

Botswana's 2019 General Elections: A Referendum on General Ian Khama

Batlang Seabo and Robert Nyenhuis 

Abstract: On October 23, 2019, Botswana held its twelfth free and fair election. For the first time in the history of Botswana's electoral democracy, a former president (Ian Khama) defected from the ruling party and supported the opposition. The opposition coalition, working informally with Khama, mounted a spirited campaign against the well-oiled machine, the incumbent and long-ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP). Seabo and Nyenhuis reflect on the 2019 general election, analyze the outcome, and consider the implications for the future of Botswana's electoral democracy. They argue that barring other factors, the BDP's resounding victory was mainly a result of Botswana's rejection of former president Ian Khama.

Résumé: Le 23 octobre 2019, le Botswana a tenu sa douzième élection libre et équitable. Pour la première fois dans l'histoire de la démocratie électorale du Botswana, un ancien président (Ian Khama) a fait défection du parti au pouvoir et a soutenu l'opposition. La coalition de l'opposition, travaillant de manière informelle avec Khama, a monté une campagne énergique contre la machine bien huilée, le parti sortant et longtemps au pouvoir, le Parti démocratique du Botswana (BDP). Seabo et Nyenhuis se penchent sur les élections générales de 2019, analysent le résultat et examinent les implications pour l'avenir de la démocratie électorale du

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Botswana. Ils affirment qu'à l'exception d'autres facteurs, la victoire retentissante du BDP est principalement le résultat du rejet par les Botswanais de l'ancien président Ian Khama.

Resumo: A 23 de outubro de 2019, realizaram-se as 12.^{as} eleições livres e justas do Botsuana. Pela primeira vez na história da democracia eleitoral do Botsuana, um antigo presidente (Ian Khama) abandonou o partido no poder para apoiar a oposição. A coligação oposicionista, em colaboração informal com Khama, montou uma espirituosa campanha contra a máquina bem oleada do Partido Democrático do Botsuana (Botswana Democratic Party – BDP), que há muito se encontra em exercício de poder. Seabo e Nyenhuis refletem sobre as eleições gerais de 2019, analisam os respetivos resultados e as suas consequências para o futuro da democracia eleitoral do Botsuana. De acordo com os autores, para além de outros fatores, a vitória retumbante do BDP resultou do facto de os botsuaneses rejeitarem o antigo presidente Ian Khama.

Key words: voting behavior; ethnicity; Botswana; quality of democracy; electoral campaigns; dominant party politics

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Introduction

Botswana held its 2019 general election amid a great deal of uncertainty regarding the outcome. Perhaps the 2014 general election served as a precursor, as it had featured an enhanced and well-resourced opposition campaign. The Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) entered the 2019 election having split for the second time in its history. This more recent split was led by former president Ian Khama, the revered son of founding president Seretse Khama. Following a political fallout with his successor, Mokgweetsi Masisi, Khama broke away from the BDP and offered his support to a new opposition party, the Botswana Patriotic Front (BPF). He also supported the opposition coalition, the Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC), in a bid to unseat the BDP from power. As such, Khama capitalized on his traditional authority, leveraging it for political expediency.

These elections were unique, in the sense that the UDC mounted a strong campaign against the ruling BDP, leading analysts and observers to predict a possible change of government. However, despite the opposition's optimism in the runup to the election, the BDP was returned to power with a seemingly resounding victory. As shown in [Table 1](#), on the surface, it maintained its two-thirds parliamentary majority (adding one seat) and won 53 percent of the national aggregate vote. On average, it won constituencies by a remarkable 24 percent, many by more than 30 percent. A shift in the balance of power may have occurred as the BDP made significant strides in the opposition's historical strongholds. Scratching below the surface, the BDP also lost several

Table 1. 2019 Botswana Election Results

Party	National vote share (%)	Seats won	Average victory margin
Botswana Democratic Party (BDP)	52.7	38 (+1)	24.0%
Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC)	35.9	15 (−3)	11.6%
Alliance for Progressives (AP)	5.1	1 (+1)	6.3%
Botswana Patriotic Front (BPF)	4.4	3 (+3)	11.8%
Botswana Movement for Democracy (BMD)	0.3	0 (−2)	–
Turnout	83.5		

Source: Independent Electoral Commission of Botswana (IEC)

Note: Botswana has Single-Member electoral districts (SMDs) so the number of seats won is not directly or proportionally allocated.

seats in the Central District, its historical heartland. The overall outcome thus masks considerable fluctuation at the constituency level.

This article analyzes the factors that shaped the outcome of the 2019 election. Using Afrobarometer survey data and official constituency results, we test relevant theories from the African voting literature, focusing on ethnic, partisan, and government evaluation explanations. Our central argument is that the 2019 general election served largely as a referendum on former president Khama, and by extension his successor Masisi, occasioned by Khama's informal cooperation with the UDC. Khama's connection to the Bangwato community, along with his campaign behavior, threatened to interject ethnicity into politics in a country long considered to be relatively immune from such influences. However, we find scant evidence that ethnicity played a major role in the contest. The BDP, which has been in power since independence, has been criticized by some scholars (Good & Taylor 2006; Good 2010, 2017) as increasingly authoritarian. The internal struggle for its leadership, resulting in a severance with the Khama political family, has bolstered its democratic bona fides and led to a renewal of sorts.

Below we continue with a brief synopsis of Botswana's electoral context, its political climate with commentary on electoral trends, and the rupture between Khama and Masisi. We then discuss voting theories to develop some testable hypotheses from the African literature and apply them to our specific case. Next, we discuss our methodology, followed by our analysis and discussion subsections, and we finish with some concluding remarks for the broader study of African elections and democracy.

Botswana's Electoral Context

Since its independence from Britain in 1966, Botswana has held eleven successive elections, all dominated by the ruling BDP. Several explanations account for the BDP's electoral supremacy. First, even though the elections

have been judged to be free and fair (Sebudubudu & Bothomilwe 2010; Cook & Sarkin 2010), opposition parties decry the uneven political playing field (Molomo & Sebudubudu 2005; Osei-Hwedie & Sebudubudu 2006; Sebudubudu & Osei-Hwedie 2006). The ruling BDP has enjoyed incumbency privileges and used state resources to overwhelm opposition parties which have limited resources.

Second, opposition parties have also suffered incessant internal factionalism and fragmentation, which have diminished their capacity to challenge the BDP (Lotshwao 2011; Maundeni & Lotshwao 2012; Maundeni & Seabo, 2013; Poteete 2012). Third, successive BDP governments have been credited with prudent economic management, due to their investing diamond revenues in infrastructural development, education, and social welfare (Good & Taylor 2006; Leith 2005).

The fourth explanation is the BDP's association with its founding leader and country's first president, Sir Seretse Khama. Khama, a revered leader of his time, was heir to the royal chieftaincy of the Bangwato. Later exiled, he returned to become Botswana's first president after the BDP's triumph in the 1965 general election. Since then, the BDP has dominated constituencies in the Central District, a region inhabited by the Bangwato. This traditional status, later to be enjoyed and used for political capital by his son Ian Khama, as a de facto paramount chief of Bangwato, has sparked debates over the influence of chieftainship in Botswana politics. When he assumed power in 2008, not only did Ian Khama ride on the automatic succession politics of the BDP, but his traditional status also influenced the BDP's decision to recruit him to stabilize and heal party factions (Good 2010; Nasha 2014).

From Khama to Masisi: A Bumpy Transition

Despite his popularity and charisma, Khama's political legacy remains questionable, as the country's democratic credentials were blighted during his tenure. The Directorate on Intelligence and Security Services (DISS), commissioned by Khama (Good 2017; Nasha 2014), was reportedly culpable for extrajudicial killings and harassment of opposition politicians. As a result, Freedom House downgraded Botswana's freedom ratings, as some journalists were arrested while others fled the country (Freedom House 2016).

Unexpectedly, Botswana experienced an extremely turbulent power transition when Khama stepped down in April 2018 and was succeeded by Mokgweetsi Masisi. Almost immediately, Masisi moved to reverse a number of his predecessor's policies. He instituted policies regulating the liquor trade, extending trading hours for businesses, and reversing the elephant hunting ban (Bloomberg 2019). The firing of Khama's close ally and former intelligence service director Isaac Kgosi, and later his arrest, were probably the tip of the iceberg in Masisi's attempt to consolidate power. The other school of thought on the feud suggests that Masisi did not honor a succession deal with Khama over the appointment of Khama's younger brother as vice president

(Kgalemang 2018). However, Khama would deny these allegations as a source of the feud, rather citing ill-treatment at the hands of Masisi's government.

Masisi's rise to political prominence had not been entirely smooth, as some in the BDP had opposed his selection as vice president. Signs of opposition to Masisi's authority emerged early, as fellow cabinet colleagues began to cast aspersions on his leadership credentials (Gabathuse & Johannes 2017). Without a political base of support even within his own party, it would not be far-fetched to conclude that Masisi could only consolidate power by addressing Batswana's frustrations with the Khama regime. In so doing, Masisi curtailed some of Khama's retirement benefits, including banning his long-time privilege of flying Botswana Defence Force aircraft. A state media blackout on Khama eliminated the extensive coverage he had previously enjoyed. Masisi also moved swiftly to contain Khama's influence in the *kgotla* meetings he addressed and tried to limit favorable coverage of his philanthropic activities, which included popular soup kitchens (Ramatiti 2018). At the height of the tensions with Masisi, Khama perhaps hosted these events more frequently in order to curry political favor.

In retaliation to the Masisi government's perceived onslaught against him, Khama allegedly sponsored a motion of no confidence against Masisi in parliament, with the intention of ousting Masisi from office before the general election (Mmeso 2018). However, the motion was soundly defeated. When the attempted parliamentary coup failed, Khama publicly pledged support for former minister Venson Moitoi to challenge Masisi at a BDP elective congress. Traditionally, BDP presidents who succeed their predecessors through automatic succession go uncontested on the eve of elections and remain the chosen one to carry the party forward. After Moitoi announced her candidacy, Masisi dropped her from his cabinet, causing Moitoi to withdraw from the presidential race at the Kang elective congress. Subsequently, the BDP confirmed Masisi as its 2019 presidential candidate. Faced with no other options to maintain control, Khama defected from the BDP, joining the newly established BPF. In an effort to exert maximum influence in the election's outcome, Khama also pledged support for the opposition coalition UDC, traversing the Central District endorsing its candidates.

The 2019 General Election: A Possibility of Regime Change and Hung Parliament

The election's uncertain outcome resulted from several factors. First, the resurgent opposition coalition put together a competitive campaign, which led many observers to predict a regime change or a hung parliament. The UDC campaign, allegedly sponsored by South African business billionaire Zunaid Moti, allowed top officials to reach far-flung constituencies via private jets and helicopters.

Khama's defection also factored heavily into a potential BDP loss. The Khama family and name have been the backbone of the BDP, especially in the Central District, since the party's establishment in 1962 (Good 2010).

Controlling nineteen of the fifty-seven contested constituencies, the Central District holds significant electoral importance. After his defection, Khama strategically exhorted his constituents in the Central District to endorse UDC candidates in regions where the BPF did not compete. The defection of Khama's younger brother and former cabinet minister, Tshekedi, to the BPF further cemented the end of the family dynasty's connection to the BDP.

A BDP victory, however, still remained a possibility. The party's optimism largely emanated from the hope that Masisi inspired in the citizens and the belief that he ushered in a new and improved era of BDP rule. Indeed, as highlighted above, Masisi utilized the period before the election to carry out an effective campaign, while implementing some policies that endeared him to the voters. He presented a somewhat "new BDP" that was to be marked by consultation, embracing private media and the labor federation movement. This was by all accounts a departure from his predecessor's political modus operandi. What, then, accounts for how the people of Botswana made their electoral decisions in 2019?

Theories of Voting

We draw on the extant voting behavior literature to develop some theoretical explanations for voter motivation. Central to our concern is Khama's ability to play the ethnic card. We develop hypotheses that engage with and tailor ethnic explanations to our specific case, and then briefly consider alternative theories (partisanship and government evaluations) to account for micro-level electoral decisions.

Ethnic Voting

Early studies of African voting behavior identified the role of ethnic identity in Ghana (Gyimah-Boadi 2001; Lentz & Nugent 2000; Nugent 2001), Kenya (Bratton & Kimenyi 2008; Elischer 2008), South Africa (Ferree 2006), Zambia (Posner & Simon 2002), and across Francophone Africa (Fridy 2007; Toungara 2001). Central to these studies was the fact that the foremost cleavage structures influencing politics emanated from ethnic considerations, and that ethnic groups would exhibit uniform electoral behavior in choosing "one of their own."

When assessing the specific mechanism, some authors (Ferree 2006; Fridy 2007) argued that voters used race and ethnicity as cognitive heuristics when making electoral decisions. Pippa Norris and Robert Mattes (2003) found some support for the belief that ethnicity—measured as both race (respondents who identified as Black African) and language (those who belonged to largest linguistic group)—strongly conditioned citizens' voting behavior. However, later empirical studies question the validity of ethnic explanations. Evaluating cross-national survey evidence, researchers highlight other cleavage structures—income, education, geography, linguistics,

and occupation—as the major political fault lines (Basedau et al. 2011; Lindberg & Morrison 2008; McLaughlin 2007; Mozzafar et al. 2003).

Given the dominance of ethnicity in the African voting behavior literature, we probe its possible influence in Botswana. Over the years, scholars have connected BDP support with the eight major Tswana ethnic groups, perhaps with the exception of Bangwaketse, among whom the BNF was more popular (Wiseman 1977; Makgala 2005).¹ Even though Botswana's political process is not structured around ethnic politics, John Wiseman (1997) contended that ethnic diversity existed and played a political role: Seretse Khama's traditional prestige was immense within the Bamangwato. As discussed above, the community's respect for Ian Khama could potentially shape members' propensity to sever their long-standing connections with the BDP. Khama campaigned vigorously on behalf of the BDP's opponents, targeting areas in which his traditional legitimacy was strongest (such as Serowe in Central District). If the ethnic argument holds, we would expect the Bangwato to follow their co-ethnic and defect from the BDP, supporting either the UDC or BPF, when making electoral decisions. As such, we posit that:

Hypothesis 1a: *citizens who self-identify as Mongwato will be less likely to vote for the BDP.*

Moreover, scholars have noted some traces of perceived ethnic neglect or discrimination by the BDP. This was evidenced by the relocation and the dispossession of the Basarwa of their land by the government (Good 1999). In a different vein, Dominika Koter (2019) illustrates that, during Khama's tenure, levels of national identification among the Bangwato significantly increased as they believed they had acquired greater political standing. Khama's very public spat with and severance of ties to the BDP, followed by well-publicized investigations into Khama's allies, might have convinced the community that they had lost their newfound enhanced position. This may have further led them to conclude that their ethnic group was now facing political discrimination. We posit:

Hypothesis 1b: *citizens who perceive their ethnic group faces discrimination will be less likely to vote for the BDP.*

Alternative explanations

We acknowledge that other factors also shaped Botswana voting behavior. As such, we list two other explanatory variables that we will control for: partisanship and evaluations of government performance.

In the African context, some authors highlight a strategic partisan motivation—voters try to align themselves with likely winners, in an attempt to reap the benefits of electoral victory. Other researchers (Bratton 1999; Kuenzi & Lambright 2007; Posner 2007) stress the mobilizing effect of

political parties. While partisan attachments have been shown to be relatively stable over time (Lindberg & Morrison 2008; Young 2009), some countries have experienced declining party identification. Similar to Keith Weghorst and Staffan Lindberg (2013:720), we acknowledge that partisanship does not lead to an automatic transfer of votes; rather, partisans may also be swing voters, and the effects of partisanship should be empirically tested.

In our specific case, the internal disputes within the BDP came to the fore well before the election, resulting in Khama's party defection and Venson Moitoi's challenge of Masisi in April 2019. The losing faction at the Kang congress, commonly known as "New Jerusalem," publicly endorsed UDC candidates during the campaign (Gabathuse 2019; Kanono 2019). As such, we would expect that traditional BDP supporters who may either be taking cues from Khama or from disillusioned BDP party leaders would be more likely to consider alternative, possibly opposition, candidates at the ballot box. Conversely, BDP supporters who are firmly supportive of Masisi would be more likely to continue to support the incumbent party. Our analysis should also center on non-partisan Batswana, an increasing segment of the electorate.

When evaluating the performance of their government, voters across the world consider economic conditions. The well-established economic voting thesis posits that voters will punish incumbents during times of hardship and they will reward them for success; voters have quite sophisticated and multi-faceted economic outlooks. Some (Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier 2008) claim that economic concerns weigh even more heavily in voters' minds in the developing world. In the African context, economic performance evaluations of the government feature prominently in electoral decision-making (Posner & Simon 2002; Bratton et al 2012). Additionally, one may expect in countries that have held many successful elections since independence (such as Botswana and Ghana) that the voting patterns of their citizens may more closely resemble those of voters in the developed world. As such, economic issues may not be the primary concern of voters. Other factors such as education, infrastructural development, and healthcare may also have some influence.

Methods & Data

We make use of two types of analysis: first, we conduct statistical tests on available Afrobarometer survey data; second, we qualitatively assess the constituency-level data available from Botswana's Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). A discussion about our data use is necessary, including transparency about the data's limitations.

Ideally, we would have liked to have panel data that measured the change in Batswana voting intentions at different time intervals, corresponding to the political events detailed above. For instance, it would have been instructive to look at evaluations of both Khama and Masisi at different points of the electoral campaign. However, publicly available and credible survey data are limited in Botswana. As such, we have tried to maximize the inferential

Table 2. 2019 Botswana Election Results

Party	Sample (all respondents)	Sample (voters)	Actual election (valid votes)
BDP	43.3%	56.7%	52.7%
BPF	1.9%	2.5%	4.4%
UDC	22.9%	30.1%	35.9%
Others	8.2%	10.7%	7.0%
Unsure	5.1%		
Not Vote	18.6%		16.5%
Turnout	81.4%		83.5%

Sources: Afrobarometer Round 8 (2019) Botswana data, IEC

leverage afforded by the available survey data. The 2017 (Round 7) and 2019 (Round 8) Afrobarometer surveys conducted in Botswana are nationally representative, and both include 1,200 respondents. The 2017 sample was conducted in May; it captures the attitudes of citizens while Khama was still in office. The 2019 iteration was conducted in July and August, less than three months before the October 23 election. This fortuitous timing allowed us to avoid the temporal disconnect that plagues many electoral studies relying on Afrobarometer data (Lindberg 2013:4). Utilizing both of these samples also allowed us to track the changes in Botswana attitudes before and after Khama left office, enabling some tentative conclusions on the broader political effects his departure from the BDP may have had on voting behavior.

As with any use of survey data, there are questions of their representative nature. We compared the sample's results with the results observed in the actual election. In Table 2, the first column illustrates that, in our sample, 81.4 percent of people reported that they would vote. This number compares very favorably with the actual results (83.5 percent). Similarly, the aggregated national vote measures in the election correspond very well with the figures from the sample (columns two and three). There is minor divergence in the vote shares for the BDP and other parties (overrepresented), and the BPF and UDC (underrepresented). There are some reasons that may account for this small discrepancy.

First, the constituencies are single-member districts, and many of the districts were not competitive. As the election approached, it is possible that some voters switched to the likely winner, as suggested by the decrease from other, smaller parties' shares, or chose not to vote at all. Second, the BDP's vote share decreased as both the UDC and BPF's shares increased. It is unknown whether these voters shifted to these parties as a result of campaign appeals. However, in the context of our analysis and argument, we may be underestimating Khama's campaigning effect, given that the survey occurred three months prior to the election. It appears that both the BPF and UDC improved their standing, albeit slightly, and some of this is likely due to Khama's influence. One of the major political events occurred toward

the end of the campaign, as Ian Khama's brother, Tshekedi Khama, resigned from the BDP and joined his sibling in the BPF, contesting the election under their banner. This late disruption, a month before the election, sent the BDP scrambling to find a replacement candidate prior to the IEC's deadline, but it also effectively secured Tshekedi's Serowe West constituency seat for the BPF (Tau 2019). In our analyses we also used questions that asked respondents to indicate their approval of incumbent president Mokgweetsi Masisi. Masisi assumed office in early April 2018 and had served in office for fifteen months prior to the survey's data collection. Given his very public efforts to repeal and replace many of his predecessor's policy initiatives, we assumed that respondents would be able to clearly assess his performance.

In line with previous empirical efforts (Basedau et al. 2011), we employed a multistep analysis that utilized several statistical methods—bivariate descriptive statistics, logistic regression models—and then examined over time changes in presidential approval levels matched with constituency-level electoral outcomes. We started with descriptive statistics to probe the effects Khama's departure from the BDP may have had on the ethnic components of party support, and whether his subsequent public campaign against Masisi had an effect on the attitudes among traditional BDP supporters.

We continued in our examination of Botswana voting behavior by using a logistic analysis that treated voter choice for the BDP as our dependent variable, modelling respondents' support for the BDP in relation to all other party options (the UDC, AP, BPF, and BMD).² This analysis seemed particularly appropriate for the voting decisions of respondents, as one of our principal objectives was to examine the BDP's support base relative to all other options on the electoral menu.

Our regression outputs featured in Figures 1 and 2 require some discussion. Similar to other empirical studies, we included standard controls for demographic characteristics—age, gender, education, and poverty.³ Considering age, and given the BDP's historical dominance and claim as the party of liberation, we expected that the party would still be able to rely on a reservoir of political capital among older Botswana. Gender was treated as a binary variable in the response, with female respondents serving as the reference group. Education ranged from zero to nine, with a higher score reflecting more years of education. Respondents' location of residence included "rural," "semi-urban," and "urban," with "rural" serving as the reference group. We had only *a priori* expectations for gender and geographic location. Michael Bratton et al. (2012) found that both female and rural residents were more likely to support the ruling party, while Amy Poteete (2012) documented that the BDP's traditional dominance of the countryside has continued, albeit weaker than in the early years after independence. In assessing respondents' income and living conditions, we constructed an index of their material insecurity—how often they have gone without food, medical services, cash income, water access, and fuel. This practice has become quite common in studies of southern African voting behavior (de Kadt & Lieberman 2017; Mattes 2015).⁴

Figure 1. Marginal Effects Plot for Batswana Voting Intention for the BDP

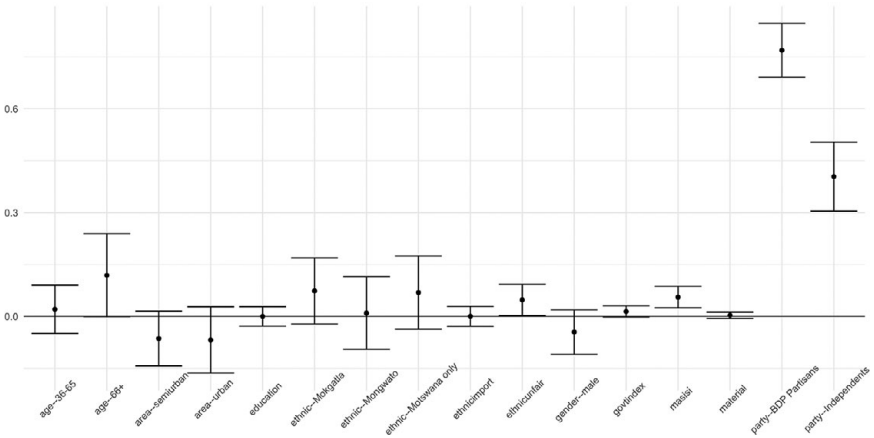
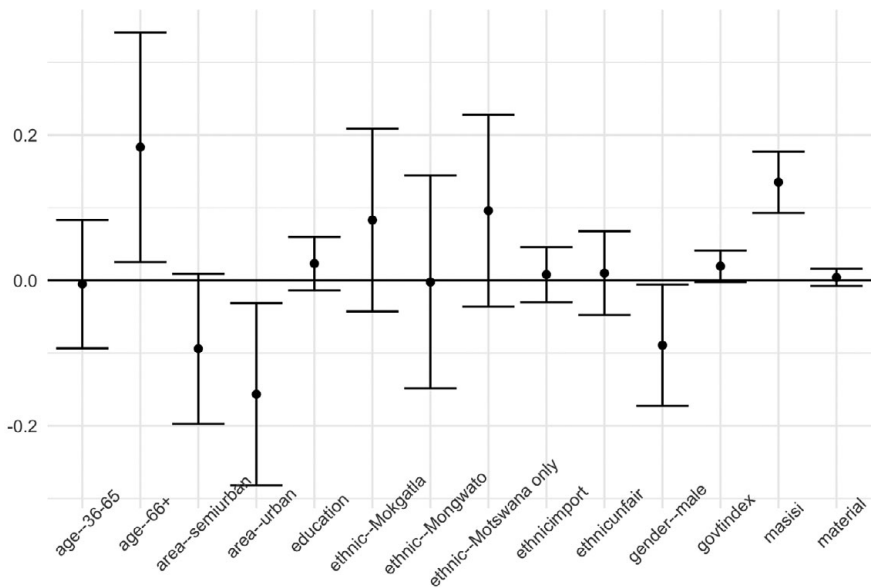


Figure 2. Marginal Effects Plot for Non-Partisans' Voting Intention for the BDP



Our three explanatory variables included measures of ethnicity, national government performance, and Khama’s and Masisi’s leadership. We made use of several questions to investigate whether ethnic identity shaped Batswana’s voting behavior. Similar to Bratton et al (2012), we tested whether the respondent’s ethnic identity relative to her national identity mattered, and whether she felt that her ethnic group had faced discrimination. Second, we considered each individual’s nominal ethnic identity. In doing so, we tested

the argument that respondents who shared Khama's ethnicity (Bangwato) would be less likely to support the incumbent BDP, relative to other ethnic groups and those who viewed themselves as Motswana only.⁵ The government evaluation variable is an index of three separate questions measuring respondents' assessments of the government's performance with respect to creating jobs, fighting crime, and combatting corruption.⁶ To test the argument that the elections served as a referendum, of sorts, on Khama, we included questions asking respondents about their approval of both Khama and Masisi.

Analysis and Discussion

Table 3 illustrates the constituencies that were either gained or lost by the BDP in the election, to both the UDC and the BPF. The aggregate national election figures offer a misleading impression that the contest was marked by relative stability. At the subnational constituency level, the BDP lost fourteen seats while gaining fifteen seats. Our analysis aims to offer an explanation that accounts for both national and subnational results.

The BDP lost eleven seats in the Central District, two in Ngamiland in the northwest, and one in Ghanzi in the west. More striking than the electoral losses is the overall shift in voting patterns in these constituencies. In 2014, on average, the BDP won these seats by a comfortable double-digit margin (10 percent). In 2019, they averaged an 8.5 percent defeat, reflecting a swing of nearly one fifth of the district electorates. Even more troubling for the incumbent party is that only four of these seats were competitive (won by less than 5 percent) in the 2014 contest. Table 3 also demonstrates that the BDP lost all three seats to the Khama-backed BPF candidates in Khama's hometown of Serowe, illustrating electoral sea changes in these constituencies. One preliminary conclusion that may be drawn from these figures is that Khama's desertion, as expected, negatively impacted the BDP's performance in the Central District.

Examining the other side of the same electoral coin, the BDP made significant electoral inroads in the southeastern part of the country, in or around the capital. In fourteen out of the fifteen seats it gained, the BDP reversed its fortunes from 2014 by more than 20 percent. On average, it won these seats by a remarkable 26.5 percent, illustrating an average shift of more than 35 percent across constituencies. Furthermore, the BDP won thirteen out of the fifteen seats with a majority of votes, a clear sign of electoral strength in the FPTP contests. What is perhaps most surprising is that the BDP had such an incredible electoral showing in an area over which the opposition has had a monopoly for decades. Specifically, the BNF had dominated the Southern District for five decades, while the opposition had claimed most districts in Gaborone for the past twenty-five years (Brown 2020:707). The rest of the examination below further probes why the BDP lost seats in its historical stronghold (Central District) while establishing an

Table 3. 2019 Botswana Election Results, at the Constituency Level

Seats lost by the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP)							
<i>Lost to the UDC (11)</i>		2019 Vote Share			BDP Margin of Victory/Loss		
<i>Constituency</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>BDP</i>	<i>UDC</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>Change</i>
Bobonong	Central	44.5	49.2	6.3	0.8	-4.7	-5.5
Ghanzi South	Ghanzi	43.8	48.5	7.7	11.5	-4.7	-16.2
Mahalapye East	Central	36.4	41.6	22.0	20.7	-5.2	-25.9
Mahalapye West	Central	33.1	50.7	16.2	26.5	-17.6	-44.1
Maun East	Ngamiland	47.6	51.8	0.6	5.4	-4.2	-9.6
Ngami	Ngamiland	45.8	47.8	6.4	0.3	-2.0	-2.3
Nkange	Central	42.2	48.1	9.7	4.6	-5.9	-10.5
Palapye	Central	37.2	39.6	23.2	16.8	-2.4	-19.2
Sefhare-Ramokgonami	Central	37.0	62.1	0.5	11.3	-25.1	-36.4
Selebi Phikwe East	Central	37.4	51.1	11.5	2.9	-13.7	-16.6
Shoshong	Central	45.7	53.7	0.6	8.9	-8.0	-16.9
Average		41.0	50.5	8.5	10.0	-8.5	-18.5
<i>Lost to the BPF (3)</i>							
<i>Constituency</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>BDP</i>	<i>BPF</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>Change</i>
Serowe North	Central	34.1	42.2	23.7	75.1	-8.1	-83.2
Serowe South	Central	34.7	37.8	27.5	55.6	-3.1	-58.7
Serowe West	Central	29.4	53.6	17.0	64.0	-24.2	-88.2
Average		32.7	44.5	22.7	64.9	-11.8	-76.7

(Continued)

Table 3. (Continued)

Seats gained by the BDP							
<i>Gained from the UDC (15)</i>		2019 Vote Share			BDP Margin of Loss/Victory		
<i>Constituency</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>BDP</i>	<i>UDC</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>Change</i>
Gabane-Mmankgodhi	Kweneng	63.5	10.4	26.1	-1.9	37.4	+39.3
Gaborone Central	Gaborone	47.9	30.3	21.8	-12.2	17.6	+29.8
Gaborone North	Gaborone	60.0	31.6	8.4	-12.5	28.4	+40.9
Gaborone Bonnington N	Gaborone	55.1	35.7	9.2	-24.2	19.4	+43.6
Gaborone Bonnington S	Gaborone	43.9	22.6	33.5	-26.3	10.4	+36.7
Ghanzi North	Ghanzi	50.3	48.5	1.2	-4.0	1.8	+5.8
Goodhope-Mabule	Southern	59.6	35.9	4.5	-4.5	23.7	+28.2
Jwaneng-Mabutsane	Jwaneng/ Southern	55.9	36.2	7.9	-4.1	19.7	+23.8
Kanye South	Southern	60.3	36.4	3.3	-2.3	23.9	+26.2
Mochudi East	Kgatlang	61.8	35.1	3.1	-5.0	26.7	+31.7
Mochudi West	Kgatlang	63.9	28.3	7.8	-14.9	35.6	+50.5
Mogoditshane	Kweneng	56.4	27.1	16.5	-3.3	29.3	+32.6
Molepolole North	Kweneng	67.2	25.6	7.2	-19.0	41.6	+60.6
Molepolole South	Kweneng	70.4	18.8	10.8	-3.3	51.6	+54.9
Ramotswa	South-East	63.4	28.7	7.9	-3.4	34.7	+38.1
Tlokweng	South-East	58.1	36.2	5.7	-22.4	21.9	+44.3
Average		58.6	30.5	10.9	-10.2	26.5	+36.7

Source: IEC

electoral foothold in the opposition's traditional bastion of support (south-eastern Botswana).

Table 4 illustrates that party defection in voting was minimal for the two major parties, the BDP and UDC. However, when examining the Central

Table 4. Vote Choice by Party Affiliation

Round 7 Afrobarometer				
Party Affiliation	BDP	UDC	Others	Total
BDP	95.5%	2.4%	2.1%	100% (336)
UDC	3.6%	94.0%	2.4%	100% (167)
Others	8.4%	10.9%	80.7%	100% (119)
Independents	59.7%	31.2%	9.1%	100% (263)
Central District				
Party Affiliation	BDP	UDC	Others	Total
BDP	96.4%	0.9%	2.7%	100% (112)
UDC	5.4%	89.2%	5.4%	100% (37)
Others	14.7%	5.9%	79.4%	100% (34)
Independents	72.0%	20.7%	7.3%	100% (82)
Round 8 Afrobarometer				
Party Affiliation	BDP	UDC	Others	Total
BDP	90.5%	5.6%	3.9%	100% (356)
UDC	5.8%	92.3%	1.9%	100% (156)
Others	11.8%	28.2%	60.0%	100% (85)
Independents	58.6%	28.3%	13.1%	100% (297)
Central District				
Party Affiliation	BDP	UDC	Others	Total
BDP	89.1%	4.0%	6.9%	100% (101)
UDC	8.3%	83.3%	8.3%	100% (60)
Others	2.9%	17.7%	79.4%	100% (34)
Independents	65.9%	27.1%	7.1%	100% (85)
Southeastern Botswana				
Party Affiliation	BDP	UDC	Others	Total
BDP	86.8%	9.3%	3.9%	100% (129)
UDC	6.0%	94.0%	0.0%	100% (50)
Others	22.2%	29.6%	48.2%	100% (27)
Independents	54.7%	32.0%	13.3%	100% (128)

Sources: Afrobarometer Round 7 (2017) and Round 8 (2019) Botswana data.

District, it becomes apparent that partisan loyalty decreased slightly among the BDP, with the BPF gaining votes. For UDC partisans, roughly one in six of them selected others at the ballot box, with the BDP and BPF gaining a small number of followers. A central question at play in this election was whether BDP supporters in the Central District would show loyalty to the ruling party or abandon the incumbents, taking cues from their paramount chief (Brown 2020). The lack of meaningful party defection among BDP loyalists suggests that these partisans decided to reject Khama's appeals to support the UDC and BPF. Interestingly, UDC supporters may have abandoned their own party, mostly to support BPF candidates, while a small number chose the BDP. As such, another preliminary conclusion is that party loyalty among BDP partisans trumped Khama's appeals to desert and defect to alternatives at the ballot box.

In southeastern Botswana, the story was a little different. BDP partisans were still loyal, but slightly higher rates of voters defected than in the Central District and in the country as a whole. Again, UDC partisans remained very loyal, with few defecting to the BDP.⁷ It is notable that independents again broke for the BDP, but to a lesser extent than in the rest of the country. However, the fact that the BDP won a majority of independents in this region speaks volumes to the ability of the BDP, and of Masisi in particular, to court voters. This is all the more important as this area had become an opposition stronghold over the past two decades. Independents, overall, broke consistently for the BDP, and of particular interest to this analysis, broke more heavily in favor of the BDP in the Central District. The inability of both the BPF and the UDC to make inroads with this vital sector of the electorate offers support for our contention that the underpinning factor of this electoral contest was a resounding rejection of Khama's continued political influence. We proceed with explanatory efforts below to account for the rates of defection among BDP partisans and the voting motivations of those who lacked any affiliation. Together, these groups make up roughly three out of four Batswana in our survey samples.

Table 5 illustrates that, considering the BDP and the UDC, some shifts occurred along ethnic lines. The survey respondents who self-identified as Mokgatla were more likely to claim an affiliation with the BDP over the two rounds, but more of them became politically unaffiliated. It is of particular note that support for the UDC dropped rather significantly between these two surveys.⁸ These results offer some support for the ethnic argument, as Masisi himself identifies as a Mokgatla. Unfortunately, we do not have data that could show party-switching among respondents who identified as Mokgatla. As such, we tempered our findings. Behavior among Mongwato self-identifiers does cast doubt on the ethnic argument. We expected that this group, if they followed the cues from Khama, would switch allegiances to either the BPF or the UDC, at the expense of the BDP. There was a minor (2.6 percent) drop in BDP allegiance, but a major decrease (roughly half) in support for the UDC. Most damning for the ethnic argument is the fact that no Mongwato self-identifiers claimed BPF affiliation, undermining the

Table 5. Vote Choice by Ethnicity

Round 7 Afrobarometer						
<i>All of Botswana</i>						
Ethnic Identity	BDP	BCP	UDC	Others	None	Total
Mokgatla	30.5%	3.7%	39.0%	0.0%	26.8%	100% (82)
Mongwato	34.1%	0.0%	25.9%	0.0%	40.0%	100% (85)
Motswana Only	29.1%	7.8%	21.4%	0.0%	41.7%	100% (91)
All others	33.0%	7.0%	17.7%	0.2%	42.1%	100% (572)
Round 8 Afrobarometer						
Ethnic Identity	BDP	BPF	UDC	Others	None	Total
Mokgatla	37.2%	0.0%	13.8%	5.3%	43.6%	100% (94)
Mongwato	31.5%	0.0%	12.3%	4.1%	52.1%	100% (73)
Motswana Only	38.5%	0.0%	15.4%	9.9%	36.3%	100% (91)
All others	30.9%	1.6%	14.6%	7.5%	45.4%	100% (628)

Sources: Afrobarometer Round 7 (2017) and Round 8 (2019) Botswana data.

expectation that the Bamangwato would choose ethnic loyalty over other political concerns. They did, however, claim greater political independence, and their ethnic loyalty may yet express itself in voting behavior, as analyzed below. Overall, the number of survey respondents who lacked a partisan affiliation continued to be a plurality in the sample. In Round 7, 42.7 percent claimed to be politically independent, increasing to 44.6 percent in Round 8. Thus, electoral outcomes in Botswana seem to partly hinge on the voting behavior of political independents, especially since there is a consistently high level of party loyalty at the ballot box. These observations guide and structure the specification of our statistical modelling below.

Figure 1 illustrates the findings of our logistic analysis, which accounts for the variance in why certain Batswana supported the incumbent BDP. We illustrate the marginal effects for each independent variable to adjudicate among their relative explanatory weight. Figure 1 confirms our earlier exploratory analysis that partisan attachment largely shaped voting behavior, with very little defection among party loyalists. What is interesting and key to our analysis is that political independents, even after controlling for sociodemographic and ethnic factors, were more likely to vote for the BDP; this warrants additional examination. Demographically, Batswana over the age of sixty-five are most likely to support the BDP, while urban and male voters are less likely to have voted for the BDP compared to their rural, female compatriots. While it was expected that Khama might pull away a noticeable number of his base, mainly the elderly, most older voters decided to remain with the party they had known and voted for all their lives.

When we examined only political independents, we found that older non-partisans were much more likely to support the BDP than their younger compatriots. Why these older citizens and other Batswana lack partisan attachment is beyond the scope of this analysis but warrants future study. Chief among motivations for independent voters was their evaluation of Masisi in office. This fact provides robust empirical support for our main argument that the 2019 election was largely a referendum on the Khama years and his continued political involvement.

Table 6 also illustrates the model run for survey respondents across political affiliation. What is striking about this analysis is that BDP partisans and political independents behaved rather similarly in making their electoral decisions in 2019. The factor that best explains their electoral decision-making is their approval of Masisi's leadership, and we found no evidence

Table 6. Model of Voting Intention for BDP in 2019 (logistic regression; baseline category is all other parties)

Variable	All of Botswana	All of Botswana	BDP partisans	Independents Only
Age (36–65)	0.17	0.02	0.00	−0.04
Age (66+)	1.01 ⁺	0.10	0.18*	0.96*
Male	−0.37	−0.04	−0.09*	−0.44*
Education	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.11
Material well-being	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.02
Semi-urban	−0.53	−0.04	−0.09 ⁺	−0.45 ⁺
Urban	−0.56	−0.04	−0.16*	−0.73*
Ethnicity (Mokgatla)	0.62	0.11*	0.08	0.42
Ethnicity (Mongwato)	0.08	0.03	0.00	−0.01
Ethnicity (Motswana only)	0.58	0.09	0.10	0.48
Ethnic discrimination	0.40*	0.04 ⁺	0.01	0.04
Ethnic ID > National ID	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.04
Government evaluation	0.12 ⁺	0.01	0.02 ⁺	0.10 ⁺
Masisi evaluation	0.46***	0.02	0.14***	0.61***
Party (BDP)	4.59***			
Party (Independent)	2.47***	−0.61***		
Party (Opposition)		−0.86***		
Party (Independent) x Masisi		0.08*		
Party (Opposition) x Masisi		0.03		
Central Region		0.01		
Southeastern Botswana		−0.06		

Note: ⁺ p < 0.1; * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001.

Source: Afrobarometer Round 8 (2019) Botswana data.

that ethnicity shaped their preferences. Evaluations of Masisi mattered even more for independents than for BDP partisans, as illustrated by the positive and statistically significant interaction in column 3. The fractured nature of the BDP, given the divisiveness in the run-up to the election, could help account for this. Alternatively, Masisi as the face of the BDP seems to have offered a clear choice for political independents to reject Khama's waning influence. In sum, we find clear and robust evidence that Botswana's voting behavior was largely motivated by the voters' evaluations of the incumbent president. We do, however, need to consider whether these evaluations mattered at the subnational level, to which we now turn.

Constituency-level analysis

In Table 7, we supplemented our statistical modelling by considering constituency-level data available from Botswana's IEC,⁹ which allowed us to examine the relative popularity levels of both Khama and Masisi.¹⁰ The figures illustrate the approval percentages for both Khama in Round 7 and Masisi in Round 8 Afrobarometer data. By this stage (July 2019), Khama had publicly called on his supporters to go out and vote for the UDC in districts in which the BPF did not field a candidate (*Mail and Guardian* 2019). As such, we demonstrate the gaps in voter approval between the two leaders and assess these differences within the context of actual electoral outcomes.¹¹ The constituency-level results lead us to three conclusions that lend support to our overall argument that this election was, in fact, a referendum on former president Ian Khama.

First, the BDP lost a total of eleven seats to the opposition UDC. In these electoral districts, Khama's approval rating was significantly higher than Masisi's, by an average difference of 30.7 percent.¹² Half of these defeated parliamentarians were incumbents, and, of note, several of them lost quite heavily (by double-digit margins). This is all the more surprising, given that, on average, the BDP won these districts by 10.2 percent in 2014; and that vote swings of 30 percent are exceptionally rare in Botswana (Poteete 2012:78). Given the massive swings in electoral fortunes for the BDP candidates, coupled with Khama's popularity and Masisi's much lower standing in these areas, it seems that Khama's political shadow loomed large in these specific contests. It could well be that Khama's clarion call to support the UDC candidates was heeded by his constituents.

Second, when considering the electoral districts the UDC lost to the BDP, again we examined the differing levels of approval for Khama and Masisi. Masisi was, on average, 10.7 percent more popular in these constituencies than Khama was in the earlier survey. The UDC won these districts, on average, by 10.3 percent in 2014, and twelve out of fifteen featured incumbent candidates running. Given the advantages of incumbency and the stark differences in popularity between Khama and Masisi, this time favoring Masisi, these results once again offer evidence for our argument.

Table 7. Leaders' Approval Ratings and 2019 Botswana Election Results, by Constituency

Constituencies the BDP lost					
	<i>District</i>	Favorable Evaluations (%)			2019 electoral result
		<i>Khama</i>	<i>Masisi</i>	<i>Difference</i>	
Bobonong	Central	81.9	50.0	−31.9	Non-incumbent loses by 4.7%
Mahalapye East, West	Central	72.3	37.5	−34.8	Non-incumbents lose by 5.2, 17.6%
Maun East	Ngamiland	75.9	57.2	−18.7	Incumbent loses by 4.2%
Ngami	Ngamiland	81.6	52.3	−29.3	Incumbent loses by 2.1%
Nkange	Central	83.2	48.8	−34.4	Non-incumbent loses by 5.9%
Palapye	Central	76.8	36.5	−40.3	Incumbent loses by 2.4%
Sefhare-Ramokgonami	Central	72.3	37.5	−34.8	Incumbent loses by 25.1%
Serowe North, South, West	Central	76.8	36.5	−40.3	Incumbents lose by 8.1 and 24.2%, Non-incumbent loses by 3.1%
Shoshong	Central	56.4	37.5	−18.9	Incumbent loses by 34.9%
Tonota	Central	71.9	48.2	−23.7	Incumbent loses by 8.0%
Average		74.9	44.2	−30.7	
National Average		71.0	52.6	−18.4	

(Continued)

Table 7. (Continued)

Constituencies gained by the BDP					
	<i>District</i>	Favorable Evaluations (%)			2019 electoral result
		<i>Khama</i>	<i>Masisi</i>	<i>Difference</i>	
Gabane-Mmankgodi	Kweneng	43.2	56.3	+13.1	Incumbent loses by 37.8%
Gaborone Central, North	Gaborone	43.2	58.1	+14.9	Incumbents lose by 17.6, 28.4%
Gaborone Bonnington N, S	Gaborone	43.2	58.1	+14.9	Incumbents lose by 17.4, 10.9%
Goodhope-Mabule	Southern	73.1	65.7	-7.4	Non-incumbent loses by 23.7%
Mochudi East, West	Kgatleng	43.2	64.3	+21.1	Non-incumbent loses by 26.7, Incumbent loses by 35.6%
Mogoditshane	Kweneng	43.2	56.3	+13.1	Incumbent loses by 29.3%
Molepolole North, South	Kweneng	43.2	58.1	+14.9	Incumbents lose by 41.6, 51.6%
Tlokweng	South-East	59.4	60.8	+1.4	Non-incumbent loses by 21.9%
Average		49.0	59.7	+10.7	

Third, the constituencies that flipped from the BDP to the BPF once again fit the pattern one would expect if Khama's popularity had shaped electoral outcomes. Given the location of these seats (Serowe, Khama's home area), the observed effect should be even stronger. Again, the difference in Khama's and Masisi's popularity is vast—40.3 percent—and this lends support to the argument that voters in these regions were cognizant of the political animosity between the two antagonists and decided to support the BPF out of their loyalty to the former president. The Khama effect seems to be even more convincing when we consider that these three Serowe constituencies were won by BDP candidates by an average of 65 percent in the 2014 contests. The most direct impact Ian Khama had in these contests was to recruit his brother, Tshekedi, to desert the BDP and join him in the BPF. As a BPF candidate, Tshekedi Khama re-won the Serowe West constituency with 53.6 percent of the vote, almost double the votes of his nearest competitor.

In sum, the BDP picked up seats where Masisi was more popular than his predecessor, while the opposition UDC and BPF rode the wave of leftover Khama support to subnational electoral victory. Together with our above regression results, the collective evidence offers significant and robust support for our argument that the 2019 election actually served as a referendum on Khama, and, by extension, on his successor Masisi. In essence, voters made their electoral decisions pitting the long-serving icon versus his political and very personal rival.

One last remaining piece of our empirical puzzle is to consider which factors largely influenced the independents' evaluations of Masisi. Above, we outlined the criticism lodged against Khama during his time in office—specifically, his autocratic tendencies and the perception that his administration was permeated by corruption. Considering these two factors, we ran linear regressions to model the independents' evaluations of Masisi. [Table 8](#) below illustrates that middle-aged independents who self-identified as either Mongwato or Mokgatla were much more positive in their assessments of Masisi. This again refutes the impression that ethnicity was a major factor in Botswana's political system. Furthermore, independents who were more satisfied with the way democracy functioned in Botswana and less likely to perceive the president's office to be corrupt were much more positive in their evaluations of Masisi. This offers support for the premise that voters cognizant of the worst abuses of the Khama years and convinced that Masisi offered a renewal for the BDP and the country in general gravitated toward the BDP at the ballot box. The interactions with both the Central and Southeast parts of the country yielded some conflicting results, likely due to the small sample sizes. However, they do seem to suggest that independents in the Central region were more concerned with the functioning of democracy, while those in the southeastern part of the country considered government performance in line with the president. None of the interactions achieved statistical significance, though.

Table 8. Model of Political Independents' Evaluations of Masisi (linear regression)

Variable		
Age (36-65)	0.18*	0.18*
Age (66+)	0.37*	0.33
Male	0.02	0.02
Education	0.04	0.05
Material well-being	0.02	0.01
Semi-urban	0.12	0.07
Urban	0.16	0.14
Ethnicity (Mokgatla)	0.27*	0.27*
Ethnicity (Mongwato)	0.47**	0.54***
Ethnicity (Motswana only)	0.01	0.02
Ethnic discrimination	0.04	0.05
Ethnic ID > National ID	0.03	0.03
Government evaluation	0.09***	0.07*
Satisfaction w/ democracy	0.11 ⁺	0.18**
Corruption in the president's office	-0.20**	-0.22***
Central Region	-0.48	
Central Region x Government evaluation	-0.01	
Central Region x Democratic satisfaction	0.05	
Central Region x Presidential corruption	0.08	
Southeastern Botswana		0.20
Southeastern Botswana x Government evaluation		0.04
Southeastern Botswana x Democratic satisfaction		-0.12
Southeastern Botswana x Presidential corruption		0.12
N = 520	520	
R ²	0.156	0.157

Note: ⁺ p < 0.1; * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001.

Source: Afrobarometer Round 8 (2019) Botswana data.

Conclusion

As a model of democracy for the continent, Botswana has held twelve uninterrupted elections in its more than five decades of independence. As such, it is Africa's oldest democracy. This level of consistent democratic political competition may have allowed voters to develop attitudes and behaviors resembling those of more economically advanced countries. Our findings allow for reflection on the broader African voting literature, as well as on the 2019 election's consequences for the country's democratic consolidation.

The defection of Khama from the BDP and his subsequent campaigning in his home region opened the possibility that ethnic appeals and mobilization could be interjected into Botswana's political system. However, in this article we demonstrate that ethnicity does not seem to have played a major role in helping Botswana make their electoral decisions. Even where Khama played the ethnic card (the Central region), his co-ethnics, the Bangwato, were not less likely to express support for the BDP in any statistically significant fashion. In fact, consistent with our argument that the election was a referendum on Khama, and, consequently also on his successor, the Bangwato still largely identified with and supported the BDP at the ballot box. Furthermore, Botswana voters displayed rational behavior in assessing leader performance as well as the performance of the national government, corroborating earlier studies (Seabo & Molebatsi 2017) focused on the country, and on the voting behavior of Africans in general (Bratton & Kimenyi 2008; Bratton et al. 2012; Mattes 2015). As voters continue to base their electoral choices on leadership and performance issues, political parties are likely to become aware that they increasingly have to respond to governing shortcomings, thereby enriching the quality of representation. As others (Posner & Simon 2002) have argued, voting behavior patterns more closely resemble those in institutionalized democracies after continued, uninterrupted democratic contests.

In much of the quality of democracy literature, Botswana is usually heralded as a success case and, relative to other African countries, rightfully so. However, some scholars (Good 2017; Makgala & Bothomilwe 2017; Mogalakwe & Nyamnjoh 2017) have recently questioned the country's democratic health. Criticisms of the more than five decades of electoral dominance by the BDP usually center around the consequences of a perpetually weak and fragmented opposition competing in an unequal electoral playing field, non-competitive districts, and the creeping elements of authoritarianism in the country's executive branch. The 2019 election, and the broader political conditions emanating from the outcome, offer a mostly but not entirely positive reflection. The country's opposition parties launched well-funded and well-organized campaigns and defeated the BDP in over a dozen constituencies. However, the general lack of competitive districts, as demonstrated in Table 1, illustrates a reversal of the trend of increasingly close contests for most of the early twenty-first century (Poteete 2012); this represents a potentially worrisome symptom for the country's democratic well-being.

More broadly, the 2019 election largely served as a fundamental rejection of Khama, his political allies, and his desire to continue wielding significant political influence. His tenure in office was plagued by an increase in governmental corruption, the persecution of political opponents, and malfeasance by close allies (Makgala & Bothomilwe 2017; Mogalakwe & Nyamnjoh 2017), leading some scholars to label Botswana a "highly elitist and authoritarian democracy" (Good 2017:114). In the last few years, Masisi has moved decisively to strengthen his own political legacy and to undo many

of his predecessor's policies and achievements. This has led him to, at times, directly challenge eminent political figures and Khama loyalists.

The political fallout of these decisions resulted in increased divisions within the BDP, which eventually culminated in Khama's departure. The party's internal turmoil spilled out into the public political arena, setting the electoral stage. In what seems to be a win for the country's democracy, citizens adjudicated among the competing factions in the electoral marketplace. With nearly six out of seven eligible Batswana voters having their voices heard, they sent a strong signal to the troubled, former ruling guard. These outcomes seem to be positive for the internal party democracy of the BDP, as it has reformed itself after years of decline. The actions undertaken by Masisi to root out corruption and to ameliorate authoritarian tendencies in the executive branch largely resonated with Batswana, allowing for a more optimistic assessment of the country's democratic trajectory and their emboldened leader. The removal and rejection of Khama from the political center stage offers hope for institutional renewal; however, it remains to be seen whether more widespread democratic improvements will be forthcoming.

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Notes

1. These ethnic groups include the Bangwato, Bakwena, Bakgatla, Balete, Batawana, Barolong, Bangwaketsi and Batlokwa. These tribes are recognized in the constitution of Botswana as the major tribes.
2. We use the survey question, "Regardless of whether you voted or not, who would you vote for?" We code BDP likely voters as 1, and all other valid voting options as 0. We exclude respondents who are uncertain and those who believe they would not vote in the election.
3. Unlike other empirical studies on voting behavior, we do not include controls for race or linguistic differences, as these questions yielded little variation. Nearly all respondents self-identified as Black (99.6 percent), with 83.2 percent self-reporting to be native speakers of Setswana. Besides Ikalanga/Sekalaka, no other linguistic category registered more than thirty-three responses.
4. We calculated variance inflation factors (VIF) for all explanatory variables in our models. Following others (Ishiyama & Fox 2006; Ferree & Horowitz 2010) we

consider a score greater than 4 to be indicative of multicollinearity. None of the variables registered a score greater than 1.4. For additional robustness checks, we ran the models separating all variables with a correlation greater than 0.2 (Age and education, education and material well-being, and Masisi and government evaluations). The results did not change.

5. The Afrobarometer survey asked respondents to which ethnic group they belong. For descriptive statistical purposes (Basedau et al. 2011), we included only the ten most frequently chosen responses.
6. Across our two Afrobarometer surveys, Botswana reported unemployment (67.3 percent), poverty/destitution (23.4 percent), health (20.4 percent), crime and security (12.2 percent), and corruption (10.6 percent) to be most pressing. To maximize our N and choose the best fitting model, we include only job creation, fighting crime, and combatting corruption. Including all variables does not alter the statistical significance or direction of the index variable.
7. We exercise caution in reading too much into these results, as the sample of UDC partisans is only 50.
8. We show only the three major parties that are central to our study's interest and ethnic self-identification categories in which we observed noticeable shifts along ethnic lines. All other partisan choices are left as "others" or "nones" (political independents).
9. The Afrobarometer regions do not map exactly onto the electoral constituencies. We used the coded regions, which closely align with the geographical units. We list the electoral constituencies and the relevant Afrobarometer regions in the appendix.
10. Although the Afrobarometer data do not allow us to examine the MP approval ratings for all incumbent candidates, in the ones that we can, we do not find any evidence that these specific constituencies' MPs were distinctly unpopular.
11. To increase the confidence in our findings, we exclude constituencies that have fewer than thirty respondents in the Afrobarometer survey. These include Ghanzi South and North, Jwaneng-Mabutsane, Kanye South, and Selebi Phikwe East. Including these districts did not change our results.
12. Authors' calculations using data available from the Botswana Independent Electoral Commission, available here: <https://www.eisa.org.za/pdf/bot2014results.pdf> [accessed July 24, 2020].

Appendix

Constituency	Afrobarometer Region Used	R7 Sample (N)	R8 Sample (N)
Bobonong	Central Bobonong	39	40
Ghanzi South, North	Ghanzi	27	24
Mahalapye East, West	Central Mahalapye	61	64
Maun East	Ngamiland East	55	56
Ngami	Ngamiland East and West	45	44
Nkange	Central Tutume	86	80
Palapye	Central Serowe/Palapye	101	104
Sefhare-Ramokgonami	Central Mahalapye	61	64
Selebi Phikwe East	Selebi Phikwe	25	24
Shoshong	Central Mahalapye	61	64
Tonota	Francistown	56	56
Gabane-Mmakgodi	Gaborone/Kweneng-East	137	160
Gaborone Central, North	Gaborone	137	142
Gaborone Bonnington North South	Gaborone	137	142
Goodhope-Mabule	Barolong	32	32
Jwaneng-Mabutsane	Jwaneng	11	8
Kanye South	Ngwaketse West	8	8
Mochudi East, West	Gaborone/Kgatleng	137	56
Mogoditshane	Gaborone/Kweneng-East	137	160
Molepolole North, South	Gaborone	137	142
Tlokweng	Southeast	50	56
Serowe East, South, West	Central Serowe	101	104
Boteti East, Nata Gweta	Central Boteti	37	40