BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL AND POLITICAL TRUST
Consolidating Democracy in Botswana

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to address the extent of democratic consolidation in Botswana. It departs from the basic premise that democracy is a contested enterprise that is always under construction and is socially embedded in a given cultural setting. In measuring the extent of democratic consolidation it applies the social capital theory to establish how horizontal social networks build norms of reciprocity, which give rise to social capital and political trust. It draws heavily on Putnam's thesis that networks of interpersonal trust lead to civic participation and engagement, and consequently to political trust.

However, what emerges from Botswana's democratic politics is that Batswana do not have a participative culture, they do not engage in voluntary civic associations and there is a general lack of trust in political institutions and politicians. The paper endeavours to explain this non-participative culture. The traditional system of government – bogosi (chieftainship) – was hereditary, so people were not socialised into electing a leader every five years or so. Yet the paper also shows that the consultative structure of the kgotla (the village assembly) system, although it discriminated against women and youth, has consensual elements built into it. The paper concludes by challenging the thesis that traditionalism must give way to modernity if democracy is to be consolidated. Instead it suggests that the strength of Botswana's democracy lies in a judicious and careful blending of the Westminster parliamentary system with the traditional rule of bogosi. If democracy is facing a threat it is not from traditional institutions but from globalisation, which has disempowered nation-states and given inordinate powers to markets.

INTRODUCTION

Democracy as a political ideal, a symbol of righteousness and moral values, has been adopted universally as the best form of government. Yet the application of these ideals constitutes the greatest challenge for our times because there is no blueprint that can be handed down to emerging democracies, and even the so-called mature democracies are still vacillating. Democracy remains a contested and growing terrain whose new contours unfold as we experience life. As a social and political construct it is always in a state of flux; it can never be totally achieved and at all times needs to be mediated and given local grounding. With the advent of the new millennium it was evident that the 'third wave' (Huntington 1991) was coming to a close, and democracies in transition were facing the challenge of reversal. Diamond (1999, p 261) was already speculating that with the end the 'third wave' would come the emergence of a 'fourth wave'[1] of democratisation.

As the oldest serving democracy in sub-Saharan Africa Botswana is widely acclaimed as a front-runner in democratic politics. While endurance and the test of time could be some of the basic measures for democratic consolidation, this paper suggests that other, more substantive, measurements could be used to evaluate the depth and consolidation of democracy.

Firstly, the paper discusses the traditional basis of democracy to dispel the myth that traditionalism necessarily has to give way to modern liberal democratic institutions if democracy is to be consolidated. It maintains that the political stability Botswana has enjoyed over the years is, in part, a careful and judicious blend of traditional and liberal democratic institutions of governance.

Secondly, the paper seeks to apply the theory of social capital to establish how it informs political participation and thereby facilitates democratic consolidation in the country. Since the path-breaking work by Robert Putnam (1993) *Making Democracy Work*, the theory of social capital has gained considerable currency. Social capital (Putnam 1995; Fukuyama 2001; Axford 1997, p 134) is widely perceived as the 'networks and norms of reciprocity and trust that are built up through interpersonal connections. That is to say that when people interact through a wide array of voluntary associations they develop social and political skills that give them political efficacy and civic competence and lead them to develop social and political trust. Although the concept has since been the subject of considerable public and scholarly attention and debate, its application to Botswana's social formation has been limited, if not totally absent. This paper seeks to break new ground and apply the concept of social capital to Botswana.

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[1]   The fourth wave would bring the democratisation of remaining authoritarian states like Iraq, Syria, North Korea, Libya, Cuba, and others.

Thirdly, building on the theory of social capital the paper seeks to evaluate how political trust as a value could deepen and consolidate democracy. Since the 'third wave' of democratisation the concept of political trust has assumed predominance arising out of the need to move beyond discussing interpersonal trust – relationships between individuals – to discussing political institutions such as the military, the police, the judiciary, parliaments, political parties and markets. The standard measure of democratic consolidation is political trust, which is measured by questions like: How much trust do you have in political institutions? How much trust do you have in the presidency? How much trust do you have in opposition parties to form an alternative government? How much trust do you have in leaders to do what is right? This paper addresses these questions, first by setting out the contextual framework for understanding Botswana's political system and how its traditional institutions facilitate democratic consolidation.

CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

A brief survey of Botswana's political history perhaps explains its unique position as a stable and successful democracy. Bechuanaland, as Botswana was called during the colonial period, fell under British protection in 1885[2], as an attempt to ward off Boer encroachment from South Africa. Its relative unimportance to the colonisers, given its barren and semi-arid nature and lack of economic potential at the time, was characteristic of the benign neglect of colonialism. More specifically, a system of indirect rule was put in place in which the British used *dikgosi* to maintain political control and allowed tradition rule to co-exist with colonial rule. Bechuanaland did not experience colonialism *par excellence*, as was the case in situations where there was a significant white settler population. A dual political and legal structure during the protectorate period was intended to handle European and 'native' affairs separately. Although British protectorship in Botswana undermined to some extent the essence of traditional cultures and the authority of traditional leaders, it did not supplant traditional institutions, as was the case in parts of Africa where there were significant white settler populations. Traditional institutions, such as *bogos* (chieftainship), although in some instances, as in the case of the lineage of Bakwena, were distorted[3], were by and large left intact.

As Wilmsen (1989, p 273) points out, 'the policy of indirect rule never contemplated taking administrative control of minorities out of the hands of Tswana'. This practice went a long way towards institutionalising inherent

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[2]   At the request of the three Tswana chiefs, Khama, Sebele and Bathoen, for British protection.
[3]   The banishment of Bakwena Kgosi Sechele to Ghanzi created serious succession disputes.

inequalities in Tswana society, disparities that found their way into the Constitution. Moreover, traditional systems, such as *mafias* (loaning of cattle to less privileged members of society) continued, and this helped to reinforce patron-client relationships and a sense of paternalism in society.

Botswana's history is widely documented (Tlou & Campbell 1984; Mgadla & Campbell 1989; Ngconcgo1989; Molutsi & Holm 1989; Morton & Ramsay, 1987) and this paper seeks to comprehend it with a view to contextualising *bogosi* and democracy in the quest for democratic consolidation. Historical accounts suggest that Botswana has a long tradition of democracy. Although there are strong debates (Mgadla & Campbell 1989; Ncgoncgo 1989) about the substance and nature of democracy in the country, it is believed to be firmly rooted in traditional Tswana culture. It is anchored on the *kgotla* (village assembly) system of consultation, which is based on the concept of *mafoko a kgotla a mantle otlhe* (free speech). As discussed in Mgadla & Campbell (1989, p 49), d*ikgosi* ruled their people, at least during the pre-colonial period, as absolute sovereigns who enjoyed hegemonic influence, and their decisions were almost always based on consensus. The assertion that *kgosi ke kgosi ka batho* (a chief is a chief by the grace of people) goes to the heart of the basis of rule by *dikgosi*. *Dikgosi* preside over *dikgotla*, which were, and still are, forums for deliberating public policy. *Kgosi* can only exercise his or her authority based on the respect of the people, and those who rule against the wishes of their people do so at their peril. The above notwithstanding, historical evidence suggests that during the pre-colonial period there were despotic *dikgosi*, just as there were benevolent ones (Potholm 1979). Similarly, in the liberal democratic setting, democracies and autocracies call themselves by the same name but these names need not cloud political analysis.

Because of the historical processes through which *merafe* (tribes) have gone it is perhaps no longer accurate to refer to them as such because they have lost the social structure that defined them; *dikgosi* who preside over them have lost their power, wealth and sovereignty. During the pre-colonial period tribalism was perhaps the highest of nationalisms because it implied complete loyalty to the *kgosi*, and recognition that he or she was the absolute sovereign, controlled the political and economic well-being of the polity, and also had divine powers for rain-making. However, in the post-colonial period tribe denotes entities that were infiltrated and undermined by colonialism, and their powers usurped by the post-colonial state. Economically, they are no longer self-sustaining entities, and depend on the central government for financial support. To this end, scholars (Sklar 1979; Diamond 1987, p 119; Mafeje 1971, pp 258-259) have asserted that it is a misnomer to talk of tribalism in the post-colonial period because tribes have been transformed and have lost their traditional essence. This is not to deny that 'tribal' sentiments still exist among people; they manifest themselves not to restore

the autonomy of the *kgosi* and *morafe* but often as a ploy to advantage the petty bourgeoisie. In this sense tribalism is seen as a 'false consciousness' that tends to 'mask class privilege'. The ruling elite often invokes tribal sentiments as a stepping-stone to a position of political power.

Scholars have suggested that perhaps the use of 'ethnicity' would be a more value-free way to refer to manifestations of 'tribal' feelings during the post-colonial period. Goldsworthy (1982, p 107) defines ethnicity, as 'a form of consciousness, a sense of identity, that is usually associated with' language and kinship. Other scholars, such as Horowitz (1985) and Diamond (1987, p 117) concur, and conceptualise ethnicity as 'based on a myth of collective ancestry, which usually carries with it traits believed to be innate', and which gives rise to a sense of group identity, affinity and solidarity.

Schraeder (2000, p 138) defines ethnicity as a sense of 'collective identity in which a people (the ethnic group) perceives itself as sharing a common historical past and a variety of social norms and customs'. These social norms and customs also define 'relationships between males and females, rites and practices of marriage and divorce, legitimate forms of governance and the proper means of resolving conflict'. The struggles of ethnic minorities to have their languages recognised as national and official, according to Horowitz (1985) referred to in Diamond (1987, p 122), 'encompasses much more than access to education and jobs in the modern sector' but also notions of people's dignity and recognition.

Although cultural attributes are not tangible, they form an essential part of people's identity, self-esteem and dignity. Horowitz (1985) further delves into the realm of 'social psychology', arguing that there is nothing more degrading than to deny a person his or her self-esteem and dignity. In what he calls the 'politics of ethnic entitlement' Horowitz (1985) states that the fear of 'domination' and exclusion by far outweigh the drive for material gain (Diamond 1987, p122). This explains why people rally behind an ethnic cause that offers no apparent economic advantages.

Arising from the modernisation theory of social change (Apter 1965; Lerner 1958; Rostow 1971) there was a strong perception that in order for Africa to develop it needed to transcend the parochial traditional institutions and embark on the road to modernisation. Lerner (1958), in particular, talked about *The Passing of the Traditional Society* and argued that, with the application of modern political institutions, ethnic identities and traditional values would disappear. The cultural values theories (Almond & Verba 1963) assert that attitudes to democracy proceed from values that are socially constructed and culturally embedded. Perhaps in a more profound way, people who retain traditional identities (based on language, ethnicity, and place of origin) rather than modern ones (such as class or occupation) are said to develop a low sense of political efficacy, low levels of interpersonal

trust, and hence low levels of what Putnam (1993) would refer to as social capital. As a result, attachment to primordial loyalties is said to undermine political development and democratic consolidation. Within this framework, tribalism was viewed as negative and backward, and progress meant shedding the ethnic loyalties.

It is also in order to point out that sociological approaches emphasise the demographic features of society wherein age, gender, location and ethnicity influence the manner in which people form political attitudes. Young people, who invariably have higher levels of education and are often located in urban centres, are less inclined to espouse traditional values and are receptive to new ideas. Rural people are often more inclined to adhere to primordial loyalties, and hence support traditional institutions, whereas urbanites are exposed to divergent views, are stimulated by a variety of social engagements, and are usually receptive to change. The patriarchal structures that are embedded in traditional societies tend to constrain women's engagement and participation in politics and leadership roles.

While *dikgotla* are said to form the basis of democratic rule in Botswana they cannot be said to encourage popular participation. In the past, women and children were not allowed to take part in *kgotla* proceedings, let alone assume office. Moreover, according to Peters (1994), the *kgotla* as a forum for public discourse excluded ethnic minorities, such as *Bakgalagadi* and *Basarwa.* Nevertheless, the installation of Kgosi Mosadi Seboko in September 2003, as a woman *kgosi kgolo* (paramount chief) of Balete, was a clear indication that *bogosi* is adapting to a 'new wave' of democratisation, and starting to be more inclusive. The patriarchal structure of the royal lineage demanded that the heir to the throne should be the oldest male sibling of the *kgosi*. In this regard, traditionalism, applied strictly, would have ruled out Kgosi Mosadi's candidature.

The institutional approaches to political development negate the relevance of traditional institutions (*bogosi* and *dikgotla*) in advancing democracy; and of necessity these institutions need to be replaced by modern ones (parliaments, courts, political parties, voting). Moreover, the hierarchical structure of Tswana society tended to undermine the non-Tswana ethnic groups who settled in their areas and this is, in part, reflected in sections of the Constitution and the Chieftaincy Act. However, with the application of modern institutions traditional norms and practices still endure. The challenge for social science research is to develop a paradigm that will unpack this relationship and a comprehensive theory that will explain the endurance of democratic transitions in traditional societies.

Political and theoretical discourses that try to understand the relationship between *bogosi* and ethnicity, on the one hand, and democratic consolidation, on the other, are limited because they depart from the basic premise that *bogosi* and

ethnicity are institutions from the authoritarian past, hence an anathema to democracy. As stated by Proctor (1968, p 59), one of the major problems faced by the architects of the new states of Africa was to carve out a 'satisfactory position for tribal authorities in a more integrated and democratic political system'. As Sklar (1999-2000, p 9) succinctly points out, the nation-states in Africa appear to be polarised by a 'dual identity'; that is identity, at one level, accorded to the 'ethnic group', and at another to the 'nation-state' manifesting a 'common citizenship'. These identities are not imaginary, they are real, and understanding them would go a long way to helping in an understanding of the dynamics of African social formations. In Botswana, these identities are not only fostered by linguistic differences but are also institutionalised by the territorial division of tribal and administrative districts. Furthermore, the arbitrary manner in which colonial boundaries were drawn, which eroded a sense of 'national identity', resulted in emerging nation-states having low levels of cohesion.

Drawing on cultural and modernisation theories Mamdani (1996) concludes that *bogosi* is a hindrance to the development of democracy. He asserts that *bogosi* leads to 'decentralized despotism' as well as the 'bifurcation' of society into 'citizens and subjects'. While his formulation clearly captures important trends during the colonial period, and has validity in some African social formations, it does not enjoy universal validity. The argument that *bogosi* is anathema to democratisation is a simplistic and perhaps Eurocentric way of looking at African social formations. Democracy must be seen as a socially constructed and embedded process that is mediated by prevailing cultural institutions. In Botswana, as clearly articulated by Nyamnjoh (2003, p 111) *bogosi* is a 'dynamic institution, constantly reinventing itself to accommodate and be accommodated by new exigencies' of democratisation. The interface between *bogosi* and democracy constitutes an 'unending project, an aspiration that is subject to renegotiation with changing circumstances and growing claims by individuals and communities for recognition and representation' (Nyamnjoh 2003, p 111).

Botswana has a Westminster-type unicameral parliamentary democracy with a National Assembly comprising two houses, Parliament and *Ntlo ya Dikgosi* (House of Chiefs). Members of Parliament are elected in a general election, except for four, who are appointed by the President for a term of five years, and Parliament is the supreme legislative organ in the land. *Ntlo ya Dikgosi*, the second chamber of Parliament, has no legislative powers and serves only in an advisory capacity. It is this crafting of the National Assembly which, while privileging Parliament, recognises the importance of *bogosi* (chieftaincy) as the basis of Tswana cultural heritage. The significance of this is that while liberal democracy is considered to be the wave of the future, there is sensitivity to traditional institutions that are highly revered, especially by the rural people. Although there

are tensions over the status of *dikgosi kgolo* and *dikgosana* (sub-chiefs) in relation to the implied social hierarchy of *dikgosi*, Botswana's political stability owes a great deal to this institution.

DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION

It is more than four decades since Botswana began what has turned out to be Africa's most enduring experience with liberal democracy. While most of Africa opted for one-party and military governments, which were the norm during the 1960s and 70s, Botswana remained resolute in its adherence to multiparty democracy. Having met the minimum conditions set out by various scholars (Dahl 1989; Przeworski 1991; Huntington 1991, Linz & Stepan 1996; Diamond 1999; Bratton et al 2005), Botswana qualifies to be counted as a democracy. Perhaps in what Huntington (1991) refers to as a 'third wave' of democratisation it is instructive to go beyond identifying the formal appearance of democracy to determining the extent of democratic consolidation. Democracy, perceived by Przeworski (1991), Linz & Stepan (1996) and Diamond (1996) as the 'the only game in town', has become a universal ideology.

Linz & Stepan (1996, p 15) define a consolidated democracy as 'a complex set of institutions, rules, and patterned incentives and disincentives that has become, in a phrase, the only game in town'. Democracy is consolidating if the processes of electing leaders into office and holding them accountable are widely accepted by the populace, and are taken as the norm for regime change. More substantively, it entails the establishment of an institutional framework for facilitating free and fair elections, the separation of powers, and effective oversight of democratic procedures, to ensure transparency and accountability.

More comprehensively, Diamond (1999) and Bratton et al (2005) refer to both 'institutionalisation' and 'legitimation' as key variables that underpin democratic consolidation. Institutionalisation is the existence of and adherence to codified rules and procedures in dispensing democratic practice. With respect to legitimation, the existence of institutional structures that supply democracy is not enough; democracy is said to be consolidating if citizens are demanding consolidation. Yet Botswana demonstrates that institutions which are defined as being outside the structure of democracy or are said to be inherently authoritarian operate within the structures of democratic institutions. The unity or convergence of opposites (parliamentary institutions and *bogosi*) in what in other traditions would manifest the reification or bifurcation of the state perhaps explain Botswana's uniqueness.

Democracy is understood to mean regular free and fair elections, enjoyment of civil liberties and political freedoms and a military that is subordinate to civil

authorities. Such a system exists in Botswana but co-exists with the traditional institution of *bogosi*. Democracy should be understood as a contested process that is evolving and ever changing. Like society, it is a dynamic process that is forever seeking to widen and deepen its frontiers. To comprehend democracy at the local level 'we need to ask ourselves not only how people understand and interpret basic democratic institutions, such as elections, but also the value people attach to [*bogosi*]' (Nyamnjoh, 2003). The fundamental conceptual issue to grapple with is that elections are one of the basic tenets of democracy, without which we cannot say we are democratising, let alone consolidating democracy. Yet *dikgosi* assume office through heredity, which is not always based on merit. A way out of this apparent paradox is that *bogosi* no longer contend for political power, the institution helps to legitimate the Westminster parliamentary system. Through their respect and influence in the rural areas *bogosi* are able to deepen democracy. For many rural people *bogosi* are not an 'obstacle to democracy, but a necessary intermediary which will ensure that change occurs in an orderly and familiar way' (William 2004, p 121). *Dikgosi* are an embodiment of identity and belonging; in the rural areas they live with their people, and their identification with government helps to legitimise government in the eyes of the people.

The basic thesis of this paper is that instead of conceiving *bogosi* and democracy, as inevitable opposites we need to reconfigure our conceptual tools and see the co-existence of the two institutions more positively. *Dikgosi* have accepted their position in the political structures of the polity. The Constitution defines them as a second chamber of the legislature without any legislative authority. *Dikgosi* are no longer contesting this position, although they would be happy with enhanced powers, but are resigned to being civil servants operating under the Minister of Local Government. In addition to accepting their advisory role on matters of tradition and culture, they have made the *kgotla* (village assembly) a way for government to communicate with the people, thereby legitimating the new governing structures. It is widely accepted that the *kgotla* is a highly respected forum and government has effectively used it to entrench itself and popularise its political and development programmes.

To say that 'democracy is the only game in town', according to the cultural values theory, is to suggest that modern values have replaced traditional ones, but in Botswana people still have multiple affiliations such as ethnic identity, which are presided over by *dikgosi*. According to the Afrobarometer data (2003), 27 per cent of Batswana identify with their ethnic group, while 42 per cent maintained a national identity. In any society 'innumerable collective entities exist to which citizens may be attached' (Dahl 1992, p 46), but such attachments do not weaken their democratic probity. To argue that *bogosi* is inconsistent with democratisation is to fall into the trap of believing that 'the development of

democratic institutions, and consequently democratisation', at least in as far as Botswana is concerned, 'are inappropriate for non-western societies' (Huntington 1991, p 22). Democracy is universal in character but in each situation is anchored in the prevailing cultural and socio-economic conditions. As a result no two democracies can ever be identical, as they are socially embedded.

Dikgosi can make a more profound contribution to the deepening of democracy in the rural setting. The Botswana government has come to terms with the fact that it would be a mistake to make people choose between liberal democracy and *bogosi* and, in fact, *bogosi* has embraced democracy. This discussion seeks to go beyond the simplistic notion of democratic consolidation as linear, with European practice seen as a paragon of excellence. To a large extent, democratic consolidation implies the emulation of Western ideals, but more fundamentally it is a process that is nurtured, given form and content by conditions that prevail in every society. For democracy to be relevant it has to be based on local conditions and mediated through people's dreams, aspirations and struggles. Botswana's uniqueness is testimony to this fact; its democracy is a reflection of the blending of the Westminster model and the traditional institution of *bogosi. Dikgosi* should be seen as intermediaries, who, in a manner different from that of civil society, 'straddle the space between the state and society' (William 2004, p 122).

With respect to liberal democratic institutions, Pippa Norris (1999), in the seminal book, *Critical Citizens*, argued that citizens may be critical of the way democracy works yet uphold it as the best form of government. In this regard, Dalton (1999) developed a scheme for evaluating the different levels of performance of democratic structures. They argued that five categories may be used to disaggregate and measure different aspects or institutions of the state. First, a democracy needs to define itself as a political community, which involves a sense of belonging to a community, priding oneself on its values and ethos and agreeing to participate in its activities. Second, regime principles refer to the defining principles of the liberal democratic state, and these principles, as espoused by Norris (1999, p 11), are civil and political liberties, political participation, tolerance of opposing political views, political opposition expressed in moderate terms, the rule of law, and respect for fundamental human rights.

Third, democracy can be conceived as an ideal and as a practice. However, since it is a symbol of righteousness and moral values it is exacting and demanding to attain. In this regard, Norris argues that it might be easy to measure the attainment of democracy as an ideal, but the most realistic way is to compare the current regime with the past regime. In most countries in Southern Africa it may be easy for people to draw a sharp distinction between present and past regimes. For instance, in South Africa, even though apartheid ended more than a decade ago, people who lived under it vividly remember it and are able to compare it

with the current dispensation. The same is true of people who lived under one-party governments, military dictatorships and personalised authoritarian rule. However, in Botswana such comparison is difficult because, since 1965, Botswana has enjoyed the democracy dividend under one democratically elected party without any difference in policy, except for leadership style. Perhaps comparison could be made with rule by *dikgosi* and the colonial administration, but such comparisons would be not fit Norris's classification.

Fourth, regime institutions involve bodies such as the executive, legislature, judiciary, civil service, military, police and so forth. Institutional support refers to perceptions by the electorate of how political institutions perform. Fifth, political actors broadly defined include politicians and political leaders. These are presidents, members of Parliament, councillors, political party leaders and, generally, office bearers of political parties. The standard measure of the performance of political actors is political trust, which is measured by questions such as, 'how much trust do you have in the presidency?' 'How much trust do you have in leaders to do what is right?'

SOCIAL CAPITAL

The seminal work of Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work* (1993), underlines the importance of the theory of social capital, which brings back into academic discourse issues of 'social trust', 'civic engagement' and 'civic networks' as indispensable attributes or raw materials or properties that make democracy work. Social capital is defined as attributes of social organisation that involve norms and values, virtues of trust, and networks that bond society together. Putnam found a strong correlation between 'civicness' and institutional or government performance. He argues that societies find virtue and gratification in the sense of being a community and in participation in community activities and public affairs. Putnam (1993, p 4) concludes that obligation to others, norms and values of solidarity, trust and tolerance, and gratification in being active in associational life lead to 'happiness in living in a civic community'. Fukuyama (1992) argues that different societies display different levels of social trust but in the main the 'willingness for people to trust strangers and institutions beyond the family have profound social and political consequences'. In the same vein, Newton (1999) argues that social trust has a strong correlation with political support.

Putnam (1993) uses the example of the revolving credit scheme (*motshelo*) to demonstrate how social capital is earned in society. In Botswana we can use the example of *motshelo* and burial societies and, to some extent, borehole syndicates through which people earn their money or pay their dues when their

turn comes. Apart from the legal rules that may be written into modern revolving schemes, in the traditional setting there would be an unwritten social contract which is trust that all members will honour their obligations until their turn comes to receive the contribution or pay their dues.
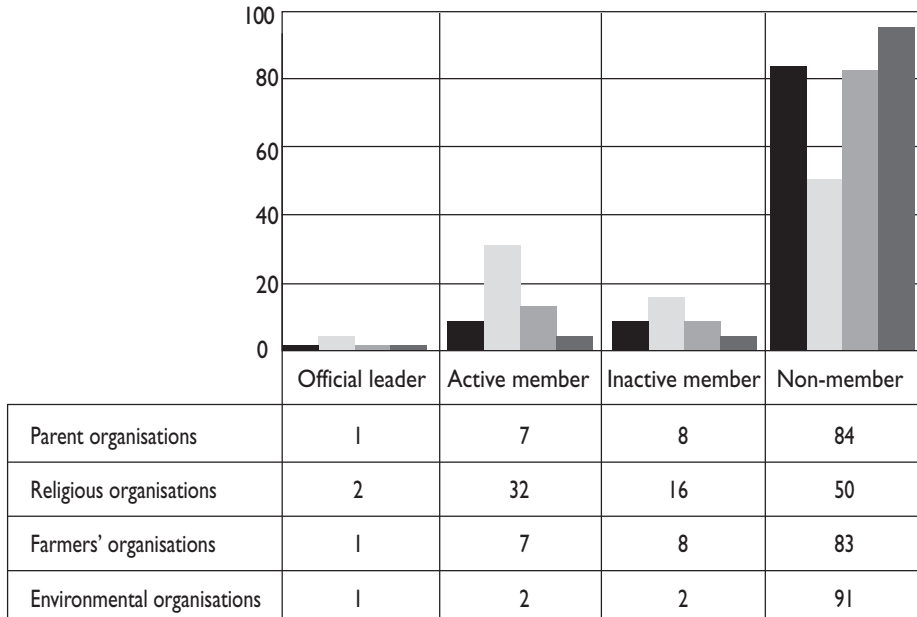
Trust is therefore a function of social capital and communities are willing to engage in common projects with the full understanding that all members of the group will meet their obligations. This trust emanates from trust that others, including strangers, will not harm you or your property or the things you treasure if they are entrusted with them. This trust can also be traced to the Tswana traditional culture of entrusting a herd of cattle, valued at hundreds of thousands of Pula, to a herdsman, in the belief that he will not steal or harm them. Perhaps more importantly, social capital is earned when people trust not only those who are personally known to them but strangers too. It relates to processes that are basic at the community level. Political trust, on the other hand, refers to attitudes to political leaders and institutions, trust in politicians and trust in institutions.

Social capital is said to be a set of social collaborations made up of the interrelationship between the norms of reciprocity, social horizontal networks and trust in the inherent goodness of people. Social capital is embodied in the social fabric of society and in relationships between people and communities. The norms of social reciprocity suggest that when societal values of honesty are internalised and accepted as social norms, deviant behaviour is shunned and despised by members of the community. As a result, individuals in their personal capacity and as members of communities face considerable social censure if they go back on what is socially accepted as the norm.

Social capital also expresses itself through networks with stronger ties building stronger networks – the stronger the networks the greater the chance that individuals and communities will cooperate for mutual gain. The re-emergence of de Tocqueville's (1968) notion of 'civic participation' underscores the centrality of cooperation and trustworthiness as virtues of a democratic citizenry. Misztal (1996, p 9) sees the revitalisation of 'civil society and an active citizenry' as an important way of realising the potential of 'cooperation, self-realization, solidarity and freedom'. Social capital enhances personal and institutional performance and efficiency, thus reinvigorating the society and the economy, and thereby making democracy work.

With the advent of modernisation as people transcend their primordial, tribal and traditional loyalties they lose the bond of family and social networks. As people move into the cities, mines, and industries, personal family and social ties are lost. It is in the wake of these that social capital emerges, not out of the 'homeboy' syndrome but out of the trust that emerges from the social networks.

Figure 1
Membership of civic organisations

	Official leader	Active member	Inactive member	Non-member
Parent organisations	1	7	8	84
Religious organisations	2	32	16	50
Farmers' organisations	1	7	8	83
Environmental organisations	1	2	2	91

Source: Afrobarometer data 2005

Drawing on the Afrobarometer data extracted from a survey conducted in 2005, Figure 1 shows that Batswana are not active members of civil society organisations. For instance, 50 per cent said they were not members of religious organisations, 83 per cent do not belong to farmers' organisations, 84 per cent were not members of parent associations, and 91 per cent did not belong to environmental organisations. Based on these low levels of civic engagement, it is not surprising that Botswana is characterised by high levels of disengagement and voter apathy. Arising out of the empirical evidence supplied by the Afrobarometer studies, it would appear that Batswana have low levels of engagement in voluntary associations and hence low levels of social capital. The question that remains is what implications low levels of social capital have for political trust?

POLITICAL TRUST

The discussion of political trust starts with the question 'What is trust?'. Trust is basically a dimension of relationship that exists between individuals, and between individuals and institutions. Trust can manifest itself at interpersonal and institutional levels. Myriad elements are involved in building trust: face-to-face

relationships between lovers, family members and friends; personal pre-disposition – some people are more trusting than others; the socialisation process; different experiences and histories; variations from country to country; and social and demographic characteristics. Hyden (1983) argues that people tend to trust their own kin, family members or tribespeople more than they do strangers or people from somewhere else. More generally, the preconditions for trust are the existence of shared values, norms and networks.

Although it is somewhat difficult to define, trust is prevalent in all forms of human interaction. It manifests itself in different cultures and the bottom line is that it is an important feature of social relationships. Simply put, trust is an important raw material for sustained and stable relationships, cooperation and exchange of ideas, goods and services. Varied and amorphous as it is, it is the central pillar of all human exchanges. Without trust individuals suffer, families break up, leaders fall, and communities perish.

Trust is essential for solving problems because it is the basis of forgiveness and the willingness to open up to the other party on the understanding that such opening up is mutual. It is also the premise on which diplomacy is based; that you negotiate on the strength of the goodwill of other parties. In this regard, trust can also be seen as a basis for building democratic values of accountability and civility. The multifaceted nature of trust has made its definition difficult but has not diminished its utility as a theoretical concept and a framework of understanding social reality. It is based on values of openness, integrity, trustworthiness and authenticity.
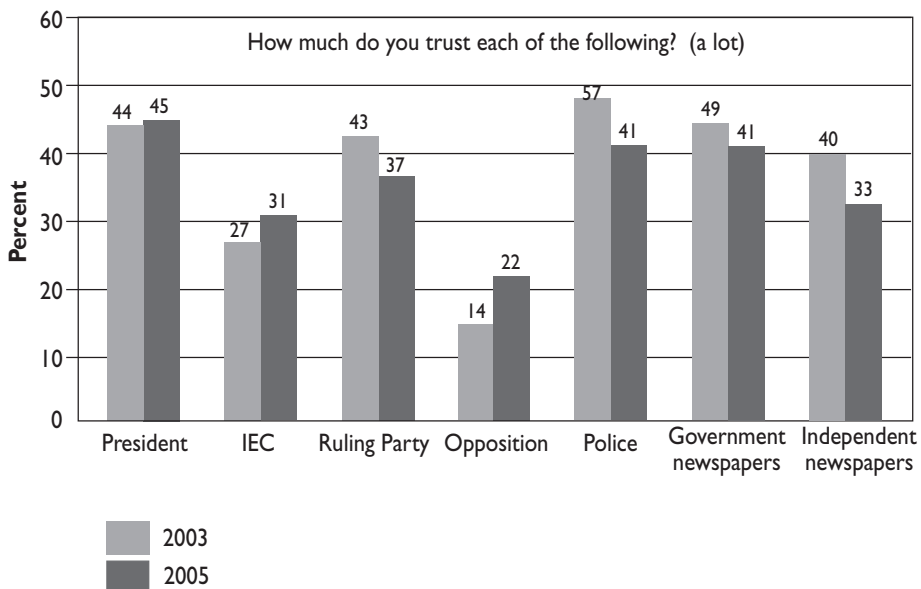
Politicians and the electorate are indispensable to making democracy work;. mutual trust is critical to political participation and the sustenance of liberal democracy. The more citizens trust politicians, the more they are likely to vote and to participate in democratic structures and processes. In this regard, Putnam (1993) argues that involvement in civic voluntary associations in which members are engaged in collective action for mutual and reciprocal benefit is likely to build interpersonal trust. However, Putnam emphasises that such collaborative work must involve informal horizontal networks because if the networks are vertical they produce patron-client relationships.

Misztal (1996, p 2) notes that the concept of trust has evolved from the narrow traditional one of individual and interpersonal trust and has permeated the institutional sphere, measuring institutional, state, corporate and global relations. Trust has transcended the private domain and is now considered a public good. The complexities of the post-modernist era and globalisation have made trust an important unit of analysis. It informs relationships between business partners and associates. Perhaps arising from globalisation, the old models of trade and economic interactions that were defined by national boundaries have been

rendered obsolete. Now, with the emergence of a borderless world, we have to reconfigure new ways of doing business and new ways of international relations, and these relationships cannot be sustained without trust. In the new dispensation we must reconfigure the new coordinates of the nation-state. Then the challenge will be to reconfigure trust in a cosmopolitan setting.

Misztal (1996, p 2) conceives of trust as a 'substitute for contractual and bureaucratic bonds' that glue communities together; as relationships that make the electorate trust politicians; relationships that make people trust political institutions; and relationships that make people trust markets. Political trust is a manifestation of social capital. The triumph of capitalism over other economic models requires a clear perception of how it can be sustained and even managed in the era of globalisation. In the post-modern era, Misztal (1996, p 6) asserts, the dominant rationality is market economics. Although markets are good at regulating prices and the supply of commodities they seem inadequate at self-regulation. The market needs the virtues of civility, honesty, integrity and trust to work smoothly and effectively yet it cannot produce these values. Perhaps this goes to the very heart of the crisis of liberal democracy – it may be a better form of government than any imagined alternative but cannot provide social justice and equitable distribution of resources.

Figure 2
Trust in Institutions

How much do you trust each of the following? (a lot)

Institution	2003	2005
President	44	45
IEC	27	31
Ruling Party	43	37
Opposition	14	22
Police	57	41
Government newspapers	49	41
Independent newspapers	40	33

Afrobarometer data 2003 and 2005

Figure 2 reflects the levels of political trust in institutions in Botswana. What is interesting is that, apart from the police in 2003, all the ratings for 2003 and 2005 are below 50 per cent. Perhaps this supports the thesis that because Batswana manifest low civic engagement and hence low social capital there is low political capital leading to low political trust. Even more disturbing is the fact that opposition parties and the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), which are among the principal actors in a democracy, scored the lowest ratings on political trust.

THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY IN BOTSWANA

Social capital, on the one hand, is a feature that relates to community social interactions which accumulate social trust. Political trust, on the other hand, relates to attitudes to and perceptions of political institutions and leaders. The two are closely related and mutually reinforcing in building lasting democratic values; they can be seen as two sides of the same coin. More substantively, the accumulation of social capital in the form of social trust leads to the accumulation of political capital, which leads to political trust. This paper explains why Batswana have low levels of civic engagement and political trust.

Participation

There is widespread agreement among democracy theorists (Rousseau 1969; Mill 1972; Dahl 1989; Held 1996; Diamond 1999) that active political participation is the lifeblood of representative democracy, which is at the heart of liberal democracy. Although there are considerable differences in the degree of political participation necessary for democracy to function effectively the common values espoused by democracy theorists are that civic engagements are intrinsically associated with a well-functioning democracy. Bratton (1989, p 552) defines political participation as a multi-dimensional process in which voting is a critical component but also includes other important activities including, among others, standing for political office, doing volunteer work in a political campaign, mobilising others to lobby policy issue, contacting or engaging an elected representative over an issue, engaging in mass action and taking part in voluntary associations.

　　Although political participation is a necessary but insufficient condition for democracy, it remains an indispensable attribute of liberal democratic politics. A high degree of disengagement from democratic institutions may weaken, if not paralyse, the democratic process. Political participation is not only measured by participation in elections or in institutions that are overtly political, it also manifests in civic engagement. Support for a government may be measured by the recognition that it is legitimately elected; by a willingness to comply with its

decisions, to pay taxes, and to participate in a broad array of its activities. Yet this show of support does not mean that citizens may not be critical of government and its performance. Moreover, lack of participation in political institutions does not necessarily mean a lack of interest or disengagement from politics.

Table 1
Voting Trends
1965 - 2004

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Year	Voting age population	Total registered	Total voted	% of 2/1	% of 3/1	% of 3/2
1965	202 800	188 950	140 858	93	69	75
1969	205 200	140 428	76 858	68	37	55
1974	244 200	205 050	64 011	84	26	31
1979	290 033	230 231	134 496	79	46	58
1984	420 400	293 571	227 756	70	54	78
1989	522 900	367 069	250 487	70	48	68
1994	634 920	361 915	277 454	57	45	77
1999	867 000	459 662	354 466	53	41	77
2004	920 000	552 849	421 272	60	46	76
			Average	**70**	**46**	**66**

Source: Election Reports

As Table 1 indicates a decline in political activity has long been a feature of Botswana politics.

A measure of political participation is that since the independence elections of 1965 Botswana has held eight other elections at intervals of five years, in a multiparty framework. Although the regularity of these elections is a feature worth celebrating because other countries opted for a one-party system we need to view elections more critically. In some jurisdictions elections were held merely to legitimise the authoritarian system that was in place. In Botswana they are held within the framework of a predominant-party system. A disturbing feature of

the Botswana elections is that, of the nine, only two – those conducted in 1965 and 1984 – returned the ruling party by a minority vote. However, if voter turnout is narrowly defined as the percentage of those who voted against those registered to vote all nine elections returned the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) by an overall majority. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this paper, voter turnout was calculated as a percentage of those who actually voted against the eligible voting population. The results show that Botswana manifests high levels of voter apathy. Since Botswana's electoral system provides for a simple majority all these election outcomes were lawful and were a legitimate basis for forming a government. This paper, however, submits that the electoral laws should be reviewed to ensure that governments are formed on the basis of majority rule.

There is increasing concern in Botswana about a growing decline in political participation: citizens are increasingly disengaged and uninterested in politics. This state of affairs runs contrary to the widely accepted norm propounded by Dalton (1996, p 40) that 'democracy should be a celebration of an involved public'. The reality is that citizens are generally disengaged from politics. This concern is shared across the political spectrum and, in response to this state of affairs, the IEC commissioned a Voter Apathy study in 2002 to investigate the causes of voter apathy and how they may be resolved.

To be sure, the theory and practice of political participation is highly contested. Schumpeter (1950) argues for a minimalist view of citizen participation in politics, maintaining that the populace must be called upon to participate in politics only when it matters, that is, when they are called upon to renew the mandate of the political elite after five years. The argument is that between elections the elected representatives and the bureaucracy should act and decide on behalf of the rest of the population. Berelson et al (1954) and Duncan & Lukes (1966, p 161) observe that in reality less than one-third of the population is interested in politics, and many are not well informed. Based on empirical evidence, especially in developed countries, which have had more experience of democracy, there are significant declines in voter turnout at the polls (Norris 2002) and this feature is manifesting itself in Africa.

However, Mill (1972) advances the contrary argument that participation in civic life is a virtue and makes one a better citizen. He contends that in democratic politics it does not help to be a passive citizen allowing others to take decisions on one's behalf. Instead, he argues, citizens must acquire skills and get to know more about how the government works when they take part in its activities. Nevertheless, we must bear in mind that a high voter turnout does not always signify a well functioning democracy; at times a high turnout legitimises an authoritarian government, as was the case in Zimbabwe's 2005 parliamentary elections.

The Voter Apathy Study (2002) revealed an overwhelming perception that politicians assume public office not to serve the people but to enrich themselves. Participants felt politicians were interested in them only during the campaign process in order to win their votes and, once elected, forgot about them.

It would be wrong and misleading to conceive of political participation only in terms of categories and yardsticks developed in European social formations. Clearly liberal democracy as it is conceived today is the brainchild of European political experience. When we apply it to Africa, we must take cognisance of prevailing African institutions, norms and cultures. Invariably, when we talk of governance in Africa, Botswana in particular, we cannot escape recognising the centrality of *bogosi*. The big question is: did Batswana in the traditional setting elect *dikgosi*? How did the system remove from office leaders who were no longer useful? Were there periodic elections? The answer to all these questions is No! Given this state of affairs, it is understandable that Batswana do not have a culture of participation. However, Batswana participate in large numbers in their own traditional rituals such as weddings and funerals.

Predominant-Party System

Elections are the most common way in which people express their political preferences, and where there is a general lack of interest in politics and people do not vote in large numbers, this would perhaps be the first indication of a malfunctioning democracy. Moreover, in a situation such as that in Botswana, where political competition returns one political party to political power election after election and opposition parties remain fractured and polarised and unable to unseat the incumbent party such competition becomes symbolic and ineffective.

However, there is nothing inherently wrong with the predominant-party system wherein one party wins all the elections. When a party is returned to power as an expression of confidence and goodwill it is a matter worth celebrating. Where the predominant party system is a manifestation of inequities on the political playing field, though, there is cause for concern. In every election some parties and candidates win, while others lose. Over time, cumulative experience of winning and losing shapes peoples' perceptions of and attitudes towards a political regime. As a result, as Norris (1999, p 219) suggests , people may feel that

> representative institutions are responsive to [their] needs so [they] can trust the political system. If [they] feel that the party [they] prefer persistently loses, over successive elections, [they] are more likely to feel that [their] voice is excluded from the decision-making process, producing dissatisfaction with the political institutions.

The above quotation goes a long way to explaining why, as demonstrated in Figure 2, people tend to have more trust in the ruling party than in the opposition parties. The predominant-party system tends to reinforce these tendencies and perceptions. Holm (1987) makes the important observation that as political parties campaign and mobilise the electorate they become better known, appreciated and supported by the populace. As a result, political parties with coherent manifestos and effective campaign strategies are in a better position to command political trust. Over the years the BDP has been the ruling party and has effectively taken advantage of its incumbency to maintain a high level of visibility and contact with the people.

Its organisational structure and the resources it commands have enabled it to reach all areas of the country, including the most remote. As a result it has succeeded in cultivating high levels of political trust. As a corollary, members of the BDP are more likely to contact and trust politicians and participate in political activities. Conversely, supporters of opposition parties are probably less trusting of political institutions because, although they are allowed to participate freely in the country's political activities, they feel there are structural impediments that render their political participation ineffectual. Moreover, the break-up of the Botswana National Front (BNF) in 1998 and the continued fracture of the opposition parties and their failure to coalesce and form a credible alliance or coalition to present an effective challenge to the BDP has led to a decline in people's faith in opposition politics.

The decline in confidence in the integrity of political institutions and politicians does not emerge in a social vacuum, it is a result of trying social and economic realities in Africa. At every election the electorate is told that democracy is a process that will deliver development, bring services and better their lives. Yet once elected to power political parties renege on these deliverables and claim that economic goods and services can only be delivered by the market. This feature is characteristic of what Ake (2000) refers to as the democratisation of disempowerment – where democracy is unable to address problems of poverty, unemployment and income inequalities. The predominant-party system gives the impression of a choiceless democracy where the ballot paper lists several parties but in practice only one stands to win. In such circumstances people tend to disengage from politics

CONCLUSION

Contrary to Putnam's notion that civic engagement leads to the creation of the social capital necessary for political participation Batswana do not participate in voluntary associations and are generally apathetic. Yet, unlike people in the rest

of Africa, they have had sustained experience of liberal democracy. But, as ably demonstrated by Norris, a decline in civic engagement is not only observed in Botswana, it is prevalent worldwide. It is also pointed out by Berelson et al (1954) and Duncan & Lukes (1966) that only a small proportion of people in the world are politically engaged and active. The conclusion I draw from their experience with democratic transition is that far from regressing, save for minor reforms that are necessary, Botswana's democracy is consolidating. I argue that a factor that accounts for its stability is its history of traditional rule, based on the democracy of the *kgotla* system. Moreover, the careful blending of traditional institutions with modern ones forms the basis of stable democratic rule.

Let me further clarify that it would be a misnomer to call Botswana's democracy consolidated – no democracy can ever be consolidated; democracy is constantly under construction and changing. Overall, Botswana has a working democracy. Although some of the democracy indicators are distressed, it would be wrong to say that her democracy is not working. I agree with the notion propounded by Norris that it is normal for people to identify strongly with democratic values but criticise the manner in which they are practised. As is the case in Botswana, people trust political institutions but remain critical of politicians.

Finally, liberal democracy manifests itself as a process that maintains the rule of law and defines the organisational structure of society and the dispersal of political power. In a liberal democratic setting the state should define or specify the limits of democratic freedom and self-actualisation of its citizens. However, with globalisation it is not clear what people are choosing when they elect a new government into office because governments have lost their power to global markets. The market has become a living reality, consumer identity has become the over-riding identity and democratic politics plays second fiddle. This impasse occurs because markets are self-seeking entities driven by profit. Governments have lost their power and sovereignty to some amorphous transnational phenomenon which is not amenable to democratic control. Far from manifesting the consolidation of democracy, this state of affairs manifests the crisis of liberal democracy, a crisis that is acute in the global periphery.

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