological Career Summary: Chief Linchwe II Kgafela', *Botswana Notes and Records* 17 (1985): 47-52.

<sup>90</sup> TNA CO 1048/531, British Intelligence report, October 1963.



forefront of the political transition to national self-determination. Bechuanaland's specific political circumstances did not fit easily with an ideology built on a generalised understanding of colonialism.

The People's Party attempted to assume the identity of a nationalist party, with evidently little capacity for building a united and cohesive movement. The leadership took inspiration from successful political organisations throughout Africa, especially Ghana's Convention People's Party (CPP) under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah, the President of Ghana and icon of the African nationalist movements of the 1950s and 1960s. Nkrumah's All African People's Congress in 1958 framed Ghana as a model for the right to national self-determination in African territories still under colonial rule.<sup>91</sup> The People's Party's attitude on independence closely matched Nkrumah's doctrine that '[i]t is far better to be free to govern, or misgovern yourself than to be governed by anyone else'.<sup>92</sup> Matante adopted a Ghanaian black star as his personal election symbol and was observed leading demonstrations in West African robes. Seretse jokingly referred to these as Matante's 'maternity cloaks'.<sup>93</sup> The organisation stood 'less for a political Party than for a Nation', the People's Party's election manifesto professed, because it represented 'the inalienable right of all the people of Bechuanaland to sovereign self-determination'.<sup>94</sup> The People's Party's supporter base was limited to urban areas along the railway line to the east of the territory, finding little appeal from the Protectorate's rural majority. For the most part, the party aimed to attract African workers who would benefit the most from the elimination of racial discrimination and the provision of socio-economic rights. This included those with employable skills and experience in relatively well-off working and professional class occupations, but dissatisfied with their living conditions and treatment in the workplace.

However, as much as the People's Party assumed the role of a cohesive national movement, the organisation itself became increasingly divided. The party suffered from a geographical divide, in which their northern base in Francistown remained their most predominant centre of political backing and activity, whilst their southern base in Palapye

<sup>91</sup> Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 81; Nugent, *Africa Since Independence*, 8.

<sup>92</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (London: Nelson, 1959), vi.

<sup>93</sup> Lewis Jr. (ed), *Quett Ketumile Joni Masire*, 110; TNA CO 1048/381, *African Review*, March 1965.

<sup>94</sup> TNA CO 1048/531, People's Party's election manifesto, March 1965.

was poorly organised and struggled with relatively few followers.<sup>95</sup> Originally constituting one group under the People's Party label, the party suffered a break-up in 1962 between the Palapye-based minority faction of Motsamai Mpho, the former Secretary General, and the core of the organisation in Francistown led by Kgaleman Motsete, the President, and Matante, the Vice-President. Yet again, in 1964, another split occurred as Motsete was superseded and ejected from the People's Party by Matante. Motsete was left with few followers under an organisation of the same name. The factions each adopted the veneer of a nationalist party for self-determination, but without the substance of political unity, they could not credibly claim to lead a mass movement like those elsewhere on the continent.

In the effort to resurrect their political fortunes, the divided factions were motivated by the successful anti-colonial wars further north in Africa and welcomed the prospect of using violence. The party often described itself as 'brothers' in a global struggle, alongside their revolutionary predecessors in China, and their freedom fighter contemporaries in South Africa, Rhodesia, Mozambique, and Angola.<sup>96</sup> To assist in their own revolution at home, the Matante and Mpho factions claimed to have a small group of foreign trained guerrillas in combat, sabotage, and explosives.<sup>97</sup> In July 1963, Matante urged 'the Protectorate will not be able to attain independence by any save revolutionary means'.<sup>98</sup> Mpho argued he was pre-empting the outlawing of his party and making plans to 'conduct underground operations to achieve the overthrow' of the colonial authority and the 'total destruction' of the Democratic Party.<sup>99</sup> The opposing factions within the People's Party were another target of fierce rhetoric and acts of intimidation, as their devotees disrupted rival political meetings.<sup>100</sup> Even in regard to their own faction, the leaders threatened to violently enforce a sense of discipline. Veronica Thomas, Matante's Women's League leader in Francistown, warned 'those people who do not register (as voters) will have their homes burned or be killed'.<sup>101</sup> As the Democratic Party gained support for their constitutional road to independence, the People's Party contemplated an unconstitutional one.

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<sup>95</sup> TNA CO 1048/113, British Intelligence report, November 1961.

<sup>96</sup> Senate House Library, University of London (SHL) PP.BS.BIP, Motsamai Mpho, address to Independence Party conference, December 1965.

<sup>97</sup> TNA CO 1048/532, British Intelligence report, December 1965; TNA CO 1048/381, *African Review*, March 1965; TNA CO 1048/535, British Intelligence report, February 1964.

<sup>98</sup> TNA CO 1048/531, British Intelligence reports, July 1963, August 1964, and October 1964.

<sup>99</sup> TNA CO 1048/531, British Intelligence report, March 1965; TNA CO 1048/535, Heads of Special Branch meeting, 20 April 1964.

<sup>100</sup> TNA CO 1048/531, British Intelligence report, June 1964; TNA CO 1048/113, British Intelligence report, September 1962.

<sup>101</sup> TNA CO 1048/531, British Intelligence reports, October 1963 and August 1964.

The leadership made a strategic error in endeavouring to mimic African freedom fighters in the region, though only artificially, by engaging in disorderly behaviour. Weary of turning the most prominent nationalist leaders into martyrs, the police avoided taking excessive action against them. Residents targeted by the People's Party with acts of intimidation were not frightened to report their assailants to police and testify against them in court.<sup>102</sup> Most importantly, the violent proclamations were counterproductive to their intended effect of gaining more followers and stimulating further radical political activity. The verbose and repetitive jeremiads against the colonial authority, the Democratic Party, and Seretse were met with outspoken voices of disapproval from crowds.<sup>103</sup> Mpho warned he would bring about 'bloodshed on the Congo pattern', referring to the tragic aftermath of Belgium's former colony after June 1960.<sup>104</sup> Across Africa, many colonial officials and European inhabitants saw the Congo's experience as a warning of the dangers of moving to independence too early.<sup>105</sup> Frustrated by the lagging support for the People's Party and dissention within the organisation, Fish Keitseng, the Chairman, observed how 'the most regular attendance came from members of the local police force'.<sup>106</sup> For a population that cherished its domestic tranquillity amidst a turbulent region, threats of violence and unrest were not attuned to local sensitivities.

The People's Party was more successful in attaining finance and assistance from foreign sources. The external funding was enough to buy several land rovers, establish a party newsletter, fund scholarships, and provide numerous trips across the world. The leadership travelled regularly, for as long as months at a time, as far as New York, Moscow, Tokyo, Havana, and Dar es Salaam. The key points of supply were from foreign African organisations and nationalist parties, including the Bureau of African Affairs, the OAU's African Liberation Committee, and Ghana's CPP; and to a lesser extent the Communist countries, including the Soviet Union and China. As beneficial as the external contacts proved to be for the People's Party during their early years, these relations were ultimately

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<sup>102</sup> TNA CO 1048/531, British Intelligence report, June 1964.

<sup>103</sup> TNA CO 1048/113, British Intelligence reports, November 1961 and April 1962; TNA CO 1048/531, British Intelligence report, December 1964.

<sup>104</sup> This refers, not to Congo-Brazzaville, but the country later known as Zaire or the Democratic Republic of the Congo. TNA CO 1048/535, British Intelligence report, April 1965.

<sup>105</sup> John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1988), 252-5. The Congo crisis also served to galvanise the transnational movement for decolonisation at the UN, see Alanna O'Malley, 'Ghana, India, and the Transnational Dynamics of the Congo Crisis at the United Nations, 1960-1', *The International History Review* 37:5 (2015): 970-1, 985-6.

<sup>106</sup> TNA CO 1048/113, British Intelligence report, June 1962.

limited in improving the efficacy of their nationalist campaign. When the party had achieved notable attention overseas in the UN Special Committee on Decolonisation, its leaders failed to capitalise at the local level. At a June 1962 party meeting, Matante was so incapable of translating a UN resolution on self-determination in the HCTs, he struggled to read through half the document, gave up, and left the audience without an understanding of what legitimacy the People's Party had achieved or what was being demanded of their government at the international level.<sup>107</sup> The anti-colonialist narrative for self-determination, and its grandiose phrases so freely and frequently deployed, did not translate an easily identifiable message for much of the domestic population. The People's Party's advocacy for collective liberation could acquire sweeping votes at the UN, but not sufficient ones amongst its own people.

The various external links had some role in the internal frictions of the People's Party, contributing to its break-up. The dispute between Mpho and Matante was apparently an ideological one between two former African National Congress (ANC) members in South Africa. While Mpho sustained organisational links with the ANC and preached global Communism, Matante increasingly built stronger connections with the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), a breakaway faction of the ANC that established its own party in 1959.<sup>108</sup> In June 1962, seemingly paranoid over a suspected ANC-Communist plot to take over the People's Party, both Matante and Motsete sought to eliminate 'all Communists and ANC Communist agents in the party'. This resulted in a permanent rupture.<sup>109</sup> Expelled members garnered sufficient support in their home districts to allow a second organisation to run under the People's Party name until the group was reframed in February 1964 as the Botswana Independence Party. Both the 1962 and 1964 splits occurred alongside suspicions in the rank-and-file, confirmed in British Intelligence reports, that Matante was embezzling the foreign donations into his private bank account.<sup>110</sup> As the organisation became more fractured, the highly valued international contacts gradually cut ties with all factions in fear of

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<sup>107</sup> TNA CO 1048/113, British Intelligence report, July 1962; BNARS S. 348/2, UN Special Committee on Decolonisation, 'Question of Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland', 7 June 1962.

<sup>108</sup> In the memoir of Fish Keitseng, a leading People's Party member in Mpho's faction, Matante is suggested to have been better known in South Africa as a 'thug' and a police informant than an anti-apartheid activist. See Keitseng, *Comrade Fish: Memories of a Motswana in the ANC Underground*, compiled by Ramsay and Barry Morton (Gaborone: Pula Press, 1999), 85. See also Ramsay, 'Twentieth Century Antecedents of Decolonising Nationalism in Botswana' in Edge and Lekorwe (eds), *Botswana*, 114.

<sup>109</sup> TNA CO 1048/113, British Intelligence report, July 1962.

<sup>110</sup> Keitseng, *Comrade Fish*, 89, 136.

being accused of taking sides. Whilst some donations continued to flow through, the financing was less reliable and the party struggled with a lack of adequate funds.

The People's Party had an ideological commitment to anti-colonialism, but it ultimately proved to be a political instrument as well, one they could abandon when its utility no longer served their interests. This was seen in their call to delay independence after losing to the Democratic Party in the March 1965 elections for self-government. The three People's Party members elected to the Legislative Assembly, including Matante, began to oppose independence for precisely the same reasons they advocated for 'immediate independence' only a few years earlier. Rather than 'steamrolling' ahead, Thari Motlhagodi and Kenneth Nkhwa contended there was a need to 'go very steady with the date of independence' as the increase in political awareness had caused internal unrest. Unsurprisingly, they did not recognise the role of the People's Party in any instances of such disorder. Given the additional external threat of being 'overrun' by minority regimes in Southern Africa, Motlhagodi asserted a 'rush into Independence...would be exposing ourselves to the greatest danger internationally'. From an original position at the UN, claiming to represent mass rallies for colonial liberation in Bechuanaland, the People's Party began to argue 'the whole population of this country is against this Independence'.<sup>111</sup> 'I would have liked it earlier', Motlhagodi stated, in reference to the People's Party's original calls for independence by the end of 1962, 'but then because of the circumstances now, I think it is premature until we have ironed things out'.<sup>112</sup> Given the ongoing constitutional, political, and economic development achieved in the first half of the decade, these arguments convinced nobody of their merits. The sole party with international anti-colonial credentials on the right to self-determination had begun to oppose the cause. This only reinforced the difficulties the country faced in gaining full acceptance within OAU circles by independence.

The People's Party deserves recognition for applying political pressure on the colonial authority, indirectly providing a motivation for the founding leaders of the Democratic Party to form a political organisation and, thus, speeding up the process of decolonisation in Bechuanaland. The People's Party displayed a double-standard in forcefully

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<sup>111</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the Fourth Meeting of the First Session* (Gaborone: Bechuanaland Legislative Assembly, 1965), 7-9.

<sup>112</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the Fifth Meeting of the First Session* (Gaborone: Bechuanaland Legislative Assembly, 1965), 29. See also Molomo, *Democratic Deficit in the Parliament of Botswana*, 112-5.

calling for immediate independence before their electoral loss, and then opposing it thereafter. By attempting to delegitimise the Democratic Party's movement to independence, it undermined their own legitimacy as a party committed to the nationalist cause. Nonetheless, from the early to mid-1960s, the People's Party was the most authentic representative of the anti-colonial movement that was beginning to prevail globally. The organisation's decline as a political force revealed that this international movement was not fully representative of Bechuanaland's needs and interests. The call of the People's Party and its breakaway factions for the right to self-determination was not sufficient to win more than a fifth of voters in total, let alone the kind of mass majorities that similar nationalist parties achieved elsewhere in Africa.<sup>113</sup> Without a more familiar trajectory towards independence, Botswana struggled to gain recognition amongst other African majority-ruled states. The party that had the most external legitimacy in supporting 'the first right' was ultimately not voted the first party in government. In conditions of geopolitical and economic vulnerability, the anti-colonial agenda for immediate independence was too risky to attain widespread success in Bechuanaland. In place of radical African nationalism, the Democratic Party proclaimed to offer a safer programme that addressed the question of what to do with independence once achieved.

### **'The best Bechuanaland Prime Minister we have got': The Democratic Party and the Dominance of Moderates**

At the same time as anti-colonial voices on the world stage demanded immediate independence in the HCTs, many local observers in Bechuanaland called for a substantial delay. In submissions to the constitutional conferences in the early 1960s, domestic contributors could not overlook difficulties over security and the economy as easily as many external onlookers at the UN. Grant M. Kgosi, a union activist for African civil servants, argued in August 1963 'a period of about 50 years or more' was required 'before the British Good Government and people could leave the Native African People alone'.<sup>114</sup> Once 1965 was scheduled as Bechuanaland's first year of self-government, there were concerns over the timetable, even from members of Seretse's own family. His uncle, Peto M. Sekgoma, feared the attainment of self-government in 1965 would take Bechuanaland down the path of

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<sup>113</sup> Matante's People's Party won 14.18% of the total vote, Mpho's Botswana Independence Party won 4.61%, and Motsete's People's Party won 0.27%. See Charles W. Gossett and Kebapetse Lotshwao, 'Report on the 1965 General Election and the 1966 Local Government Election', *Botswana Notes and Records* 41 (2009): 55.

<sup>114</sup> BNARS S. 594/6/1, Grant M. Kgosi to Government Secretary, 9 August 1963.

becoming 'the next Congo'. For these observers, the state of political and economic development was not sufficient to attain independence in conditions of internal stability. '1965 is too short a period', according to Sekgoma, for 'educating the common mob in Self Rule'. The population was being left 'in the dark', interpreting self-government the way they 'think it means and not the way it should be'.<sup>115</sup> Peter Sebina, the Tribal Secretary of the Bamangwato, argued that before undertaking gradual reform there was a need for 'an appreciable number of enlightened people who can grasp the principles of politics, and socio-economic development'.<sup>116</sup> There was a lack of the nationalist fervour for self-determination seen in other parts of the continent. Jack Halpern, a South African journalist, observed a leading Chief questioning, 'apparently in all seriousness, "What has Ghana got that we haven't?"'. Africans in Bechuanaland, according to Halpern, were unaware of the social and economic opportunities that independence could bring.<sup>117</sup> Just as the People's Party closely matched the discourse of anti-colonialism at the UN, the Democratic Party aimed to tune their rhetoric and policies to the viewpoints of such local sources.

In response to the demands of the People's Party and its external supporters, the Democratic Party aligned itself closer to the objectives of the colonial authority. By the early 1960s, neither the Democratic Party nor the Colonial Office wanted to continue British rule in Bechuanaland for much longer. The British government maintained very little political, economic, or strategic interest in the Protectorate, finding much greater rewards from their commercial investments in South Africa. The growing voices for immediate independence at the international level, and the increasing financial cost of the Protectorate's administration, convinced the Colonial Office it needed to find a way to end their rule over Bechuanaland.<sup>118</sup> However, this directly conflicted with their own doubts over the viability of the territory as an independent nation-state. Since Bechuanaland was first occupied by the British, an eventual incorporation into South Africa was believed by colonial civil servants to be a likely outcome for the territory, even up to the early 1960s. Without a radical change in the apartheid regime this was politically unthinkable, given the anticipated denunciations at home

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<sup>115</sup> BNARS S. 594/6/1, Sekgoma to Peak, 15 July 1963.

<sup>116</sup> BNARS S. 581/1/2, Peter M. Sebina, 'The Aspiring Bechuana', 17 April 1961.

<sup>117</sup> SHL ICS 28/5/B/1, Jack Halpern, 'The "Winds of Change" in Bechuanaland', 10 April 1961.

<sup>118</sup> TNA DO 183/768, M. McMullen to Scott, 18 April 1966; TNA CO 1048/45, W. B. L. Monson to H. Poynton, 12 November 1962. On decolonisation in the British Empire, see Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*; Darwin, *Unfinished Empire: The Global Expansion of Britain* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), 366-75; Darwin, 'British Decolonisation since 1945: A Pattern or a Puzzle?', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 12:2 (1984): 188-91, 197-206; R. F. Holland, *European Decolonisation 1918-1981: An Introductory Survey* (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1985), 209.

and abroad.<sup>119</sup> The Colonial Office decided to leave the future of Bechuanaland's relations with Pretoria up to a future African-led government.

The first step was to allow Bechuanaland to advance to a position of self-government. The future leadership would then 'express their wishes about their eventual status' in terms of independence and 'find through negotiations with the Republic [of South Africa], a basis for the future conduct of their mutual relations'.<sup>120</sup> In this way, the Colonial Office could distance itself from the course decided upon by the local population, particularly in case it was disfavoured by opinion in the UK or internationally. They also sought to avoid a conceivable post-independence scenario where they may be obliged to intervene in the case of either internal disorder or an incursion from South African forces. Not wishing to offer a security guarantee or leave behind a small defence force, in case it would embolden the new government to help anti-apartheid forces, the colonial rulers prioritised the need for peaceful and stable local leadership.

The wish of colonial officials was for the future rulers to be able to manage the complexities of government policy and define a functional arrangement with the apartheid regime. They wanted to be convinced they were 'handing over to a stable regime and that a workable relationship with South Africa had been established'.<sup>121</sup> At the end of 1962, colonial civil servants still believed '[i]t was too much to hope...that the Africans there would be ready to maintain a responsible attitude, if we associated them with ourselves in responsibility...and (as a corollary) for their relations with South Africa'.<sup>122</sup> The People's Party's radical anti-colonial stance, including demands for immediate independence, placed it in an irreversible position in which any form of cooperation with the colonial authority would be politically untenable, as well as infeasible in terms of their hasty timetable. For Bechuanaland to have any chance of becoming economically viable, according to colonial officials, they would have to rely on the 'good-will of South Africa'. With a leadership

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<sup>119</sup> TNA CO 1048/381, Colonial Office paper on the HCTs, September 1963; TNA CO 1048/664, 'The Future of Basutoland, the Bechuanaland Protectorate and Swaziland', Colonial Office paper, August 1963; TNA CO 1048/45, Monson to Poynton, 'High Commission Territories', 12 November 1962.

<sup>120</sup> TNA CO 1048/381, 'High Commission Territories – Future Status', Colonial Office paper, 12 September 1963; TNA DO 185/10, UK delegation's statement at the UN Special Committee on Decolonisation, June 1965; TNA CO 1048/381, Colonial Secretary to UK High Commissioner for Southern Africa, 15 November 1963; TNA CO 1048/381, Monson to J. T. A. Howard-Drake, 21 February 1964.

<sup>121</sup> TNA CO 1048/381, 'The High Commission Territories – The Future', Colonial Office paper, 28 October 1963.

<sup>122</sup> TNA CO 1048/45, Monson to Poynton, 12 November 1962.



composed of former anti-apartheid activists, the People's Party could not be relied upon by the Protectorate administration to handle the delicate relationship with South Africa without provoking economic or military punishment. The colonial officials therefore sought a party they could work with towards self-government through a progressive sharing of administrative duties, ensuring sufficient training and experience. They looked for a 'reasonable and moderate pre-independence' leadership which had found a way to 'live with the Republic' and acknowledged they 'could not live without her'.<sup>123</sup> The British notion of 'responsible' African government was clearly condescending, especially for an administration that grossly underperformed in delivering political and economic development for several decades.<sup>124</sup> Overall, the implicit support of the colonial authority would prove to be a critical advantage to those offering a moderate alternative to the People's Party.

The founders of the Democratic Party became the willing beneficiaries of colonial government support, meeting for the first time in November 1961 in Lobatse. In its attitudes, policies, and strategies, the Democratic Party's founders saw the People's Party as 'from the very beginning too irresponsible'. Rather than join the People's Party, they realised there was an opportunity to gain political momentum by providing 'practical ideas on the future development' of the territory.<sup>125</sup> The organisation was framed as a post-colonial party, focused on 'what we would make of our independence, once granted', as opposed to ending colonial rule as a sufficient goal in itself.<sup>126</sup> Unlike the People's Party, the Democratic Party refused to copy a foreign model for guidance. As a matter of principle, Seretse did not believe Bechuanaland had 'to depend on Filipinos, Mexicans or Eskimos [sic] to advise us on how we should rule ourselves'.<sup>127</sup> Bechuanaland had a specific economic and geographical context to take into account, and this would not be served best by using a foreign template. As an organisation prepared to work with the colonial administration, the Democratic Party realised the territory did not have the features 'which might justify a classical anti-colonial struggle'.<sup>128</sup> The people required 'a typically Bechuanaland Protectorate Party formed for the sole purpose of taking care of Bechuanaland's problems', and 'not a poor imitation of any

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<sup>123</sup> TNA DO 183/768, McMullen to Scott, 18 April 1966.

<sup>124</sup> From the 1950s, across the Empire, colonial officials encouraged a more 'moderate' and 'responsible' nationalism, while eschewing those they saw as 'extremists'. See Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, 168.

<sup>125</sup> SHL PP.BS.BDP, 'A Short History of the Bechuanaland Democratic Party', 1963; Bechuanaland Democratic Party, *Shaping the Destiny of a Nation* (Gaborone: Bechuanaland Democratic Party, 1982), 8.

<sup>126</sup> Bechuanaland Democratic Party, *Shaping the Destiny of a Nation*, 10.

<sup>127</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the Second Session* (Mafeking: Bechuanaland Legislative Council, 1962), 65.

<sup>128</sup> Bechuanaland Democratic Party, *Shaping the Destiny of a Nation*, 10.

well-known party elsewhere in Africa or overseas'.<sup>129</sup> In rejecting the conventional models for an anti-colonial movement, the Democratic Party was free to pursue political cooperation with the colonial authority and prepare for economic cooperation with South Africa.

The Democratic Party won the ability to lead Bechuanaland to independence, not as a mass movement for self-determination, but as a party that professed to deliver 'responsibility' in government. In the elections on 1 March 1965, the Democratic Party resoundingly defeated the People's Party with eighty per cent of the vote and ninety per cent of the seats in the Legislative Assembly.<sup>130</sup> As noted by the Queen's Commissioner, in a time of severe drought, the people voted for the Democratic Party as 'the one party which they knew to be capable of assuming the responsibilities of government from the Colonial Power'.<sup>131</sup> Fawcus reported the People's Party's call for radical change, obscurity on economic policy, and anti-British stance appealed less to local inhabitants than the Democratic Party's 'progressive conservatism, economic realism and attachment to the United Kingdom connection'.<sup>132</sup> Seretse's party sought votes on the assumption the population would compare, not the extent of their ideology and rhetoric, but the merits of their policies and programmes. The Democratic Party specifically designed their 1962 'Aims and Objects' under 'practical, realistic and unemotional terms'.<sup>133</sup> The leadership remained exceptionally temperate when confronted by international pressure for immediate independence and an uncompromising domestic rival advocating revolutionary change. 'We do not, and will not make', Seretse enunciated before the election, 'any extravagant promises, nor claim the ability to achieve the impossible'.<sup>134</sup> With a majority in the Legislative Assembly, Seretse remarked on the Democratic Party's reputation 'for our responsible attitude and our considered views', whereas the new party in opposition were known for shouting 'irrelevant and irresponsible statements from the roof tops'.<sup>135</sup> Whilst many struggles for self-determination were driven by radical African nationalism and anti-

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<sup>129</sup> SHL PP.BS.BDP, 'A Short History of the Bechuanaland Democratic Party', 1963.

<sup>130</sup> From a total of thirty-one contested seats in the Legislative Assembly, the Democratic Party won twenty-eight and Matante's People's Party won three. The remaining four seats in the Legislative Assembly were 'specially elected' by the Democratic Party. See Gossett and Lotshwao, 'Report on the 1965 General Election', 55.

<sup>131</sup> TNA CO 1048/406, Fawcus to Anthony Greenwood, 12 May 1965.

<sup>132</sup> TNA CO 1048/404, Fawcus to Courtenay Robert Latimer, 3 January 1963.

<sup>133</sup> Bechuanaland Democratic Party, *Shaping the Destiny of a Nation*, 10-1.

<sup>134</sup> SHL PP.BS.BDP, 'This Is What We Stand For', Democratic Party election manifesto, January 1965.

<sup>135</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the First Session* (Gaborone: Bechuanaland Legislative Assembly, 1965), 44.

imperialism, the Democratic Party triumphed under a sobering platform of steady and self-restrained leadership.

Despite their conservative political viewpoint, the Democratic Party still regarded themselves as a nationalist party. By mid-1962, its membership spanned across virtually all tribal territories, relying upon the majority in the rural areas for their primary supporter base.<sup>136</sup> Seretse's sense of authority as leader was enhanced by his royal image and magisterial tone, propounding before the election his 'feeling of responsibility for all the citizens of Bechuanaland...whether they vote for or against my party'.<sup>137</sup> The party sought a sustainable balance in their public perception, maintaining political sympathy for national self-determination, tempered by an acceptance of the economic and strategic hardships to be confronted by the post-colonial government. They were progressive enough to bring about independence, but moderate enough not to jeopardise the stability provided by the colonial administration. Their development plan was somewhat ambitious at the time, as striving for economic viability and prosperity was an enormous challenge, but it was coherent, comprehensive, and consistent.<sup>138</sup> They sought the same nationalist objective as the People's Party, but had a more pragmatic mindset toward achieving and sustaining it, as well as offering greater rewards in the long-term by way of economic development.

Instead of calling for immediate independence, the Democratic Party set a preferred date for self-determination based on their own political needs, and a measurement of the practical costs and benefits of self-rule to the territory. The Democratic Party's original standpoint on constitutional change was dilatory, targeting an African majority in the Legislative Council by 1965, with self-government by the end of the decade.<sup>139</sup> The party's lethargic approach was mocked by the People's Party at the 1963 constitutional conference, claiming the Democratic Party had conceived, as reported by Fawcus, 'a carefully thought out plan to preserve vested interests and postpone constitutional development'. The Democratic Party was pressured into calling for elections by September 1964, even though they privately recognised the undesirability of such a swift timetable.<sup>140</sup> The party's stance

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<sup>136</sup> TNA CO 1048/47, Fawcus to Maud, 18 May 1962.

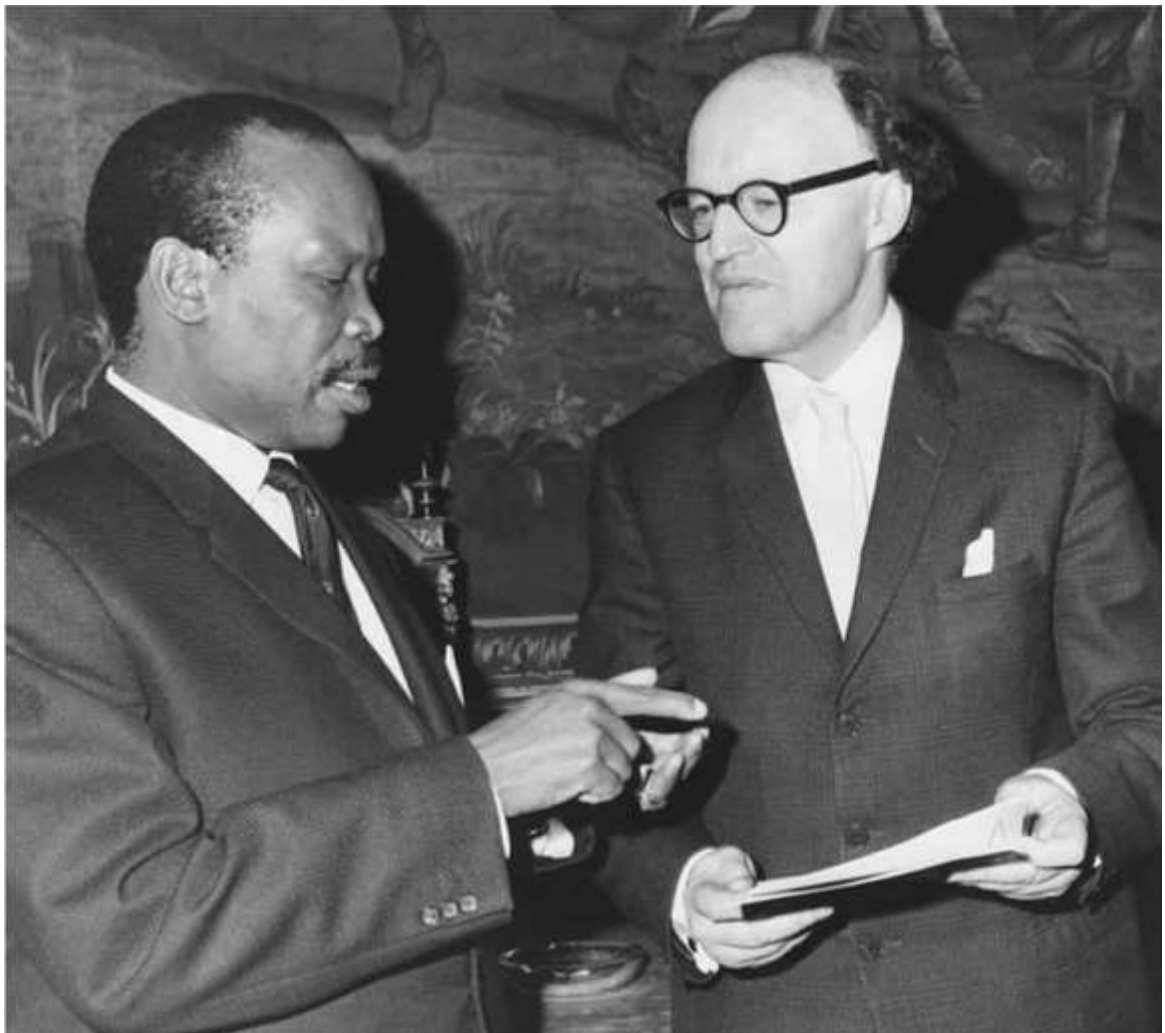
<sup>137</sup> SHL PP.BS.BDP, 'This Is What We Stand For', Democratic Party election manifesto, January 1965.

<sup>138</sup> TNA CO 1048/406, note of meeting between Eirene White and Masire, 14 March 1965; TNA CO 1048/404, Fawcus to Maud, 15 January 1963; TNA CO 1048/47, Fawcus to Maud, 18 May 1962.

<sup>139</sup> TNA CO 1048/404, Fawcus to Latimer, 3 January 1963.

<sup>140</sup> TNA CO 1048/405, Fawcus to Sandys, 8 January 1964.

toward independence was far more certain once they entered the election campaign. The leadership of the Democratic Party outlined a firm commitment to self-determination in principle, but with a flexible position on the precise date depending on its feasibility. They observed how the People's Party had earlier lost credibility by promising, and then failing, to deliver independence by the end of 1962 or the start of 1963. The Democratic Party, instead, targeted full national self-determination 'within the shortest possible time' and only after using the 'oncoming period of self-government as a preparatory stage towards the attainment of independence'.<sup>141</sup> In Bechuanaland, self-determination was considered in highly strategic terms, not just as an unconditional and inalienable right of the people.



*4 Seretse Khama and Frank Pakenham at Independence Conference, Marlborough House, London, February 1966. Courtesy: Dictionary of African Biography.*

<sup>141</sup> SHL PP.BS.BDP, 'This Is What We Stand For', Democratic Party election manifesto, January 1965.

After winning government, the Democratic Party reconsidered its cautious approach to independence. As argued by Quett Masire, the Deputy Prime Minister of the new government, with the next elections only five years away, the perception of needless delay could 'spoil their chances of being in the saddle when it was achieved'.<sup>142</sup> As Seretse confidentially advocated for September 1966 to be announced as the date of independence, he highlighted the need to allow the Democratic Party to claim full credit when a date was finally outlined and ensure the opposition could not gain any initiative in the absence of a set time period. Public declarations of progress towards self-rule were the best resource available to the Democratic Party to retain both political momentum after the elections and a public view of having full control over Bechuanaland's political development.<sup>143</sup> Another source of pressure for the Democratic Party to consider was within the government itself. African civil servants assumed they would benefit from widespread promotions upon self-government and expressed their frustrations towards the party.<sup>144</sup> There were valid reasons to defer independence in the interests of training in self-government and continued security from South Africa. Yet, the Democratic Party also recognised numerous external factors that encouraged a more accelerated pathway to independence. For as long as Bechuanaland remained short of full internal self-rule, they would remain deprived of recognition amongst other independent African states and their options for foreign aid would continue to rely on Britain.<sup>145</sup> Hugh Norman-Walker, the new Queen's Commissioner, acknowledged in September 1965 how a set date would be conducive 'to good order and stable government between now and independence'.<sup>146</sup> The end of colonial rule was less about the principle of self-determination than the politics of wielding power, and the policy predicaments of an underdeveloped and strategically vulnerable country.

Bechuanaland's independence was achieved, not from a dissident anti-colonial standpoint, but through cooperation and assimilation into the colonial government. By November 1963, the Colonial Office favoured the delegation of administrative responsibilities to African political leaders as they would become increasingly inclined 'to

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<sup>142</sup> TNA CO 1048/406, note of meeting between White and Masire, 14 March 1965.

<sup>143</sup> TNA CO 1048/406, Seretse to Masire, 8 September 1965; TNA DO 183/932, Colonial Secretary, 'Bechuanaland: Independence Date', memorandum for Cabinet Defence and Overseas Policy Committee, 9 July 1965.

<sup>144</sup> TNA CO 1048/406, Hugh Norman-Walker to Campbell, 8 September 1965.

<sup>145</sup> TNA CO 1048/406, Arthur Douglas to Campbell, 25 May 1965.

<sup>146</sup> TNA CO 1048/406, Norman-Walker to Campbell, 8 September 1965.

take a more “realistic” attitude to their day to day relations with South Africa’.<sup>147</sup> On the one hand, it was not immediately favourable for the avowedly nationalist Democratic Party to be associated with the colonial authority, and on the other hand, it was advantageous over the long-term to be identified with the recent progress made by the government in constitutional and economic development.<sup>148</sup> In the Legislative Council and Executive Council, Fawcus encouraged Seretse to ‘lead the debate on the Government side on various important matters’ including constitutional development, race relations, labour issues, and Africanisation of the civil service.<sup>149</sup> Until after the 1965 election, the Democratic Party was hampered by not being able to freely criticise the Protectorate administration in the populist fashion demonstrated by the People’s Party.<sup>150</sup> The People’s Party attempted to exploit their rival’s closeness to the British, characterising the Democratic Party as a ‘neo-colonial’ party. However, there were advantages in the Democratic Party’s proximity to the colonial rulers.<sup>151</sup> Even though the People’s Party’s policies were far more ambitious on various political, economic, and social issues, it was the Democratic Party that received official credit for any progress.

For those concerned over the consequences of self-government, electoral victory by the Democratic Party did not risk radical change. For those wanting national self-determination, the Democratic Party could bring about independence more quickly and sustainably than any other party because they had the only leadership with experience in government. The People’s Party’s policies were far less detailed. Their experience consisted of prior involvement with liberation groups in South Africa, in which government was not to be worked with but adamantly opposed.<sup>152</sup> The country’s path to independence existed well outside the doctrines of the Third World, where colonial reformism and cooperation was often rejected. The synergetic movement towards independence by the Democratic Party and the British may not have been consonant with a typical anti-colonial narrative, but it was a far more effective strategy toward colonial liberation, given Botswana’s circumstances.

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<sup>147</sup> TNA CO 1048/381, Monson to Lansdowne, 5 November 1963.

<sup>148</sup> TNA CO 1048/404, Fawcus to Maud, 15 January 1963; TNA CO 1048/47, Fawcus to Maud, 18 May 1962.

<sup>149</sup> TNA CO 1048/47, Fawcus to Maud, 18 May 1962.

<sup>150</sup> Fawcus, *Botswana*, 71.

<sup>151</sup> TNA CO 1048/47, High Commissioner for Southern Africa to Colonial Secretary, 28 May 1962.

<sup>152</sup> TNA CO 1048/405, Fawcus to Campbell, 20 February 1964.

The Democratic Party benefited decisively from the unofficial backing of the Protectorate administration. Seretse's party adopted the rhetoric that British colonial officials throughout Africa had been seeking: that of 'moderation', 'responsibility', and 'development'.<sup>153</sup> The Democratic Party's electoral success was important to colonial interests. Those within the Colonial Office widely concurred 'Mr. Seretse Khama is by far the best Bechuanaland Prime Minister we have got'.<sup>154</sup> In the elections, it was 'important to ensure the fullest support for the Democratic Party', according to Fawcus, because it was on their 'success our hopes must be pinned'.<sup>155</sup> 'The awful African humiliation of the Congo must not be repeated in Bechuanaland', the Resident Commissioner implored, 'and the best way to avoid it is to support the Democratic Party'.<sup>156</sup> Fawcus deemed the absence of a 'troublesome left wing group' in the Democratic Party to be a virtue, believing its democratic principles were beneficial to stability and development.<sup>157</sup> The colonial authority used conspicuous means to ensure the Democratic Party would be well placed to argue it had the necessary experience and mindset for successful post-colonial government.

In the absence of any mass social movement, the Protectorate administration helped to shift the transition to national self-determination in favour of the Democratic Party. The colonial rulers could guide the transfer of powers in a way that was consistent with their objectives in Bechuanaland and the region. Rather than being the end goal of a nationalist drive for colonial liberation, independence was treated as a political tool to be shaped in favour of a particular set of compatible domestic and colonial interests. The Democratic Party ultimately won the elections with a considered and collaborative approach to independence. Without the international anti-colonial credentials of the People's Party, the state's external image on collective liberation was markedly backward. Only by way of rewriting its official party history of this time period, framed in more ideological terms for self-determination, could Seretse's government establish its anti-colonial credentials within the OAU.

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<sup>153</sup> Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, 168.

<sup>154</sup> TNA FO 371/182071, S. P. Whitley to P. J. S. Moon, 15 July 1965.

<sup>155</sup> TNA CO 1048/404, Martin to Monson, 10 April 1963.

<sup>156</sup> TNA CO 1048/404, Fawcus to Maud, 15 January 1963.

<sup>157</sup> TNA CO 1048/406, Fawcus to Greenwood, 12 May 1965.

## Conclusion

Botswana's reputation after independence as a state idealistically committed to advancing human rights, including the right to national self-determination, is not consistent with its history of post-colonial transition. International anti-colonial voices endorsed the People's Party as the most convincing nationalist force in Bechuanaland. However, the population elected the most conservative organisation regarding constitutional change and the most cooperative with the colonial rulers. While they disagreed on the ideology of radical anti-colonialism, the Democratic Party would later replicate one area of success attained by their political opponents. The People's Party's ability to attract international attention and sympathy was a trait that would be vital for Botswana's quest for legitimacy within the OAU. Once the Democratic Party was in government, it advertised its unreserved support for self-determination as a worthy goal in itself, even to the point of accepting the use of violence by liberation movements. The key distinction between the Democratic Party and the People's Party was therefore one of timing and strategy. The Democratic Party advocated an anti-colonial ideology after 1966 as an effective way to build support on the continent, while the People's Party in the early 1960s, perhaps too idealistic, mistakenly saw it as the natural pathway toward winning independence anywhere in Africa. The next chapter features another human rights debate between the Democratic Party's commitment to political liberties and the People's Party's proposals for socio-economic rights. Seretse's electoral victory would be more decisive in favouring a liberal-democratic post-colonial vision, with little space to advocate economic and social freedoms in government. Just as Botswana was highly unusual in its sustained commitment to political and civil rights before the 'breakthrough' moment for human rights in the West, it was unusually tepid in its embrace of wider anti-colonial discourses on collective liberation as a human right.



### **“APARTHEID” amongst Batswana’: The Vision for Non-Racial Democracy**

Botswana’s human rights idealism appealed to Western aid partners for its emphasis on upholding political liberties. Before independence, however, the realisation of a liberal-democratic and a multi-party state was not the result of an inevitable or uncontested process. As shown in the last chapter, the two parties believed in the right to national self-determination, but their methods differed greatly in their approach toward attaining it. This chapter traces a sharper division between the Democratic Party, who advocated for a non-racial democracy based on political and civil rights, and the People’s Party, who made a pioneering call for socio-economic rights. Human rights phraseology was an effective way for these groups to communicate how they would address racial discrimination. At the Select Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, witness testimony reflected less of a concern for democracy than a wish for greater equality in standards of living and the delivery of government services. The People’s Party offered a voice for those concerned with such issues, pledging to fulfil the UDHR’s provisions for economic and social freedoms. The Democratic Party had their own vision for human rights in the post-colonial society. Seretse argued political liberties would be conducive to delivering economic prosperity, building internal harmony, and ensuring a ‘responsible’ and stable government. African nationalist organisations, Emma Hunter writes, had to ‘construct a narrative which would serve to persuade listeners that they offered the most compelling vision of the future’.<sup>158</sup> Before Seretse’s government could justify foreign aid based on its democratic credentials, his party had to rationalise the imperative placed on these rights to voters. The Democratic Party did not commit itself to democracy simply because it had an idealistic belief in such forms of government. Rather, it saw political liberties as integral to Botswana’s long-term survival.

### **‘It is quite simple, it’s economics’: Development, Inequality, and Human Rights in Bechuanaland**

The People’s Party offered a unique outlook for the post-colonial society with a plan for the provision of economic and social rights. They were attuned to the racial and socio-economic hardships of the African population in urban areas. Both oral and written testimony at the Select Committee reveals how many African residents recognised and rejected their inferior treatment to the white population in terms similar to the People’s Party’s protestations.

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<sup>158</sup> Hunter, *Political Thought and the Public Sphere in Tanzania*, 11, 160.

African observers, sending petitions to the constitutional conference as it considered a bill of rights, also expressed concerns over socio-economic racialism. The People's Party, in their election manifesto, included an extensive 'Declaration on Human Rights' made up of fourteen articles with many ambitious and detailed socio-economic freedoms. The party directly quoted at least four Articles from the UDHR, including Article One on the inherent and equal status of rights for all humans, Article Two on entitlement to rights without distinction, Article Twenty-Five on the right to an adequate standard of living, and Article Twenty-Six on the right to education.<sup>159</sup> The People's Party also spoke about the lack of formal democratic equality and proposed some political and civil rights. However, their discussion of socio-economic rights was more detailed, consistent, and original. For the citizens of a soon to be established nation-state, racial injustice was an adversity the People's Party wished to leave in the past. The organisation believed they had found the appropriate set of rights to redress these colonial legacies and ultimately win the election for self-government.

Racism within the workplace was a leading issue for African contributors at the Select Committee and constitutional talks. Richard N. Mannathoko, the General Secretary of the Civil Servants Union and one of the few university-educated Africans in the Protectorate, highlighted the imbalance in salaries within the government sector. Whilst African wages would range from £132 to £576 per annum over a period of eighteen years, the equivalent remuneration rates for Europeans would begin at £540 and reach £852 per annum. Mannathoko, also a founding member of the Democratic Party, demonstrated how the highest paid African officers earned no more than 'his white girl typist or telephone operator'.<sup>160</sup> M. Sinombe, a witness to the Select Committee, encapsulated how racialism was evident in wages, fixed so that 'the white man or the white person should never get a salary lower than the African', and employment patterns, through outright 'job reservation'. Whilst Africans without adequate experience or training 'could not manage to do the job at first', with sufficient investment in their skill development, Sinombe urged 'they could do the

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<sup>159</sup> TNA CO 1048/531, Matante's election manifesto, March 1965.

<sup>160</sup> The reference to a 'white girl' suggests Richard N. Mannathoko's concerns were for the working rights and conditions of African men. SHL ICS 28/5/A/14, Mannathoko, 'Development Problems – Bechuanaland', December 1963; Richard Werbner, 'Responding to Rooted Cosmopolitanism: Patriots, Ethnicity and the Public Good in Botswana' in Pnina Werbner, *Anthropology and the New Cosmopolitanism: Rooted, Feminist and Vernacular Perspectives* (Oxford: Berg, 2008), 191; Richard Werbner, *Reasonable Radicals and Citizenship in Botswana: The Public Anthropology of Kalanga Elites* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 107. See also BNARS BNB 632, D. S. Mabe, oral testimony, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination, 21 February 1963.

job'.<sup>161</sup> Outside of the civil service, E. P. S. Letsididi, Secretary General of the Bechuanaland Protectorate Worker's Union, reported '[t]he treatment accorded African employees is most disgusting'. Letsididi wrote in his petition how the economic interests of Africans were being imperilled through a scheme whereby remuneration and promotion were determined by race and not ability. An employer 'expects his African employees to be in perpetual submission', Letsididi described, often receiving a mere 'one fifth of the European's salary'.<sup>162</sup> For Kgosi, writing on behalf of seven African villages, the best way to address this grievance was to have safeguards for the rights of workers. 'That means the establishment of a wage Determination', he contended, 'since the so-call[ed] existing daily rate employees are unprotected (not safe)'.<sup>163</sup> While these were voices of relatively well-off African professional and working class men, they helped to reflect a general picture of racial discrimination and injustice.

Racial disparities were further exposed in the delivery of basic social welfare. O. Magano, an African farmer, observed how the colonial authority, in his view, was preventing African children from attending school. The requirement of payments for primary education, Magano construed, was intentional discrimination as '[i]t is known that we [Africans] do not all have ready cash'.<sup>164</sup> A. R. Sedebadi, a self-employed African, reflected on how the notion of a common humanity had been abused. When an African and a European suffer from eye disease or stomach trouble, Sedebadi exclaimed, 'their pains are just the same'. From Sedebadi's perspective, it was therefore inexplicable for Europeans to be given medical priority.<sup>165</sup> Such a racialised context was described by Kgosiemang Lekwapa, an observer writing from Johannesburg, as a state of "'APARTHEID" amongst Batswana'.<sup>166</sup> Whilst the

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<sup>161</sup> This is unconfirmed to be Masukula Sinombe, an African civil servant. BNARS BNB 632, M. Sinombe, oral testimony, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination, 18 February 1963.

<sup>162</sup> BNARS BNB 632, E. P. S. Letsididi, 'Discriminatory Practices in Places of Employment', written testimony, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination, 28 January 1963. Formed in June 1959 by Lenyeletse Seretse, the Bechuanaland Protectorate Worker's Union aimed to 'secure by constitutional means satisfactory working conditions for all African employees; to obtain and maintain reasonable hours of duty, wages and other conditions of labour'. Lenyeletse Seretse was a member of the Democratic Party, but there was no clear role that the union played in the party. See TNA CO 1048/59, British Intelligence report, July 1962.

<sup>163</sup> BNARS S. 594/7, Kgosi to Government Secretary, 9 August 1963.

<sup>164</sup> BNARS BNB 632, O. Magano, oral testimony, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination, 20 February 1963.

<sup>165</sup> BNARS BNB 632, A. R. Sedebadi, oral testimony, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination, 18 February 1963. See also BNARS BNB 632, Mr. Sinombe, oral testimony, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination, 18 February 1963.

<sup>166</sup> BNARS BNB 632, Kgosiemang Lekwapa, 'Discrimination – "APARTHEID" amongst Batswana', written testimony, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination, 8 August 1962.

colonial authority denied any official policy of discrimination in either the civil service or in the provision of government services, there was a clear perception of injustice amongst the African population. Sebina insisted the colonial government should focus on building a sense of 'social equality'. In this ideal national community, 'black and white should meet as social equals in the same occupation with mutual respect', and social services 'must be given equally to both groups'.<sup>167</sup> For these African voices, the establishment of an authentically non-racial society required advancements in the protection of economic and social freedoms.

The People's Party took political advantage from these complaints on racial discrimination, expressing similar frustrations over Bechuanaland's socio-economic inequality and the unequal provision of government services.<sup>168</sup> Patrick Tshane, a member of the People's Party providing evidence to the Select Committee, stated bluntly 'if a white man feels hungry I can definitely as well feel hungry'. 'When a white man can even get 6d. a day', Tshane maintained, 'there is no reason why I should be subjected to 2½ a day'.<sup>169</sup> Klaas Motshidisi, a representative of the Bechuanaland People's Party Workers Union, suspected a racial hierarchy was being practiced by Rhodesia Railways in the territory. The transport company provided Europeans a 'living wage' with 'proper houses', the Coloureds a 'subsistence wage' with 'better houses', and Africans merely a 'starvation wage', where they 'live in useless houses and most of the time they have no houses in which to live'.<sup>170</sup> The party was prone to exaggeration, however, when attempting to convey a sense of outrage over racial discrimination. In his testimony to the Select Committee, John Mahloane, another affiliate of the People's Party, described the residential compounds for Africans, set up by the Colonial Development Corporation, as 'reminiscent of a Nazi concentration camp'.<sup>171</sup> While this last comparison was hyperbolic, the party presented the most articulate list of grievances over Bechuanaland's informal economic and social apartheid.

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<sup>167</sup> BNARS S. 581/1/2, Sebina, 'The Aspiring Bechuana', 17 April 1961.

<sup>168</sup> SHL ICS 28/5/B/9, Halpern, 'Constitution', undated; George Winstanley, *Under Two Flags in Africa: Recollections of a British Administrator in Bechuanaland and Botswana 1954 to 1972* (Kelvedon: Blackwater Books, 2000), 234.

<sup>169</sup> BNARS BNB 632, Patrick Tshane, oral testimony, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination, 19 February 1963.

<sup>170</sup> BNARS BNB 632, Klaas Motshidisi, oral testimony, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination, 19 February 1963.

<sup>171</sup> BNARS BNB 632, John Mahloane, oral testimony, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination, 20 February 1963.

The organisation highlighted the ‘hidden’ nature of discrimination, tying it with the issue of class. Peter Maruping, Secretary General of the People’s Party, delivered a compelling example of the pervasive nature of racialism in Bechuanaland. Through his retelling of the simple act of purchasing milk from the ‘Protectorate Bakery’ in Lobatse, he detailed to the Select Committee how racialism distressed local residents throughout their daily life. On one side of the counter, the business charged three pence for a glass, whilst on the other side, patrons were charged six pence, but were allowed to sit on tables within the shop. After recognising the *de facto* form of racial segregation, Maruping confronted the owners, Mr. and Mrs. Delarey, and was told ‘Africans buy that side’, the cheap side. Maruping conceded there were naturally different services provided to those who specifically paid for a superior quality. However, he contended ‘[t]his discrimination in prices is deliberate because it is a well-known fact that Africans are not paid enough so as to afford these luxuries’, whilst ‘Europeans are paid enough to afford these luxuries’.<sup>172</sup> While at times normalising both class and gender divisions, the People’s Party presented an important alternative vision for racial equality in the country. The People’s Party explained a complex phenomenon, where racial discrimination did not necessarily require explicit signs, indicating ‘No Africans’ or ‘Europeans Only’, to reinforce a degrading racial structure.

The party factions, beyond drawing attention to the problem of racial discrimination, sought to attract political support through the promise of economic and social rights. The People’s Party initially accumulated considerable levels of public sympathy through boycotts of racist business owners, particularly in the first half of 1962. In the lead up to the March 1965 elections, the People’s Party attempted to shift more focus onto their specific policies as an alternative government. The party promised a more equitable distribution of government services. Under the leadership of Matante, the People’s Party’s 1965 election manifesto quoted, in full, Article Twenty-Six of the UDHR. The party committed itself to establishing a society where ‘[e]veryone has the right to education’, declaring it shall be ‘free up to the age of 15 years’.<sup>173</sup> Mpho’s breakaway party, the Independence Party, promoted an equally ambitious vision in regard to healthcare, pledging ‘free medical treatment for all those

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<sup>172</sup> BNARS BNB 632, Peter Maruping, oral testimony, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination, 21 February 1963.

<sup>173</sup> TNA CO 1048/531, Matante’s election manifesto, March 1965. See also TNA DO 183/767, ‘Summary of the Election Manifesto of the two Principal Political Parties in Botswana’, Commonwealth Secretariat background paper on Bechuanaland, 1966; SHL PP.BS.BIP, Mpho, ‘Message to Voters’, 1965.

who cannot afford the minimum medical fees'.<sup>174</sup> Given the enthusiasm amongst the population for equal rights at work, Motsete's splintered People's Party faction vowed to provide freedom from 'the fear of economic insecurity' through the delivery of '[j]obs for all or for as many as possible with a statutory general living wage minimum'.<sup>175</sup> Matante's party argued the state had an obligation to care for its most vulnerable citizens, repeating Article Twenty-Five of the UDHR, in which '[e]very one has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of himself and his family'.<sup>176</sup> The People's Party saw a duty for the state to provide universal economic and social freedoms, and thereby remove the racial divisions and class distinctions of the colonial era.

The colonial authority took a different viewpoint, casting race and class as two separate structures, whereby the persistence of socio-economic differentiation was assumed to be compatible with the creation of a more harmonious society. The Final Report of the Select Committee postulated 'the social barriers which undoubtedly exist are to a great extent based on economic differences or due to those class distinctions which are to be found in all communities'.<sup>177</sup> The colonial authority refused to recognise any claims of racialism without a direct line of responsibility, linking back to the government, through official policy or practice. In response to the testimony on the 'Protectorate Bakery', the Acting Administration Secretary characterised Maruping's narrative as unfair. There was 'no discrimination obvious or implied', as he claimed '[i]t is quite simple, it's economics'.<sup>178</sup> Outside of 'the normal economic differentiation', Arthur Douglas, the Government Secretary and Chairman of the Select Committee, similarly confined his discussion of racialism to examples which could be easily understood or had only the most obvious manifestations. In July 1962, Douglas notified the Legislative Council there was substantial progress being made toward the establishment of a non-racial society. His evidence was little more than the fact

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<sup>174</sup> BNARS BNB 1672, Independence Party election manifesto, 1965. See also TNA CO 1048/531, Matante's election manifesto, March 1965.

<sup>175</sup> TNA CO 1048/531, Motsete's election manifesto, 1965. See also SHL PP.BS.BPP, People's Party constitution, December 1960.

<sup>176</sup> TNA CO 1048/531, Matante's election manifesto, 1965. See also BNARS BNB 6594, People's Party Programme, 1967; BNARS BNB 1948, People's Party Central Committee memorandum, 'Party's Ideological Concept', undated.

<sup>177</sup> BNARS BNB 632, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination, 'Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination', undated.

<sup>178</sup> BNARS BNB 632, Maruping, oral testimony, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination, 21 February 1963.

Rhodesia Railways no longer displayed segregationist signage.<sup>179</sup> A lack of appreciation for the deeper structural examples of discrimination was demonstrated within the government's rhetoric on industrial harmony. Non-racialism was important 'for sound political and economic development', according to Fawcus, as there needs to be 'healthy relations between employers and employees'; thereby assuming Europeans will remain as the bosses and Africans as the workers.<sup>180</sup> For colonial officials, the priority was to ensure there was an elimination of all forms of discrimination in government policy and practice, rather than the abolition of racial hierarchies they claimed to be unchangeable or conceptually invalid.

Although the government was far more open to acknowledging racial disparities in the provision of basic welfare, this was often framed within the larger issue of the territory's lack of economic development. In 1948, economic and social rights had been a source of concern for the colonial authority during the negotiations on the UDHR. The Protectorate administration feared it may be exposed for breaching at least three proposed human rights. An official assessment from Mafeking, Bechuanaland's administrative headquarters in South Africa, reported the '[s]tandard of living of Africans and medical and social services cannot be said to be adequate', 'Europeans are usually more highly paid than Africans', and '[e]ducation is not compulsory owing to inadequate number of schools'.<sup>181</sup> In addressing these deficiencies, the government was less willing to accept that the problem was in the racial structures of the society, whereby any advantages for the European population could be delegitimised. In 1963, C. J. Hunter, the Director of Education, proposed to the Select Committee the problem in his government portfolio was 'not that too much is done' for European children. 'I think that a sounder viewpoint', Hunter considered, was 'that too little is provided for the African children'. For him, the wider imperative should be to 'conform to normal standards in developed countries'.<sup>182</sup> The government saw the issue as not one of racial inequality, but an overall lack of prosperity, due to the territory's vulnerable economic and geographical context.

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<sup>179</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the Second Session*, 121-4; TNA CO 1048/225, Douglas to J. A. Steward, 9 August 1962.

<sup>180</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the Third Session* (Lobatse: Legislative Council, 1963), 3.

<sup>181</sup> TNA FCO 141/1174, Mafeking to Pretoria, 22 July 1948.

<sup>182</sup> BNARS BNB 632, C. J. Hunter, oral testimony, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination, 12 August 1963. See also TNA CO 1048/47, Fawcus to Maud, 18 May 1962.

The Democratic Party was equally neglectful of the socio-economic dimension of racialism, being preoccupied with the expansive goals of development and inter-racial harmony. In March 1965, M. C. Molomo, even as one of the party's more vigorous advocates for legislative action against racialism, proclaimed the Democratic Party did not seek to address the issue of 'class distinction because it is bound to happen in any society, at any stage in all social circles'. Rather than dismantle racial hierarchies, the cultivation of good relations, for Molomo, depended on maintaining 'peace between master and servant'.<sup>183</sup> The Democratic Party's vision for economic advancement omitted any specific uplift in the Africans' standing in relation to whites. Seretse did not adamantly believe the government had a primary duty to improve socio-economic inequality. He urged it was the responsibility of the people 'to fold [their] sleeves and work for twenty-four hours a day', contributing 'blood, sweat, and tears'.<sup>184</sup> Industriousness was more important for improving race relations, according to the Democratic Party, than a rapid transformation in the distribution of wealth and capital.

The Democratic Party's ethos was not for economic and social rights, but national development. The ability to secure the economic wellbeing of the territory, Seretse affirmed, would lead to 'freedom not only from the pinpricks of discrimination in all its forms, but freedom also from the demoralising effects of want, hunger and its ally disease'.<sup>185</sup> In its 1965 election manifesto, the Democratic Party maintained the need to avoid both prejudicial and preferential treatment, thereby distancing itself from any policies aimed at drastically altering the economic structures of the society; for instance, through sweeping affirmative action.<sup>186</sup> As Masire told the Legislative Council in August 1964, 'the civil service is not a philanthropic [sic] organisation created for the benefit of destitutes or chaps who have not got the ability to do certain jobs'. He condemned those 'who feel that they must live in conditions which will make them feel important and that positions must be created for them'.<sup>187</sup> The imperative, for Seretse, was not on the rights to be claimed immediately from the state, but on the rewards to be gained through the long-term achievement of Bechuanaland's development goals. The two parties took a distinct view of

<sup>183</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the First Session*, 26.

<sup>184</sup> SHL PP.BS.BDP, Seretse, address to Democratic Party annual conference, 28 March 1964.

<sup>185</sup> SHL PP.BS.BDP, Seretse, address to Democratic Party annual conference, 28 March 1964. See also BNARS BNB 5314, Seretse, speech at Bechuanaland Independence Conference, 14 February 1966.

<sup>186</sup> SHL PP.BS.BDP, 'This Is What We Stand For', January 1965.

<sup>187</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the Fourth Session* (Lobatse: Legislative Council, 1964), 117-8.



underdevelopment in the territory. As the People's Party saw it as an issue of socio-economic rights and racial discrimination, the Democratic Party, along with the colonial administration, preferred to define it in the uncontroversial terms of national economic planning and policy-making. For the Democratic Party, there were other rights that would better promote social harmony and non-racial citizenship.

### **'Where is the democracy?': Bechuanaland's Democratic Deficit**

In the lead up to independence, the constitutional talks featured ongoing discussions about reforming the prevailing racial division and hierarchy within the Legislative Council and Executive Council. Outside of party politics, African residents made calls for greater democratic freedoms. They depicted discrimination in the political sphere as unjust and uncondusive to improving race relations. For T. Madisa and A. T. Moya, writing in a joint submission to the 1963 constitutional conference, the communal form of representation in the legislature was incompatible with the needs of the territory. After observing a 'manifestation of separateness', Madisa and Moya argued the segregated political representation and voter rolls encouraged 'racial differences and the tensions that inevitably arise from them'.<sup>188</sup> They concluded Bechuanaland must become a single nation, where the population would be recognised individually on a common roll, and free to vote for any party or independent candidate. Not only were there dangers in regard to social harmony, but also a lack of security for African interests. J. Modise, a self-described 'ordinary farmer' providing evidence to the Select Committee, spoke on his misgivings over the influence of Europeans in the Legislative Council and their wish to promote their own economic interest above those of Africans. The political system was susceptible to exploitation by Europeans, Modise determined, as neither the Legislative Council nor the African Councils were 'absolutely representative of 90% Africans according to individual right of vote'.<sup>189</sup> Such calls for formal equality expressed dissatisfaction over the political system, whereby the majority was excluded from key aspects of decision making that affected their day-to-day lives, thereby harming the wider potential for inter-racial harmony.

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<sup>188</sup> This petition was sent by care of The Hill School in Lobatse. BNARS S. 594/7, T. Madisa and A. T. Moya, 'Suggestions to the B. P. Constitution', 8 July 1963.

<sup>189</sup> This is unconfirmed to be Joe Modise, an ANC activist in exile. BNARS BNB 632, J. Modise, oral testimony, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination, 20 February 1963.

African contributors to the constitutional talks disputed the official justifications for racialised political representation in both their lack of economic rationale and underlying social prejudice. Chief Bathoen II of the Bangwaketse, a Legislative Council member and later opposition leader of the Botswana National Front, proclaimed '[t]he economic importance of the Europeans should not be over-emphasised unduly; nor should any claims to civilisation be adhered to blindly as a legacy of the whites'. Toward the aim of an African majority in the Legislative Council, he argued, '[i]t is high time the European element realised that an African can just as well rise to high standard'. Rather than fear the local residents would 'cast [the Europeans] in a lion's den from whence they have emerged' should they attain political power, Gaseitsiwe expected the 'happy relationship' to be lost to 'fanatical extremism' without greater political responsibility for the majority.<sup>190</sup> These motions for political liberties were framed by a general belief in the equal and inherent rights of humanity. As expressed by Lekwapa, many held the notion 'all human beings are so good that they deserve a share in the government of their country, and so wise that the world needs their advice'.<sup>191</sup> Such commentary saw democracy as an enlightened principle for the basis of human society, ideal for both improving race relations and empowering Africans.

However, these proposals from the public for expanding African democratic rights were highly restrained and not a consistent feature. This moderate approach was revealed in the petition of M. L. A. Kgasa, a principal at Kgari Sechele II Secondary School. The 'vote is such a powerful and an equally dangerous weapon', according to Kgasa, and should not be 'injudiciously given out of minor emotion'. In his proposal to the constitutional conference, whilst he welcomed the need for progressive reform, Kgasa argued the provision of political rights depended on a sufficient level of engagement and knowledge amongst the Africans. With a predominantly illiterate population, unable to grasp the concepts involved in party politics and the challenges confronting the economy, 'it is incomprehensible how a one man one vote idea could become a real reality'. As part of his constitutional proposals, he underlined the need for a limited franchise for African residents. Voters, for Kgasa, 'must be able to read and write', and 'to speak and understand English'.<sup>192</sup> Viewpoints such as these

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<sup>190</sup> BNARS S. 594/7, S. B. Gaseitsiwe, 'Review of the B.P. Constitution', 25 June 1963. See also BNARS BNB 632, Lekwapa, 'Discrimination – "APARTHEID" amongst Batswana', written testimony, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination, 8 August 1962.

<sup>191</sup> BNARS S. 594/7, Lekwapa, 'B. P. Constitutional Talks', 13 June 1963.

<sup>192</sup> BNARS S. 594/7, M. L. A. Kgasa, 'Review of Constitution', 4 June 1963. On the lack of political awareness, see SHL ICS 28/5/B/1, Halpern, 'The "Winds of Change" in Bechuanaland', 10 April 1961; SHL ICS

saw economic development as a necessary precursor to a successful democracy with full political participation.

The constitutional negotiations received further submissions whereby the need for radical democratic reform was either completely neglected or dismissed. Sebina was adamant in declaring '[m]an is endowed with a number of rights'. However, outside of his appeal for social equality, he did not specifically call for the right to vote. Instead, Sebina defended colonial Bechuanaland as an example of 'democratic government', whereby his primary concern was to merely sustain the territory's 'freedom of expression'.<sup>193</sup> The demand for political liberties was far from coherent, particularly outside of its perceived intrinsic value as an abstract concept. On the one hand, the structures and examples of socio-economic racialism were so pervasive as to elicit straightforward demands for greater equality in standards of living or government services. On the other hand, the benefits of democracy, and the exact form it would take, were less urgently felt for many Africans. The political system in Bechuanaland could be crafted in many ways, with key differences in the numbers and powers accorded to the racial groups. Amongst these African contributors to the constitutional talks, in contrast to alternative calls for economic and social rights, any interest in acquiring greater political liberties was relatively constrained and inconclusive.

The People's Party's proclamations in favour of democratic freedoms thereby offered a notable voice in favour of political transformation during key stages in the lead up to independence. The party saw the Legislative Council as the clearest example of racial discrimination.<sup>194</sup> In their February 1961 memorandum to the Resident Commissioner, Motsete and Mpho argued the segregated franchise and voting procedures were reflective of Bechuanaland's wider 'economic and social apartheid with its snubs, frustration and indignities for the African'. Without a more democratic form of representation, they warned the Africans' 'love of the white men as "the haves" will be turned by the stroke of the pen into hatred'. Under such a scenario, they warned there would be a repeat of 'what the Jews suffered in the past in Eastern Europe' and under 'the pogroms of Hitler's Germany'.<sup>195</sup> As a

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28/2/A/20, Halpern, 'Notes re High Commission Territories on which Africa Bureau policy to be based', no date; SHL ICS 28/5/C/5, Alan Donald to Halpern, 10 February 1964.

<sup>193</sup> BNARS S. 581/1/2, Sebina, 'The Aspiring Bechuana', 17 April 1961.

<sup>194</sup> BNARS BNB 632, Mpho, oral testimony, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination, 19 February 1963.

<sup>195</sup> BNARS S. 581/1/2, Motsete and Mpho, 'Critical Appraisal of Constitutional Proposals for a Legislature for the Bechuanaland Protectorate', 6 February 1961.

panacea for all of the territory's problems, the People's Party referred to the establishment of a truly democratic, independent state as the one solution needed to improve race relations.<sup>196</sup> Like so many anti-colonial parties, they were effective in turning the professed liberal-democratic principles of the British against the colonial authority. For Mpho, speaking to his faction in December 1962, the lack of political rights and freedoms was '[c]ut and dried White Hypocrisy! [sic]'. 'They hate dictatorship, curse communism, and preach democracy', Mpho exclaimed, '[b]ut they never put democracy into practice where they share the land with the blackman'. The narrative of colonial oppression was easily communicable for the People's Party, as Mpho queried '[w]here is the democracy? Who can deny the fact that the Colonial Government of Bechuanaland is a dictatorship?'.<sup>197</sup> The People's Party's proposals for democratic reform were far more pronounced and precise than the voices of African observers outside of party politics.

Alongside their commitment to the realisation of a wide set of economic and social rights, the People's Party promised to uphold political liberties. Within their 1965 election manifesto, they pledged to maintain 'the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association', and 'the right of freedom of opinion and expression'. The party endeavoured to overthrow the racialised political structure by outlawing any disqualifications from the voting roll based on colour.<sup>198</sup> In a resolution to the 1963 constitutional conference, Motsete outlined an alternative set-up of the Legislative Council in which the Europeans would be almost entirely unseated. Aside from the Resident Commissioner and three senior government ministers, ninety per cent of the remaining seats would be elected through universal adult suffrage. Under a common roll, the party advocated the principle of one-person-one-vote, including female suffrage. Minority interests were accounted for in five specially elected seats, including one for the indigenous San population, one for Indians, and three for diKgosi. Crucially, no such privileges were provided for the European population.<sup>199</sup> Whilst Mpho's faction presented a less detailed submission, their proposals were similar, with the only clear distinction being the requirement for voters to be twenty-

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<sup>196</sup> BNARS BNB 632, Motlhagodi, oral testimony, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination, 21 February 1963.

<sup>197</sup> Mpho spoke to a faction later renamed the Botswana Independence Party. SHL PP.BS.BPP, Mpho, address to People's Party conference, 29 December 1962.

<sup>198</sup> TNA CO 1048/531, Matante's election manifesto, March 1965. See also SHL PP.BS.BPP, People's Party constitution, 6 December 1960; BNARS BNB 1948, People's Party central committee, 'Party's Ideological Concept', undated; SHL PP.BS.BIP, Mpho, 'Message to Voters', 1965.

<sup>199</sup> BNARS S. 594/7, Motsete and D. Moruping, 12 June 1963.

one years or over, compared to Motsete's eighteen years or over.<sup>200</sup> The People's Party's policies were far from being entirely incompatible with the Democratic Party's standpoint, and their submissions were not radically different to the eventual constitutional format of Botswana.

However, the People's Party's commitment to democracy was compromised after the party's division and decline. Out of all the party leaders, Mpho made the most impassioned claims of a belief in democracy.<sup>201</sup> Yet, given his links to the Communist elements of South Africa's ANC, these proclamations were often contradicted by his ideological leanings. 'We are fighting against the Western Democracy', he announced in August 1962, in which such forms of government were 'our enemy No. 1'.<sup>202</sup> After repeated electoral losses, Mpho at least called on supporters to 'stomach it until the next general election for the purpose of maintaining peace and national unity', but Matante strove to become a far more obstructive force.<sup>203</sup> As the only factional leader to succeed in entering the Legislative Assembly in 1965, Matante occupied substantial portions of time initiating motions of 'no confidence'. Rather than accept his political defeat, Matante spoke exhaustively on spurious claims of electoral fraud. He asserted the Democratic Party's cooperation with the colonial rulers proved that Bechuanaland was being ruled by a neo-colonial government.<sup>204</sup> By questioning the legitimacy of the country's first elections, the opposition leader threatened to undermine the institutions of democracy at a critical time of their development and consolidation.

Through less disruptive means, Motsete's objection was distinctive for its apprehension over the long-term sustainability of political freedom. In the July after the elections, Motsete wrote a petition to Fawcus to point out the dangerous parallels, he saw, between Bechuanaland and the regimes in Eastern Europe.<sup>205</sup> A 'dictatorship of the proletariat' had become a 'dictatorship over the proletariat', according to Motsete, involving 'a one-party state under a tin-god of a tyrant'. With such a large majority in the Legislative Assembly, Motsete feared the Democratic Party could bring a similar fate to the territory,

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<sup>200</sup> BNARS S. 594/6/1, Mpho, 'Proposals to the Constitutional Committee for the Amendment of the Legislative Council Constitution of Bechuanaland Protectorate', 20 April 1963.

<sup>201</sup> SHL PP.BS.BIP, Mpho, address to Independence Party conference, December 1965.

<sup>202</sup> SHL PP.BS.BPP, Mpho, speech to People's Party conference, 19 August 1962.

<sup>203</sup> SHL PP.BS.BIP, Mpho, address to Independence Party conference, December 1971.

<sup>204</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the Second Meeting of the First Session* (Gaborone: Bechuanaland Legislative Assembly, 1965), 71-147; *Official Report of the Debates of the Fourth Meeting of the First Session* (Gaborone: Legislative Assembly, 1966), 5-10.

<sup>205</sup> See Anne Applebaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe 1944-56* (London: Allen Lane, 2012).

resulting in an uprising against the regime. His recommendation was for a bi-cameral legislature, providing the diKgosi with their own chamber and the ability to keep the elected party in check.<sup>206</sup> Although the People's Party made effective arguments and proposals for greater political freedoms, their rhetoric and practice often belied a full embrace of such ideals. The party's ideologies were wedded much more closely to anti-colonialism, African Socialism, and Pan-Africanism than Western liberal-democracy.

The views of the European population toward political reform were much further restrained by a mixture of reluctant acceptance and fearful opposition. After the beginning of the 1963 constitutional talks, some European residents expressed a willingness to agree to widening democratic representation.<sup>207</sup> Fawcus wrote to Duncan Sandys, the Colonial Secretary, commending the brave and mature attitude of Europeans during the constitutional conference. In favour of a more flexible arrangement, they eventually accepted the provision of four specially elected members who could be chosen by the ruling party according to its own preferences, and not by race. '[W]hen one considers that in other multi-racial territories in Africa special treatment of European interests is still a live issue', he supposed the white population should be commended for discontinuing their call for reserved seats. Through their willingness to negotiate and compromise, Fawcus argued they had 'made a notable contribution to unity and stability and to the satisfactory development of the party system on which both democracy and effective executive government in Bechuanaland will depend'.<sup>208</sup> They wanted to protect their own position within the territory, but the European population eventually proved capable of accepting major democratic reform.

The European community, nonetheless, continued to produce considerable levels of protest during the constitutional discussions. Masire noted in his memoirs the 'hostile white attitudes towards rule by a black majority'. Universal democratic rights under a common roll, Masire recalled, were opposed by 'most whites and many colonial officials'.<sup>209</sup> In January 1964, outside of those participating in the constitutional conference, Fawcus conceded there

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<sup>206</sup> TNA CO 1048/531, Motsete, 'Memorandum on the 1964 Constitution for Bechuanaland', 11 July 1965. A tribal body, known as the House of Chiefs, was eventually constituted but served more in an advisory role. See Gulbrandsen, *The State and the Social*, 228-9; Picard, *The Politics of Development in Botswana*, 146; Parson, *Botswana*, 40; Gretchen Bauer and Scott D. Taylor, *Politics in Southern Africa: State and Society in Transition* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), 95-6.

<sup>207</sup> BNARS S. 594/6/1, William Taylor, 'Preliminary Memorandum to Constitutional Review Conference', 2 June 1963.

<sup>208</sup> TNA CO 1048/405, Fawcus to Sandys, 8 January 1964.

<sup>209</sup> Lewis Jr. (ed), *Quett Ketumile Joni Masire*, 62.

was a mixture of differing viewpoints on the part of the European inhabitants. 'A few dislike the proposals intensely', as he expected such elements 'will probably leave the territory in the early future'.<sup>210</sup> The colonial authority, by December 1963, received letters from District Commissioners reporting on the response of the European community. The Commissioner for Machaneng relayed the agitation of local white residents for their lack of 'guaranteed seats', supporting 'the old political principle of "no taxation without representation"'. Europeans believed their disproportionate contribution to the government's tax revenue, and the territory's private capital investment, should trump any democratic sentiment for a more non-racial electoral format.<sup>211</sup> Overall, the white inhabitants lacked any realistic alternatives other than eventual acceptance. They were forced to accept their lack of numerical weight in population, diminishing power in a period of political transition, and inability to provide a coordinated effort at resistance amongst a diverse set of viewpoints. In response to gradual constitutional change, the result of productive discussion within a peaceful reform process, white residents were more disposed toward acquiescence than resistance.

Although the Protectorate administration's support was fundamental in the promotion of political liberties, any democratic initiatives on their part were limited by the priority to ensure such reform was favourable to the wellbeing of the white minority. In the early stages of constitutional change, the colonial authority supported and sustained the racial division of the Legislative Council. The official narrative attempted to justify communal representation as suitable for the needs of the African population, defining it as the most democratic alternative available. Between late 1961 and early 1962, these views were articulated by the Information Branch's 'IF YOU ASK ME \_ \_ \_' newsletter. In the style of a question and answer format, the publication responded to letters asking why Africans did not have greater political power as a group. The colonial authority's response highlighted the need for the legislature to represent the interests of all racial groups in the territory, to the point of dismissing the possibility of establishing a genuinely non-racial democracy. 'There is no likelihood in the foreseeable future', the newsletter predicted, of Europeans and Africans 'fusing their differences so as to become a single community'. The priority for the government was to ensure 'neither side could overwhelm the other' within the legislature.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> TNA CO 1048/405, Fawcus to Sandys, 8 January 1964.

<sup>211</sup> BNARS S. 594/7, Machaneng District Commissioner to Chief Secretary, 12 December 1963. See also TNA CO 1048/404, Fawcus to Stephenson, 24 July 1963.

<sup>212</sup> SHL ICS 28/5/A/5, Information Branch, 'IF YOU ASK ME \_ \_ \_', No. 1, October 1961. See also BNB 788, Legal Secretary, Joint Advisory Council Constitutional Committee, first meeting, 4 June 1959; TNA CO

For the Information Branch, under particular threat were the Europeans, whose votes would be virtually meaningless on a common roll.

The focus of the colonial authority was not on uplifting the African population through political representation, but on recognising the economic contributions of the white population. Despite their small number, the Protectorate administration claimed the Europeans performed a pivotal economic role commensurate with their dominant political position. For this reason, according to publications by the Information Branch, 'they have a strong economic claim to a reasonable share in the representation'. Europeans were noted to have paid over one third of taxation collected in the territory, bringing other 'benefits in which all communities share' in the form of capital, enterprise, and skill.<sup>213</sup> The description of the African majority was, by contrast, pejorative and patronising, picturing a 'great mass of African peasantry with little education', and an inability to 'keep abreast of current events by studying the newspapers and other media'. Africans, warned the Information Branch, could not understand 'the policies which are likely to benefit the community most'.<sup>214</sup> For the colonial authority, the political empowerment of Africans should only follow their economic advancement. In a context where the Protectorate administration denied the existence of racial discrimination in the socio-economic sphere, and failed to adequately deliver government services, there was almost no prospect of greater African representation under such terms.<sup>215</sup> These pamphlets help to challenge the story, depicted by some writers, of the seemingly easy and natural development of democratic political institutions in Botswana.<sup>216</sup> At certain points, and in different ways, the colonial authority needed to be pushed towards reform by the political parties. The rationale and principle for non-racial democracy had to be effectively designed, contested, and canvassed for it to succeed. Believed to have attained an equilibrium between protecting minority interests and preserving a 'democratic' way of life, the colonial authority did not provide the most significant impetus for expanding political rights.

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1048/47, Fawcus to Maud, 18 May 1962. James Zaffiro has written on the history of the Information Branch, but he does not mention these particular newsletters. See Zaffiro, 'Twin Births', 51-77.

<sup>213</sup> SHL ICS 28/5/A/5, Information Branch, "IF YOU ASK ME\_\_", No. 1, October 1961. See also BNARS S. 594/7, D. A. T. Atkins, 'B. P. Constitutional Changes', 10 July 1963.

<sup>214</sup> SHL ICS 28/5/A/5, Information Branch, "IF YOU ASK ME\_\_", No. 1, October 1961. See also BNB 788, Fawcus, Joint Advisory Council Constitutional Committee, 4 June 1959.

<sup>215</sup> SHL ICS 28/5/A/5, Information Branch, "IF YOU ASK ME\_\_", No. 1, October 1961. See also TNA CO 1048/47, Fawcus to Maud, 18 May 1962.

<sup>216</sup> See, for example, Molomo, *Democratic Deficit in the Parliament of Botswana*, 58-121; Fawcus, *Botswana*, 51.



Within a context of broader pressure for reform, the racialised system of government rapidly lost legitimacy. Distinct from the official view only a few years earlier, by the time of the constitutional conference in mid-1963, Fawcus disclosed to Stephenson his doubts over the perpetuation of segregated voter rolls and representation. 'In our circumstances, and at this stage of African Colonial history', Fawcus realised 'there appear to be no strong grounds for withholding universal adult suffrage'.<sup>217</sup> Leslie Monson, the Assistant Undersecretary for the Colonies, on a visit to Bechuanaland in 1962, recorded a similar pessimistic feeling towards the political framework. Communal representation was 'particularly felt to be anachronistic', according to Monson, 'and there is pressure also to change over from indirect to direct election of the African members'. Fawcus was described by Monson as supportive of reforming the parity system in favour of a non-racial franchise.<sup>218</sup> Such a change in perspective was due to the rise of the Democratic Party.

Seretse's party gained substantial support in the lead up to the constitutional conference, whilst the People's Party lost momentum and splintered. Fawcus recognised the confidence of the European inhabitants in the Democratic Party, favouring democracy as long as it did not severely threaten their interests. Provided there were adequate safeguards in the form of a bill of rights, he argued, 'many Europeans will accept "one man one vote"'.<sup>219</sup> More importantly, in his notes during the constitutional discussions, Fawcus argued 'universal adult suffrage has the merit in Bechuanaland that illiterate and lower qualification inhabitants are in many cases among its more reasonable and conservative citizens'.<sup>220</sup> Unlike the earlier newsletters of the Information Branch, the poor education of Africans transformed from being a justification for denying the expansion of democratic rights, to a key reason for such reform. The Democratic Party, the least radical alternative, was therefore anticipated to be a likely choice for a majority of the population in the first elections. African contributors to the Select Committee and the constitutional talks made complaints regarding representation in government, the People's Party made calls for political change, and the colonial authority and European inhabitants ultimately accepted democratic reform.

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<sup>217</sup> TNA CO 1048/404, Fawcus to Stephenson, 24 July 1963.

<sup>218</sup> TNA CO 1048/47, Monson, note on visit to High Commission Territories, 1962.

<sup>219</sup> TNA CO 1048/404, Fawcus to Stephenson, 24 July 1963. See also TNA CO 1048/404, Fawcus to Latimer, 3 January 1963; TNA CO 1048/404, Fawcus to Latimer, 15 January 1963; TNA CO 1048/404, Fawcus to Maud, 15 January 1963.

<sup>220</sup> TNA CO 1048/404, Fawcus, 'Sketch of a possible new constitution: notes', 1963.

Regardless, the most convincing argumentation for political liberties would come from the Democratic Party as it laid out its post-colonial vision for Botswana.

### **‘A tremendous responsibility’: Seretse’s Vision for Liberal-Democracy**

The Democratic Party played the defining role in the establishment of political liberties as a foundational value for post-colonial Botswana. Seretse’s party achieved a mandate for a Western liberal-democratic system from a vast majority of voters, as well as a common acceptance of political reform by European settlers and the colonial authority. The People’s Party contributed to the discourse on political reform, but their main concern was for the provision of economic and social rights. While the party had much credibility in their commitment to anti-colonialism and their vision for socio-economic equality, their respect for political freedoms and competition was less consistent. As shown in the first chapter, the People’s Party harassed dissenting members, ejected internal opponents, and threatened a violent uprising. The People’s Party’s ambitious aims and coercive methods were reminiscent of pretexts elsewhere in Africa for more authoritarian forms of government, allowing no legitimate space for political disagreement.<sup>221</sup> In their eventual call to delay national self-determination under Democratic Party rule, rejecting the wishes of an overwhelming majority of voters, the People’s Party had shown it was willing to abandon their declared principles. The People’s Party, therefore, was not the most credible force to launch an ongoing respect for political liberties, particularly in the way the Democratic Party outlined in their vision for non-racial democracy. While the People’s Party promised to deliver a similar set of democratic rights as Seretse, they could not pair this with the same message of trust and stability that the Democratic Party underscored.

As the People’s Party sought radical political change, the Democratic Party positioned themselves as a ‘responsible’ party with a cautious and cooperative approach toward constitutional reform. Seretse had a long pedigree as a supporter of political

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<sup>221</sup> To a degree, parallels may be found with the behaviour of the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) before its election, in a country that would soon become a one-party state despite its leader’s earlier pronouncements for democratic and individual rights. See James R. Brennan, ‘Youth, the TANU Youth League and Managed Vigilantism in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 1925–73’, *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 76:2 (2006): 221–246; Brennan, ‘The Short History of Political Opposition and Multi-Party Democracy in Tanganyika, 1958–64’ in Gregory Maddox and James Leonard Giblin (eds), *In Search of a Nation: Histories of Authority and Dissidence in Tanzania* (Dar es Salaam: Kapsel Educational Publications, 2005).

freedoms. In 1956, he pronounced his goal to transform Botswana into a democracy.<sup>222</sup> Nevertheless, as shown in 1959 during government discussions over the constitution, his approach could be more conservative. In favour of an indirect voting procedure for the African majority, at that period, the future Democratic Party leader argued the establishment of 'African territorial constituencies for the purpose of direct elections would be a waste of time'.<sup>223</sup> The party may have been 'Democratic' by name, but as the moderate alternative to the People's Party, the leadership took some years to cultivate their status as a driver for political reform. This would be achieved through their three key arguments for the importance of liberal-democracy: it would offer 'responsible' government, deliver economic advancement, and build a non-racial society.

Seretse offered a form of 'responsible' idealism, whereby democratic principles would be enshrined because they provided wider benefits to society. Rather than match the People's Party's promise of immediate independence to a democratic sovereign state, Seretse chose instead to highlight the rewards of a more temperate and deliberative transition process. This was the public platform the Democratic Party leader offered by March 1964, just as he came close to losing his life while suffering from physical illness. He could not speak at the annual national congress of the Democratic Party. From his bed at Francistown Hospital, Seretse drafted a presidential address to be presented to members in absentia. His health was an allegory for the wellbeing of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, soon approaching independence with an uncertain forecast for its future viability and security.

As Bechuanaland's political development was relatively belayed, Seretse watched multiple African colonial dependencies attain their national freedom, often with the loss of democratic freedoms. By 1964, one-party states were already officially established, or at least being consolidated, in Guinea, Congo, Ivory Coast, Tanzania, Malawi, and Kenya.<sup>224</sup> Seretse speculated whether Africans were aware of the challenges this freedom presents, especially how far 'we may or may not maintain a free atmosphere in our free states'. Regardless, he concluded the long-term survival of the state was to be found in its ability to establish a successful non-racial democracy. Once in power, the Democratic Party would encourage

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<sup>222</sup> TNA FCO 141/1248, H. Gilchrist, Office of the High Commissioner for Australia in the Union of South Africa, report on Bechuanaland Protectorate, 28 December 1956.

<sup>223</sup> TNA DO 102/47, Seretse, Joint Advisory Council Constitutional Committee, second meeting, July 1959. See also Fawcus, *Botswana*, 57.

<sup>224</sup> Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, 128-9.

open political opposition and criticism in a multi-party state. 'As regards freedom and basic human rights', Seretse declared, 'we shall always endeavour to attach the same value to those concepts for other people as we do for ourselves'.<sup>225</sup> Committed to elections 'carried out on a one-man-one-vote basis', the Democratic Party's election manifesto outlined a further pledge to 'uphold a democratic form of government and democratic institutions' once in power.<sup>226</sup> The party defined democracy as built upon a multi-party state, leaving little possible justification for an attempt at a 'democratic one-party state', as seen in the example of Tanzania.<sup>227</sup>

In crafting a vision for liberal-democracy, as much as the Democratic Party detested the language and disagreed with the policies of the People's Party, their political opponents would be essential to the functioning of a multi-party state. 'Responsible' government was not just about serving the best interests of the people, but about remaining consistent in a value for 'universal basic human rights' and tolerant of those with alternative political creeds seeking to keep the ruling party in check. The Democratic Party 'will not stifle political opposition and criticism, but will', Seretse assured, 'welcome all responsible criticism of the creative type'. After all, as the President acknowledged, it was only through 'responsible and creative criticism a truly democratic State can be assured'.<sup>228</sup> The Democratic Party's emphasis on pragmatism had potential to sit incongruously with an imperative for accelerating democratic change. Yet, Seretse's commitment to remaining accountable in government, with an acceptance of political debate and dissent, was a form of 'responsibility' designed to substantiate the Democratic Party's image of reliability. They accepted they were the moderate alternative, but they also wanted to be known as 'responsible' democrats who wanted genuine reform. The more democratic the political system and government practices could become, so the party proclaimed, the more the population could have confidence in their rulers.

Seretse's ability to take leadership over the call for political liberties was important not only for the transition to a liberal-democratic system, but to the acceptance of his party

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<sup>225</sup> Emphasis in original. SHL PP.BS.BDP, Seretse, address to Democratic Party national congress, 28 March 1964.

<sup>226</sup> SHL PP.BS.BDP, 'This Is What We Stand For', January 1965. See also Seretse, *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the Second Session*, 120.

<sup>227</sup> The United Republic of Tanzania, *Report of the Presidential Commission on the Establishment of a Democratic One Party State* (Dar es Salaam: Government Printer, 1965).

<sup>228</sup> SHL PP.BS.BDP, Seretse, address to Democratic Party national congress, 28 March 1964.

among all racial groups. His more conservative approach to constitutional discussions acquired the support of the colonial authority and European residents. The Democratic Party's closeness to the Protectorate administration left it with little capacity to assert a more vocal anti-colonial standpoint to build support amongst Africans, such as the more oratorical and emotive approach of the People's Party. However, Seretse welcomed his party's affiliation with such a cooperative approach to constitutional change, claiming the attribute of 'responsibility' was something all citizens in the country should acquire for the future prosperity of Bechuanaland. 'This right to elect the country's law-givers throws on the citizens a tremendous responsibility', Seretse elucidated in the 1965 election manifesto, 'and I wish to impress on the individual voter the sacredness of that responsibility'. The slogan of 'responsibility' was one that could appeal to all races.

By stressing the importance of such accountability on the part of voters, especially the African majority, Seretse could position the Democratic Party in a favourable viewpoint as the more trustworthy of the political alternatives. A vote for the party implied little risk or radical change during progressive democratic reform, an uncertain future after independence, and a vulnerable geographic and economic position. The upcoming election was a matter of paramount concern for the African majority, as the Democratic Party leader described the vote as 'a tool by which you can make or ruin your country's future, your own, and that of your own children'.<sup>229</sup> The Democratic Party avoided making ambitious promises equivalent to those of the People's Party. Instead, Seretse's electoral campaign married a sense of 'responsibility' with the ability to enact democratic change that was both politically sustainable and economically profitable.

The Democratic Party presented themselves as the most competent party to reduce racial disparities and discrimination. Their two key assets included a credible economic plan and the potential for a powerful democratic mandate. In accepting Bechuanaland's economic difficulties, the Democratic Party's development goals were restrained. Their proposals were less ambitious than the Articles quoted by the People's Party from the UDHR. Nonetheless, the Democratic Party argued their plans were more plausible in the pursuit of improving socio-economic inequality and sustaining a better distribution of government services. The target was not just African advancement, but the broader objective of national prosperity.

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<sup>229</sup> SHL PP.BS.BDP, 'This Is What We Stand For', January 1965.

Alongside the imperative of Bechuanaland's economic viability and success, Seretse also highlighted the significance of attaining democratic legitimacy as an essential first step toward improving race relations. The party's 1962 'Aims and Objects' joined a commitment 'to protect fundamental human rights' to a refusal to tolerate racial discrimination.<sup>230</sup> For the establishment of 'a progressive and a coherent nationhood', Seretse outlined in March 1964 how democratic values did not necessarily imply there was freedom for 'the idiosyncrasies of certain elements in the community' who favoured a more racialised outlook. To bring about a non-racial democracy, the Democratic Party leader proclaimed 'the will of the majority will have to be imposed by whatever sterner methods that can be thought of'.<sup>231</sup> The Democratic Party had already affiliated itself with the government's considerable efforts to eliminate racial discrimination through their visible position in the Legislative Council and Executive Council. Under colonial rule, the Democratic Party claimed to improve race relations through a form of representation that was severely restricted, but still undergoing democratic reform. Africans could have greater faith in a democratic government, not simply because it more accurately reflected the make-up of society, but because it offered better outcomes in economic prosperity and social harmony.

The Democratic Party's achievements with limited political powers provided a compelling argument for the party's rule under a more democratic system. Whilst the People's Party was more articulate in expressing social and economic grievances, the Democratic Party had more practical experience addressing such adversities through official institutions. Well before independence, the Democratic Party could confirm they had already contributed toward alleviating socio-economic hardships and building a fairer distribution of government services. 'The [Democratic Party] should rightly take credit', Seretse trumpeted in March 1964, for improvements in multi-racial schooling and localisation of the civil service.<sup>232</sup> If greater democratic representation saw the Democratic Party have full control in government, Seretse argued, it would bring about even more progress toward eliminating racial discrimination. Without any sentiment for socio-economic rights, the Democratic Party's call for democratic freedoms was rationalised by underscoring the civic duty of voting for a 'responsible' party in government; upholding the importance of a viable development

<sup>230</sup> This may have been the earliest reference of the Democratic Party to international human rights. See SHL PP.BS.BDP, Bechuanaland Democratic Party, *Shaping the Destiny of a Nation*, 10-1.

<sup>231</sup> SHL PP.BS.BDP, Seretse, address to Democratic Party national congress, 28 March 1964; S. M. Gabatshwane, *Seretse Khama and Botswana* (Kanye: Bechuanaland Press, 1966), 29-30.

<sup>232</sup> SHL PP.BS.BDP, Seretse, address to Democratic Party national congress, 28 March 1964.

plan as a means of fulfilling economic and social goals; and demonstrating the conduciveness of political liberties to establishing greater harmony in race relations. The 1966 independence constitution reflected Seretse's pronouncements for liberal-democracy in Botswana, enshrining political and civil rights such as freedom of conscience, expression, assembly, and association.<sup>233</sup> The Democratic Party presented its vision for a non-racial democracy as a foundation for a prosperous and inclusive society, without the need for the promise of economic and social rights.

### Conclusion

Botswana's idealism for political liberties was an inheritance from the Democratic Party's electoral campaign, in a contest between differing visions for the state's post-colonial future. Non-racial democracy was not autonomically assumed to be an inherent good, but justified as a means of addressing underdevelopment, discrimination, and disharmony. Both parties engaged with the content of the UDHR in their manifestos, but in different ways. Without a mass social movement for self-determination, a greater spotlight could be placed on the parties' principles and programmes for action, upon which the electorate would have to choose the superior platform. The Democratic Party's highly detailed development agenda juxtaposed the People's Party's rudimentary vision for economic and social rights, which were passionate in promise but vague on planning. To fully understand the choices of voters in the self-government elections, more research is needed amongst the scholarship of Botswana on the public sphere of intellectual debate and reflection.<sup>234</sup> Nonetheless, the Democratic Party's victory was simultaneously a triumph for political liberties in Botswana, with consequences lasting for many decades to come. The next chapter covers a parallel debate between the parties over the bill of rights. Seretse's vision for non-racialism, built upon individual protections, triumphed over the People's Party's proposals for African collective rights. Botswana's post-colonial transition reveals how the end of colonial rule meant more than just national self-determination, as the process itself allowed for these vibrant and consequential human rights debates to occur. Rather than being presented as anti-political, human rights were used as a flexible political tool to demand change, fashion a post-independence agenda, and install an African leadership.

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<sup>233</sup> BNARS BNB 700, 'Constitution of Botswana', 1966.

<sup>234</sup> As seen in Hunter, *Political Thought and the Public Sphere in Tanzania*, 23-4.

### **‘Conditional on a Bill of Rights’: Race and Human Rights in the Constitution of Botswana**

As a philosophy based on individual rights, non-racialism formed a key pillar of Botswana’s human rights idealism. It was an ethos designed to address discrimination by discarding the concept of race altogether and replacing it with a respect for individualism. Similar to the development of political liberties covered in the previous chapter, an emphasis on individual freedom was not a natural outcome in the lead up to independence. Seretse’s advocacy for these principles was opposed by the People’s Party’s calls for the collective rights of Africans. Based on a racially exclusivist vision, the People’s Party sought the return of white-owned land to the African population. The construction of a bill of rights played a fundamental role in this debate, as the European settlers and the colonial authority wanted to safeguard private property protections. The colonial government was pressured into reforms of race relations by the People’s Party’s boycotts of racist business owners and anti-white rhetoric. The Democratic Party’s advocacy for non-racialism, and thus individualism, promised to protect white minority interests. With a fixation on pragmatism, Seretse justified individual protections as an additional way to ensure territorial security, economic advancement, and internal stability. The negotiations over the bill of rights produced a symbolic document for external onlookers and donor nations to admire, seeing it as evidence of Botswana’s commitment to non-racialism through individual protections. Such image-building ultimately masks how Botswana’s constitutional foundations were heavily shaped by the needs of a small, but influential, racial group. The irony of Botswana’s non-racial democracy was that it was built out of a racialised discourse of individual human rights, one that excluded more communalist notions for Africans. Even as it inspired a non-racial vision for Southern Africa, Botswana’s human rights idealism was developed out of a hard-headed assessment of internal and external realities.

### **‘In conformity with the principles of African ownership’: The People’s Party’s Vision for Collective Rights**

Botswana’s foundational narrative as a non-racial democracy, based on political liberties and individual protections, has eclipsed an alternative post-colonial vision advanced by the People’s Party before independence. David Anderson, an historian of Africa, has observed the silences in the ‘history made by the victors’ of Kenya’s 1963 independence elections. The official narrative, Anderson writes, has ‘neatly avoided any acknowledgment of those who



then held alternative visions of Kenya's post-colonial political future'.<sup>235</sup> In Botswana, the Democratic Party's powerful meta-narrative of non-racial individualism has similarly obscured the People's Party's programme of African communalism. The People's Party inspired an initial wave of support amongst urban communities. This was driven by activism against European traders accused of racist practices. Yet, the party could not sustain much political momentum after experiencing factional divides. By the March 1965 elections for self-government, the party relied far more on the anti-European grievances of its small, young, and town-based African supporter base. This narrow-band constituency shaped the organisation's vision for a post-colonial future, whereby a notion of collective rights securing African entitlements to land became a principal demand. In addition to their anti-European rhetoric, the People's Party's call for the return of white owned land to the African population stoked fears among whites and colonial officials. Amongst discussions over the bill of rights, the People's Party's political decline allowed for the Democratic Party to offer a more individualist concept for multi-racial harmony.

The People's Party initially vowed to uphold social harmony and equality in their campaigns against racial discrimination. Its original 1960 constitution was optimistic about improving relations, proclaiming 'there is room and enough for a mutually beneficent co-existence'. The corresponding aim of the Party was to 'denounce, discourage and otherwise combat all manner of...discrimination'.<sup>236</sup> Their early protests generally avoided racialised or exclusionary rhetoric. In the first half of 1962, the People's Party organised localised campaigns against white traders known for their verbal prejudice against African customers or poor treatment of African workers. From 3 to 12 May 1962, the People's Party boycotted four stores and one café in Francistown, belonging to the Jewish traders known as the 'Levitt Brothers', for allegedly describing all Africans as 'thieves and criminals'. Although some picketers held anti-Semitic placards, demonstrators acted in accordance with the law, and no acts of intimidation were carried out against Europeans.<sup>237</sup> The campaigns, according to British Intelligence, were illustrative of the People's Party's ability to draw upon support in the cities and maintain discipline amongst their followers.<sup>238</sup> The People's Party produced a

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<sup>235</sup> David Anderson, "'Yours in Struggle for Majimbo': Nationalism and the Party Politics of Decolonisation in Kenya, 1955-64", *Journal of Contemporary History* 40:3 (2005): 547-8.

<sup>236</sup> SHL PP.BS.BPP, People's Party constitution, 6 December 1960.

<sup>237</sup> TNA CO 1048/259, UK High Commissioner for Southern Africa to Colonial Secretary, 17 May 1962; TNA CO 1048/113, British Intelligence report, June 1962; SHL ICS 28/5/B/2, Halpern, 'Boycott of Levitt's Store', *Sunday Express*, 20 May 1962; Keitseng, *Comrade Fish*, 89-90.

<sup>238</sup> TNA 1048/113, British Intelligence report, May 1962.

noteworthy anti-racist campaign that could use the power of the people, including ordinary workers and local residents, to directly oppose acts of racism.



*5 G. Mennen Williams observing a People's Party protest led by Philip Matante, 'We Deplore Apartheid [sic] in our land', 1961. Courtesy: YouTube.*

The party demonstrated their capacity to uphold peaceful means of protest against racial discrimination. This was shown in their movement against the Lobatse Cash Stores in January 1962, whereby two employees were claimed to have been wrongfully dismissed. Whilst commenting on the 'number of crudely printed placards', Fawcus noted the caption 'WE DO NOT REQUIRE GUNS...OUR WEAPON IS BOYCOTT'. Most of the People's Party's affiliated boycotts were inspired, not by their leadership group, but by the rank-and-file members who directly encountered racial abuse.<sup>239</sup> Those who made the biggest sacrifices during the protests were the employees who identified themselves with the party, given they often lost their jobs as a result. The boycotts were consistent, to some extent, with a tolerant philosophy of non-racialism. Mpho insisted the party was threatening 'to boycott every trader whether white or black', and could not be blamed for any anti-European bias, as

<sup>239</sup> TNA CO 1048/113, Acting Resident Commissioner to Deputy High Commissioner, 27 January 1962; TNA CO 1048/113, Resident Commissioner to High Commissioner, 16 April 1962; TNA CO 1048/113, UK High Commissioner for Southern Africa to Colonial Secretary, 25 January 1962; TNA 1048/113, British Intelligence report, May 1962.

‘unfortunately only whites have stores here’.<sup>240</sup> The organisation also made the most notable contributions to the hearings of the Select Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in February 1963. Mpho’s faction provided oral testimony that was distinct for its eloquence and substance. The People’s Party approached the discussions with constructive contributions and an apparent intent to improve relations. The party was highly coordinated as a political unit, proclaiming to ‘speak on behalf of the people of Bechuanaland’. As many witnesses outside of party politics were illiterate and lacked a formal education, and the Democratic Party remained quiescent as participants, the People’s Party’s testimony served as an important contribution to the proceedings.<sup>241</sup> They were effective in articulating and protesting the racialism encountered by Africans on a daily basis.

Alongside their non-violent activism on race relations, the party also espoused a more racialised standpoint. In September 1963, the People’s Party warned John Maud, the High Commissioner, of the potential for either instability or secession, given much of the white population identified their heritage as South African. These ‘two completely irreconcilable nationalities’, the party memorandum advised, ‘cannot exist side by side without being involved in a ghastly controversy’.<sup>242</sup> For the People’s Party, this argument was validated by the petitions for secession by some white communities in the Tuli and Tati blocks, residing along the borders of South Africa and Rhodesia respectively.<sup>243</sup> In seeking ‘unification of the people’ under one nation, as Matante later conceded in March 1966, the People’s Party did ‘not believe in the so-called multi-racial system’ which involved racial inclusiveness between Africans and Europeans.<sup>244</sup> Mpho shared this grim outlook on pluralism during a speech in

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<sup>240</sup> SHL ICS 28/5/B/2, Halpern, ‘Boycott of Levitt’s Store’, *Sunday Express*, 20 May 1962. A list of the most notable boycotts includes: The Tati Hotel in Francistown, a cash store in Lobatse, four shops and a cafe owned by the Levitt Brothers in Francistown, T. W. Shaw’s shop in Palapye, and O. H. Shashane’s cafe and butchery in Palapye. See The Africa Institute, ‘Political Developments in the Bechuanaland Protectorate’, 47.

<sup>241</sup> BNARS BNB 632, Mpho, oral testimony, 19 February 1963, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination; TNA CO 1048/702, British Intelligence report, February 1963; TNA CO 1048/531, British Intelligence report, February 1963; TNA CO 1048/531, Mothapo, ‘People’s Party Says “Set Date For Freedom”’, *Contact*, 10 January 1963.

<sup>242</sup> TNA CO 1048/407, Maruping and Matante to High Commissioner, 11 September 1963; BNARS BNB 1948, Botswana People’s Party, ‘Party’s Ideological Concept’, undated.

<sup>243</sup> TNA CO 1048/531, Matante to Secretary of the UN Special Committee on Decolonisation, 15 April 1964; TNA CO 1048/407, ‘Bechuanaland Goes to UN with Land Demands’, *Cape Times*, 11 June 1964. Similar calls were seen earlier for the Ghanzi District to be incorporated into South-West Africa, see Margo Russell and Martin Russell, *Africans of the Kalahari: White Minority in a Black State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 68-9, 125. See also Halpern, *South Africa’s Hostages: Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland* (London: Penguin Books, 1965), 293-4, 324, 331; Richard Stevens, *Lesotho, Botswana, & Swaziland: The Former High Commission Territories in Southern Africa* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1967), 149-50.

<sup>244</sup> SHL PP.BS.BPP, Gibson, interview with Matante, 9 March 1966; Lewis Jr. (ed), *Quett Ketumile Joni Masire*, 43-4.

December 1962. He asserted the People's Party could not 'live side by side' with those who are 'racialists and believe in white supremacy', as any European who identified himself as a resident was merely trying 'to legalise his evil intentions of possessing a portion of Botswana'.<sup>245</sup> The People's Party explained the racial problem for Africans as due, not just to the persistence of discrimination, but to the very presence of the white population.

The party used expressions of anti-European sentiment to gain political support. This tactic became more pronounced by the end of 1962, after the boycotts were abandoned and the first factional split occurred. British Intelligence recorded vocal outbursts against the white population at party protests and conferences.<sup>246</sup> At an early meeting led by Matante, the European population was described as 'blood suckers' and 'thieves', with one party leader asserting 'the People's Party hate the Europeans and we shall hate them forever'.<sup>247</sup> Similarly, in June 1964, a leader at an Independence Party rally promised the party 'will "chase" Europeans out' upon entering government.<sup>248</sup> Without following up their threats with action, the organisation still suffered the disadvantages of being perceived by the colonial authority as a 'radical' movement. The People's Party's combative approach irreparably damaged their perception amongst colonial officials and undermined any claim to offer peace and stability for all racial backgrounds in the territory.

Despite their faults, the People's Party offered more than just violent rhetoric and empty threats. Since their political decline, the People's Party's constitutional framework for post-colonial Bechuanaland has been neglected within the country's official narrative. They defined their mission as one dedicated to restoring the land to the African population as their rightful inheritance. From the viewpoint of the party, white inhabitants adhered to a foreign concept of ownership and had an illegitimate claim to property within the Protectorate. By December 1962, Matante's faction outlined a resolution whereby 'all land termed crown and/or European settlement in any part of our country...must be restored to the indigenous

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<sup>245</sup> SHL PP.BS.BPP, Mpho, address to People's Party conference, 29 December 1962.

<sup>246</sup> TNA CO 1048/531, Bechuanaland Intelligence report, December 1964; TNA CO 1048/531, Bechuanaland Intelligence report, December 1963; TNA CO 1048/531, Bechuanaland Intelligence report, January 1963; TNA CO 1048/113, Bechuanaland Intelligence report, February 1962; TNA CO 1048/113, Bechuanaland Intelligence report, July 1962; TNA CO 1048/113, Bechuanaland Intelligence report, September 1962; TNA CO 1048/535, Bechuanaland Intelligence report, May 1963.

<sup>247</sup> TNA CO 1048/113, Bechuanaland Intelligence report, November 1961.

<sup>248</sup> TNA CO 1048/535, Bechuanaland Intelligence report, June 1964.

people', including an elimination of all 'artificial barriers and boundaries'.<sup>249</sup> Mpho sent a similar set of proposals to the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, in November 1964. Every piece of land sold by the colonial authority, Mpho wrote, 'shall be restored to the people of Botswana without compensation'.<sup>250</sup> His vision was to have all 'foreign title deeds or ownership...placed under Government control in confirmity [sic] with the principles of African ownership of land', abandoning the notion of individual property rights for that of communalism. More Socialist than traditionalist, private land would be brought under state ownership, rather than the authority of the Kgosi.<sup>251</sup> To the detriment of the Europeans' position and security within the territory, the People's Party offered a set of group rights for Africans as the basis for reformulating race relations after independence. The People's Party's post-colonial vision did not succeed as a result of the party's electoral loss. Yet, their voice for collective rights encouraged the colonial authority to address racial discrimination and the Democratic Party to develop their own philosophy of individualist non-racialism.

### **Racial Freedoms without 'Freedom Riders': The Colonial Authority and Race Relations**

The colonial authority, in fear of the People's Party's proposals, prioritised the peace and security of white settlers, farmers, and businessmen. The Protectorate administration relied heavily upon the revenues of European ranchers and commercial interests, particularly as they paid several times the rate of tax as Africans with the same income. Fawcus thought the white population was responsible for 'substantial investment, to useful development of the land and to a real improvement in the economy'. Europeans had struggled with drought, foot and mouth disease, and an inability to meet steep repayment terms for Crown grants on overvalued land. As a number of families and farmers had begun to leave, the Queen's Commissioner believed Europeans 'deserve all the encouragement they can get from

<sup>249</sup> TNA CO 1048/113, Mothapo, 'Bechuanaland Tension', *Contact*, 6 September 1962; TNA CO 1048/113, Maruping and J. L. Kgaboesele, People's Party resolutions, December 1962; TNA CO 1048/531, British Intelligence report, January 1963; TNA CO 1048/113, British Intelligence report, January 1962.

<sup>250</sup> TNA CO 1048/535, Mpho and Emmanuel R. Mokobi to Harold Wilson, 6 November 1964. See also SHL PP.BS.BPP, Mpho, address to People's Party conference, 29 December 1962. One European inhabitant was reportedly told by a leader of Mpho's faction that Africans 'do not need capital to put up a shop or hotel; if we want one, then we will take one'. See The Africa Institute, 'Political Developments in the Bechuanaland Protectorate', 50.

<sup>251</sup> BNARS BNB 1672, Botswana Independence Party manifesto, 1965; TNA CO 1048/535, British Intelligence report, June 1964; SHL PP.BS.BPP, Mpho, address to People's Party conference, 29 December 1962. Many African post-colonial states justified the nationalisation of large estates and the violation of an individual right to property for ensuring economic and social rights. See *Seminar on the Realisation of Economic and Social Rights with Particular Reference to Developing Countries, Lusaka, Zambia, 23 June – 4 July 1970* (New York: United Nations, 1970), 8, 12; Howard, 'The Dilemma of Human Rights in Sub-Saharan Africa', 735-6.

Government'.<sup>252</sup> Bechuanaland's post-colonial future demanded of it the ability to 'continue to offer peace and security to all', Fawcus maintained, with 'adequate inducement to capital and skills...from outside the Territory'.<sup>253</sup> Official action against racial discrimination in Bechuanaland was therefore conducted with a primary consideration for the interests of the white population after independence.

The colonial authority struggled to satisfy the often conflicting priorities of safeguarding European interests and ensuring stability in race relations. Concerned over discrimination on the railways, Bernard Braine, Joint Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, warned the government in August 1961 'to anticipate trouble'. In relation to the recent racial conflict in the US Civil Rights Movement, identifying the global echoes of the struggle, Braine advised the government to 'not encourage "Freedom Riders" to operate in British territory'.<sup>254</sup> Alan Tilbury, the Assistant-Attorney General, held a similar view. The colonial authority, he suggested, should 'not remain passive and allow the initiative (and acclaim) to pass to individual Africans (possibly belonging to a particular party [the People's Party]) who may attempt to break down segregation by provocative acts'.<sup>255</sup> Even as a result of the People's Party's non-violent boycotts in 1962, Fawcus reported 'the local European community...feel that time is running out for them', whilst there had been 'little or no investment in Francistown...and none can be expected in present circumstances'.<sup>256</sup> By 1963, the People's Party's anti-white sentiment led British Intelligence to expect that 'many of the small farmers will attempt to liquidate their assets during the year'.<sup>257</sup> The Europeans who predicted 'anti-white violence' considered the option of evacuating their wives and children to South Africa in the lead up to the 1965 elections.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> TNA CO 1048/749, Queen's Commissioner to Colonial Secretary, 14 May 1964; *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the Second Session*, 121; TNA CO 1048/47, James Fairbairn, 'Bechuanaland', *New Statesman*, 27 July 1962.

<sup>253</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the Fourth Session*, 4; TNA CO 1048/404, minutes of meeting to consider procedure for consultation on the review of the constitution, 1 July 1963.

<sup>254</sup> TNA DO 157/17, discussion with Bernard Braine, 30 August 1961. On the influence of the US Civil Rights Movement in Africa, see Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*.

<sup>255</sup> TNA DO 157/17, A. G. Tilbury, 'Racial Discrimination on the Railway in Bechuanaland Protectorate', internal opinion paper, 26 August 1961; TNA CO 1048/225, M. Archer to J. P. I. Hennessy, 30 January 1962; TNA CO 1048/225, 'Removing Racial Discrimination in Bechuanaland', 10 August 1962; TNA CO 1048/225, Molly Cooper, 'Apartheid's "All Change" at Border', *Reynold's News*, 12 August 1962.

<sup>256</sup> TNA CO 1048/113, Resident Commissioner to High Commissioner, 16 April 1962; TNA 1048/113, Bechuanaland Intelligence report, May 1962; TNA CO 1048/189, Colonial Office background paper on the Bechuanaland Protectorate, March 1962.

<sup>257</sup> TNA CO 1048/531, British Intelligence report, January 1963.

<sup>258</sup> TNA CO 1048/531, Bechuanaland Intelligence report, February-March 1965.

While there was much fear in the white community, they had leverage, given the colonial government's apparent reliance on their economic output.

The settler population's reluctance to bring about more rapid progress in addressing racial discrimination contributed to fuelling the anti-white sentiment. White-owned businesses and sporting groups, including cricket and tennis clubs, were slow to reform.<sup>259</sup> 'Europeans in Mahalapye and Palapye', British Intelligence reported, 'would refuse to play in a side which included an African'.<sup>260</sup> The Europeans' opposition to non-violent boycotts and demands for the arrest of picketers showed a lack of preparedness for an African majority-ruled government who would seek to promote or potentially enforce change. In the face of a discriminated majority, a vocal African party with an anti-white platform, and an approaching transfer of power, the European minority acknowledged they could find themselves without protection from racialism after independence. A consideration for the wellbeing of whites, not Africans, thereby drove the colonial authority to make a meaningful improvement in race relations.

The colonial authority first began to take effective action through the formation of the Select Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.<sup>261</sup> Arthur Douglas, the Chairman of the Select Committee, attempted to reassure witnesses 'there is no need to preach to the converts' on the fact of discrimination.<sup>262</sup> 'A country well on its way to independence', as pronounced by the Select Committee's Final Report, 'cannot afford the moral degradation and uneconomic use of its human resources to which the survival of racial discrimination must condemn it'.<sup>263</sup> Douglas defined racialised abuse based on

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<sup>259</sup> Winstanley, *Under Two Flags in Africa*, 234.

<sup>260</sup> TNA DO 35/7297, Bechuanaland Intelligence report, October 1960; BNARS BNB 632, J. Joas, oral testimony, 20 February 1963, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination; BNARS BNB 632, Mr. Tladi, oral testimony, 18 February 1963, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination; BNARS BNB 632, Mabe, oral testimony, 21 February 1963, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination; BNARS S. 591/1, Kanye District Commissioner to Member for Tribal Affairs and Social Services, 'Clubs and Club Liquor Licences', 28 February 1964; BNARS S. 591/1, Mahalapye District Officer to Member for Tribal Affairs and Social Services, 'Clubs and Club Liquor Licences', 25 February 1964; SHL ICS/28/5/B/1, Halpern, 'The "Winds of Change" in Bechuanaland', *South African Quaker*, 10 April 1961.

<sup>261</sup> BNARS BNB 632, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination, November 1963.

<sup>262</sup> BNARS BNB 632, Douglas, opening statement, Select Committee on Racial Discrimination, 19 February 1963.

<sup>263</sup> BNARS BNB 632, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination, November 1963.

‘internationally recognised statements on fundamental rights’.<sup>264</sup> The Select Committee adopted a non-racial outlook defined by the repeal of legislatively mandated forms of racism, but without a notion of more socio-economic or structural inequities.

Immediate steps were taken toward reform, as the Select Committee recommended the removal of all provisions deemed to be outdated.<sup>265</sup> References to Europeans, Africans, or ‘Natives’ were found in thirty-two laws, including twenty-five statutory and seven financial. ‘It was easy to deal with the matters of legislation’, Masire recalled, as a subsequent meeting in the Legislative Council in August 1964 brought about the amendment of virtually all discrimination in law.<sup>266</sup> Far more controversial for Europeans, the Select Committee ‘envisaged non-racial schools as the ultimate educational objective’, providing the academic standards of white students did not decline. Language, rather than race, would be the only factor ‘determining which child is educated at which school’. The Select Committee dismissed European opposition to reform as ‘out of step with the majority...which desires the abolition of racial discrimination’.<sup>267</sup> ‘[E]ffected remarkably smoothly in nearly every part of the Territory’, Fawcus announced the Protectorate’s ‘schools are now either English or Tswana-medium schools and admission is not determined on grounds of race’.<sup>268</sup> As shown in the first chapter, the colonial authority’s initiation of constitutional discussions undercut the People’s Party’s ability to credibly claim to be leading the movement for independence. Due to the Select Committee’s progress, a similar outcome occurred in the party’s standpoint against racialism. Despite the political pressure caused by the People’s Party and the participation of its members as witnesses, the successful operation of the Select Committee, as an official process, undermined any acclaim for the party’s more informal boycotts and protests. The Select Committee was not entirely effective as its purview was limited and instances of racialism continued well into the post-colonial era. Regardless, with the colonial authority already taking measures toward establishing a non-racial society, the People’s

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<sup>264</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the Third Session*, 133. See also BNARS BNB 632, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination, November 1963.

<sup>265</sup> BNARS BNB 632, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination, November 1963.

<sup>266</sup> Lewis Jr. (ed), *Quett Ketumile Joni Masire*, 44-6; TNA CO 1048/225, Government Secretary and Seretse, ‘Race Relations: Discriminatory Legislation’, note for the agenda of the Executive Council, 27 June 1962.

<sup>267</sup> BNARS BNB 632, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination, November 1963; BNARS BNB 632, Hunter, oral testimony, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination.

<sup>268</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the Fourth Session*, 3. The transition to multi-racial schooling encountered some opposition from the European population, see Gabatshwane, *Seretse Khama and Botswana*, 41-3.



Party's promise to remove racial discrimination upon entering government became far less compelling. The Select Committee's avowed non-racial idealism was a precursor to the individual protections built into the constitution at independence.

**'An outlook above racial hate and dislikes': The Democratic Party's Philosophy of Non-Racialism**

The Democratic Party's human rights philosophy before independence would form the basis of Botswana's foundational narrative as a non-racial state. The leadership's conservative approach to addressing racial discrimination meant it got less immediate support on the streets than the People's Party's non-violent boycotts. However, as a party with members elected to the Legislative Council, including Seretse who also sat on the Executive Council, the Democratic Party had a tremendous advantage. The colonial authority held the Democratic Party in high regard for its 'moderate' standpoint, permitting Seretse and his party to initiate legislative action to address racialism and improve social harmony. The Democratic Party earned the trust of white residents for their opposition to the People's Party's more extreme viewpoint. At the same time, it could also address concerns amongst the African population over racial discrimination through their actions within government. While the People's Party appealed to the interests of the most disaffected African residents, the Democratic Party's vision for economic prosperity and social harmony foresaw a need to protect the rights of all racial groups after independence. Rather than setting up an exclusive set of rights for Africans, Seretse appealed to a notion of individual freedoms that would strive to transcend racial lines and provide adequate protections for all citizens.

Seretse's vision for Bechuanaland was both characteristic and distinctive of African political forces within the region. Both parties were likely to have been influenced in some way by the 1955 Freedom Charter, the founding manifesto of the South African Congress Alliance, including the ANC and its allies. It set forth a vision of aspirations and principles for a post-apartheid South Africa. However, neither party in Bechuanaland would have fully affiliated with it. The liberal-democratic principles mostly aligned with the Democratic Party's views, but only the People's Party would have shared the promises of land, work, housing, and comfort, especially through economic nationalisation. The Freedom Charter's assertion 'that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white', would have appealed to Seretse's ultimate vision for Southern Africa, but this would have sat

uncomfortably with the Pan-Africanists in the People's Party.<sup>269</sup> These differences and similarities point to the awareness of local politicians to broader political forces and the transmission of ideas across the region, as well as the refashioning of such trends for the local politics of Bechuanaland. The Democratic Party's version of a Freedom Charter, a founding document to unite forces against racialism in Bechuanaland and beyond, would be best described as what would become the bill of rights of Botswana.

The Democratic Party was initially reticent in its outlook toward racial discrimination. Party members expressed an understanding for some inequitable colonial laws and practices, especially in relation to the restrictions on Africans' access to credit facilities. '[A]lthough apparently discriminatory', Seretse reaffirmed the argument of the colonial authority that such statutes 'were really for the protection, very largely of the African people', whose level of education and way of life were supposedly ill-suited to competing in a modern capitalist economy.<sup>270</sup> Democratic Party members visibly attempted to break the Levitt Brothers boycott in Francistown, proclaiming 'boycotts are not the affair of political parties'. As commented by Halpern, this 'reinforced the widespread impression of Seretse's party being "good boys"'.<sup>271</sup> Upon hearing of another boycott in Lobatse, Seretse flew from Serowe, walked through the crowd, entered the targeted shop, and walked out with 160 rand of goods. The boycott was over, as Seretse's example convinced protestors to begin re-entering the store.<sup>272</sup> From early to mid-1962, the most successful period of the People's Party's boycott movement, the Democratic Party struggled to acquire new members and gain favourable publicity. Those within the Democratic Party who opposed the strategy were forced to admit the boycotts were a powerful way to mobilise Africans who had encountered abusive and hostile Europeans.<sup>273</sup> The Democratic Party benefited politically from their leaders' presence on the board of the Select Committee. However, throughout the entire process, colonial civil servants criticised the party for not providing testimony on racial discrimination. The Democratic Party, unlike the People's Party, showed 'no coordinated interest in the proceedings'. With a lack of 'considerably greater efforts to woo the

<sup>269</sup> South African Congress Alliance, 'The Freedom Charter, 1955' in Nancy L. Clark and William H. Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2016), 174-8; Dubow, *Apartheid*, 69-70.

<sup>270</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the Second Session*, 119.

<sup>271</sup> SHL ICS 28/5/B/2, Halpern, 'Boycott of Levitt's Store', *Sunday Express*, 20 May 1962; SHL ICS 28/5/B/3, Halpern, 'Constitution', 23 July 1962; SHL ICS 28/5/B/11, Halpern, 'Man in the News: Seretse Khama', undated.

<sup>272</sup> SHL ICS 28/5/I, 'Seretse Breaks Boycott', *Sunday Times*, 5 August 1962.

<sup>273</sup> TNA CO 1048/113, Resident Commissioner to Colonial Secretary, 1 June 1962.

electorate', colonial officials were distressed over the Democratic Party's inaction. They saw no 'reasonable hope of success at the next election' whilst other parties were building support over the issue of racialism.<sup>274</sup> Non-combateness on discrimination was seen by colonial officials as a detrimental quality in the eyes of African voters.

The Democratic Party's image as a non-racial party relied largely on its involvement in government efforts to eliminate discrimination. Rather than protest in the cities, the Democratic Party supported removing discrimination in law. 'If we are really sincere' in improving race relations, Seretse explained, 'we should be honest enough to see that all discriminatory practices are put right'.<sup>275</sup> From its participation as official members, the party closely affiliated with the operations of the government taskforce, and claimed ownership over its resulting reforms within the Legislative Council. Seretse personally introduced the motion to appoint the Select Committee in the Executive Council and Legislative Council.<sup>276</sup> Masire, during the constitutional talks in July 1963, therefore claimed any reforms on race relations were a consequence of the Democratic Party's actions within the processes of government.<sup>277</sup> Whilst the Democratic Party adopted a gradualist approach to eliminating discrimination, the leadership utilised its experience in government to present a progressive image on improving race relations.<sup>278</sup> Although the People's Party initially occupied a leading position in opposing discrimination, from a position of power, the Democratic Party eventually claimed to take more effective action on eliminating racialism.

Seretse championed a concept of non-racialism within both the party and the broader population, proclaiming its merits and practicality. He articulated to his party 'that we have an outlook above racial hate and dislikes'.<sup>279</sup> '[I]t is quite possible for black and white', Seretse conceived, 'not only to live together, but to play together, to go to school together, and in fact form a real nation'.<sup>280</sup> For the leadership, the problem was not necessarily the injustices

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<sup>274</sup> TNA CO 1048/702, Bechuanaland Intelligence report, February 1963.

<sup>275</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the Second Session*, 120.

<sup>276</sup> TNA CO 1048/225, Government Secretary and Seretse, 'Race Relations: Discriminatory Legislation', note for the agenda of the Executive Council, 27 June 1962.

<sup>277</sup> TNA CO 1048/404, Masire, minutes of meeting to consider procedure for consultation on the review of the constitution, 1 July 1963.

<sup>278</sup> SHL PP.BS.BDP, Seretse, address to Democratic Party national congress, 28 March 1964; *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the Second Session*, 126.

<sup>279</sup> SHL PP.BS.BDP, Seretse, address to Democratic Party national congress, 28 March 1964. See also *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the Third Session*, 120; SHL ICS 28/2/D/14, Halpern, 'Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland', undated.

<sup>280</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the Second Session*, 26 July 1962, 120.

of the whites against the African population, but the act of discrimination itself, to which Europeans could find themselves subjected to after independence. '[W]e were very much influenced by the situation in South Africa', Masire remembered, as '[w]e saw what it meant to be racialistic, and we knew we didn't want a society like that'.<sup>281</sup> The alternatives to non-racialism were the People's Party's racial exclusivism, or the racial conflict so endemic amongst Bechuanaland's neighbours in South Africa and Rhodesia.<sup>282</sup> The Democratic Party's vision for non-racialism seemed overly ambitious, given the regional context. Yet, they believed their idea represented the best hope for the future stability of the state and Southern Africa.

Seretse acknowledged the economic importance of allowing the European minority to remain in Bechuanaland. '[B]ecause of the contribution which he can make to the Territory', Seretse explained in discussing white inhabitants, 'the enlightened and realistic people, would like him to continue to live here, would like to make him feel he belongs to the Territory'.<sup>283</sup> The offer of sufficient protection for all racial groups was necessary for the continued import of white capital, investment, and expertise. Masire recognised '[w]e cannot make promises which make their future gloomy and yet hope that they will come here'.<sup>284</sup> Fawcus reported their policy was one of 'nationalism tempered by realism', unlike the People's Party's more radical Africanist ideology. The Democratic Party was further distinguished by welcoming Europeans into its party ranks. Just as African residents would have to compromise by ignoring any historical grievances, the Resident Commissioner asserted any potential white member would be obliged to 'associate themselves fully with the aspirations of the African people'.<sup>285</sup> The rest of the European population were slow to demonstrate support for Seretse's party, but they eventually accepted their fate as being intertwined with them. In accordance with the growing success of the Democratic Party, European representatives in the Legislative Council transformed their outlook from one in which they feared the consequences of independence, to one where they welcomed its onset. After talking to 'a lot of Europeans in the country', Benjamin Steinberg, a white member of the newly 'non-racial' Legislative Assembly, noticed their overwhelmingly positive response

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<sup>281</sup> Lewis Jr. (ed), *Quett Ketumile Joni Masire*, 104.

<sup>282</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the Second Meeting of the First Session* (Mafeking: Bechuanaland Legislative Council, 1961), 9.

<sup>283</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the Second Session*, 120.

<sup>284</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the Fourth Session*, 115.

<sup>285</sup> TNA CO 1048/404, Fawcus to Maud, 15 January 1963.

to the election of the Democratic Party. 'The government does not only protect the minority', Steinberg expounded, 'it represents everybody white or black, so why wait until September 30<sup>th</sup>, why not put the Independence date forward?'.<sup>286</sup> To safeguard the territory's economic security, as the Democratic Party recognised, the white population needed to feel secure.

The Democratic Party was united in espousing a philosophy of non-racialism, including a tolerant attitude for the ongoing economic role of the white population. As Masire recollected, '[i]t was hard to tell whether all those in the party in the early days agreed with Seretse and me', or if the rank-and-file 'were just trying to please us' without agreeing with their social agenda.<sup>287</sup> Regardless, this was an ideology that reportedly gained much more appeal than the People's Party's racist alternative. Outside of their urban supporter base, British Intelligence noted in June 1964 how the People's Party's policies of expelling Europeans and taking back occupied land had 'not attracted any noticeable public support'.<sup>288</sup> In a submission to the 1963 constitutional talks, Kgasa suggested the People's Party's plans amounted to 'national suicide'. He argued '[t]he idea of expulsion of Europeans is, to say the least, idiotic'.<sup>289</sup> Dr. Silas M. Molema, a former National Secretary of the ANC in South Africa, also rejected the views of the People's Party, including his exiled anti-apartheid contemporaries in Matante and Mpho. 'The policy of cooperation, unity and happy relations between black and white', Molema concluded, was consistent with 'this ideal fundamental human rights'. 'I believe I speak for the black section of our community in saying that we', Molema announced, 'will do our utmost to support to the hilt that endeavour to make relations sweet and durable and workable'.<sup>290</sup> Non-racialism was a powerful philosophy not just for its ability to reassure the white population but because the vision of social harmony it promised, built upon equal rights as individuals, offered so much that had been previously denied to the African majority. The rationale of the Democratic Party was that freedom from racial discrimination required a responsibility not to deny other citizens of this right. Whilst the People's Party had promised the rights of Africans as a group, the Democratic Party

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<sup>286</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the Fourth Meeting of the First Session* (Gaborone: Legislative Assembly, 1966), 36; *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the First Session*, 29; TNA CO 1048/531, British Intelligence report, May 1963; TNA CO 1048/404, Fawcus to Stephenson, 24 July 1963; SHL ICS 28/2/D/14, Halpern, 'Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland', undated; Lewis Jr. (ed), *Quett Ketumile Joni Masire*, 44-6.

<sup>287</sup> Lewis Jr. (ed), *Quett Ketumile Joni Masire*, 104.

<sup>288</sup> TNA CO 1048/535, Bechuanaland Intelligence report, June 1964.

<sup>289</sup> BNARS S. 594/7, Kgasa to Government Secretary, 'Review of Constitution', 4 June 1963.

<sup>290</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the First Session* (Mafeking: Bechuanaland Legislative Council, 1961), 29.

presented a plan to ensure nationwide economic development and social harmony. Seretse and the colonial authority were united in their programme for enshrining individual freedoms for all citizens in the post-colonial society.

### **‘Most gratifying and reassuring’: The Bill of Rights and the Protection of the European Minority**

When the UDHR was adopted in 1948, including a value for individual freedoms, the Protectorate administration opposed its circulation within the territory. In March 1949, Arthur Creech Jones, the Colonial Secretary, instructed government journals to publish the UDHR throughout the British Empire.<sup>291</sup> In Bechuanaland, the colonial authority chose not to comply with either Jones’ recommendation or the UN resolution to promulgate the text of the Declaration. Vivian Ellenberger, Bechuanaland’s Acting Government Secretary, insisted the ‘Declaration is not secret but it should not be given publicity’.<sup>292</sup> The colonial authority anticipated a hostile response from South Africa to the publication of the UDHR within the region. The South African government abstained from a vote on the UDHR at the UN, pronouncing their opposition to any implied requirement on the part of sovereign states to conform to its principles.<sup>293</sup> ‘[F]ar from courageous’, Evelyn Baring, the High Commissioner, admitted to feeling ‘very strongly that the wisest course is to avoid provocation’ with Bechuanaland’s most important and more powerful economic partner.<sup>294</sup> Internationally endorsed in the same year of the establishment of the apartheid regime, the UDHR was a sensitive political document recognised by South Africa to have a potentially revolutionary force.<sup>295</sup>

Pretoria feared the use of such ideals as a political weapon to delegitimise the government, both internally and externally. They already confronted an embarrassing resolution within the 1946 General Assembly over the treatment of its Indian population.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> TNA FCO 141/1261, A. Creech Jones, circular despatch, ‘The Universal Declaration of Human Rights’, 28 March 1949; TNA FCO 141/1262, Commonwealth Relations Office to Evelyn Baring, 21 April 1949.

<sup>292</sup> TNA FCO 141/1261, Vivian Ellenberger to Bechuanaland District Commissioners, 24 September 1949.

<sup>293</sup> TNA FCO 141/1261, Jones, circular despatch, ‘The Universal Declaration of Human Rights’, 28 March 1949.

<sup>294</sup> TNA FCO 141/1262, Baring to Philip Noel-Baker, 17 June 1949. See also TNA FCO 141/1174, Baring to Jones, 25 March 1948.

<sup>295</sup> Dubow, *Apartheid*, 47.

<sup>296</sup> Lorna Lloyd, ‘“A Most Auspicious Beginning: The 1946 United Nations General Assembly and the Question of the Treatment of Indians in South Africa”, *Review of International Studies* 16:2 (1990): 131-2, 151; Lloyd, ‘“A Family Quarrel”: The Development of the Dispute over Indians in South Africa’, *The Historical Journal* 34:3 (1991): 705, 724-5.

However, the Bechuanaland colonial government had concerns over their own ability to conform to these standards. In addition to the breaches of various economic and social rights, as seen in the second chapter, both official legislation and traditional practices conflicted with the individual freedoms enumerated within the UDHR. Colonial officials found violations of the right to freedom of movement, considering the powers of the High Commissioner to expel individuals from the territory, as well as the ability of traditional leaders to restrict the migration of their subjects. There were even found to be violations of the right to protection from slavery or servitude, with a government provision for forced labour.<sup>297</sup> In 1948, the colonial authority saw international doctrines of individual rights as a potential source of embarrassment that could jeopardise the legitimacy of the British presence in Southern Africa.

By 1966, in striking contrast, the colonial authority championed the protection of individual rights within the constitution as an essential component for the country's domestic priorities and international prestige. The official view highlighted a need to enshrine 'enlightened' and 'civilised' norms before an African majority government came to power. When opening the first Legislative Assembly session after the March 1965 elections, the Resident Commissioner characterised a bill of rights as beneficial for the maintenance of social harmony. In encouraging diversity in religion, language, and culture, Fawcus thought the protection of political and individual liberties would 'tolerate no discrimination against any racial group'.<sup>298</sup> As depicted in a report on the 1963 constitutional conference, these freedoms were interdependent. The participants agreed the survival of democracy after independence depended on 'respect for the dignity and fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual'.<sup>299</sup> Masire reaffirmed this viewpoint within his memoirs, explaining the Democratic Party's view that a bill of rights avoided authoritarianism. 'We felt that if rights such as free speech and freedom of association were protected', Masire reflected, 'then a one-party state would not be possible'.<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> TNA FCO 141/1262, Colonial Office circular, 12 May 1949; TNA FCO 141/1262, Office Superintendent to Secretariat, 15 October 1949; TNA FCO 141/1262, Government Secretary to Chief Secretary, 14 November 1949; TNA FCO 141/1262, Ellenberger to W. A. W. Clark Esquire, 'Note on the Movement of Persons and Changes of Residence in the Bechuanaland Protectorate', 1 July 1949; TNA FCO 141/1174, Nettelton to Harold Eddey Priestman, 22 July 1948.

<sup>298</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the First Session*, 2-3.

<sup>299</sup> BNARS BNB S. 581/2, Bechuanaland Constitutional Proposals, June 1964.

<sup>300</sup> Lewis Jr. (ed), *Quett Ketumile Joni Masire*, 68.

For the state to have legitimacy, colonial officials highlighted the symbolic importance of conforming to international standards of human rights. At the 1963 constitutional discussions, anticipating the importance of the country's position in the international sphere, a bill of rights was characterised as a way to 'affirm to the world at large that this country respects those basic principles which find widespread acceptance among democratic nations'.<sup>301</sup> Before the final constitutional conference in February 1966, held in London, elected European members of the Legislative Assembly underscored the need for the country to align with the principles of the UN Charter. George Sim saw the 'guarantee of the personal liberty of the individual' as a fitting precursor to Botswana's acceptance at the UN after independence.<sup>302</sup> From the colonial authority's viewpoint, international conventions on individual rights had transformed from an inapposite set of values for the colony to an inescapable doctrine for the development of the state.

Colonial officials were far from being guided by just liberal-democratic ideals. Throughout the constitutional discussions, the Protectorate administration were reminded of the anxieties of European inhabitants. Whilst reviewing drafts of the constitution, they 'considered that there is likely to be a strong demand from minority groups, particularly the Europeans, for the inclusion of a code of fundamental rights in the constitution'.<sup>303</sup> The government's expectation of calls for adequate safeguards was confirmed in petitions received from white farmers in the Tati and Tuli Blocks. On behalf of over 300 landowners, a representative from the Tati Block wrote to the Queen's Commissioner, stating those with 'either freehold property or fixed interests...are concerned about the safeguarding of their respective rights and title'.<sup>304</sup> The 'Vigilance Committee of the Tuli Block' voiced a common wish '[t]hat all sections and each individual's rights and property will be respected and safeguarded'. The Vigilance Committee assured the preservation of their interests would have 'the result that our economy would be guaranteed and we will be marching on to selfsufficiency [sic] in the future'.<sup>305</sup> The pressure to inject human rights in the constitution arose less from a concern for Bechuanaland's political evolution or moral integrity, than an aim to protect the interests of the white minority after independence.

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<sup>301</sup> BNARS BNB S. 581/2, Bechuanaland Constitutional Proposals, June 1964.

<sup>302</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the Fourth Meeting of the First Session* (Gaborone: Legislative Assembly, 1966), 26.

<sup>303</sup> TNA CO 1048/404, 'Sketch of a Possible New Constitution for the Bechuanaland Protectorate', notes from constitutional conference, July 1963.

<sup>304</sup> BNARS S. 594/6/1, Secretary of Tati-land Committee to the Queen's Commissioner, December 1963.

<sup>305</sup> BNARS S. 594/6/1, Vigilance Committee of the Tuli Block to Chairman of Constitutional Committee, October 1963.



The colonial rulers wanted to guarantee majority rule in Bechuanaland would not threaten European interests in the territory. Lekwapa, writing to the colonial authority in November 1963, warned of how ‘White Settlers at Ghanzi, Tuli Block & Tati Area, seem to be bent to reviving old scars again’.<sup>306</sup> Many farmers held a strong affiliation with South Africa and had a history of appealing to the apartheid regime for support. The colonial authority therefore acknowledged the need to appease white inhabitants for the maintenance of stability in the territory and the region. Fawcus exclaimed peaceful race relations were ‘conditional on a Bill of Rights to safeguard human rights’.<sup>307</sup> The concern for property rights was even held by more philanthropic Europeans. Alongside his concerns for alleviating poverty and racialism, William Taylor, an English volunteer for the Bamangwato Development Association, called for an American-style constitution ensuring ‘that no property shall be [acquired] without fair and just compensation’.<sup>308</sup> The official view of individual rights as necessary for maintaining democracy and humane governance was merely an external layer of legitimacy for a basic need to assuage white anxieties.

Botswana’s bill of rights had an important functional role to allay the fears of the European population. In early November, as part of the 1963 constitutional conference, a separate ‘Committee on Fundamental Rights’ was held to discuss the inclusion of a bill of rights, involving members from all parties and racial groups. The conclusions of the Committee highlighted the precedent set by similar discussions held in other British dependencies in Africa; namely Kenya, Nyasaland, and Uganda.<sup>309</sup> Charles Parkinson, a constitutional lawyer and historian, correctly observed Kenya’s protection of European minorities within its December 1963 independence constitution as setting an authoritative example for Bechuanaland.<sup>310</sup> Stanley de Smith, an academic lawyer, traced the precedent set in Nigeria’s bill of rights, whereby individual rights served as an inconspicuous way of preserving minority interests.<sup>311</sup>

The Committee on Fundamental Rights also gave special attention to the report of Nyasaland’s November 1962 constitutional conference. Far more explicitly than any colonial

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<sup>306</sup> BNARS S. 594/6/1, Lekwapa to the Government Secretary, 28 November 1963.

<sup>307</sup> TNA CO 1048/404, Fawcus to Latimer, 15 January 1963.

<sup>308</sup> BNARS S. 594/6/1, Taylor, ‘Preliminary Memorandum to Constitutional Review Conference’, 2 June 1963.

<sup>309</sup> TNA CO 1048/405, ‘Fundamental Rights’, notes from constitutional conference, 1963.

<sup>310</sup> Charles O. H. Parkinson, *Bills of Rights and Decolonisation: The Emergence of Domestic Human Rights Instruments in Britain’s Overseas Territories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 244.

<sup>311</sup> Stanley de Smith, *The New Commonwealth and its Constitutions* (London: Stevens & Sons, 1964), 179.

official in Bechuanaland, Nyasaland's First Secretary of State disclosed the importance of a bill of rights as 'a means of establishing that confidence which is essential at this time of major social and political change', to the benefit of 'Nyasaland's external credit, political and financial'. In a clear snub to any provision for collective rights or protections, he asserted the constitution must 'accord to everyone, not as members of a particular community but as individuals, some guarantee of protection against infringement of ordinary human rights'.<sup>312</sup> The committee could accept, decline, or modify the laws and recommendations of such antecedents from around the continent. Applied in accordance with the local needs and interests of Bechuanaland, Kenya, Nyasaland, and Uganda each had a direct influence on the framing of the right to personal liberty, protection against deprivation of property, and freedom from racial discrimination.<sup>313</sup> With such delicate issues already covered so thoroughly elsewhere in Africa, a strong set of guidelines had been established before Bechuanaland's transfer of power. The Protectorate's relatively late entry into constitutional discussions thereby eased what could have been a far more contentious negotiation over the position of white inhabitants after independence.

Bechuanaland's bill of rights, first included in the 1965 constitution for self-government, convinced the Europeans of their physical and economic security after independence in 1966. The constitutional talks resulted in a clear provision for the protection of individual rights, with the final 1966 independence constitution upholding '[p]rotection from deprivation of property' without compensation, and 'protection for privacy of home and other property'.<sup>314</sup> However, the Resident Commissioner acknowledged the Europeans at the constitutional talks 'did not appear to be unrealistic in their assessment of what it could

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<sup>312</sup> TNA CO 1048/404, 'Report of the Nyasaland Constitutional Conference', November 1962. In addition to these precedents, the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights also served as a model, see Simpson, *Human Rights and the End of Empire*, 844-73; Kenneth Roberts-Wray, 'Human Rights in the Commonwealth', *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 17:4 (1968): 916; Thomas Allen, *The Right to Property in Commonwealth Constitutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 36-82; A. J. G. M. Sanders, 'Constitutionalism in Botswana: A Valiant Attempt at Judicial Activism', *The Comparative and International Law Journal of Southern Africa* 16:3 (1983): 352; James S. Read, 'Bills of Rights in "The Third World": Some Commonwealth Experiences', *Law and Politics in Africa, Asia and Latin America* 6:1 (1973): 24.

<sup>313</sup> TNA CO 1048/405, 'Fundamental Rights', notes from constitutional conference, 1963.

<sup>314</sup> BNARS BNB 700, 'Constitution of Botswana', 1966. On the constitutional protections and their application after independence, including some important limitations over the following decades, see Allen, 'Commonwealth Constitutions and the Right Not to Be Deprived of Property', *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 42:3 (1993): 523-52; Bugalo Maripe, 'Giving Effect to International Human Rights Law in the Domestic Context of Botswana: Dissonance and Incongruity in Judicial Interpretation', *Oxford University Commonwealth Law Journal* 14:2 (2014): 254; Clement Ng'ong'ola, 'Compulsory Acquisition of Private Land in Botswana: The Bonnington Farm Case', *The Comparative and International Law Journal of Southern Africa* 22:3 (1989): 301-2; Ng'ong'ola, 'Land Rights for Marginalized Ethnic Groups in Botswana, with Special Reference to the Basarwa', *Journal of African Law* 41:1 (1997): 11-2.

and would not achieve'.<sup>315</sup> In December 1963, white residents from various districts held an unofficial gathering to confer on the perceived inadequacies of the bill of rights when it was first proposed. They were not satisfied of the safeguards over their property, demanding a much higher and more definite guarantee on the amount of compensation for any loss of land.<sup>316</sup> Despite some dissatisfaction, African and European representatives in the Legislative Assembly were pleased with the outcome. James Haskins, a white member of the Committee on Fundamental Rights, described the safeguards as 'most gratifying and reassuring...it will give those few who have tendered to waiver [sic] a little the added degree of confidence'.<sup>317</sup> The Democratic Party's Goareng Mosinyi postulated such liberties, in accordance with the policy of the party in power, were designed 'to protect the minority to assure them that they will live quite peacefully with the rest'.<sup>318</sup> Just as comforting for the white population as a bill of rights was the support of an individualist conception of non-racialism by the Democratic Party combined, most crucially, with its electoral success over the People's Party. As much as it could be presented as a provision for human decency, a bill of rights was designed as a tool for protecting white minority interests.

### Conclusion

Botswana's decolonisation process featured a sensitive political debate in the lead up to independence over the rights to be enshrined in the post-colonial society. The outcome was heavily shaped by the needs of the British and European settlers. The Democratic Party's emphasis on individual protections in a non-racial democracy prevailed over the People's Party's vision for the collective rights of Africans. As much as Botswana's non-racial idealism has been credited for its progressiveness, its establishment was not a natural political development built on a positive consensus, but a racially charged negotiation with uneven benefits and broken visions. Non-racialism was just as much an inspiring ideology for the state to take into independence as it was, conveniently for white residents, a way to pin the territory's conceptualisation of human rights on individualism rather than African communalism. While it safeguarded the interests of the white minority, the bill of rights served Seretse's broader goal to secure long-term economic prosperity and social harmony.

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<sup>315</sup> TNA CO 1048/405, Fawcus to Sandys, 8 January 1964.

<sup>316</sup> BNARS S. 594/7, Machaneng District Commissioner to Chief Secretary, 12 December 1963.

<sup>317</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the First Session* (Gaborone: Bechuanaland Legislative Assembly, 1965), 24.

<sup>318</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the First Session* (Gaborone: Bechuanaland Legislative Assembly, 1965), 31.

As shown in the next chapter, these same protections would have much greater strategic worth for the post-colonial government. The President rearticulated individual freedoms, beyond their domestic utility, as reflective of Botswana's virtuous ideals and righteous values. Botswana's constitutional foundations were not simply about building a truly non-racial society or a post-racial utopia. Instead, the bill of rights was an example of the mastery of the post-colonial leadership for image-building. The Democratic Party's official narrative was remarkable for turning a highly racialised constitutional process into evidence of non-racial idealism.

### **‘When you are weak, you have to stick to principles’: Botswana’s Campaign for Foreign Assistance**

Botswana’s reputation for human rights idealism was the product of an image-building campaign by Seretse. Its post-colonial identity centred on non-racial democracy, built upon political liberties and individual protections. The Democratic Party, as the second and third chapters discussed, promised to uphold these freedoms, countering the People’s Party’s proposals for socio-economic and collective rights. The government in Gaborone, the capital, sought prosperity and stability at the same time as foreign onlookers questioned the viability of the state and its safety from neighbouring countries. This resulted in a desperate search for allies and substantial economic assistance from overseas. With poor results, Britain had earlier used Bechuanaland’s supposed progressiveness on race relations to diversify aid to the Protectorate. In North America and Western Europe, Seretse was more successful in leveraging Botswana’s non-racial principles to gain support from donors. The President’s first speech to the UN General Assembly, on 24 September 1969, was the turning point for his appeal for global help. The ability to prove a non-racial democracy could become a sustainable, prosperous, and unified state, the President asserted, would directly undermine the legitimacy of nearby governments built upon political, economic, and social division. By the mid-1970s, Botswana confronted greater vulnerability to regional conflicts, making any wish for the spread of human rights increasingly unlikely amongst its neighbours. Seretse slowly shifted the narrative, emphasising the worth of safeguarding the territory from the spread of racial violence so it could form an island of social harmony and liberal-democracy. The President thereby defined a base level for success, whereby internal priorities could be framed as internationalist goals demanding global support. Botswana’s utopia for human rights, almost like a church, used its believers and their financial contributions to help maintain the faith, as well as the physical architecture that housed it.

### **‘The shopwindows are being shabbily stocked’: Botswana’s Empty Shelves at Independence**

Botswana’s declared significance for non-racialism had its inception during the colonial era. The very power responsible for the Protectorate’s exceedingly poor state at independence was the first to make an attempt at crafting an attractive perception of peaceful race relations and prosperity. While the notion was unconvincing under British rule, the idealistic portrait was later occupied by the Democratic Party in government. Both Britain and Seretse presented the territory as exemplary, but only one leadership was persuasive in its message.

Donors saw the affirmation of non-racial democracy, under a majority-ruled government, as worthy of material assistance to help secure a better way of life in Southern Africa. Britain's pretence of providing a model for multi-racialism in the region was treated as an absurdity, given the signs of continuing poverty. Such weakness would later provide a valid reason for donors and allies, whose interest was limited before 1966, to empathise with the post-colonial leadership. Botswana's state of vulnerability after British rule, combined with its defiant hopes of success for multi-racialism, made it a natural target for donors. Just as the state had to inherit many economic problems, at the very least, it could also succeed a once discredited assumption of exceptionality. Seretse was original, however, in showcasing the performance of the state under international standards of human rights.<sup>319</sup>

Colonial officials saw in Bechuanaland the merits of its imperial trusteeship. At the opening of the Legislative and Executive Councils in 1961, John Maud, the High Commissioner, proclaimed the principles of Bechuanaland would have greater benefits beyond its borders. After South Africa's exit from the Commonwealth in that same year, the territory was one of the few remaining outposts in the region for the British way of life, whereby 'no man's place in society shall be determined by the colour of his skin'. For Maud, the government was fulfilling a pledge of the Commonwealth to demonstrate 'how the African, the European and the Asian can learn to get along together'.<sup>320</sup> The colonial authority's self-image was not dampened by the Select Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, despite its overwhelming evidence of disharmony and division experienced by African residents. Louis Mynhardt, a European farmer and member of the Legislative Council, rejected the need for any considerable action to address discrimination in law. The local residents 'were setting an unparalleled example of harmonious living to other nations', Mynhardt exclaimed, 'and provided a first-rate model of a happy and contented multi-racial community'.<sup>321</sup> The UK government, seeking to challenge the philosophy of apartheid, justified greater material assistance to the HCTs, given their importance for promoting racial harmony in the region. '[W]e must ensure that our shop-window[s] of non-

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<sup>319</sup> See, for example, Seretse, 'Broadcast to the Nation on the occasion of Human Rights Day, 10 December 1975', 201-3; SHL PP.BS.BDP, Seretse, address to Democratic Party national congress, 28 March 1964; BNARS BNB 8140, 'Text of his Excellency's Broadcast to the Nation on the Occasion of Human Rights Day', 10 December 1974; BNARS BNB 6858, Democratic Party election manifesto, 1979.

<sup>320</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the First Session* (Mafeking: Bechuanaland Legislative Council, 1961), 4. In ideal terms, the Commonwealth was seen by the British as united by a common commitment to democracy and non-racial citizenship. See Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, 153-4.

<sup>321</sup> BNARS S. 591/2, Information Branch, press statement, 18 March 1964.

racialism', advised Andrew Cavendish, the Minister of State for Commonwealth Relations, 'are windows that show that non-racialism can work'.<sup>322</sup> Unlike the Africans who experienced the worst effects of discrimination, the colonial rulers saw the state of racial affairs in the territory as a cause for sententious grandstanding.

For all of Bechuanaland's supposed advancements toward social inclusion, the British were confronted by the apartheid regime's greater political and economic development. In September 1963, Hendrik Verwoerd, the Prime Minister of South Africa, argued the Africans within Bechuanaland would be so discouraged by Britain's lack of progress they would willingly favour 'separate development', the apartheid regime's ethno-nationalist project, over racial integration.<sup>323</sup> Britain's attempt to 'transform these historically Black areas into multiracial territories' should be disregarded, he alleged, because 'true multi-racialism has failed throughout Africa'. Only South Africa's apartheid structure, the Prime Minister arrogated, could be trusted to bring about 'natural native democracy'. He questioned the ability of the British to secure both equal rights and a multi-racial constitution without a total separation of the races. Verwoerd further asserted the British were 'powerless to...achieve the economic viability of these areas for their peoples'. South Africa, he suggested, could establish a 'Common Market' and build industries near the border for Batswana migrant workers. As 'the guardian, the protector or the helper', Verwoerd declared the apartheid government could lead the territory 'far better and much more quickly to independence and economic prosperity than Great Britain can do'.<sup>324</sup> For the Protectorate's hopes of a better future, the apartheid regime contended Bechuanaland would have stronger prospects the closer it was brought to South Africa in political terms.

Britain was losing the contest with South Africa over the claim to provide superior administration in the region. In opposition to multi-racial integration or genuine self-determination, South Africa's salesmanship regularly shifted the debate into the development sphere, a strength for the apartheid regime at the time. Two years after Verwoerd's proposal, Edwin Munger, a writer on race relations in Africa, observed how 'materially greater

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<sup>322</sup> SHL ICS 28/5/G, Information Branch, *Bulletin from Bechuanaland*, 12 December 1963.

<sup>323</sup> Hendrik Verwoerd, *Dr. H. F. Verwoerd on I. Crisis in World Conscience II. The Road to Freedom for: Basutoland, Bechuanaland, Swaziland* (Pretoria: Department of Information, 1963), 12. On the policy of 'separate development', see Dubow, *Apartheid*, 105-13.

<sup>324</sup> Verwoerd, *Dr. H. F. Verwoerd*, 12, 14. See also Eschel Rhoadie, *The Third Africa* (Cape Town: Twin Circle Publishing Company, 1968), 37-8.

improvements are being made in the Transkei than in Bechuanaland'.<sup>325</sup> The South African challenge was also recognised within the Colonial Office. A September 1963 internal paper suggested Britain's 'self-respect prompts us to show that under our aegis a healthier state of society' than South Africa's can be developed both socially and economically, and 'that it is possible for black and white to live together contentedly'.<sup>326</sup> With independence just three years away, and the territory remaining impoverished, the British could never demonstrate Bechuanaland was a genuine model for a better life than under a Bantustan Homeland. Halpern wrote unflatteringly how 'the shopwindows are being shabbily stocked' and 'could easily carry notices reading "in the hands of South African receivers"'.<sup>327</sup> As opposed to advancing a wider cause for non-racialism in the region, Britain's lack of progress in Bechuanaland threatened to provide an inferior example to South Africa's segregationist model.

Unable to offer an alluring alternative to separate development, the Protectorate administration aimed to demonstrate the superiority of non-racialism through a peaceful political transition and a successful post-colonial leadership. A key objective of the 1963 constitutional conference was to consolidate Bechuanaland's progress toward becoming a non-racial democracy. A respect for political freedoms and an enshrined bill of rights formed key pillars of this process. Fawcus highlighted how the proposals 'will contribute to unity, stability and democracy in this increasingly important and interesting part of the African continent'.<sup>328</sup> Seretse, having once been censured by Pretoria for his marriage to a white woman, was in a unique position to change attitudes. Tony Thomas, a British correspondent, was a believer in Seretse's efforts to 'prove that genuine multi-racial cooperation can survive and prosper in Bechuanaland'. As an example to the region, Thomas anticipated the territory would reduce the fears of those in South Africa who associated African political power 'with bloodshed, corruption and chaos'.<sup>329</sup> In the months leading up to independence, Colonial Office officials shared a similar trust in Seretse's Presidency, not only to take over the responsibilities of the territory, but to demonstrate the feasibility of securing white minority

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<sup>325</sup> Edwin Munger, *Bechuanaland: Pan-African Outpost or Bantu Homeland?* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 35.

<sup>326</sup> TNA CO 1048/381, Colonial Office paper on the High Commission Territories, September 1963.

<sup>327</sup> SHL ICS/28/2/D/1, Halpern, 'Relations between South Africa and HCTs', January 1962. See also SHL ICS/28/2/D/10, 'Conditions in HCTs', undated.

<sup>328</sup> TNA CO 1048/405, Fawcus to Sandys, 8 January 1964.

<sup>329</sup> TNA CO 1048/406, Tony Thomas, 'Bechuanaland: Tomorrow's Trouble-Spot?', *Yorkshire Post*, 23 November 1964.



rights under African majority rule. Bechuanaland's 'peaceful constitutional progress to a non-racial form of government', according to a Colonial Office paper on independence, will 'provide a ray of hope in an area so torn by the doctrines of racial discrimination'.<sup>330</sup> The British hoped to provide an effective example to the region, but also to illustrate a successful transfer of powers in the Commonwealth.

Botswana confronted a steep economic challenge in becoming a viable state, let alone a thriving alternative to South Africa. The reason behind Botswana's underdevelopment was clear for the African-American Institute (AAI), who held a special conference in June 1967 on US assistance to the territory. A report of the AAI talks in New York concluded 'Britain had *protected* but not *developed* the territory'.<sup>331</sup> As one of the poorest countries in the world, the President wrote in 1968 how 'there can have been few countries so handicapped from the outset of independence'. The process of aligning political development with economic progress was mismatched, as elucidated by Seretse, whereby 'the problems of raising the standards of living of the people are as immense as they are urgent'.<sup>332</sup> Martin Ennals, a preeminent leader in the early transnational human rights NGO community, exposed one example of economic deprivation in child education. On a visit to the territory, he encountered a primary school composed of two teachers, seventy-three students between the ages of seven and nineteen, and one classroom, including barely any desks, measuring under five by seven metres.<sup>333</sup> The 'long, hard struggle to improve the economy', Fawcus bemoaned, was intensified by 'the worst drought for 50 years which, following a long series of drought years, must be regarded...as a national disaster'.<sup>334</sup> The Democratic Party similarly acknowledged the difficulties to be faced in government. In March 1965, Masire admitted 'it is hard to contemplate our political future in the context of our present economic position'.<sup>335</sup> The demands of attaining an independent non-racial democracy in Bechuanaland were diminished in comparison to the hardships of retaining it.

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<sup>330</sup> TNA DO 183/767, 'Botswana Independence Bill: Constitutional and Political Background', June 1966.

<sup>331</sup> Emphasis in original. BNARS BNB 161, Jane W. Jacqz, *Development Needs in Botswana and Lesotho*, report of a conference on US assistance to Botswana and Lesotho sponsored by the African-American Institute (AAI) at AAI headquarters in New York City, 29 June 1967.

<sup>332</sup> BNARS BNB 1078, Seretse, 'Country of the Future', *New Commonwealth Trade and Focus* 4 (1968).

<sup>333</sup> TNA CO 1048/860, Martin Ennals, 'Report on Bechuanaland', October 1964.

<sup>334</sup> TNA CO 1048/519, Fawcus to Colonial Secretary, 28 April 1965.

<sup>335</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the First Session* (Gaborone: Bechuanaland Legislative Assembly, 1965), 61.

Botswana depended on international donors for its survival, especially in the first few years after independence. The new leadership ‘needs support and aid urgently’, the Resident Commissioner implored, to recover from the drought, prop up the administration, and accelerate economic development.<sup>336</sup> In 1966, half of the government’s budgetary expenses were financed by grant-in-aid from Britain.<sup>337</sup> Foreign aid provided forty-five per cent of total government expenditure in 1973 and 100 per cent of development spending from 1967 to 1970. With effective economic management over finances from external assistance and the profits from the mining boom, Botswana steadily reduced its dependency on aid throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Aid levels continued to remain very high in per capita terms, but they made up only twenty per cent of total government spending in 1982 and forty to sixty per cent of development spending from the late-1970s to mid-1980s.<sup>338</sup> Regardless, as Masire acknowledged, ‘we would never have been able to achieve our successes without provision of finance and personnel from other countries’.<sup>339</sup> The need for economic support was accentuated by the strategic vulnerabilities of the state. In a region with increasing racial and political tensions, as portrayed by one UN official, Botswana risked ‘being caught in a tug-of-war between South Africa and the world outside’.<sup>340</sup> Whilst the territory was opposed to the racial policies of the regimes in South Africa and Rhodesia, as a landlocked state, Botswana was reliant upon the surrounding regimes for communications, trade, and transport, especially through an open railway line.<sup>341</sup> ‘We knew that if we were too vulnerable, we could not be truly independent’, Masire explained, because ‘the fruits of our development efforts would be at risk’.<sup>342</sup> Botswana’s pathway to becoming less dependent on its neighbours required a long-term transition to greater self-reliance and a more immediate diversification of the country’s economic relationships.

Despite its newly acquired independent status, Botswana still relied upon its former colonial ruler to formulate a budget and stimulate economic development. ‘We are so

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<sup>336</sup> TNA CO 1048/519, Fawcus to Colonial Secretary, 28 April 1965.

<sup>337</sup> Fawcus, *Botswana*, 97.

<sup>338</sup> G. S. Maipose, G. M. Somolekae, and Timothy Johnston, ‘Effective Aid Management: The Case of Botswana’ in Jerker Carlsson, Gloria Somolekae, and Nicolas van de Walle (eds), *Foreign Aid in Africa: Learning from Country Experiences* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1997), 19.

<sup>339</sup> Lewis Jr. (ed), *Quett Ketumile Joni Masire*, 153–4.

<sup>340</sup> Bodleian Library, Oxford University, Papers of George Ivan Smith, MS. Eng. c. 6475, Regional Representative for the UN Technical Assistance Board (UNTAB) and Director of Special Fund for East and Central Africa to Executive Chairman of UNTAB and Managing Director of Special Fund, 2 November 1963.

<sup>341</sup> Halpern described the HCTs as ‘hostage states’, given their heavy dependence on South Africa. See Halpern, *South Africa’s Hostages*, 443.

<sup>342</sup> Lewis Jr., *Quett Ketumile Joni Masire*, 161–2.

backward in so many walks of life', Masire confessed to the Legislative Assembly, not due to any natural disadvantage, 'but because Britain has failed to give us the requisite boosting to attain a better standing in those walks'. Britain had a special responsibility to help guide the territory toward prosperity, given their past 'sins of omission'.<sup>343</sup> Despite lacking adequate advancement under colonial rule, at the 1966 Independence Conference, Seretse noted Britain made up for its earlier neglect, without which 'the plight of Bechuanaland would be very grave indeed'.<sup>344</sup> Some of the leading advocates for ongoing financial support came from officials within the colonial administration, including the Resident, Queen's, and High Commissioners, as well as the British High Commission after independence.<sup>345</sup> Without any apparent political obligations, Gaborone characterised this bilateral assistance as 'aid without strings'.<sup>346</sup> Beyond the country's internal requirements, the imperative for acquiring assistance from Britain was to avoid having to accept aid and substantial private investment from South Africa.<sup>347</sup> Botswana needed aid from Britain to prevent a collapse into total dependence on surrounding regimes, leading to subservience and potentially incorporation.

In the long-term, Botswana could not afford to rely solely on Britain for foreign aid nor take for granted their continuing support. The deficiencies of British aid were recognised at the 1967 AAI meeting, where the funding was characterised as oriented toward budget-balancing, rather than accelerating development. Their relief efforts, as forecast by the report of the New York conference, could not 'be expected to continue indefinitely at present levels'.<sup>348</sup> Whilst the British once defined their occupation of Bechuanaland as a model for social harmony, when considering their continued external support, many within the UK government held little respect for Botswana's avowed lesson in non-racialism. On a visit to the region in 1972, Peter Kerr, the Parliamentary Under Secretary for the Foreign Office, was advised to publicly reaffirm Botswana's important international role.<sup>349</sup> However, in his confidential report to Sir Alec Douglas-Home, the Secretary of State for Foreign and

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<sup>343</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the First Session* (Gaborone: Bechuanaland Legislative Assembly, 1965), 61.

<sup>344</sup> BNARS BNB 5314, Seretse, speech at Bechuanaland Independence Conference, 14 February 1966.

<sup>345</sup> TNA FCO 45/818, David Anderson, 'Leadership in Botswana', report sent to W. Wilson, April 1971; TNA CO 1048/519, Fawcus to Stephenson, 8 August 1963; TNA CO 1048/381, Maud to Sandys, 23 November 1962.

<sup>346</sup> TNA FCO 45/439, Seretse, 'Botswana and Southern Africa', address to Foreign Policy Society, 13 November 1970; BNARS BNB 1447, Democratic Party election manifesto, 1969.

<sup>347</sup> TNA FCO 45/118, John Gandee to Wilson, 14 October 1969.

<sup>348</sup> BNARS BNB 161, Jacqz, *Development Needs in Botswana and Lesotho*, 29 June 1967.

<sup>349</sup> TNA FCO 45/1079, Anderson to Wilson, January 1972; TNA FCO 45/1079, Douglas-Home to British High Commission, January 1972.

Commonwealth Affairs, he ridiculed the 'wishful thinking' behind the belief that a white South African visitor to Botswana 'will see for himself a multiracial society in action and will return to his home, seduced by its attractions and anxious to preach its virtues to all his friends'. Kerr considered how the development of viable African majority-ruled states in the region would instead 'give some credibility to the concept of independent South African Homelands'. If underdeveloped states like Botswana could succeed supported by external aid, Kerr suggested, then Pretoria would have a model for developing its Bantustanlands.<sup>350</sup> Kerr's comments reveal the lack of belief in the British government for Botswana's ability to persuade its neighbours to adopt multi-racialism.

Seretse was bluntly informed of Britain's more limited intentions during a meeting with Peter Foster, the head of the Central and Southern African Department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Whilst British aid was provided to ensure Botswana became viable, Foster stressed 'it was not with a view to influencing developments in the Bantustans'.<sup>351</sup> British aid was issued through a conservative scheme, designed to do as much as needed to sustain independence and avoid international criticism. The policy was not designed to be proactive, whereby it could seek to improve human rights in South Africa by way of an attractive showcase for non-racial democracy. Although Britain was vital to making independence sustainable, Botswana's hopes for political and economic success required a greater diversity of donors and foreign patrons.

The need to find more sources of aid was a common priority for both Botswana and Britain. Under British rule, the Protectorate saw very little financial or technical assistance outside of the UK.<sup>352</sup> Colonial officials were hopeful that Seretse's government would have better success finding alternative sources. Fawcus recognised 'the time has come for Bechuanaland's case for aid to be put squarely to other Western donors'.<sup>353</sup> As the Resident Commissioner informed Anthony Greenwood, the Colonial Secretary, the country was in an ideal position to attain broader support, particularly amongst Britain's own allies. Fawcus

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<sup>350</sup> TNA FCO 45/1080, 'Lord Lothian's report on his visit to Zaire, Swaziland, Botswana and Lesotho', February 1972. This viewpoint had support within Central and Southern African Department (CSAD), see TNA FCO 45/1080, A. B. Moore to Peter Kerr, 17 February 1972. See also TNA OD 31/415, A. G. Elgar to S. J. G. Fingland, 26 October 1970.

<sup>351</sup> TNA FCO 45/1096, record of conversation between Seretse and Peter Foster, 27 October 1972.

<sup>352</sup> TNA OD 9/49, C. N. F. Odgers to J. Knell, 20 September 1962; TNA OD 9/49, Marjorie S. Belcher to H. Nield, 1 August 1962. See also TNA CO 1048/381, 'The High Commission Territories', Colonial Office paper, September 1963; BNARS S. 578/6, Latimer to G. B. Shannon, 12 October 1961.

<sup>353</sup> TNA CO 1048/519, Fawcus to Colonial Secretary, 28 April 1965.

endorsed the prospects of external assistance, stating ‘there are few countries in Africa where Western aid and influence is more genuinely and unequivocally welcomed by the chosen political leaders’.<sup>354</sup> After independence, the President departed on frequent overseas trips to find wider sources of donor support. This was a campaign that echoed the earlier efforts of the People’s Party to seek external funding before independence, but with a very different message. In November 1970, for instance, Seretse spoke at the Dag Hammarskjöld Centre in Sweden, promulgating Botswana’s campaign to broaden the country’s foreign relations. ‘We are currently too dependent on a single country for our development assistance’, Seretse disclosed, and ‘[w]e should not rely too heavily on the goodwill of a single donor’.<sup>355</sup> As the British and the Democratic Party both acknowledged, Botswana could not rely on its colonial connection forever.

Botswana’s aid links with Britain and other Western partners only served to reaffirm its newly gained sovereignty. Seretse reiterated the country would remain a non-aligned state and refuse funding with ‘political strings attached’. Throughout the 1970s, in a development that alarmed Britain, Botswana cautiously developed links with the Soviet Union and the PRC. Seretse criticised the British and the West over the lack of sanctions against South Africa and Rhodesia, and did not simply obey the voting instructions of Western powers at the UN. The government, concerned it would be forced to accept aid from the apartheid regime, interpreted their mission for furthering external links as one of maintaining political independence. Any effort to isolate Botswana from external sources of aid would leave it susceptible to having to accept assistance from neighbouring white minority regimes. As feared in the 1969 Democratic Party election manifesto, unmistakably alluding to South Africa, ‘[c]ertain countries offering aid whose way of life is not our way of life may seek political rewards for their assistance which Botswana is not prepared to pay’.<sup>356</sup> The more friends Botswana could acquire overseas, the more autonomy the state would enjoy.

The Democratic Party placed much of their electoral worth on their superior capacity to achieve economic development. At the 1966 London talks, Frank Pakenham, the Colonial

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<sup>354</sup> TNA CO 1048/406, Fawcus to Greenwood, 12 May 1965. See also TNA FCO 45/831, Anderson to Moore, 15 November 1971; TNA FCO 45/439, Anderson to Wilson, 3 December 1970.

<sup>355</sup> TNA FCO 45/439, Seretse, ‘Developing Democracy in Southern Africa’, address at the Dag Hammarskjöld Centre, 11 November 1970.

<sup>356</sup> BNARS BNB 1447, Democratic Party election manifesto, 1969. See also TNA FCO 45/433, Seretse, address to National Assembly, 14 December 1970.

Secretary, appreciated how the Democratic Party was ‘fully aware that independence is not a magic carpet ride to Utopia’.<sup>357</sup> More precisely, as articulated by Motlatsi Segokgo, a Democratic Party member of the Legislative Assembly, ‘[w]e are inheriting...Britain’s liabilities, and the new Government is going to be blamed’ for ‘faults which are not their own’.<sup>358</sup> After the Democratic Party spent much of their electoral campaign claiming to be the ‘responsible’ choice for effective economic management, the party now confronted the imposing challenges of fulfilling that pledge. In April 1965, Fawcus calculated the costs were far more drastic than just political self-interest for the Democratic Party. ‘Seretse Khama’s future and internal stability in Bechuanaland will depend on’, as anticipated by the Queen’s Commissioner, the Democratic Party’s ‘ability to accelerate the pace of economic and social development’.<sup>359</sup> A path to prosperity was more than just an ambition for Seretse’s government but a political and strategic imperative.

The Democratic Party’s recognition of the challenges facing the economy and avoidance of excessive promises favoured its tagline as a ‘responsible’ political party. Nonetheless, even their basic development objectives in government were difficult to accomplish. This was Seretse’s chief concern as he warned, in August 1969, ‘Botswana’s survival as an independent African state depends on rapid economic development’.<sup>360</sup> The greater the Democratic Party’s pledges to achieve economic independence in its budget, implement development programmes, and improve living standards, the more vital it was to acquire aid from external sources. The plan was not to rely on foreign assistance permanently, but to make effective use of it toward the end goal of self-reliance. ‘If we are to progress as a nation’, Seretse announced to a Democratic Party conference in March 1970, ‘we must free ourselves from dependence on external aid’. In a position where the government was struggling to attract sufficient overseas support, there was already an aim ‘to stand on our own feet’.<sup>361</sup> Although significant foreign aid was not hoped to be a perpetual

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<sup>357</sup> BNARS BNB 5314, Frank Pakenham, speech at Bechuanaland Independence Conference, 14 February 1966. See also TNA CO 1048/519, Fawcus to Sandys, 9 September 1964; BNARS BNB 152, ‘Report of the Bechuanaland Independence Conference’, March 1966.

<sup>358</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the First Session* (Gaborone: Bechuanaland Legislative Assembly, 1965), 57.

<sup>359</sup> TNA CO 1048/519, Fawcus to Colonial Secretary, 28 April 1965.

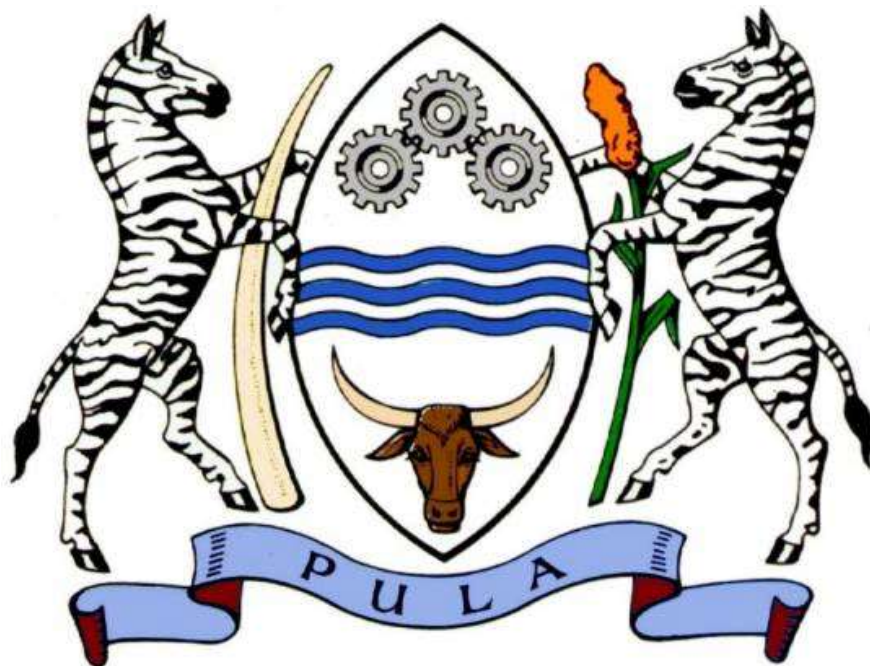
<sup>360</sup> TNA FCO 45/114, Seretse address to National Assembly, August 1969. See also BNARS BNB 1447, Democratic Party election manifesto, 1969.

<sup>361</sup> TNA FCO 45/433, Seretse, ‘Botswana’s Foreign Policy’, address to Democratic Party conference, 28 March 1970. See also BNARS BNB 9100, Seretse, address to Democratic Party conference, 5 April 1969; SHL PP.BS.BDP, ‘This Is What We Stand For’, Democratic Party election manifesto, January 1965.

feature of Botswana's economy, it was a vital element of Seretse's plan for the state's long-term viability.



6 Flag of Botswana. Courtesy: *mapsofworld.com*.<sup>362</sup>



7 Coat of arms of Botswana. Courtesy: Government of Botswana.<sup>363</sup>

<sup>362</sup> The flag was designed by George Winstanley, a colonial civil servant. The colours represent water and racial harmony. Winstanley, *Under Two Flags in Africa*, 236.

<sup>363</sup> The coat of arms was created by Winstanley, with designs from the wives of Fawcus and Russell England, a white politician. Similar to the flag, the zebras signify racial harmony. Winstanley, *Under Two Flags in Africa*, 236.

With a broader focus on the political and economic challenges confronting the post-colonial world, Steven Jensen has recently written of the remarkable contributions of small non-Western states to international human rights law and diplomacy. A geopolitical situation, Jensen argues, ‘can appear so critical and so dire that realism can only express itself meaningfully through an idealistic and transformative worldview’.<sup>364</sup> In slight contrast, Seretse suggested the only ideology followed in Botswana was ‘realism’, with neither optimism nor cynicism. However, his definition offers an example of articulating immediate strategic priorities through a moralistic worldview, in this case, on political freedom, racial equality, and economic prosperity. For the President, it was ‘realistic’, ‘pragmatic’, and ‘moral’, all at once, to accept that development could only be sustained under a non-racial democracy. In a region where others had followed a markedly different course, Seretse therefore believed it was reasonable to assume that Botswana would have a wider role to play. Regardless of the state’s desperate circumstances, Seretse suggested the only way forward was through its principles. These values were certainly idealistic, but they were argued by the President to have real world application, with no viable alternatives.<sup>365</sup> Seretse was not blinded by raw idealism when articulating his grand vision for Southern Africa, but pursuing an underlying strategic plan for Botswana.

**‘Black and white people can live together quite harmoniously’: Botswana’s Message of Hope as a Call for Aid**

In the lead up to independence, Seretse sketched a bold mission statement for the territory. ‘It has always been my belief’, the Prime Minister sermonised at the 1966 Independence Conference in London, ‘that Bechuanaland, small country though it may be, has a role to play in Southern Africa and in the unnecessary conflicts between black and white’.<sup>366</sup> His conviction for encouraging change in Southern Africa was advanced even earlier, in July 1962, at the appointment of the Select Committee. The community needed to mend any internal fractures, Seretse advised, ‘in order to set an example to this part of the world which lives in turmoil’.<sup>367</sup> Shortly after his success in the March 1965 elections, Seretse broadcast his intentions to the world in a television interview with Independent Television News (ITN).

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<sup>364</sup> Jensen, *The Making of International Human Rights*, 85. This contrasts with the viewpoint of Hopgood, who perceives an increasing divide between local realities and global idealism, to the detriment of the cause of human rights. See Hopgood, *The Endtimes of Human Rights*, xv, 29, 182.

<sup>365</sup> TNA FCO 45/437, Seretse, speech to African-American Chamber of Commerce, 25 September 1969. A comparable viewpoint is presented in the memoirs of Jimmy Carter, see *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1995), 147.

<sup>366</sup> BNARS BNB 5314, Seretse, speech at Bechuanaland Independence Conference, 14 February 1966.

<sup>367</sup> *Official Report of the Debates of the First Meeting of the Second Session*, 120.



With slow, considered delivery, he outlined his vision for a Botswana that would ‘influence neighbouring states’ and ‘show that black and white people can live together quite harmoniously and work for the interests of their country’. He announced ‘we will never have a one-party state by act of government’.<sup>368</sup> In a very public manner, Seretse limited the actions of his Presidency, rejecting the kinds of authoritarian measures that had become the usual response to addressing the challenge of underdevelopment. Yet, it was by way of the vision he proposed for non-racial democracy that the call for strategic and material support would be answered. As Masire underscored in his memoirs, ‘[w]hen you are weak, you have to stick to principles’.<sup>369</sup> While the narrative would be adapted over the years to suit Botswana’s immediate geopolitical situation, its profound sense of purpose for protecting and promoting human rights would remain consistent.

The language held much greater resonance when appealing to foreign donors. At the 1967 AAI Conference, Dr. Z. K. Matthews, Botswana’s Ambassador to the US, linked economic development to Botswana’s ‘plan for peace and progress in the non-racial society it is seeking to build up in southern Africa’. If ‘properly developed’, Matthews, also a former anti-apartheid activist, predicted the state would ‘play some part in the process of reconciliation which must take place if the peoples of this area – white and black – are to live in peace and harmony’.<sup>370</sup> The government positioned itself as a moderate ally within the wider liberation movement, identifying freedom in Botswana with the hopes of those oppressed in Southern Africa, and the lack of freedom in the region with the state’s own insecurity. As articulated by Seretse himself to the US Council on Foreign Relations in June 1976, Botswana had a ‘moral obligation to insist on the restoration of human rights in the countries surrounding us’. There was an explicit imperative for self-preservation too, as ‘the absence of peace in these countries is a threat to our own peace, without which we cannot survive’.<sup>371</sup> In drawing attention to Southern Africa, Seretse underscored the importance of Botswana as a beacon for the forces on the side of peace and human rights. In the use of

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<sup>368</sup> Seretse, video interview by Adrian Porter, Independent Television News (ITN) Reports, 17 March 1965, ITN Source, [http://www.itnsource.com/shotlist/BHC\\_ITN/1965/03/17/X17036502/?v=1](http://www.itnsource.com/shotlist/BHC_ITN/1965/03/17/X17036502/?v=1), viewed 18 July 2016.

<sup>369</sup> Lewis Jr., *Quett Ketumile Joni Masire*, 250.

<sup>370</sup> BNARS BNB 161, Jacqz, *Development Needs in Botswana and Lesotho*, 29 June 1967. See also Verbatim Records of the General Assembly Plenary Meeting, 1444<sup>th</sup> session, 17 October 1966, A/PV.1444, para 46.

<sup>371</sup> Seretse, ‘The Liberation Struggle in Southern Africa and American Perceptions’, address to Council on Foreign Relations in New York, 8 June 1976 in *Speeches by His Excellency the President, Sir Seretse Khama, on the Occasion of his Visits to India, United States of America, United Kingdom, Canada, China and North Korea* (Gaborone: The Government Printer, 1976), 25.

such moralistic language, Botswana opened itself up to external scrutiny, whereby internal behaviour would determine international generosity. The state was willing to subject its sovereignty to respecting human rights, but towards an intended outcome of reinforcing its security and welfare through outside assistance. Botswana self-imposed human rights conditions on its incoming aid, well before such requirements became a fixture of foreign aid packages.

The surrounding white minority regimes had a strong affiliation and strategic importance for the West, particularly in the context of the Cold War.<sup>372</sup> South Africa and Rhodesia framed themselves as forming a frontline in the region against Communism. Nonetheless, Botswana, as a principled and peaceful example, offered an alternative approach for those in North America and Western Europe to encourage progressive change in the region. The government's standpoint was non-aligned, but their values held great purchase amongst its liberal-democratic allies. 'We wanted the support of the democratic countries', Masire recalled, 'so we emphasised our role in the region with them'.<sup>373</sup> The President, as the next chapter will show, offered Western nations like the US a more appealing alternative than the difficult politics of coercing their strategic allies in the region. The West could therefore maintain their alliance with South Africa, whilst upholding their values and integrity in the form of aid to Botswana.

For Botswana's immediate neighbours, the narrative was never so confrontational nor grandiose as to dangerously inflame tensions within the region, thereby revealing the political imperative behind the moralistic narrative. The country had 'not advanced any "ism" or "ology" of her own', as reported by Anderson in April 1970, but had promoted the merits of human rights and majority rule through its internal prosperity. What could be 'more sensible, wise and responsible', the British High Commission queried, or 'less provocative, less emotive, and less quarrel-picking'?<sup>374</sup> Given the depth of change it sought to elicit in the region, and the breadth of support it was thought to be worthy of, Botswana's policy was remarkable for combining a potentially transformative power with a lack of obvious risk. '[W]e knew that though our approach was offensive to South Africa', Masire acknowledged,

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<sup>372</sup> Sue Onslow, 'The Cold War in Southern Africa: White Power, Black Nationalism and External Intervention' in Onslow (ed), *Cold War in Southern Africa: White Power, Black Liberation* (London: Routledge, 2009), 12-3.

<sup>373</sup> Lewis Jr., *Quett Ketumile Joni Masire*, 297.

<sup>374</sup> TNA FCO 45/818, Anderson, 'Leadership in Botswana', report sent to Wilson, April 1971.

‘it could not be challenged as a moral principle’.<sup>375</sup> Botswana’s case for non-racial democracy was two parts political, serving both the state and the Democratic Party, and one part moralistic. Its main objective was the maintenance of sovereignty for the state at home, but with the corresponding benefit of promoting wider freedoms in Southern Africa. This was a human rights movement where both individual and collective self-determination were married together, and not so easily dismissed as an outdated or discredited sentiment from the era of anti-colonialism.<sup>376</sup> Botswana’s stand for human rights had a moral radiance, but unlike the righteous 1970s rebirth of human rights in the West, the political paradigm of serving the needs of the state and the ruling party was always tied to the outcomes of its campaign. The country’s endeavour was professedly humanistic and virtuous, but not entirely charitable or self-sacrificing. Without the preservation of the state and Seretse’s government, as donors were duly informed, the human rights campaign could not be deemed a ‘success’.

In the pursuit of both aid and allies, Seretse’s 24 September 1969 address to the UN General Assembly was a turning point for crafting Botswana’s international image.<sup>377</sup> The importance of this objective was outlined by Seretse the day after the UN address, speaking to the African-American Chamber of Commerce. To continue on the path of development, Seretse believed ‘it is necessary to convince people and governments residing outside Africa that Botswana has a future and a role to play’. Given the stereotypical image of the continent that depicted ‘dramatic failures’, ‘lurid adventure stories’, and ‘Africa’s wildlife’, for Botswana to stand out, ‘it is necessary to create a recognisable identity’.<sup>378</sup> At the UN, the President thereby characterised the state as an antithesis of nearby societies based on racial separation. Seretse located the biggest threat to Botswana’s non-racial ideals within those neighbouring countries ‘whose way of life is not our way of life and whose values are in most respects, the reverse of our own’.<sup>379</sup> He characterised Botswana as having a decisive strategic importance,

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<sup>375</sup> Lewis Jr., *Quett Ketumile Joni Masire*, 250.

<sup>376</sup> This was in great contrast to the general trend, where the right to collective self-determination was usually ignored in the 1970s human rights movement in the West. See Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 173; Simpson, ‘The First Right’.

<sup>377</sup> On the use of human rights for small states building an international image, see Alison Brysk, ‘Global Good Samaritans? Human Rights Foreign Policy in Costa Rica’, *Global Governance* 11 (2005), 455, 460-1.

<sup>378</sup> TNA FCO 45/437, Seretse, speech to African-American Chamber of Commerce, 25 September 1969.

<sup>379</sup> BNARS BNB 1392, Seretse, ‘Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations’, September 1969. John Syson, a British expatriate and personal adviser to the President, may have played a key role in framing this speech and the international narrative for Botswana in the late 1960s and early 1970s. See TNA FCO 45/818, Anderson, ‘Leadership in Botswana’, report sent to Wilson, April 1971; TNA FCO 35/368, Anderson to Wilson, 26 March 1970; TNA FCO 45/459, Anderson to Wilson, 17 March 1970; TNA FCO 45/1270, Anderson to Moore, 25 April 1973.

whereby it could encourage a wider transformation within Southern Africa. The greater the success of the multi-racial state, the more it would expose the failures of apartheid and separate development. 'Botswana as a thriving majority-ruled state', Seretse encapsulated, 'will present an effective and serious challenge to the credibility of South Africa's racial policies' and its efforts to develop independent Bantu homelands for its African population.<sup>380</sup> Outmatched in terms of sheer economic and military power, Botswana declared itself to be unique and unmatched as a force for good in the region.

The Democratic Party had already done much of the work to develop Botswana's non-racial democracy, but there was still a major duty to be performed by other nations to help establish its economic grounding. Commendable ethics were not sufficient on their own, Seretse told the UN, for it was only a 'prosperous non-racial democracy in Botswana...[that] will add to the problems South Africa is already facing in reconciling its irrational racial policies with its desire for economic growth'. The mission was not so much to raise the living standards of those in Botswana, in absolute terms, as to surpass the attempts of the apartheid regime to develop its Bantustan homelands, in relative terms. A basic prerequisite for either development or providing a compelling case for change in the region was the safeguarding of Botswana's independence, threatened by both the antagonistic posture and the instability of its neighbours. In fulfilling this priority, Seretse called for 'the support and sympathy of friendly nations', hoping to encourage statements of unity from foreign leaders, politicians, and activists. For the President, there could be no division between the wellbeing of Botswana and its concern for reform amongst the white minority regimes. The country's territorial integrity and prospects were characterised by Seretse as inseparable to its 'potential contribution to achieving change by peaceful means'.<sup>381</sup> Seretse's efforts to sell Botswana as a worthy aid recipient spotlighted the merits of rewarding its exemplary behaviour and the promise of promoting such values throughout the region by strength of its example.

The UN address brought greater attention for Botswana within the global anti-apartheid movement. The use of such moralistic rhetoric was well received just as the ANC had begun to orient its language more frequently in terms of human rights.<sup>382</sup> Seretse set

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<sup>380</sup> BNARS BNB 1392, Seretse, 'Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations', September 1969.

<sup>381</sup> BNARS BNB 1392, Seretse, 'Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations', September 1969.

<sup>382</sup> Irwin, *Gordian Knot*, 172, 178.

forth a clear position in opposition to South Africa's racial policies, as extolled by the Africa Bureau, at a time when Seretse was seen by anti-apartheid activists as too restrained and reticent for an African politician. International forums had already been subjected to numerous statements about the apartheid regime from nationalist leaders, losing impact with each repetition and finding unease over the growing extremity of their language. Seretse's speech stood out, as NGOs exalted him for providing 'a salutary warning of the inherent dangers that exist in Southern Africa'.<sup>383</sup> The President had not been 'a strong leader' beforehand, according to Naomi Mitchison, a Scottish novelist and activist, but he spoke at the UN like 'a genuine African'. Botswana had found its 'real destiny', for Mitchison, standing among other African states against white minority rule.<sup>384</sup> Colin Legum, an anti-apartheid activist, also acclaimed Seretse's 'radical' speech as 'a remarkable challenge to his powerful neighbour', noting the President's standpoint belied his earlier perception as a 'cautious conservative'.<sup>385</sup> Seretse's statesmanship was distinguished because it was legitimised by the internal record of his government, providing a voice, much needed from the continent, that had credibility in its performance and not simply its protests.

Close observers would have already been familiar with the arguments put forward, yet this was the first time these ideas were articulated in such a public forum. The British High Commission in Botswana reported that Pretoria, painted as the main villain within Seretse's narrative, was unsettled and incensed by the speech.<sup>386</sup> In front of a broad international audience, however, Botswana's security was ultimately strengthened by way of the general understanding and sympathy attained for Gaborone's stance. The President's address upheld the commitment of the UN to international stability, whilst peacefully encouraging many of the precepts entailed within the UDHR. Any effort from South Africa to interfere with Botswana's territorial borders or its beliefs thereby threatened to bring almost universal condemnation. Botswana's international image was a form of defence, whereby the act of communicating the country's stand for human rights could ensure its preservation. The President, as shown in the introduction to the thesis, defined his country's constitutional foundations and political ideology for non-racial democracy as a commitment

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<sup>383</sup> TNA FCO 45/118, The Africa Bureau, 'Botswana President's Statement', 3 October 1969.

<sup>384</sup> BNARS BNB 1490, Naomi Mitchison, 'Seretse Khama and Botswana', *Venture* 21:10 (1969).

<sup>385</sup> TNA FCO 45/121, Colin Legum, 'Seretse Puts Challenge to South Africa', *The Observer*, 28 September 1969. Seretse's open opposition to South Africa would later find approval from the Southern Africa Committee, see Paddy Colligan, 'Botswana after the Death of Sir Seretse', *Southern Africa* 13:7 (1980), 26-7, African Activist Archive, [http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document\\_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-A66](http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-A66), viewed 10 May 2016.

<sup>386</sup> TNA FCO 45/118, Gandee to Wilson, 14 October 1969.

to the UDHR. The 1975 Human Rights Day speech was not simply a statement of faith, but a recognition of the positive instrumentalism to be found in these internationalist values. These circumstances were unusual, given the tendency elsewhere for such standards to be regarded as dangerous and unwarranted external interventions. The state's sovereignty was shielded, in effect, by letting its guard down to international measurements of human rights.

After his address to the UN, Seretse focused more on specific countries to trumpet Botswana's pioneering role in the region and solicit bilateral assistance, particularly from the Scandinavian countries. Sweden, Denmark, and Norway became major contributors to Botswana's total foreign assistance.<sup>387</sup> Britain could be relied upon for aid because of their established links and deeper understanding of Botswana's position. It was more difficult presenting a case for aid to new and prospective partners. There was greater pressure on Seretse to establish the conflicting notions of being, on the one hand, an influential model for the region and, on the other hand, a country in desperate need of aid. Seretse's main goal was therefore to highlight Botswana's significance for the prospects of peaceful reform in the region. This was seen in the President's speeches in November 1970 to the Dag Hammarskjöld Centre in Sweden and the Foreign Policy Society in Denmark. There was not so much an avowal to be a model but, through outside help, a hope to become one in the near future. 'We are far from perfection', Seretse conceded to the audience in Denmark, 'but we feel that we have embarked on the right road'.<sup>388</sup> Described as a country with unavoidable weaknesses and challenges, Botswana was not without wider ambitions or the capacity to help alleviate the problems facing the region.

In Sweden and Denmark, Seretse hoped to appeal to the internationalist values underlying their aid policies and involvement in the global movement against apartheid. 'Our principal aspiration', the President proposed, 'is to make a contribution to the victory of democracy, dignity and self-determination throughout Southern Africa'. Seretse contended the policies of racial discrimination were unethical and economically irrational, thereby opening up an opportunity for Botswana to show 'that what unites men is more important

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<sup>387</sup> Lise Rakner, *Botswana – 30 Years of Economic Growth, Democracy and Aid: Is There a Connection?* (Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute, 1996), 27, 31-2.

<sup>388</sup> TNA FCO 45/439, Seretse, 'Developing Democracy in Southern Africa', address at the Dag Hammarskjöld Centre, 11 November 1970.

than what divides them'.<sup>389</sup> Success in the territory was to be regarded as a single mandatory step within a wider master plan, surveying grander implications for the region. Independence and prosperity in Botswana was not just 'a struggle for ourselves alone', Seretse reiterated in Uppsala, but a benefit to 'the establishment of self-determination and non-racial democracy throughout Southern Africa'.<sup>390</sup> In their attempts to widen external support, Botswana needed its supposed international respectability and reputation to produce tangible aid and alliances.

Although the UN speech established Botswana's global image, it was the talks to individual countries that brought accountability on the part of potential donors. Seretse's appeals were direct in highlighting both the rewards of bilateral support whilst, more implicitly, associating a lack of aid with a disregard for the problems facing Botswana and the region. Denmark and Sweden, as well as Canada and the US, were described by the President as encompassing a select group who appreciated Botswana's stand for non-racialism in the region. Seretse alluded it was only these countries who could profess to be 'making a modest but effective contribution to promoting world peace and security'.<sup>391</sup> Success in Botswana would be attributable to the country's foreign backers, offering moral authority to those involved in such a peaceful strategy for reform in the white minority regimes. 'Sweden can make a positive contribution to the development of Southern Africa', Seretse entreated, 'by supporting our efforts to create a just and sound society'.<sup>392</sup> This was an ideal audience for this appeal for aid as Sweden was the first industrialised country to recognise and support liberation movements in the region.<sup>393</sup> Sweden's aid policy was oriented towards promoting internationalist values, in alignment with their own national self-image.<sup>394</sup> Such donors publicised their aid to Botswana as justifiable in terms of the cost and honourable on the basis of its laudable objectives. The British Embassy in Copenhagen ascertained the Danish government was keen to depict its annual aid package as 'an indirect engagement in the race confrontation in Southern Africa', allowing for economic and political development 'in the

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<sup>389</sup> TNA FCO 45/439, Seretse, 'Botswana and Southern Africa', address to Foreign Policy Society, 13 November 1970.

<sup>390</sup> TNA FCO 45/439, Seretse, 'Developing Democracy in Southern Africa', address at the Dag Hammarskjöld Centre, 11 November 1970.

<sup>391</sup> TNA FCO 45/439, Seretse, 'Botswana and Southern Africa', address to Foreign Policy Society, 13 November 1970.

<sup>392</sup> TNA FCO 45/439, Anders Johansson, *Dagens Nyheter*, November 1970.

<sup>393</sup> Dubow, *Apartheid*, 53

<sup>394</sup> Göran Ohlin, 'Swedish Aid Performance and Development Policy', *Development Policy Review* 6:1 (1973): 56-8; David Jones, *Aid and Development in Southern Africa: British Aid to Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), 139; Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society*, 77.

face of the white ruled countries which surround it'.<sup>395</sup> Botswana could not only call for aid as a means of self-help, but also ostensibly help foreign governments to contribute more productively to resolving the problems confronting Southern Africa.

While Botswana's international image frequently stressed the wider influence of its non-racial democracy, the narrative was not static and could adopt multiple attitudes, standpoints, and intended outcomes. The government used it as a means to defend its necessary, but uncomfortable, economic relations with its adjoining minority-ruled regimes. The President implored the international community to understand why it would be both unrealistic and unwise for Botswana to 'sever our Southern African connections completely'. Botswana could only encourage peaceful reform in the racial policies of its neighbours, Seretse argued, through proximity, not by distance and isolation.<sup>396</sup> The model of a non-racial democracy would work better through political co-existence and be more likely to reach prosperity through economic cooperation. For Botswana to contribute to the transnational anti-apartheid movement, Seretse explained, it would have to remain an exception to the international boycott movements. As Botswana's UN delegates rationalised in April 1970 to the President of the Security Council, in response to a resolution on Rhodesia, Botswana could not comply with its call to sever all ties with the surrounding regimes. A blocking of the railway line, they insisted, 'would be a massive economic setback for Botswana and would seriously undermine its efforts to demonstrate the viability of non-racial policies in Southern Africa'.<sup>397</sup> Behind the idealism of Botswana's narrative was an inherent realism regarding its geopolitical circumstances.

Alongside Botswana's self-endorsement as a transformative beacon for non-racial democracy, the government also set out a more defensive position. In the letter to the Security Council, Botswana's self-preservation was highlighted as the country's leading concern. Whilst their non-racial society could present a challenge to the racial policies of its neighbours, as clarified to the Secretary-General, 'Botswana's first task...is to survive as an island of non-racial democracy and majority rule'.<sup>398</sup> By the mid-1970s, the more conservative

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<sup>395</sup> TNA FCO 45/439, British Embassy Copenhagen to CSAD, 24 November 1970.

<sup>396</sup> TNA FCO 45/1496, 'Botswana: Before the Elections', *Africa Confidential*, 20 September 1974.

<sup>397</sup> TNA FCO 35/368, 'Preliminary views of the Government of Botswana on Security Council Resolution No. 277 (1970)', 21 April 1970.

<sup>398</sup> TNA FCO 35/368, 'Preliminary views of the Government of Botswana on Security Council Resolution No. 277 (1970)', 21 April 1970. See also TNA FCO 35/368, 'Botswana Refuses to Apply Sanctions', *The Guardian*, 30 March 1970; TNA FCO 45/433, Seretse, 'Botswana's Foreign Policy', address to Democratic Party



posture was given greater exposure as instability rose in Southern Africa and peaceful change seemed, at least in the near future, out of reach for the apartheid regime. The 1976 Soweto Uprising and the escalation of the Rhodesian Bush War in the latter half of the decade brought a bleaker outlook for the region. In response to growing instability, Seretse's government brought forward a more conservative posture. Some of the origins of this standpoint can be found toward the beginning of the decade. In the President's November 1970 speech in Denmark, where Botswana was portrayed as a positive example, Seretse foresaw a need to readjust the priorities of the state. 'If the confrontation I fear does take shape', Seretse prophetically warned, 'there will be a need for Islands of peace, sanity and dignity'.<sup>399</sup> Rather than spreading a wave of non-racial democracy over Southern Africa, this viewpoint indicated a fear of being washed away by more racist neighbours. At every point in time after independence, Seretse controlled the benchmark for 'success'. He gradually reduced Botswana's ambitions, in accordance with the context of instability in the region, to a base level of securing his state's existence as a peaceful, liberal-democratic, and non-racial society.

In international discussions on peace within the region, where the focus on attracting aid was not the predominant aim, the President was compelled to accept a more pragmatic position. As seen in the January 1971 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Singapore, where violence in Southern Africa was a leading concern, Seretse set out a comparably narrow sense of purpose for the country. 'Botswana was a small wedge', Seretse explained, 'which was serving to prevent the consolidation of minority rule'. Rather than aiming to inspire a movement toward human rights amongst its neighbours, the task was to guard Botswana's territorial integrity as South Africa intimidated those on its borders.<sup>400</sup> Botswana held an affirmative stance for promoting human rights, promising donors and allies a peaceful solution to the racial conflicts imperilling stability and progress in the region. However, as successful as it was in attracting sympathy, it was a position that could not be relied upon as a method of building urgent relief, particularly in any potential crisis. At best, the intention to bring about a sweeping change in the region was a long-term goal, thereby

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conference, 28 March 1970; BNARS BNB 1392, Seretse, 'Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations', September 1969.

<sup>399</sup> TNA FCO 45/439, Seretse, 'Botswana and Southern Africa', address to Foreign Policy Society, 13 November 1970.

<sup>400</sup> TNA FCO 36/757, Seretse, Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Singapore, 20 January 1971. Seretse's performance in Singapore impressed Lee Kuan Yew, the President of Singapore, see *From Third World to First: Singapore and the Asian Economic Boom* (New York: Harper Business, 2011), 360.

leaving the country exposed to an immediate breakdown of relations or regional stability. The narrative of providing a model for surrounding regimes therefore required a ready alternative, underscoring Botswana's peaceful progress as a cardinal achievement to be perpetuated in the midst of tension and the threat of chaos. Botswana's mission statement could oscillate between an emphasis on sustaining the country's non-racial democracy, as a worthy goal in itself, and the potential dissemination of its principles throughout the region as an exemplar. The state required aid for two worthy causes, its immediate preservation and its grand transformative potential. These two purposes could justify aid for both pessimists and optimists, whereby state survival was always the basic criteria for 'success'.

Just as Botswana's pronouncement to be a model for non-racial democracy could vary between international contexts and strategic requirements, the narrative had a capacity to serve the political needs of the ruling elite. The Democratic Party's ability to diversify its donor support beyond Britain diminished the accusations of neo-colonial control, a frequent allegation by opposition parties and an unwanted liability when seeking understanding from other international networks, such as the OAU and the Non-Aligned Movement. Success in attracting external aid sources was also used to legitimise the Democratic Party's position in power, reinforcing their suppositions of triumph in establishing social harmony and developing the economy. Electoral dominance established the majority support of the governing party, but the active approval of overseas governments and peoples added a further layer of authority. As Seretse sought to 'translate the principles of the Democratic Party and Botswana into concrete foreign policy objectives', he implied a sense of symmetry between the tenets of the party and the country itself.<sup>401</sup> In this regard, Botswana was similar to many other African states in attempting to merge the achievements, identity, and interest of the country with that of the ruling party.<sup>402</sup>

The Democratic Party did not have the same kind of credentials for national liberation, or a mass movement for independence, to maintain its support like many other African parties in government. Nonetheless, given much of Botswana's aid and support was reliant upon its symbolic strength, based on the traditional party aims for political liberties

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<sup>401</sup> TNA FCO 45/433, Seretse, 'Botswana's Foreign Policy', address to Democratic Party conference, 28 March 1970.

<sup>402</sup> Ludovick S. Mwijage, *Julius K. Nyerere: Servant of God or Untarnished Tyrant?* (Leeds: Wisdom House Publications, 2010), 30.

and individual freedoms, the very survival of the state could be readily credited to the Democratic Party. There was an ‘increasingly widespread recognition on the part of donors’, Seretse boasted in December 1971, of how their assistance to a non-racial community like Botswana ‘can make a positive and constructive contribution to the struggle to achieve such societies throughout Southern Africa’. For the President, such international support also ‘reflects credibility on the competence, energy and imagination which this Government has brought to bear on the problems of development’.<sup>403</sup> The ideal perception of Botswana’s internal cohesion was reflective of the Democratic Party’s philosophy of ‘Kagisano’. The concept strived to attain social harmony by way of the party’s four key maxims, including democracy, development, self-reliance, and unity. As a result, it was only ‘the ideal of Kagisano’, Seretse later enunciated in April 1977, ‘which has made our country a true model of democracy’.<sup>404</sup> As much as Botswana claimed to be convincing its neighbours of the virtues of the Democratic Party’s non-racial philosophy, the government could rely on influencing the electoral decisions of its own citizens with the psychological and material resources that came from Seretse’s salesmanship. Botswana’s record on human rights could therefore be used to bring in vital external support, protect state autonomy, promote the values of non-racial democracy in the region, and legitimise the authority of the governing party. Idealism, in this context, had so many strategic benefits for its exponents it was virtually synonymous with realism.

### Conclusion

Botswana utilised its strength in the relatively new language of human rights to attract foreign economic support and strategic ties, converting idealistic declarations into psychological encouragement and material aid from the West. The British attempted to frame Bechuanaland as a model, but no one was convinced. Botswana’s attraction for donors proved to be its hopes for a virtuous and viable independence, not a misplaced notion of imperial trusteeship. Its international image did not need to mask the strategic imperative of survival for the state to be regarded as a worthy aid recipient. Seretse’s narrative for promoting human rights always made Botswana’s existence and development the fundamental objective, through which the hopes for regional reform would become possible. This meant he could shift the narrative to a more defensive posture when the prospects of

<sup>403</sup> TNA FCO 45/817, Seretse, ‘A People’s Progress’, address to National Assembly, 3 December 1971.

<sup>404</sup> Bechuanaland Democratic Party, *Laying the Foundation of Nationhood: Quotations from the Speeches of Sir Seretse Khama* (Bechuanaland Democratic Party: Gaborone, 1982), 8.

hope in the region receded. Defence of an island of non-racial democracy was just as worthy a task for aid givers as the diffusion of its values. Throughout the 1970s, the US was the most important of Botswana's allies. US-Botswana relations, as the next chapter will discuss, offer a test case for both the strengths and limitations of human rights idealism for attracting support. At independence, Seretse's government had already learned how to craft a rights phraseology in their favour in the domestic setting. Subsequently, without changing their core values, the Democratic Party skilfully adapted their rights-based narrative for an international campaign. Seretse's non-racial idealism was about more than the rights of citizens but building transnational links based on a common understanding of human rights.

### **‘Our Bantustans are better than yours’: The Role of Human Rights in US-Botswana Relations**

US-Botswana relations exhibit both the strengths and limitations of Botswana’s human rights idealism. In the context of the Cold War, where ideology in the Third World was a key battleground, the American superpower was attracted by the Western principles exclaimed, and in many ways fulfilled, by Botswana. When Seretse reached out to the West during his international campaign, as shown in the previous chapter, a common regard was found for non-racialism based on political liberties and individual protections. From the US, Botswana received substantial psychological reinforcement and material assistance. Key projects, like the Bot-Zam road, became an emblem of America’s capacity to support its allies who, in turn, respected human rights. Yet, Washington was only prepared to support Botswana to the extent it served their own strategic objectives. Although grateful for this support, Gaborone still found it to be less than they had hoped. Disappointment was especially found during the Carter administration, whose human rights pronouncements did not match the level of aid given to Africa’s best performing state on human rights. The US commended Botswana’s aspiration to become a prosperous alternative to white minority rule. By the mid-1970s, however, Seretse recognised it was more effective to emphasise his country’s persistent vulnerability, defencelessness, and underdevelopment. The US could have engaged much further, but Botswana extracted the maximal benefit from its human rights record, finding vital support on the path to survival. For any limits that this approach encountered, when the global superpower could not align its strategic interest with its professed value for human rights, it only further accentuated how innovative Botswana was in finding closer harmony between the two. Human rights idealism was a strategic resource for Botswana because it could reach out to foreign powers, like the US, who themselves proclaimed to be a beacon for these principles.

### **‘You can’t give this country enough, its human rights record is so good’: Changes in America’s Perception of Botswana**

The campaign for bilateral American assistance to the territory began before Seretse and the Democratic Party entered government. From the early 1960s, the British eagerly sought to obtain material resources from the US for the Protectorate. The colonial rulers wanted to lessen the dependence of the HCTs on Britain as a source of financial aid. At the ‘Anglo-American Talks on Africa’, held at the Foreign Office in December 1965, Maud underlined the benefits of using the territories as a model for change in South Africa. The US would not

have to rely on sanctions as a method of influence, Maud suggested, as the HCTs could show 'South Africa and the world in general that there was a practical alternative to Apartheid'.<sup>405</sup> A similar argument was raised by academics and activists in the US. In the same month of Botswana's independence, Richard P. Stevens spoke on the merits of assisting the HCTs at a seminar held by the American Committee on Africa. Stevens encouraged the backing of what constituted 'the greatest threat to that government's racial mythology'. In allowing the HCTs to become 'showpieces of democratic life', the scholar affirmed, it would show the apartheid regime 'there is an alternative to its present course which can only lead tragically and inevitably to race war if not race suicide'.<sup>406</sup> A commitment to develop these territories would provide the US with 'tremendous possibilities for re-establishing its credit in Africa', without the uncomfortable prospect of confronting South Africa.<sup>407</sup> In June 1967, an entire conference organised by the AAI was dedicated to discussing America's capacity to alleviate underdevelopment in Botswana and Lesotho.<sup>408</sup> Beset by the geopolitical difficulties of punishing white minority regimes allied to the US in the Cold War, the American government was presented on multiple fronts with a case for a more appealing method of engagement in Southern Africa.<sup>409</sup>

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<sup>405</sup> TNA FO 371/167140, 'Record of Anglo-American Talks on Africa', 5-6 December 1962. See also TNA CO 1048/519, Queen's Commissioner to Colonial Secretary, 28 April 1965.

<sup>406</sup> Stevens, 'The South African Threat to the Independence of Basutoland, Bechuanaland, and Swaziland and a Program for American Action', 19 March 1966, African Activist Archive, [http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document\\_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-134D](http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-134D), viewed 10 June 2015. See also Stevens, *Lesotho, Botswana, & Swaziland*, 257, 266. Stevens arrived in Bechuanaland in late December 1965 for a research trip. The publication of his book on the former HCTs, highlighting the need for further US assistance, was followed by lectures on the topic in front of universities, anti-apartheid groups, and other NGOs. See Stevens, *A Journey into the World: Reflections of an Itinerant Professor* (New York: iUniverse, 2010), 121, 132.

<sup>407</sup> Stevens, 'The Transkei, Bantustans and the High Commission Territories', 22 March 1965, African Activist Archive, [http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document\\_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-A95](http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-A95), viewed 10 May 2016. In March 1966, similar arguments were raised by George M. Houser, an activist for civil rights in the US and independence in Africa. See Houser, 'Testimony of George M. Houser before the Sub-Committee on Africa of the House Foreign Affairs Committee', 15 March 1966, African Activist Archive, [http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document\\_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-B8B](http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-B8B), viewed 10 May 2016.

<sup>408</sup> BNARS BNB 161, Jacqz, *Development Needs in Botswana and Lesotho*, 29 June 1967. Further support for US assistance to Botswana can be seen from the United Nations Association of the United States of America, contending it was an effective way for the American government to 'take positive action to aid in the struggle against apartheid'. See United Nations Association of the United States of America, *Southern Africa: Proposals for Americans* (New York: United Nations Association of the United States of America, 1971), 74.

<sup>409</sup> On the important strategic and economic relationship between the US and white minority regimes, see Peter J. Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy Towards Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis, and Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 208, 219-20; Robert Louis Stevenson, 'US African Policy Under Henry Kissinger' in Hanes Walton Jr., Stevenson, and James Bernard Rosser Sr. (eds), *The African Foreign Policy of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger: A Document Analysis* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), 84-5, 92-3; Thomas J. Noer, *Black Liberation: The United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948-1968* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985); Henry F. Jackson, *From the Congo to Soweto: US Foreign Policy Toward Africa Since 1960* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1982), 226-39, 256-81; William J. Foltz, 'United States Policy toward South Africa: Is One Possible?' in Gerald J. Bender, James S. Coleman, and Richard L. Sklar (eds), *African Crisis Areas and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 32-42.

Nonetheless, Washington maintained it held no major interest or responsibility for the HCTs to warrant more formidable support. Whilst American officials claimed to want closer involvement in the region, there were both internal and external considerations preventing the US from taking such a role. In response to Maud's proposals at the 1965 talks, Elbert Mathews, on behalf of the State Department, highlighted the impediments to America's involvement. Congress was disinclined to broaden foreign assistance and the Peace Corps was too focused on Latin America for a considerable deployment of trained manpower.<sup>410</sup> At the 1964 talks, G. Mennen Williams, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, expressed his doubts over the readiness of the US to offer help. Williams, having visited the HCTs personally, thought they 'could hardly be called a "show piece"', and was therefore very far from becoming a useful strategic partner.<sup>411</sup> Washington expected the British to boost economic development in the territory, particularly whilst it remained under colonial rule. Not even a visit in November 1965 to the US by the future President could bring about further progress. Less than a year before independence, Seretse presented a list of proposed development projects to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Outside of basic food supplies, the British Embassy in Washington reported 'AID were quite categorical in saying that there was no US aid available for Bechuanaland'. Whilst private foundations in the US gave more promising feedback, and American officials remarked on his commendable performance as a moderate African leader, the most immediate outcome of the visit was the provision of two Peace Corp officials.<sup>412</sup> Before Botswana established its significance for the cause of human rights in Southern Africa, the US could not be convinced to build stronger ties.

By the early 1970s, Washington's attitude on providing relief to Botswana had become markedly more encouraging and enthusiastic. America's external outlook aligned itself with the earlier arguments of the British colonial officials and observers in the US. Washington cited the benefits of encouraging the development of non-racial democracy as a way to ensure both the interests of the US and for promoting stability in Southern Africa, with a preference for peaceful democratic transitions as opposed to violent uprisings subject to Communist infiltration. In a report delivered to Congress in February 1971, President

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<sup>410</sup> TNA FO 371/167140, 'Record of Anglo-American Talks on Africa', 5-6 December 1962.

<sup>411</sup> TNA DO 183/273, 'Record of Anglo-American Talks', 3-4 December 1964.

<sup>412</sup> TNA CO 1048/484, Walker to Cortazzi, 8 November 1965. The Peace Corps began more substantive work in Botswana in December 1966 with the arrival of fifty-nine volunteers, see BNARS BNB 161, Jacqz, *Development Needs in Botswana and Lesotho*, 29 June 1967.

Richard Nixon included Botswana in his outline for foreign policy priorities in the coming decade. In a brief but encouraging statement, Nixon announced the former HCTs would find support from the US 'in their efforts to prove the viability of multiracial societies in the heart of southern Africa'.<sup>413</sup> Such a prominent expression of America's interest in helping the majority-ruled neighbours of apartheid reaffirmed what had become an established policy. William Rogers, the Secretary of State, released a policy statement on Africa in 1970, signalling greater efforts to reduce the economic dependence of the small independent states on white minority regimes. The facilitation of greater economic flexibility for these countries was presented to form part of America's 'stand for racial equality and self-determination' in the region.<sup>414</sup> Halpern recognised Rogers' policy initiative as partially 'a result of a strong but dignified appeal for outside financial help made by Sir Seretse Khama'. The outcome of this campaign, the journalist commented, was to commit 'the US to helping countries like Botswana...which tried to build non-racialism in contrast to apartheid'.<sup>415</sup> After a lack of any clear sign of further assistance to Botswana at the end of colonial rule, by the early 1970s, the US displayed a key stake in maintaining the country's independence.

The dramatic precipitation of American concern for Botswana's prospects was directly linked to Seretse's speech at the UN in September 1969.<sup>416</sup> Senator Edward Brooke had a close interest in Botswana after he first visited the country and met Seretse in Serowe on 28 January 1968. He had originally questioned the country's ability to survive, as well as to

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<sup>413</sup> Department of State, Office of the Historian, Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) 1969-1976, Volume E-5, Part 1, Sub-Saharan Africa 1969-1972, Document 14, Richard Nixon, 'Building for Peace: A Report to the Congress', 25 February 1971. On Nixon's policy toward Africa, see Noer, *Black Liberation*, 240; Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy Towards Africa*, 206-7.

<sup>414</sup> William Rogers, *The United States and Africa* (Johannesburg: The South Africa Institute of International Affairs, 1970), 5-6; US National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Record Group 59: General Records of the Department of State, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1973STATE071670, Department of State to Embassy Gaborone, 17 April 1973. See also Department of State, Office of the Historian, FRUS 1969-1976, Volume 28, Southern Africa, Document 71, 'Paper Prepared by the National Security Council Interdepartmental Group for Africa', March 1972; NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1977STATE295561, Department of State to Embassy Gaborone, 10 December 1977.

<sup>415</sup> SHL ICS 28/5/B/12, Halpern, 'The Man in the Middle', *The Times*, undated.

<sup>416</sup> In retrospect, Seretse received glowing acclamation from American diplomats who had worked in Botswana or were familiar with the country during his Presidency. See John H. Kean, interview by W. Haven North, 1 August 1994, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training (ADST), Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, <http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Kean,%20John%20H.toc.pdf>, viewed 20 April 2016; William E. Schaefe Jr., interview by Lillian Mullin, 19 November 1994, ADST, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, <http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Schaefe,%20William%20E.%20Jr..pdf>, viewed 20 April 2016; Roy Stacy, interview by W. Haven North, 26 March 1999, ADST, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, <http://adst.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Stacy-Roy.pdf>, viewed 20 April 2016.



preserve its values and integrity.<sup>417</sup> By October 1969, based on Seretse's speech at the UN, the African-American Senator realised how the President planned to defy such doubts. On a moral mission to promote a wider transformation in the region, fully deserving of aid from nations like the US that proclaimed to advance human rights, it was through the state's ideals that it would find the means to survive. Just over a week after the address, Brooke printed the text into the congressional record and commented upon the importance of the country to the struggle for human liberty and equality around the globe. 'Such a brave effort to secure and to keep the rights which we ourselves have long proclaimed', Brooke advocated to his colleagues, 'deserves our fullest support and understanding'. For the Senator, human rights occupied a fundamental role in the existence of the state and the future direction of the broader discourse on race. 'If the people of Botswana can win their struggle and accomplish the tasks they have set for themselves', Brooke believed the country 'will have set an inspiring example for the peoples of the world'. For this reason, outside of any strategic interest, there was a moral imperative for America's engagement. 'Botswana, in some ways, more than any other nation', the Senator exclaimed, 'occupies a key position in the fight for human rights'.<sup>418</sup> The Democratic Party's ethos for political liberties and individual protections, successfully enshrined in the lead up to independence, had attained international prominence with the capacity to inspire those within a global superpower.

Beyond the exuberant sentiments for Botswana's stand for human rights, American interest was asserted in a more substantial way through financial and technical resources. In absolute terms, the aid flows to Botswana from the US could appear less than remarkable. However, in relative terms, given the small size of the country, an exceptional level of support was shown. In August 1971, Richard Rolfe, a South African journalist, quoted a US official who believed Botswana 'gets more aid per head of population than any other country

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<sup>417</sup> Edward W. Brooke, *Bridging the Divide: My Life* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 170; *The Des Moines Register*, 29 January 1968, 10.

<sup>418</sup> Brooke, *Congressional Record*, 91<sup>st</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 8 October 1969, 29133-29136. Brooke held a similar standpoint to Seretse on taking a non-racial viewpoint toward politics and policy-making, see Brooke, *Bridging the Divide*, 153. Further support for Botswana in the US Congress was given by Senator Paul Simon, see *Congressional Record*, 95<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 19 January 1978, 163-4. In oral history interviews, Botswana continued to be seen as a model for liberal-democratic government in Africa, see Horace G. Dawson Jr., interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, 7 February 1991, ADST, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, <http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Dawson,%20Horace%20G,Jr.toc.pdf>, viewed 20 April 2016; Ulric Haynes Jr., interview by Kennedy, 20 April 2011, ADST, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, <http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Haynes,%20Ulric,%20Jr.%20toc.pdf>, viewed 20 April 2016; Charles J. Nelson, interview by Celestine Tutt, 31 October 1981, ADST, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, <http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Nelson,%20Charles%20J.toc.pdf>, viewed 20 April 2016.

in the world, not excluding South Vietnam'. The US became Botswana's most important source of financial and technical assistance at a time when it was desperately needed. In his *Financial Times* article, Rolfe pointed out the astonishing nature of these contributions, as America had 'tended to run down aid to developing countries'. American values for political and civil rights, applied in an African setting, were presented by Western diplomats and journalists as conducive to economic success. The 'US aim is more than to promote multi-racialism', the American official remarked, 'but also to show that Our Bantustans are better than yours [in South Africa]'.<sup>419</sup> America's support for Botswana's internal record continued throughout the decade, as one anonymous foreign diplomat in Gaborone told the *Washington Post*, in December 1977, '[y]ou can't give this country enough, its human rights record is so good'.<sup>420</sup> Botswana not only acquired vast amounts of aid in material terms, but amassed a great store of ideological weight with one of the world's leading superpowers.

The papers of David Bolen, the US Ambassador to Botswana from 1974 to 1976, reveal the extent of the assistance delivered to the so-called American Bantustanland. The direction of the aid in the early 1970s was still primarily toward alleviating human suffering, notwithstanding a recent mining boom in diamonds financed, in large part, by multi-national companies like Anglo American. From 1962 to 1974, American aid totalled more than thirty million US dollars (USD), not inflation-adjusted, with ninety-three per cent distributed toward emergency food and drought relief. By 1975, this number had been updated to sixty million USD, including around 100 volunteers from the Peace Corps.<sup>421</sup> In constant dollars, USAID figures suggest that from the financial years of 1965 to 1980, America had

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<sup>419</sup> Rhodes House Library, Oxford University (RHL), MMS Afr. s. 1681, Richard Rolfe, 'Developing Mineral-Based Wealth', *Financial Times*, 10 August 1971. See also the final published article in the *Financial Times*. Zaffiro suggests in 1979 Botswana received the most US aid per capita of any country in the Third World, with fifty million USD. See Zaffiro, 'U.S. Relations with Botswana', 3.

<sup>420</sup> J. Regan Kerney, 'Texas-Size Country in Southern Africa Enjoys Tranquillity and True Democracy: Letter From Botswana', *The Washington Post*, 23 December 1977.

<sup>421</sup> Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University, David Benjamin Bolen Papers (DBB), Box/Folder 4:1, State Department briefing notes, 'US Programs', January 1974; DBB 6:3, Bolen, 'US-BLS Relations in Southern African Context', speech, October 1975; BNARS BNB 3128, Government of Botswana, 'Peace Corps Volunteers in Botswana – The Country Plan 1970-1974'; BNARS BNB 3127, Government of Botswana, 'Botswana and Peace Corps 1970-1974', January 1971; Grant (ed), *Sheila Bagnall's Letters from Swaneng: 1966-1974* (Odi: Leitlho Publishing, 2001), 45-6. On the role of the Peace Corps in Africa, see Jonathan Zimmerman, 'Beyond Double Consciousness: Black Peace Corps Volunteers in Africa, 1961-1971', *The Journal of American History* 82:3 (1995): 999-1028; Julius A. Amin, 'Serving in Africa: US Peace Corps in Cameroon', *Africa Spectrum* 1 (2013): 71-87; Amin, 'United States Peace Corps Volunteers in Guinea: A Case Study of US-African Relations during the Cold War', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 16:2 (1998): 197-226; Lynne Farmer, 'A Retrospective of US Peace Corps Service to Botswana, 1966-1970', *Botswana Notes and Records* 41 (2009): 130-2; Elizabeth A. Cobbs, 'Decolonisation, the Cold War, and the Foreign Policy of the Peace Corps', *Diplomatic History* 20:1 (1996): 79-81, 104-5.

committed over \$432 million USD in grants and loans.<sup>422</sup> US relations with Zambia, Botswana's northern neighbour, provide an enlightening comparison, before Kenneth Kaunda's government occupied a greater strategic importance to the US during Rhodesia's political negotiations. In Andrew J. DeRoche's study of US-Zambia relations, he described Zambia as a 'beacon of hope' for the US on the issue of racial equality.<sup>423</sup> However, from the financial years of 1965 to 1976, in constant dollars, Zambia only received around fifty-four million USD.<sup>424</sup> The US remained a significant donor for many decades, showing a commitment to Botswana's development as a non-racial democracy surrounded by white minority rule. Throughout the 1970s, US-Botswana relations were advanced by human rights idealism.

### **'A potential bridge builder': US Interests in Botswana and Africa**

America's encouragement for Botswana's human rights record was motivated by more than just ideology, but also a wider set of strategic interests. The Policy Planning Council in the State Department released a paper in November 1968, before the surge in American aid to Botswana, highlighting the struggle of the US to sustain an appropriate equilibrium between their different partners on the continent. Whilst the US professedly associated with the post-colonial world against racial discrimination and colonialism, Washington had 'a range of material and strategic interests in the white-controlled states'. African majority-ruled governments demanded immediate liberation in Southern Africa, often advocating violent methods. The US preferred a more gradual and peaceful transition, if at all, of the political dynamic.<sup>425</sup> OAU members saw the asymmetry as unfavourable to them. America had essential military and economic links with the white minority regimes, as well as the current or former colonising powers in Europe.<sup>426</sup> In response to any American weakness, the Soviet

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<sup>422</sup> The figures on US foreign assistance to Botswana can differ depending on the source, the date, and the method of calculation. Nonetheless, there is consistency in the relative amounts of aid which maintained a level that was at least close to, if not reaching, the highest levels in the world per capita from the US. In this case study, a level of caution should be exercised when looking at aid levels, as the quality and timing of the aid can be just as important to consider. See U.S. Agency for International Development, 'U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants: Obligations and Loan Authorizations', data from 1 July 1945 to 30 September 2014, USAID, <https://explorer.usaid.gov/reports-greenbook.html>, viewed 11 August 2016. See also Zaffiro, 'The U.S. and Botswana in the 1990s', 32.

<sup>423</sup> Andrew J. DeRoche, 'Non-Alignment on the Racial Frontier: Zambia and the USA, 1964-68', *Cold War History* 7:2 (2007): 228-9, 240, 243.

<sup>424</sup> USAID, 'U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants: Obligations and Loan Authorizations'.

<sup>425</sup> Department of State, Office of the Historian, FRUS 1964-1968, Volume 24, Africa, Document 409, Policy Planning Council, 'National Policy Paper, Southern Africa', 20 November 1968.

<sup>426</sup> On the challenges of America's balancing act in Africa, see Irwin, *Gordian Knot*, 7-8, 42-3, 151. Earlier in the 1960s, America's image in Africa, and its narrative on the virtues of democracy, was greatly harmed by the international media coverage of the US civil rights movement, particularly in periods where social progress was

Union and the PRC, both avowedly anti-colonial Communist powers, were eager to expand their influence throughout all parts of Africa.<sup>427</sup> As a self-proclaimed friend to the continent, the US therefore required a more glamorising element to their relationship with Africa to help win credibility.

Botswana was suitably positioned for the US, geographically residing between majority-ruled and minority-ruled governments, and embodying the coexistence of African and European populations. Seretse's government was regarded as reliable from the view of Western countries, in its moderate stance and its practical relationship with South Africa, and growing acceptance in the OAU, regarding its support for national self-determination. South Africa's role in US-Botswana relations was pivotal as both countries, in different ways and degrees, were dependent on the apartheid regime. Botswana rejected political cooperation with Pretoria, but remained reliant on the apartheid regime economically. The US needed South Africa as a key strategic partner in the Cold War and a bulwark against the spread of Communist influence in the region. In the April 1969 'National Security Study Memorandum 39', it was stated that US allies in the white minority regimes would remain in power in Southern Africa, thereby helping to ensure security and contain Communism.<sup>428</sup> America's and Botswana's relations with South Africa were politically difficult, at a time when both sought approval from the OAU. Regardless, their bilateral ties with each other could be mutually beneficial for their respective outreaches further north. American assistance to Botswana offered greater national autonomy from South Africa, just as Botswana presented a means for the US to build greater respectability on the continent.

In December 1969, only a few months after Seretse's UN address, Botswana's usefulness to the US was recognised within a National Security Council meeting, the highest forum of American foreign policy-making. With hopes of finding an appropriate balance in Washington's diverse relationships within the continent, the participants evaluated the available measures to be taken against Rhodesia. Rogers wondered '[h]ow can we be hard-headed on economic matters but do symbolic things that black Africa will like? Why couldn't

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stalled, state violence was used, and racial discrimination persisted. See Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 6, 81-2, 113; Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 135.

<sup>427</sup> Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 170.

<sup>428</sup> This official standpoint for US foreign policy would be reversed by the time Carter entered power, especially after the Soweto Uprising in June 1976. See Nancy Mitchell, *Jimmy Carter in Africa: Race and the Cold War* (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Centre Press, 2016), 28, 327; Jackson, *Soweto*, 246-7.

we help Botswana?'. Seretse's government had 'real promise', the Secretary of State argued, as the '[P]resident gave a good toast at the UN and relations with South Africa are sensible'. Nixon himself realised the country could be 'a potential bridge builder' for the US into the African continent, as well as the divide between African majority-ruled states and white minority regimes.<sup>429</sup> American preoccupation with Botswana was not narrowly confined to their common struggle for human rights in the region. The country was situated within a much broader set of imperatives for the US in their relations with Africa, and a concern for developments on the continent to be conducive to American objectives. Botswana offered a viable alternative, not just to the white minority regimes in the region, but to the difficult domestic and international politics of coercing South Africa and Rhodesia faced by Washington.<sup>430</sup> The effort to bolster and glorify Botswana was a safer option for the US than abandoning more powerful allies against Communism.

If Botswana was the bridge builder for America's pathway to better relations with Africa, following Nixon's analogy, human rights was the bridge itself. America's relations would have had no symbolic substance without the appealing values of non-racial democracy to preserve in Botswana. By promoting these principles amongst its neighbours, Seretse's efforts raised an opportunity for the US to improve their standing in Africa, as a superpower with internationalist ideals and not just unilateral objectives. The US wished to show they had a common dedication with the OAU toward improving human rights in Southern Africa, despite their different stance on the pursuit of violent liberation. Botswana's place within America's goals in the region was outlined in the November 1968 Policy Planning Paper. The 'essential US objectives' included the aims to 'encourage long term constructive change in the area' and 'moderate trends towards violence and confrontation'. As part of the effort to achieve these goals, the Policy Planning Council foresaw the need to strengthen the majority-ruled states in Southern Africa through bilateral aid.<sup>431</sup>

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<sup>429</sup> Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum (RNPL), NSC Files: Institutional Files, Box H-025, folder NSC Meeting 12/17/69 Southern Africa (NSSM 39), 'Minutes of the NSC Meeting on Southern Africa', 17 December 1969. See also RNPL [EX] CO 20 [1969-70], Nixon, 'The President's Reply to the Remarks of the Newly Appointed Ambassador of the Republic of Botswana', 17 April 1969; RNPL Botswana Vol. 1 [1969-1972], Rogers, memorandum for the President, 26 March 1969; US Department of State, Office of the Historian, FRUS 1969-1976, Volume 28, Southern Africa, Document 53, National Security Council Interdepartmental Group for Africa, 'Botswana: Policy Planning Paper', June 1971.

<sup>430</sup> On the difficulties of US actions in regard to the white minority regimes, see Mitchell, *Jimmy Carter in Africa*, 322-3.

<sup>431</sup> Department of State, Office of the Historian, FRUS 1964-1968, Volume 24, Africa, Document 409, Policy Planning Council, 'National Policy Paper, Southern Africa', 20 November 1968. See also Nelson, interview by

Botswana's actual contribution in fulfilling these objectives proved to be ambiguous. Regardless, it always offered a pathway for the US to engage with Africa at a symbolic level alongside Washington's more substantive actions, when the Americans began to encourage regime change in the region toward the end of the 1970s. In March 1977, Donald Norland, the US Ambassador from 1976 to 1979, recognised Botswana had been 'one of the few remaining democratic, non-racial, majority-ruled governments in Africa dedicated to achieving peaceful solutions to Southern African problems'.<sup>432</sup> Botswana generated an attraction within the US as a legitimate African government that respected political and civil rights, under a President that saw the spread of these values as a means of securing peace in the region. Regional conflicts brought as much anxiety to Botswana over its territorial integrity as the US was fearful of subsequent opportunism on the part of external Communist forces. For many reasons, the US preferred South Africa, South-West Africa, and Rhodesia to eventually transform into larger versions of Botswana, remaining friendly with the West, and becoming majority-ruled, non-racial democracies capable of providing adequate protections for their European populations.<sup>433</sup> As Norland identified, 'Botswana's future is synonymous with, and can be said to embody, the key long-term interests of the US in Southern Africa'.<sup>434</sup> While the promotion and protection of human rights may not have been the only objective for the US regarding Botswana, it was the principal element in facilitating America's engagement with the small Southern African state.

The US was eager to highlight the centrality of human rights in their friendship with Botswana, without spotlighting their wider strategic objectives in Africa. American officials were creative in their panegyrics on Botswana. This was seen most particularly in 1976, at the mutual celebration of Botswana's ten years and America's 200 years since independence. On 4 July, Bolen lauded Botswana for sustaining the ideal that 'all men are created equal, that they have the right to life, to liberty and to the pursuit of happiness'. The Ambassador

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Tutt, 31 October 1981, ADST, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, <http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Nelson,%20Charles%20J.toc.pdf>, viewed 20 April 2016.

<sup>432</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1977GABORO00774, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 31 March 1977; NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1978GABORO00715, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 13 March 1978. See also Donald R. Norland, interview by Kennedy, 15 December 1992, ADST, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, <http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Norland,%20Donald.toc.pdf>, viewed 20 April 2016.

<sup>433</sup> Rosser Sr., 'A Critic of the Kissinger's Study of Southern Africa' in Walton Jr., Stevenson, and Rosser Sr. (eds), *The African Foreign Policy of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger*, 96.

<sup>434</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1977GABORO00774, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 31 March 1977; NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1978GABORO00715, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 13 March 1978.

considered the two countries could share a common experience in attaining internal stability and strength within a multi-racial society. The 'spirit of 76' was also an opportune time to assert America's ability to claim Botswana as an ideological partner and ally in the Cold War, overlooking the country's non-aligned stance. The acclaim was generally not for any indigenous value for liberty within Botswana but, specifically, 'the American ideal of freedom, equality and respect for human dignity'.<sup>435</sup> On visits to the territory, similar feelings were expressed by Senator S. I. Hayakawa in June 1978; and Andrew Young, the American Ambassador to the UN, and Richard Moose, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, in November 1978.<sup>436</sup> The magniloquence of American statesmen and politicians was important for the territorial integrity of Botswana. The speeches provided international affirmation of Seretse's government, and indicated to neighbouring powers that any intimidation would also be regarded as a threat to the sentimental value of the country within the US.

At the highest level of government, US Presidents wrote personally to Seretse on the importance of their mutual values. Whilst such salutations never occupied a key focus of interest from the American heads of state, they signal a steady transition in the dynamics of Botswana's relations with the US. Seretse made several trips to the US, but only two included formal meetings with American Presidents, including Richard Nixon in March 1969 and Gerald Ford in June 1976.<sup>437</sup> An American head of state would not reciprocate with a visit to Botswana until the arrival of Bill Clinton in March 1998 and George W. Bush in July 2003. By the mid-1970s, the executive level in the US had at least arrived at a position of showing a direct assurance of America's ties to Botswana, and displayed signs of wanting to foster these links. More importantly, the letters show the predominance of human rights as a centrepiece for their relations, even before Carter entered the White House with a special stress on this issue in American foreign policy. 'I am confident the deep devotion of our two peoples to human rights and fundamental freedoms', Ford wrote to Seretse in September 1975, will 'constitute an enduring basis for broadening and deepening the close bonds of friendship

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<sup>435</sup> DBB 4:4, Bolen, remarks at Bicentennial Picnic, 4 July 1976.

<sup>436</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1978GABORO01641, Embassy Gaborone to Embassy Lusaka, 2 June 1978; NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1978GABORO03796, Embassy Gaborone to Embassy Khartoum, 30 November 1978.

<sup>437</sup> Under the urging of Rogers, Nixon received Seretse at the White House on 31 March 1969, making it Seretse's first meeting with a US President. See RNPL, NSC Box 735, Folder 2, Rogers to Nixon, 26 March 1969.

and cooperation already existing between our countries'.<sup>438</sup> Carter himself brought further statements of support for Botswana's constructive leadership on stability and racial equality in the region.<sup>439</sup> To differing extents, Botswana's stand for non-racial democracy received applause at the local and executive level, from the Embassy to the Presidency.

Botswana's most comprehensive recognition for its human rights record came from the State Department's assessments of internal behaviour amongst its aid partners. In the 1970s, members of Congress initiated legislation to tie external assistance for American allies to their internal behaviour. Under the International Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Act of 1976, the Secretary of State was required to provide a report to Congress on 'practices regarding the observances of and respect for internationally recognised human rights in each country proposed as a recipient of security assistance'.<sup>440</sup> Botswana was recognised as one country in such a position, compelling the state to be virtually audited on how the government treated its own citizens. This provided a critical test for the integrity of the self-proclaimed model for human rights. Seretse's government became even more distinguished as a result of the annual reports, setting the highest standards on the continent. The 1977 survey observed the country's respect for rights regarding personal liberty, the absence of any political prisoners, and the enjoyment of political and civil rights by citizens under a multi-party system. The inquiry found human rights to be increasingly ingrained within the institutions of the country, based on the personal commitment of the President. 'A concern for human rights provides the foundation for Botswana's non-racial society', the report determined, and this 'shapes President Khama's philosophy for approaching the

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<sup>438</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1975STATE212579, Department of State to Embassy Gaborone, 8 September 1975. See also NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1976GABORO01633, Embassy Gaborone, 30 August 1976. Human rights under the Ford administration, however, were not a priority in foreign policy-making. See Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, 167.

<sup>439</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1977STATE233997, Department of State to Embassy Gaborone, 29 September 1977; NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1978STATE146919, Department of State to Embassy Gaborone, 9 June 1978.

<sup>440</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1976STATE298713, Department of State to Embassy Gaborone, 8 December 1976. In the 1970s, members of Congress also initiated legislation to tie external assistance for American allies to their internal behaviour, see Donald M. Fraser, 'Freedom and Foreign Policy', *Foreign Policy* 26 (1977): 140-56; Lynsay Skiba, 'Shifting Sites of Argentine Advocacy and the Shape of 1970s Human Rights Debates' in Eckel and Moyn (eds), *The Breakthrough*, 112; William Michael Schmidli, 'Human Rights and the Cold War: The Campaign to Halt the Argentine "Dirty War"', *Cold War History* 12:2 (2012): 348-9, 354; Schmidli, 'Institutionalizing Human Rights in US Foreign Policy: US-Argentine Relations, 1976-1980', *Diplomatic History* 35:2 (2011): 363-5; Stephen B. Cohen, 'Conditioning US Security Assistance on Human Rights Practices', *The American Journal of International Law* 76:2 (1982): 247-256; Snyder, "'A Call for US Leadership": Congressional Activism on Human Rights', *Diplomatic History* 37:2 (2013): 372, 378, 389.



problems of Southern Africa'.<sup>441</sup> As a developing country, even the provision of economic and social rights was reported to be indisputable, with policies targeted toward uplifting the rural poor and minimising inequality.

Agreement with the views of the State Department was found amongst human rights organisations, as Botswana welcomed any interest shown by external investigators. In a powerful set of endorsements, Freedom House regarded Botswana as one of the very few 'free' countries on the continent and Amnesty International could find almost no criticism for Botswana. The main exception was Botswana's limited capacity to deal with rapid increases in the flow of refugees after the 1976 Soweto Uprising and throughout the Rhodesian Bush War.<sup>442</sup> Rather than undermine the justification for assisting Botswana, as occurred in regard to some recipients of American aid after human rights evaluations, the reports of the State Department concluded by advocating for more donor help. Cyrus Vance, the Secretary of State, advocated for greater assistance to show 'Botswanans [sic], and other observers, that the US supports those nations that adhere to basic standards of human dignity'.<sup>443</sup> Whilst the original intention of the Congressional requirement for human rights reports was to apply pressure on foreign countries to stop abusing the freedoms of their own citizens, Botswana was placed in the entirely opposite category. 'Botswana is one of the few developing countries in Africa or the world', the US Embassy extolled, 'where focus of our effort should be recognition of exemplary human rights behaviour rather than a campaign to

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<sup>441</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1977STATE142614, Department of State to Embassy Gaborone, 20 June 1977. See also NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1977STATE277265, Secretary of State to Embassy Gaborone, 18 November 1977; NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1978GABORO02964, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 28 September 1978; NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1979GABORO03810, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 31 October 1979.

<sup>442</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1979STATE235933, Department of State to Embassy Addis Ababa, 7 September 1979. In 1963, within two years of its founding, Amnesty International (AI) had a strong interest in the colonial government's adherence to the UDHR. However, the predominant concern was for refugees fleeing South Africa, not necessarily local residents, whereby AI had a generally favourable report on the record of the British in the HCTs. See TNA CO 1048/570, AI, 'Now in the Future is it Peace or War?: A Report on Refugees from South Africa and on the Issues Involved', October 1963. In the 1977 annual report of AI, the section on Botswana solely emphasised refugees fleeing Rhodesia, while recognising there were 'no adopted prisoners'. See AI International Secretariat, 'Amnesty International Annual Report 1977', AI, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol10/006/1977/en/>, viewed 5 May 2016.

<sup>443</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1977STATE142614, Department of State to Embassy Gaborone, 20 June 1977. The US advocated for Freedom House to give a higher ranking, see NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1977STATE305297, Department of State to Embassy Gaborone, 22 December 1977; NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1977GABORO02663, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 27 October 1977.

improve human rights conditions'.<sup>444</sup> Under both methodical human rights reporting, and a more subjective fondness for the country, the US saw Botswana as a deserving aid and strategic partner.

American interest and engagement in the country was showcased in their involvement in an infrastructure project to foster links between Botswana and Zambia. Positioned at the Zambezi River, the most northern point of the territory, a 400-metre trip on a pontoon ferry provided the only geographical connection between Botswana and the rest of independent Africa. Access to the transportation boat at Kazungula, near Kasane, involved a 300-kilometre ride by car from the village of Nata in the north-east of the country. The border itself was tenuous, as Pretoria initially informed the country it recognised no common frontier between Botswana and Zambia, and claimed the river formed part of South-West Africa.<sup>445</sup> America became involved with the project in 1970, when USAID financed a transportation survey. In August 1972, the aid agency and the government of Botswana signed a loan assistance package of over sixteen million USD for supervision and construction through private American firms, such as Grove International.<sup>446</sup> The Bot-Zam road was made feasible through American financing, and completed during a precarious decade for the country, featuring increasing instability and uncertainty throughout the region.<sup>447</sup>

The US framed the highway as part of a wider effort to ensure the long-term viability and prosperity of Botswana.<sup>448</sup> As a land-locked state, dependent on neighbouring white

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<sup>444</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1978GABORO02964, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 28 September 1978. See also NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1978GABORO03832, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 5 December 1978.

<sup>445</sup> SHL ICS 28/5/B/12, Halpern, 'The Man in the Middle', *The Times*, undated.

<sup>446</sup> BNARS 5617, Botswana Ministry of Works and Communications, 'Botswana-Zambia Road Project', final report, July 1978; NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1977GABORO00170, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 18 January 1977; DBB 4:4, Bolen, 'US-Botswana Economic Cooperation in a Growing Interdependent World', speech at Rotary Club Annual Induction Dinner, 2 July 1975.

<sup>447</sup> Seretse doubted the feasibility of the project without an external financier. See TNA FCO 31/21, notes on talks between British High Commission and Seretse, 14 September 1967.

<sup>448</sup> RHL MSS Afr. s. 1681, Box 227, File 7, ff 1-22, The Africa Bureau, 'Draft Statement on Botswana', April 1970; RHL MSS Afr. s. 1681, Box 227, File 7, ff 1-22, Guy Arnold, 'Botswana/Zambia Highway', 17 April 1970. See also Richard J. Dols, interview by Kennedy, 20 January 1992, ADST, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, <http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Dols,%20Richard%20J.toc.pdf> viewed 20 April 2016; Kean, interview by North, 1 August 1994, ADST, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, <http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Kean,%20John%20H.toc.pdf>, viewed 20 April 2016; Nelson, interview by Tutt, 31 October 1981, ADST, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, <http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Nelson,%20Charles%20J.toc.pdf>, viewed 20 April 2016.

minority regimes, Botswana required greater flexibility in its trading routes. The project evoked an immediate comparison with the Tan-Zam Railway, funded by the PRC and built from 1970 to 1975, with a similar goal to alleviate Zambia's dependence on Rhodesia and South Africa. In his memoir, Masire described the Bot-Zam road as a 'lifeline project'.<sup>449</sup> Yet, the true lifeline for Botswana was the Rhodesian railway line, which faced the prospect of shutting down in the late 1970s as the conflict intensified across the border. As a form of economic intubation, the country needed at least some prospect of developing an alternative to what was virtually the only method of transporting imports and exports from the country. The road link was set to provide rewards for the country both internally, through allowing farmers to have greater access to markets, and externally, with closer political and economic ties to be developed with Botswana's neighbours to the north.<sup>450</sup>



8 Map of Botswana, edited by author. Courtesy: worldatlas.

As a public token, the Bot-Zam road represented the commitment of the US to economic development in the territory. Washington hoped the project and the influx of

<sup>449</sup> Lewis Jr. (ed), *Quett Ketumile Joni Masire*, 156, 281.

<sup>450</sup> DBB 4:4, Bolen, remarks to USAID Science Research Laboratory at Content Farm in Sebele, 29 July 1975; NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1973STATE126112, Department of State to Embassy Lusaka, 27 June 1973.

American workers would boost the favourability of the US within Seretse's government and the general population.<sup>451</sup> However, as the Bot-Zam road was only number seventeen on Botswana's list of desired aid projects, there were more than just economic priorities and bilateral considerations involved.<sup>452</sup> The new road, aimed at developing further links to the north for Botswana, epitomised America's own interest in using the territory as a stepping stone into the rest of independent Africa. Any drive to reduce Botswana's dependence on white minority regimes would improve its credentials within the OAU, thereby increasing the broader value of America's relations with Botswana. The project showed Washington had accepted the growing necessity of interdependence and cooperation amongst African territories under majority rule. Outside of America's more conservative standpoint toward political change in South Africa and Rhodesia, the Bot-Zam road showed the US could take proactive action in assisting African countries to fulfil their national objectives.

The road's further symbolism was demonstrated at its opening on 20 January 1977, coincidentally, the same day as Carter's inauguration as President. Norland spoke at the event, in vague but glowing language, of how the highway was a 'concrete manifestation' of America's commitment to ensuring world peace through economic prosperity and cooperation. In a passionate speech on the virtues of America's engagement with Africa, the Ambassador argued the Bot-Zam road signified the commitment of the US to prosperity in the region, their dedication to democracy in Botswana, and the importance of developing closer links with Africa in achieving these goals.<sup>453</sup> Norland's remarks reflect the sense of ownership the Americans held over the project, claiming the US was the enabling instrument for Botswana's links further north as well as its viability as a state. America could use the highway to show it not only supported human rights in Botswana, particularly in regard to majority rule and national self-determination, but also the attempts in the rest of independent Africa to sustain and extend these freedoms throughout Southern Africa. The allegory can be continued further, however, when considering America's reluctance to fund the road's pavement, resulting in lengthy delays for the project's full completion to a bitumen standard.<sup>454</sup> Just as the highway typified the important and substantive bilateral links between

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<sup>451</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1975GABORO00771, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 11 June 1975.

<sup>452</sup> Arnold, *Africa: A Modern History* (London: Atlantic Books, 2005), 464-6.

<sup>453</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1977STATE013396, Department of State to Embassy Gaborone, 20 January 1977.

<sup>454</sup> For the road's pavement, Washington preferred to allow Botswana to rely on funding from the European Economic Community, as the Americans committed to paying only for the design and supervision costs. See

Botswana and the US, the tenuousness of the gravelled road exemplified the potholes and gaps preventing a more comprehensive consolidation of their links. The Bot-Zam road represented a new and important connection, but it was designed for neither speed nor sturdiness.

**‘How to earn the disaffection of friends and enhance relations with adversaries’:  
Limits and Missed Opportunities in America’s Recognition of Botswana**

By the completion of the Bot-Zam road, Botswana’s relations with the US had reached their zenith in aligning aid with human rights adherence. Washington lost special interest in Botswana just as Southern Africa became more integral to America’s Cold War imperatives in the mid to late 1970s. The Cuban victory in Angola in 1975 against South African forces, backed by the US, brought greater fears of Communist influence in Rhodesia, Namibia, and South Africa.<sup>455</sup> Without more vital American objectives at stake in the country, Botswana’s relations with the US could not rely on ideals alone to improve ties, especially during critical geopolitical crises in the region. The US aligned itself with Botswana’s model for non-racial democracy in Southern Africa, but they were without any expectation it would result in substantive change in the white minority regimes. Washington was more concerned with its own image and interests on the continent. Under the initiation of the Carter administration, the US wished to assert its leadership on exporting human rights to the world.<sup>456</sup> However, as recognised recently by Nancy Mitchell and Joe Renouard, the human rights cause in US foreign policy continued to be premised on meeting America’s national interests.<sup>457</sup> Botswana’s claim to be a model was most useful to the US as a reference point for symbolic posturing, rather than as an actual instrument capable of producing external reform.

American statements of support for Botswana were predominantly rhetorical, fit for the purpose of serving the narrative of the US, and not as part of a radical new outlook on geopolitics in the region. The briefing papers for Ambassador Bolen in 1974 underscore the

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NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1976GABORO01302, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 12 July 1976; NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1977ECBRU03076, US Mission EC Brussels to Embassy Gaborone, 29 March 1977; NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1978GABORO01698, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 6 June 1978; NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1978GABORO01535, Embassy Gaborone to Embassy Mbabane, 24 May 1978.

<sup>455</sup> Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 389-90; Gleijeses, ‘A Test of Wills: Jimmy Carter, South Africa, and the Independence of Namibia’, *Diplomatic History* 34 (2010): 854, 862-3.

<sup>456</sup> Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue*, 239-40.

<sup>457</sup> Renouard, *Human Rights in American Foreign Policy*, 278; Mitchell, *Jimmy Carter in Africa*, 662.

importance of disseminating, in public discussions, Botswana's role as an example for the region. The country was to be presented as 'a shop window of hope for the peaceful evolution of a different and better way of life for Southern Africa'.<sup>458</sup> Regardless, the Americans never clearly endeavoured to alter the internal behaviour of a Western-oriented regional power like South Africa by providing economic aid to a small neighbouring state with opposing values. Internal communications reveal there were spirited defences of Botswana's model for change from American officials at the local Embassy. Yet, these were almost always pronounced in the context of the more important agenda of justifying further aid and support for the host country, and not as a practical goal warranting consideration in isolation to other needs. In May 1973, as telegraphed to the State Department, the Embassy applauded the country's ability to secure the 'goal of self-determination for all people of Southern Africa by making success of country's current political, economic and social policies'. As bold as this proposition was, the contention was made amidst a modest plea for fostering the development of youth in Botswana and inculcating a positive viewpoint of the US.<sup>459</sup> Even Norland, perhaps the strongest American advocate for assistance to the country, placed little emphasis on Botswana's persuasive showpiece for non-racialism. In his appeal for greater signs of appreciation in America for Botswana's protection of human rights, Norland still found the key force of reform in the region to be, not Botswana, but the US.<sup>460</sup> Without mentioning Botswana's ability to change mindsets in the apartheid regime, in proposing a public donation linked to the country's human rights record, Norland accentuated the effect the US could have on neighbouring countries.<sup>461</sup> The US was convinced of the moral virtues of Botswana, but not necessarily its ability to alter the policies, practices, and philosophies of those across its border.

In public oratory, US officials showed signs of shallowness and doubt over Botswana's regional influence. In the decision to consecutively send two African-Americans

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<sup>458</sup> DBB 4:1, 'Botswana Talking Points', briefing papers for Bolen, 1974.

<sup>459</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1973GABORO00740, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 14 May 1973.

<sup>460</sup> Norland would later attribute Botswana's political stability and economic success to American leadership in recognising and encouraging its outstanding human rights record. See Norland, 'A New Era for Human Rights: Botswana, 1977' in Shawn Dorman (ed), *Inside a U.S. Embassy: How the Foreign Service Works for America* (Washington: American Foreign Service Association, 2003), 90.

<sup>461</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1977GABORO03067, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 5 December 1977. In outlining America's interests and objectives in Botswana, Norland overlooked any consideration of the country being a wider force for change in the region, see NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1977GABORO00774, Embassy to Department of State, 31 March 1977.

as Ambassadors to the former HCTs, including Bolen and Norland, Washington sought to position itself within the discussion of race in Southern Africa.<sup>462</sup> On being appointed to the region, Bolen conveyed a personal affinity with the countries. 'I would hope my presence would help demonstrate that a minority black can live and make progress under white majority rule', Bolen elaborated in his briefing notes, 'just as BLS [Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland] themselves demonstrate that whites can prosper in peace under black majority rule.'<sup>463</sup> The statement reveals how Botswana's imagery was a reflection, less of the true racial dynamic of either country, than an idealistic viewpoint of non-racial citizenship and social harmony in American society. The claim of holding an affiliation with Botswana's perceived success in human rights was effectively an affirmation of America's example for human rights. In an inconsistent, but sincere comment, Bolen acknowledged in 1975 how the BLS 'have little direct influence on the situation' in Southern Africa.<sup>464</sup> America's aim was less to change viewpoints on race relations within Botswana's neighbours to the south, but more to improve the impression of the US amongst their post-colonial counterparts to the north.

By the late 1970s, with increasing instability in the region, Seretse's narrative for spreading non-racial democracy diminished in favour of a more pitiable image. At independence, as South Africa still maintained an interest in taking over responsibility for the territory and the viability of the state was in question it was more profitable for Botswana to adopt an inspiring rationale for foreign donors. However, Seretse later identified a need for an alternative pretext for maintaining and expanding such assistance, as regional conflict intensified and Botswana's model for non-racial democracy was obviously found to have not brought about reform. The inspiring narrative of his September 1969 UN address was no longer so compelling. On 9 June 1976, in a meeting in the Oval Office with Ford, Seretse articulated a much less confident impression of Botswana's ability to bring about change in Southern Africa. He presented a picture of vulnerability in regard to external threats confronting the territory. Notwithstanding the benefits to be gained from the Bot-Zam road, facing the prospect of Rhodesia closing its rail line, Seretse disclosed 'we feel we are sitting on a volcano'. In his dialogue with Western countries, Botswana's example was not the key point for Seretse, but the country's outright survival. 'Our effectiveness as an influence

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<sup>462</sup> This may contrast with the motivations of sending African-American Ambassadors elsewhere in Africa, as well as the responses by the host countries. See Brenda Gayle Plummer, *In Search of Power: African Americans in the Era of Decolonisation, 1956–1974* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 32, 220.

<sup>463</sup> DBB 4:1, 'Key Questions', briefing papers for Bolen, 1974.

<sup>464</sup> Bolen, 'US-BLS Relations in Southern African Context', speech, October 1975

would end', the President explained, 'because so would our existence as a state'.<sup>465</sup> From Seretse's perspective, Botswana's significance for the US ceased to be its use as a viable force for ending apartheid, but its more lamentable role as the last token for human rights in the region.



*9 Seretse Khama and Gerald Ford at the White House, 9 June 1976. Courtesy: Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.*

Seretse was not changing viewpoints within the US government, but aligning with their underlying and long-held doubts about the persuasive capacity of Botswana's non-racial example. He recognised the greater rewards in targeting America's concrete strategic interests, revealing some of the boundaries of human rights idealism in influencing US foreign policy. In his most crucial bilateral talks with the Americans, the President raised with Ford the possibility of losing a like-minded partner like Botswana, rather than appealing to any mission in the US government to reinforce a liberal-democratic model for the sole purpose of promoting human rights. Although the earlier statements on human rights by those like Senator Brooke were helpful for psychological encouragement, it was not optimism that Botswana could rely on in times of crisis, but a more realist standpoint.

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<sup>465</sup> Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library and Museum, Memoranda of Conversations - Ford Administration, Box 19, 'Memorandum of Conversation', 9 June 1976. Bolen concurred with this viewpoint, see DBB 6:3, Bolen to Roy T. Haverkamp, 8 March 1976.



The US could also be fickle when aid to Botswana did not directly result in complete diplomatic deference. This was shown in October 1971 after the country voted at the UN to recognise the PRC, against American wishes. As heard on the Oval Office tape recorder, Nixon would later lament the creation of Botswana out of ‘the stupidity of the United States State Department’, assuming ‘we made it’.<sup>466</sup> In an empty threat, Nixon rudely sputtered ‘no more aid is to go to those black bastards unless they vote with us’.<sup>467</sup> Idealism, even when seen in strategic terms, could be easily forgotten when more pressing geopolitical priorities were imminent. If the US had treated the state as a genuinely transformative influence, a lot more donor support would have been incoming to ensure Botswana reached a more convincing state of prosperity. When treated as an ally needing some bolstering to remain viable, only a certain amount was required to secure Botswana’s survival, without necessarily adding further to the claim of superiority under a non-racial system. The local US representatives lobbied hard for their vote at the UN, but Botswana valued its credentials amongst OAU and non-aligned circles, and affirmed its neutrality and autonomy by slowly accepting diplomatic outreaches from the PRC and the Soviet Union. Seretse was effective in framing a narrative for Botswana that would align with US objectives, but there was only so far that he was willing to cater to them, beyond which the Americans offered few rewards.

In the use of Botswana as a platform, the US could not achieve its objective of building greater trust within the OAU, let alone its ambition to promote human rights on the continent.<sup>468</sup> This strategy, involving the delivery of donor funds and resources in an explicit reward of Botswana’s stand for human rights, was never pursued to its full potential. Many opportunities were missed for the US to expand their relations further with Botswana and to become more closely associated with the symbolic substance of its non-racial democracy. This became particularly evident by the mid to late 1970s, just as the Rhodesian conflict was escalating and posing a threat to Botswana, and the US was drawn to the attention of more urgent priorities in the region.

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<sup>466</sup> Nixon, Oval Office conversation, 28 October 1971, [nixontapes.org, http://nixontapeaudio.org/chron2/rmn\\_e606a.mp3](http://nixontapeaudio.org/chron2/rmn_e606a.mp3), viewed 18 April 2016. America applied pressure on Botswana in the lead up to the UN vote on recognition for the PRC, see Nelson, interview by Kennedy, 18 November 1991, ADST, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, <http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Nelson,%20Charles%20J.1991.toc.pdf>, viewed 20 April 2016; John Hurd Willett, interview by Richard Jackson, 21 December 1998, ADST, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, <http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Willett,%20John%20Hurd.toc.pdf>, viewed 20 April 2016.

<sup>467</sup> Nixon, Oval Office conversation, 22 October 1971, [nixontapes.org, http://nixontapeaudio.org/chron2/rmn\\_e599b.mp3](http://nixontapeaudio.org/chron2/rmn_e599b.mp3), viewed 18 April 2016.

<sup>468</sup> Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 135.

In April 1976, Henry Kissinger travelled to Africa as Secretary of State, seeking to find a resolution between African nationalists and the Rhodesian regime. In his set-piece speech in Lusaka on 27 April, Kissinger highlighted the moral imperative for majority rule in Rhodesia and racial justice in Southern Africa.<sup>469</sup> Botswana's example of successful majority rule was far from offering an immediate solution, compared to the option of using South Africa to bring diplomatic pressure on Ian Smith, the Prime Minister of Rhodesia.<sup>470</sup> Majority-ruled states in the region, like Botswana, would ultimately benefit from a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Nonetheless, Kissinger's two weeks of 'shuttle diplomacy' was unsuccessful, thereby providing little use to neighbouring countries subject to increasing incursions and the overflow of refugees.<sup>471</sup> In seeking methods of achieving their aims in Southern Africa for stability and limiting Communist influence, during a period of crisis for American foreign policy, Kissinger's visit revealed how little the US was willing to elevate the importance of Botswana's achievements in non-racialism and liberal-democracy.

While there was a far larger community of white settlers in Rhodesia, Botswana's ability to protect the individual rights of its European population was broadly relevant to the discussion of finding an acceptable compromise across its border. However, rather than seek their guidance or further participation, in his key address in Lusaka, Kissinger announced he would only offer greater assistance to Botswana if it was to seal its borders with the regime.<sup>472</sup> The Secretary of State saw more influence in Botswana's questionable ability to apply economic pressure, as opposed to any symbolic weight as a model for peaceful race relations under majority rule. As Kissinger was advised personally in Nairobi on 5 May by Gaositwe K. T. Chiepe, Botswana's Minister of Trade and Industry, it would cost the country around seventy to 100 million USD to take over the railway.<sup>473</sup> Bolen telegraphed the Secretary of

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<sup>469</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1976STATE101350, Department of State to All African Diplomatic Posts, 27 April 1976.

<sup>470</sup> Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy Towards Africa*, 213-4.

<sup>471</sup> On Henry Kissinger's perspective on Africa and his trip to the continent, see Mitchell, *Jimmy Carter in Africa*, 27-8, 56-7, 108; Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, 225; Stevenson, 'US African Policy Under Henry Kissinger', 213-4; Luise White, *Unpopular Sovereignty: Rhodesian Independence and African Decolonisation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 234-6; Onslow, '“We Must Gain Time”: South Africa, Rhodesia and the Kissinger Initiative of 1976', *South African Historical Journal* 56:1 (2006): 131.

<sup>472</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1976STATE095349, Department of State to USDEL Secretary, 20 April 1976; US Department of State, Office of the Historian, FRUS 1969-1976, Volume 28, Southern Africa, Document 194, 'Memorandum of Conversation', meeting between Kissinger and Julius Nyerere, 25 April 1976. See also Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy Towards Africa*, 214.

<sup>473</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1976SECTO11364, USDEL Secretary to Department of State, 6 May 1976.

State to relay further concerns within Seretse's government. The statement 'would cause great difficulties for Botswana', according to Archibald Mogwe, the Foreign Minister, as it would lead to African nationalists from around the continent to exert pressure on the country to adhere to sanctions it could not afford economically.<sup>474</sup>

In a letter to the Secretary of State on 14 April, Yvonne B. Burke and Charles C. Diggs, on behalf of the Congressional Black Caucus, advised Kissinger to at least make a stopover in Botswana. Given Seretse's knowledge of the situation and his leadership, they advised a visit there 'would be an appropriate tribute to his courageous statesmanship and symbolism'.<sup>475</sup> Botswana was also a founding member of the Frontline States, an assembly of nations seeking political transition in the region. Regardless, Kissinger left Botswana off his itinerary, perhaps explaining why, in his Lusaka speech, he had so easily ignored the government's economic and political difficulties, as well as its success in non-racialism.<sup>476</sup> America's donor support for Botswana demonstrated a common sympathy for majority rule, non-discrimination, and peaceful race relations. The relevance of these to resolving growing emergencies and political deadlocks was met not with enthusiasm, but with indifference.

Carter permitted another failure to appropriately recognise Botswana's achievements. This thesis complicates the prevailing historical interpretation that positions Carter's presidency at the forefront of the emerging human rights movement in the 1970s.<sup>477</sup> The research also challenges many broadly favourable accounts of Carter's policy in Southern Africa, in which Botswana plays only a peripheral role, if any. For many scholars, his administration helped to manage a difficult negotiation process in Rhodesia, encouraged reform in South Africa, pursued independence for Namibia, and built productive bilateral

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<sup>474</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1976GABORO00875, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 11 May 1976. NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1976GABORO00988, Embassy Gaborone to Secretary of State, 22 May 1976.

<sup>475</sup> US Department of State, Office of the Historian, FRUS 1969-1976, Volume E-6, Documents on Africa, 1973-1976, Document 38, 'Letter from Congresswoman Yvonne Burke and Congressman Charles Diggs to Secretary of State Kissinger', 14 April 1976.

<sup>476</sup> Kissinger was advised by Nyerere not to meet personally with Seretse, see Schaufele Jr., interview by Mullin, 19 November 1994, ADST, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, <http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Schaufele,%20William%20E.%20Jr..pdf>, viewed 2 April 2016. On Kissinger's view on the minimal role of human rights in American foreign policy, see Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, 206-10, 226; Noer, *Black Liberation*, 239, 244-5; Renouard, *Human Rights in American Foreign Policy*, 46-7, 80-2; Snyder, 'A Call for US Leadership', 385-6; Umberto Tulli, "'Whose Rights are Human Rights?'" The Ambiguous Emergence of Human Rights and the Demise of Kissingerism', *Cold War History* 12:4 (2012): 576-7.

<sup>477</sup> Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 4, 149-61; Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue*, 1-2.

links with Zambia.<sup>478</sup> Yet, Carter's interest in the most successful non-racial democracy in the region was far from commensurate with his proclaimed human rights idealism and his personal concern on the issue of race in Southern Africa.

Two years after meeting Ford, Seretse was invited to Harvard University on 8 June 1978 to accept an honorary degree for his promotion of human rights in the region. Seretse was recognised on equal terms with fellow awardee Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, a Russian novelist and dissident.<sup>479</sup> To further show how America appreciated his contribution during his visit to the US, Norland strongly recommended to Vance there was a need to secure a meeting between Seretse and Carter. The Ambassador explained how such a discussion presented an 'unparalleled opportunity' for marking America's approval of Botswana's multi-party democracy, showing support for Seretse's philosophy of non-racialism, and re-establishing aid links and psychological encouragement for a key African partner.<sup>480</sup> Given Seretse's age at 57 and deteriorating health, this was expected to be his last trip to the US as President. However, the ability to secure the award ceremony at Harvard was tarnished by the inability of Carter to make room for a direct dialogue.

The matter was less of poor timing than of associating little priority for Botswana. Kenneth Kaunda, the President of Zambia, was welcomed at the White House on 17 May, only a short time before Seretse was in the US.<sup>481</sup> A leader of a one-party state had greater access to the American President than a human rights award winner elected within a multi-party state.<sup>482</sup> There was further irony in the apparent rebuff, as Carter had previously criticised Ford for not meeting with Solzhenitsyn at the White House as President.<sup>483</sup>

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<sup>478</sup> Mitchell, *Jimmy Carter in Africa*, 644, 672-9; Mitchell, 'Tropes of the Cold War: Jimmy Carter and Rhodesia', *Cold War History* 7:2 (2007): 273-7; Simon Stevens, "'From the Viewpoint of a Southern Governor": The Carter Administration and Apartheid, 1977-81', *Diplomatic History* 36:5 (2012): 845-52, 879-80; DeRoche, 'Standing Firm for Principles: Jimmy Carter and Zimbabwe', *Diplomatic History* 23:4 (1999): 666, 684-5.

<sup>479</sup> Seretse was recognised on equal terms with fellow awardee Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, a Russian novelist and dissident. See NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1978STATE149240, Department of State to Embassy Gaborone, 12 June 1978.

<sup>480</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1978GABORO00715, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 12 March 1978.

<sup>481</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1978GABORO02120, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 7 July 1978.

<sup>482</sup> DeRoche, *Kenneth Kaunda, the United States and Southern Africa* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 130-5; DeRoche, 'Asserting African Agency: Kenneth Kaunda and the USA, 1964-1980', *Diplomatic History* 40:5 (2016): 988-993. Carter also welcomed at the White House the leaders of Tanzania and Nigeria. In Mitchell's thorough analysis of Carter's policy in Africa, particularly in regard to the Rhodesian negotiations, Botswana plays a marginal role, see Mitchell, *Jimmy Carter in Africa*, 310, 330.

<sup>483</sup> Muravchik, *The Uncertain Crusade*, xix, 6.

Relations between Botswana and America were not seriously harmed, but as reported by Norland, Gaborone realised the US associated greater importance to other members of the Frontline States in securing stability in Southern Africa.<sup>484</sup> Regardless of the model for human rights Botswana offered the region, the Carter administration failed to take full advantage of its links with Botswana and its efforts to promote peaceful change. Whilst Carter would promote human rights far more than Nixon and Ford, from Botswana's standpoint, there was not necessarily an equivalent upsurge in what the Americans were prepared to offer the country.

USAID figures reveal America increased its overall aid to Botswana under the Carter Administration, in a period where the country needed greater resources to accommodate increasing inflows of refugees.<sup>485</sup> To a degree, the rise in US assistance to Seretse's government reflected the growing usefulness of Botswana's strong human rights record after the inauguration of Carter in 1977. Patricia Derian, the Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, was scheduled to arrive in Botswana in March 1979. Her draft speech, set for delivery at Trinity Church, Gaborone, was to have praised Botswana's human rights record, and announce a special development grant for the country based on its shared commitment to liberal-democracy and the UDHR. Unluckily, due to physical illness while in South Africa, her trip was cancelled just days before her scheduled arrival.<sup>486</sup> Nonetheless, compared with earlier administrations, the new commitments were too modest to reflect a substantial elevation in interest or importance for Botswana in US foreign policy, especially compared to the Nixon administration's stated hopes for the territory's wider role.

Seretse was also repeatedly denied his requests for military aid after the creation of the Botswana Defence Force (BDF) in March 1977. Young and Moose rejected the President's plea in person on their visit to the territory. In response, L. J. Legwaila, an advisor

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<sup>484</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1978STATE149240, Department of State to Embassy Gaborone, 12 June 1978. In retrospect, Norland claims Botswana's example encouraged and inspired the Carter administration, a viewpoint that contradicts his private observations of apathy and indifference at the time. See Norland, interview by Kennedy, 15 December 1992, ADST, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, <http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Norland,%20Donald.toc.pdf>, viewed 20 April 2016.

<sup>485</sup> USAID, 'U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants: Obligations and Loan Authorizations'.

<sup>486</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1979STATE054826, Department of State to Consulate Cape Town, 6 March 1979; NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1979CAPET00502, Embassy Cape Town to Department of State, 8 March 1979; Norland, 'A New Era for Human Rights', 90.

to the President, saw greater ramifications for American values around the world. The US should help 'those who share its commitment to democracy and respect for human rights', Legwaila admonished, or 'we will wake up one morning and find we don't exist'. Seretse even suggested it was possibly a mistake for Botswana to have affiliated itself with democratic countries like the US, as the state 'attached [itself] to those who are not interested' and is 'taken for granted'. The President was irritated by America's contradictory policy, whereby 'turbulent states get assistance from the US and Western countries and all we get is a pat on the back'.<sup>487</sup> In the face of such rejections, Botswana's non-aligned status allowed it to accept security assistance from the PRC in 1976 and the Soviet Union in 1981.<sup>488</sup> The US would not deliver significant military aid in Seretse's lifetime.<sup>489</sup>

For Gaborone, the quality of the support provided still did not adequately reward the country's human rights record.<sup>490</sup> The leadership's frustrations were expressed by Norland in a scathing telegram to the State Department in June 1978, under the sarcastic subject heading of 'how to earn the disaffection of friends and enhance relations with adversaries'. The Ambassador pointed out several faults in America's donor packages to Botswana, describing an overall reluctance to take up projects, a slow and tentative rollout of programmes, and bureaucratic inflexibility in addressing immediate concerns, particularly the refugee crisis. Whilst the US continued to be seen favourably, Norland noted how the overall image of the

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<sup>487</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1978GABORO03832, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 5 December 1978.

<sup>488</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1976STATE313047, Secretary of State to US Delegation Secretary, 30 December 1976; Director of Central Intelligence, 'Soviet Policies in Southern Africa: National Intelligence Estimate', February 1985, Central Intelligence Agency, [https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC\\_0000681977.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000681977.pdf), viewed 23 September 2015; Director of Central Intelligence, 'The Soviet Challenge to US Security Interests: National Intelligence Estimate', 10 August 1982, Central Intelligence Agency, [https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC\\_0000268223.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000268223.pdf), viewed 23 September 2015. Botswana was dismayed by the poor quality of the supplies from the East and remained deeply sceptical of the intentions of Communist governments. See Taylor, 'The "Captive States" of Southern Africa and China: The PRC and Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland', *The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 35:2 (1997): 81-2; TNA CAB 133/517, 'Botswana/Lesotho/Swaziland: Brief by Foreign and Commonwealth Office', 18 September 1981; National Intelligence Council, 'The US-Soviet Competition for Influence in the Third World: How the LDCs Play It', April 1982, Central Intelligence Agency, [http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document\\_conversions/89801/DOC\\_0000273391.pdf](http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0000273391.pdf), viewed 23 September 2015.

<sup>489</sup> Dale, 'The Creation and Use of the Botswana Defence Force', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 73:290 (1984): 225; Dale, 'The Politics of National Security in Botswana: 1900-1990', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 12:1 (1993): 47; Zaffiro, 'The U.S. and Botswana in the 1990s', 24; Lewis Jr. (ed), *Quett Ketumile Joni Masire*, 298-9.

<sup>490</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1979GABORO01194, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 6 April 1979; NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1979GABORO00878, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 13 March 1979.

American government had deteriorated due to 'sluggishness, unresponsiveness and even negativism toward many conventional projects'. Botswana was treated as no more of a priority than countries with inferior human rights records, and less demanding economic and political concerns.<sup>491</sup> After continually listing a range of methods for recognising Botswana's human rights record, including the visit of high level officials, and the delivery of films to promote democratic life and the rights of individuals, these suggestions had 'fallen on deaf ears'.<sup>492</sup> Carter's contribution to the state which, by his administration's criteria, held the finest human rights record in Africa was not fully commensurate with his crusading rhetoric on the subject.

Notwithstanding America's continued cooperation with Botswana over the decades, the US had abandoned the pretension of using the country as either a transformative influence or a bridge to Africa by the mid to late 1970s. This was well before the US had maximised all possible routes of aid and support. It was also at a time when the importance of Botswana's existence was at its highest point, given the deterioration of the region to greater racial conflict, political instability, and human suffering. There were substantial rewards for Botswana in using human rights to attract American assistance, but the US was unwilling to fully expand upon their symbolic links. To do so would have been to go well beyond America's strategic interests, an act it was ultimately unwilling to do in this case. For two states that had enshrined human rights as hallmarks of their foreign policy, where expectations for a productive partnership could be reasonably placed quite high, their cooperation was somewhat underwhelming.

In Carter's experience, from a position of great geopolitical power, Cold War and national security imperatives often required his administration to deviate from his human rights idealism. In Seretse's experience, from a position of insecurity, a commitment to international standards of human rights offered a means to attract help from more powerful

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<sup>491</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1978GABORO01773, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 12 June 1978. See also NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1977GABORO00774, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 31 March 1977; NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1978GABORO00255, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 1 February 1978; NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1975GABORO00786, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 13 June 1975.

<sup>492</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1978STATE320595, Department of State to USCINCEUR Vaihingen, 21 December 1978; NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1978GABORO00812, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 21 March 1978.

allies. Jensen, in his study of Jamaica, notes how human rights initiatives can become ‘a survival strategy for the postcolonial world’ in overcoming political and economic predicaments.<sup>493</sup> Far from just wishful idealism, Botswana’s moralism was a practical method of attaining vital external aid and support. Both Botswana and the US were realist in their mindset, but they differed in the extent that they saw the strategic utility of human rights for their objectives in Southern Africa. On the one hand, the US *could* afford not to duly reward Botswana to the degree its record deserved, on the other hand, Botswana *could not* afford to fail its internationalist values. While Patricia Derian’s absence from Trinity Church could be excused for ill health, there were times when the superpower was not the most devoted worshipper on the altar of international human rights, and when a Third World state like Botswana could instead hold the chalice.

### Conclusion

Botswana insisted its model for non-racial democracy would influence its neighbours, but it ultimately persuaded more effectively those in the West, like the US, to offer psychological encouragement and material aid. In the first half of the 1970s, the US joined Seretse’s struggle to peacefully undermine the credibility of white minority regimes. By the second half of the decade, Seretse shifted to a defensive posture where the US gave aid to help an island of liberal-democracy and non-racial citizenship survive a period of crisis. This was the point when Botswana reached the maximal benefit of its human rights idealism. As these investments bought the US a stake in the success and sustainability of Botswana, it was hoped to boost America’s image on the continent. The Americans missed numerous opportunities to reward Botswana’s human rights record, viewing such action to be beyond what was required for their strategic objectives. Any lost potential in their symbolic connection was less of a problem for Botswana, as a country that succeeded in surviving as a state and attaining relative prosperity, than the US, as a superpower that continually failed to build greater trust within the OAU. The US struggled to maintain an appropriate balance between its relations with independent Africa and the white minority regimes. Seretse’s government confronted the same challenge, as the next chapter will show, where the stakes of failure were much higher. Botswana’s example for non-racial democracy was inspiring for American policy-makers who identified with a familiar foundational narrative, and saw a way to advance their own objectives in the process, but without a willingness to contribute much

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<sup>493</sup> Jensen, *The Making of International Human Rights*, 85.



further. Seretse introduced a new model for America to promote human rights in the world, not by punishing violators, but rewarding high performers. As a non-Western state that relied on human rights as a lifeline, Botswana offered a lesson to the US on how such values could align with hard-headed realism.

### **'Differences in ideology must not preclude unity': Botswana's Post-Independence Movement for Self-Determination**

Botswana's survival was contingent on having friendly links with the OAU and amicable relations with white minority regimes. The same party that opposed radical anti-colonialism before independence was, once in government, required to assert its autonomy against intimidation from South Africa and Rhodesia, while establishing its pro-liberation credentials. Botswana needed to play the role of a high-wire walker, providing sufficient weight toward two often counterpoised sides, whereby the risk of overbalancing in either direction brought grave danger. For African nationalists, Botswana accommodated refugees and offered vocal support to freedom fighters. For surrounding regimes, it continued its economic cooperation and refused to allow liberation forces to use its territory as a base for operations. At independence, the Democratic Party was unwelcome amongst members of the OAU, as it was perceived as a neo-colonialist outfit of the British and a satellite state of apartheid. The early rapport developed with Zambia and Tanzania was crucial for authenticating Botswana's status as a genuine post-colonial African state, committed to eliminating colonialism and racialism in Africa. These links were established despite their contrary philosophies on the importance of political and civil rights. Botswana's idealism on individual human rights was sufficient to win support in the US, as shown in the previous chapter, but not on its own continent. Seretse's government eventually attained respect among fellow Africans for its legitimacy as a supporter of national self-determination, whereby violence was deemed to be an understandable recourse for those denied this collective right. While some scholars see colonial liberation and individual human rights as mutually exclusive ideals, Botswana found legitimacy in both columns out of strategic necessity.

### **'Between the Scylla of Black Africa and the Charybdis of South Africa': Botswana's High-Wire Walk between White Minority Regimes and African Nationalists**

Botswana was compelled to play the role of a funambulist. The country was geographically positioned as a landlocked state in Southern Africa, dependent on the cooperation of neighbouring white minority regimes, whilst hoping to gain and maintain political acceptance amongst the majority-ruled states further north. There was an imperative to preserve sovereignty at home, against threats to territorial integrity and economic viability, as well as a need to have their independence recognised amongst OAU members. These objectives were equally indispensable, but far from easily compatible. As observers, the British recognised the dangerous balancing act demanded of Gaborone. Anderson observed Botswana had no

other choice but to steer 'between the Scylla of Black Africa and the Charybdis of South Africa'.<sup>494</sup> The most critical factor for Botswana to confront was its reliance on South Africa: in trade, as a market for exports and a source of supply for essential goods; in key services, such as transport and communication links; in employment, serving as an outlet for a large portion of Botswana's labour force, as well as bringing skilled and unskilled manpower; in economic institutions, through the operation of a customs union and, until 1976, a monetary union; in agriculture, operating a marketing organisation for the sale of commodities; and in private investment.<sup>495</sup> Excess collaboration with either the white minority regimes, or the forces working against them internally and externally, risked isolating Botswana from one of these critical sources of cooperation, in economic or political terms respectively.<sup>496</sup>

As a result, the apartheid regime was in a powerful position to exert influence over Botswana. Halpern reported on the quiet menace carried by Dr. Hilgard Muller, the South African Minister of Foreign Affairs, as a guest to the independence celebrations in September 1966. '[H]e carried...a weapon as deadly as any used by James Bond or The Men from UNCLE – the weapon of economic hostility', as Halpern wrote, through the 'silencer of professed friendship'. Pretoria held the threat that this 'silencer' could be removed at any time depending on the foreign policy pursued by Seretse's government.<sup>497</sup> In considering more serious retaliation than an economic blockade, South Africa merely had to cross a 'Grass Curtain' to overrun the territory.<sup>498</sup> Rhodesia constituted the most constant source of incursions in the late 1970s, and South African forces would not make their most lethal interventions until the 1980s.<sup>499</sup> However, both before and after independence, the apartheid regime regularly carried out operations to pursue and assassinate suspected dissidents in the

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<sup>494</sup> TNA FCO 45/818, Anderson, 'Leadership in Botswana', report sent to Wilson, April 1971; TNA FCO 45/1102, Anderson to Moore, 10 February 1972. The US had a similar analysis, see NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1976GABORO02291, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 14 December 1976.

<sup>495</sup> DBB 4:1, 'Botswana Talking Points', briefing papers for Bolen, 1974. See also P. M. Landell-Mills, 'The 1969 Southern African Customs Union Agreement', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 9:2 (1971): 269, 279-80; Rhodie, *The Third Africa*, 45-7.

<sup>496</sup> Lewis Jr. (ed), *Quett Ketumile Joni Masire*, 246, 250; TNA FCO 45/1890, Seretse, address to Democratic Party conference, 16 April 1976.

<sup>497</sup> SHL ICS 28/2/D/15, Halpern, 'South Africa and Botswana and Lesotho', no date. See also Lewis Jr. (ed), *Quett Ketumile Joni Masire*, 251.

<sup>498</sup> TNA CO 1048/406, Thomas, 'Bechuanaland: Tomorrow's Trouble-Spot', *Yorkshire Post*, 23 November 1964.

<sup>499</sup> For a firsthand account of an abduction by Rhodesian security forces in Botswana, see Benjamin Ramotse, 'Operation Springtime: We Have Two in the Bag', *Southern Africa* 3:9 (1970), African Activist Archive, [http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document\\_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-A06](http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-A06), viewed 10 May 2016.

territory.<sup>500</sup> To avoid an escalation in hostility, the government preferred to overlook many of these illegal entries.<sup>501</sup> Gaborone's attitude was one of pragmatism, realism, and open acceptance of their situation. 'We cannot pick up our vast country', Seretse affirmed, and place 'it on some more comfortable portion of the map'.<sup>502</sup> At the Non-Aligned Conference in Lusaka, Zambia, in September 1970, the President acknowledged and appealed for acceptance of the boundaries for policy-making in Botswana. The government did not lack a concern for the plight of the liberation movements, but a lack of room to manoeuvre toward their common objective of spreading majority rule throughout the region.<sup>503</sup>

The government's pragmatism did not necessarily lead to an absence of integrity or autonomy. Its dealings with South Africa were not permitted to come at the cost of the country's self-respect, value system, or way of life.<sup>504</sup> Despite Botswana's vulnerability, Seretse stressed 'we are not prepared to sell our souls'. Any links between the two would only be those essential for the survival of the state.<sup>505</sup> Limits were set for their economic cooperation, resulting in the refusal of direct aid from South Africa. This was a policy more defiant than some independent African states, including Malawi.<sup>506</sup> Even before the government attracted greater assistance from the US and other Western sources, in October 1966, Seretse refused South Africa's offers. 'Batswana are not desperate beggars', the President enunciated, as 'we would prefer to tighten our belts and try to weather any storms' than to consider such an option.<sup>507</sup> Seretse also rejected South Africa's 'outward policy' of

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<sup>500</sup> DBB 4:4, memorandum of conversation between P. L. Steenkamp and Bolen, 17 July 1975; NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1977USUNN04106, US Mission USUN to Department of State, 27 October 1977; Mgadla, 'A Good Measure of Sacrifice'.

<sup>501</sup> Samuel B. Thomsen, interview by Kennedy, 26 August 1966, ADST, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, <http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Thomsen,%20Samuel%20B.toc.pdf>, viewed 9 December 2015.

<sup>502</sup> TNA FCO 45/439, Seretse, 'Botswana and Southern Africa', address to Foreign Policy Society, 13 November 1970. See also TNA FCO 45/817, Seretse, 'A People's Progress', address to National Assembly, 3 December 1971.

<sup>503</sup> Seretse, 'Botswana's Policy of Non-Alignment', 8-10 September 1970 in *Non-Aligned Conference: Lusaka, 1970* (Gaborone: Botswana Information Services, 1970), 2-3.

<sup>504</sup> TNA FCO 45/439, Seretse, 'Botswana and Southern Africa', address to Foreign Policy Society, 13 November 1970; Keith P. McCormick, interview by Kennedy, 20 July 2000, ADST, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, <http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/McCormick,%20Keith%20P.toc.pdf>, viewed 9 December 2015.

<sup>505</sup> TNA FCO 45/1272, Seretse, speech in reply to Nyerere, 28 August 1973. See also TNA FCO 45/1698, 'Botswana: Nine Years After', *Africa Survey*, November 1975.

<sup>506</sup> RHL MMS Afr. s. 1681, Rolfe, 'Developing Mineral-Based Wealth', *Financial Times*, 10 August 1971. See also Irwin, *Gordian Knot*, 159-62.

<sup>507</sup> Seretse, 'Presidential Address to the First Meeting of the First Session of the First National Assembly', 6 October 1966 in Carter and Morgan (eds), *From the Frontline*, 14-5. However, Botswana acquired revenues from the Customs Union with South Africa and accepted some modest forms of technical assistance in health, education, and animal husbandry. See Jones, *Aid and Development in Southern Africa*, 27; Dale, *The Racial Component of Botswana's Foreign Policy* (Denver: University of Denver 1971), 14.

engagement with the international community. He refused Pretoria's outreaches without a serious commitment to internal reform and encouraged Western nations to join him.<sup>508</sup>

Whilst the prospect of South African aid offered short-term development, it would only increase Botswana's dependency in the long-term, and deflate its moral prestige, an asset required to obtain economic assistance in North America and Western Europe.<sup>509</sup>

There were also narrow parameters outlined for their cooperation with the apartheid regime. Botswana could exercise a symbolic detachment to negate the material cooperation it could not readily do without. Gaborone refused to exchange representatives with South Africa until it could promise Botswana's diplomats would be treated on equal terms with the white population when staying in the country.<sup>510</sup> Botswana's policy of coexistence resulted in a delicate continuation of both political tolerance, acknowledging their differences, and essential economic accommodation, with notable reservations. Yet, as long as the apartheid regime remained in power, and the liberation struggle continued, the government's poise in this high-wire walk could not offer anything more than indefinite stability.<sup>511</sup> The art of funambulism continually brought danger, without much hope of immediate consolidation, as even a successful equilibrium threatened to collapse after an unfortunate misstep.

In danger to their geographic and economic circumstances, Botswana's political identity was affiliated with the very state and non-state entities in Africa that conflicted with their more powerful neighbours. While South Africa could impose severe economic penalties or even physical invasion, an inability to find sympathy from independent Africa risked bringing about virtually the same outcome. Peter Kerr, the Parliamentary Under Secretary for the Foreign Office, was told of Botswana's predicament whilst meeting the President on his

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<sup>508</sup> Irwin mentions B. J. Vorster, the Prime Minister of South Africa, sought to build greater ties with the HCTs, including a customs arrangement. Yet, he fails to mention Botswana strongly rejected South Africa's 'outward policy' without political change. On this issue, Botswana should not be put in the same category as Zambia or Malawi. See Irwin, *Gordian Knot*, 159, 161; Seretse, *Africa and America in the Seventies: Address by his Excellency the President of the Republic of Botswana, Sir Seretse Khama to the Third Annual Conference of the African-American Dialogues, Lagos, March 1971* (Gaborone: The Government Printer, 1971), 8-9; TNA FCO 36/757, Seretse, Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Singapore, 20 January 1971. Eschel Rhoodie, South Africa's Secretary of the Department of Information, was overly optimistic in anticipating further diplomatic engagement with Botswana, and a potential 'Commonwealth' of black and white states in the region. See Rhoodie, *The Third Africa*, 38-9, 46-7, 225.

<sup>509</sup> TNA FCO 45/439, Seretse, 'Botswana and Southern Africa', address to Foreign Policy Society, 13 November 1970.

<sup>510</sup> BNARS BNB 1392, Seretse, 'Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations', September 1969.

<sup>511</sup> TNA FCO 45/1269, British High Commissioner to Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 'Botswana: Annual Review for 1972', 8 January 1973.

visit to the territory in January 1972. 'Botswana's geographical situation made her vulnerable', Seretse confessed, 'not so much owing to pressures from South Africa as pressures from the African states to the north'.<sup>512</sup> Without the sympathy of the mass voting bloc of OAU members, who backed liberation groups in Southern Africa, Botswana could count on only limited support in international forums to launch an effective protest and stir outrage.<sup>513</sup> Gaborone also required the understanding of freedom fighters and their respect for the policies of the government. The movements for majority rule had to appreciate Botswana may assist in some capacity, but could not be expected to undermine their own security in the process.<sup>514</sup>

The most conspicuous and straightforward manner for Botswana to align itself with the OAU was to make its views on minority rule well-known.<sup>515</sup> In both domestic and international settings, high-level ministers frequently expressed their criticism of racist philosophies and political systems. Licenced by the reality of non-racism in Botswana, Seretse aimed to ensure '[t]he world knows where we stand vis-à-vis the evil policy of apartheid'. 'We are not prepared to keep quiet', the President made clear, 'while the dignity of millions of our African brothers and sisters is denigrated by people who have elevated the evil doctrine of white supremacy to the level of dogma'.<sup>516</sup> Far from pandering to their more powerful neighbour, Botswana underlined South Africa's lack of moral supremacy. Seretse called for the end of apartheid by way of an 'extension of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms to all the people of South Africa'.<sup>517</sup> The government was incurring a degree of risk through such verbal assaults. Anderson regarded the outbursts as like Botswana 'cutting off her nose to spite her face' by provoking South African investors and buyers.<sup>518</sup> Dr. Muller personally told Seretse he interpreted Botswana's posture as an

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<sup>512</sup> TNA FCO 45/1079, record of conversation between Kerr and Seretse, 20 January 1972.

<sup>513</sup> SHL ICS 28/2/D/14, Halpern, 'Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland', no date.

<sup>514</sup> Moutlakgola Nwako, statement at Preparatory Conference of Non-Aligned Countries at Dar es Salaam, 13-17 April 1970 in *Non-Aligned Conference*, 12-6.

<sup>515</sup> TNA FCO 45/704, record of conversation between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and Seretse, 6 November 1970; Seretse, 'Statement on Lusaka Manifesto at the OAU Summit Conference, Addis Ababa', 6-9 September 1969, in Carter and Morgan (eds), *From the Frontline*, 52-3.

<sup>516</sup> Seretse, speech given at a banquet in his honour by the PRC in Peking, 27 June 1976 in *Speeches*, 29. See also Seretse, 'The Southern African Political Crisis in Perspective', address to Oxford University's African Society, 4 June 1976 in *Speeches*, 11; Seretse, speech given at a banquet given in his honour by Shri Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed of the Federal Republic of India, 4 April 1976 in *Speeches*, 2-3; TNA FCO 105/346, Archibald Mogwe, statement to United Nations General Assembly, 30 September 1980.

<sup>517</sup> TNA FCO 45/1698, Seretse, address to National Assembly, 24 November 1975. See also BNARS BNB 1164, Seretse, 'Unity in Diversity', speech to welcome Kenneth Kaunda, 21 May 1968.

<sup>518</sup> FCO 45/1270, Anderson to Foster, 8 February 1973.

intrusion upon South Africa's domestic affairs.<sup>519</sup> However, for the President, Botswana's vocal disapproval was an expression of sovereignty.<sup>520</sup> Gaborone saw itself as having the right to develop its values under a philosophy of non-racialism, as well as the entitlement to broadcast this point of difference with its neighbours.

In terms of their practical assistance to those oppressed in South Africa, Botswana's policy contained a mixture of generosity for refugees and stringency toward active guerrilla operations. Gaborone established strict criteria for the types of individuals permitted in the territory and the forms of activity they could engage in. In moralistic language, the President argued the free countries of the world had a duty to assist those who were without freedom. By granting asylum to people fleeing persecution, the government took a further step to assert their independence, facing intimidation on this issue from the white minority regimes. Such a policy made Botswana more economically vulnerable, with a further drain on resources needed for development, and physically exposed, as increasing amounts of anti-apartheid activists arrived while facing the threat of abduction by external forces.<sup>521</sup> However, Botswana was obligated to maintain its open-door policy, Seretse affirmed, because 'freedom-loving humanity has willingly taken upon itself, through the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, the humanitarian task of caring for those who are still fighting for their freedom'.<sup>522</sup> To a large extent, the policy matched the rhetoric. Consistent with the open approach of the colonial authority, from 1963 to 1981, Botswana received an average of around 6,000 refugees per year from across the region.<sup>523</sup> This included a large spike in the late 1970s mainly as a result of the Rhodesian Bush War, including 12,000 refugees arriving between January 1975 to February 1977, with estimates of as many as 30,000 having either resided in or transmitted through the territory in the late 1970s.<sup>524</sup> The 'open door' attitude was highly credited internationally. After investigations by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and International Red Cross, in the footsteps of a laudable catalogue of recipients,

<sup>519</sup> FCO 45/1096, summary of record of conversation between Seretse and Foster, 27 October 1972.

<sup>520</sup> TNA FCO 45/118, Seretse, address to National Assembly, 17 November 1969.

<sup>521</sup> TNA FCO 45/111, Seretse, address to National Assembly, 9 December 1968; NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1977GABORO00836, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 12 April 1977.

<sup>522</sup> Seretse, 'Speech Addressing the Sixteenth Annual Conference of the Botswana Democratic Party at Mochudi', 9 April 1977 in Carter and Morgan (eds), *From the Frontline*, 257-8. See also BNARS BNB 1164, Seretse, 'Unity in Diversity', speech to welcome Kaunda, 21 May 1968.

<sup>523</sup> Dale, *Botswana's Search for Autonomy in Southern Africa*, 44-5.

<sup>524</sup> BNARS MICRO 588, United Nations Security Council, 'Assistance to Botswana', March 1977; Michael Niemann, 'Diamonds Are a State's Best Friend: Botswana's Foreign Policy in Southern Africa', *Africa Today* 40:1 (1993): 31; Osei-Hwedie, 'The Role of Botswana in the Liberation of Southern Africa since 1966', 429-30.

notably Eleanor Roosevelt, Seretse won the Nansen Award in May 1978 for recognition of his services to victims of racial discrimination.<sup>525</sup>

If refugees were to be welcomed, active freedom fighters were not. The government may have supported the ultimate objective of removing its oppressive neighbours from power, but unlike the policy of Zambia or Tanzania, the use of the country for subversive purposes was prohibited. Their fear was that the creation of a base for guerrilla operations would present an obvious target for forceful retaliation by South African or Rhodesian forces. Botswana's territorial integrity was inversely correlated to the level of threat perceived from the white minority regimes.<sup>526</sup> The potential for the territory to become a 'launchpad' or 'spring-board' for freedom fighters risked dragging Botswana into a state of warfare it could neither control nor succeed in. The government did not establish an army, the Botswana Defence Force, until March 1977 as a result of growing incursions from participants in the Rhodesian Bush War.<sup>527</sup> Botswana's emphasis on peace and neutrality was itself a form of defence, providing South Africa with very little excuse to launch raids, where they would face international ignominy for any attack.

Violent incursions from South Africa would be less difficult to justify, in the eyes of the global community, under the pretext of self-defence or a supposed act to 'protect' Botswana.<sup>528</sup> In a continuation of the colonial authority's 1963 Prevention of Violence Abroad Act, the President warned '[a]ny political refugees who behave in this manner will do so at their own peril'.<sup>529</sup> If found, suspected guerrillas could be denied entry, tried, imprisoned, and deported.<sup>530</sup> The government's argument was premised on the view that

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<sup>525</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1978STATE314660, Department of State to Embassy Gaborone, 14 December 1978; BNARS BNB 3899, Seretse, acceptance speech at The Nansen Award Ceremony in Geneva, 22 May 1978.

<sup>526</sup> Dale, 'The Racial Component of Botswana's Foreign Policy', 12.

<sup>527</sup> The President originally argued Botswana's weakness was a moral strength, but eventually acknowledged this did not provide security in times of crisis. See Seretse, address to the AAI Board of Trustees, 10 June 1976 in *Speeches*, 7. See also Gerald R. Ford, Presidential Library and Museum, Memoranda of Conversations - Ford Administration, Box 19, 'Memorandum of Conversation', 9 June 1976.

<sup>528</sup> TNA FCO 31/21, record of conversation between the Commonwealth Secretary and Masire, 9 October 1967; Lewis Jr. (ed), *Quett Ketumile Joni Masire*, 251.

<sup>529</sup> Seretse, 'Presidential Address to the First Meeting of the First Session of the First National Assembly', 6 October 1966 in Carter and Morgan (eds), *From the Frontline*, 15-6; Dale, 'The Politics of National Security in Botswana: 1900-1990', 46.

<sup>530</sup> Dale, 'The Implications of Botswana-South African Relations for American Foreign Policy', 11; Osei-Hwedie, 'The Role of Botswana', 428-9; Makgala, 'The BNF and BDP's "Fight" for the Attention of the ANC, 1912-2004: A Historical Perspective', *Botswana Notes and Records* 38 (2006): 119-20. By the mid-1970s, Botswana increasingly ignored the existence of guerrillas within its territory. See Morapedi, 'The Dilemmas of Liberation in Southern Africa', 83. There was also more informal assistance provided to freedom fighters from non-



endangering Botswana's independence would not result in greater freedoms for those currently oppressed in the region.<sup>531</sup> A further inhibition for Botswana in their participation in the anti-apartheid movement was their stance on sanctions. Given their economic dependence, while Gaborone would support the arms embargo, it could not so readily advocate or participate in economically isolating the apartheid regime.<sup>532</sup> On the one hand, Botswana exercised its sovereignty in declining the use of its land as a base for insurrection abroad, but on the other hand, the pressure from South Africa on this issue constrained its options so no other policy was viable, exemplifying the limits of that sovereignty. Nonetheless, through the sheer act of survival, by way of a pragmatic policy, Botswana could sustain its right to national self-determination. On both sides of the high-wire, Botswana offered an agreeable level of accommodation, whilst sustaining some key areas of defiance and a level of autonomy.

### **'Poetic irony' – Botswana's Quest for Legitimacy within the OAU**

Botswana's ability to gain acceptance amongst OAU members depended upon the fostering of a sense of African unity and new bilateral links on the continent. Given the Democratic Party's initial unpopularity in Africa at independence these tasks required skilful diplomacy and the support of key sponsors within the OAU. As detailed in the first chapter, the People's Party was the first to establish links with numerous African countries and nationalist organisations. The party's negative propaganda about the Democratic Party, as a neo-colonialist outfit controlled by an oppressive British administration, led to scepticism on the continent for Bechuanaland's first elected government. In October 1965, the winning parties of all the HCTs were humiliated at an OAU meeting in Accra, Ghana. Diallo Telli, the first Secretary General of the OAU, made a speech conveying his concern 'that only those political parties which favour cooperation with South Africa have succeeded in the elections...with help that can easily be surmised'. Whilst committing the OAU to safeguard their territorial integrity and calling for international aid, Telli condemned the conduct of the 'secret' elections in the HCTs.<sup>533</sup> A joint memorandum was released by the representatives of

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governmental sources, including through traditional leaders. See Louisa Cantwell, 'Chiefly Power in a Frontline State: Kgosi Linchwe II, the Bakgatla and Botswana in the South African Liberation Struggle, 1948-1994', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 41:2 (2015): 255-72.

<sup>531</sup> BNARS BNB 2464, Democratic Party election manifesto, 1974.

<sup>532</sup> Nwako, statement at Preparatory Conference of Non-Aligned Countries in *Non-Aligned Conference*, 15; TNA FCO 45/433, Seretse, 'Botswana's Foreign Policy', address to Democratic Party conference, 28 March 1970.

<sup>533</sup> TNA DO 216/50, Commonwealth Relations Office to Embassy Pretoria, 3 November 1965. See also TNA PREM 11/4603, Embassy Cairo to Foreign Office, 22 July 1964. In a further incident, during the 1970 Budget Session of the OAU in Addis Ababa, Mogwe was offended by the Secretary General's Progress Report,

the three accused parties, rebuking the ‘alarmingly untrue and provocative statement’ and reaffirming their opposition to the policies of apartheid as ‘uncivilised and contradictory to fundamental Human Rights’. Particular offence was taken at the call by Telli for the OAU to help ‘certain leaders in these territories’ with a more antagonistic attitude towards South Africa, which was interpreted as instructing members to aid the opposition parties in overthrowing the elected governments. The memorandum noted the ‘poetic irony’ of an organisation committed to African unity seeking to foster disunity in the HCTs.<sup>534</sup> The Secretary General did not suggest the new governments were unwelcome within the OAU, but he made it clear they had much to prove in terms of their credentials as supporters of African objectives in Southern Africa.

In its effort to acquire sympathy from OAU members, Botswana characterised its foreign policy as based on common sense. Gaborone presented its standpoint as rational and realistic, both for Botswana’s wellbeing and the objectives of the liberation struggle. Failure for Botswana as a state would be a setback for its own African population, but also for the movement against apartheid, as an attractive model for majority rule. As early as September 1967, the government’s dilemma was explained at an OAU meeting in Kinshasa, Congo. Moutlakgola Nwako, Botswana’s Minister of State, described the problems caused by the illegal entry of freedom fighters into their territory. The OAU had an obligation, he argued, ‘to see that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Botswana should not be violated’. Some concerns were raised over the treatment of guerrillas, but he received an encouraging response amongst the delegates.<sup>535</sup> The need to uphold the independence of Botswana was a priority all OAU members could relate to, and they were not so easily willing to risk undermining it in fear of setting a dangerous precedent for all. In the same month, Seretse disclosed to John Gandee, the British High Commissioner, he was confident the forces of the liberation movement had been ordered at their highest level to avoid causing difficulties for Botswana. Whether all guerrillas would obey these instructions was less certain.<sup>536</sup>

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including an implicit accusation Botswana had underlying sympathies for apartheid and was actively opposed to African liberation groups. TNA FCO 45/437, Anderson to Wilson, 16 March 1970.

<sup>534</sup> TNA DO 216/50, Masire, A. S. Mohale, and Makhosini Dlamini, ‘Joint Memorandum by the Leaders of the Elected Governments of Bechuanaland, Basotoland [sic] and Swaziland to the Heads of African States in Accra’, 25 October 1965. See also TNA DO 216/50, Embassy Accra to Commonwealth Relations Office, 26 October 1965; Lewis Jr. (ed), *Quett Ketumile Joni Masire*, 112.

<sup>535</sup> SHL ICS 28/5/A/27, Jack Spence, ‘Recent Developments in Botswana’, discussion paper for the Southern Africa Study Group, 10 February 1970. See also TNA FCO 31/19, British High Commissioner to the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs, ‘Botswana: The First Year’, 13 November 1967; TNA FCO 31/21, record of conversation between the Commonwealth Secretary and Masire, 9 October 1967.

<sup>536</sup> TNA FCO 31/21, notes on talks between British High Commission and Seretse, 14 September 1967.

In seeking legitimacy for Gaborone's policy against directly assisting freedom fighters, a significant breakthrough was found in the Lusaka Manifesto, drafted at a Summit of East and Central African States in April 1969. Whilst advocating for the support of the liberation struggle, the document recognised how 'the possibility of continuing the struggle through peaceful means varies from one country to another'.<sup>537</sup> Given Botswana's unique position, its obligations were much more restricted than that of other OAU members. The President's eloquent voice in opposition to the injustices of the apartheid regime was appreciated by Nzo Ekwangaki, Secretary General of the OAU, on a visit to the territory in July 1973. 'The Liberation struggle has a military aspect and an economic aspect', Ekwangaki remarked, 'but also a spiritual aspect'. As Botswana's non-racial society was fully mobilised against the doctrines of white supremacy, the Secretary General underscored this element as 'the greatest contribution' the country could make.<sup>538</sup> Not only was the OAU open to defending Botswana's position, but its members were also willing to participate in broader international appeals to secure its territorial integrity, particularly during the escalation of the Rhodesian Bush War. As Botswana launched a complaint to the UN Security Council in January 1977 over increasing incursions, the country found expressions of support from all African representatives.<sup>539</sup> Those without independence in Southern Africa often occupied the most predominant focus of concern within the OAU. Nonetheless, Botswana's sovereignty was eventually respected as an important end in itself, as opposed to a trait to be sacrificed for the mobility of guerrilla forces. Regardless of the political difficulties involved, Botswana's mission to gain acceptance of their foreign policy within the OAU was successful.<sup>540</sup>

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<sup>537</sup> Episcopal Churchmen for South Africa, 'Manifesto on Southern Africa: A Prophetic Appeal from Free Africa', African Activist Archive, [http://kora.matrix.msu.edu/files/50/304/32-130-714-84-african\\_activist\\_archive-a0b5m7-a\\_12419.pdf](http://kora.matrix.msu.edu/files/50/304/32-130-714-84-african_activist_archive-a0b5m7-a_12419.pdf), viewed 5 May 2016. See also Nwako, statement at Preparatory Conference of Non-Aligned Countries in *Non-Aligned Conference*, 12-6.

<sup>538</sup> TNA FCO 45/1272, Nzo Ekwangaki, speech at Gaborone Agricultural and Trade Fair, 13 July 1973.

<sup>539</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1977USUNN00116, US Mission USUN to Department of State, 15 January 1977.

<sup>540</sup> TNA FCO 45/1499, Seretse, interview with Radio Botswana and *Botswana Daily News*, 21 June 1974.



**10** Kenneth Kaunda, Josip Broz Tito, Indira Gandhi, Julius Nyerere, Milton Obote, and Seretse Khama at the Third Non-Aligned Conference in Lusaka, Zambia, September 1970. Courtesy: [juliusnyerere.org](http://juliusnyerere.org).

Botswana's pivot to the north was further consolidated through its advocacy for greater African unity. The national self-determination of all African peoples, the government acknowledged, was tied up with their ability to work together for mutual needs and objectives. The country established much more important economic links with South Africa and received far greater aid from the West.<sup>541</sup> Yet, by the late 1970s, Seretse pursued a role in building upon older multilateral institutions and creating newer mechanisms to further African cooperation. In July 1978, at an OAU summit in Khartoum, Sudan, the President made one of his most outspoken speeches in front of an African audience. 'Our continent is increasingly building up a reputation for instability and chaos', he warned, as it became 'a playground for a growing assortment of extra-continental powers'. For Seretse, it was primarily the role of Africans to safeguard the continent as a whole, with responsibility residing in all states, both individually and collectively. For this purpose, he urged it was vital to rejuvenate the OAU 'to take care of our common interests' and 'the supreme purpose of securing the future of our continent'.<sup>542</sup> The President also played a notable role in the

<sup>541</sup> For example, Botswana's economic links with Kenya were spoken highly of by both governments, but there was very little of substance. See Seretse, *Dr. Moi in Botswana* (Gaborone: Botswana Information Services, 1970); TNA FCO 45/1283, F. D. Milne to Moore, 25 June 1973; TNA FCO 45/1283, 'Botswana – Example of Racial Harmony', *Botswana Daily News*, 25 June 1973.

<sup>542</sup> TNA FCO 65/2139, "'A Continent Reputed for Instability and Chaos" – Khama', *Botswana Daily News*, 26 July 1978. On Botswana's commitment to African unity, see TNA FCO 45/1270, Seretse, 'Independence Day

establishment of the Frontline States in 1970; and the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) in 1980, a precursor to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) established in 1992, an organisation with the aim of furthering economic links throughout the region. However, there were important differences between Botswana and other OAU members in terms of their internal policies. Before their multilateral position was more firmly established within the OAU, Seretse's motion for African unity in diversity was one Botswana had applied much earlier in their bilateral relations with Zambia and Tanzania.<sup>543</sup>

Botswana's most important sponsor amongst OAU members was also its nearest. Zambia, as a fellow landlocked state, empathised with Botswana's difficult geographic and economic conditions. The two countries were connected by only a small column of water, stretching 400-metres on the Zambezi River at Kazungula. Access was provided by a pontoon ferry service, often used by refugees in transit. Zambia was distant from South Africa, thereby allowing President Kenneth Kaunda to adopt a stronger position against the apartheid regime, even to the point of allowing freedom fighters to operate from its territory. Despite their differences, the two countries faced common challenges in attempting to balance their political standpoint with the OAU and their necessary trade links with white minority regimes. The support provided by Kaunda was formally acknowledged at a banquet held in Gaborone on 21 May 1968. Both countries had their own interests to consider but, as Seretse observed, it 'is only a friend who takes pains to appreciate another's problems, attitudes and actions'.<sup>544</sup> Seretse suggested the two nations had mutual trust. They had a commitment to upholding common principles, including the advocacy of national self-determination and practice of non-racialism, when these could be 'sacrificed...on the altar of geographical expediency'. Botswana's ability to sustain its independence was easy to question in 1966, but Zambia was credited by Seretse as one state which did not see it as a 'hostage', 'satellite', or 'client' of South Africa.<sup>545</sup> Kaunda similarly expressed feelings of brotherhood, identifying the two nations as successful examples of racial harmony with values of

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Message to the Nation', 30 September 1973; TNA FCO 45/1096, Seretse, speech to Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU, Rabat, 12 June 1972.

<sup>543</sup> TNA FCO 45/433, Seretse, 'Botswana's Foreign Policy', address to Democratic Party conference, 28 March 1970.

<sup>544</sup> BNARS BNB 1164, Seretse, 'Unity in Diversity', speech to welcome Kaunda, 21 May 1968. See also SHL ICS/5/A/29, British High Commission, notes on Bechuanaland, no date.

<sup>545</sup> Seretse, 'Address on Botswana, Zambia and African Unity', 25 October 1971 in Carter and Morgan (eds), *From the Frontline*, 132. See also SHL PP.BS.BDP, Mainza Chona, speech to Democratic Party conference, 22 April 1973.

‘individual liberty, in Christianity, in the oneness of the human race and in the sanctity of man’.<sup>546</sup> The British High Commission presumed the rapport between the two peoples was minimal outside government and, at least before the construction of the Bot-Zam road, their economic links were not considerable.<sup>547</sup> Regardless, at such an early stage, an ally within the OAU was crucial for Botswana’s ability to establish its recognition as a legitimate African independent state.

Botswana’s relations with Zambia overcame an important underlying hurdle, given an important difference in their ideological standpoints on political liberties. An ability to find coexistence between Botswana and South Africa was more important with such a vast discord in their race relations. Yet, easily overlooked is the level of tolerance needed by government officials to establish links with those in Africa who had less respect for democracy than themselves. Gaborone could not often afford to risk jeopardising their growing acceptance within the OAU by questioning or interfering with the internal policies of fellow members. Nonetheless, there were several occasions when Botswana’s exceptionally strong human rights record threatened to embarrass the government, and their African guests or hosts.

Soon after Kaunda formally announced Zambia would become a one-party state in February 1972, under the United National Independence Party (UNIP), Seretse arrived in April for bilateral talks held at Livingstone. The President was received at the airfield by many UNIP supporters, chanting ‘One Zambia: One Nation: One Leader: Kaunda: One Party State’. Awkwardly, this was followed by a shout of ‘One Botswana: One Nation: One Leader: One Party State’. When corrected by Seretse, the Zambian officials instructed the words be changed to ‘One Botswana: One Nation: *Pula! Pula!*’, inserting the Setswana word for ‘rain’. In private, according to Anderson, Seretse was amused, but disappointed Zambian officials did not understand the differences in their political system or have respect for the President’s long-standing commitment to multi-party democracy.<sup>548</sup> A very similar incident

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<sup>546</sup> SHL PP.BS.BDP, Kaunda, speech to Democratic Party conference, 23 May 1968.

<sup>547</sup> TNA FCO 45/1093, Anderson to S. G. Cook, 18 October 1972; TNA FCO 45/1269, British High Commissioner to Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, ‘Botswana: Annual Review for 1972’, 8 January 1973; SHL ICS 28/5/A/27, Spence, ‘Recent Developments in Botswana’, discussion paper for the Southern Africa Study Group, 10 February 1970. These relations encountered some difficulty in the mid-1970s as Zambia became reluctant to accept refugees from Rhodesia transiting through Botswana. See Morapedi, ‘The Dilemmas of Liberation in Southern Africa’, 73-90.

<sup>548</sup> TNA FCO 45/1096, Anderson to Foster, 25 April 1972.

occurred a year later when Mainza Chona, Zambia's Vice-President, was invited to the Democratic Party's annual conference in Lobatse. Chona explained to the audience the rationale behind the 'one-party democracy', citing a wish to overcome tribal differences and personal rivalries. In response to shouts of 'One Zambia: One Party', the Vice-President encouraged a similar call of 'One Botswana: One Party'. As a sidenote, Chona mentioned Zambia's system may not necessarily be the most appropriate 'medicine' for Botswana.<sup>549</sup> Rather than create a serious disruption in relations by launching an official rebuke, Botswana preferred not to draw attention to their distinct viewpoints on democratic freedoms.



*11 Kenneth Kaunda and Seretse Khama, undated. Courtesy: Mmegi.*

The commitment of Seretse's government to political liberties and individual protections meant its proclamations of having common values with fellow OAU members were very narrow in reality. Botswana was so successful in making itself an example for change amongst its neighbours, to external observers in the West, they showed a uniquely

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<sup>549</sup> SHL PP.BS.BDP, Chona, speech to Democratic Party conference, 22 April 1973; NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1973GABORO00632, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 25 April 1973. Chona was the chairman of the commission to establish a one-party state in Zambia, see Republic of Zambia, *Report of the National Commission on the Establishment of a One-Party Participatory Democracy in Zambia* (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1972), 8, 22.

liberal and progressive pathway for independent Africa also. Whilst Botswana's non-racial democracy seemed to demonstrate how there were no excuses for the lack of greater human rights in Africa, amongst both OAU members and white minority regimes, it was normally only the abuses of the latter that could be mentioned.<sup>550</sup> The government was far too exposed to verbal attacks on its economic cooperation with South Africa to critique other countries with whom it was seeking political support. However, Botswana still had to point out its unique characteristics to aid donors as a genuine believer in human rights protections. The President expressed an understanding for leaderships who adopted different models of government according to their local needs. Nevertheless, without restrictions on the number of parties in the country, Seretse announced, there was much to be proud about the stability, democracy, and economic development of the country. The multi-party system, he crowed, 'produced a political atmosphere that has allowed for peace and progress'.<sup>551</sup> Although the President saw the benefits of greater democratic freedoms within an African context, this was a cause he could not consider pursuing throughout the continent whilst the apartheid regime remained in power.

Elsewhere in the government, there were private denouncements of the lack of political liberties in independent Africa. B. C. Thema, Minister of Education, told Anderson of the commitment of the Democratic Party to maintain a multi-party democracy. The minister 'recoiled instinctively and with apprehension from any idea of a one-party state', citing Zambia as an example. '[A]s long as Botswana was a multi-party state', Thema illustrated, 'people could travel the roads freely and without fear'.<sup>552</sup> In reference to Mozambique, another minister explained to Norland that the one-party state was 'the root of totalitarianism'.<sup>553</sup> In public, such statements would normally be reserved for describing the apartheid system, not the make-up of fellow majority-ruled states. Masire, another critic of the state of democracy in Africa, explained the reason for the lack of open condemnation

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<sup>550</sup> Exceptions include Botswana's questioning of human rights abuses in Uganda and Lesotho. See TNA FCO 105/34, statement by the Government of Botswana, 13 April 1979; DBB 4:4, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 19 July 1975; TNA FCO 45/433, Seretse, 'Botswana's Foreign Policy', address to Democratic Party conference, 28 March 1970.

<sup>551</sup> TNA FCO 45/1698, 'President Sounds Need for Majority Rule', *Botswana Daily News*, 22 May 1975. See also TNA FCO 45/111, Democratic Party conference resolutions, 7 April 1969; TNA FCO 45/111, Seretse, address to Democratic Party conference, 5 April 1969; TNA FCO 45/1496, Eleanor J. Emery to Douglas-Home, 16 January 1974; TNA FCO 45/1496, Emery to James Callaghan, 16 November 1974.

<sup>552</sup> FCO 45/1282, Anderson, report on meeting with B. C. Thema, 24 May 1973.

<sup>553</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79 Electronic Telegrams, 1977GABORO00836, Embassy Gaborone to Secretary of State, 12 April 1977. See also TNA FCO 105/346, Turner to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 14 March 1980.



was its ineffectiveness as a form of persuasion. Quiet diplomacy was preferred, exercising influence privately as a friend, whereas publicly antagonising a fellow leader and their supporters risked causing unnecessary conflict.<sup>554</sup> In addition, as much as Botswana could be concerned about the prevalence of one-party states, these majority-ruled African nations would always be considered as relatively democratic compared to the white minority regimes. The fact of there being a one-party state in Zambia and Tanzania did not prevent Seretse from arguing they could all be successful examples of non-racial democracy and encourage change amongst the racist regimes.<sup>555</sup> Furthermore, any form of open disunity amongst African countries threatened to undermine their mutual goal of liberation in Southern Africa. The Democratic Party's views on political freedoms in Africa remained a considerable point of difference as they developed closer relations with others on the continent. Nevertheless, political interests and strategic concerns dictated that such principles could not be permitted to hamper Botswana's growing political support amongst OAU members.

Botswana's position within the OAU was further entrenched by their backing from Tanzania, despite vast differences in their economic philosophies. Under the leadership of Nyerere, the East African state operated under a one-party state, and pursued a communalist ideology of African Socialism, known as Ujamaa, to shape their economic and social life. The Democratic Party was therefore both geographically and ideologically distant from the governing Tanganyika African National Union (TANU). In the lead up to independence in Botswana, the TANU government facilitated OAU funding to the opposition People's Party.<sup>556</sup> Nyerere sent a letter of congratulations and support to Seretse after his electoral win in March 1965.<sup>557</sup> Regardless, Nyerere also shared widespread doubts over the viability of the territory and expected it would become a Bantustan of South Africa.<sup>558</sup> In the month of Botswana's independence in September 1966, the Tanzanian representative at the UN's Special Committee on Decolonisation affiliated with the views of the People's Party's petitioners and described the Democratic Party as neo-colonialist. The Tanzanian delegation

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<sup>554</sup> Lewis Jr. (ed), *Quett Ketumile Joni Masire*, 295-6.

<sup>555</sup> TNA FCO 45/433, Seretse, 'Botswana's Foreign Policy', address to Democratic Party conference, 28 March 1970.

<sup>556</sup> TNA CO 1048/531, British Intelligence report, July 1963.

<sup>557</sup> TNA DO 185/10, Nyerere to Seretse, 5 March 1965.

<sup>558</sup> Lewis Jr. (ed), *Quett Ketumile Joni Masire*, 267.

believed the British had collaborated with the apartheid regime to suppress the movement for 'real' independence and claimed the People's Party had won a majority of the votes.<sup>559</sup>

However, by March 1967, Nyerere clarified his allegiances, articulating the most repeated statement from an OAU member in defence of Botswana's foreign policy. 'We can ask that they should do everything possible to assert the principle of human dignity', Nyerere affirmed, '[b]ut we should not ask them to commit suicide'.<sup>560</sup> The TANU government therefore recognised the non-racial values under Seretse's leadership and the impossibility of hosting guerrilla operations without the risk of serious economic isolation or physical invasion. Relations were further consolidated in August 1973 during a visit by Seretse to Tanzania. He expressed appreciation for the understanding and sympathy from the Nyerere government, tracing Tanzania's interest as arising from a common set of beliefs and objectives.<sup>561</sup> In Botswana's efforts to establish greater ties with the OAU, Nyerere committed his government to providing 'full support' and 'every assistance in our power'. Nyerere doubted other African leaders, with more secure geographic positions, had been so strong in firmly denouncing apartheid and rejecting South African aid.<sup>562</sup> Unlike Zambia, Botswana's efforts to win support from Tanzania showed a capacity to rapidly change the viewpoints of its sceptics within the OAU.

Similar to Zambia, Botswana's relations with Tanzania showed an ability to overcome vast philosophical differences on human rights and development. Before achieving independence in December 1961, Nyerere was originally an advocate for the protection of

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<sup>559</sup> TNA CO 936/971, 'Draft Report of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples', 16 September 1966, A/AC.109/L.323/Add. 1. On the Special Committee on Decolonisation, see Oliver Turner, "'Finishing the Job": The UN Special Committee on Decolonisation and the Politics of Self-Governance', *Third World Quarterly* 34:7 (2013): 1193-208.

<sup>560</sup> TNA FCO 45/433, Seretse, 'Botswana's Foreign Policy', address to Democratic Party conference, 28 March 1970. See also TNA FCO 45/831, 'Heartfelt Admiration – Tanzanian High Commissioner', *Botswana Daily News*, 25 November 1971; TNA FCO 45/831, Anderson to Moore, 25 November 1971; TNA FCO 45/1102, 'Envoy Pledges to Explore Areas of Cooperation', *Botswana Daily News*, 7 December 1972. One Tanzanian official is reported to have said 'Botswana's main contribution to the freedom movement in Southern Africa should be to survive'. See Frederick Lundahl, 'Thumbing Your Nose at the Giant: The Case of Botswana in Southern African Interstate Relations', *Journal of International and Comparative Studies* 5:3 (1972): 47.

<sup>561</sup> TNA FCO 45/1272, Seretse, speech in reply to Nyerere, 28 August 1973.

<sup>562</sup> TNA FCO 45/1272, Nyerere, speech at banquet given in honour of Seretse, 28 August 1973. See also TNA FCO 45/2246, Commonwealth Secretariat, 'The Frontline States: The Burden of the Liberation Struggle', May 1978. In February 1980, the Tanzanian President described Botswana as 'an example to Africa' and Seretse as 'a man whom it is impossible to watch without respect and admiration'. See Nyerere, 'Forward' in Carter and Morgan (eds), *From the Frontline*, xxii and xiv. Nyerere was not known to offer such compliments lightly. See TNA FCO 45/1272, P. J. Middleton to R. E. Holloway, 7 September 1973.

human rights. '[W]hen we say we want to establish the rights of individuals', Nyerere asserted, 'we mean it'.<sup>563</sup> Once in government, however, individual protections were undermined through the 'Preventative Detention Act' in 1962. The Tanzanian President contended it was 'better that ninety-nine innocent people should suffer temporary detention than that one possible traitor should wreck the nation'.<sup>564</sup> This was an equation never openly considered by Seretse's government, even as it faced refugee crises and violent incursions. Democratic freedoms were also curtailed in Tanzania under the establishment of a one-party state in 1965. '[W]here there is one party, and that party is identified with the nation as a whole', Nyerere illustrated, 'the foundations of democracy are firmer than they can ever be where you have two or more parties, each representing only a section of the community!'.<sup>565</sup> Such comments were a striking point of comparison to the viewpoint in Gaborone, whereby Seretse underscored the need to build consultation and consensus between different groups in the community.<sup>566</sup> The abandoning of many political and civil rights in Tanzania was justified by Nyerere as necessary for national unity, security, and prosperity. Seretse chose instead to cling to these freedoms to advance the same objectives.

The two countries differed more broadly than human rights observance, particularly in their economic and social vision. In an attempted transformation of Tanzanian society, the TANU government pursued Nyerere's philosophy of Ujamaa. Within the Arusha Declaration of 1967, Nyerere called for the establishment of a self-reliant economy. His further aims were to halt the spread of capitalist attitudes and methods of production, and to promote a 'classless society' based on mutual responsibility.<sup>567</sup> As seen in his 1973 visit to Tanzania, Seretse often spoke of his government's commitment to social justice and building 'a society which will not be characterised by rigid divisions between the rich and the poor'.<sup>568</sup>

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<sup>563</sup> Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity*, 70.

<sup>564</sup> Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity*, 313.

<sup>565</sup> Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity*, 196; Nyerere, 'Will Democracy Work in Africa?', 3. See also The United Republic of Tanzania, *Report of the Presidential Commission on the Establishment of a Democratic One Party State*, 14-16; James Kirby, "'Our Ideals Must Guide Us, not Blind Us": Examining the Abuse of Human Rights in Tanzania, 1960-75', *Melbourne Historical Journal* 43:1 (2015): 112-33.

<sup>566</sup> TNA FCO 45/817, Seretse, 'A People's Progress', address to National Assembly, 3 December 1971.

<sup>567</sup> Nyerere, *Freedom and Development*, 7. On Nyerere's philosophy on development and the role of the state, see Lal, 'Self-Reliance and the State: The Multiple Meanings of Development in Early Post-Colonial Tanzania', *Africa* 2 (2012): 212-34; Hunter, 'Revisiting Ujamaa: Political Legitimacy and the Construction of Community in Post-Colonial Tanzania', *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 2:3 (2008): 471-85; Julie M. Weiskopf, 'Socialism on Safari: Wildlife and Nation-Building in Postcolonial Tanzania, 1961-77', *The Journal of African History* 56:3 (2015): 429-47. However, African Socialism proved to be disappointing in terms of meeting its goals of self-reliance and socio-economic equality. See James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

<sup>568</sup> TNA FCO 45/1272, Seretse, speech in reply to Nyerere, 28 August 1973.

In contrast, Botswana was an openly capitalist society with a free market economy. Despite its impressive economic growth and an open commitment to evenly distributing the rewards of development, the government failed to alleviate its severe problems with socio-economic inequality.<sup>569</sup>

Unlike his reticent dislike of one-party systems, Seretse vocally disparaged the concept of Socialism. Seretse told an audience in Sweden in November 1970 '[t]his label, even if qualified by the adjective "African", can have little meaning for the majority of our people'. Whilst the ideology was widely applied, even in the West, the President observed how the 'crushing of Czechoslovakia was justified as the defence of "Socialism"'. To avoid this 'confusion', the President preferred to adopt a strategy more attuned to Botswana's local culture and traditions.<sup>570</sup> However, in overcoming such differences between Botswana and its fellow African majority-ruled states, Seretse took inspiration from Nyerere's proposition that 'differences in ideology must not preclude unity'. 'There are and will be', Seretse proclaimed, in repetition with Nyerere's own words, 'socialists and non-socialists, democrats and non-democrats in Africa'.<sup>571</sup> African unity was not premised on strategic considerations alone, as there was a common ideological component for Botswana to appeal to. The country's links with Zambia, Tanzania, and other OAU members were made possible by a mutual respect for the right to national self-determination.

### **'Neither terrorists nor murderers': Botswana's Advocacy for Self-Determination in Southern Africa**

Botswana's identification with the majority-ruled states in Africa was premised on their legitimacy as a proponent of national self-determination. Without a mass movement for independence, like Zambia or Tanzania, the Democratic Party could not spontaneously rely on its internal history for credibility. The government therefore required a consciously cultivated sense of affinity to the objectives of liberation movements in Southern Africa. To accomplish this, Seretse framed Botswana's own sovereignty as fundamentally linked to the freedoms of Africans throughout the region. The country's efforts to reinforce its self-

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<sup>569</sup> Parson, *Botswana*; Parson, 'Cattle, Class and the State in Rural Botswana'; Good, 'At the Ends of the Ladder'; Gulbrandsen, *The State and the Social*; Maundeni, 'The Politics of Poverty in Botswana'.

<sup>570</sup> TNA FCO 45/439, Seretse, 'Developing Democracy in Southern Africa', address at the Dag Hammarskjöld Centre, 11 November 1970. See also TNA FCO 45/433, Masire, address to Democratic Party conference, March 1970.

<sup>571</sup> TNA FCO 45/433, Seretse, 'Botswana's Foreign Policy', address to Democratic Party conference, 28 March 1970. See also Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, 113.

determination was synonymous, as the President expounded, with ‘the realisation of the aspirations of our fellow men in Rhodesia, Namibia and South Africa who are not as fortunate as we are’.<sup>572</sup> Seretse described how Botswana’s independence was still incomplete, not just due to their dependence on South Africa, but because ‘[w]hen our oppressed brothers suffer, we also suffer’.<sup>573</sup> Botswana needed to underline such sentimental connections with these oppressed groups as the country had such thorough economic ties with their oppressors. On a more practical level, the government had an interest in the fulfilment of majority rule as the lack of such rights perpetuated the instability on its borders. In terms of their security, facing incursions from external authorities and insurgents, Botswana’s independence would only be enhanced by a resolution to the wars of liberation, particularly through peaceful means.<sup>574</sup> As a member of the Frontline States, in contact with both nationalist groups and other member states, Gaborone played an active role in encouraging productive negotiations for political change in Rhodesia and South Africa.<sup>575</sup> There was both a moral obligation for Botswana to pursue the realisation of human rights in neighbouring countries, as well as a strategic interest to resolve threats to its peace and progress.<sup>576</sup>

Seretse affirmed that his government’s definition of national self-determination differed categorically from that of the apartheid regime. South Africa purportedly offered a pathway to independence for Africans, separated along tribal lines in Bantustans, through the policy of separate development.<sup>577</sup> The HCTs were originally planned by South Africa to be a key inclusion within the scheme. However, the concept was rejected altogether by Seretse’s government.<sup>578</sup> In 1976, the year of Transkei’s nominal independence, an event unrecognised by virtually every state except South Africa, Seretse announced ‘there is nothing charitable

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<sup>572</sup> TNA FCO 45/1698, Seretse, address to National Assembly, 24 November 1975. See also TNA FCO 105/34, Mogwe, ‘Statement on the Present Political Situation in Southern Africa’, August 1977.

<sup>573</sup> TNA FCO 45/1096, Seretse, speech to Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU, Rabat, 12 June 1972; BNARS BNB 2464, Democratic Party election manifesto, 1974. More specifically, Seretse did ‘not recognise the right of self-determination for minority groups in any nation, as long as such groups have full entitlement to participate in the political, economic and social life of the country’. See TNA FCO 45/111, Seretse, address to Democratic Party conference, 5 April 1969.

<sup>574</sup> Seretse, address to the AAI Board of Trustees, 10 June 1976 in *Speeches*, 7; Seretse, speech given at a banquet given in his honour by Shri Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed of the Federal Republic of India, 4 April 1976 in *Speeches*, 3.

<sup>575</sup> Gilbert M. Khadiagala, *Allies in Adversity: The Frontline States in Southern African Security 1975-1993* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1994), 18-96.

<sup>576</sup> BNARS BNB 2464, Democratic Party election manifesto, 1974.

<sup>577</sup> For an example of the apartheid regime’s defence of separate development, see South Africa Department of Information, *The Integration Model* (Pretoria: The Government Printer, 1974).

<sup>578</sup> Hyam, *The Failure of South African Expansion 1908-1948*, 193.

about the creation of impoverished Bantustans'.<sup>579</sup> Designed to 'perpetuate black misery and white privilege', the President lamented Transkei's fate as 'one of the saddest and most tragic events in Africa's unhappy history'.<sup>580</sup> The main failing of the 'Balkanisation of South Africa' was its inability to satisfy the ambitions of the African population.<sup>581</sup> As a result, the government refused to recognise or deal directly with the artificial states of Transkei and, on its border, Bophuthatswana.<sup>582</sup> For Seretse's leadership, national self-determination could not be built upon racial and tribal separation but the granting of full independence. Forcefully, Seretse argued 'the objective of liberation is itself not negotiable'.<sup>583</sup> Whilst Botswana may have coexisted and even cooperated with the apartheid regime, there was no room for compromise on its demand for granting an authentic right to self-determination.

While Gaborone maintained an instinctive sense of abhorrence for racialist systems, there was a deliberate strategy to craft Botswana's external perception to suit the preferences of fellow OAU members. As shown in the first chapter, the party was the most conservative of the political alternatives in the lead up to independence, recognising the difficulties of governing a vulnerable state in a turbulent region. The need for vast political, economic, and social development led to a policy of caution and cooperation during the post-colonial transition. Rather than build a mass social movement to precipitate the end of colonial rule, the Democratic Party worked with the Protectorate administration toward self-government and a cordial exit. It was only their opponents in the People's Party who called for immediate independence.

However, the governing party was not willing to publicise such events in their official history. In its place, certain elements of the past were rewritten for public consumption. At a Democratic Party conference in April 1973, Seretse professed the organisation 'flatly refused to be influenced by the views of those who predicted a future of gloom and unmitigated poverty'. The party did not hesitate in demanding independence, according to the President,

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<sup>579</sup> TNA FCO 45/1890, Seretse, address to Democratic Party conference, 16 April 1976.

<sup>580</sup> Seretse, address to the AAI Board of Trustees, 10 June 1976 in *Speeches*, 9; Seretse, 'Botswana's Geopolitical Situation and Her Attitude to the Liberation Struggle in the African Continent', address to the House of Commons Committees on External Affairs and Defence in Ottawa, 15 June 1976 in *Speeches*, 19-20.

<sup>581</sup> BNARS BNB 2464, Democratic Party election manifesto, 1974; TNA FCO 105/346, Mogwe, address to United Nations General Assembly, 30 September 1980.

<sup>582</sup> TNA FCO 45/1281, CSAD, brief for Rowlands on visit of Masire, 24 June 1977; TNA FCO 45/1281, Emery to Foster, 8 October 1973; Seretse, 'Address to the Development Committee of the European Parliament, Brussels', 20 June 1977, 264-5.

<sup>583</sup> TNA FCO 45/1499, Seretse, speech to open Democratic Party headquarters at Tsholetsa House, 20 July 1974.

because '[w]e were too firmly attached to the principle of self-determination'. Compared to the livelier nationalist movements elsewhere on the continent, the methods and attitudes of the Democratic Party were highly disparate. With an identical outcome, achieving self-determination, the government still found great value in trading off its ability 'to defy the prophets of doom'.<sup>584</sup> Aside from party grandstanding, there was a wider imperative in reframing the Democratic Party's cautious viewpoint on the notion of independence to a more courageous one. In July 1975, Archibald Mogwe, the Foreign Minister, disclosed to Bolen the need for the government to present a favourable standpoint for an African audience. He explained how 'African states were preoccupied with human dignity, equality and self-determination in Southern Africa'. As a result, they 'tended to judge issues and countries by the degree of support and interest demonstrated in resolving these problems'.<sup>585</sup> There was therefore a requirement on the part of Botswana to exhibit solidarity with liberation movements and to uphold national self-determination as the centrepiece of their foreign policy.<sup>586</sup>

Not only did Gaborone support the objectives of freedom fighters, they eventually portrayed the use of violent methods against oppressive regimes as reasonably justifiable. As a country known for its internal peace and stability, these expressions of understanding revealed the extent to which Botswana was prepared to certify the moral authority of those using guerrilla tactics, whilst not making a physical contribution of its own. An escalation of violence in the region was acknowledged to not be in the state's interests. The encouragement of exclusively non-violent methods in Southern Africa could have helped to provide some added security for Botswana. Nevertheless, the leadership was not willing to accept the status quo by occupying a fixed standpoint against violence, particularly when peaceful methods for change proved unproductive.<sup>587</sup> The Lusaka Manifesto committed signatories to the advocacy of non-violent means, but endorsed the use of violence when 'peaceful progress is blocked by actions of those at present in power in the States of

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<sup>584</sup> TNA FCO 45/1270, Seretse, address to Democratic Party conference, 21 April 1973. See also Seretse, 'The Southern African Political Crisis in Perspective', address to Oxford University's African Society, 4 June 1976 in *Speeches*, 12.

<sup>585</sup> DBB 4:4, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 1 August 1975. See also DBB 5:2, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 12 July 1974; TNA FCO 65/2139, Turner to Varcoe, 2 August 1978.

<sup>586</sup> Seretse, 'Speech to open the First Session of the Second Parliament', 24 October 1969 in Carter and Morgan (eds), *From the Frontline*, 70; TNA FCO 45/1890, Seretse, address to Democratic Party conference, 16 April 1976.

<sup>587</sup> Seretse, address to the AAI Board of Trustees, 10 June 1976 in *Speeches*, 8; TNA FCO 45/1496, Seretse, address to National Assembly, 18 November 1974.

Southern Africa'.<sup>588</sup> A peaceful transition to national self-determination was therefore the preferred option. However, when this alternative was not made feasible by the minority regimes, regardless of the threat to regional stability, the Lusaka Manifesto saw this as legitimate grounds for insurgency and rebellion. Without full liberation, any form of peace would be morally inadmissible and entail a constant source of grievance amongst nationalist groups, thus providing neither genuine harmony nor durable stability. Consistent with the formulation of the UDHR, as detailed in the introduction to the thesis, Seretse affirmed there could be no guaranteed security for Botswana or peace in the region without the international provision of human rights.

Whilst not advocating the use of violence in principle, Gaborone voiced an understanding for the motivations propelling these groups to resort to such desperate measures. As Seretse clarified, '[w]e do not necessarily affix a moral stamp to their actions'. Yet, without a genuine effort by the white minority regimes to bring about change, 'the love for freedom and liberty becomes a consuming fire and violent revolution the only logical and justifiable alternative'. The true responsibility for the conflict lay not with the liberation movements, striving for the freedoms they have observed elsewhere in Africa, but the repressive regimes seeking to remain in power. 'A man who is subjected to a legalised state of violence every single day of his life', Seretse commiserated, 'cannot be expected to have a clear perception of the sanctity of human life'.<sup>589</sup> As the President reiterated at the 1971 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Singapore, human history contained numerous examples of people using violence to either preserve or win their freedoms. He cited the European resistance movements during World War Two against Nazi Germany and, in a more provocative example for some in the Third World, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 against the Soviets.<sup>590</sup> In June 1976, in front of an American audience at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, the President pointed out how 'America itself was conceived in violent revolution'. These movements held the same wish to have the authority of their governments based on democratic representation and the belief 'that all men are

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<sup>588</sup> Episcopal Churchmen for South Africa, 'Manifesto on Southern Africa', 6.

<sup>589</sup> Seretse, speech given at a banquet given in his honour by Shri Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed of the Federal Republic of India, 4 April 1976 in *Speeches*, 3. See also Nwako, statement at Preparatory Conference of Non-Aligned Countries in *Non-Aligned Conference*, 12-6; TNA FCO 45/1499, Seretse, speech to open Democratic Party headquarters at Tsholetsa House, 20 July 1974; Seretse, 'The Southern African Political Crisis in Perspective', address to Oxford University's African Society, 4 June 1976 in *Speeches*, 13-4; BNARS BNB 3899, Seretse, speech at luncheon given in his honour by the Lord Mayor of London, 18 May 1978.

<sup>590</sup> TNA FCO 36/757, Seretse, Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Singapore, 20 January 1971; Seretse, *Africa and America in the Seventies*, 6.



created equal'.<sup>591</sup> Botswana remained a comparably moderate influence among independent African states. Nonetheless, their defence of the use of violence by the liberation movements showed more than just a baseline support for self-determination, but an acceptance of the costs and sacrifices sometimes required in attaining it.

In front of an international audience, Botswana's voice in support of freedom fighters played a role in humanising those who used violent means. The President characterised the guerrilla movements as fellow activists of human rights, valuing the same freedoms enjoyed under African majority-ruled states. They were 'neither terrorists nor murderers', Seretse exclaimed, as they were 'fighting on behalf of humanity for their basic human rights'.<sup>592</sup> Africans had the same desires and wishes for peace as those elsewhere in the world, despite the violence and disorder throughout the continent. As shown in the compelling example provided by Botswana's stability and progress, '[t]he people of Africa are not war-mongers'. The President appealed to North America and Western Europe on how the 'lives of the freedom fighters in Southern Africa are just as sacred as those of human beings everywhere'.<sup>593</sup> The government had a proven capacity for image-building, establishing its own portrait as a force for individual human rights in the region. The leadership therefore had a platform to persuade the same observers in favour of liberation movements, revealing the common aspirations between Botswana and those fighting across its border. Aware of the concern in the West over Communist infiltration amongst these rebel groups, Seretse declared it was unfair to consider all freedom fighters under such a label, particularly as the turn to the East for aid was often as a measure of last resort.<sup>594</sup> Botswana held a unique position of influence in the West, based on their legitimacy as a liberal-democratic state, in defending the attitudes and practices of those oppressed under white minority rule. For multiple causes, from human rights to anti-apartheid, Botswana could serve as a bridge of understanding between the West and the Third World.

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<sup>591</sup> Seretse, address to Council on Foreign Relations in New York, 'The Liberation Struggle in Southern Africa and American Perceptions', 8 June 1976 in *Speeches*, 24.

<sup>592</sup> Seretse, address to Council on Foreign Relations in New York, 'The Liberation Struggle in Southern Africa and American Perceptions', 8 June 1976 in *Speeches*, 25.

<sup>593</sup> Seretse, 'The Southern African Political Crisis in Perspective', address to Oxford University's African Society, 4 June 1976 in *Speeches*, 13. See also Seretse, 'Botswana's Geopolitical Situation and Her Attitude to the Liberation Struggle in the African Continent', address to the House of Commons Committees on External Affairs and Defence in Ottawa, 15 June 1976 in *Speeches*, 21.

<sup>594</sup> DBB 6:4, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 20 April 1976; DBB 6:4, Embassy Gaborone to Department of State, 9 March 1976.

Much more than the Democratic Party's advocacy for national self-determination after independence, the defence of the use of violence constituted a radical shift in attitude by the leadership. In the early part of the 1970s, Seretse was candid on his government's history of conciliation. Unlike Algeria or Kenya, he noted 'Botswana's political independence was achieved by negotiation and mutual consent'.<sup>595</sup> Without a national struggle that could be transformed into myth and legend like in other African majority-ruled states, the President instead portrayed the Democratic Party's peaceful victories as equally significant. However, in demonstrating solidarity with the same groups who sought violent revolution, the Democratic Party presumed the questionable premise that it would have adopted the same methods if the British had not entered into constitutional negotiations with the Batswana. Led by former anti-apartheid activists, the People's Party would have been a far more likely candidate to take the lead in such a scenario.

After critiquing the People's Party's abrasive language as inflammatory and irresponsible in the lead up to independence, the Democratic Party increasingly adopted a tone in government much closer to their political rivals in support of the liberation movements. '[I]nfluenced by our own history', the President contended in December 1968 'that problems cannot be solved by violent means'.<sup>596</sup> In March 1970, he still argued '[d]emocratic societies should favour the resolution of conflicts by peaceful means rather than by recourse to violence'.<sup>597</sup> However, this viewpoint had shifted by the latter half of the decade. 'As a party we have always believed in the right of peoples to self-determination', Seretse proclaimed at a party conference in April 1977, 'hence we cannot but support fully those who have been forced to take up arms to fight for this inalienable right'.<sup>598</sup> This more assertive stance was not drawn from the party's origins, nor its founding values for a peaceful transition to non-racial democracy. The Democratic Party's principles on political liberties and individual protections remained consistent both before and after independence. This offered a stable set of values for Seretse to appeal to the West. In contrast, Botswana's outreach to OAU members included a standpoint requiring ongoing cultivation and

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<sup>595</sup> TNA FCO 45/816, Seretse, 'A Decade of Achievement – A Decade of Challenge', address to Democratic Party conference, 10 April 1971. On the Algerian and Kenyan colonial wars, see Fabian Klose, *Human Rights in the Shadow of Colonial Violence: The Wars of Independence in Kenya and Algeria* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

<sup>596</sup> TNA FCO 45/111, Seretse, address to National Assembly, 9 December 1968.

<sup>597</sup> TNA FCO 45/433, Seretse, 'Botswana's Foreign Policy', address to Democratic Party conference, 28 March 1970. See also TNA FCO 45/704, Anderson to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 16 December 1970.

<sup>598</sup> Bechuanaland Democratic Party, *Laying the Foundation of Nationhood*, 26.

refinement, far removed from the party's history with post-colonial transition. As some elements of Botswana's human rights ideology remained virtually identical after colonial rule, its philosophy and identity was still developing on its support for national self-determination. Botswana had to calibrate its standpoint just as a more collectivist and belligerent self-determination predominated among anti-colonialists by the late 1960s, including the use of armed struggle when necessary. Compared to other African states, Botswana was well ahead of its time in enshrining political liberties and individual protections, but much slower to evolve in its attitude toward self-determination.

### **Conclusion**

Botswana's advocacy for the right to national self-determination in Africa was not an entirely idealistic commitment but a carefully formulated strategy to preserve its own independence. Gaborone's support for the liberation struggle was a way to balance against its unavoidable economic cooperation with its neighbours. To maintain an equilibrium in its relations with majority-ruled and minority-ruled Africa, Botswana had limited manoeuvrability in its foreign policy. Their avowed solidarity with freedom fighters, without any direct physical support, was tolerable for South Africa and Rhodesia, and eventually commended by OAU members. Botswana did not allow guerrilla operations on its territory, but made great sacrifices in accepting refugees by the thousands. From independence, the Democratic Party was required to find credibility within the OAU from a position of disfavour. It achieved this through bilateral links with Zambia and Tanzania, despite fundamental differences in their treatment of political and civil rights. The governments of Seretse, Kaunda, and Nyerere found solidarity in their respect for national self-determination, with a common goal for expanding this right throughout Southern Africa. Once the government began to depict the freedom fighters as fellow human rights activists, and the Democratic Party presented itself as having a longstanding support for colonial liberation, their image as a legitimate African state was firmly ingrained. As will be shown in the conclusion to the thesis, toward the end goal of survival, this was one area where Botswana attained a self-defined measure of 'success'. Seretse's image-building was masterful enough to win over multiple audiences, in the West and in Africa, with differing outlooks on individual and collective self-determination.

### **Conclusion: Botswana's Story of Survival and 'Success' in Human Rights**

Botswana was a 'success story' for human rights from more than one ideological viewpoint. For the West, the country offered an inspiring model for political liberties and individual protections in a continent dominated by white minority rule, authoritarian regimes, and one-party states. For much of the post-colonial world, Botswana acted within its limited means to preserve its independence and support liberation groups fighting for their own right to national self-determination. However, success in human rights was not just a moral end in itself for Botswana, but a strategic necessity. While many scholars have highlighted the country's subjective claim to political and economic success, they miss the point about how the image of 'success' was designed to serve a more basic objective, that of survival.

Botswana's national principles and values were a vital strength at a time of physical vulnerability and economic underdevelopment. The original assertion of success in Botswana arose from an invented narrative, featuring the hope to protect and develop a state capable of peacefully undermining the regimes in South Africa and Rhodesia. Seretse's mission for the state, as a compelling example for change amongst its neighbours, served to attract psychological support and material assistance from North America and Western Europe. For a different geopolitical audience, the President affirmed a belief in advancing self-determination in Southern Africa in a manner that was acceptable within the OAU.

Botswana's global identity, melding both a First World and a Third World perspective on human rights, played an integral role in the country's continued existence. In a context where success in human rights was self-defined as the survival of a state, Botswana could stake a claim to being a genuine 'success story', but in a way so far unrecognised in the historiography.

The government's fixation on internationalist ideals in its foreign policy remained so consistent because the content of this idealism remained so compatible with the political needs of the state. Many African post-colonial rulers had forgone basic human rights for the purported sake of security and economic prosperity. In one of the poorest states in Africa to attain independence, landlocked in a volatile region amidst white minority rule, the Democratic Party may have been expected to follow a similar formula. Instead, the government maintained a democratic multi-party state and constitutionally enshrined individual protections as vital instruments for its own imperatives in peace and development. Without credibility on human rights, Seretse could not have advocated the role of Botswana

in the region as a model, thereby limiting the basis of his appeal for aid amongst foreign liberal-democratic nations. Without the President's later embrace of the more radical and collectivist view of self-determination, including the acceptance of armed struggle, Botswana could not have asserted its affiliation with independent Africa.

In a geographic context where their actions mandated some form of accommodation with surrounding regimes, human rights thereby became a tool for asserting Botswana's autonomy. For many states, such international standards were regarded as a threat to sovereignty. From the perspective of Botswana, a willingness to be subjected to international scrutiny on its human rights credentials became a peculiar way to reaffirm its own sovereignty. On the one hand, political liberties and individual protections were only enjoyed because they were conducive to the imperatives of the government, and on the other hand, the survival of the state was considerably dependent on the provision of human rights. For Botswana, rather than being regarded as an interference or a hindrance, human rights could be both a serviceable instrument and an indispensable lifeline. Instead of denying the political nature of human rights, Botswana accepted the positive, progressive, and productive instrumentalism of these principles. In the process, Gaborone fulfilled international standards of human rights in both its internal behaviour and external advocacy. Human rights were cited as a moral virtue in Botswana, but this was an idealism inextricably linked to survival as an independent state.

This investigation, as outlined in the introduction to the thesis, addressed two key research questions in developing a political history of human rights in Botswana. The first research question, focusing on the lead up to independence, uncovered why Seretse and the Democratic Party committed themselves to ingraining human rights in the political and constitutional make-up of the state. The study also accounted for the priority accorded to political liberties and individual protections, rather than socio-economic freedoms or collective rights for Africans. The Democratic Party rationalised liberal-democratic freedoms, to the party membership and to the electorate, amidst debates over the timing of independence, the elimination of racial discrimination, and the formation of the bill of rights. The second research question focused on the period after independence, exploring the strategic significance for Botswana of having a strong human rights record. Two different geopolitical audiences were considered in this discussion, including the West and the OAU. Human rights played a fundamental role in the country's external image, with the case study

of the US exemplifying the attraction of Botswana to like-minded foreign allies, bringing moral encouragement and economic rewards. Beyond its philosophy of individual human rights, Botswana's avid support of national self-determination served to reinforce its credentials amongst fellow African majority-ruled states. In many ways, the Democratic Party in government copied the People's Party, not in substance, but in their worldly outlook and quest for legitimacy amongst different portions of that audience. The People's Party was dedicated to finding acceptance in international forums, believing their political success lay in the attainment of external support from abroad. The Democratic Party's strategy was distinct, but very close in methodology, using its human rights credentials to build favourability and justify aid to best serve the prospects of the state.

The story of how human rights contributed to the survival of Botswana began in the process leading up to the state's inception. Without a mass social movement demanding immediate independence, the Democratic Party emphasised 'responsibility' in government rather than national self-determination as a worthy end in itself. The People's Party was highly attuned to the anti-colonial discourse advocated by those in the OAU and the Third World in international forums. The party adopted the rhetoric of radical voices within the UN Special Committee on Decolonisation, acquiring legitimacy amongst nationalist organisations and governments elsewhere on the continent. Such anti-colonial idealism on national self-determination contrasted with many local observers in Bechuanaland who pondered 'what has Ghana got that we haven't?'.<sup>599</sup> The Democratic Party's approach to independence was cautious and involved close cooperation with the British rulers, thereby undermining their anti-colonial credentials. It was due to their experience in government, the Democratic Party claimed, that made them the most competent and 'responsible' alternative to confront the challenges of post-colonial government. Throughout the Democratic Party's political ascension, it remained distant from the internationalist discourse perceiving collective sovereignty as the first right. However, the Democratic Party's embrace after independence of national self-determination, for itself and those under white minority rule, played an essential part in validating Botswana's place within the OAU. Under colonial rule, the Democratic Party found little inspiration or strategic utility in adopting a more ideological push for immediate independence.

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<sup>599</sup> SHL ICS 28/5/B/1, Halpern, 'The "Winds of Change" in Bechuanaland', 10 April 1961.

Seretse's party subordinated national self-determination in favour of political liberties and individual self-determination. Racial discrimination was a central issue for political debate on human rights in the territory, with two distinct visions between the parties on how to eliminate 'APARTHEID amongst Batswana'.<sup>600</sup> The People's Party undertook a pioneering campaign for socio-economic freedoms and collective land rights for Africans, finding an initial wave of support primarily amongst urban youth. The Democratic Party ultimately succeeded in winning a mandate for its more inclusive concept of non-racial democracy in the March 1965 elections. Seretse defined an ideology of non-racialism based on individualism, promising to deliver racial harmony after independence, and made a commitment to a more open political system, contending a liberal-democratic model would work to promote the interests of Africans. The human rights enshrined into the constitutional framework of the state were justified by the Democratic Party as aligning with the political, economic, and social needs of the state. The concerns of the white population and the preferences of the British played an important part in the process. While the People's Party advocated racial exclusivism, the Democratic Party recognised the economic importance of the Europeans' contribution to the territory. As the white inhabitants only found effective security in the promise of individual protections, a peaceful pathway to independence was seen by the British as 'conditional on a Bill of Rights'.<sup>601</sup> The irony of Botswana's non-racial idealism was that it was founded on a highly racialised process where white minority interests predominated. In political and civil rights, the Democratic Party found a viable foundation for its domestic project. These same values were later transformed into a national identity that could build a much wider internationalist appeal for the state. Throughout the post-colonial transition, the Democratic Party was not driven by pure idealism for liberal-democracy, but an underlying understanding that these human rights had strategic utility for the state.

The theme of human rights evolved from a concept related to constitutional provisions for national citizens to an ideal of relevance to the region and the global community. The British were the first to characterise Bechuanaland as a model, but their poor development of the Protectorate convinced no one of the merits of imperial trusteeship. In the quest for foreign assistance, the government articulated an image of the

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<sup>600</sup> BNARS BNB 632, Lekwapa, 'Discrimination – "APARTHEID" amongst Batswana', written testimony, Legislative Council Report of the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination, 8 August 1962.

<sup>601</sup> TNA CO 1048/404, Fawcus to Latimer, 15 January 1963.

state as one of the world's leading promoters and defenders of human rights. Seretse traded on the country's virtues in liberal-democracy and non-racial citizenship to invoke a wider importance for the state. In his definitive speech to the UN General Assembly in September 1969, the President contended Botswana's success as a state would peacefully undermine neighbouring white minority regimes. An ability to show non-racial democracy to be a viable model for Southern Africa, Seretse argued, would offer a pathway to reforming the apartheid regime. While he asserted great strength in virtue, the President made his case from a position of vulnerability, as his country sought strategic allies and economic resources from abroad. Botswana's human rights idealism helped to reinforce the territorial integrity and autonomy of the state, because 'when you are weak, you have to stick to principles'.<sup>602</sup> The base level for success was always controlled by Seretse, with state survival serving as the basic ambition. As regional stability deteriorated throughout the 1970s, and the promotion of peaceful race relations seemed a more distant prospect, Seretse's narrative underlined far more the defence of Botswana, and all it signified, rather than the diffusion of its principles. Human rights in Botswana became more than just a commitment on the part of the government to its own citizens, but a lifeline for the state.

An example of this was seen in US-Botswana relations, whereby America became Botswana's most important aid donor. American officials, politicians, and policy-makers found inspiration in Botswana, perceiving it as one of the most important countries in the world for the promotion of human rights. Botswana's record was greatly rewarded, as one diplomat noted '[y]ou can't give this country enough, its human rights record is so good'.<sup>603</sup> Yet, there were wider objectives behind America's engagement with Gaborone. For Washington, Botswana represented an important bridge for building American legitimacy amongst African majority-ruled states. Botswana, they thought, could help the US offset its strategic and economic ties to South Africa and Rhodesia. This aim was exemplified in the Bot-Zam highway, seeking to link Botswana much more closely to its counterparts further north and advance America's standing on the continent. However, the allegory could be carried even further when considering the reluctance of the US to fund the road's pavement, resembling the potholes and gaps preventing a more comprehensive level of cooperation and assistance. In the mid to late 1970s, the limits of their relationship began to be revealed.

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<sup>602</sup> Lewis Jr., *Quett Ketumile Joni Masire*, 250.

<sup>603</sup> J. Regan Kerney, 'Texas-Size Country in Southern Africa Enjoys Tranquillity and True Democracy: Letter From Botswana', *The Washington Post*, 23 December 1977.



Kissinger saw little strategic importance in the country, and Carter's increase in aid was far from commensurate with his grand rhetoric on human rights. The US was unwilling to commit any further than its strategic interests would allow. Nonetheless, while Washington did not take full advantage of its symbolic ties, Botswana achieved the maximal benefit from its human rights idealism, and ultimately preserved its own existence. The case study of US-Botswana relations revealed how a small non-Western state could inspire, and in some ways outperform, a superpower in its alignment of strategic imperatives with human rights commitments.

America's failure to effectively balance its relations with independent Africa and white minority regimes contrasts sharply with Botswana's acrobatic high-wire walk between the two often conflicting audiences. Botswana confronted a foreign policy dilemma as it had to maintain its vital economic cooperation with South Africa and Rhodesia, whilst building political integrity amongst OAU members. To preserve this equilibrium, Seretse's government needed to recalibrate its standpoint on national self-determination much closer to its adversaries in the People's Party. Botswana was flexible in economically accommodating the white minority regimes and accepting refugees, but sustained a necessary level of restraint in refusing direct aid from the apartheid government and disallowing the use of the territory as a base for freedom fighters. From a position of alienation within the OAU at independence, the Democratic Party gradually developed a wider understanding for its position. Botswana received significant help in this regard on the part of Zambia and Tanzania, despite their contrary position on human rights, showing how 'differences in ideology must not preclude unity' for the fulfilment of common African objectives.<sup>604</sup> To build legitimacy within the continent, Seretse became a strong advocate for national self-determination in the region. He insisted Botswana furthered this objective through its own survival as a state and its moral support for liberation groups, even to the point of accepting the use of violence when peaceful methods had failed. In North America and Western Europe, Seretse was in a unique position to humanise the freedom fighters of Southern Africa, not as terrorists or murderers, but as human rights activists. The President effectively occupied two standpoints on human rights thought by much of the scholarship to be mutually exclusive. Seretse supported political and civil rights, principles that became popular in the emerging human rights movement in the West, and national self-determination, the

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<sup>604</sup> TNA FCO 45/433, Seretse, 'Botswana's Foreign Policy', address to Democratic Party conference, 28 March 1970.

central target of the anti-colonial movement. Botswana proved these were not only two sets of compatible ideals, individual and collective self-determination, but also mutually beneficial strategic assets in foreign policy-making.

In current-day Botswana, the once acclaimed ‘success story’ of Botswana on human rights has notably diminished. After the President’s death in July 1980 due to deteriorating health, aged fifty-nine, Seretse’s vision for non-racial democracy in Southern Africa was ultimately vindicated when all the neighbouring white minority regimes lost power. Rhodesia transformed into the majority-ruled Republic of Zimbabwe in April 1980; South-West Africa became the Republic of Namibia after attaining independence from South Africa in March 1990; and Nelson Mandela, ANC leader and long-time political prisoner, won the country’s first free elections in May 1994 on the path to building a multi-racial state in post-apartheid South Africa. In the process, the threats on Botswana’s border diminished and the country slowly lost its claim to exceptionalism. Botswana could no longer be so easily juxtaposed against a more racially segregated state. There also arose many internal issues. As the most recent elections in 2014 revealed, Botswana is still a multi-party democracy, but it has not had a peaceful transition from Democratic Party rule. Lieutenant General Ian Khama, Seretse’s son and President since 2008, shows increasing signs of authoritarianism.<sup>605</sup> As described by Kenneth Good, a political scientist, the President ‘has used techniques and capacities of personal, militaristic rule to an exceptional degree’. For Good, in a strong critique, these ‘techniques appear to compensate to some degree for the narrowness of his qualifications for political leadership in a democracy’.<sup>606</sup> Economically, Botswana is also losing its sparkle. Growth is slowing in an economy that has failed to diversify away from diamonds.<sup>607</sup> More worrying, Botswana’s supply is expected to run out within the next few decades.<sup>608</sup> The portrait of ‘success’ is thereby increasingly outdated, given the country’s

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<sup>605</sup> David Smith, ‘Trouble in paradise for Botswana’s democratic credentials’, *The Guardian*, 17 September 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/17/trouble-paradise-botswana-journalist>, viewed 13 November 2016.

<sup>606</sup> Good, ‘The Presidency of General Ian Khama: The Militarisation of the Botswana “Miracle”’, *African Affairs* 109:435 (2009): 318; Good, ‘Democracy and Development in Botswana’, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* (2016): 13, viewed 9 December 2016, doi: 10.1080/02589001.2016.1249447.

<sup>607</sup> African Economic Outlook, *African Economic Outlook 2016*, [http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/AEO\\_2016\\_Report\\_Full\\_English.pdf](http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/AEO_2016_Report_Full_English.pdf), viewed 13 November 2016.

<sup>608</sup> Michael Cohen, ‘Diamonds Aren’t Forever for Botswana as Mining Boom Fades’, *Bloomberg*, 4 November 2015, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-11-05/diamonds-aren-t-forever-for-botswana-as-mining-boom-fades-away>, viewed 13 November 2016.

democratic and economic performance is fading. Regardless, Botswana's international image continues to maintain its glow, for now, despite the diminishing substance behind it.



***12** Lieutenant General Ian Khama, President of Botswana, 7 June 2010. Courtesy: The Conversation.*

After the remarkable triumph of human rights and non-racial democracy in South Africa during the 1990s, Botswana's narrative has shifted towards ecotourism. Annette LaRocco, a researcher on African and environmental politics, has described the new portrait of Botswana as presenting a 'haven for elephants amidst a time of historical levels of poaching for their ivory'. The widespread bans on hunting elephants, however, have deliberately ignored the needs of local communities who need at least minimum hunting rights to protect crops, property, and lives. As one local Botswana man told LaRocco, the government 'always concern themselves with what the international community says about Botswana. They don't pay attention to how the ordinary Botswana [citizen] is impacted'.<sup>609</sup> Ian Taylor and Gladys Mkhawa, both political scientists, have noted a similar form of image-building that paves over more disturbing local realities. In the early 2000s, Botswana

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<sup>609</sup> Annette LaRocco, 'The Comprehensive Hunting Ban: Strengthening the State through Participatory Conservation in Contemporary Botswana' in Maano Ramutsindela, Giorgio Miescher, and Melanie Bochi (eds), *The Politics of Nature and Science in Southern Africa* (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2016), 198-200.

promoted itself ‘as a haven of “clean diamonds”’, just as the international community took action against the proliferation of ‘conflict diamonds’, whereby illegal trade has fuelled civil conflicts in countries like Liberia and Sierra Leone. Botswana’s history of internal peace was important to reiterate at a time when Western consumers began to question African-sourced gems. Unexpectedly, when taking a closer look at Botswana, some international NGOs found Botswana’s diamonds to be far from ‘clean’. Indigenous minorities and hunter-gather societies, like the San, have allegedly been removed from their ancestral lands to make way for mining prospecting.<sup>610</sup> For NGOs like Survival International and First People of the Kalahari, Botswana is not a site for praise regarding its human rights record, but for indignation.<sup>611</sup> Under Seretse’s presidency, Botswana’s image-building efforts proved to be helpful for the country as it sought sympathy and support from external nations. Regardless, in post-apartheid circumstances, local communities and minority groups receive disproportionately less benefits than the elites who profit the most in modern-day Botswana. This thesis, therefore, has discussed a case study that is limited in both the regional context of Southern Africa and the time period of 1966 to approximately 1980.

As the first non-racial democracy in Southern Africa, a region engulfed by racial conflict and instability, Botswana partially fulfilled the vision of the UDHR. On Human Rights Day in 1975, the rest of the world may have been seen by Seretse to have failed to realise the utopia of international peace set out in 1945 and 1948. Yet, by enshrining human rights in its internal philosophy and external outlook, the country succeeded in ensuring its own peace and stability. By ‘laying the foundations for a non-racial society, a society in which respect for human rights has become a national ideal’, Botswana had preserved its own survival as an independent entity.<sup>612</sup> Botswana’s experience offers an enlightening perspective on the importance of unmasking the role of small state actors outside of the West to the evolving discourse of human rights. Case studies at the sub-global level offer unique insights into how human rights are thought of, debated, and treated in different national and regional settings. A state like Botswana did not have the same clout as other actors in North America and Western Europe. However, it was precisely because Botswana was weak and vulnerable

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<sup>610</sup> Taylor and Gladys Mokhawa, ‘Not Forever: Botswana, Conflict Diamonds and the Bushmen’, *African Affairs* 102 (2003): 273-82.

<sup>611</sup> Sapignoli, ‘Dispossession in the Age of Humanity’.

<sup>612</sup> Seretse, ‘Broadcast to the Nation on the occasion of Human Rights Day, 10 December 1975’, 201-3.

that it embraced human rights, in a way that made a novel contribution to international human rights history.

Seretse's human rights idealism was an effective brush for building a national portrait of Botswana. By appealing to universal principles, he crafted an image that commanded attention on the world stage. In the context of Southern Africa, Seretse developed a human rights idealism that would directly contest the racial oppression of neighbouring regimes. Non-racial democracy was a philosophy of political liberties and individual protections, defined by international standards of human rights like the UDHR. Seretse would not be limited by a Western interpretation of human rights that exclusively prioritised the rights of the individual under a state. In contradiction to much of the literature, Seretse's government eventually built legitimacy for respecting both individual and national self-determination. Botswana shows the movements of anti-colonialism and human rights were not mutually exclusive, but had potential to interweave. In one of the direst conditions for an African post-colonial state, where hard-headed realism was needed to confront immediate dilemmas and potential crises, human rights idealism proved to be a lifeline. If instrumentalism took others down a pathway of compromising human rights, Botswana illuminated where an alternative route could be taken. Human rights were about more than just restricting state power and opening it to external scrutiny but, in Botswana's case, ensuring state survival and building international legitimacy. Botswana became a beacon of hope for human rights precisely because it needed the luminosity that such a beacon would bring.

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