

## **CONTINUITY AND CHANGE: THE INFLUENCE OF THE PRESIDENTS ON BOTSWANA’S FOREIGN POLICY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The article analyzes the role of leaders in determining Botswana’s foreign policy since independence with a focus on President Seretse Khama Ian Khama. It identifies leader’s traits as critical factors in foreign policy development. However, leadership traits alone are insufficient, rather a combination with the international contexts fully explain Botswana’s foreign policy choices and instruments. The first three Presidents pursued similar friendly policy behaviour and utilized silent diplomacy as a foreign policy tool, especially, towards neighbouring states and on continental issues. President Ian Khama has apparently departed radically from his predecessors by pushing for a visible, active stance and being outspoken on international issues including democratic governance, elections processes, human rights, the International Criminal Court, and China; and preferring public diplomacy as the foreign policy instrument to realize his cherished goals. He has made some impacts on regional affairs, but with challenges. He also shares similarities with past Presidents as he has continued with the same principles, friendly behaviour, flexibility and pragmatism; and reliance on soft power in line with the country’s size and relative capability.

### **Introduction**

The role of leaders is increasingly becoming the focal point in explaining and analyzing foreign policy. This is more so because, primarily, the top leaders predominate in shaping and changing foreign policy decisions and behaviour of states. Ascendancy to leadership by a new President or Prime Minister and a government raises the prospect of changes in foreign policy decisions and behaviour in part due to differences in personality traits. However, change in policy choices necessitates a more nuanced analysis than merely personal attributes

of the President. Most relevant are the context within which a leader operates, especially, changes therein, that influence his/her foreign policy choices. In reality, change in leadership and environment mutually impact on each other in determining foreign policy choices.

Botswana has had four Presidents since independence; however, it is apparent that President Seretse Khama Ian Khama has some distinctive stance which departs from the norm set by his three predecessors. The article, therefore, analyses foreign policy decisions and actions during President Ian Khama's leadership, since 2008. It starts with the definition of foreign policy and framework of foreign policy analysis. This is followed by a discussion of Botswana's foreign policy with a focus on the first three Presidents, their policy orientation and instruments, as well as the principles that have guided the leaders' foreign policy making since independence. Then Khama's foreign policy is examined to gain insight into the causal factors that determine his decisions and behaviour; the context within which he makes sub-regional, regional and global foreign policy choices; his goals; and means for implementation.

The aim is to understand how and why Khama is different from his predecessors, as well as highlight the similarities. The overarching questions that arise are: To what extent has the new leadership of Khama brought about changes in Botswana's foreign policy? What is the nature of Khama's foreign policy choices? What factors determine his foreign policy choices? Does he present a new foreign policy stance radically different from his predecessors? If so, what makes his posture a radical departure from the norm? Does his foreign policy represent change or continuity? In what ways have changes in the external environment led to changed foreign policy orientation and choices for Khama's government? What is the impact of Khama's new posture in the sub-region, region and globe? How consistent has been his new foreign policy, and what challenges confront Khama's new policy stance?

### **Foreign Policy Analysis**

Foreign policy is conceptualized as "the objectives state leaders have decided to pursue in a given relationship or situation" (Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2011: 103). What is stressed, however, is the need to understand the process of decision making to appreciate the decisions made and their implementation (Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2011). Internal and external factors,

combined, as determinants of foreign policy, are accepted analytical premise of scholars, be it realists, liberals or constructivists. Foreign policy analysis is useful, as it offers possibilities to explore the inter-linkages between domestic and geopolitics, given systemic or strategic constraints. However, some foreign policy analysts resolutely uphold the view that foreign policy choices and behaviour are largely shaped by the top leadership. This, in essence, means that the analysis of foreign policy has transcended the 'billiard ball' that privileged the state and sub-state interactions at the exclusion of the individual leader level of analysis. Therefore, foreign policy analysis cannot be dispensed without an examination of the leader. The focus on the individual leaders allows for a much fuller understanding of foreign policy.

Goldstein & Pevehouse (2011: 107) highlight the importance of “values and beliefs, ... unique personalities – their personal experiences, intellectual capabilities and personal styles ...” in making decisions. Breuning (2007) too has undertaken an extensive study of the influence of leaders in foreign policy by focusing on their personality traits which are taken as critical determinants of how the office of the President functions with respect to foreign policy making process.

However, focus on the leadership alone does not provide a comprehensive explanation of determinants of foreign policy making. Rather, a multilevel analysis of making foreign policy decisions, that incorporates the individual leader (micro), state (intermediate) and international (macro) levels, is emphasized. The interaction of these levels of analysis helps to take into account the regional and international context within which the leader makes decisions. Kegley & Blunton (2011: 193) succinctly argue that “leaders are influential because factors external to the actor can become determinants only as they affect the mind, heart and will of decision-maker”. Constructivists reinforce this by arguing that “ideas and expectations within the head of a leader are intellectual filters through which objective realities are interpreted” (Kegley & Blunton, 2011: 193) in response to demands and changes of the context within which they operate. Primarily, perceptions of opportunities and constraints posed by the environment, leadership style, skills and experience, interests and prominent involvement in decision making point to the significance of Presidents or Prime Ministers in shaping their country's foreign policy (Breuning, 2007).

Foreign policy analysts rely on personality traits of leaders to gauge behaviour, determine the kind of leader she/he is, motives, and priorities or goals to explain foreign policy decisions. It

is assumed that personality traits fix the political behaviour, and shape the way leaders view the world and their own roles in it (Sarkesian et al, 2008: 73). Similarly, a leader's core values and beliefs help to identify his/her perceptions and analysis of the external environment, and the cost-benefit analysis of foreign policy choices. Additionally, trust, directness, self-confidence, self-assertion, flexibility or willingness to compromise and forthrightness are some of the emotional characterization of personality that impact on the decision making process and ultimately on judgements about foreign policy issues (Breuning, 2007). In actuality, however, a leader is assisted by advisors and a bureaucracy in the form of the Ministry, Department or Office of the President, which influence the decision making process through availing information or policy options, or during the articulation of the decisions made. Similarly, a leader is mindful of his/her country's national interests, history and culture, among others, in shaping foreign policy decisions and actions. Moreover, a leader's appreciation of his/her country's relative power position in the international arena in terms of capabilities, size, geo-politics and predominant international norms and instruments, including human rights, democracy, good governance, international laws and propensity to use soft or hard power, explain foreign policy behaviour (Breuning, 2007). Essentially, differences in personality traits account for differences in leaders' foreign policy decision making style whether participatory or non participatory, foreign policy goals that constitute the national interests, and foreign policy tools, whether silent or public diplomacy, and soft or hard power.

The overwhelming influence of leaders in foreign policy is most pronounced in developing countries with relatively enormous constitutional power accorded to the executive, underdeveloped bureaucratic or institutional structures and weak civil society organizations. In Africa, for example, the top leadership occupies unchallenged position in policy making, in general, and foreign policy, in particular, largely due to the discretionary powers. Nevertheless, such power is circumscribed by the way a leader perceives, interprets or amplifies the sub-regional, regional and global context to impact on his/her choices of foreign policy decisions, objectives and instruments. Leader, systemic role, societal and governmental variables, in order of saliency; are the causal factors that explain the foreign policy of a small, underdeveloped and open country (Rosenau, 1971) like Botswana. East (1975) emphasizes size, arguing that small states are known for their cautious behaviour to avoid risks. Small states have opportunities to pursue independent self-interests, although,

they are still more limited than big, powerful states (Neack, 2003). Nevertheless, being small does not mean that they are powerless as they can control their foreign policy choices and ultimate fates. However, this power is contingent upon opportunities presented in the international system and the willingness of leaders of small states to take advantage of the opportunities. Thus, Neack (2003: 158) suggests that “international conditions must be ripe for action and leaders must be inclined to act”.

It has been argued that the preoccupation of African leaders’ foreign policies has been survival as entities given the security threats in anarchical international system and economic problems of underdevelopment in an interdependent and globalized economy characterized by asymmetries (Khadiagala & Lyon 2001; Clapham 1996). These points to the fact that externalities including dependency and marginalization, and geographical condition, such as size and being landlocked, influence the policy options of African leaders. These factors are clearly significant in the case of Botswana.

### **Botswana’s Foreign Policy**

#### ***Leaders as Architects***

Personalities and perceptions of the external environment of Botswana’s four Presidents should help to identify the differences and similarities in their foreign policy preferences, decision making processes, goals, and instruments for realizing the objectives. Such comparative analysis of leadership is based on two sets of criteria: first are background, experience, time in office and changes in international conditions that determine the regional and global agenda; second are the foreign policy choices, goals and instruments, which are largely impacted on by the first set of criteria. Seretse Khama’s status and experience as a revered Paramount Chief, British educated lawyer, inter-racial marriage, and the first President, motivated his foreign policy style of prudence, diplomacy, friendly neighbourly relations, and prioritizing national interests. Work experience as the Vice President and teacher, journalist as well as a seasoned farmer prepared Masire for the Presidency and allowed him to pursue a realistic foreign policy and adjust according to changing external situation.

His background as a British educated economist and technocrat, with rich work experience explain Mogae’s preoccupation with foreign economic policies and goals to develop his

country's economy. He recognized the overriding importance of sub-regional organizations as frameworks for member states' and sub-regional socio-economic development and conflict resolution and management. He also saw diplomacy and democracy as facilitators of friendly inter-state relations. The most notable personality trait of Ian Khama include his political efficacy; army training that has adorned him with professionalism, discipline, technical and strategizing expertise; adherence to the rule of law; philanthropy; and Paramount Chief of the largest tribe in Botswana, the Bamangwato. His expectation of other people's behaviour is largely a result of his firm belief in discipline.

It is assumed that a country's foreign policy rarely changes; instead, it is the environment that changes (Kegley & Blunton (2011). Therefore, it is important to consider factors such as size, capabilities, geopolitics and international context that modify a leader's influence. Botswana's small size, landlocked position, a developing economy, and national values, combined, have been critical in influencing its leaders' foreign policy choices since independence. Botswana's Presidents, as drivers of foreign policy, with advice from the Office of the President, have consistently been mindful of the constraints posed by these factors which have necessitated pursuance of a pragmatic stance. However, Botswana has not allowed its size, underdevelopment, landlocked position or geopolitics to prevent it from taking a stand in sub regional or regional and international affairs. The leadership has been able to influence international issues in spite of limited capabilities, being a small power, external vulnerability to regional powers, especially, South Africa and global powers including China, the emerging global economic power. These underscore the fact that leaders, whether democratic or authoritarian, are rational in their maximization of state's interests and minimization of the costs associated with realization of foreign objectives.

All the four Presidents have been guided by the same core principles that have guided foreign policy behaviour, since independence. These include political tolerance, democracy and good governance, respect for human rights and rule of law for achieving peace, security and stability, and commitment to international cooperation (Republic of Botswana, 2010: 1). It has to be underscored that whilst these foreign policy objectives are constant, they lead to flexible and concrete actions by leaders who are pragmatic in responding to situations as they evolve. Thus, a leader's interpretation and understanding of these goals is significant. Its reputation as the longest and stable democracy in sub-Saharan Africa has given Botswana the

credibility to take a stand against undemocratic governments, especially, since the 1990s, when democracy became a universal system of governance. The country has taken pronounced stances against democratic infractions. Democracy has an added advantage as it allows a country to exhibit peaceful foreign behaviour, especially, towards other democratic governments, and hostility or aggression towards non democratic ones (Doyle, 2008). However, the loud diplomatic stand against reversals of democracy in countries such as Zimbabwe has not only been about the fact that Botswana regards regional democratic violations as actions that undermine democratic norms but also as potentially destabilizing and threatening to its own security.

Primarily, Botswana has utilized its soft power to remain an active participant and promote its national interests in regional and global affairs. Soft power defined by Nye (2004: xi) is “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments”. It includes the use of diplomacy, persuasion, dialogue, negotiations, compromise and cooperation, model of democracy, good governance and rule of law, and national culture to influence global issues (Nye, 2004: 142; Chong, 2007: 7, 10). Use of soft power and democratic foreign policy making process has allowed the four Presidents to pursue predominantly friendly foreign policy behaviour towards external state and non-state actors. There are contrary views related to the issue of whether President Ian Khama’s foreign policy behaviour has been consistent; and whether he has relied on soft power or not. Soft power, relative to hard power, is seen to ensure successful achievement of foreign policy goals, especially in contemporary, interdependent and globalized world (Nye, 2004).

Botswana’s four Presidents, Seretse Khama (1966-1980), Ketumire Masire (1980-1998), Festus Mogae (1998-2008) and Khama, have been renowned for the pragmatic and realist nature of their foreign policy choices as they capitalized on opportunities and took cognizance of constraints posed by the external environment. They have pursued friendly foreign behaviour and non interference in domestic affairs of other states. Nevertheless, there have been instances when Botswana’s behaviour has fallen short of friendly. Its involvement in military intervention and peacekeeping became necessary given the geographical interconnectedness arising from shared boundaries, to prevent ramifications of overflow of security problems to Botswana and the sub-region. Common to the four leaders are the foreign policy goals of safeguarding sovereignty, security of the state in terms of territorial

integrity and citizen's lives and property, economic development, and promotion of democracy globally.

In pursuance of these foreign policy objectives, Botswana has preoccupied itself with the southern African sub-region, African continent, and the world, in order of priority. This means that countries geographically proximate to Botswana take precedence, almost at the neglect of other parts of Africa that have rarely received Botswana's attention, with the exception of a few that are of strategic importance to the country, such as Nigeria or South Sudan. For foreign policy tools, the leaders have relied on both soft and hard power including silent diplomacy, collective responsibility, especially, through the sub-regional framework, threats of economic sanctions, peacekeeping participation and military force. This is particularly true for the first three Presidents. However, Botswana has found it expedient to refrain from adopting the regional organization's position on active support for liberation movements as under Seretse Khama; and military coups as violations of democratic rule, as under President Mogae. Much more significant, is the fact that regardless of the stance taken by each of the four leaders against anti-democratic practices by states, for example, none has cut diplomatic and economic relations, except Ian Khama, an illustration of pragmatic foreign economic policies, and appreciation of geographical handicap and limited capabilities as a small power (Democracy Coalition Project, 2002).

### ***Seretse Khama, the Pioneer of Pragmatism***

Botswana's first President, Seretse Khama, for example, pursued a pragmatic and realist foreign policy in the face of hostile sub-regional environment with racist regimes in South Africa and Rhodesia, while recognizing its underdeveloped status. For example, it has been economically dependent on South Africa, especially, in relation to trade, export routes, export of labour to the mines and the Rand currency (Chipasula & Miti, 1989). Thus he refrained from either open criticism of, or confrontation with, apartheid South Africa and white Rhodesia (Osei-Hwedie, 1998). Instead, his major foreign policy preoccupations were state security to protect national sovereignty and territorial integrity in order to ensure the survival of the country and his rule; and human security with a view to protecting citizens' lives and property from violent attacks by racist Rhodesia and South Africa, to foster peace and stability in the state. Efforts were also made to promote people's welfare and development through soliciting international development aid from donor countries and international



organizations, as well as investment by South African private corporations. Furthermore, Botswana wanted to portray itself as a functioning multi-racial democracy worthy of emulation in the southern African region, especially, by racist South Africa and Rhodesia.

Moreover, in a realistic appraisal of the country's vulnerability, Botswana refrained from active support of liberation movements fighting against racist regimes through the provision of bases and transit routes. Rather, it extended moral and indirect support to liberation movements through the FrontLine States (FLS), Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations (UN), as well as hosting refugees. Subsequently, however, since the late 1970s, Seretse Khama openly supported armed struggle once he appreciated the resistance by minority regimes, a position similar to other FLS, short of providing bases and transit facilities. This demonstrated his flexibility in adjusting to changing circumstances (Niemann, 1993: 3).

### ***Masire, Reorientation***

President Masire continued to pursue his predecessor's foreign policy goals of promoting the country's security, international collaboration to foster national development; and upholding democracy. The changed sub-regional context, with the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980 and South Africa in 1994 paved the way for Botswana's new economic foreign policy of facilitating development through regional integration; and promoting democracy, good governance, rule of law and human rights as enablers of socio-economic development. Similarly, the need to contribute to regional stability and security prompted President Masire to involve his country in direct military intervention to resolve conflicts in the sub-region and beyond, and in peacekeeping missions, as well as support for international sanctions against governments with flawed democratic practices. These represented departures from the policies of silent diplomacy and non-interference in other states' domestic affairs. The rationale for intervention stemmed from the realization that peace, security and socio-economic development are intricately intertwined, and that Botswana's own security is very much linked with that of its neighbours, reminiscent of the common regional security. In defence of democracy, Botswana, together with South Africa and Zimbabwe, as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) troika, employed a combination of diplomacy, threat of sanctions and intervention force to restore an elected government in 1996 in Lesotho.

In the 1990s, President Masire allowed Botswana to participate in peacekeeping in Mozambique, Somalia and Sierra Leone, as part of the OAU and UN missions. Participation in these exercises was an expression of solidarity with the UN and OAU systems and the countries concerned. As part of the human security agenda and common security framework, Botswana has been an integral part of the Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization, since 1995, as the mechanism to control cross border crime (Molomo et al, 2007). Furthermore, the changed international context, since the end of the Cold War, and the fall of the USSR; and especially globalization, all increased President Masire's choice of foreign development partners. These also helped to prioritize development as the main preoccupation in international interaction; and champion democracy as the preferred mode of governing, worldwide. For example, Botswana, as part of the OAU, condemned the 1996 military overthrow of the elected President of Niger. And, even after stepping down as President, Masire headed two missions which were critical to the advancement of democracy, and free and fair elections. These were the Commonwealth Election Observer Group to monitor general elections in Nigeria in 1999; and Inter-Congolese Dialogue in the 2000s (Democracy Coalition Project, 2002).

### ***Mogae, Diversifying Global Partners***

President Mogae's foreign policy, 1998 through 2008, remained steadfast with the pursuit of economic development, international cooperation, human security and democracy. He embraced the new regionalism essential in the era of increased globalization and interdependence to mitigate vulnerabilities and promote gains from international trade and investment. In this regard, he continued to push for effective regional integration through SADC and the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) as drivers of economic development of member states thereby guaranteeing stability and security. Furthermore, Mogae's government collaborated with other governments to secure the 2002 SACU agreement for a fairer distribution of, and benefits from, increased revenue sharing. Also, his government and that of South Africa had to employ a combination of persuasion and force to resolve electoral instability and restore law and order in Lesotho in 1998. Their military intervention helped safeguard democracy and prevented spill over of security threats to the rest of the sub-region (Osei-Hwedie 2002; Molomo et al, 2007).

At the international level, Botswana has been favourable to boosting international and regional trade with the USA through the Africa Growth Opportunity Act, the European Union, and World Trade Organization to help promote domestic manufacturing including textiles and the cutting and polishing of diamonds, as well as diversifying global partners for development. Indeed, President Mogae was renowned for frequent travels overseas to woo foreign direct investment to the country's manufacturing sector from both the West and East and to negotiate for national control and processing of diamonds. He is the originator of an active 'Look East' foreign policy, in recognition of the shift in economic power from the West to the East, in order to increase economic relations with China and India. He actively mobilized international support for his vigorous and steadfast efforts to fight against the HIV and AIDS pandemic in Botswana. Similarly, the successful 'Diamond for Development' campaign to counter the negative 'Blood Diamonds' publicity by Survival International, which threatened the economy, demonstrated the shrewdness and determination of a small state to flex its muscle to safeguard its national interests rather than be cowed by a non-state actor.

Whereas President Mogae had a fervent preoccupation with foreign economic goals, his stance towards promotion of democracy, globally, was chequered. He remained preoccupied with sub-regional issues and complied with the SADC collective position, while refraining from taking a stand on other parts of Africa, except for Nigeria. For example, while he and Thabo Mbeki of South Africa used diplomatic leverage to stop President Chiluba of Zambia from punishing opponents of his intention to illegally stand for a third term, Mogae opted for the SADC position that supported Mugabe in spite of electoral irregularities in the 2002 presidential elections. Also, he successfully resolved the Botswana-Namibia dispute over Sedudu/Kisakili Island, a testimony of the peaceful behaviour associated with democratic governments, and adherence to international law and institutions. Moreover, he failed to emulate the OAU's condemnation of the 1999 military coup that overthrew a democratically elected government in Ivory Coast, and desisted from speaking out on electoral violence in Ivory Coast in 1999 and 2000. However, Botswana had been critical of military coups in Nigeria and Abacha's killing of civilians (Democracy Coalition Project, 2002). Nigeria is important to Botswana given its hegemonic leadership in West Africa.

### **Ian Khama: New Foreign Policy Stance?**

Observers have characterized Khama's foreign policy behaviour as a marked change from that of his three predecessors. His government's decisions, pronouncements and actions, aptly articulated by his then Vice President and the Minister of Foreign and International Affairs, point to a new foreign policy position for Botswana characterized by visibility through being vocal on sub-regional, regional and international issues. To trace the changes in foreign policy, it is imperative to grasp the content and evolution of Khama's orientation. Unfortunately, it is quite problematic to do so as there is no systematic research into his or the government's orientations and contributions to the trajectory of Botswana's foreign policy behaviour. Nevertheless, we relied on available information to explain the nature of the difference and analyze the reasons why Ian Khama is seemingly different from his predecessors. This enables us to gauge the assertion that foreign policy rarely changes, rather, the leadership and circumstance or context within which foreign policy is made, do.

It is apparent that President Ian Khama's government has taken a deliberate step to be active and voice its preferred position on international affairs and not be swayed by the need for collective stand by either the Southern African Development Community (SADC) or African Union (AU), and not even the preferences of the international community. Foreign policy issues that have led to controversy include his government's position on the Zimbabwe election results, boycott of SADC Summit, and the ICC. In support of international democracy, for example, Botswana was the only SADC country that challenged the 2013 harmonized Zimbabwean elections for irregularities which contravened SADC's Election Guidelines for free and fair election administration. It was also the only SADC state to demand an independent election audit, thereby not conforming to SADC's collective stand and endorsement of election outcome (Republic of Botswana, 2013).

Before then, President Ian Khama publicly criticized the seriously flawed March 2008 elections in Zimbabwe and delays in forming the government of national unity between Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Unity-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) (EIU, 2008; EIU, 2011). Allegations of election irregularities prompted President Khama to withhold recognition of President Mugabe's government; call for Zimbabwe's suspension from regional organizations including SADC, AU and the Commonwealth; and propose fresh presidential elections to resolve contested elections.

President Khama wrote to all Presidents of SADC countries, Chairperson of the AU, and Secretary General of the UN to suggest the holding of fresh elections as the best solution to resolving the disputed presidential election in Zimbabwe (EIU, 2008).

President Khama also boycotted the SADC Summit hosted by South Africa in August 2008 in protest against President Mugabe's attendance when disputed elections had not been resolved. Instead, the Foreign Minister attended with the primary goal of getting the report on the progress of the mediation in Zimbabwe. His boycott of the Summit, based on principle, incurred the ire of the host, South Africa, which led to a thaw of relations (EIU, 2008), in addition to worsening relations with Zimbabwe. Botswana could not afford strained relations with South Africa since it is the most important economy in the region, both in southern Africa and sub Saharan Africa. Furthermore, the criticism of the Khama government, viewed as an obstacle to realization of African aspirations, by the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) again led to strained relations. The leader of the ANCYL, Julius Malema, further aggravated matters by calling for regime change in Botswana by extending support to the opposition.

Furthermore, Ian Khama's government criticized Madagascar for the violent overthrow of a democratically elected leader and blocking his return from exile as per SADC negotiated peace agreement. And, he quickly recognized Quattara's elected government in Ivory Coast and extended an invitation to visit Botswana (EIU, 2011). To champion human rights, as a component part of good governance, Botswana openly criticized the governments of Egypt, Libya and Syria for the violent suppression of protesters, and Zimbabwe for violent suppression of the opposition. Botswana was the first African country to break off diplomatic ties with Gadhafi's regime following the Arab Revolution and Gadhafi's use of force to quell the rebellion. Moreover, Botswana is a strong supporter of international law and courts, especially the International Criminal Court (ICC) and has offered to arrest any African leader wanted by the Court for crimes against humanity, especially, those of Sudan and Kenya, another departure from the AU's position on the ICC.

Botswana has made its influence felt beyond Africa and the Middle East, to extend to the world stage. In a bold move, Ian Khama has been the only African leader to date who has publicly spoken out on the shortcomings of Chinese investments in his country, and openly courted Japan as important donor. In a seemingly show of independence, the President failed

to travel to the White House where President Obama had hosted leaders of Africa democratic governments in 2013. Botswana has sought to have an active role in international organizations, particularly the UN, culminating in election to the Human Rights Council for 2011 to 2014, for the first time in the country's history (*DailyNews*, 2011:3). Such an election raised the country's international status, credibility and influence as participation in any UN forum is highly regarded.

Much more recent, Botswana has made its views known on a wide variety of international concerns. On October 1, 2013, in a speech to the 68<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly, Botswana reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to international cooperation on development issues including development, HIV and AIDS, Climate Change, international peace and security and the international justice system. In particular, it was announced that Botswana was the first African country to ratify the 2010 Kampala Amendments to the Rome Statute to extend to Crime of Aggression. Botswana urged the UN Security Council (UNSC) to punish Assad government of Syria for failure to protect its citizens from war crimes and crimes against humanity in accordance with the Responsibility to Protect (R2P); condemned UNSC members, Russia and China, who prevented the adoption of resolutions for intervention in Syria to end the violence and loss of life; and commended Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon for humanitarian gesture towards Syrian refugees by hosting and catering to their needs. Furthermore, Botswana attributed the current political instability to Morsi's undemocratic rule; however, it called for restoration of constitutionalism. Also, Botswana lamented the threats to security and territorial integrity of the South Sudan following strained relations with Sudan. Similarly, Botswana bemoaned the dire humanitarian situation in Darfur, and condemned terrorist attacks in Kenya, Nigeria and Pakistan, calling for concerted global response to terrorism (*Botswana Guardian*, October 4, 2013).

### *The Differences*

From the above, it can be discerned that Ian Khama's foreign policy is different from his three predecessors in five important ways: First, his preference for public diplomacy as a foreign policy tool is a departure from the silent diplomacy of the first three Presidents. Second, non conformity with SADC's chosen position on issues has been different from his predecessors' principled stand in unity with SADC member states. He has, instead, taken an independent and solitary position different from that of his colleagues. Third, he has broken

off diplomatic and other relations with some governments he disapproves of, which has not been done before, as in the case of Gadaffi's government of Libya following the Arab Spring Revolution. Fourth, he has opted to take active, vocal and visible roles on international issues ranging from democracy, elections administration, human rights, good governance, international law and the ICC; to international donors; and major powers. Finally, he has chosen to align his foreign policy with the major concerns of the global community on democracy, elections and humanitarian intervention. These five differences account for distinct experiences that have translated into varying and interesting diplomatic trajectories.

### *Motivations*

The factors which have motivated Ian Khama's foreign policy choices are multiple: his political efficacy prompts the desire for his country's participation in the international arena and not to allow the small size and limited capabilities constrain the exercise of its sovereignty. His four Ds – democracy, development, dignity and discipline – strengthen his resolve and confidence that his foreign policy stance is right and acceptable, and lend credence to his expectation that states should exercise discipline by adhering to, and upholding, democratic principles. He is known to be a man of the ordinary people, both at home and internationally.

The President has capitalized on his country's international reputation as the longest stable democracy in SSA, history of free and fair elections, and prudent management of the economy as firm grounds for a credible voice on issues. More important, the changed international context within which President Khama operates gives him room to champion his active and vocal stand, and public diplomacy, a situation not discernible in the past. The trend in international affairs has gravitated towards the use of public diplomacy as the preferred tool of foreign policy to support open and democratic stance. Similarly, the use of soft power has been the acceptable trend in contemporary world politics, and is appropriate for a small state in pursuit of foreign policy objectives if it is to punch above its weight. Even more relevant, the prominence of international norms, values and laws in the twenty-first century that favour the international community's promotion of democracy, free and fair elections, human rights, humanitarian assistance, the ICC, and fair treatment of host nations by foreign investors makes his behaviour acceptable. His stance is strengthened by the congruence between the national and international values of democracy, good governance,

rule of law, and dialogue. Lastly, lack of sanctions or costs for taking a decision not preferred by either SADC on the Zimbabwe's electoral outcome and Gender Protocol or the AU on the Zimbabwe elections and the ICC has given impetus to continuing with the same foreign behaviour, and directly and indirectly has garnered admiration for the country. Likewise, his public critique of China's poor quality of final projects, in general, a departure from Mogae, and particularly the inability to get Botswana's Morupule electric power plant fully operational as originally scheduled, did not result in China terminating economic cooperation with Botswana. Botswana too did not break off ties with Chinese investment, either old or new.

### *Principled Stand*

Contrary to widely-held view that his foreign policy is based on a whim (Allison, 2013), Khama's foreign policy actions are based on principled, reasoned and justifiable grounds, akin to normative and moral considerations. For example, criticisms of the Zimbabwean electoral outcomes in 2013 and 2008 were premised on democratic principles, electoral laws, good governance, and its own and sub-regional security concerns. Similarly, its willingness to arrest any African leader wanted by the ICC is based on adherence to international law as signatory to the Rome Statute of the ICC, "importance of international law and institutions in the prevention and resolution of conflicts", and advancement of human rights (Republic of Botswana, 2010: 1). However, based on realistic and reasonable appraisal of the volatile political situation of the post-Nairobi Westgate Shopping Mall bombing by terrorists, Al Shabbab, Botswana has supported the AU proposal to postpone the trial of the President and Vice President of Kenya at the ICC. This position does not exonerate the two and depart from the Rome Statute as Article 16 allows for a year's postponement. Nevertheless, the AU proposal is contingent upon the UN Security Council and ICC approval (Motsamai, 2013: 1; Ngalwa, 2013: 22). Essentially, Botswana's support for the ICC remains resolute.

### *Impact and Challenges*

Whether Ian Khama's Botswana has been successful in achieving foreign policy objectives through the use of visibility and public diplomacy is difficult to categorically state. However, it is undeniable that the country plays a very active role in global affairs, especially in southern Africa. Undoubtedly, Botswana has been unsuccessful in convincing SADC to



adopt its position on Zimbabwe elections and expulsion from the sub-regional organization, on two occasions in 2008 and 2013 (EIU, 2008; Republic of Botswana, 2013). Similarly, very few SADC member states have followed suit on fulfilling the ICC requirements. Nevertheless, Botswana's voice has been heard and has had some impact in regional and global power politics, rather than remain a mere spectator. For example, President Mwanawasa adopted the same stance as Botswana's as he publicly criticised President Mugabe's anti democratic practices. In 2012, the AU was forced to change the venue for its 19<sup>th</sup> Summit from Lilongwe, Malawi to Addis Ababa following President Joyce Banda's refusal to host Sudan, and her determination to arrest President Al Bashir of Sudan for genocide and war crimes in Darfur in compliance with the ICC mandate. Like Botswana, Malawi as a member of the ICC felt duty bound to abide by the ICC mandate (AU, 2012; BBC News, 2012). In relation to international affairs, Botswana's participation in the Human Rights Council has given it clout in global affairs and international appreciation for its respect for democratic principles in general and upholding human rights, in particular (DailyNews, 2011: 3). It is likely that following criticism, some Chinese commercial interests have flocked to Zambia where the environment seems not to be very hostile given the corruption there. Also revealing is the SADC's cautious and compromised assessment of the 2013 Zimbabwe elections as 'free and peaceful', not the usual 'free and fair', an indirect agreement with Botswana's views on the elections.

The principled stand on democracy and human rights as the basis of its foreign policy positions has not been applied consistently to all states. Those who are not taken in by the principled position of Ian Khama's foreign policy point to what they view to be double standards and holier-than-thou attitude. The examples often cited are Swaziland, Zimbabwe and Ivory Coast as well as the manner of communicating with others. Ian Khama's diplomatic relationship with Swaziland, which involves visits, contrasts sharply with his difficulty in recognizing Robert Mugabe as the legitimate President in Zimbabwe after the 2008 elections. Another good example is his participation in King Mswati's birthday celebrations in Swaziland. Yet Mswati is the remaining absolute monarchy in southern Africa with little or no regard for human rights of his citizens, and no political pluralism. It is likely that Ian Khama's status as the Paramount Chief necessitates his affinity with a fellow traditional authority, King Mswati. Thus, his dual role, as President of a democratic country and Paramount Chief of a big ethnic group, demands different etiquettes, which has led to the

unavoidable inconsistencies. Contradictions raise questions about the credibility of his principles and open up criticisms. Ian Khama was also criticized for a hasty invitation to President Quattara while domestic and international diplomatic efforts to find a permanent solution to the Ivory Coast political impasse were still ongoing. Moreover, critics fault the Khama government for what is seen as undiplomatic way of communicating its views to other actors, short of the expected etiquette. Typical examples include the diplomatic tirade with Kenya and the speech at the 68<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly in 2013. The UN address focused on a variety of issues including Syria, Egypt, South Sudan, Darfur, war crimes, crimes against humanity and R2P, UNSC members' use of veto power, refugees and terrorism (*Botswana Guardian*, October 18, 2013: 11).

### *Similarities*

Ian Khama shares similarities with his three predecessors, in spite of differences in foreign policy posture. This shows that a state's basic policy and behaviour remain consistent overtime. For example, he is guided by the same principles of foreign policy, exhibits friendly behaviour, and pursues goals of socio-economic development and security, primarily through regional frameworks of SADC and SACU. Moreover, he has demonstrated astuteness, flexibility and tact as he has been mindful of the country's geopolitics, the need for good neighbourliness and regional integration, similar to past leaders. Therefore, as good statesmanship and statecraft demand, he has readily normalized tense relations and never broken off diplomatic or economic relations with SADC member states because its security and economic well being are largely dependent on neighbouring states. With respect to Zimbabwe, he accepted a power sharing arrangement between ZANU-PF and MDC, following the 2008 disputed elections; and together with other SADC states, Botswana supported lifting of sanctions by Western governments after the signing of the Global Political Agreement. Ian Khama's government has also rendered financial assistance to, and continued to trade with, Zimbabwe including refurbishing power station that supplies both countries (Piet, 2010). Also, in spite of challenging the 2013 Zimbabwean election results, he sent a strong delegation led by his Vice President to the swearing in of Robert Mugabe as President. Zimbabwe is of great interest to Botswana due to mutual dependence and impact of spill over of problems across borders. For example, it has been estimated that 2,000 illegal immigrants are repatriated back to Zimbabwe every week, and some of the illegals have been

allegedly involved in criminal activities. In addition 1,000 Zimbabwean refugees resided in Botswana in 2010 at an astronomical cost of Botswana Pula 1.2 million a month (Republic of Botswana, 2010).

Moreover, like past Presidents, Ian Khama's government has eagerly promoted cooperation with SADC members, through bilateral Joint Commissions and development projects. Among the most recent projects are the Caprivi Link Interconnection power line which would supply electricity to Botswana, and whose commissioning he and the Zambian and Zimbabwean Presidents witnessed (Republic of Botswana, 2010); and Kazungula bridge involving Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Botswana's participation in peace operations, started during the Masire era through Mogae's time, has been continued in Ian Khama's presidency as contribution to regional and world peace. Its troops were expected to form part of the contingent to the conflict ridden northeast region of the Democratic Republic of Congo to battle the M23 rebels threatening President Kabila's government. Through its Foreign Minister, Botswana re-stated its commitment to assisting in achieving international peace and security in order to make the world safer, peaceful and prosperous for the current and future generations (*Botswana Guardian*, October 4, 2013: 14).

Similar to Mogae, Ian Khama has nurtured an increasingly 'Look East' policy which has made Japan a much more preferable development partner. For a President who rarely undertakes overseas visits, he attended the Fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development in Japan in June 2013, and held two important talks with the Japanese Prime Minister and the United Nations Secretary General on strengthening bilateral cooperation and boosting relations with SADC, respectively. The government in a show of solidarity and visibility has readily rendered humanitarian assistance during natural disasters such as the Fukushima Nuclear disaster in Japan of 2012, and before that Haiti, Pakistan and Niger (Republic of Botswana, 2010).

## **Conclusion**

It is evident that Botswana's leaders determine foreign policy choices. Their personality traits largely help to explain differences in their behaviour towards other states. President Ian Khama's deliberate option of making his country visible with an active role in world affairs,

reliance on public diplomacy as a foreign policy tool, and boldness to take an independent position different from SADC on Zimbabwe's 2008 and 2013 elections, AU on Zimbabwe and the ICC, and Africa as a whole by condemning China's business dealings stand out as radically different from the other three Presidents, who relied on silent diplomacy and bandwagon with SADC and OAU/AU. However, a leader's influence is tempered by the international context which reinforces the differential impact of circumstances such that changes in environment influence the leadership's standpoint towards others. Geographical location and national principles, as factors that remain constant across time, help us to understand continuity in foreign policy behaviour of the four leaders. Commonalities among the four leaders include, primarily, good neighbourly relations, international collaboration, adherence to SADC and AU positions on issues on which there is convergence, pursuit of economic and security goals that foster national interests, and the use of soft power, commensurate with the country's size and relative capabilities.

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