
To What Extent Was The British Colonial Rule Responsible For Botswana's Success Today

It is important to understand the situation of the Botswana before and after independence to fully understand how far they came, where their accomplishments lay and how the various successful factors came to be. Once this has been achieved it is then safe to look at the contributions that the British made to the country through the foundations they lay and all other factors, as well as the role The BDP (Botswana Democratic Party) played in the transformation of the country.

Conditions during colonial times in Botswana

Botswana was colonized by the British in the 1880's and officially declared a British Protectorate on March 31, 1885. A British Protectorate is a dependent territory that has been granted local autonomy and some independence while still retaining the suzerainty of a greater sovereign state. This was a key point in the success of Botswana as they were not considered a colony and didn't have to endure the ruthless rule which ended up destroying most other African Colonies. The local people were given rule and control over the land and were protected by Britain at the same time; however they had to follow British rules and law. The British had neither mineral nor physical value for Botswana it was only named a protectorate due to the competition between the Germans and the British in Southern Africa, this led to preservation of land and resources which would later come to use after independence. Since it became a British Protectorate and local rule was allowed, the Botswana's developed a good sense of democracy and managed to achieve local peace and political stability quicker. This was because the country had time to prepare and get used to power and the democratic system whilst also still receiving British aid and protection. This created a safe environment to develop and thrive. Local leaders who knew the needs and wants of the various tribes and would communicate with the British who would give these tribes roles, creating a system of class and developing leadership roles as well as securing stability. The British implemented a tax system which would come to shape society and help educate and develop the society economically.

Of all the changes that Britain's colonial administration made after the Bechuanaland Protectorate was established, the introduction of taxation had the strongest impact on Tswana institutions. The protectorate was created as a geopolitical buffer zone, and the British were not interested in the exploitation of its economic or natural resources. To make Bechuanaland colonization self-financing in the absence of exploitable resources, the British administration levied the Hut Tax in 1899, and complemented it with the Native Tax in 1919. They required payment from all Botswanan families that owned a hut, and as such were essentially imposed on persons simply because they are in the society, and not because of any income or ability to pay. In addition to strengthening the political and economic power of tribal chiefs, who could now earn commissions of about ten percent on what they collected, taxation gradually introduced a cash-based economy into Botswana. There were, however, additional important effects of the newly introduced taxes: increased labor migration, and an exacerbation of economic inequality.

Botswana today

Though Botswana had been a British protectorate and survived relatively easily through the colonial period in comparison to other African colonies, when they gained independence in 1966 the country was not in a good state. It was listed by the international monetary fund as one of the poorest countries in the world³. Their infrastructure was extremely bad, with only 12 kilometers of paved roads and with only 1 doctor per 36000 people⁴ in comparison to the world average of 1 per every 657 patients, this and the fact that they seriously lacked medical supplies and facilities contributed to their very low life expectancy of only 34 years of age. The main source of income at the time was agriculture and farming which was to be changed soon after independence. Though the British did help build a semi stable education system and at independence. Botswana had an above average primary school education enrolment percentage. Though the level of education received was nothing special, in fact it was considered by (Harvey and Lewis)⁵ two historians who specialize in African history, to be very low. Class sizes were huge, the full seven-year education course was usually not offered and students were often taught by untrained teachers. "Every fifth pupil was repeating a grade, and very few opportunities existed at the secondary and tertiary levels: Secondary schooling was not available in the country until twenty years before independence, and a full five-year secondary course was not offered until 1954.

At independence, Botswana was estimated to have only at most a few dozen university graduates, and only about a hundred people with a secondary school leaving certificate.⁶ In 1965, according to Barro and Lee's (2010) data on educational attainment, 72.7 percent of Botswana's inhabitants above the age of 25 had no schooling. 24.6 percent had received some primary schooling, but only 1.4 percent completed the full primary course. Completion rates for tertiary education were extremely low, at about 0.1 percent of the above-25 population. The average Botswanan completed only 1.2 years of schooling. By contrast, the average German above 25 years of age completed more than 5.2 years of schooling. Less than one percent of Germans had no schooling, and more than 23 percent had at least some secondary education.

Botswana Proceeded to shock the world with a massive turnaround considered to be near impossible and obtained the title, Africa's success story. Over the years to come the newly independent country managed to build their economy to the point where they are today considered to be one of the fastest growing economies in the world, they went from a per capita income of just 70\$ (each person earns on average 70 dollars a year) to about 6100\$ in just over 20 years.

Keeping in mind that the average economic growth rate in the world is between 2-3 percent it was an absolute miracle that Botswana managed to achieve what they did. The country is now considered to be upper-middle-income country and has exceeded the vast majority of other African economies, but how did they come across such economic success, and who was responsible? In the early 1970's the BDP made the pivotal decision to switch economic focus from farming and agriculture to the mining industry, which now contributes to 40% of their annual revenue. This decision made by the BDP resulted in their entire economy changing and the start of their economic dominance. As mentioned above the British had no interest in exploiting Botswana's economy or natural resources. In fact, they were driving and promoting agriculture as Botswana's main source of income and thus did not prepare Botswana for mining and international trade whatsoever. The foundations on which the industrial boom of the mining

industry were solely built and set in motion by the Botswanan government. There was no foreign aid involved in the movement and vital economic policies set in place are all a result of excellent decisions made on the Botswanan Government's behalf. Some credit has to be given to the British due to the tax systems that they set in place and how they told or allowed Botswana to handle the money and responsibilities for the taxing. It can be argued that the British set an economical drive in motion and educated the people on how to handle and successfully use and operate income. With the implications of the hut tax system all residents of properties or owners of land had to pay a tax on their property, at the time Botswana was a country mainly driven by subsidy and so land was of vital importance, but because the country still had a very strong tribal hierarchy and social stability very difficult to maintain, the British assisted the local administration on how to handle it. They implemented a system where the local tribe leaders would be the ones to collect and control the taxation system, they would keep 10% of what was collected which would help them remain powerful figures in the community.

The Chiefs who lived in various areas ended up becoming wealthier than the rest and as a result towns and areas developed economic and political hubs, this created institutional development which would prepare them for independence and benefit them in the march to success. This also drove the country away from subsidy and towards currency and income, suddenly money became important and this drove the people to develop their economic skills in order to obtain or retain power. In light of this it can be said that the British to a small extent played a role in the economic success of the country by creating and developing economic skills but the BDP and their policies are largely responsible and played a much larger role in the economic growth and success of Botswana.

The Economic success of Botswana is the main reason the country is considered to be such a success but factors which lead to this economic boom lie Botswana's great policies and excellent political stability. Compared to the large majority of the African countries which were colonized Botswana's political stability and compatibility with the democratic system is second to none. Pre-independence the various tribes of the land previously operated in a modern democratic way and were prepared to rule as a democracy. Local leadership created a large majority of peace among tribes and led to stable political control. When the British transformed Botswana into a protectorate the country was able to keep local political control, though they still operated under British law and rule the administration and governmental work was done by the locals and merely advised by the British. This played a key role in their political success as compared to the other African countries they were given adequate time and guidance in preparing to take control and run the country under a democratic rule. During the colonial period the political organizations and institutions were built on both British administrations and pre-colonial Tswana culture resulting in a smooth transition into Governmental roles and responsibilities.

Keeping the peace in your country and having stability are extremely important to a successful democracy. Since independence the country has had the same ruling party a result of a stable political and social system. According to the Mo Ibrahim Foundation which measures the overall score of a countries governance Botswana is still outperforming the very large majority of African countries. This is supported by an Afro barometer done by The African-Led Research Network from 1999 to 2014. Which measured how much of a democracy Botswana is i.e. full democracy, a democracy with little problems, a democracy major problem etc. and an overall satisfaction with the way democracy works in Botswana, it was concluded in the average over the years measured that 76 percent found the country to be a full democracy or democracy with

minor problems and that 69 percent were fairly/very satisfied with the democracy.

Conclusion

Based on the above it is more than fair to say that Botswana has succeeded in maintaining peace and political stability. What role did the British play in these achievements? The British are largely responsible for the political success of the country purely because they did not take complete control of Botswana and left the administrative functions and ruling of the locals to the locals. Though it was very ethically wrong and the British don't deserve praise for their contributions in Botswana because they had no right to colonize Botswana in the first place and to the very racially sensitive society that we live in today as a result of colonization it is important to note that we are not thanking the British for what they did but merely acknowledging that in that situation and the sad turn of events that were experienced all over Africa that the British rule was lighter and did for the purposes of this research have some positive contributions to Botswana that played a role in their success today. In that the British policies of tax and tribal hierarchy lead to social stability and trust/support of the government, they also aided the government by developing their leadership skills and preparing for them for an independent democratic rule. Although the people of Botswana had previously operated in a similar fashion to democratic rule and were somewhat prepared for it, moderate success of modern day Botswana's political and social largely is due to British support and policies that aided the implementation of a centralized government that was able to hold the peace with its people and avoid corruption and transform into the success they are today. However, the economic strength of Botswana was the main factor that drove the country to be the success it is today. Though the political structure and stability was aided by the British most of the work was done by the Botswana's. Although the British did contribute a little towards the success factors of Botswana it is clear that the Botswanan local people and democratic government rulers contributed the most.

The aid of the British is still visible and deserves to be recognized when coming to the conclusion that British influence contribution to Botswana's success today was minor in comparison to the local Government level of success and brilliant economic decisions making which lead the country to its success today.