

Southern Africa Report

Botswana's foreign policy in SADC Business unusual?

Dimpho Motsamai

Summary

Botswana's role as chair of SADC from 2015 to 2016 has reinvigorated debate in the country over the need for a structured foreign policy framework. Currently, there is no national consensus about Botswana's national interests and how, in achieving them, the country behaves towards others, politically, socially, economically and militarily. The country's foreign diplomacy has evolved over the decades since independence from survivalism to promoting strong regional alliances. Past administrations have adopted a consultative approach to their less democratic neighbours, preferring private meetings to public admonishments. But personalities have a strong influence over policy, and President Ian Khama's tough, outspoken and pragmatic approach is often misunderstood and criticised.

BOTSWANA IS GENERALLY REPUTED to have a strong and stable democracy. Apart from its internal stability, it also enjoys good relations with its neighbours in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.¹ But recently, under the current president, Ian Khama, questions have been raised about the country's regional foreign policy and strategy and the parameters that shape decision-making.² While Botswana's diplomacy has varied over time, adapting to circumstances and needs, the practice under the current president has departed from the conventions set by his three predecessors.³

There are also questions about Botswana's diplomatic influence in the region and the kind of premium it places on its relationships within SADC. In light of these questions 2015 has been a watershed year for the country's foreign policy in the SADC region. Under Khama's administration Botswana has, for the first time, assumed SADC's annual rotational chairmanship. This presents an opportunity for the Khama administration to strengthen the articulation of the country's policy directions in the region and the way SADC fits into its development strategies.

Botswana's chairmanship is significant for a number of other reasons too. The country's first president and the incumbent's father, Sir Seretse Khama, is hailed as one of the founding fathers of SADC. Secondly, the country hosts the institution's headquarters. Moreover, Botswana, which chaired the region for 16 consecutive years under SADC's predecessor, the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), was lauded as one of SADC's 'Big-3', along with South Africa and Zimbabwe – a fact that attests to its diplomatic significance in the past.⁴

There are questions about Botswana's diplomatic influence in the region, and the kind of premium it places on its relationships within SADC

The timing of the chairmanship is also significant. Botswana faces challenges in establishing itself as an industrialising state within the SADC region and, equally, in maintaining old political alliances. Internally, the domestic constraints are diverse and include a heavy dependence on mining and beef production, with little sign of structural diversification. These structural deficiencies have implications for the country's socio-economic development.⁵ A country's foreign policy is often bolstered by its domestic economic profile, in particular, aggregate wealth and rising standards of living. Its primary production character may undercut Botswana's diplomatic profile.

Another significant challenge is revealed from key developments in Botswana's external engagements following its independence in 1966. Both the country's foreign policy process and the actors who influence decision-making are in a constant state of flux. Often institutional practices and culture have been substituted for the need to develop a more structured framework for external engagement. Recent efforts by the government to redefine its foreign policy framework are among attempts to remedy this situation. An initiative launched in 2011 sought to provide a more enabling environment for foreign policy coordination and implementation and to help explain the domestic factors that should drive the country's external engagement.

Undeniably, the factors that shape the framing of foreign policy objectives, its implementation and the decision-making procedures, change over time. This report, therefore, discusses Botswana's patterns of engagement with and within SADC and how these have largely shaped its foreign policy in the region.

The report is divided into five sections. The first presents a broad overview of Botswana's foreign policy tenets and the institutions that have driven its implementation. The second highlights the historical factors that influenced state behaviour regionally and the normative foundations of the country's foreign policy. The third part of the report examines the role of Botswana in the creation of SADC and the management of regional relations under the administrations of former presidents Quett Masire and Festus Mogae. The fourth examines Botswana's record of diplomacy in SADC under the Khama administration. The report concludes with a reflection on whether there is continuity of policy across administrations. It then highlights opportunities for a more structured foreign policy framework.



THE SADC HEADQUARTERS ARE
LOCATED IN BOTSWANA

An overview of Botswana's foreign policy

Broadly defined, the term foreign policy applies to a country's strategy in dealing with affairs outside its territorial borders. It also denotes the pursuit of domestic interests

externally on the basis of nationally defined values, beliefs and objectives.⁶ In a sense, foreign policy is the externalisation of national interest.

Historically, Botswana's foreign policy has been based on eight tenets outlined in a statement made by its first president, Sir Seretse Khama

Inherent too in such an approach is the ability to adapt to changing internal and external contexts. This has been characteristic of Botswana, a small, landlocked country which has undergone different phases of development along with differing degrees of engagement in various regional and international organisations. The most significant for the country, by virtue of its geography and political and economic profile, are: SADC, the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and the African Union (AU). Botswana is also a member of the United Nations, the Commonwealth and the Non-Aligned Movement, among others.

Historically, Botswana's foreign policy has been based on eight tenets outlined in a policy statement made by its first president, Sir Seretse Khama, on 28 March 1970, at the congress of the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) in Molepolole, Botswana.⁷ The principles are elaborated as follows:

- Democracy: this referred to establishing relations with democratic countries and jointly pursuing democratic ideals and encompassed the peaceful resolution of conflict, self-determination and the provision of refuge to victims of racial oppression;
- Development: the focus was on attracting development assistance and foreign direct investment. Emphasis was on supporting initiatives that promoted a more equitable world trading system as well as protecting Botswana's infant industries;
- African unity and non-alignment: this was about diversifying relations with many countries, while supporting unity on the continent;
- Self-reliance: strategies included reducing excessive dependence on external aid, negotiating aid 'without strings' and forging closer bilateral, regional and South-South relations;
- Good neighbourliness: mostly within the region, with emphasis on peaceful coexistence with South Africa;
- Peaceful resolution of conflicts;
- Territorial integrity; and
- Respect for the sovereignty of all nations.

Today, the country continues to adhere to these tenets with some added caveats. These include providing greater support for multilateralism and regional integration. Botswana also aims to promote: international goodwill and friendship; international co-operation; trade, investment and tourism; peace, growth and development.⁸ The country also wants to integrate foreign policy more concretely in its national development agenda.

The same eight principles have been reiterated in subsequent manifestos of the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), the party that has ruled Botswana since independence.⁹ The most recent version (2014–2019) reflects this consistency. It lists: peaceful coexistence, good neighbourliness, respect for the sovereignty and territorial



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integrity of all nations, abiding by the country's international obligations and contributing to international peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts as indispensable to its diplomacy.¹⁰ It is, however, important to note that the BDP does not have a foreign policy committee. Its central committee decides on all party policy.¹¹

In 2011, the government launched an initiative to review and redefine its foreign policy framework and to develop a national consensus on its strategy and approach.¹² A Task Force on Foreign Policy was formed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MOFAIC) to steer the process. The ministry produced a draft concept paper, which was circulated throughout the government, to stimulate discussion about the recipients' areas of competence in relation to foreign policy development. Two multi-stakeholder workshops on foreign policy took place.¹³ Finally, a foreign policy 'Pitso' or consultative conference was convened in 2012. The outcome was a draft proposal on the framework, which was given to government for consideration. The process of finalising the initiative has since stalled and was ongoing at the time of writing.

In 2011, the government launched an initiative to review and redefine its foreign policy framework

The way in which a government is organised also affects foreign policy administration, institutionalisation, bureaucratisation and oversight. Four institutions play a significant role in these areas. The first is the Office of the President (OP). Since the 1980s, the OP has played a central role in external diplomatic engagement and in setting the country's foreign policy agenda. This centrality is consistent with the powers given to the president by Botswana's Constitution, which vests executive power in the institution of the presidency. In the 1980s, the OP was regarded as a super-ministry, encompassing defence, foreign affairs, broadcasting and the press, police, public service and Parliament itself.¹⁴

Whether it currently acts as a super-ministry is debatable. Its role now is to provide overall national leadership and direction (conceptual and operational) in all matters of national importance. It is additionally responsible for policy coordination, monitoring and evaluation. Because of its centrality, the OP is responsible for ensuring that there is coherence in overall national policy and that all resources are used optimally.¹⁵ Accordingly, it provides oversight over the work of key ministries involved in foreign policy implementation, including those concerning Botswana's engagements within SADC.

The second is the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, which has served historically as the institutional repository for SADC work. It has evolved to become the country's SADC focal point. Focal points – officially developed by SADC in 1992 – can best be described as administrative and coordinating structures between SADC member states and the Secretariat. The finance ministry facilitates the involvement of Botswana in regional and global economic issues.¹⁶

But finance ministries are traditionally not attuned to political diplomacy, hence the important role of MOFAIC, which evolved out of the Department of External Affairs established in the Office of the President in 1966. The department was upgraded to a fully-fledged ministry outside the OP in 1998.

Since 1966, Botswana has had eight foreign affairs ministers: Moutlakgola P K Nwako (1966–1969), Edison Masisi (1969–1971), Bakwana Kgosiidintsi Kgari (1971–1974), Archibald Mogwe (1974–1984), Gaositwe Choepe (1984–1994), Mompoti Merafe (1994–2008), Phandu Skelemani (2008–2014) and Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi (2014 to date).

The foreign affairs ministry has been responsible for representing Botswana in its dealings with other nations and international organisations. It coordinates the activities of all the groups, agencies and interdepartmental committees participating in the formulation and execution of foreign policy, including activities concerning SADC.

Unlike the finance ministry, which has a specific SADC office, MOFAIC has an all-encompassing department that focuses on Africa and the Middle East. The department is responsible for the promotion of relations among Botswana, African countries and the Middle East, as well as continental organisations, notably SACU, SADC and the AU.¹⁷ The ministry's foreign affairs activities are also carried out through Botswana's diplomatic missions abroad. On the African continent Botswana has nine missions, located in South Africa (Pretoria and Johannesburg), Namibia, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Nigeria and Ethiopia.¹⁸

The fourth institution is the Botswana Parliament, whose role in foreign policy processes includes ratifying treaties and making decisions about policy choices and about budget allocations to implementing ministries. The parliamentary review process and foreign affairs committees should also enable consultation and debate on foreign policy matters. But overall, Parliament has played a limited role in foreign policy decision-making, mostly reviewing decisions already made by the executive.

The reason for this is that Botswana's constitutional structure vests the conduct of foreign affairs in the executive. It can also be attributed to the longstanding dominance of the BDP in the

legislature and the fact that the small opposition could not exercise effective influence over foreign policy decisions.

However, in recent years, opposition numbers have gradually increased. In the 2014 general election, the opposition won 20 of a total of 57 seats, giving it some influence over policy.¹⁹ This influence and the future of Parliament's involvement will, however, depend on many factors, including whether oversight instruments are habitually applied in all policy areas including foreign affairs.

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Historical factors shaping Botswana's foreign policy

Botswana's foreign relations, like those of many African states, are a product of its colonial history. The country's quest for security during its colonial days and up to 1961 was manifested primarily in avoiding absorption into the Union of South Africa. The country's foreign policy precepts, therefore, evolved from the early days of independence, when the link between internal politics and foreign policy became increasingly apparent.²⁰

Botswana achieved independence in 1966 as a grant-aided, poor and dependent territory. The country was weak and surrounded by hostile white minority regimes, notably apartheid South Africa, South West Africa (now Namibia), Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe) and Portuguese-led Mozambique and Angola. As former President Ketumile Masire has said, post-independence Botswana was essentially a poor country living in the shadow of apartheid, with South Africa, Namibia, and Rhodesia, then still under white minority rule.²¹ Landlocked and in a difficult geographical position, the country had to co-exist and survive, often with unfriendly neighbours.²²

It was specifically in relation to apartheid South Africa that, having acquired the formal status of a sovereign country, Botswana asserted itself. This was to counter South Africa's perception that its independence was in accordance with the Bantustan model.²³ An ambition of the apartheid administration was to control and influence the political future of Botswana along similar lines to those of the Bantustans.

In this hostile environment Seretse Khama, as president of a developing democracy, called for mutual understanding, discussion and change through negotiation, while attempting to maintain a domestic polity based on the rule of law, democratic practice and social harmony.²⁴ Therefore, the driving force behind Botswana's policies then was the constant need to survive and to protect its territorial integrity, while safeguarding its security and economic viability.

In 1966, the Department of External Affairs was established in the Office of the President and given responsibility for managing Botswana's relations with the international community.²⁵ The initial years of its evolution coincided with the development of an explicitly political role for its president. This came after the early search for aid and the re-negotiation of the SACU Agreement with South Africa, which was concluded in 1969.

The country's diplomacy in the SACU negotiations led to the development of a clearer diplomatic style and strategy, which its first president referred to as 'Botswana's outward drive'.²⁶ Subsequent patterns of the country's external diplomacy after independence were illustrated during his international visits. The Commonwealth



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meetings are instructive cases in point. During his first visit to the Commonwealth Conference, in 1969, for instance, Khama was unequivocal in his support for the concept of 'no independence before majority rule'.²⁷ This put a relatively unknown Botswana on the diplomatic map and signalled its intention not only to look after its domestic interests but also to engage in regional politics.

Khama also raised Botswana's diplomatic profile in 1970, when he attempted to find a means by which the Commonwealth secretary general might mediate in a constitutional crisis in Lesotho. His method was to use 'private diplomacy' to influence African Commonwealth governments who were averse to international interference in African politics. But regional leaders like Zambia's Kenneth Kaunda and Hastings Banda of Malawi resisted the initiative. While this was the case, the approach to influence from behind was to be the first of many offstage activities in multilateral contexts. The style under Khama was for Botswana to help others achieve success through private diplomatic persuasion.²⁸

Accordingly, Botswana's diplomacy and style were aimed at avoiding 'too public a stand' on issues and against 'too much position taking', both of which were perceived to limit prospects for successful negotiations.²⁹ The approach was about strategic re-positioning and providing an opportunity for the country to remain an avenue for peaceful action for change in Southern Africa. In one way, the approach can be considered a softer version of realism. Realists prescribe policies that maximise state interests in an effort to seek relative gains and preserve balances of power.³⁰

Botswana's diplomacy in the post-independence era can similarly be seen within its membership of the Front Line States (FLS). Created in 1974, the FLS was an informal diplomatic and political alliance for coordinating the politics of liberation in Southern Africa. It was based on the 1969 Lusaka Manifesto of the Organisation of African Unity.

Botswana became part of the FLS through its support for the armed struggle in the region. The strategy was to help end white minority rule and protect its own viability and survival. As early as 1973 President Khama acknowledged that, should peaceful means fail to bring about a settlement of the conflict in South Africa, his government would show understanding 'when the people concerned decide to resort to violent means'. In 1975, after the first series of FLS meetings, he indicated that, barring advances in the negotiations, Africa would have no choice but to give full support to the freedom struggle.³¹

However, the country was confronted with a double challenge. On the one hand, there was a need to avoid antagonising its apartheid neighbours, on the other, it needed to retain the moral high ground by granting temporary refuge to liberation fighters from neighbouring states. The refuge was temporary because Botswana did not provide bases for the different liberation movements in the region. Instead, it became a haven for large numbers of refugees. Between 1976 and 1979 Botswana took care of over 30 000 refugees fleeing from Namibia, Rhodesia, Angola and South Africa. This practice did not protect it from foreign incursions, also targeted at refugee camps. It is largely for this reason that the Botswana Defence Force (BDF) was established in 1977.³² The country's defence policy was also conceived during this period.

While Botswana publically supported the liberation struggle, its relations within FLS were not always easy to manage. Some friction existed over the extent to which



BOTSWANA BECAME PART OF THE FLS THROUGH ITS SUPPORT FOR THE ARMED STRUGGLE IN THE REGION

Botswana and its ruling party supported the member states' liberation.³³ The degree of Botswana's support for the liberation parties in Zimbabwe illustrates this. Together with Zambia, it leaned more towards the faction of the Patriotic Front, which was led by a relatively moderate Joshua Nkomo. The rest of the FLS has stronger ties with Robert Mugabe, who led the more radical wing of the party.

Another area of friction was divergences in the policy approaches of the FLS during the Angolan civil war. For instance, countries like Tanzania and Mozambique had clear alliances with the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) while Zambia gave tacit support to the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and also advocated a government of national unity. Botswana's position was often ambiguous in such scenarios. Its approach was to adopt a principled position supporting all parties that were engaged in the liberation struggle, without necessarily defining its ideological leanings.

The BDP in SADC

The role of the ruling BDP in the construction of foreign policy and regional alliances is important in understanding the dynamics of Botswana's diplomacy. The BDP, which was conceived in 1961, associated itself with the idea of democratic change, stability and economic development.³⁴ As highlighted, in terms of its FLS membership, the BDP as a party in government led by Khama, together with Zambia under Kenneth Kaunda and Tanzania under Julius Nyerere, advocated majority rule in Southern Africa.³⁵

Initially, however, the BDP's relationships with other liberation groups and parties in the region were not strong. It was the country's main opposition party, the Botswana National Front (BNF), which initially cultivated strong relations with liberation groups. This was mainly attributed to its socialist background and ability to forge ideological links with them.³⁶ For instance, the major link between the BNF and South Africa's African National Congress (ANC) was a common left-leaning political outlook and the fact that some founding members of the BNF were formerly ANC activists in South Africa prior to the banning of the movement in 1960.

As an opposition party, the BNF had more leeway to define its support for the ANC and other liberation parties and it did so overtly. In contrast, the BDP, as a ruling party in government, adopted a balance between providing moral support and token assistance to liberation groups and avoiding a backlash from the white minority ruling regimes in neighbouring states. Botswana depended on these states heavily, both economically and in terms of infrastructure links.³⁷ The BDP government understood its stance against the apartheid

regimes as one of principle and pragmatism.³⁸ But it arguably alienated the party from the liberation movements in the region. Moreover, there were perceptions that the BDP was a neo-colonial puppet.

The game-changer in these relationships was the establishment of SADC. Khama's pioneering role in the process changed the image of the BDP and strengthened its links with the liberation parties in the region. The other contributing factor was that the parties developed a collective ideology around strengthening pan-African development. SADC was seen as the entity through which this could be done. This ultimately gave the BDP a foreign policy outlook that was strongly rooted within the SADC region.

While Botswana publically supported the liberation struggle, its relations within FLS were not always easy to manage

It was only after 1994 that the dynamics with the ANC changed. The ANC's victory in the 1994 general election and a major split in the BNF in 1998 forced the ANC to align itself with its ruling counterpart, the BDP. This was a position adopted by the ANC in relation to other former liberation groups (such as the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front – ZANU-PF – in Zimbabwe and the South West African People's Organisation – SWAPO – in Namibia).³⁹ So the ANC as a ruling party was obliged to deal with the BDP at governmental level. Likewise, Angola's MPLA and the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) government in Mozambique, then very socialist, had to work with a pro-capitalist BDP government as opposed to the socialist BNF.

Botswana and the creation of SADC(C)

Botswana is not often considered to be a major player in SADC, as far as influence and security interests are concerned. But, as noted, the country was instrumental in the creation of its forerunner, the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), as part of the FLS core along with Tanzania, Zambia and Mozambique. The FLS became the nucleus of SADCC.

The primary motive behind the SADCC initiative was to force a realignment of economic relations among and between its members and, among other intentions, change the pattern of asymmetrical economic relations with South Africa, to which they were historically linked as junior partners. During its formative years, Sir Seretse Khama led the processes of defining the conference's policy orientation, particularly in 1979 at the Arusha conference on economic cooperation which

preceded SADCC's formation. SADCC was thus a product of the attempts to translate the political unity achieved by the FLS into a regional economic order divorced from South Africa. Botswana's role in the processes that eventually led to its establishment in 1980 was critical. The role included:

- Defending the SADCC blueprint: When the creation of a sub-regional economic community was recommended in the 1970s by the FLS, there were divisions between members over whether to establish a Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) instead.⁴⁰ During the negotiations Botswanan negotiators played an important role in defending the SADCC blueprint. Later, SADC was able to secure South African membership, something COMESA was unable to do.
- Housing the organisation's headquarters: SADCC members nominated Botswana to host the institution's headquarters. Botswana was the first chair of the organisation and served in that role for 16 consecutive years. It also substantively funded the running of the Secretariat.
- Acting as a resource and investment mobiliser: Botswana used its geography and stability to present itself as a regional hub and gateway for development assistance and investment. It was also the first of the SADCC member states to invest millions in the rehabilitation of rail infrastructure.

Relations within SADC: 1980–1998

Quett Masire played a pivotal role in the development of Botswana's independence and that of the Southern African region. He served as deputy prime minister of Bechuanaland during the 1965–66 transitional periods of nominal self-government, as independent Botswana's first vice-president and minister of finance and development planning (1966–1980) and as the second president of Botswana (1980–1998).

Masire, later Sir Ketumile Masire, was particularly instrumental in the formation of SADCC, which he chaired in its formative years. As the founding minister of finance and development planning, his tenure helped strengthen Botswana's policy formulation in relation to macro-economic prudence. His administration was also very active in the management of the organisation's affairs because its focal point was located in his ministry. The active role of finance remained, even after the foreign affairs ministry was created⁴¹

According to Masire, the decision that Botswana should chair the organisation was made by the regional heads of state, who re-endorsed this position for 16 years. The reason, he said, was Botswana's political stability, international reputation and credibility. These were considered by the leaders to be most

conducive to supporting the institution's regional integration projects and to attracting development assistance for its programmes.

The 16-year tenure was significant, strengthening Botswana's regional portfolio because it had to manage the organisation efficiently in a changing regional context. For instance, the 1990s saw a diminution of conflict in the region (the end of civil war in Mozambique and the reduction of hostilities in Angola), in addition, of course, to the dawning of majority rule in South Africa. The changes necessitated a leadership able to adapt and strengthen the organisation as required by changing circumstances. Botswana's focus was to push for greater regional co-operation and actively mobilise resources for the organisation's development plans.

But to do this, Botswana had to strengthen its regional alliances. As chair of the organisation, the country had to maintain good working relationships with other countries presiding over key SADC institutions such as the SADC Organ for Defence, Politics, and Security, continuously headed by Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe until 1996. A culture of cooperation developed between Botswana and Zimbabwe during those years, culminating in a joint intervention by the SADC 'Big-3' (Mugabe, Masire and Nelson Mandela) to quell the 1994 Lesotho military uprising. Their influence was equally important in persuading Mozambique National Resistance's Afonso Dhlakama to participate in the country's 'multiparty elections' in 1994.⁴² Masire highlighted that during his tenure, quiet diplomacy, confidentiality and strengthening African capacity and agency were key to Botswana's regional strategy.

Mogae's regional diplomacy: 1998–2008

Undoubtedly, Masire heavily influenced Botswana's regional diplomacy under President Festus Mogae. Masire's legacy was certainly pivotal to the evolution of Botswana's relations with its peers, but also to the management and oversight of its regional engagement. When he handed over to his successor, Mogae, like himself a former finance minister, there was much continuity in Botswana's regional engagement. Institutionally, this was reflected in the upgrading of the Department of Foreign Affairs to a fully-fledged ministry.⁴³

During the process consideration was given to maintaining the consultative and cooperative culture between ministries that had existed. There was also emphasis on including both Cabinet and Parliament in decision-making.⁴⁴ While recognising the centrality of the powers of the president on foreign policy matters, Mogae highlighted that his approach was mostly consultative, based on a consensus decision model. Correspondingly, he promoted a culture of

informal briefings by the ministries to encourage pro-active action and debate on regional matters, before official positions were taken.

According to Mogae, no other country played a more robust role than Botswana in the creation of SADC. Within SADC, Mogae worked with Masire and served in the organisation's Council of Ministers for many years. As president and a former finance minister, the focus in Mogae's regional foreign policy on economic and trade partnerships was natural. From 1998 through 2008 he focused on aligning the country's priorities of economic development with its regional relations and supporting regional integration in particular. Political and diplomatic cooperation were seen as critical tools for acquiring development partnerships in various forms. Consequently, Mogae supported SADC's regionalism project and pushed for Botswana's integration through SADC and SACU.

No other country played a more robust role in the creation of SADC than Botswana

The negotiations to reform SACU dominated Botswana's agenda throughout Mogae's tenure, but they were difficult processes that yielded mixed results. The first difficulty concerned negotiating SACU's revenue-sharing formula. This was a longstanding source of contention among its members. Botswana's negotiation approach was to lobby Swaziland, Lesotho and Namibia – small and dependent economies like itself – to support proposals more suited to their economic realities.

This led to the 2002 SACU agreement, which elaborated a fairer distribution of, and benefits from, increased revenue-sharing.⁴⁵ Commitments were also made to increase the participation of the four countries in SACU decision-making.⁴⁶ But disagreement over the SACU revenue-sharing formula endured beyond his tenure. The proposals from South Africa to re-formulate and essentially cut distributions to the four countries have specifically remained a bone of contention in the organisation. According to Mogae, SACU has remained a sticking point for Botswana's relations with South Africa, especially since Botswana negotiates from a position of weakness.

Mogae also sculpted Botswana's political and diplomatic strategy in SADC – one of supporting SADC's institutional development, consolidating old alliances, creating new ones and positioning Botswana as a credible promoter of democracy. With regard to the support to SADC, the aim was to mobilise others towards better policy implementation.

According to Mogae, SADC and its member states were largely crippled by the fact that its many signed protocols and agreements were not implemented. His attempts to encourage other SADC countries to improve the domestication of SADC agreements largely failed to bear fruit and during the course of his administration SADC did not develop any project aimed at achieving this goal.

Beyond SADC, Mogae pursued what he referred to as active multilateralism and 'charm offensive' diplomacy. 'You do not go to people only when you are in trouble, you create friends,' he said, during an interview for this paper. This was also his strategy for Botswana at the AU.⁴⁷ The emphasis was to broaden Botswana's partnerships as far as possible and improve its relations with Francophone countries. Indeed, under Mogae, Botswana's profile at the AU improved.

1998–
2008

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It is important to highlight Mogae's capacity for supporting regional mediation and peace-building initiatives. It was under his leadership that Botswana and South Africa, then presiding over SADC, were invited by the Lesotho government to help resolve post-election instability in 1998. The mission, while criticised for its operational deficiencies, was able to neutralise the political and security situation in Lesotho. Botswana's participation was particularly important in the context of its leadership of SADC. Between 1996 and 2001, SADC's security organ had suffered some paralysis. There were disputes over regional security structures. So, according to Botswana, the mission was essentially a success under these circumstances.

You do not go to people only when you are in trouble, you create friends

Less of a success, it has been argued, was Mogae's approach to the Zimbabwe crisis which began in 2001 when its political and economic woes set in. The country's radical land reform programme turned violent, there were harsh confrontations between government and dissidents and humanitarian conditions deteriorated dramatically.⁴⁸ The crisis set the stage for an economic meltdown that lasted for more than a decade. It also plunged the country into years of political deadlock following the disputed re-election of President Robert Mugabe in 2002. South Africa was appointed as mediator and, in 2009, a government of national unity was established, which lasted until the 2013 election, which was won by Mugabe's ZANU-PF.

It was under Mogae that Botswana was criticised for adopting a so-called soft approach or quiet diplomacy towards Zimbabwe and for failing to take a stand against recurrent political violence, among other problems.

The Zimbabwe situation not only posed a challenge for Botswana, it was also a problem for SADC as an organisation. Political divisions existed among member governments, with countries like Angola, Namibia and South Africa apparently backing Mugabe. Despite the escalation of the crisis, SADC members refrained from public criticism and isolation of Zimbabwe, though Botswana did criticise the negative effects of the land reform programme.

Explaining this position, Mogae emphasised that quiet diplomacy had appeared to work at the time because the political issues were so highly charged. The approach, he said, was, indeed, constructive engagement, aimed at gaining some compromises through private negotiation. It was an approach, however, that was largely ineffectual.

The Khama administration: a tougher stance

A key theme when discussing Botswana's diplomacy under President Ian Khama is the role of personalities and their background in shaping foreign policy. Unlike his predecessors, who were career politicians and finance ministers, Khama has a strong military background. His experience in regional politics dates back to the 1970s, when he joined the paramilitary Police Mobile Unit, which was the forerunner of the BDF.

When the BDF was formed in April 1977, Khama was appointed its deputy commander. At the time, Botswana faced rising regional tensions, driven by cross-border aggression from white minority regimes. As its deputy commander and then its commander, from 1989 to 1998, Khama played a central role in evolving the BDF into a modern professional fighting force.⁴⁹

In April 1998, Khama retired from the BDF and became involved in politics. He was immediately appointed a specially elected Member of Parliament, Vice-President of Botswana (1998–2008) and Minister for Presidential Affairs and Public Administration.⁵⁰ In July 2003, he was also elected as the party's chairman. He acceded to the presidency in 2008 and was re-elected for a second term in October 2014.

From the onset, Khama developed a distinct policy strategy roadmap which outlined five key principles, referred to as 5Ds, for governing the country. These were: democracy, dignity, development, discipline and delivery.⁵¹ The principles not only provided a blueprint for the country's policy orientation domestically, they also applied to external engagement. So, while foreign policy was still guided by the BDP's principles, discussed in the first section of this paper, the 5Ds emerged as a distinct policy framework, informing both policy and practice in external engagements.

The 5Ds also correspond to the principles of foreign policy outlined in the BDP's party manifesto 2014–2019. In the document it is clearly stated that the country's engagement in SADC must, 'without compromise, support democracy, good governance, respect for the rule of law, promotion of human rights and the maintenance of international peace and security'.⁵²

The implications of integrating the 5Ds into foreign diplomacy are demonstrable. Khama has exhibited a distinct diplomatic posture that breaks from past practice. Notably, under his leadership, Botswana has openly criticised other SADC governments it perceives as flouting democratic principles.

Three cases of the administration's approach since 2008 are illustrative. The first relates to Botswana's attitude to Zimbabwe and its non-conformity with SADC. Khama publicly criticised

Zimbabwe's 2008 elections and delays in forming the government of national unity between Mugabe's ZANU-PF and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). In 2008, he boycotted a SADC summit on Zimbabwe and continued to criticise ZANU-PF publicly for violating the negotiated political agreement.⁵³ In addition, the Khama administration challenged the outcome of Zimbabwe's 2013 election, despite its endorsement by SADC. Botswana was the only SADC country to demand an independent audit of the election, flagging irregularities, which, it asserted, contravened regional standards as per SADC's election guidelines.⁵⁴

Botswana's position on the unconstitutional change of power in Madagascar in 2008 is another case. The Khama administration was among the first to criticise Madagascar for the violent overthrow of a democratically elected leader and for blocking his return from exile in terms of a settlement negotiated by SADC.

The 5Ds, it can be argued, also influence a more pragmatic approach to the country's economic relations. Botswana has increasingly adopted a multi-directional strategic orientation which entails finding new partnerships to support its diversification drive and supporting investment in infrastructure.⁵⁵ There is clearer articulation of the need to link foreign policy with economic strategies, namely, the Industrial Development Policy of Botswana (2013), the Special Economic Zone for Botswana (2011), the National Entrepreneurship Policy (2013) and the Botswana Trade Policy (2009). These initiatives are aimed at supporting economy-wide strategies, namely, the Economic Diversification Drive (2010), the Botswana Investment Strategy and the National Export Strategy (2010), as well as sector-specific strategies.

Khama has exhibited a distinct diplomatic posture that breaks from past practice

There has also been greater focus on bilateralism within SADC and the enhancement and expansion of forums such as the Joint Permanent Commission for Cooperation (JPCC). Significant attention has been paid to relationships with South Africa, Zambia and Namibia, with which there are common development projects. But generally, the country's JPCCs are affected by a lack of economic orientation with its neighbours, that is, the degree to which these countries' policies cohere.

The decision to focus on bilateral relations with non-conventional partners has extended to regions outside SADC. Since assuming office, Khama has undertaken a number of high-level bilateral visits to countries in West and East Africa. These include Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia and Kenya. According to the Office of the Presidency, the main purpose of such visits has been to promote direct cooperation, particularly with respect to trade and investment and to identify sectors in which investment and trade deals can be made. Mining, energy, agriculture, education and technology are some of the sectors previously highlighted.

But Khama's multilateral engagement in Africa has been limited. He has not personally attended AU summits since assuming office, sending either the vice-president or Cabinet ministers. The OP has not issued an official statement about these decisions. Whether and how President Khama's continued absence undermines foreign policy objectives is unknown. What is clear is that there is a preference for bilateral diplomacy, since, by its very nature, it brings quick results and guarantees the interests of the two parties. Multilateral diplomacy, on the other hand, is an instrument for securing long-term commitments and therefore represents

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a long-term and complex activity. In the context of the 5Ds, the emphasis on bilateral relations and selective multilateralism could make sense.

Continuities and discontinuities

Some of the historical factors that shaped Botswana's foreign policy engagement in the SADC region still exist. They include the country's landlocked geography, interdependence with its regional neighbours and the imperatives of an undiversified economy. Botswana still regards the SADC region as the locus of its future prosperity and security. So, as in the past, these factors and a scarcity of resources are a spur to regional engagement, despite the country's minimal coverage in terms of diplomatic missions. Limited resources also partly determine Botswana's level of support for SADC institutions.

There has been some consistency expressed in efforts to promote democracy and the respect for standards agreed to by SADC member states. All Botswana's different administrations have articulated the country's support for values like human rights, respect for the rule of law, good governance and the peaceful resolution of conflict.

Furthermore, the country's foreign policy guidelines have remained the same. The principles currently in use and guiding both MOFAIC and the finance ministry are those evolved by the BDP since the 1970s. The ruling party continues to conceptualise and influence the country's foreign policy framework and directions. But the party's interaction with the executive and the ministries concerned with SADC affairs has been and remains limited and control over external affairs has remained concentrated in the Office of the President. The OP under Khama has endured as the locus of policy decisions, including those relating to SADC.

Parliament's role in foreign policy decision-making is, similarly, not as pronounced, although it has continued to fulfil its basic oversight role, primarily through debates and scrutiny of policies, actions and budgets.

While this is the case, there have been some changes. The first and most obvious concerns Khama's foreign policy team since 2009. While the finance minister has remained the same, there have been two foreign ministers, namely Phandu Skelemani and Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi. In addition, several ambassadors and permanent secretaries have been replaced or reappointed.

The second relates to Botswana's diplomacy within SADC under Khama, which has mostly departed from majority consensus. An apparent break from constructive engagement has been observable, as has a more interventionist approach. Khama is the first president of Botswana to emerge from

the military and, for this reason, is unlike his predecessors, who had political and academic backgrounds. The personal characteristics of political leaders in Botswana – their background, beliefs, decision-making approach and interpersonal style – have affected its foreign diplomacy.

The third change relates to efforts to correlate domestic and foreign policy. Under Khama, foreign policy is domestic and is therefore informed by the same principles that guide policy approaches at the national level. Correspondingly, there is a stronger preference for diplomatic engagement and a minimalist approach to multilateralism. The preference for bilateralism is emerging as a transactional approach to pursuing national interests.

It could also be argued that there is a tendency to 'economise' on the country's external engagements – something that was not as marked in previous administrations, which favoured putting considerable diplomatic effort into building and consolidating political relationships. Under Khama, alliances are selective and are based less on history and more on tangible outcomes.

Under Khama, foreign policy is domestic and is informed by the same principles that guide national-level policy approaches

The final change relates to the centrality of the OP to foreign policy decision-making and diplomacy. According to officials from previous administrations, while the OP remained central, the difference between Khama and his predecessors is that coordination between the OP and foreign policy agencies like MOFAIC and the finance ministry is weaker.

Findings and conclusion

Opinions diverge on whether certain diplomatic approaches and engagements are suitable and strategic for pursuing Botswana's interests. The reason is that ultimately, foreign policy development, emphasis and modes of diplomacy have been heavily shaped by personalities. Furthermore, the combination of personality, context and parameters has had policy consequences for the way Botswana conceptualises its role in the region. It is also because there is no national consensus in defining Botswana's national interests and how, in achieving them, the country behaves towards others, politically, socially, economically and militarily. Botswana's recent positions in SADC, while in the minority, have been a significant signal of how it conceives its role. But how it serves its strategic interests may need further elaboration.

The study concludes with the following recommendations:

- There is a need to re-invigorate and finalise the foreign policy development process. The foreign policy Pitso, the first of its kind in Botswana's recent history, provided a unique opportunity for government and civil society to engage frankly in shaping the country's foreign policy and developing a national consensus.
- The institutional setup should be improved. Policy harmonisation and institutional coordination is needed to

improve synergies among MOFAIC, the Ministry of Finance and the OP on the country's SADC strategy.

- It is equally important to improve communication between the government and the public about Botswana's foreign diplomacy and motives for particular actions or positions. There is scope for expanding public outreach and communication from government's side in relation to the actual activities it conducts within SADC.

Notes

- 1 SADC grew out of the SADCC and much of the literature does not distinguish between the two organisations. In this paper except where the SADCC is specifically referred to, SADC will be used.
- 2 See IS Malila and RM Molebatsi, 'Botswana's Experimentation with "Ethical Foreign Policy"', *Southern African Peace and Security Studies* 3:1; N Ntibinyane, 'Khama's megaphone diplomacy', www.osisa.org/hrdb/blog/khamas-megaphone-diplomacy; M Nguni and N Ntibinyane, 'Khama's SADC litmus test', www.mmegi.bw/index.php?aid=53345&dir=2015/august/14
- 3 As discussed in BZ Osei-Hwedie and G Mokhawa, 'Continuity and Change: The influence of the presidents in Botswana's foreign policy', *Afro Asian Journal of Social Sciences* 5:1, 2014, www.onlineresearchjournals.com/aaajoss/art/126.pdf
- 4 As discussed in Solomon M Nkiwane, 'A Complex Symbiosis: Regional Cooperation and Domestic Reform', *Harvard International Review* 17:4, 1995 and RI Rotberg, 'Strengthening African Leadership: There Is Another Way', *Foreign Affairs* 83:4, August 2004.
- 5 This is elaborated on in Botswana's tenth National Development Plan: NDP 10, which runs from 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2016.
- 6 As defined in GM Khadiagala and T Lyon (eds), *African Foreign Policies: Power and Process*. Boulder, Colo: Lynne Rienner, 2001.
- 7 Author interview with Dr Quett Ketumile Masire, the second president of Botswana and president of the BDP from 1980 to 1998, Gaborone, Botswana, 15 July 2015.
- 8 Author interview with Gaeimelwe Goitsemang, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Gaborone, Botswana, 16 July 2015.
- 9 For an understanding of the factors driving the BDP's dominance, see Z Maundeni (ed), *Forty Years of Botswana's Democracy, 1965–2005*. Gaborone: Mmegi Publishing House, 2005.
- 10 See Botswana Democratic Party Election Manifesto 2014–2019, 30.
- 11 See the BDP Constitution, www.bdp.org.bw/Documents/CONSTITUTION%20OF%20BDP.pdf
- 12 Author telephonic interview with Ambassador Caesar Lekoa, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, 27 July 2015.
- 13 The ministry has held two seminars involving special interest groups such as the Botswana Confederation of Commerce Industry and Manpower, the Kalahari Conservation Society, The Media Institute of Southern Africa, the Botswana Council of Non-Governmental Organizations, the Local Enterprise Authority, Ditshwanelo, former Botswana ambassadors, the University of Botswana, the Vision 2016 Council, farmers' associations and the Botswana Export Development and Investment Authority, among others.
- 14 See J Zaffiro, 'African Legislatures and Foreign Policy-Making: The Botswana Case', *Botswana Notes and Records* 25, 1993.
- 15 The functions of the OP are outlined on its home page, www.gov.bw/en/Ministries—Authorities/Ministries/State-President/Office-of-the-President/
- 16 See the functions of Ministry of Finance and Development Planning on its home page, 1govportal.imexsystems.net/en-gb/About%20Botswana/About%20Government/Pages/Ministry-of-Finance-and-Development-Planning.aspx
- 17 Author interview with officials at MOFAIC, 17 July 2015.
- 18 Botswana's missions abroad can be accessed on the MOFAIC website, www.mofaic.gov.bw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=73&Itemid=73
- 19 Botswana's 2014 General election results can be accessed on the Independent Electoral Commission's homepage at http://www.iec.gov.bw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=15&Itemid=121
- 20 Author interview with Dr Quett Ketumile Masire, 15 July 2015.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 The Bantustans were a major administrative device for the exclusion of blacks from the South African political system under the apartheid administration. Territories were ethnically defined and granted self-governing and 'independent' status by the apartheid government.
- 24 Author interview with Dr Quett Ketumile Masire.
- 25 Author telephonic interview with Ambassador Caesar Lekoa, 28 July 2015.
- 26 As discussed in Willie Henderson, 'Seretse Khama: A personal Appreciation', *African Affairs*, 89:354, January 1990, 44–47.
- 27 This is well captured in Willie Henderson, op cit.
- 28 Ibid, 46.
- 29 As discussed with Dr Quett Ketumile Masire, 25 July 2015.
- 30 See 'Botswana's role in the FLS' in GM Khadiagala, *Allies in Diversity: The Frontline States in Southern African Security, 1975–1993*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press.
- 31 Author interview with Botswana's former president, Festus Mogae, 16 July 2015.
- 32 Author interview with Ambassador Charles Mogotsi, Senior Private Secretary, Botswana Government, 15 July 2015.
- 33 Expressed in interviews with former presidents Masire and Mogae, 15–16 July 2015.
- 34 Author interview with Dr Quett Ketumile Masire.
- 35 BW Oitsile, 'Botswana and the liberation in South Africa and Zimbabwe', master's dissertation, Trent University, Canada, 2010, www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/thesescanada/vol2/002/MR64083.PDF
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Author interview with former president Festus Mogae, 15 July 2015.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 This is elaborated in C Makgala, 'The BNF and BDP's "Fight" for the Attention of the ANC, 1912–2004: A Historical Perspective', *Botswana Notes & Records* 38.
- 40 COMESA is made up of the following countries: Angola, Burundi, Comoros, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Rwanda, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.
- 41 Author interview with Ambassador Charles Mogotsi, Senior Private Secretary, Botswana Government, 15 July 2015.

- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Author telephonic interview with Ambassador Lekoa, MOFAIC, 27 July 2015.
- 44 Author interview with former president Festus Mogae, 15 July 2015.
- 45 As discussed in BZ Osei-Hwedie and G Mokhawa, 'Continuity and Change: The influence of the presidents on Botswana's foreign policy', *Afro Asian Journal of Social Sciences* 5:5, 2014.
- 46 See F Flatters and M Stern, 'SACU Revenue Sharing: Issues and Options', Queens University, http://qed.econ.queensu.ca/faculty/flatters/writings/ff&ms_sacursf_2006.pdf
- 47 Author interview with former president Festus Mogae, Gaborone, Botswana.
- 48 For more on the Zimbabwe crisis, see Brian Raftopoulos and Alois Mlambo, *Becoming Zimbabwe: A History from the Pre-colonial Period to 2008*, Oxford: African Books Collective, 2009
- 49 As discussed with officials from Botswana's diplomatic missions.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 See the 5Ds in the inauguration address by the President of the Republic of Botswana, Lt General Seretse Khama Ian Khama, 20 October 2009, www.gov.bw/en/News/Inauguration-address-by-His-Excellency-Lt-General-Ian-Khama/
- 52 See Botswana Democratic Party Election Manifesto 2014–2019, 30.
- 53 For an in-depth discussion of Botswana's role in Zimbabwe's 2008 post-election crisis see O Jonas, D Mandiyanike and Z Maundeni, 'Botswana and Pivotal Deterrence in the Zimbabwe 2008 Political Crisis', *The Open Political Science Journal*, 2013:6, 1–9.
- 54 See 'Statement by the Government of Botswana on the 2013 Election in the Republic of Zimbabwe, 2013'.
- 55 The partnerships apply both to its diversification drive and to regional infrastructure expansion projects.

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About the author

Dimpho Motsamai joined the ISS in 2010 as a researcher in the Conflict Prevention and Risk Analysis division. Her work focuses on SADC's peace and security policies; and conflict vulnerability dynamics in Swaziland, Lesotho, Zambia, Botswana, Namibia and Mozambique. Dimpho studied at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in Johannesburg and holds a master's degree in international relations. She is currently pursuing a doctoral degree at the Wits School of Governance.

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ISS Pretoria

Block C, Brooklyn Court,
361 Veale Street
New Muckleneuk,
Pretoria, South Africa
Tel: +27 12 346 9500
Fax: +27 12 460 0998

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5th Floor, Get House
Building, Africa Avenue,
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