Introduction: A Short History of the Protectorate

The British established a protectorate in the southern part of Tswana territory in 1884 (British Bechuanaland) and over the northern territories (Bechuanaland Protectorate) in 1885. In the Protectorate, at first missionaries were appointed as Assistant Commissioners, but later on English-speaking South Africans with police or clerical experience were appointed, and called Resident Magistrates. The reigning theory of “parallel rule” meant two separate administrations. In the first, the British would protect the Tswana chiefs from German and Boer (that is, Afrikaner) threats as well as govern European traders working in the protectorate. The Boers were indeed a threat. In 1852, there were violent clashes with the Boers who in their trek north attacked British positions. In the second, Tswana chiefs would have full control over subjects.

South Africa in the Statute of Union Act (1934) got virtual control over its territory, which forced the British to solidify its own rule in the High Commission Territories as transfer to the Union would now be unacceptable. In consequence, a form of indirect rule was applied to governance; and no longer would recruitment of officials come from the Union. Indirect rule meant the introduction of a District Commissioners and a formal bureaucracy with salaried officials.

Nationalism in Botswana was mild and did not induce popular mobilization for rapid independence. The transition was more strongly pushed by colonial authorities than it was by nationalist leaders. With the need for a partner to hand over power, Seretse Khama emerged as a consensus figure. He was from an aristocratic family of the largest tribe among the Tswana (the Bamangwato), but when he married an English woman, he lost title to the throne. He maintained his high traditional status but was not identified as a “traditional” chief. And through his education, he became the leader of the “new men” seeking a nonascriptive based polity. Furthermore, as a successful businessman in the ranching world, he won the support from the expatriate community. He was fully trusted by the colonial authorities. In 1962, he was given the senior post in a trainee-minister

1. This short history relies heavily on Picard 1985, pp. 10-19.
system. His moderate Bechuanaland (later, Botswana) Democratic Party (formed in opposition to the Bechuanaland People’s Party, founded on the ideal of radical nationalism) immediately became the major force in the Legislative Council, winning 28 of 31 elected seats in 1965. Independence came in 1966, again with very low popular mobilization, and he became the country’s first President.

Questions to Be Asked

Our model (see Figure 1) does well – it sets the probability of a civil war onset in Botswana at close to zero throughout the thirty-three years of independence, and there has been no civil war. Small population, lack of mountains, lack of oil, and political stability without anocracy are the key variables leading the model to estimate for Botswana a low probability of civil war. A narrative can help deepen our general understanding of civil war onsets, however, by addressing two questions. First, what accounts for the smooth transition from protectorate rule to independence? This was the highest likelihood moment for a civil war onset (with probability about fifty percent higher than the world average), but there wasn’t a touch of violent resistance to be found. Although many factors come into play in accounting for the peaceful transition, the relative power of the British in assuring Seretse’s government protection appears to be of greatest importance. There is no denying the complementary importance of Seretse’s perfect structural position in Tswana and British societies and his brilliant exploitation of that position to marginalize opposition and sustain the regime he inherited.

Second, are the variables in our model plausibly causal in accounting for the low probability of civil war throughout the period under review? And are there variables highlighted in the historiographical literature that come to light, and can be generalized? In answering these two related questions, we will see a variety of factors that worked together supporting stability, and a single case does not allow us to sort them out. But one oft-used explanation, than of cultural homogeneity, is not supported in the ethnographic record. And one variable that has come up in other narratives, that of labor mobility, does not receive support from this case. Here the narrative helps us lose confidence in two proposed (one from the literature; one from other narratives) variables rather than add confidence in the variables that we have highlighted in our original model.

The Peaceful Transition (1966-67)

Quite rare for Africa, Seretse’s leadership assured an unequivocal victory for moderates, thoroughly marginalizing the radicals seeking rapid Africanization of their polities and economies and the traditionalists seeking a return to chiefly rule. The moderation put Botswana in a role of near pariah among newly independent African states. Days before independence, the white settlers of Rhodesia announced their Unilateral Declaration of Independence. The UN, at the behest of the Organization of African Unity, responded with sanctions, which would have had devastating effects on the Botswana economy, so closely connected with that of Rhodesia and South Africa. The soon-to-be independent Botswana government declared its “effective inability to comply” and continued to permit commerce “with a minimum of publicity”.

Botswana, Random, p. 2
elect Khama also continued full economic integration with South Africa, knowing that any other policy “would have been suicide for his country” (Fawcus 2000, 194). Meanwhile a drought marred any celebratory feelings at the point of independence. In these conditions of newness of statehood, a defiance of African nationalist aspirations, and economic threat, there was hardly a hint of rebellion.

And there was no absence of groups that might have been threatened by the transition to independence as it took place.

Let us look first at the radical nationalists. Radical movements got embarrassingly little support. Two Tswana migrants in South Africa, P.G. Matante, formerly of the Pan African Congress and M. Mpho, formerly of the African National Congress, returned to Bechuanaland after the Sharpeville incident of 1966 and the banning of their parties in South Africa. They tried to bring militant nationalism to their home country and organized the BPP in 1960. By April 1963, the People’s Party had split into two groups. Despite the deep latent support the ANC had among Africans in South Africa, the BPP could not frame the anti-colonial battle as one of colonized Africans against exploitative white settlers, and the BPP was never able to figure powerfully in the polls (Du Toit 1995, 53; Fawcus 2000, 128).2

More threatened than the radicals were the Chiefs. The failure of the chiefs to mount a serious threat to Seretse is even more surprising. The Chiefs were marginalized and aggrieved, but they were not violent. The foundation of the cleavage between the chiefs and the “new men” was in the historic dispatch from the British Secretary of State for the Colonies to the governors of the African colonies in 1947. This dispatch set the stage in all colonies for the supercession of indirect rule institutions to the institutionalization of modern political structures, and a diminishment of chiefly roles. A set of proclamations in Botswana in the 1950s implemented this dispatch. In response to this changed foundation for rule, the Chiefs (and Kgosi Bathoen II was especially articulate) favored the idea of a Central African Federation, where they felt they would retain tribal power; but the “new men” were opposed (Olufemi 2003, 60-62).

In the subsequent years of preparation for the transition, the Chiefs pressed for more power in the new system, and in 1961 a Legislative Council was created, with the ten Africans on it chosen by and from an advisory council of chiefs (Proctor 1968, 60). As the Legislative Council drew up a constitution, however, the politicians outnumbered the chiefs three to one in the negotiations. These politicians saw the chiefs as illiterate and basically incompetent. To be sure, all agreed that the constitution had to recognize chiefs in some institutionalized way, but in no way were chiefs to get territorial control over their traditional territories, or even a “House of Lords”, for which they clamored. Similarly, the politicians rejected reserved seats in the legislature for chiefs, for fear that they’d become the swing voters. Finally, the chiefs were given an Advisory Council (called a “House of Chiefs”). Rather than accept this symbolic gesture, the chiefs began

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2. There was another opposition that emerged, led by a returned Tswana, Dr. Kenneth Koma, who had been educated in the communist world. He had even less success in mobilizing a constituency. See Fawcus 2000, 191-92).
organizing to issue a minority report. However, the Resident Commissioner advised them they would look bad if the Whites appeared to accept change but not the Chiefs; and he argued that the House of Chiefs was giving them the kind of role they had traditionally. The chiefs reluctantly accepted this and approved the constitutional draft. Nonetheless, the House of Chiefs got off to an inauspicious start, having trouble electing a chairman, with most chiefs being humiliated by not understanding the bills that they were supposedly advising on, yet still they demanded greater responsibilities. Two of the Chiefs -- Chief Bathoen and Chief Linchwe -- had sufficient education to understand the issues involved and to express frustration about their colleagues’ marginalized role. In light of this, Proctor assessed “the dominant mood of the Chiefs … is one of frustration” for their lack of power (Proctor 1968, pp. 60-78; see also, Fawcus 2000, p. 135).

No wonder the chiefs were frustrated. Even before independence was granted, the Chieftainship Law of 1965 gave the Prime Minister the right to approve the appointment of new chiefs, and thus a control over chiefly succession. The Prime Minister could also suspend and dismiss chiefs. The Minister of Local Government and Lands could fix the salary of each chief. In the Amendment Act the President could take action without even a complaint from the tribe. Even worse, the Local Government (Tax) Law of 1965 took away the chief’s control over local tax and gave it to elected local councils (where chiefs served as minority and ex-officio members) (Olufemi 2003, 77; Jones 1983, 133).

After independence, President Khama made explicit on which side he stood in regard to the new men vs. chiefs cleavage. Before the Botswana Teachers’ Union in 1966 he said: “I appreciate that many of our people at this time of rapid social change are bundled into positions which make them look around for familiar reference points. They take comfort in the sense of identity which they derive from family and hence from tribe. This is understandable but it becomes dangerous when it leads people to think in exclusively tribal terms. It becomes a threat to the stability and security of our state when it is carried to the point where a man in a responsible position thinks of himself as a tribesman before he thinks of himself as a Botswana” (Olufemi 2003, 76).

If the “commitment problem” should have revealed itself among any group in Botswana, it was surely the chiefs. The handwriting was on the wall that as the state got stronger, the chiefs would be squeezed to political irrelevancy. Indeed this turned out to be true. First, the chiefs were constitutionally prohibited from participating in politics, thereby disenabling them from using their chiefly incumbency to vie for political power (Wiseman 1978, 487-8). If they could have competed for power, since district boundaries coincided with chieftaincies, the institutions would have incentivized movements for autonomy or separation. The chiefs were denied that move. And the effects of political emasculation were certainly dramatic. The Customary Court Law of 1966 curtailed the power of chiefs to adjudicate civil and criminal cases; these cases were transferred to the magistrate and to the high courts. In 1968 in the Tribal Land Law, local land boards appointed by the minister of local government took control over communal land administration; and adjudication of land disputes was no longer to be performed by customary courts, and out of chiefly discretion, again with chiefs serving only as ex officio members of the new land boards. Chief Neale Sechele refused to abide by the land
policy, and insisted that he would oversee the distribution of communal land. In 1970 he was suspended and deposed by the minister of local government. The African Courts Amendment Law of 1968 limited the penalties that could be imposed by chiefs in customary courts, and the president was given the authority to appoint a customary court commissioner to oversee these courts. The BDP government became increasingly intemperate as Chiefs raised objections to laws in the House of Chiefs. One of the BDP ministers, amid a debate on expanding chiefly power, argued that the chiefs were not after policy but “favors, prestige, and power”, yet he preached, they refused to come to meetings on time, they strayed from the topics of debate, and they held too-long meetings in the rural areas “where time is of no essence” (Olufemi 2003, 81-6, 124-5). All this could reasonably have been foreseen, and leads to the question of why the chiefs did not rebel early, when the state was new, than later, when the state would have been able to consolidate its power.

One analyst has reported on the “exceptional sociopolitical stability of the parliamentary democracy of Botswana can…be attributed to the continued significance of the customary order and its control by hereditary officeholders who have to a limited extent exploited only their outstanding position to challenge the government. Thus, although there are now dark clouds emerging, we have at hand so far [1995] a fairly successful marriage of a republican state and its subordinate hereditary principalities” (Ornulf Gulbrandsen, quoted in Olufemi 2003, 128). This only describes the outcome, and provides no answer to the question of how the chiefs were so successfully limited in their power, without taking advantage of a possible window of opportunity at the moment of transfer to seize state power.

The third potential set of actors who might have taken advantage of the weakness of the new state were the non-Tswana tribes, which make up a small percentage of the population. One such group is the Kgalagadi, with about 14,000 living in Botswana. The Kgalagadi were conquered in the early 19th century by the Tswana, their cattle confiscated, turning them into hunting/foragers who were forced to hunt, herd, and pay tribute to their masters. As late as in the 1970s, the Tswana used a non-human prefix to refer to the Kgalagadi. Kgalagadi’s leaders demanded a seat in the House of Chiefs, to assure them that they would not be represented by a Tswana chief. As for the Basarwa, another despised group, in 1978 they were denied by the Attorney-General rights to their land (since they were nomads), and as lands to their south have been fenced, they are losing traditional hunting grounds. The Tribal Grazing Land Policy (1975) had the effect of displacing Basarwa from traditional lands as illegal squatters (Good 1992, 80-4). These policies have severely weakened the non-Tswanas living in Botswana. One Kgalagadi politician in his appeal for a separate district claimed, “that secession is an issue for which he is prepared to die.” He surely meant secession from the district, which pitted the Sarwa against the Kgalagadi (Solway 1994, 257, 259-60, 265, 272-fn. 28). But here we see ethnic difference and intense grievances, but a long-history of political quiescence.
Finally, the Whites may have been the most fearful of noncredible commitments to their land, their businesses, and their security in the face of a postcolonial regime, one in which there was no assurance that Seretse Khama could keep the lid on anti-colonial mobilizations. Indeed, the UDI of Rhodesia was certainly a relevant model. Pre-empting this possibility, the Resident Commissioner, defying the admonitions of the Nationalist Party leaders in South Africa, understood that only with fairly rapid constitutional change, more or less faster than was being demanded by local radicals, would the moderates, that is to say Seretse’s Democratic Party, be able to defeat the more anti-European People’s Party. He feared, however, that Seretse “would quickly be written off as a colonial protégé.” Thus he tried to cauterize Seretse from any imperial stain. For example, Russell England was a British expatriate with strong political support for white rule. He was in his 70s when the winds of change altered his course. He feared for the new popularity of the People’s Party. He therefore proposed to Seretse that they become joint leaders of a new party – a provocative idea that Seretse took seriously. But the Resident Commissioner demurred, as he felt that a White leader would only pose problems for future electioneering in tribal areas, and give Seretse the taint of cooptation (Fawcus, 2000, chap. 10).

Seretse got support from the Whites because he bought into their program, and they trusted him since he was married to a European woman and was part of the cattle ranching elite (Du Toit 1995, 53). “Even the group considered potentially the most recalcitrant, the economically backward Afrikaners in Ghanzi, were quick to accept the ascendancy of the new state.” Du Toit then quotes an expert, writing about the Afrikaners in Botswana, that “they apply for citizenship, register as voters, and pin posters of Seretse Khama on their walls” (Du Toit 1995, 53). Indeed, the Whites were so confident in Seretse’s future victory and thus were willing to agree to a “one person one vote” formula, as they had no fears being ruled by him. If credible commitments of this type are not easy to provide, we wonder how Seretse made them to stave off a potential White rebellion in the mid-1960s?

The answer to the puzzle of post-colonial peace is neo-colonialism. There was hardly a new state in 1965, but the colonial state with a secure ally as its head, who was thoroughly dependent on Britain for his own prosperity, or even survival. The UK paid nearly the entire recurrent budget. It was not only 1971 with the production of diamonds that Britain no longer paid the full cost of administration of the country (Parsons and Robinson, 2003). The Botswana Defense Force received assistance from the British Special Air Services for any counter-insurgency operations and the American army for

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3. From the Forward by President Q.K.J. Masire, pp. ix-xii of Fawcus 2000: Fawcus was the head of the Bechuanaland Protectorate Administration as Resident Commissioner at the point of transition. He was in constant conflict with the British High Commissioner in South Africa, to whom he formally reported, but who was linked to the National Party, and who wanted no change in Bechuanaland that might unbalance South Africa.

4. Parsons and Robinson argue that the Tswana elite, because of their control of the cattle economy, have a shared interest with white ranchers, making for good race relations at the elite level. In Zambia, the cattle ranchers were the Tonga and Ila in the South (represented by Harry Nkumbula) who got no support from Zambia’s dominant party (the UNIP) whose electoral base was in the north. In contrast, in Botswana the cattle ranchers were the political elites (Parsons and Robinson, 2003).
both counter insurgency work and staff training. The US attached a Lt.-Col. to its embassy in Gaberone to give assurance to the government that it was safe (Dale 1987, 85).

In the bureaucracy, there was an emphasis on the “Oxbridge” model of civil service recruitment and this “established the public service as an elite entity” though with very slow incorporation of Batswana. The first African assistant district officer was appointed in 1951; the second in 1959. By 1962 only four positions of 155 in the professional grades were taken by Africans. This European-dominated service continued through independence: in the central government 683 White civil servants or 31% in 1964; 584 Whites or 9% in 1975; with similar rates in the wider public service. The decline was much less in the senior and middle-level staff positions (Du Toit 1995, 25-6, 35).

At the point of transition, the Financial Secretary of the protectorate, Alfred Beeby, became ex officio Minister of Finance for a transitional period, and the British Attorney-General, Alan Tilbury, served in the cabinet in an advisory capacity. David Morgan (a White resident) and Seretse were the other two holdovers from the former Executive Council. All five permsecs of the new ministries were expatriates. Expatriates remained in the civil service, at Seretse’s insistence, in this period. Alfred Merriweather, a medical missionary, who had previously been Speaker of the Legislative Council, was elected Speaker of the new body. The permsecs respected and knew the new Ministers quite well for a long time. The Resident Commissioner resigned, and a figurehead replacement was appointed who served fourteen months. But the Resident Commissioner’s private secretary (a Brit), served in that role for Seretse as well (Fawcus 2000, 186-7). Administrative continuity, military surveillance by Britain and the U.S., and trust in the incumbent to whom power would be transferred were enough to assure Whites of continuity and protection. These factors also made any move by minority tribes, chiefs, or even radical Africans, utopian. It would be better to wait for the neo-colonialists to leave the country before an insurgency could possibly pay off. Neo-colonial structures and commitments staved off potential rebellion from radicals, from chiefs, from outcasts and from Whites, at the moment of transition.

The General Prediction for Botswana of Low Probability for a Civil War Onset

In this section, we will look at some of the factors that play a role in our model’s predictions for Botswana, to see if and how they “work” to delimit the probability of civil war. We then look at variables that come up in the modern historiographical literature that are marshaled to account for Botswana’s long-term peace. Finally, we will look at factors that might have worked to threaten civil peace to assess how they were addressed in Botswana. The overall lesson of this exercise is that the variables that highlighted state coherence (instability, anocracy and new state) had clear mechanisms accounting for a half-century of peace in Botswana. The continuity of monarchy, consistent with variables having to do with state coherence, also seems important in this case. Other of our variables, such as population and mountains, although they are in the predicted direction, are less useful in accounting for Botswana’s history. Finally, two variables that we
haven’t seriously modeled – leadership and settlers who build good institutions – appear to carry weight in this case.

Our Variables that Predict Peace

Small size

Botswana has a population density of 1.6 people per square kilometer, one of the lowest in the world, and total population some 1.5 million, within the bottom centile in the world until 1993, when it climbed just above the bottom tenth of all country/years in our dataset. About 80 percent of them live in an eastern strip along a rail line. As of 1986, 22 percent of the population was urban (Picard 1985, 4). During the 1970s Botswana had the highest rate of urbanization in sub-Saharan Africa (Du Toit 1995, 40).

In their formal model accounting for Botswana’s growth rates, Parsons and Robinson (2003) lend no theoretical support to our statistical finding. They show that the higher the population, the greater the incentive to colonize a country to extract rents, and the higher the rate of return on capital. These factors make large countries attractive to build a state and provide public goods. However, they point out, higher population generates more resource rents, which can be expropriated by the elites in the absence of a state. So there should be no general relationship between size of population (as there is in Herbst) and incentives to build a state.

There are no hints in the historiographical literature on Botswana showing how low population there facilitated civil peace. Therefore, from the point of view of county size, our model may have been “lucky” in predicting low levels of violence due to low population size.

No Mountains

Botswana’s flatness is remarkable. Zero percent of the country can be considered mountainous. This is considered in our model as insurance against insurgents being able to hide from the state. Perhaps the vast stretches of the Kalahari desert constitute a substitute to hide from the state. And these stretches were hardly easy to reach. Indeed, in 1966 there were only 25 kilometers of road were tarred (Du Toit 1995, p. 27). However, any insurgent band could be spotted by an air patrol and quickly attacked. The degree to which this ecological constraint played a role in the potential insurgents’ strategies (i.e. to remain quiescent) is hard to calculate.

No anocracy or instability

There can be little doubt that the continuity of single-party rule, the peaceful transition of power after the death of the president in 1980, and the lack of any institutional change has served the interests of the state against any potential predator seeking to undermine it.
Continuity in Monarchy

In 1750 the Ngwaketse of SE Botswana became a dominant military state controlling Kalahari hunting, cattle, and copper. In the later part of the 18th century, other Tswana chiefdoms formed in the north. Yet from 1750 onwards, the Tswana chiefdoms were under attack by the Kololo (Sotho refugees), and the Ndebele. But after the 1840s, four Tswana states were reconstituted: Ngwaketse, Kwena, Ngwato and Tawana. The Kwena (under King Sechele who ruled for 63 years, 1829-92), allied with British traders and missionaries, and involved in the ivory and ostrich feather trade, were for a while dominant. But by the 1870s, the Ngwao, under Khama III (1875-1923) ruled over much of today’s Botswana, though there were other Tswana kings (Parsons and Robinson, 2003). Khama III of Bamangwato built a hierarchical state in the 19th c., and instituted a district governor system of high-ranking commoners or royalty who resided in the area they administered.

Colonialism retained the institutional structure of the state (Good 1992, 70-1). To be sure, when the Protectorate was established in 1885, there was no unified government in this territory – each of eight tribes was “ruled by a powerful hereditary Chief and was politically distinct from the others. There was no paramount Chief nor any other supratribal authority, and no ‘national’ consciousness transcended tribal loyalties” (Proctor 1968, 59). Even though the Protectoral Bechuanaland or the independent Botswana are not perfect representations of any potential Tswana kingdom, the protectorate represented “the Rolong-Ngwaketse-Kwena-Ngwato (and later Kgatla and Tswana) alliance against the Boers originated in 1852. The four main kingdoms of pre-colonial Botswana – Ngwaketse, Kwena, Ngwato and Tawana – were generously accommodated with territory in return for their alliance with the British.” There were still anomalies in the “reserves”, but overall the country represented the broad boundaries of a Tswana proto-state (Parsons 1985). Indeed, the assumption of all chiefs that the legitimate boundaries of the state were those of the Protectorate, and that secession had no historical foundation, limited their oppositional maneuvers. This assumption is plausibly related to the fact that there was an institutionalized memory of a related set of Tswana kingdoms that coincided with present state boundaries.

Other Variables in Literature

Two factors often proposed in the case study literature, in which our model places little value – historical patterns explain present ones; and ethnic-linguistic homogeneity explain peace – add no value to our understanding of civic peace in post-protectorate Botswana. Yet two other variables that we haven’t specified very well seem quite important: viz., leadership and colonial institutions.

Historical peacefulness of the people

In some post-protectorate accounts, the Tswana are portrayed as peace-loving, as if it were an explanation for contemporary societal peace. The historical data would give
no support for such claims. The key historical fact of the Tswana kingdoms, as with most centralized states, was warfare. For the Tswana, the state-making moment was in the aftermath of the Zulu conquest that led to regional war, known as the Mfecane (also called the Difaqane). In this moment there was immense population flight and social dislocation (Du Toit 1995, 19-22). Nor did contact with Europeans yield peace. In 1826, Ngwaketse leaders allied with European travelers employing their arms in a fight with the Kololo. As the century wore on, Africans found themselves implicated in religious clashes (among British, German and Boer settlers), and these involvements “took a number of Tswana societies to the verge of civil war.” For example there was a near war in 1872 in the Ngwato area over chieftainship between Sekgoma, Khama and Macheng. A rebellion of southern Tswana chiefs in 1878 led to a military expedition led by Sir Charles Warren to restore British control (Picard 1985, 9-10, and footnote on p. 292). There were even examples of violent struggles during the colonial period (though the examples are of intra-chiefly battles and assassinations). Also in the 1930s the British deposed chiefs under threat of machine guns and aircraft bombings (Parsons 1985, p. 36).

**ELF**

Any simple claim of ethnic homogeneity as the source of civil peace is on its face inadequate.

One problem with the linkage between ethnic heterogeneity and ethnic violence is that Botswana has only a *myth* of ethnic unity. In reality, the House of Chiefs has become a venue for ethnic struggle (Solway 1994). The leading BDP party has a core in the Bamangwato and Bakwena tribes, and one expert is quoted as claiming “a vote for the BDP is an affirmation of ethnic membership” (Du Toit 1995, 38-9). Furthermore, small minorities abound. Ethnic figures are estimates, as the government does not recognize these categories officially, and doesn’t count them: the Ngwato people are about 280,000; Ngwaketse with 98,000; Kwena with 98,000. The Tawana with 59,000; the Kgalagadi with 44,000; the Malete, with 20,000; the Rolong with 16,000 and Tlokwa with 5,600. All these speak Setswana. Of non-Setswana-speaking groups, there are about 30,000 San or Sarwa (called “Bushmen”) in the west along with about 14,000 Kgalagadi (Picard 1985).

To be sure, the diversity is not as great as the figures above lead one to believe. Take the so-called slave society of the Kgalagadi. Their language is closely related to Setswana, and thus many Kgalagadi were easily able to “pass” as Tswana (Solway1994, 258). The cultural differences are not great, but then (as we see in Somalia and former Yugoslavia) insurgencies can turn small differences into cultural rifts.

Another problem with an argument linking ELF to ethnic peace is in the comparison between Botswana and Lesotho. In Lesotho, Du Toit argues “with 99 percent of the population speaking Sotho, Lesotho outranks even Botswana in terms of cultural homogeneity.” And Sotho is quite related to Tswana, so there is cultural similarity between the two titular groups. “Yet politics in Lesotho has been dominated by lineage conflict” that has led to coups and military rule. What needs to be explained in Botswana is “why a multiethnic society has not yet emerged” (Du Toit 1995, 18-19).
A final problem linking homogeneity to civil peace is that (as in Somalia) homogeneity can easily lead to aggressive irredentism. There are 1.7 million Setswana speakers in the Republic of South Africa, and small pockets of Batswana in Zimbabwe and Namibia. Moreover, Botswana houses 120,000 Kalanga speaking people, the majority of whom (190,000) live in Zimbabwe. Minorities with external homelands invite calls for secession that tend to be strongly resisted by the state, in the fear of inducing other regions to make similar claims. No such things occurred in Botswana. But this cannot be explained by the level of cultural diversity in the population.

**Settlers and Good Institutions**

An impressive aspect of Botswana’s post-protectorate political institutions is the relative lack of corruption. Du Toit (1995) portrays a country with an exemplary corruption-free bureaucracy. The policymaking process, he summarizes, is “for influence within the state, not against the state” (p. 48). An analysis, for example of the Botswana Meat Commission, in which the state created a parastatal, led to an outcome in which the industry was not “plundered for private gain, it was deliberately nurtured, subsidized, and supported for profitable gain by individuals within the state who, along with private-sector elites, were entrepreneurs…” (pp. 64-65). The customary courts set up in the colonial era have dealt principally with delicts (defamation, insult, assault, seduction, adultery, damage to property), and have done so well such that rampant criminality is largely absent (pp. 69-70).

The stunning difference in the workings of the state institutions between Botswana and many other African states has no easy explanation, but as suggested by (Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson 2001), it may be that states that had significant settler populations had stronger institutions. Settlers have long been considered a reason for bloody anti-colonial battles (Lustick 1985); but once the colonial period is over, if those settlers remain, the institutional carry-over perhaps is strong. Good institutions are a signal of a coherent state that would be able to address an insurgency with force and delicacy.

**Leadership**

No serious student of Botswana delimits the extraordinary leadership of Sir Seretse Khama. To be sure, he was rightly positioned from a network point of view to capture trust from all the major groups in the society. He was able to get support from the colonial masters (who trusted him, as he bought into their program, and was married to one of them), from cattle ranching interests (as he was one of them, though nearly all of the others are white), the educated Tswana elite (who identified with him as an educated man who had studied abroad), and even the traditionalists (as he was of a chiefly line among the leading tribe, the Bamangwato) (Du Toit 1995, 36).

But Seretse governed smart to take advantage of his position in society. He set clear priorities for growth over distribution and stability over participation. One result of
the policies is that Botswana’s Gini coefficient (0.556) reveals a level of inequality equaled only by Brazil, with 40 percent of the households receiving only 10.7 percent of the income and the top 20 percent getting 61.5 percent of the income in 1985-86. This was a political economy that the wealthy could not disdain. Even cattle ownership is becoming more skewed: in the 1940s, 10 percent of households had no cattle; in 1980, the figure was 45 percent. Yet in this period, infant mortality declined, and life expectancy for women had risen. Moreover, primary school enrolment rose by 97 percent by 1988 from 1965, and secondary from 3% to 33% of eligible pupils. The president was thus able to win the hearts of the rich without excluding the poor from some advantages from the rapid economic growth in the economy (Du Toit 1995, 33-43; Good 1992, 76-78).

The policies, however, are not all working towards peace. The governing coalition has relied heavily on civil servants. At independence there were 2,175 central government positions; by 1975, this had mushroomed to 6,317. By the mid-1980s there were some 18,000 at all levels of civil service, with the private sector then registering only about 6,000 middle class jobs. The route to the middle class continued to be through the state, not the private economy (Du Toit 1995, 33, 44-6). This suggests that for any group capturing the state there would be a very big prize, and worth a whole lot of risk.

More important than his policies and their impact, Seretse Khama had a rather unique ability (for African leadership) to make moderate, neo-colonial, policies exciting, as if they were themselves radical. Here was a traditional chief, married to a European, with highly conservative economic views, and fully willing to accommodate the apartheid regime to the south. And yet he was held in apparent awe by a broad spectrum of the populace. The success of the policies – in which his successor was able to preside over one of the fastest growing economies in the world – helped increase his (and his successor’s) stature as a leader who could not easily be defied.

Threats to Botswana’s Stability

Botswana did not have an easy historical moment in which to get its institutions in place and its population secure. It was a neighbor of a country that was amid a devastating war over apartheid. Moreover, South Africa closed the job spigot that had been a safety valve for a generation in Botswana for young men. Yet despite these travails, there was no mobilization for the capture of the state by dissident forces.

South Africa

The backdrop of Botswana independence was in the war taking place in South Africa for majority rule. The ANC needed the support of South Africa’s neighbors in the north to provide aid to the guerrillas, but aid was dispensed at high cost to the regimes offering it. In June 1985 a convoy with 50 armed South African soldiers came within fifteen kilometers from Gaborone to take out four ANC safe houses. To neutralize the Botswana Defense Force (BDF), the South African commandos cut telephone wires to the barracks and sprinkled spikes on the road. No one was killed on the South African
side in this particular incident, but twelve were dead and six wounded on the Botswana side. There were other military incidents. One of them, a South African Defense Force raid on a cluster of private houses in May 1986, near Mogoditshane, using an airforce contingent, was easily recognizable as South African. The South Africans in this period were contemptuous of world opinion, and did not worry about the implications of their police power across borders for the stability of the Botswana regime. Equally problematic, South African refugees continued to pose a problem for Botswana up until the victory of the Africans. Botswana could not refuse refugees, though having them in the country made it susceptible to SADF commando actions. Also, the refugee role for stability within Botswana was a worry, given that these refugees would want to ally with forces in Botswana that would have wanted a more confrontational role against South Africa. And inasmuch as these ANC guerrillas had access to arms, the conflict need not have stayed quiescent.

**Blocked labor mobility to S. Africa**

Through the 1970s, many Tswana relied for economic survival on the opportunities to do migrant labor in South Africa. But due to the economic conditions in South Africa, the numbers began declining, from 50,000 per year in the 1970s to just under 20,000 in 1981 (Picard 1985, 5). In several other countries (Algeria, Haiti, Jamaica), blocked migration to industrial jobs abroad was a plausible account for civil war onset. Here in Botswana, we have a similar phenomenon, but without the violent implications. (However, this was the period of rapid growth in Botswana with the diamond mining, so this might have reduced the supply of labor to South Africa, mitigating the political effects of legally constrained demand).

**Diamonds**

Diamonds, first coming into production in Botswana in 1971, is in some models (Collier and Hoeffler, 2001) seen as a curse on civil peace. The diamond industry quickly became the backbone of the Botswana economy and as of 2002, it contributed 33 percent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and over 50 percent of government revenues. Yet the state (with near full control of the industry in the hands of De Beers) has successfully denied guerrillas access to these mines and has not plundered the mines for state cronies. It is said that unlike the alluvial diamonds of Sierra Leone, which are quickly harvested without need for heavy machinery, Botswana’s diamonds need to be mined (the diamonds are kimberlite), and therefore less subject to rebel plunder. That which needs to be explained is not then how rebels are kept away, but how state bureaucrats have clean hands. This though is a question for economic development, and not of insurgency.

**Conclusions**

The remarkable feat of our statistical model is that it gives this African country an average probability for a civil war at a touch over a half a percent each year, way below

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the world average, and more than three times less than the average for all sub-Saharan states. In its early years of independence, per capita GDP in Botswana was as low as $563, and did not reach $1,000 until sixteen years after independence. The country was enriched by diamonds, but unlike Sierra Leone, this did not lead to plunder of natural resources by competing warlord bands. (Our model does not see plunderable resources as making a state more prone to war). The big answer to the question of civil peace is the neo-colonial transition led by a man who held the trust of virtually all those who had an incentive to rebel. But the trust would have been non-credible without the alliance of the protector and the independent state, in which the former assured all parties its full support of the latter. The protectorate institutions in this environment were able to grow in power and autonomy, providing a disincentive for any potential rebels to challenge state power even after the British by-and-large left the governing scene.
References:


Pr(onset) for BOTSWANA

cname   year         pr   gdp/l       pop   mtn-t   Oil   ins-b   anocl
BOTSWANA 1966   .0291348    .577       563       0     0       0       0
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BOTSWANA 1968   .0052517    .688       594       0     0       0       0
BOTSWANA 1969   .0051526    .769       609       0     0       0       0
BOTSWANA 1970   .005131    .804       624       0     0       0       0
BOTSWANA 1971   .0051331    .823       647       0     0       0       0
BOTSWANA 1972   .0050984    .875       673       0     0       0       0
BOTSWANA 1973   .0049299   1.013       700       0     0       0       0
BOTSWANA 1974   .0046966   1.197       727       0     0       0       0
BOTSWANA 1975   .0045     1.362       755       0     0       0       0
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BOTSWANA 1979   .0043092    1.62       870       0     0       0       0
BOTSWANA 1980   .0041927   1.735       902       0     0       0       0
BOTSWANA 1981   .0039637    1.94       934       0     0       0       0
BOTSWANA 1982   .0039597   1.973       967       0     0       0       0
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