

## **What Has Made Political Institutions in Botswana and Mauritius Tick?**

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### **Abstract**

Botswana and Mauritius are among the select few countries in Africa that are notable for successfully fostering development. That there is a consensus regarding Botswana and Mauritius as extraordinary cases of democratic development in Africa is beyond dispute, and their success and, indeed, “exceptionality” has been well documented by various analysts. The prominence of the two African cases is illustrative of the challenges and promises African politics hold. What is particularly interesting about the two countries is that they succeeded in the face of adversity, where many countries in Africa failed. In fact, institutions in the two countries, in the main, have endured and aided democratic development as opposed to impeding it. In other words, the two countries have ensured effective and quality institutions. The question we seek to answer is what has made their political institutions effective, while the same cannot be said about the institutions in most of their peer nations. We argue that the success of political institutions in the two countries is an outcome of multiple factors: strong and committed leadership, ability to manage ethnic diversity, a competent and meritorious bureaucracy and strong state capacity, as well as the ability to forge a public-private sector coalition. It is these factors that the essay seeks to explain.

**Keywords:** Botswana, institutions, effective leadership, Mauritius, successful democratic transitions.

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**I**nstitutions, particularly their endurance and stability, are central to the success of a country. According to Hague and Harrop, an institution conventionally “refers to the major organizations of national government, particularly those specified in the constitution such as the legislature, the judiciary and the

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executive.”<sup>1</sup> They state further that “the concept of an institution is also used more broadly to include other organizations which may have a less secure constitutional basis, such as the bureaucracy, local government, and political parties.”<sup>2</sup> For Roskin et al., “political institutions are the working structures of government, such as legislatures and executive departments.”<sup>3</sup> And, as Roskin and his co-editors note,

political institutions are, in large measure, artificial creations. Most of them evolve over time, but at key points in a nation’s history, people have the opportunity to choose their institutions. This brings in an element of creativity in politics... . [Institutions] are crafted by a handful of people who can do a good job or a poor one. They are guided by past experience and by reason. Often they are taking a leap in the dark.<sup>4</sup>

In liberal democracies, institutions play a crucial role, as they offer “the framework within which decisions are reached.”<sup>5</sup> Various analysts link the prudent use of resources and, in turn, economic growth to institutions.<sup>6</sup> Relying on the work of Acemoglu et al. and Easterly and Levine,<sup>7</sup> Martin contends that “institutions have been shown to be a more powerful explanation of cross-country variations in income per capita than measures of geographical endowments or trade macro-economic policies.”<sup>8</sup> Further, it is argued that “the main reason for diverging growth experiences of resource-rich countries lies in differences in the quality of institutions.”<sup>9</sup> It is in this context that Leftwich notes, “there is now widespread agreement in the international community and amongst researchers that institutions matter for stable and secure states, economic growth, political democracy and inclusive social development.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rod Hague and Martin Harrop, *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 77.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Roskin, Robert Cord, James Medeiros, and Walter Jones, eds., *Political Science: An Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Pearson, 2008), 235.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 252-253.

<sup>5</sup> Hague and Harrop, *Comparative Government and Politics*, 77.

<sup>6</sup> Phillippe Martin, “A Closer Look at Botswana’s Development: The Role of Institutions,” *Paterson Review* 9 (2008): 35-54.

<sup>7</sup> Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson, “The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation,” *American Economic Review* 91, no. 5 (2001): 1369-1401, and William Easterly and Ross Levine, “Tropics, Germs, and Crops: How Endowments Influence Economic Development,” *Journal of Monetary Economics* 50, no. 1 (2003): 3-39.

<sup>8</sup> Martin, “A Closer Look at Botswana’s Development,” 39.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Adrian Leftwich, “Bringing Agency Back In: Politics and Human Agency in Building Institutions and States—Synthesis and Overview Report,” Research Paper 6, Development Leadership Program (June 2009), <http://www.dllprog.org> (accessed August 4, 2014).

In this sense, institutions are at the core of a country's economic performance.

At the time of their independence, African countries inherited varying types and structures of institutions, and these have evolved differently. A select few have facilitated democratic and economic development, although most have tended to hinder such development, as they have been consumed by the “big man syndrome” and a host of other challenges. In short, political institutions in most African countries have failed to deliver political and economic advancement. As a result, Africa is replete with many cases of failed political institutions, and, in turn, a poor developmental record in the main. Thus, Africa generally fares badly in socio-economic and political development when compared to other continents. Social, political, and economic indicators paint a bleak future for Africa. In fact, the failed states index is dominated by African countries. According to the World Bank, almost half of the African population lives below the international poverty line.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, Africa accounts for about 70 percent of all HIV-infected persons and AIDS-related deaths in the world.<sup>12</sup> The foregoing discussion is telling about the general performance of institutions in Africa.

Various explanations have been suggested for Africa's adversities, and institutional failure is evidently at the core—including in countries that are well endowed with resources. Alence argues that Africa's poor performance can be linked to *dysfunctional political institutions, poor leadership, and governance* (italics added).<sup>13</sup> Akyuz and Gore contend that economic policy errors and institutional structural constraints have contributed to Africa's poor performance.<sup>14</sup> Ong'anyo attributes Africa's problems to leadership.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, leadership also has been a major challenge in most African countries. Thus, Rotberg notes that “leadership in Africa is typified by disfiguring examples—the Idi Amins and Robert Mugabes—than by positive role models such as Nelson Mandela and Seretse Khama [the latter two were among a rare group of exceptional leaders in Africa].”<sup>16</sup> Leftwich is more emphatic:

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<sup>11</sup> World Bank, “Global Monitoring Report: Millennium Development Goals from Consensus to Momentum” (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2005).

<sup>12</sup> Omano Edigheji, “A Democratic Developmental State in Africa? A Concept Paper,” Research Report 105 (Johannesburg: Centre for Policy Studies, 2005).

<sup>13</sup> Rod Alence, “Political Institutions and Developmental Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 42 (2004): 163-187.

<sup>14</sup> Yilmaz Akyuz and Charles Gore, “African Economic Development in a Comparative Perspective,” *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 25 (2001): 265-288.

<sup>15</sup> Antony O. Ong'anyo, “Political Instability in Africa: Where the Problem Lies and Alternate Perspectives,” Symposium 2008: Afrika: Een continent op drift [Africa: A continent adrift], African Diaspora Policy Centre, Amsterdam.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Rotberg, “The Roots of Africa's Leadership Deficit,” *Compass: A Journal of Leadership* 1, no. 1 (2003): 28-32.

Much of the focus of the literature on economic and political development has concentrated on failure, or relative failure, rather than success. And when seeking to account for poor performance the explanatory finger has pointed at institutions, structures and/or policies. In the African context, especially, these have included pervasive neo-patrimonialism; poor policies; weak institutions; inadequate bureaucracies; overbearing states; “comprador” bourgeois parasitism; ethnic conflict; deeply embedded patron-client politics; disruptive colonial impositions and inheritances and the creation of artificial states; predatory political regimes—and many more.<sup>17</sup>

Despite the various explanations offered, many African countries continue to backslide. And, as a result, the continent has been marred by challenges related to weak states, including poor economic performance, poverty, conflict and violence, political instability, weak institutions, lack of infrastructure, ineffective and poor policies, poor leadership, poor resource management, brain drain, and corruption. These challenges manifest in most countries’ poor performance in realizing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) targets and essentially poor quality of life endured by many Africans. Despite many regional and global initiatives that seek cooperation for development, social indicators continue to stagnate (i.e., life expectancy, primary school enrollment, access to water, and so on).

In spite of failing in many areas as noted above, Africa also has made considerable strides in some areas. For instance, there has been a shift from dictatorships and one-party states to multiparty/electoral democracies and an increase in the level of political awareness and participation.<sup>18</sup> Economic growth rates in Africa also have improved. While Africa has shown better economic performance with its GDP increasing from 2.3 percent in 2009 to 4.7 percent in 2010, it has failed to translate economic growth into employment, poverty reduction, or even significant progress toward attaining the Millennium Development Goals.<sup>19</sup> Unemployment and poverty remain disturbingly high in most African countries. Moreover, African countries continue to rely heavily on commodities and fail to diversify their economies. According to the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and African Union (AU), “the African diversification experience has been volatile with no discernible and

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<sup>17</sup> Leftwich, “Bringing Agency Back In,” 8.

<sup>18</sup> Ong’ango, “Political Instability in Africa.”

<sup>19</sup> United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), African Union (AU), African Development Bank (AfDB), and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *MDG Report: Assessing Progress in Africa towards the Millennium Development Goals*, 2013.

general sustainable movement towards deepening diversification.”<sup>20</sup> Although Africa has made progress in terms of primary school enrollment, recording a leap from 54 percent of primary-aged children in 1990 to 76 percent in 2008, the cost and quality of education, access, and unequal opportunities remain a challenge.<sup>21</sup>

The foregoing discussion suggests that Africa’s need for capable states, strong and capable bureaucracies, and independent institutions is indisputable. African countries need a state “that has the capacity to deploy its authority, credibility, and legitimacy in a binding manner to design and implement development policies and programmes for promoting transformation and growth, as well as for expanding human capabilities.”<sup>22</sup> The quest for stability, prosperity, good governance, effective institutions, and policies that can meet society’s most basic needs and interests prevails.

Notwithstanding the various pitfalls faced by most African countries, there are a few countries that kept themselves apart from the rest of Africa. Botswana, Mauritius, Namibia, and South Africa are among the select few countries that are prominent for their achievements. However, our focus is on Botswana and Mauritius only because (1) the two countries were in a vulnerable and precarious situation at independence, (2) agriculture was the mainstay of their economies at the time, (3) they transformed themselves into middle-income status, despite their histories of economic hardship, (4) they have a sustained history of being democracies, and (5) both are ranked among Africa’s top performers in governance. The two countries evolved differently from most African countries, yet they gained political independence at almost the same time. The prominence of the two African cases is illustrative of the challenges and promises African politics hold.

### **Botswana and Mauritius: Prominent Achievers and Exceptions in Africa**

That Botswana and Mauritius are prominent achievers in Africa is beyond doubt, and their achievement is not a small feat in Africa—considering the challenges faced by the continent as noted above. Both countries dispelled a crisis of viability at independence in 1966 and 1968, respectively, to become two of Africa’s super-performers. This makes an investigation into how and why they succeeded all the more interesting. Although much has been said in the literature about the uncertainty that confronted the two countries at independence, it is invaluable to recite a few observations about them. Consider

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<sup>20</sup> UNECA and AU, *Africa 2011: Governing Development in Africa—The Role of the State in Economic Transformation* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: UNECA, 2011), 81.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.,7.

the following characterizations about the two countries at the time: On the one hand, Botswana's viability at independence was questionable, as it faced a lacklustre future. In the words of Lewis, its "beginnings in 1966...could only be described as desperate."<sup>23</sup> So desperate was Botswana that "wealth was measured almost entirely in cattle."<sup>24</sup> These sentiments are shared by Molutsi when he notes that "Botswana's leaders inherited a poor, weak and insecure state. ...The country was poor because it had no identifiable resource base. The only possible source of economic sustenance was the livestock subsector, which at the time had been decimated by one of the harshest droughts in the country's history."<sup>25</sup> The absence of a resource base meant there was close to nothing to drive development. In short, Botswana was a rudimentary place that had no prospect of functioning as a country. Little did people know that beneath the Kalahari subsoil were some precious minerals.

Mauritius, on the other hand, had to deal with what Brautigam and Diolle termed "the crisis of confidence at independence."<sup>26</sup> In fact, it was predestined to fail according to most observers, including James Meade, a Nobel Prize winner in economics.<sup>27</sup> As reported by Zafar, James Meade "famously predicted a dismal future for Mauritius in 1961 due to its vulnerabilities to weather and price shocks and lack of job opportunities outside the sugar sector..."<sup>28</sup> Carroll and Carroll echoed the same sentiments when they stated that "Mauritius seemed a strong candidate for membership in the developing world's club of 'basket cases.'"<sup>29</sup> Its economy was extremely fragile, depending almost entirely upon sugar plantations, and it was plagued by what appeared to be irresolvable ethnic conflicts. Brautigam and Diolle make a related point, when they note that Mauritius had "a pro-poor foundation. The period of independence was fraught with perceived peril, and the population was divided even over the issue of becoming independent with a large percentage preferring some kind of continued association with Great Britain along the lines of the nearby French island of the Reunion."<sup>30</sup> Basically, both

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<sup>23</sup> Stephen Lewis, "Editor's Note," in *Very Brave or Very Foolish? Memoirs of an African Democrat*, ed. Stephen Lewis (Gaborone, Botswana: Macmillan, 2006).

<sup>24</sup> Barbara Wake Carroll and Terrance Carroll, "State and Ethnicity in Botswana and Mauritius: A Democratic Route to Development?" *Journal of Development Studies* 33, no. 4 (1997): 464-486.

<sup>25</sup> Patrick Molutsi, "Botswana: The Path to Democracy and Development," in *Democratic Reform in Africa: The Quality of Progress*, ed. E. Gyimah-Boadi (London: Lynne Rienner, 2004).

<sup>26</sup> Deborah Brautigam and Tania Diolle, "Coalitions, Capitalists and Credibility: Overcoming the Crisis of Confidence at Independence in Mauritius," DLP Research Paper, no. 4 (2009).

<sup>27</sup> Ali Zafar, "Mauritius: An Economic Success Story," in *Yes Africa Can: Success Stories from a Dynamic Continent*, ed. Chuhan-Pole Putnam and Angwafo Manka (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2011), 91-106, and Jeffrey Frankel, "Mauritius: African Success Story," paper no. 234 (Cambridge, MA: Center for International Development, Harvard University, April 2012).

<sup>28</sup> Zafar, "Mauritius," 4.

<sup>29</sup> Carroll and Carroll, "State and Ethnicity in Botswana and Mauritius," 466.

<sup>30</sup> Brautigam and Diolle, "Coalitions, Capitalists and Credibility," 11.

countries were in a vulnerable and precarious situation. And, common to both countries at the time, agriculture was the mainstay of their economies; cattle for Botswana, and sugar for Mauritius.

However, such characteristics have become part of the two countries' histories because the same cannot be said about them any longer. Their developmental trajectories have evolved differently, setting them apart from most African countries that continue to backslide in their socio-economic and political indicators. In fact, there is a consensus that Botswana and Mauritius are among the few prominent achievers in Africa.<sup>31</sup> Both countries transformed amid adversity to middle-income status, a clear indication that their institutions have been effective over the years, with unparalleled achievements in Africa. Carroll and Carroll observed: "Both countries have diversified their economies and experienced rapid and sustained economic growth; they have avoided inter-ethnic or tribal political violence; and they have maintained their democratic institutions while developing vigorous democratic processes [at least by African standards]."<sup>32</sup> With respect to Botswana, it has become a leading producer of diamonds, and its GDP per capita (PPP) stood at US\$17,779 in 2008. Further, "It remains the only country in the world which sustained an uninterrupted and rapid annual economic growth rate of 9.2 per cent for three decades (between 1966 and 1996)."<sup>33</sup> Life expectancy reached 67 by 1991, although it declined to 56 on account of HIV/AIDS by 2001.<sup>34</sup> Yet, Botswana has stood true to its guiding principles of democratic development, self-reliance, and unity, and thus the country has become a better place for the majority of its citizens in terms of improving the quality of life.

Regarding Mauritius, its "growth in GDP per capita rate averaged 5.4% over the period 1970-2010, during which the growth rate in the rest of Africa was only about 1%. By 2010, Mauritius achieved a per capita income of about \$7,000 ...", and its life expectancy was 72.8 years.<sup>35</sup> According to the 2013 African economic outlook report, Mauritius has the best business environment and the most competitive economy in the region. Remarkably, no one lives below the poverty line in Mauritius. Population living below the poverty line of USD 1.25 (PPP) per day is non-existent.<sup>36</sup> Undeniably, the achievements of Botswana and Mauritius, relative to African peers, are startling.

The achievements realized by Botswana and Mauritius suggest that

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<sup>31</sup> Carroll and Carroll, "State and Ethnicity in Botswana and Mauritius," and Frankel, "Mauritius."

<sup>32</sup> Carroll and Carroll, "State and Ethnicity in Botswana and Mauritius," 466.

<sup>33</sup> Boga T. Manatsha and Keshav Lall Maharjan, "Fancy Figures and Ugly Facts in Botswana's Rapid Economic Growth," *Journal of International Development and Cooperation* 15, nos. 1-2 (2009): 19-46.

<sup>34</sup> David Sebudubudu and Mokgane Botlhomilwe, "The Critical Role of Leadership in Botswana's Development: What Lessons?" *Leadership* 8, no. 1 (2012): 29-45.

<sup>35</sup> Frankel, "Mauritius," 2.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

both countries have had effective structures of government (i.e., executive, legislative, judicial, and civil service), “or the adoption of [effective] practices that soon turned into institutions.”<sup>37</sup> This essay focuses on the factors that have made political institutions in Botswana and Mauritius effective relative to those of peer countries. There is no single factor that accounts for this but instead numerous factors: strong and committed leadership, ability to manage ethnicity, a competent and meritorious bureaucracy, and the ability to forge a public—private sector coalition. In this regard, we argue that economic transformation is not due to sheer luck but rather to good management under well-functioning political systems in the two polities. We now turn to these factors.

## **Factors That Have Made Political Institutions in Botswana and Mauritius Tick**

Analysts have demonstrated that institutions are critical to the success of a country. The question we seek to answer is what has made them effective in Botswana and Mauritius? The essay examines possible explanations below.

### ***Devoted Leadership***

Political institutions in Botswana and Mauritius have been effective because the two polities have had devoted leadership. It has been established that leadership matters in steering development or institutions. According to Rotberg, “the positive examples of African leadership stand out because of their clear-minded strength of character, their adherence to participatory democratic principles, and their rarity.”<sup>38</sup> Botswana and Mauritius are “positive examples” because leadership contributed immensely to their democratization during their formative years. The essay argues that the political and economic success of both countries is premised on good leadership; that is, their institutions were effective early because of sturdy leadership. As Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson rightly point out: “Institutions are ultimately the endogenous creation of individuals.”<sup>39</sup> Institutions are an outcome of decisions by the leadership. Similarly, effective implementation of decisions is equally dependent on the commitment of the leadership. The eminence and peculiarity of leadership is critical to the commitment to and realization of good governance and economic development.<sup>40</sup> Thus, Carroll and Carroll observe that the quality

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>38</sup> Rotberg, “The Roots of Africa’s Leadership Deficit,” 28.

<sup>39</sup> Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James Robinson, “An African Success: Botswana,” in *In Search of Prosperity: Analytic Narratives on Economic Growth*, ed. Dani Rodrik (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 80-119.

<sup>40</sup> Carroll and Carroll, “State and Ethnicity in Botswana and Mauritius.”

and character of leadership are predisposed to promote “the continuation of competent *leadership* concerned with improving the general welfare of society, but we cannot suggest how societies can obtain such leaders in the first place.”<sup>41</sup> Leadership was not scarce in Botswana and Mauritius, unlike in most African countries.<sup>42</sup> With a committed political leadership, there was political will to promote democratic development in both countries. Carroll and Carroll observe that Botswana and Mauritius had “talented political leaders [who] were personally committed to democratic government, and to economic development.”<sup>43</sup> The commitment of the leadership in both countries is widely documented.

In Botswana, the country’s first president, Seretse Khama, is singled out and credited for being instrumental in laying the foundation of the country and the success that was to follow. Rotberg had this to say about Seretse Khama:

[F]or him, there was an ethic of performance and good governance to which he adhered. Sir Seretse was conscious every day that he could do better than the leaders of next-door South Africa, where whites oppressed the majority and deprived most inhabitants of their human and civil liberties. For whatever set of personal and pragmatic reasons, Sir Seretse epitomized world-class qualities of leadership.<sup>44</sup>

Maipose and Matsheka also noted that “Seretse Khama established a precedent for high ethical standards, a strong and relatively independent but accountable civil service, and a government focused on development. [His] successors carried on and built on these attributes.”<sup>45</sup> Martin also wrote about the critical role played by Seretse Khama, which he notes was “decisive.”<sup>46</sup> Cook and Sarkin are equally praiseworthy of the qualities of Seretse Khama. They observe that, “Khama’s focus on accountability and political consultation, his push to de-racialize the political system, his responsible fiscal policy, and his contingency planning are all emblematic of his successful and popular leadership.”<sup>47</sup> Such leaders are rare in Africa, and it is this type of leadership

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 471.

<sup>42</sup> Rotberg, “The Roots of Africa’s Leadership Deficit.”

<sup>43</sup> Carroll and Carroll, “State and Ethnicity in Botswana and Mauritius,” 470.

<sup>44</sup> Rotberg, “The Roots of Africa’s Leadership Deficit,” 30.

<sup>45</sup> Gervase S. Maipose and Thapelo C. Matsheka, “The Indigenous Development State and Growth in Botswana,” in *The Political Economy of Economic Growth in Africa 1960-2000*, vol. 2, ed. Benno J. Ndulu Benno et al. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 511-546.

<sup>46</sup> Martin, “A Closer Look at Botswana’s Development.”

<sup>47</sup> Amelia Cook and Jeremy Sarkin, “Is Botswana the Miracle of Africa? Democracy, the Rule of Law and Human Rights versus Economic Development,” *Transnational Law and Contemporary Problems* 19 (2010): 453-489.

that has set Botswana apart from its peers. In this context, Henderson noted that “the history of modern Botswana is very much the history of Seretse Khama. Without the caution, guidance and political acumen of Seretse, it is highly unlikely that Botswana would have escaped either the Bantustan status or the long-standing desire of the South African authorities for detailed control of the political future of that country.”<sup>48</sup>

Seretse was able to initiate the development of strong institutions because, by birth, he was a chief and thus had authority to change the institutional framework. Masire, who was Seretse’s right-hand man and later became the country’s second president following the death of Seretse, noted that they were mindful of and influenced by events that were taking place elsewhere in Africa as they were “framing [their] platform and...programme,” and “thought moderation would be a virtue ...”<sup>49</sup> Masire observes that Botswana was successful because of “[t]eamwork”<sup>50</sup> in their approach to issues and challenges they faced. Such teamwork could not have prevailed without devoted leaders and leadership. It is the quality of Botswana’s leadership that led to notable achievements in economic performance, education, and health indicators.<sup>51</sup> It is in this sense that Samatar opines that “a key force that distinguishes successful from failed states is the social chemistry of the dominant class and the discipline of its leadership.”<sup>52</sup> Such chemistry and discipline were not in short supply in Botswana.

Further, Botswana’s founding leaders were distinct from others to the extent that they did not misuse public resources to further their private ends. Unlike their counterparts in most African countries, who largely looted public resources, Botswana’s leaders already had access to wealth at the time of independence. Therefore, they did not perceive public office as an opportunity to access and generate wealth.<sup>53</sup> Robinson says Botswana’s leaders “wanted to build an independent, viable and prosperous nation and seem to have

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<sup>48</sup> Willie Henderson, “Seretse Khama: A Personal Appreciation,” *African Affairs* 89, no. 354 (1990): 27-56.

<sup>49</sup> Ketumile Masire, *Very Brave or Very Foolish? Memoirs of an African Democrat*, ed. Stephen Lewis (Gaborone, Botswana: Macmillan, 2006).

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>51</sup> Rotberg, “The Roots of Africa’s Leadership Deficit,” 28-32, and David Sebudubudu and Patrick Molutsi, *The Elite as a Critical Factor in National Development: The Case of Botswana* (Uppsala, Sweden: Nordic Africa Institute, 2011).

<sup>52</sup> Abdi Ismail Samatar, *An African Miracle: State and Class Leadership and Colonial Legacy in Botswana Development* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999).

<sup>53</sup> Kenneth Good, “At the Ends of the Ladder: Radical Inequalities in Botswana,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 31, no. 2 (1993): 203-230; John D. Holm and Patrick Molutsi, “State-Civil Society Relations in Botswana,” in *Governance and Politics in Africa*, ed. Goran Hyden and Michael Bratton (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1992); Balefi Tsie, “The Political Context of Botswana’s Development Performance,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 22, no. 4 (1996): 599-616; and Tom Lodge, “Political Corruption in South Africa,” *African Affairs* 97, no. 387 (1998): 157-187.

been completely uninterested in extracting rents for cementing themselves in power,<sup>54</sup> a rare feat in Africa. This is not to suggest that they did not benefit from public resources. But more importantly, the leaders acted the way they did in part because they “faced constraints on their rule and were accountable to their people.”<sup>55</sup> In this way, institutions such as parliament, the judiciary, free press, and others offered a setting that was favorable to good policies, and also curtailed rent-seeking behavior.<sup>56</sup> This demonstrates that as much as Botswana’s leaders made a difference in shaping the country’s destiny, they also faced some constraints that placed some checks on their authority. Accountability and consultation are critical traits that they inherited from their traditional culture: *Tswana*. This is the case because, as Martin stated, “Botswana’s modern political institutions evolved from both the traditional (precolonial) Tswana culture, and the British influence introduced during the Protectorate years.”<sup>57</sup> It can be deduced and argued that Botswana people are intrinsically somewhat democratic. In terms of the *Tswana* culture, “there was an implicit bargain between the chief and his people. He was accountable to them and faced constraints on his rule; they had the ability to express their disapproval of the way he was conducting his leadership. The political system provided consultation between the chief and his people through a public forum, the *Kgotla*.”<sup>58</sup> These traits, particularly those of consultation and realizing a consensus in decision making, have been cherished and nurtured in modern Botswana.

Equally, Mauritian leaders displayed traits of visionary leadership. While Botswana had Seretse Khama, Mauritius had its own extraordinary leader, Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, who laid the critical foundation for successful development. Just like Seretse Khama, who acted differently than most African leaders, Ramgoolam was critical in transforming the island of Mauritius. Rotberg is more categorical about the leadership of Ramgoolam:

Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, the first leader of Mauritius operated under the same internalized leadership rules as Sir Seretse. Ramgoolam was more explicit in charting his vision, however—more in the manner of Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore. When Sir Seewoosagur took the Mauritian prime ministerial reins immediately after independence in 1968

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<sup>54</sup> James Robinson, “Botswana as a Role Model for Country Success,” World Institute for Development Economics Research, Paper No. 2009/40 (Helsinki: United Nations University, 2009).

<sup>55</sup> Martin, “A Closer Look at Botswana’s Development,” 41.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

(remaining prime minister until 1976), he understood that the island nation's melange of colors and peoples—a plurality of Tamil-speaking Hindu Indians, Urdu and Hindi-speaking Muslims from India and Pakistan, Chinese, and indigenous Creole-speaking Franco Mauritians, most of whom were descended from slaves—could not long survive in peace if he or others were anything but transparently democratic. He stressed open politics, nurtured social capital, welcomed a free press, and strengthened the rule of law inherited from Britain, and earlier from France. Sir Seewoosagur also sensed that Mauritius' economy, hitherto based entirely on exporting raw sugar, would have to be diversified and grow. He attracted new investors from Asia. Soon Mauritius was a major world textile manufacturer; an island without sheep became a dominant supplier of wool garments.<sup>59</sup>

These are remarkable achievements that arose from an exceptional leadership with unique traits. Due to strong stewardship, modern Mauritius succeeded in escaping “the crisis of confidence at independence,” according to Brautigam and Diolle, in the same way that Botswana dispelled the crisis of certainty at independence. Rotberg went on to say that “leadership was central to Mauritius' post-independence transition from a potentially explosive racial hothouse... into a bustling, prosperous, politically hectic sustainable democracy.”<sup>60</sup> Thus, Brautigam and Diolle observe that, “today, Mauritians looking back believe that they were blessed with good leaders as they started down the path toward prosperity. ...Mauritius was fortunate to have remarkable men at the helm.”<sup>61</sup>

Undoubtedly, Mauritius was made by its leaders. Without leaders such as Sir Seewoosagur, Mauritius easily could have gone the route of most African countries—that of self-destruction and plundering of public resources, where accountability barely exists and rent seeking is the norm. Mauritian leaders not only created institutions but also ensured that the institutions delivered the intended results. Institutions, as Brautigam and Diolle have noted, “are shaped by agents: by the elites or key stakeholders who agree to work within their confines, or to enforce the constraints they represent.”<sup>62</sup> As in the case of Botswana, Mauritian leaders largely functioned within the parameters of institutions and the rule of law. In other words, the ruling elites in Mauritius agreed to operate within the confines of the rules that governed them.<sup>63</sup> In

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<sup>59</sup> Rotberg, “The Roots of Africa's Leadership Deficit,” 29-30.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>61</sup> Brautigam and Diolle, “Coalitions, Capitalists and Credibility,” 6.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

short, political institutions in the cases of Botswana and Mauritius were effective, in part, if not primarily, because of devoted leadership. The two cases offer good lessons on the significance of leaders and leadership to a country's development. Undeniably, leaders in the two countries played a critical role in transforming their countries into prosperous nations.

Leadership is key to growth and development; it is essential to the success of institutions. Where institutions are strong, they may endure during the tenure of poor leaders, as seen in some Western countries. However, where institutions are not strong, as in the case of some developing countries, policy decisions will be shaped by the leader at the time. However, leadership on its own is not sufficient to determine the success or failure of a nation. Rather, a combination of historical, ideological, and even structural factors influence a nation's success.

Despite serving as African success stories, weaknesses exist in political institutions in relation to leadership in Botswana and Mauritius. In Botswana, much power is vested in the president, making other institutions weak. While this has been the case since independence, the powers of the president have become more pronounced with the election of President Ian Khama, whose willingness to exercise those powers exceeds that of past presidents. His predecessors were more cautious and conservative in exercising presidential powers. Furthermore, Botswana is one of the few countries to have prospered with weak civil society. In Mauritius, on the other hand, there is a perception that the executive interferes with the judiciary. Institutions, on their own, are not a sufficient explanation of success. Factors such as corruption, looming in both Mauritius and Botswana, weaken political institutions. Nonetheless, the two countries have been more successful than other African counterparts.

### ***Ability to Manage Ethnic Diversity***

The other factor that the essay attributes to the effectiveness of political institutions in Botswana and Mauritius is the ability of the two countries to manage issues arising from ethnicity. Ethnicity is a divisive, sensitive, and explosive issue that has sparked conflict in most African countries (e.g., Kenya and Rwanda), and even beyond Africa. It is not surprising that most African leaders perceived ethnic identities "as a complicating factor in the relations among new states."<sup>64</sup> Carroll and Carroll note that "ethnic fragmentation greatly complicates both democratisation and economic development."<sup>65</sup> This assertion is not unfounded when considering the experiences of most African countries. What is lacking in most African countries is the ability to manage ethnic tensions. Interestingly, Sebudubudu and Molutsi observe that "scholars

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<sup>64</sup> Marina Ottaway, "Ethnic Politics in Africa: Change and Continuity," in *State Conflict and Democracy in Africa*, ed. Richard Joseph (London: Lynne Reinner, 1999).

<sup>65</sup> Carroll and Carroll, "State and Ethnicity in Botswana and Mauritius," 478.

hardly recognise that what led to the collapse of the democratic system in the immediate post-colonial Africa were the multi-ethnic complexities of those societies on the one hand, and the fragility of the political institutions to manage the tensions that evolved on the other.”<sup>66</sup> This is telling about the quality of political institutions in most African countries. Even so, Diamond cautions us that, “although ethnicity could be regarded as a major contributing factor to ethnic divisions and thus democratic failure, political leadership has played a role as it either served to arouse these divisions or mitigate/manage them.”<sup>67</sup> Botswana and Mauritius are positive examples of countries where the leadership has mitigated or managed ethnicity, despite the fragility of the two countries’ political institutions. In fact, their records in managing ethnicity surpass that of equally small countries such as Lesotho, which is regarded as ethnically and culturally homogeneous yet unstable and prone to political violence. This, once more, demonstrates the ingenuity of the political leadership in Botswana and Mauritius. In this sense, we are inclined to agree with Molutsi, who argued that “relative ethnic homogeneity is an asset but not a guarantee for political stability.”<sup>68</sup> This suggests that the management of ethnic diversity is critical to development.

Consider the following about Botswana and Mauritius regarding their ethnic composition and management. Ethnic groups in Botswana can be categorized into two groups—Tswana and non-Tswana—with the Tswana-speaking people being the majority of around 80 percent of the country’s population.<sup>69</sup> Further, Botswana did not have “two or more contending ethnic groups” as in Rwanda.<sup>70</sup> Analysts hold that the passive disintegration of ethnic divisions advances economic growth.<sup>71</sup> To this extent, in Botswana, there is what some analysts call restricted/partial ethnic diversity or fragmentation,<sup>72</sup> and, in turn, low intensity encounters among ethnic groups,<sup>73</sup> such as between the San, or Basarwa people, and people of other ethnic identities. Remarkably, even these low-level conflicts are handled in the formal judicial process rather than through customary dispute resolution, unlike in most African countries. Solway asserts that “Botswana has been noted to be amongst the most ethnically homogenous nations in Africa and one that has avoided divisive

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<sup>66</sup> David Sebudubudu and Patrick Molutsi, “Botswana’s Democracy: Explanations for Success?” *Politeia* 27, no. 1 (2004): 47-64.

<sup>67</sup> Larry Diamond, “Introduction: Roots of Failure, Seeds of Hope,” in *Democracy in Developing Countries: Africa*, ed. Larry Diamond et al. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1988).

<sup>68</sup> Molutsi, “Botswana.”

<sup>69</sup> Sebudubudu and Molutsi, “Botswana’s Democracy.”

<sup>70</sup> Sebudubudu and Molutsi, *The Elite as a Critical Factor in National Development*.

<sup>71</sup> Frankel, “Mauritius.”

<sup>72</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, “Democracy for the Long Haul,” *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 2 (1996): 3-13.

<sup>73</sup> Sebudubudu and Molutsi, “Botswana’s Democracy.”

struggles that surround ethnically based politics.”<sup>74</sup> This has been beneficial to Botswana.<sup>75</sup> Sebudubudu and Bothomilwe are more categorical in terms of how the Botswana state has managed ethnicity:

Ethnic homogeneity alone is not a sufficient account for the relative absence of ethnic and other electoral tensions. The Botswana state has played an important role in downplaying the significance of ethnicity through its policy of distributing resources equally to all parts of the country. This [they contend had] the effect of closing potential avenues through which ethnic divisions may arise. The problem of ethnicity has also been arrested through the politics of co-optation and assimilation. The abundant resources at the disposal of the state, coupled with the country’s relatively small population, has also meant that the state has been able to finance the politics of patronage, thereby silencing potential “dissidents”. Perhaps the peaceful nature of the politics of Botswana is partly rooted in the culture of Tswana society, which abhors violence.<sup>76</sup>

The foregoing quotation summarizes the strategies Botswana used to contain ethnicity. Through the various strategies, “Tswana tribes had achieved a form of integrative and relatively peaceful cultural dominance over non-Tswana tribes, and, consequently, the Botswana polity was mostly a homogenous one.”<sup>77</sup> Moreover, the ability of the state to use its resources for the benefit of all its citizens, as suggested by Sebudubudu and Bothomilwe, derives from the skillful nature of the country’s leadership and individual leaders, particularly Seretse Khama.<sup>78</sup> The state also has been largely inclusive of the country’s various groups, including minorities. As a result, “with early education, some minority groups such as the *Kalanga*, ...[were able] to participate in state power, bureaucracy and the general economy of the country.”<sup>79</sup> By means of this policy, the country “avoided imposing any glaring exclusionist tendencies on any ethnic group other than the traditional hunter-gatherer San, or Basarwa, in the central parts of the Kalahari,”<sup>80</sup> who live on the margins of the Botswana

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<sup>74</sup> Jacqueline Solway, “Multiparty Democracy and Ethnic Politics in Botswana: Grassroots Perspectives,” *African Rural and Urban Studies* 1, no. 2 (1994): 73-91.

<sup>75</sup> Sebudubudu and Molutsi, “Botswana’s Democracy.”

<sup>76</sup> David Sebudubudu and Mokgane Bothomilwe, “The Management of Elections: The Case of Botswana,” *Politea* 29, no. 1 (2010): 65-77.

<sup>77</sup> Martin, “A Closer Look at Botswana’s Development,” 41.

<sup>78</sup> Sebudubudu and Bothomilwe, “The Management of Elections.”

<sup>79</sup> Sebudubudu and Molutsi, “Botswana’s Democracy,” 53.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

economy. Thus, Botswana is dissimilar in terms of the way it has managed ethnicity, despite ethnic tensions being of low intensity when compared to countries such as Kenya and Nigeria, or even Rwanda.

Compared to Botswana, Mauritius is more ethnically fragmented. At independence, the population on the island of Mauritius was 52 percent Hindu, 28 percent Afro-Mauritian (Creole), 17 percent Muslim, 3 percent Chinese, and less than 1 percent of European descent.<sup>81</sup> In fact, its ethnic configuration has been considered rather “unusual.”<sup>82</sup> Carroll and Carroll counsel that “there is little overarching sense of national identity to tie the various groups together, and elites and mass publics are integrated by means of extensive patron—client networks, each of which functions within the boundaries of a particular community.”<sup>83</sup> This explains why, to some extent, “Mauritian politics are, above all, ethnic politics.”<sup>84</sup> Frankel maintains that Mauritius “had, and has, a split of several major ethnic groups that would normally be considered unproductive to growth.”<sup>85</sup> Such an assertion is not farfetched, given Mauritius’s ethnic composition, history, and the concerns of various ethnic groups about independence. Carroll and Carroll observe that Mauritius faced “irresolvable ethnic conflicts”<sup>86</sup> at the time of independence. Also, Brautigam and Diolle state that “violent and divisive elections in 1967 launched Mauritius into independence, but the coalition for development took shape through a painstakingly negotiated government of national unity.”<sup>87</sup> The riots were attributable to high unemployment levels.<sup>88</sup> It is in this context that some of Mauritius’s inhabitants were wary of independence.

Elsewhere, such ethnic configuration would have been an antithesis to the country’s politics. This is supported by Frankel, when he notes that “the high level of ethnic diversity in Mauritius, [would] in many places...make for dysfunctional politics.”<sup>89</sup> Not for Mauritius. Instead, Mauritius successfully has navigated potential conflict despite its high degree of ethnic divisions, owing largely to skillful leadership and, compared to counterparts, a more inclusive democratic system that embraces its different ethnic groups. As Carroll and Carroll have stated, the country has been able to realize an integrative system in the public domain “because all Mauritians share one or more common languages.”<sup>90</sup> Kreol, originally the language of the Creole community, has become the normal maternal tongue for members of other groups, and is

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<sup>81</sup> Brautigam and Diolle, “Coalitions, Capitalists and Credibility.”

<sup>82</sup> Frankel, “Mauritius.”

<sup>83</sup> Carroll and Carroll, “State and Ethnicity in Botswana and Mauritius,” 481.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 480-481.

<sup>85</sup> Frankel, “Mauritius.”

<sup>86</sup> Carroll and Carroll, “State and Ethnicity in Botswana and Mauritius,” 466.

<sup>87</sup> Brautigam and Diolle, “Coalitions, Capitalists and Credibility,” 3.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Frankel, “Mauritius,” 1.

<sup>90</sup> Carroll and Carroll, “State and Ethnicity in Botswana and Mauritius,” 480.

spoken by almost all Mauritians,” in more or less the same way as Setswana is spoken by all Tswana and non-Tswana groups in Botswana. Moreover, in as much as the different groups lead detached private lives, significant interface exists in the public sphere. For instance, Carroll and Carroll suggest that nearly every village is diverse and that members of all ethnic communities go to the same schools.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, and more advantageous for Mauritius, “no single elite group was in a position to dominate the others,”<sup>92</sup> as also was the case in Botswana, where no single group dominated others in population size. Furthermore, although Mauritius’s different groups and elites are held together by patronage, its high degree of plurality has created “cosmopolitan benefits. The institutions manage to balance the ethnic groups; none is excluded from the system.” Interestingly and above all, Mauritius “had no indigenous population.”<sup>93</sup> Frankel discusses a theory that suggests that “most countries have nativist factions, children of the soil, who resent newcomers regardless of their merit or perhaps because of their merit. If everyone [comes] from somewhere else, nobody can claim special privileges.”<sup>94</sup> Thus, the absence of indigenous communities bestowed on Mauritius some advantages. More importantly, however, as with Seretse Khama in Botswana, the country’s first prime minister, Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, played a critical part “by avoiding divisive appeals and cooperating with all factions.”<sup>95</sup> Mauritius also has prospered under “a parliamentary system that builds consensus by representing all groups.”<sup>96</sup> For Carroll and Carroll, Mauritius’s “ethnic accommodation has been facilitated by the fact that most members of most ethnic communities have shared in the overall improvements in standards of living and quality of life.”<sup>97</sup> It is through these policies, strategies, and practices (including the use of patronage) that the country has been relatively successful in accommodating and managing ethnicity, and, in turn, aiding the effectiveness of its institutions.

As a result of its inclusive policies and notwithstanding its multi-ethnic composition, Mauritius eluded violence for thirty years, until 1999, when it experienced turbulence associated with a high level of disparities.<sup>98</sup> The 1999 riots suggest that no country is immune from ethnic violence, and that the propensity for it to arise requires that issues stemming from ethnic tensions be well managed continuously. Carroll and Carroll offered lessons to other divided countries, including the following: “relative deprivation appears to be

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 466.

<sup>92</sup> Frankel, “Mauritius,” 27.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>97</sup> Barbara Wake Carroll and Terrance Carroll, “Trouble in Paradise: Ethnic Conflict in Mauritius,” *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 38, no. 2 (2000): 25-50.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

more likely than absolute deprivation to produce conflict”; “representation of major ethnic communities in all significant aspects of the public service and policy-making is essential in a plural society”; and “institutional development presents a moving target, and...institutions that are satisfactory at one stage may create problems at another.”<sup>99</sup> These conditions, they note, are critical regarding the state’s legitimacy. Despite the blight of the 1999 riots, Mauritius is still considered a “success story,” particularly when compared to peer nations.<sup>100</sup>

In short, Botswana and Mauritius were confronted with the challenge of accommodating various ethnic and racial groups at a critical time, that of independence, when the countries’ institutions were fragile. However, their leaderships made critical decisions and policies that saved them. The two countries also offer a lesson to others that face ethnic diversity in that skillful management can ensure more inclusive democratic systems. It should be noted that Botswana’s and Mauritius’s success in managing tensions arising from ethnic diversity may not be replicated elsewhere. However, it is highly probable that had other countries experiencing ethnic fragmentation managed it like Botswana and Mauritius, the world would be a better place in which to live—at least so far as ethnic conflicts are concerned. We are inclined to agree with Ottaway, who noted that solutions for containing ethnic tensions “need to be based on the recognition that ethnic identities are not going to disappear and that they are not bad in themselves, as long as they do not become the basis for violent conflict and discrimination.”<sup>101</sup> Mauritius, in particular, shows that a high degree of ethnic diversity is not an antithesis to democratic politics and economic development, as does Botswana, with its low degree of ethnic fragmentation. Furthermore, ethnicity has not affected the way the two states relate to others. Indeed, it can be argued that Botswana and Mauritius are among a few countries in Africa that have largely avoided rudimentary ethnic divisions, and, in turn, avoided democratic failure, so far.

### ***Building a Competent, Representative, and Meritorious Public Service***

Political institutions in Botswana and Mauritius also have been effective because the two countries built competent, representative, and meritorious public services to varying extents. The significance of a capable bureaucracy in constructing a strong and effective state has been recognized.<sup>102</sup> Such a

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ottaway, “Ethnic Politics in Africa,” 316.

<sup>102</sup> Adrian Leftwich, “Bringing Politics Back In: Towards a Model of Developmental State,” *Journal of Developmental Studies* 31, no. 3 (1995): 400-427; Barbara Wake Carroll and Terrance Carroll, “State and Ethnicity in Botswana and Mauritius: A Democratic Route to Development?” *Journal of Development Studies* 33, no. 4 (1997): 464-486; and Balefi Tsie, “The State and Development Policy in Botswana,” in *Public Administration and Policy in Botswana*, ed. Ronald Kempe Hope and Gloria Somolekae (Cape Town: Juta, 1998).

bureaucracy is critical to a country's development. The bureaucracy in most African countries is ineffective and incompetent, and thus hinders national development. Carroll and Carroll assert that,

in many developing countries the bureaucracy is unsuccessful at translating policies into effective actions and state officials do not develop the legitimacy, or the abilities, required in order to function effectively. This problem arises for a number of reasons. In the first place, there is a tendency for a successful political party or leader to reward supporters with highly valued positions within the bureaucracy. This need to reward followers in order to maintain political power can also lead to inflation in the size of bureaucracies. The combination of these two factors—a civil service that is politicised and bloated—undermines the competence and the legitimacy of the bureaucracy.<sup>103</sup>

The situation described above is what prevails in most African countries, whereby loyalty and obedience to the leader, and to some extent ethnic origin, became critical traits to secure a lucrative position in the public service. In fact, most African countries immediately localized or “Africanized” their public services following independence at the expense of merit and competence. This resulted in public services that were highly corrupt. Botswana and Mauritius largely have avoided this pitfall because the leaderships of both countries recognized the importance of the bureaucracy in facilitating development. The two countries also recognized that they had to “build competent bureaucracies.”<sup>104</sup> This was critical as Botswana and Mauritius did not have sufficiently trained or skilled personnel at the time of independence, particularly at a senior level.<sup>105</sup> Take for instance the case of Botswana. Masire observes that “the vast majority (over 85%) of senior civil servants, and even of secondary school teachers, were expatriates—primarily whites in the civil service, and mainly Africans from other countries in the teaching service.”<sup>106</sup> Localization was critical at the time.<sup>107</sup> Despite the shortage of trained and skilled locals to run public services, the leaders in the two countries were mindful of developing competent and efficient public service programs. They sensed the need to inculcate practices and promote policies that fostered that goal in their bureaucracies.

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<sup>103</sup> Carroll and Carroll, “State and Ethnicity in Botswana and Mauritius,” 472.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 473.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> Masire, “Very Brave or Very Foolish?” 39.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

Both countries used various strategies and policies to address the shortage of skilled personnel. In Botswana, Masire notes that, “in building our own public service, we followed the British model of a strong permanent civil service.”<sup>108</sup> Further, leaders wanted to “retain an efficient administration so [they] could implement development programmes and deliver services,” and they also “needed to ensure training of citizens so [they] could localise the service.”<sup>109</sup> In line with this, expatriates were not replaced immediately until locals had acquired the requisite skills. This is supported by Taylor, who notes that “expatriates were retained (as opposed to much of the rest of Africa) in order to help train up a local but competent and educated civil service.”<sup>110</sup> Wallis, quoting Raphaeli, Roumani, and Mackellar,<sup>111</sup> stated that, “through effective use of expatriate technical assistance (TA) and steady development of local capabilities, the country...achieved a remarkable record of economic planning and management.”<sup>112</sup> As Masire notes, “every officer in the service... [understood] that he [/she had] a vital duty to train others or to be trained by others. Indeed training is the key to the success of a very large part of...[the] localisation plan.”<sup>113</sup> This is a clear demonstration that localization was not done hastily or for expediency.

More importantly, entry and progression in the civil service was largely based on competency. Wallis states that “considerable emphasis has been placed upon the recruitment of a highly competent economist cadre for the planning organisation.”<sup>114</sup> According to Carroll and Carroll, “recruitment to the bureaucracy is open to all groups within society and selection and promotion are based on merit. In addition, there is a right of appeal of selection and promotion decisions.”<sup>115</sup> A civil service that was accessible to all groups meant that complaints of nepotism were minimized, and thus the civil service enjoyed a high degree of “legitimacy and competence.”<sup>116</sup> This demonstrates that the leadership was keen to build an efficient public service, despite the pressure to localize it in the country’s formative years. In turn, Botswana’s

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>110</sup> Ian Taylor, “The Developmental States in Africa: The Case of Botswana,” paper presented to the Codesria workshop on the Potentiality of Development States in Africa, Gaborone, Botswana, April 15-16, 2003.

<sup>111</sup> N. Raphaeli, J. Roumani, and A. Mackellar, “Public Sector Management in Botswana: Lessons in Pragmatism,” staff working paper no. SWP 709 (Washington, DC: World Bank, December 31, 1984), quoted in Malcolm Wallis, *Bureaucracy: Its Role in Third World Development* (London: Macmillan, 1989).

<sup>112</sup> Malcolm Wallis, *Bureaucracy: Its Role in Third World Development* (London: Macmillan, 1989).

<sup>113</sup> Masire, “Very Brave or Very Foolish?” 39.

<sup>114</sup> Wallis, *Bureaucracy*, 52.

<sup>115</sup> Carroll and Carroll, “State and Ethnicity in Botswana and Mauritius,” 474.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

bureaucracy has remained one of the most effective and corruption-free in Africa” and enjoys a “far greater institutional autonomy [from politicians] than its counterparts elsewhere in the region.”<sup>117</sup> Thus, “through these efforts, the Botswana state was able to build capacity within key ministries and line ministries, resulting in a bureaucracy that was competent, efficient and largely non-corrupt.”<sup>118</sup> As a result, the civil service in Botswana was able to facilitate the country’s development.

The Mauritian public service has been found to be central to the country’s successful development as well.<sup>119</sup> As in the case of Botswana, Joypaul observes that, at the outset, the Mauritian public service was largely modelled upon the British system, but was reformed thereafter.<sup>120</sup> As in Botswana, merit and training were highly regarded. Carroll and Carroll state that “among the reasons for this success is the fact that since independence the Mauritian public service has also placed a heavy emphasis upon merit as the primary criterion for recruitment and promotion.”<sup>121</sup> The public service has clear recruitment, training, and career advancement policies. Joypaul maintains that “the Civil Service has a well-established and transparent policy for the recruitment of staff.”<sup>122</sup> Moreover, he notes that “every effort is made to ensure that the training that is dispensed will equip officers with the necessary knowledge, skills and tools to enable them to perform their day-to-day duties in a most efficient and effective manner while satisfying both organisational and individual needs.”<sup>123</sup> Civil servants, particularly those holding senior positions, initially were required to hold a diploma qualification, and later a degree in order to advance in the civil service.

Training for civil service positions was conducted by the University of Mauritius.<sup>124</sup> This training, it is argued, “fostered a common professional set of values within the civil service but values which [were] tightly tied to national values. It...also allowed for greater representation of diverse ethnic

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<sup>117</sup> Gloria Somolekae, “Bureaucracy and Democracy in Botswana: What Type of a Relationship?” in *Botswana the Political Economy of Democratic Development*, ed. S. J. Stedman (London: Lynne Reinner, 1993).

<sup>118</sup> David Sebudubudu, “The Institutional Framework of the Developmental State in Botswana,” in *The Potentiality of Developmental States in Africa*, ed. Pamela Mbabazi and Ian Taylor (Dakar, Senegal: CODESRIA, 2005).

<sup>119</sup> Carroll and Carroll, “State and Ethnicity in Botswana and Mauritius.”

<sup>120</sup> S. K. Joypaul, “Managing Diversity in the Civil Service of Mauritius: United Nations Expert Meeting on Managing Diversity in Civil Service,” United Nations Headquarters, New York, May 3-4, 2001.

<sup>121</sup> Carroll and Carroll, “State and Ethnicity in Botswana and Mauritius,” 475.

<sup>122</sup> Joypaul, “Managing Diversity in the Civil Service of Mauritius,” 9.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> Carroll and Carroll, “State and Ethnicity in Botswana and Mauritius,” and Joypaul, “Managing Diversity in the Civil Service of Mauritius.”

groups in the civil service.”<sup>125</sup> This is supported by Joypaul, who asserts that Mauritius was able to ensure “diversity management” through adherence to the rule of law.<sup>126</sup> He adds that civil servants “hailed from various socio-cultural backgrounds but...imbibed the classical civil service ethos, which...enable[d] them to work with an ‘esprit de corps’ to tackle the problems which the country faced.”<sup>127</sup> Joypaul states that quotas ensuring representation of all ethnic groups were extended to the cabinet level as “a means of strengthening the unity of the state.”<sup>128</sup> Such representation requirements demonstrate how Mauritius was able to build a modern, competent, and meritorious yet diverse public service, reflecting the different groups that comprised the country. Even then, the civil service has been not perfect in Mauritius, as instances of corruption and nepotism have been noted. It has been observed that “although political parties in Mauritius were not supposed to use the civil service for patronage purposes, they did. Two critical official reports on the civil service system in the run-up to independence called to attention the problem of family, communal, and ethnic favoritism among civil servants. Even now the bureaucracy is far from a pure meritocracy.”<sup>129</sup> However, Mauritius fares better when compared to most African countries. In short, both Botswana and Mauritius used practices and policies that facilitated the creation of *competent, representative, and meritorious public services that, in turn, resulted in effective states in the two countries*. Furthermore, this was facilitated by the ability of the two countries to forge a working compromise among ethnic groups concerning the model of government.

### ***Ability to Forge a Public-Private Sector Coalition***

Political institutions in Botswana and Mauritius also have been effective because the two countries have done (relatively) well in terms of establishing long-functioning public—private sector relationships. Such a coalition is quite critical for these countries, considering the nature of their economies. These coalitions not only assure a productive working environment in the private sector, but also serve to attract much needed foreign investment and generate employment. In Botswana and Mauritius, this relationship is manifested in the High Level Consultative Council (HLCC) and the Joint Economic Council (JEC), respectively. The two councils play critical roles in government—private sector relations, as they facilitate regular meetings between government and representatives of the private sector, including meetings with the president in Botswana and prime minister in Mauritius. Through such meetings, the

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<sup>125</sup> Carroll and Carroll, “State and Ethnicity in Botswana and Mauritius,” 476.

<sup>126</sup> Joypaul, “Managing Diversity in the Civil Service of Mauritius.”

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>129</sup> Arthur Goldsmith, “Is Governance Reform a Catalyst for Development?” *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration and Institutions* 20, no. 2 (2007): 165-186.

councils have helped to allay fears on the part of the private sector, and have provided a means of communicating concerns to the government—thus helping to ensure a productive economic environment for the private sector in the two countries.

The government—private sector partnerships were possible because of devoted leadership within these countries. With respect to Botswana, Sebudubudu and Molutsi assert that “the political elite has...showed its commitment to attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) not only by entering into partnerships with De Beers [forming a unique and strategic public—private relationship in the form of DEBSWANA to manage the four main diamond mines in the country], but it also has been working hard to create a conducive environment for the private sector.”<sup>130</sup> Moreover, the governments of Botswana and Mauritius put in place a number of initiatives to fund and promote the growth of the private sector. In terms of the role played by the Joint Economic Council in government—private sector relations in Mauritius, Zafar said that the “JEC [not the only government—private sector partnership in Mauritius] occupies a central place in the country’s institutional landscape and represents an umbrella association of a number sector-specific groupings.”<sup>131</sup> Further, he stated that “as such, it carries a certain amount of institutional weight, meeting with the prime minister on a regular basis and providing input on major policy decisions. ...[its] overarching goal...is to ensure private sector representation in all key government economic decisions. It ensures that its members’ ideas are conveyed to political leaders.”<sup>132</sup> The HLCC in Botswana functions in more or less the same way.

It can be argued that the two countries have tried to accommodate the private sector, including by providing a means through which the private sector can influence policy. This explains why the private sector has played such a critical role in promoting development in the two countries. In this way, the government and private sector function as partners in development on a win-win basis.

## Conclusion

That political institutions in Botswana and Mauritius have been effective, relative to those of most peer nations in Africa, is beyond doubt. This is particularly true when one considers that their futures were uncertain at the time of independence. Botswana and Mauritius are success stories that offer lessons to other countries; however, their successes may not necessarily be replicated. They stand out as two of the few prominent achievers in Africa—illustrative of

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<sup>130</sup> Sebudubudu and Molutsi, *The Elite as a Critical Factor in National Development*, 39.

<sup>131</sup> Zafar, “Mauritius,” 20.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

the challenges and promises African politics hold for their societies.

This essay has identified four critical factors—strong and committed leadership; ability to manage ethnic diversity; a competent, representative, and meritorious bureaucracy; and the ability to forge a public—private sector coalition—that it attributes to the creation of effective political institutions in Botswana and Mauritius. Through these factors, the two countries have been able to build effective states that ensure that the majority of people, irrespective of their ethnic origin, are able to benefit from the successes realized by their countries. Such benefits include improvements in life expectancy, literacy rate, and per capita income. Thus, we conclude that their success is largely attributable to inclusive democratic strategies, policies, and systems that have provided relatively well-functioning checks and balances, particularly during the independent nations' formative years. This observed, the two countries should consider devising new strategies and policies to deal with potential problems that may be fuelled by the contradictions of their successes—as the case of Mauritius showed in 1999 with the outbreak of riots that were associated with growing inequalities.