

In search of an alternative electoral system for Botswana

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Abstract

Electoral systems are manipulative instruments that determine how elections are won and lost. Botswana is widely regarded as a frontrunner in democratic politics, but the electoral system that it operates has been wanting in some respects. The First-past-the-post system has helped to consolidate democratic practice, and also provides for an effective link between Members of Parliament and their constituencies, but empirical evidence suggests that it is the least democratic electoral system. Its winner-take-all practice distorts electoral outcomes, and often produces minority governments. The article proceeds to discuss proportional representation (PR) and semi-proportional representation, and outlines their strengths and weaknesses. The paper concludes that since both the FPTP system and PR systems have inherent limitations, the best system would be one that draws on the best aspects of each system. The article recommends a variation of the Mixed-Member Proportionality system.

Introduction

Political institutions shape the rules of the game under which democracy is practised, and it is often argued that the easiest political institution to be manipulated, for good or bad, is the electoral system. [This is so] because in translating the votes cast in a general election into seats in the legislature, the choice of electoral system can effectively determine who is elected and which party gains power (Reynolds, A. and Reilly, B. 1997:7).

Botswana's Westminster parliamentary and the "First-Past-The-Post" (FPTP) electoral systems that it operates are a legacy of British colonialism, which ended in 1966. Since then Botswana has maintained a sustained record of democratic norms manifested by free political competition. In a region that recently underwent major political reforms of embracing multi-party politics, Botswana has been described as a flagship of democratic politics. It has held regular elections which by most accounts were "free and fair" and are taken as testimony that multi-party politics is entrenched.

This article focuses on how elections and the electoral system in Botswana have defined the depth of democracy in Botswana. To be sure, in democratic practice, elections and electoral systems are mechanisms through which the people participate directly in the political process, and are instruments of electing leaders into political office. However, there are growing concerns in Botswana that while the FPTP electoral system has consolidated electoral competition in the country, it has in many respects denied the electorate the chance to shape their political future. Regular free and fair elections do not in themselves mean democracy. Democracy is also about ensuring that electoral outcomes reflect the will of the people. The FPTP electoral system has fared poorly in this regard. This article sets out to discuss the limitations of the FPTP system with a view to suggest an alternative electoral system for Botswana.

The account is laid out in four broad areas. First, it sets out the political context of understanding Botswana's electoral system. Second, it lays out a broad overview of the various types electoral system, and discusses their strengths and weaknesses. It begins by a discussion of the FPTP system of the Plurality-Majority model that is used in Botswana. Third, it discusses the various models of Proportional Representation (PR) and Semi-PR model. Fourth, it observes that the choice of an electoral system is always a political decision. Therefore, the intention of the article is to generate debate about the need for

electoral reform in Botswana. The article proceeds to discuss these issues, first by setting the political context of understanding Botswana's electoral system.

Contextual Framework

The constitution of Botswana provides for a multi-party democracy, which is based on the basic democratic tenet of regular free and fair elections, equality of all citizens, freedom of association, assembly and believe, and the rule of law. It provides for a unicameral legislature based on the Westminster parliamentary in which Members of Parliament (MPs) are elected on the basis of a simple majority.

The law guarantees electoral democracy in Botswana. The constitution and, more specifically, the Electoral Act specify the conduct of elections. It specifies when elections are to be held, who is eligible to vote, and who can run for office. The electoral reforms that were instituted as a result of the 1997 referendum widened the frontiers for democracy in Botswana. Those reforms extended the franchise and allowed 18 year olds, the creation of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and an absentee ballot (Molomo 1998). Yet much as these hard earned concessions are real, they fall far too short of achieving participatory democracy, and the political terrain continues to be uneven.

Regular elections are a feature that has distinguished Botswana from other countries in the region, which operated the one party regime. However, as argued by Kenneth Good (1999:50), the "durability of Botswana's elite democracy, stabilised as it is by the presence of electoral competition between unevenly marched parties, seems guaranteed for the foreseeable future." This view opens the wider debate of what we really mean by a free and fair election. Elections are dubbed free and fair depending on the manner in which they comply with the electoral law. However, where the electoral law does not guarantee a level political playing field, the fairness of elections becomes a contested terrain. The fairness of an election cannot only be attested by the freedom of the poll. It involves a whole series of processes such as monitoring the whole electoral process. The electoral process as an on-going exercise that includes, among other things, the registration of political parties, party and independent candidates. It also includes the delimitation of constituencies, freedom to campaign and access to resources to campaign effectively, access to the media, registration of voters, voter education and the impartiality of the electoral process. Othhogile (1994:298) was therefore right when he asserted that the label free and fair elections must be a summation of the whole process and not individual steps taken in isolation.

Levelling the political playing field involves quite a wide array of issues such as equal access to the official media, adequate party funding and the existence of the sufficient political space to canvass for support without fear of intimidation. Fairness of elections must also take into account the redress in the courts. This is to say the judiciary must be independent to take petitions from aggrieved persons, and rule against the state, if evidence militates as such, without fear or favour. True to history, two cases lend themselves as sufficient evidence of the independence of the judiciary in Botswana. These are the *Tshiamo* ballot box in 1984 and the re-election in *Mochudi* during the 1989 elections. In both cases, the executive complied with the ruling of the judiciary to have a re-election.

The fairness of elections is also measured in terms of political parties having equal chances before the law to canvass for political support. In a vast and varied country like Botswana, encompassing difficult terrain such as the Kalahari sand velds and the Okavango swamps, effective political mobilization requires abundance of resources. Opposition parties, which are largely under funded, often face financial difficulties to reach some of the remote areas. As Othhogile in Molomo and Mokopakgosi (1991:26) and Molomo (2000: 77) variously stated, the ruling BDP has enjoyed unfair advantage over opposition parties by benefiting from external funding. There are also reports that opposition parties have benefited from external funding. Democracy would be aided, in the name of transparency and accountability, if the law provided for full disclosures of all forms of assistance for political parties.

A further observation regarding the fairness of the electoral system has to do with the impartiality of the IEC. The IEC was constituted by Section 65a of the Constitution of Botswana in 1997 (Constitutional (Amendment) Act of 1997) following the referendum, which ruled in favour of the establishment of an independent body to run elections. The IEC comprises of a chairman and deputy chairman who are appointed by the Judicial Service Commission, and five other members appointed from a list of candidates recommended by the All Party Electoral Conference. The creation of the IEC was done in the wake of allegations that the office of the supervisor of elections, which ran elections, was partial in favour of the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP). The 1999 elections were the first conducted under the auspices of the IEC.

The outcomes of the July 2000 BDP youth congress are most revealing regarding the course that the party is taking. All the members of the outgoing youth committee who stood for reelection lost. These are the people who believe that the youth wing should act as a pressure group within the party to push for reform and make sure that the party adapts to the political changes. This was the same group that was critical of Khama's sabbatical leave. The choice of Motswaledi at least in the campaigns in the Central District, as a person from Serowe, was strategic to the Khama loyalists that the new leadership of the youth wing would tow the party line.

What all this suggests is that the old guard has made come back within the ranks of the BDP. The split in the BNF and their landslide victory during the 1999 elections has led to a reawaking that there was no threat of an opposition challenge. The concessions that the party made following the Schlemmer report, which meant reforming the party structures and advocating for change, as was the case with the electoral reforms resulting from the 1997 referendum, are no longer necessary. The group that is resistant to change seems to be stewarded by Khama, and is bent on retaining the FPTP electoral system amidst calls by opposition parties and civil society to level the political playing field by ensuring that the composition of government is proportionate to the popular vote.

Electoral Systems

There are numerous electoral systems which can be classified into three broad categories. As discussed in figure 1 below, there are three main variations namely: Plurality-Majority, Proportional Representation (PR) and Semi-Proportional Representation systems.

Figure 1: Electoral Systems

Electoral systems	Plurality majority	FPTP	UK
			India
			Botswana
		AV	Australia
			Nauru
		Block vote	Palestine
			Maldives
		Two round	France
		Mali	
	Semi-PR	Parallel	Japan
			Georgia
		SNTV	Jordan
			Vanuatu
	Proportional	List PR	South Africa
			Finland
MMP		Germany	
		New Zealand	
STV		Malta	
		Ireland	

Source: Reynolds, A. and Reilly, B. *The international IDEA Handbook of Electoral System Design*. Stockholm: International IDEA (1997).

(i) Plurality-Majority systems

Plurality-majority comprises four variations: first-past-the post (FPTP), alternative, block vote and second round electoral systems.

• **First-Past-the-Post (FPTP):** The FPTP electoral system, which obtains in Botswana, is also known as the "winner-take-all" electoral system. It computes election outcomes on the basis of a simple majority. Based on the single-member constituency system, any candidate who gets a mere plurality of the vote stands duly elected as a Member of Parliament (MP) and the other candidates irrespective of the size of their poll are declared losers, and do not make it to parliament. The National Assembly then elects four specially elected MPs and the Speaker of the House.

The FPTP system has served Botswana well since independence because it has consolidated multi-party politics that the country is widely acclaimed for. Over the years, it produced stable and effective governments. The link that the system establishes between the MP and the constituency makes them accountable to the electorate. This system produces parliaments based on geographical representation where voters hold their MPs accountable and in constant check. The dominant trait of the FPTP system is that produces two party systems or a one party dominant political system, and also produces strong cabinets that are drawn from one party. The one party cabinet that it produces takes credit for their good work as well as responsibility for mismanagement and poor performance of government. The system does not only account for firm leadership but also accounts for effective policy formulation and implementation.

However, the FPTP system is widely criticised for being inadequate in terms of representing sectional interests, such as the rights of minorities, youths, women, religious and ethnic groups. The FPTP system does not only produce predominant party systems and two party system but also lends politics into a zero-sum game where governance takes the form government-versus-opposition. Invariably, the preoccupation of the dominant party is to score successive victories and marginalise opposition parties. In short, it produces parliaments that are not proportionate to the popular vote.

To illustrate the lack of proportionality that is produced by the FPTP electoral system; in 1989 the BDP polled 65 percent of the popular vote yet it emerged triumphant with 91 percent of the 34 seats in parliament. The opposition Botswana National Front (BNF), for its part, during the same election won 27 percent of the popular vote but only got 9 percent of the seats in parliament. During the 1999 election the BDP polled 54 percent of the popular vote and won 83 percent of the seats, and the BNF polled 25 percent of the popular vote and only emerged with 15 percent of the seats. The huge disparities in the percentage poll and seats won can thus lead to political discontent.

A few cases lend themselves vivid examples in this regard. The travesty of this system is that candidates who lose elections by narrow margins are denied entry into the National Assembly, irrespective of the size of their poll. In 1989 Kematlamang Morake of the BDP beat Gil Saleshando of the BNF by 4 416 to 4 329 votes in their contest for Selibi-Phikwe constituency, only a margin of 87 votes. In Ngwaketse South during the same election, Duke Pule of the BDP beat Geoffery Mosimakoko of the BNF by 3 628 to 3 464 votes, still a negligible margin of 164 votes. In Mochudi Ray Molomo of the BDP beat James Pilane of the BNF by 2 680 to 2 651 votes. However, following a successful petition at the High Court that there were administrative irregularities in the conduct of those elections, a bye-election was ordered in Mochudi and Molomo only increased the winning margin from 29 to 104 votes.

There was a repeat of the same situation in 1994. Chapson Butale of the BDP beat Knight Maripe of the BPP by 4 901 to 4 638 votes for North East constituency. Similarly, Obed Chilume of the BDP out-performed Oteng Balisi of the BPU by 3 694 to 3 016 votes for the Nkange constituency. The opposition BNF candidate for the Mogoditshane constituency M. Kgosipula beat K. Morwaeng by 3 177 to 2 931 votes. The 1999 election was by no means an exception; candidates with significant majorities were excluded from parliament. Michael

Tshipinare of the BDP beat M. Reatile of the BNF by 4 615 to 4 602 votes. In the contest for Ngwaketse South constituency K. Kalake of the BNF beat P. Siele of the BDP by 3 935 to 3 771 votes.

To further illustrate this point, Botswana can borrow a leaf from Lesotho. During the 1993 election, the Basutholand Congress Party (BCP) won 75 percent of the popular vote and swept all the 65 seats in parliament. For its part, the opposition Basutholand National Party (BNP) polled 23 percent of the popular vote but did not get a single parliamentary seat. The situation almost repeated itself in 1998 where the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) won 61 percent of the popular vote and won 79 percent of the 80 seats in the National Assembly. And the opposition BNP with 25 percent of the popular vote emerged from those elections with only 1 seat in parliament. As discussed in Molomo (1999:134), the political disturbances that swept Lesotho in 1998 culminating in the military intervention of the South African New Defence Force and the Botswana Defence Force was, in part, a reflection of the inadequacy of the electoral system. The effects of the FPTP electoral system that Lesotho operated in those elections led to the perception that the elections were rigged. Feeling somewhat dejected by the electoral system in 1998; Basotho resorted to violence, arson and complete anarchy to express their political views.

Though manifestly different, there are close similarities between the Lesotho experience to what is happening in Botswana. The lack of congruence between the popular vote and number of seats secured by the opposition in Botswana, especially during the 1989 elections, led the opposition to believe that the ruling party rigged elections in its favour. They called, among other things, for the creation of IEC. Yet despite its existence, they continue to charge that elections are rigged. It would appear that the real problem was not, as it were, the rigging of election but the bias of the electoral system in favour of the dominant party. Botswana can only choose to ignore these lessons at its own peril.

- **Block Vote (BV):** The Block vote uses the FPTP electoral system in multi-member constituencies. The voters chose between party list of candidates rather individual candidates. As the name suggests that party that wins a mere plurality of the votes is awarded a block of seats, and its entire list is returned to the National Assembly.

In ethnically diverse societies, for instance, the block vote ensures a balanced representation of all segments of the society. Even though a candidate is accorded only one vote, that vote elects a block candidates in the list.

- **Alternative Vote (AV):** The alternative vote, just as the FPTP system, uses single member constituencies but gives voters the chance to rank order their candidates in order of preference. The most preferred candidate is ranked 1, the second best 2, the third choice 3, and so on.

In this system a candidate who scores an overall majority of votes (50%+1) stands duly elected. However if no candidate scores an absolute majority, then the candidate with the lowest number of first preferences is eliminated from the race. Then his/her ballots are examined for second preferences and distributed to the top candidates, and this tally is continued until one of the candidates emerges with an overall majority. Much as the system is good and promotes majority rule, it is somewhat complicated and requires a reasonable degree of literacy and voter sophistication.

- **Two Rounds System (TRS)** The two rounds system is sometimes referred to as the second ballot system. In this electoral system, the first round is conducted in the same manner as the FPTP system, and if one candidate emerges with an absolute majority, they are declared winners. However, if no one emerges as an outright winner, the contest enters the second round. The candidate with the least votes, say they are three, is eliminated from the race. Then a week or two later a "run-off" contest is entered into between the remaining two candidates with a view to produce a candidate with an overall majority.

(ii) Proportional Representation (PR)

Proportional Representation (PR) is an electoral system that is gaining wide appeal especially among emerging new democracies. It is dominant in Latin America and Western Europe, and make up 25 percent of electoral systems in Africa. Its biggest attraction is that it is by far the most democratic electoral system. It faithfully translates party's share of the national vote into a corresponding proportion of seats in parliament and council.

As attested by Lijphart (1991) and Reynolds (1995), it stands in stark contrast to the FPTP system. This is so because it believes in the principle of inclusion of all segments of society (including women, youth and minorities) in the National Assembly. Its most typical features are that it carries multi-member constituencies and believes in rule by consensus. The PR system pushes for proportionality not only at the level of the legislature but also in the executive.

However, the degree of proportionality is measured in terms of the size of the electoral districts and the threshold of representation. The size of electoral districts depends on delimitation exercises and the voting population in a constituency. The threshold has to do with the minimum amount of electoral support that a candidate needs in order to win a seat for the National Assembly. The threshold can be as low as .67 percent in the Netherlands and as high as 10 percent in the Seychelles. Depending on the threshold; PR systems are said to be either extreme or moderate. A low threshold accounts for extreme PR and a high threshold accounts for moderate PR. Italy and Israel operate extreme PR systems while Germany, Norway, Sweden and South Africa use moderate PR systems.

The PR system has won positive appraisal from those who believe in rule by consensus and power sharing. It operates multi-member constituencies and also promotes multi-party systems. The PR system enhances the prospects for democratisation of divided societies in which political differences manifest themselves along ethnic, linguistic, religious and regional basis.

Based on the experiences of Western Europe, the PR system has been criticized on a number of accounts for producing unstable governments. The PR systems are said to produce unstable governments because where it operates, it is rare for one political party to emerge with a clear-cut majority in an election. As a result, government often takes the form of a coalition. Coalition governments are said to be notorious for shying away from making unpopular decisions for fear of alienating their partners and are generally stable.

Coalition building is a complex process. In a case where no party emerges with a clear electoral majority, one of the main parties is forced to negotiate with a smaller party whose seats would give it a majority in parliament. Such negotiations tend to give small parties inordinate power because they control the "swing seats" which are necessary to build a majority in a coalition governments. Compounding this problem is that PR systems allow extreme parties to participate in government. Nevertheless, it is better for political differences to play themselves out in parliament rather than through extra legal avenues.

The debate on the PR system in Botswana is not a new phenomenon; it has been on the political agenda for sometime now. The former President of Botswana, Sir Ketumile Masire, was apprehensive about it. In an interview with Moeti a reporter of *Mmegi* (1994:30) he said:

Oh, that one is disastrous... One thing that seems inherent in proportional representation is that you hardly find a party that can lead the country on its own. In the end you have coalition governments, which are weak governments. You always have to take your coalition partners into account before taking a decision. Sometimes [minority parties can blackmail you].

The debate on the PR system continues at the level of political parties. The BDP National Council and the Youth Wing discussed it on 19 March and 16 July 2000, respectively. The BDP, understandably, take comfort from the fact that as an incumbent and dominant party, the FPTP system has over the years has advantaged them. The BDP has therefore not been

receptive to the idea of reforming the electoral system with a view to ensuring greater proportionality of the popular vote in the composition of the National Assembly. However, when officially opening the International IDEA on Sustainable Democracy in Southern Africa on 8 May 2000, President Mogae said:

Proportional representation...deserves a little more attention than it has received in Africa, including and especially in Commonwealth English speaking Africa, i.e. including Botswana.

Manifesting a serious difference of opinion, the President and the Vice-President are poles apart in their perception on electoral reforms. The President on the one hand, who is well versed with pros and cons of both systems, thinks that it is time for the party to seriously debate proportional representation. However, what has become increasingly evident from interaction with BDP structures is that the presidents' position is not widely shared within the party. The Vice-President, on the other hand, completely rejects the PR system and any of its variations. His contention is that the FPTP system has served the country very well since independence, and therefore there is no need for change. He concluded that the PR system was susceptible to coalition governments and thereby leading to political instability. The incipient divide between Mogae and Khama, if its not addressed may as well be anchored, among other issues, around this debate. While the All-Party Conference resolved that the matter should be referred to the political parties, it seemed to be amenable to a combination of PR and FPTP systems. As illustrated in figure I above, there are three main variations of this system, and they are List Proportional Representation (List PR), Mixed-Member Proportionality (MMP) and the Single Transferable Vote (STV).

• **List Proportional Representation (List PR):** The List PR is the most used of the PR systems. Under this system, as discussed by Reynolds and Reilly (1997:61) all parties contesting the election present a list of candidates, in order of preference to the electorate. The underlying feature of the list system is that the electorate primarily vote political parties as opposed to party candidates. The lists PR presents three variation closed, open, and free systems. The closed list does not allow the electorate to express their preference of a candidate through a vote but only vote for their preferred party. The list of the candidates is pre-determined by the party. In this system, as is the case in South Africa, the ballot paper only presents the name of the party, party symbol and the picture of its leader, but no names of candidates. The open list system by contrast, as it is practiced in Finland, gives the voter a chance to elect a party of their choice, and also the opportunity to indicate their preferred candidates in that party. The free list system, as the name suggests, allows the electorate to vote freely. It allows them either to spread their votes with candidates or concentrate them on fewer candidates. This system is used in Switzerland; it tries to add more flexibility to the open party list system.

In Southern Africa, South Africa and Namibia offer more concrete examples of the Party List PR system. The party list system as it is practised in both countries reveals the primacy of party over the candidate. Under this system, parties are allocated seats in accordance to their poll of popular vote. Furthermore, under the list system, the whole country is taken as one big constituency. The PR system is good to the extent that it helps to uphold the centrality of the party and avoids the creation of personality cults. To demonstrate the centrality of the party, when an MP vacates office through death, resignation or expulsion, the system does not provide for a bye-election. Instead, the next person in the party list assumes that position. Yet the link between the MPs and the electorate that is maintained by the FPTP is lost in the PR system.

Attesting further to its limitations, the PR system is said to lack the accountability that is provided for by the constituency based system. Discussing the case of South Africa, Kenneth Good (1997:557) observed that, the African National Congress (ANC) leadership after the 1994 elections created "artificial constituencies" that were assigned to MPs and provincial

legislators. Nevertheless, such a system, innovative as it is, has failed to create an effective link between an MP and their constituents.

- **Mixed-Member Proportionality (MMP):** The mixed member proportionality system combines the positive attributes of the plurality-majority and proportional representation systems. Its *modus operandi* is that the proportions of the seats to the national assembly are elected using both the FPTP and PR system. In this system, voters are given two votes, one for the party and the other for the MP. The mixture differs from country to country. For instance, the German system has 50 percent of the seats voted on FPTP and the other 50 percent on PR, and in New Zealand its 42 percent PR and 58 percent FPTP.

- **Single Transferable Vote (STV):** The single transferable vote is perhaps the most proportional of the variants of the PR system. However, it is also the most complex and sophisticated. This system operates the multi-member constituency system wherein the candidates are listed on the ballot paper in an alphabetical order. When casting a vote, the voter is required to rank the candidates in order of preference.

Before the counting of votes is done, the electoral system first establishes the quota of votes required for a candidate to win a seat. The quota is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Quota} = \frac{\text{Total Number of Votes}}{\text{Number of Seats} + 1} + 1$$

Using this calculation, any candidate whose first preferences are more than the quota stand duly elected to parliament or council. However, if no candidate wins at this level, then the candidate with the least number of first preferences is eliminated from the race, and his/her second preferences are examined and allocated according to their preferences to the remaining candidates until a candidate with an overall majority emerges. The scoring does not end here. All the surplus votes of the elected candidates are also examined and are distributed to the remaining candidates based on their second preferences on the ballot paper. The process continues until all seats are filled and votes accounted for.

Semi-Proportional Representation

The Semi-Proportional Representation electoral system, as the name suggests, comes in mid-way the plurality - majority and proportional representation systems. There are two main types of this system: the Single Non-transferable Vote and the Parallel systems.

- **The Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV):** The Single transferable vote operates on the basis of the one-person-one vote, and provides for multiple seats in a given constituency. The candidates who score the highest votes stand duly elected as MPs or Councillors. For example, in the case of a five-member constituency, a candidate who scores 20 percent of the votes cast stands duly elected. Similarly, a party that mobilizes 80 percent of the vote's cast evenly among; for example, four of the candidate's stands a good chance of winning four of the five seats.

The advantage of this system is that it tries to ensure a close proportion between the votes cast and the seats allocated to parties in parliament and council. At the same time, it maintains the link between the Member of Parliament and his/her constituents.

- **The Parallel System (PS):** The parallel system uses a mixture of proportional representation and the plurality majority electoral systems. Depending on the circumstances of a particular country, the electoral law may specify that a certain percentage of the seats would be contested using the PR system and another percentages based on a variant of the plurality-majority system. For example in Cameroon 88 percent of the seats are contested using the PR system, while 12 percent use the FPTP system. In Guinea 67 percent vote using the PR and 33 percent the FPTP systems. In Niger 90 percent

contest the elections using PR and 10 percent FPTP systems. Finally, in Senegal the proportions are a bit more balanced, 58 percent use the PR and 42 percent the Party Block systems.

The advantage of this electoral system is that, it enjoys the better of two worlds. Winning seats on the proportional allocation compensates smaller parties that fail to win seats on the FPTP ticket. At the same time, this system guards against the fragmentation of the party system, as it is the case with pure PR system.

Appropriateness of an Electoral System

As indicated above, electoral systems come in many forms and variations, and their appropriateness must be taken into account the socio-economic basis of a polity. Over the years, debates of which electoral system is appropriate for Botswana have centred on two systems, FPTP and Proportional Representation (PR). The basic thrust of this debate has been to determine which electoral system would produce a judicious balance between an inclusive and geographically representative government. A number of questions and observations have informed this discussion. First, an appropriate electoral system has to ascertain that the outcome of the election is representative of the cross section of society. Second, which system creates greater equality of the vote? Third, which system allows for greater participation of the electorate in the political process? Fourth, which one accounts for greater accountability? Fifth, which one leads to greater efficiency and stability of government? And sixth, which one accounts for a more legitimate government.

- ***Fairness between political parties:*** Fairness between political parties covers a wide area. For a political contest to be free and fair the political playing field must be level. A fair system is one that ensures that the number of seats that political parties win is proportional to the votes it polled. In addition, to ensure complete fairness between political parties, they must be given equal chances of canvassing for political support. One way of guaranteeing this fairness is that there must be public political party funding that would ensure that all registered political parties maintain a certain level of political visibility and effectiveness.

- ***Representative Parliament:*** Parliament stands as the highest legislative organ on the land, and, as such, must reflect the wide diversity of all interests in society. The composition of parliament should reflect the characteristics of the electorate such as age, gender, ethnicity, religion, locality and socio-economic status.

- ***Accountable Government:*** Accountability, as succinctly expressed by Good (1997:557), involves the "executive answering to representatives in parliament, in the voter's name." Therefore an electoral system must encourage close links and accountability between individual MPs and their constituents.

- ***Equality and Power of the Vote:*** The electoral law must ensure that all citizens are given an equal chance of casting a vote. The voting booth must be a reasonable distance away from people's homes and they should not stay long hours in the queues waiting to cast their vote. The creation of the absentee ballot was an important development to ensure that people who are outside the country at the time of elections are given a chance to cast their vote.

Consistent with the concept of the equality of the vote is the assurance that a vote can make a difference in determining electoral outcomes. The voter should feel that their vote counts toward the making and unmaking of government.

- ***Viable Opposition:*** The test for an enduring democracy lies in the strength of the opposition. It hardly needs emphasis that good governance, if not effective governance, are predicated not only on those who are in power but also those who keep them in check through a vibrant

opposition. However, the strength of the parliamentary opposition depends on many factors and the electoral system occupies a strategic position in this trajectory. Certain electoral systems, especially the FPTP, make parliamentary opposition impotent and thereby undermine democratic governance (Reynolds and Reilly, 1997:13). The FPTP system leaves majority parties arrogant and insensitive to people's demands, and opposition parties defeated and demoralised. Yet the essence of democracy is to try to build a consensus and involve all in the process of governance. An effective opposition plays an important countervailing role and keeps government accountable and responsive to peoples needs.

- **Political Legitimacy:** In order to build a sustained democratic system there must be an electoral system that enjoys legitimacy among the electorate. The electorate needs to endorse the voting system and its procedures as open and transparent, and thereby accept its results even if they would have preferred a different outcome.

Towards an Alternative Electoral System for Botswana

During its thirty-four years of political independence, Botswana nurtured and consolidated democratic rule. The political stability that it enjoyed in part derives from the FPTP system. Yet the system, as the table 1 below indicates, has also produced parliaments that do not reflect the will of the electorate.

Table 1 states the case more clearly; it shows the disproportion created by the FPTP system and the bonus seats that the dominant party enjoys. The results of the 1989 elections were somewhat more dramatic. In those elections the BDP won 31 of the 34 seats, but had the seats been allocated proportionately to the parties poll of the popular vote, their seats would have been reduced to 22. The BNF for its part with 27 percent of the popular vote would have increased its share of the seats 3 to 9. While the disproportion continued in 1994, it was not as pronounced as in 1989 and 1999. If Botswana was using the PR system, the BDP poll in 1999 would have dropped from 33 to 22 seats, and the combined poll of the opposition would have risen to 17 seats.

Having outlined the pros and cons of both systems, it is evident that both systems have strengths and limitation. What is desirable is the formulation of an electoral model that provides for an effective link between MPs and their constituencies and also one that allocates seats in proportion to the popular vote. Under the circumstances, it would appear the most logical thing to do in Botswana is to adopt a system that would draw from both the FPTP and PR systems. The Mixed-Member Proportionality and the parallel systems merit serious consideration as alternative electoral models for Botswana. What this would entail, by way of example, is that Botswana would retain the 40 parliamentary constituencies, which would continue to be contested on the FPTP system to maintain the geographical representation in parliament. To introduce an element of proportionality that was distorted by the FPTP system, additional 20 seats or so could be introduced and these would be allocated on the basis of the party poll of the popular vote. This system would address both the issues of linking MPs to particular constituencies and constituting a representative parliament.

Table 1: Party Support 1965 - 1999.
Number of Seats FPTP

Party	1965	1969	1974	1979	1984	1989	1994	1999
BDP	28	24	27	29	28	31	27	33
BNF	-	3	2	2	5	3	13	6
BPP	3	3	2	1	1	0	0	-
BIP/IFP	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	-
BGP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
BAM	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Total no. of Seats	31	31	32	32	34	34	40	40

Number of seats PR

BDP	25	21	25	24	23	22	22	23
BNF	-	4	4	4	7	9	15	10
BPP	4	4	2	2	2	2	2	-
BIP/IFP	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	-
BPU	-	-	-	-	1	0	-	-
BCP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
BAM	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Total	31	31	32	32	34	34	40	40

Percentage of Popular Vote

BDP	80	68	77	75	68	65	55	54
BNF	-	14	12	13	20	27	37	25
BPP	14	12	6	8	7	4	4	-
BIP/IFP	5	6	4	4	3	2	4	-
BCP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
BAM	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Other	1	0	1	0	2	2	0	0
Rejected	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Percentage of Seats

BDP	90	77	84	91	82	91	67	83
BNF	-	10	7	6	15	9	33	15
BPP	10	10	7	3	3	0	0	-
BIP/IFP	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	-
BCP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
BAM	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Election Reports from the supervisor of elections.

Conclusion

The conclusion that this article draws is that choosing an electoral system involves a number of trade-offs because no one system is flawless. It is clear from the discussion in this article that both the FPTP and PR systems have inherent limitations, which undermine democratic development. Under the FPTP system, the opposition parties are projected as weak and demoralised. However, the political competition that is introduced by the PR system introduces an element of political instability resulting from coalition governments.

The FPTP electoral system was probably the best system during the first phase of the independence period, mainly because there was a dire need for political stability. However, over the years, the system has outlived its usefulness. The political stability that it entrenched is now guaranteed and what is needed now is to create a more responsive government. While the PR system is susceptible to political instability, it has no equal in terms of providing a responsive and representative government.

Botswana democratic system that is widely regarded as a flagship of democratic politics now pales in comparison to the emerging democracies in the region. FPTP electoral system that Botswana operates promotes undemocratic tendencies because it does not account for a representative parliament. The composition of parliament does not reflect the popular will of the people. The new trends in democratic politics are good governance and representative government. Therefore a mixed electoral system would ensure that there is an effective link between the MPs and the electorate, and accountable government that has a geographical representation. For democracy to mean rule by consent of the people, it has to be based on and reflect the support of a broad section of the society.

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