



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

**THE GEOPOLITICS OF LANDLOCKED COUNTRIES IN THE MARITIME  
DOMAIN: THE CASE OF BOTSWANA**

by

**Feliciana Isabel Kusavu Nezingu**

Student Number: 16051930

A mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES**

in the Department of Political Sciences, Faculty of Humanities

at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

Supervisor: Dr. Robin Blake

**2023**

## ABSTRACT

This study explores how 'landlockness' impacts the maritime domain concerns of Landlocked countries (LLCs). The ocean is home to an abundance of resources and endless opportunities that are key to the security and prosperity of the state. It is therefore a competitive arena in which states and non-state actors compete to control and promote their interests. Although LLCs in Africa already benefit from the maritime domain through activities such as commercial trade they are often passive participants and beneficiaries of the maritime domain. Increased awareness and deeper engagement with the maritime domain and littoral actors is important for enhancing their agency to promote development and prosperity. The geopolitical constraints and opportunities of LLCs are explored using the case of Botswana. Botswana is a landlocked country positioned at the centre of Southern Africa. LLCs are viewed as geographically disadvantaged due to their isolation from the ocean and reliance on transit states to gain access to the maritime domain. In addition, LLCs in Africa and around the world tend to lag behind their littoral counterparts in terms of development due to barriers to economic development linked to overseas markets. Botswana is unique because it is believed to have overcome its geographic disadvantage, with a reputation as an upper-middle-income country and one of the most developed on the continent. Surrounded by four countries, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia, access to the maritime domain for Botswana is only achieved through cooperation with transit states, making cordial political and transboundary relations a key priority of the country. The country has leveraged its position at the centre of the region to strengthen its bilateral ties with transit states and promote greater multilateralism through institutions such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) which are key to the achievement of growth and development aspirations of the region. These institutions, and regional agreements, are particularly important for Botswana as it cannot create conditions for greater economic integration and infrastructural cooperation needed to boost its economy and national security. The country also faces opportunities for greater bilateral and multilateral cooperation beyond Southern Africa. In the long term, Botswana can expand its trade beyond its immediate region, reducing reliance on its mineral commodities such as diamonds and promoting economic diversification which enhances national security.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my immense gratitude to my mother and father for their immeasurable support throughout my studies. Everything that I am and everything that I have achieved today is a result of your direct and indirect support. Thank you for instilling in me the belief that I have the ability and tenacity to pursue my dreams.

My sincerest and heartfelt gratitude also goes out to my supervisor, Dr Robin Blake, whose guidance, support and encouragement made the completion of this mini-dissertation possible. Thank you for your patience during chaotic times and the constant feedback and insights that moulded the final product. Words cannot sufficiently express my appreciation. Your warm encouragement and enthusiasm were quite refreshing and each meeting was invigorating, especially during the final months of writing.

I also express profound gratitude to my friends and colleagues for making this journey easier through constant encouragement, upliftment and inspiration. Your constant check-ins when I felt unmotivated and your listening ears when I needed advice were invaluable. You inspired confidence and persistence in me when I needed it. I am also overwhelmed with gratitude for the Mastercard Foundation which funded my final year of studies and the scholars and staff who made what would have been a difficult journey an extraordinary one. Your support and inspiration were invaluable, and I experienced immense personal and professional growth thanks to you.

## **DECLARATION**

I, Feliciana Isabel Kusavu Nezingu, declare that this mini-dissertation is my own original work and has not been submitted before to any institution for assessment purposes. Further, I have acknowledged all sources used and have cited these in the reference section in accordance with university requirements.

Pretoria

January 2023

## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AfCFTA</b>	African Continental Free Trade Area
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>BDF</b>	Botswana Defence Force
<b>BDP</b>	Botswana Democratic Party
<b>BNC</b>	Bi-National Commission
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>HDI</b>	Human Development Index
<b>ICC</b>	International Criminal Court
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>IMO</b>	International Maritime Organisation
<b>LLC</b>	Landlocked Countries
<b>MSC</b>	Maritime Standing Committee
<b>NEPAD</b>	New Partnership for Africa's Development
<b>RWP</b>	Regional Water Policy
<b>SACU</b>	Southern African Customs Union
<b>SADC</b>	Southern African Development Community
<b>SADCC</b>	Southern African Development Coordination Conference
<b>SANDF</b>	South African National Defence Force
<b>SIPRI</b>	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
<b>TCM</b>	Transport, Communications and Meteorology
<b>TKC</b>	Trans Kalahari Corridor
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNCLOS</b>	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
<b>UNECE</b>	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
<b>UNGA</b>	United Nations General Assembly

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1. Background to the study.....	1
1.2 Literature Overview .....	2
1.2.1. Geopolitics and landlocked countries.....	2
1.2.2. The Maritime Domain .....	5
1.2.3. National security .....	6
1.3. Research problem.....	7
1.4. Research Question, Sub-questions and Aim .....	8
1.5. Research Methodology .....	8
1.6. Limitations and delimitations .....	9
1.7. Ethical considerations .....	9
1.8. Research structure.....	9
1.9. Conclusion .....	10
<b>Chapter 2: Analytical and Conceptual Framework</b> .....	<b>11</b>
2.1. Introduction .....	11
2.2. Defining geopolitics as an analytical framework .....	11
2.2.1 The geographical component .....	13
2.2.1.1. Physical geography .....	13
2.2.1.2. Human geography.....	15
2.2.2. The political component.....	17
2.2.3. Geopolitics as an analytical framework.....	18
2.3. National Security .....	18
2.3.2. National Power .....	19
2.3.3. National security from a landlocked perspective .....	21
2.4. Defining the maritime domain.....	23
2.5. Challenges in the maritime domain for landlocked countries .....	26

2.6. Analytical and conceptual framework .....	27
2.7. Conclusion .....	28
<b>Chapter Three: Geopolitical Analysis of Botswana.....</b>	<b>30</b>
3.1. Introduction .....	30
3.2. Domestic geopolitical context of Botswana.....	30
3.2.1. Physical geography .....	30
3.2.2. Human Geography .....	32
3.2.2.1. Demography and population .....	32
3.2.2.2. Economic activity .....	32
3.2.2.3. Infrastructure and technology .....	34
3.2.3. The domestic political dimension .....	35
3.2.3.1. Domestic Politics.....	35
3.2.3.2. National Power and military strength .....	36
3.3. Regional and continental geopolitical context of Botswana .....	36
3.3.1. Foreign policy of Botswana.....	36
3.3.2. Bilateral and multilateral ties .....	39
3.3.3. Regional cooperation agreements .....	41
3.3.4. Transboundary cooperation for integration of infrastructure.....	41
3.3.5. Current and future integration efforts .....	44
3.4. Conclusion .....	47
<b>Chapter Four: Conclusions and Findings.....</b>	<b>49</b>
4.1. Introduction .....	49
4.2. Discussion and findings.....	50
4.2.1. Challenges of accessing the maritime domain .....	50
4.2.2. Overcoming landlockedness.....	51
4.2.3. Botswana beyond Southern Africa?.....	51
4.3. Conclusion .....	52
Bibliography.....	53

## LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1: Southern Africa New Map.....	1
Figure 2: Maritime security matrix.....	6
Figure 3: Geopolitics of Landlocked Countries.....	28
Figure 4: Map of Quadripoint in Southern Africa.....	30
Figure 5: Map of Quadripoint in Southern Africa at the Zambezi River junction of Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe & Botswana.....	31
Figure 6: Transport corridors in Southern Africa.....	43
Figure 7. Trans-Kalahari corridor.....	44
Figure 8: Coast-to-coast corridor that forms part of the TKC.....	45
Figure 9: North-South Corridor.....	46
Figure 10: Map design of Kazungula Bridge.....	47
Table 1: Geopolitics as an analytical framework.....	18



## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background to the study

Littoral states factor the maritime domain into their national security policies and strategies. What is not always recognised is that landlocked countries (LLCs) should also acknowledge the relevance and importance of the maritime domain in their national security calculus. This is crisply encapsulated by Lekunze (2022: 9) who asserts that, “even land-locked states’ national security strategies cannot afford to ignore events at sea”.

There are sixteen LLCs on the African continent, six of which are located in Southern Africa and are Lesotho, Eswatini, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and Botswana as illustrated in *Figure 1* (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute 2015). This study specifically focuses on the single case of Botswana, which is reliant on the neighbouring states of Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe for access to the sea. It explores how Botswana has navigated its geopolitical reality to overcome the limitations of its ‘landlockness’ and gain access to the maritime domain, thereby contributing to a positive condition of national security.



*Figure 1: Southern Africa Map*  
(Burmese days & Joelf 2010)

The study theme is set against a geopolitical conceptual framework with a specific focus on how ‘landlockedness’ impacts the maritime domain concerns of LLCs. Such a framework is essential for understanding how the physical geography of a state creates constraints and

opportunities that influence decision-making in international politics (Mackubin 2015, Scholvin 2010: 94).

The aim of this chapter is to provide the background to the study. It begins with an overview of literature regarding geopolitics and LLCs, the maritime domain, and national security. This is followed by the research problem, research question, the sub-questions and the research aim. The research methodology is thereupon stipulated together with the limitations and delimitations of the study as well as the ethical considerations. The chapter ends with the research structure that identifies the four chapters that the study comprises and a conclusion.

## **1.2 Literature Overview**

### **1.2.1. Geopolitics and landlocked countries**

Geopolitical literature is broadly divided into two groups: classical and critical geopolitics (Kelly 2006: 24; Wu 2018: 786). The former group, comprising earlier theories of geopolitics, originates from the discipline of political geography and was primarily concerned with how state survival is largely determined by its geographical position (Anderson 1999: 125, Kuus 2010: 2). The latter group emerged as a critique of classical geopolitics and challenged the state-centric notions of power and territoriality by positing that state power is not solely confined to territoriality and military capabilities. Power can also manifest in non-territorial forms (Kuus 2010: 5). States, for example, exercise power through hierarchies and networks comprising a variety of actors including interest groups and non-governmental organisations that also operate in non-territorial realms such as cyberspace (Agnew 1999: 502, Kuus & Agnew 2008: 101). Despite the contestation between the classical and critical geopolitical approaches, classical geopolitics – with its emphasis on the role of the state as the main actor – remains relevant in geopolitical studies and is used in this study as scaffolding for the conceptual framework.

Classical geopolitics is rooted in the works of Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904) and Johan Rudolf Kjellén (1864-1922) who sought to understand how space and geography influence the survival of the nation-state. Ratzel (1901: 60) viewed the state as a spatial organism which exists in a constant mode of expansion, integration or disintegration (Puntigliano 2016: 4). Influenced by the principles of social Darwinism, he perceived life as a constant struggle among living organisms. This struggle takes place in a vital living space, which he refers to as *lebensraum*. States continuously seek to expand their *lebensraum* because it is fundamental for influence, economic prosperity and cultural progress. As the more powerful states expand, smaller and weaker polities that fail to adapt are absorbed (Ratzel 1897: 298).

Johan Rudolf Kjellén, who was inspired by the writings of Ratzel, also viewed the state as an organism in a perpetual struggle for survival (Tunander 2001: 453). In 1899 he described the link between politics and geography as *Geopolitik*, coining the term geopolitics. Geographical space, according to Kjellén, is intrinsic to the existence of a state. He too was a proponent of expansionism, arguing that states should expand their horizons and occupy large territorial areas in order to become world powers. Classical geopolitics is also associated with Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914), an American naval strategist who extended geopolitical analysis from land to the maritime domain. He recognised the sea as a key determinant of a state's power and wealth as it allowed states to develop naval power and maritime trade (Mahan 1890: 1).

Geopolitical discourse in the Post–Cold War era departed from the narrow focus on great power politics and ushered in what is now broadly referred to as new geopolitics. The collapse of the Soviet Bloc, the advent of technology and globalisation significantly changed the world order and geopolitical conceptions of power. In new geopolitics, territories remain important, but scholars now argue that state boundaries are economically and culturally permeable due to technologies that allow states to exercise power in various spaces such as the cyber realm (Agnew 1994: 72). Scholars such as Dalby & ÓTuathail (1998) have argued that geopolitics is not bound to statecraft. Power and influence transcend state boundaries across state and non-state actors, paving the way for the inclusion of non-geographical factors such as culture and economics. The international system has indeed evolved, yet global politics still remains tied to the geographical distribution of power in a finite space. The international system remains a competitive arena in the struggle for influence (Díaz 2016: 10). As geographical position and material capabilities continue to set constraints and provide opportunities for states and foreign policy decision-makers, geopolitics remains an important guide to practice and tool of analysis in international politics (Dueck 2013, Sloan 2017: 7).

A landlocked country (LLC) is a country which possesses no coast (Menefee 1992: 6). This means that it relies on passage through a neighbouring country, known as a transit state, to gain access to the sea (Bayeh 2015: 29). While LLCs are physically distant from the maritime domain in reality, they are also theoretically isolated from maritime discourse as most maritime literature is concerned solely with littoral states. The literature on the maritime interests of landlocked countries is meagre and is often oriented towards the development challenges experienced due to coastal inaccessibility. Separation from the sea or the state of landlockedness is typically viewed as disadvantageous and undesirable. LLCs, for example, are often described as “victims of geography” and “handicapped” (Mirvahabi 1979: 130). Glassner (1970: 15) describes LLCs as small and weak because their boundaries and existence were historically determined by more powerful neighbours.

Without access to the sea, LLCs experience two vulnerabilities. The first vulnerability refers to the inability to develop effective sea power or lines of communication to strengthen national defence and the second refers to their reliance on other states for access to the sea (Mishra & Singh 2008: 55). LLCs, according to Mishra & Singh (2008: 58), gain access to the ocean in three ways: navigating rivers which connect LLCs to the coast and the sea, accessing a corridor or strip of land and using guaranteed routes such as roads, railways or internal waterways. LLCs consequently face poorer development prospects compared to their coastal counterparts due to the high transport costs and dependence on passage through transit countries to access the maritime environment for trade (Faye *et al* 2004: 32).

Faye *et al.* (2004: 43), identifies four aspects regarding LLC dependence on transit states: (1) dependence on transit states' infrastructure; (2) dependence on neighbours' peace and stability; (3) dependence on cooperative cross-border political relations; and (4) dependence on neighbours' administrative practices. Firstly, landlocked countries depend on their transit neighbours' infrastructure to gain access to the sea. This can be negatively affected by conflict, natural disasters, and a lack of resources in the transit country (Faye *et al.* 2004: 43). Secondly, a landlocked state is vulnerable to civil conflict within transit countries and relies on peace and stability as conflict and instability may lead to damaged or closed transit routes. Thirdly, landlocked countries depend on strong relationships with adjacent transit states. All political decisions are influenced to avoid military or diplomatic conflict that may jeopardise the relationship (Faye *et al.* 2004: 45). The fourth aspect involves the high administrative burden due to transit. International transit can be costly due to burdensome paperwork and bureaucratic procedures (Faye *et al.* 2004: 47). Faye *et al.* (2004: 47) add that the viable policy options for landlocked countries to gain effective access to the sea are developing their local transportation infrastructure, developing regional infrastructure integration strategies, and coordinating administrative practices in the regional integration strategies (Faye *et al.* 2004: 31). These constraints severely restrict the state's geostrategic orientations and foreign policy choices, possibly leading to feelings of national claustrophobia in LLCs which Glassner (1970: 14) called "geographical strangulation".

As the foundational concept in the framework, classical geopolitics emphasises the importance and relevance of geography for state survival through the projection of power. While classical geopolitics was originally preoccupied with territorial expansionism it can be argued that states are even today seeking to expand their power beyond their territorial borders in a quest for survival. From the literature surveyed, it is clear that LLCs face serious geopolitical implications in the maritime realm. Landlockedness is akin to a geopolitical straitjacket, severely restraining state decision-making. To survive and develop within their finite boundaries, LLCs are compelled to rely on transit states to gain access to the sea.

Permeable borders proliferated by globalisation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century mean that LLCs also face opportunities and threats from the ocean. Weak security, illicit trade of goods, illegal fishing and smuggling operations, for example, at key ports or along coastlines can negatively affect several economies including those of LLCs linked to littoral states (Africa Defense Forum 2021). The maritime domain is therefore clearly not solely the preserve of littoral states. LLCs also have a direct interest in the maritime domain as a national security imperative. In the next section the concept of the maritime domain, as an integral part of national security, is discussed.

### **1.2.2. The Maritime Domain**

The ocean is home to an abundance of natural resources including fish, minerals, gas and oil and an arena for vital activities such as fishing, aquaculture, tourism, trade, transportation and military defence (Holmes 2011: 423). Such significance renders the maritime domain a crucial geopolitical interest for many states. The contestation of maritime resources and maritime boundary disputes are perpetual features of the international system. The Ghana-Côte d'Ivoire dispute over maritime borders in the oil and gas-rich Gulf of Guinea in 2017 as well as the Kenya-Somalia border dispute in the Indian Ocean in 2021, demonstrate the vitality of the ocean as a frontier for the pursuit of state interests and power (International Tribunal For the Law of the Sea 2017, Walker & Gaas 2021).

Maritime security is an important area within the maritime domain that involves governing and regulating the high seas and all related activities. According to Germond (2015: 135), maritime security is the “security of the maritime domain or “a set of policies, regulations, measures and operations to secure the maritime domain”. Bueger (2015b: 160) clarifies the concept through a maritime security matrix (*Figure 2*), which divides maritime security into four domains: national security, the marine environment, economic development and human security. The national security domain stems from the state traditions of sea power and naval strategy. This involves the activities such as the development and application of naval power, defence at sea and the protection of important maritime trade routes. The marine environment domain involves environmental concerns at sea and in coastal areas such as vessel safety and pollution. The economic development domain is linked to trade and activities such as fishing. The final dimension of human security is centred on the vulnerabilities and insecurities experienced by individuals and local communities as a result of maritime activities (Bueger & Edmunds 2017: 1300). Maritime security is intrinsically linked to geopolitics as the sea is another geographical space which provides opportunities and constraints for the projection of power (Germond 2015: 140). LLCs have unique challenges in exerting power and influence

with limited material capabilities in the maritime domain. Many LLCs, for example, cannot develop or project sea power or enhance economic power through maritime activities.

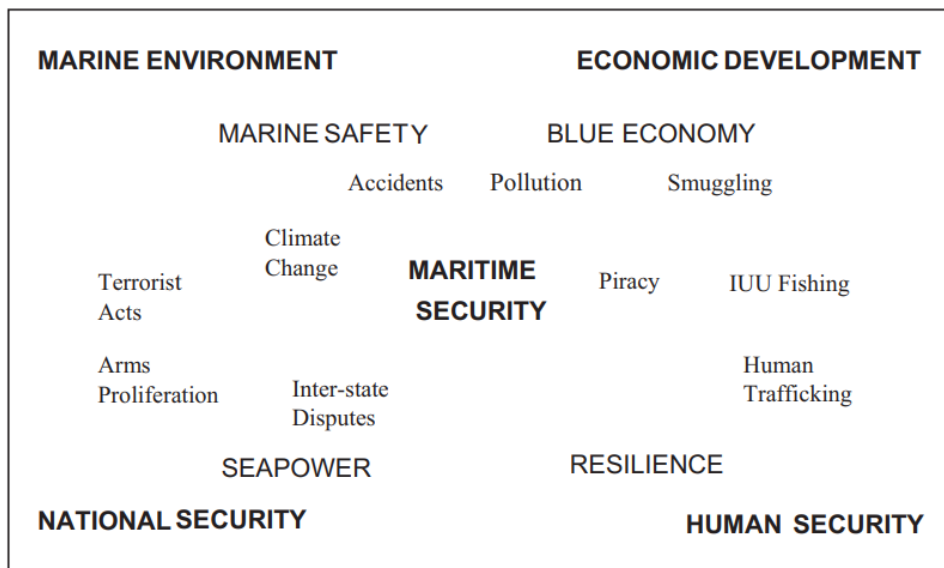


Figure 2: Maritime security matrix (Bueger 2015b)

As the second concept in the framework, the maritime domain, as a geographical space within geopolitics, is implicitly and explicitly relevant to the security of LLCs and will be more closely examined in Chapter 2. Consisting of the four domains identified by Bueger (2015b) are national security, the marine environment, economic development, and human security but it is emphasised that he adopts a littoral state perspective. While the marine environment, economic development and human security are directly associated with littoral states, national security is implicitly and explicitly applicable to LLCs and will be an area of inquiry in this study. In the next section, national security is briefly assessed within the realms of geopolitics, LLCs and the maritime domain.

### 1.2.3. National security

National security is an ambiguous concept which lacks a universal definition (Wolfers 1952: 481). However, it is concerned with the preservation of the nation-state and survival of its constituents, making landlockedness and the maritime domain key elements of national security. National security is determined by the unique characteristics of the state such as its geopolitical position, making it difficult to attach a single definition to national security (Leffler 1990: 144). Traditional conceptions of national security stem from Thomas Hobbes and Max Weber who described security as the *raison d'etre* and responsibility of the state (Fjäder 2014: 116). The state should have a monopoly over physical force to counter physical threats. In this

sense, national security equates to the state's ability to deter or defeat attack (Wolfers 1952: 484, Zelikow 2003: 23). This conception of national security emphasises the use of military power in maintaining state sovereignty, territorial integrity and key geopolitical interests (Baldwin 1997: 13).

The contemporary concept of national security has expanded beyond national survival (Leffer 1990: 143). It entails the use of power to control foreign and domestic conditions to protect national self-determination, autonomy and prosperity. This definition expands the role of the state to protecting citizens, creating conditions for economic and social prosperity as well as preserving state values and identity (Fjäder 2013: 117). National security is now linked to a variety of dimensions such as the economy, energy, the environment, health and the maritime domain (Zelikow 2003: 19). In the geopolitical context, LLCs have national security interests in the maritime domain as they benefit from access to the high seas via transit states.

Because national security exists as a result of both foreign and domestic conditions, Botswana's national security challenges are not solely limited to areas within its borders. As a LLC, it is also dependent on the state of security within the region (Fjäder 2013: 117). Since Botswana does not exist in a vacuum and is positioned within the centre of Southern Africa, its national security is affected by the stability of the broader region, particularly in its transit states. Insecurity within transit states, for example, may impede access to the maritime domain and external markets that are critical to the Botswana economy. The protection of national security is therefore an internal exercise and an external exercise for the state. In addition to ensuring the survival of the state by protecting territorial integrity and state sovereignty, the wellbeing of the populace is an important goal.

### **1.3. Research problem**

This study problematises the prevailing assumption that LLCs have very little interest in the maritime domain by exploring the geopolitical implications of landlockedness, specifically within the maritime domain. Exclusion from the maritime domain reduces the agency of landlocked states in international maritime relations and has a negative impact on national development. Without access to the ocean, LLCs become marginalised from the global economy and lag behind in growth and development compared to their littoral counterparts.

The nexus between geopolitics, the maritime domain and national security in the African context is understudied by scholars and practitioners. Although there has been growing interest in the field, it is often studied in relation to littoral states while LLCs are neglected. This is compounded by the lack of maritime policies and strategies in the national policies of LLCs. A review of the literature by authors such as Franck et al (1974: 38) and (Alexander & Hodgson

1976: 560) shows LLCs described as “geographically disadvantaged” and associated with terms such as “plight” and “predicament”. Hausmann (2001: 45), for example, refers to LLCs as “prisoners of geography”. As a LLC, Botswana is explicitly and implicitly distanced from the maritime domain. Despite its ‘landlockedness’, it is a stable and economically prosperous country compared to its Southern African counterparts. By exploring the nature of Botswana’s maritime domain, the study seeks to analyse how the country has overcome its ‘geopolitical straitjacket’ in the maritime domain as a necessary but insufficient condition for ensuring its national security.

#### **1.4. Research Question, Sub-questions and Aim**

How has Botswana, as a LLC, navigated its geopolitical condition to enhance its national security through the maritime domain?

##### **Sub-questions**

- How can geopolitics be applied as an analytical framework to the case of Botswana as a LLC?
- What is the conceptual framework that can be applied to study the case of Botswana as a LLC?
- How has Botswana navigated its national and regional fostered sound cross-border political, economic and military relations and administrative cooperation to protect and secure its maritime interests in the region?
- How can Botswana, as a LLC, overcome its geopolitical straitjacket in the maritime domain to enhance its national security?

**Research aim:** Using Botswana as a single case, this study aims to show that the geopolitical context of the maritime domain is not the sole preserve of littoral states but is also relevant to the national security of LLCs.

#### **1.5. Research Methodology**

This study employs a conceptual framework that is founded on classical geopolitics – the politics of geographical location – to explore how landlocked countries frame the perceive the maritime domain. The framework integrates the central concepts of geopolitics and the maritime domain with the aim of highlighting these concepts as a national security imperative in the context of LLCs. The key concepts of this study are unquantifiable, hence the suitability



of a qualitative approach. This allows for an in-depth examination of the research, expounding on the "hows" and "whys" of the maritime interests from the position of a LLC (Cleland 2017, Tenny 2021).

The research design involves an analysis of the case of Botswana which is contemplated as a unique case (Bryman 2016: 57) in that it will be argued that, unlike the five other LLCS in Southern Africa, Botswana has managed to overcome its 'geopolitical straitjacket' and is touted as a model of stability and prosperity in the region. The analysis of the geopolitical and landlocked factors will centre on Botswana's maritime domain.

The research method is a literature-based study that will analyse data drawn from primary sources (government documents, policy documents, official statements, conference papers and international agreements) and secondary sources (academic journals, opinion pieces, digital newspapers and media reports) available.

#### **1.6. Limitations and delimitations**

This is a desktop study reliant on published research subject to the researchers' interpretation of data. To overcome this limitation, the study mainly uses peer-reviewed literature and official publications from the Government of Botswana and relevant parties.

#### **1.7. Ethical considerations**

This is a literature-based study with no human participants. It is based on primary and secondary sources in the public domain that will be carefully referenced in line with the regulations and standards of the University of Pretoria.

#### **1.8. Research structure**

The mini dissertation will comprise five chapters divided in the following manner:

- Chapter 1: Introduction: This chapter outlines the problem statement, research questions, sub-questions and aim of the study. It also provides a background of geopolitics as an analytical framework.
- Chapter 2: Conceptual framework: This chapter outlines a conceptual framework of the key elements for geopolitical analysis.
- Chapter 3: A Geopolitical Analysis of Botswana: This chapter applies the geopolitical framework to the case of Botswana.

- Chapter 5: Conclusion and findings: This chapter summarises the main findings of the paper.

## **1.9. Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a background overview of geopolitics and its links to national security and the maritime domain. It has identified that there is a prevailing assumption that LLCs have little interest in the maritime domain as they are isolated from the sea. LLCs are typically described as geopolitically disadvantaged as they cannot directly benefit from maritime benefits such as economic growth. The chapter provided a brief literature overview of the unique challenges faced by LLCs due to a lack of access to the ocean. LLCs cannot develop effective sea power or lines of communication to strengthen national defence and they are reliant on other states' infrastructure and political goodwill for access to the sea. They also rely on peace and stability within the region to ensure safe passage through transit states. The chapter also outlined the research questions, sub-questions, research aim and methodology that have been developed to guide the study. The study aims to show that the geopolitical context of the maritime domain is not the sole preserve of littoral states but is also relevant to the national security of LLCs by using Botswana as a single case.

## CHAPTER 2: ANALYTICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter delineates the analytical and conceptual framework. The analytical framework will be used to separate or deconstruct a particular concept, in this case, geopolitics, into its constituent elements and then to explain the interaction and relationship of those elements. A conceptual framework, according to Pacheco-Vega (2018), identifies “the different concepts one would need to know to understand a particular phenomenon, without pretending to create causal links”. Conceptual frameworks are important as they map out different concepts and systematically organise them into a coherent explanation of their connection to the phenomenon being studied (McGregor 2018: 4).

In order to address the research question echoed in Chapter 1 — to understand how Botswana has navigated the geopolitical implications of “landlockedness” in the maritime domain with the higher aim of ensuring its national security — it is crucial to expound on the key concepts as well as outline the assumptions and theories that will inform and guide the study (Maxwell 2009: 3, McGregor 2018: 15). The conceptual framework will integrate the various currents of thoughts linked to these concepts, interpret bodies of knowledge and generate new insights (McGregor 2018: 15). It will provide a focus and a rationale for the area of study and explain why geopolitics is a practical and applicable analytical framework for studying the maritime domain of Botswana as a landlocked country.

The aim of this chapter is to provide the analytical and conceptual scope of the research problem, research question and sub-questions provided in Chapter 1. It will provide clarity on the key concepts studied in this paper — geopolitics, the maritime domain and national security. The chapter begins by conceptualising geopolitics as a framework of analysis and its relevance in this study. It will explore geopolitics and the different components of geopolitical analysis from a landlocked perspective. The subsequent sections will add the concepts of the maritime domain and national security before reaching a conclusion.

### 2.2. Defining geopolitics as an analytical framework

It is important to clarify the concept of geopolitics as it is a fluid and ambiguous concept lacking a clear definition. The term is broadly used to describe various phenomena associated with power politics, foreign relations and geographic determinism (Kelly 2016: 1, Mackubin 2015). In addition to its conceptual vagueness, the term has also fallen out of favour in contemporary International Relations literature, particularly due to its historical links to Nazi *Geopolitik* and traditional power politics as outlined in Chapter 1 (Sloan 2017: 1). A fundamental step towards

explication of the concept of “geopolitics” lies in understanding its etymological foundations. The concept stems from the composition of two Greek words — “*geos*” and “*polis*” (Leszek 2013: 24). The former refers to geographical space and the latter refers to the city-state and the politics within the city-state. Scholarly descriptions of geopolitics are often derived from these two components.

According to Cohen (2014: 25), geopolitics is an integration of the two disciplines of politics and geography. It is not a school of thought but rather a mode or frame of analysis which studies the spatial frameworks through which power flows at both domestic and international levels (Cohen 2014: 24). Leszek (2013: 27), provides a similar definition, describing geopolitics as an interdisciplinary area combining geography and politics by analysing the influence of geographical space on political processes. The interrelation of geography and political processes is also highlighted by Kelly (2016: 23) who intricately defines geopolitics as the study of the “impact or influence of certain geographic features, positions and locations of regions, states and resources, plus topography, climate, distance, state size and shape, demography, and the like, upon states’ foreign policies and actions as an aid to statecraft”. History and strategic studies are additional elements of geopolitics, as highlighted by Sloan (2017: 13) and Wu (2018: 792) who delineate geopolitics as a trinitarian relationship between three elements — geography, history and strategic studies. The first element, geography, comprises the study of the physical configuration of the earth’s environment. Such features include aspects such as resources, shape, boundaries, size, location and topography. The second element, history, helps us to describe and understand conflicts that have occurred in the past and possibly determine future trajectories of such conflicts (Sloan 2017: 19). The strategic element examines the dynamics between adversaries engaged in conflict or potential conflict (Sloan 2017: 15). It is an active awareness of one's interests and goals and an evaluation of the means through which the goals or desired outcome can be achieved.

Geopolitics is a practical tool for statesmen and policymakers to understand and explain the complexity of international affairs (Kelly 2016: 1). Its value lies in its utility as an analytical tool and a guide for practice, helping us to understand how geographical factors influence political interactions. Understanding these political interactions helps policymakers to determine the feasibility and impact of future policies and decisions (Cohen 2014: 24). Geopolitics is normative-strategic, descriptive and prescriptive in nature. The descriptive element creates an understanding of the international system and the behaviour of its components, such as states and regional blocs. The prescriptive or normative element helps to make strategic prescriptions by suggesting courses of action for decision-makers (Mackubin 2015). In order to understand the position of a state in the international system and prescribe courses of action, it is important to understand the geographical and political characteristics of the country

of interest. While geopolitics has been linked to traditional power politics and dismissed as an antiquated frame of analysis, it remains relevant to this day. Time and space are clearly fundamental aspects of human interaction (Abler *et al.* 1971:10). Location and space are indispensable variables in international relations and the spatial dimension of the environment is key to understanding behaviour in the international environment (Starr 2013: 435, Sloan 2017: 11). Despite the spread of globalisation in the 21st century, the spatial dimension remains a crucial element in influencing interactions within the international system (Starr 2013: 433). Geographic elements such as territories and boundaries remain important elements despite the spread of globalisation and the increasing interdependence among states (Cohen 2014: 20, Starr 2013: 439). For example, contemporary political discourse is still dominated by terms conjured up from geographic images such as North versus South and East versus the West (Young 1987: 391).

Geopolitics is a useful analytical tool for understanding the complex and dynamic web of international affairs due to the ability to break down different parts of international affairs into discrete yet interconnected components. Geopolitics is a combination of geography and politics. Geography forms the arena or physical setting in which politics occur. Politics comprise the interaction of humans within their physical setting, including decision-making processes and management of resources. The geographical and political components of the analytical framework are explained in more detail in the following sections.

## **2.2.1 The geographical component**

Geography is an important component of analysis in geopolitics as it can handicap or advantage a state in the international political arena, determining the capability of a state's range of action, tactics, capacity for action, and resources of action (Huzen 2019: 15). The geographical component of geopolitics comprises physical geography and human geography.

### **2.2.1.1. Physical geography**

Physical geography refers to the physical composition of the earth and environmental processes that shape the natural world (Castree *et al.* 2013). It includes the following elements:

- **Location and size:** Location determines the structure, agency and foreign policy of a state. States are able to make choices based on the opportunities and risks available as well as the structure and norms of the international system (Flint 2006: 26). It is a key consideration in strategic decisions as it creates the conditions for opportunities and constraints. Littoral states, for example, are advantaged as they have direct access to global markets and to an arena in which they can project sea power. Some

states are located in hostile environments while some are in relatively stable conditions. The Mozambique channel, for example, is a key global shipping route in the Indian Ocean and is home to important gas reserves. This, however, has become an insecurity hotspot of illicit trade and terrorist activities which threaten to destabilise the greater Southern African region if not thwarted (Brewster 2021, Nicoloso 2021).

- **Climate:** Climate influences the natural environment and key activities such as agriculture, creating advantages and disadvantages for the nation (Jablonsky 2006: 130). Natural disasters such as droughts and floods have the capacity to damage or cripple critical national infrastructure and the economy. Climate also has the potential to affect geopolitical stability in the short term and long term due to environmental changes altering the political, social and economic systems (Saxena (2010: 33). For example, drought conditions in a country may threaten food and water security over time.
- **Topography:** Topography refers to the natural and man-made features of the earth's surface, including landforms such as hills, mountains, rivers and valleys (Markoski 2018: 1). Topographical features such as river systems and mountains have strategic implications on the state as they determine transportation systems and military defence systems of the state (Huzen 2019: 28). Land characteristics such as steepness and distance affect the ability of a state to defend itself against external enemies and the ability of enemies to access key locations.
- **Frontiers and boundaries:** Boundaries, which are closely linked to location, demarcate the territorial extent of a state's sovereignty. This determines the resources that a state can access and cannot access (Flint 2006: 137). Historically, the expansion of boundaries was an expression of state power. Territorial disputes such as the one between Botswana and Namibia over boundaries on the Chobe River and the Kasikili-Sedudu Island in the Caprivi Strip rich in oil and wildlife prove that states seek to protect their zones of control (Onteбетse 2021).
- **Natural resources:** Natural resources form the basis of the national economy, trade and industries. They influence a country's wealth and the extent of state power (Huzen 2019: 29). They shape the living conditions of the local population and the opportunities for economic activity, therefore determining a state's developmental course (Huzen 2019: 29, Yar & Ihsan 2021: 9). Natural resources are unevenly distributed and, in some cases, scarce, setting conditions for uneven power politics. Uneven distribution allows states endowed with certain resources to specialise in the production of certain products that can be sold cheaply, giving them an economic advantage on the global market and strengthening their economic power.

### 2.2.1.2. Human geography

Geography also comprises a human element. Humans are an essential feature of the natural environment as inhabitants of space, forming boundaries and societies (Sloan 2017: 2). The human component of geography entails the study of humans and their interactions with the natural and man-made environments (Balasubramanian 2017, Castree *et al.* 2013). This involves population movements, capital flows, circulation of goods, people, and ideas and connections (Cohen 2014: 14, Tzermias 2003: 42).

Central to the concept of human geography is economic geography or the political economy. Economic geography refers to the interaction of humans with their natural resources and raw materials in converting them into commodities and services (Rogers *et al.* 2013). This includes international trade and commerce, development, economic growth, and regional supply and demand. The production, consumption, and exchange of natural resources is key to human growth and development. The economic element is indispensable as it affects all areas of geography and politics. Commercial activities are political in nature because they depend on the exploitation and allocation of limited resources within a society. It is a competitive dynamic between various infinite interests within a space of finite resources (Hampton 1987: 106). This makes it a key political activity linked to the political element of geography discussed in the paragraph below (Rogers *et al.* 2013). In addition, the nature of economic activity is determined by the geographic configuration of a state and economic activity, in return, has the potential to dramatically alter the geographic landscape of a state.

The following elements of human geography are key to geopolitical analysis:

- **Demography or Population:** population concentration, skills, migratory flows and urbanisation are key determinants of a state's political, economic and military activity. The population count may also determine the extent of national and military power as great powers are more associated with larger populations than smaller ones (Yar & Ihsan 2021: 7). Traditionally, populous states with high birth rates and large youth populations have drawn on their plentiful supply of young manpower to populate large, manpower-intensive armies (Nichiporuk 2000: 12). The population also has an influence on the country's economic infrastructure, skills and capital (Jablonsky 2006: 131). Demographic elements such as fertility, mortality and migration also determine the position of a state (Eberstadt 1991: 119). Population trends such as an increasing cohort of retired people can hamper national development due to increasing social welfare (Jablonsky 2006: 131). In addition, the nature of cities and settlements in a state is fundamentally important for national security, defence and economic

production. Major cities form the core of national economies (United Nations Human Settlements Programme 2011: 8). Urban centres, for example, tend to have large population concentrations, making them centres of commerce and economic production, knowledge production and political development (Dastjerdi 2021: 365). Infrastructure development and technological advancement tend to occur within large population concentrations.

- **Infrastructure and technology:** Infrastructure is an important element of geopolitics as it forms the foundation of indispensable activities such as economic productivity, energy production and consumption and water management. Infrastructural development is key to exploiting natural resources and strengthening the productivity of an economy. It enables the movement of resources and goods between markets, making it critical to international trade and foreign investment (Hill et al 2012: 95). Telecommunications and transportation infrastructures reduce the distance between settlements, cities and countries (Hill et al 2012: 95). The geographical characteristics of a country influence the type of technology that it develops. Littoral states, for example, are able to develop sea power, while landlocked countries mainly do not adopt maritime technology due to their lack of access to the sea. Technological advancements throughout history such as the development of naval power, air transport and rail have influenced the ability of states to navigate new frontiers, project power and develop infrastructure (Wu 2018: 792, Bey 2016).
- **Economic activity:** How the state exploits natural resources, within and outside its borders and the economic interests or aspirations of a state heavily influence relations in the international arena. Today economic performance is linked to the power and influence of the state (Jablonsky 2006: 133). Economic strength is desirable as elements such as investments, loans, economic sanctions and foreign aid can be a tool for power in global trade. The strength and productivity of the state's domestic economy as well as its access or control over other states' capabilities including infrastructure, skilled labour, and raw materials gives it more influence on the global economy and structure (Leffler 1990: 146). The economic activity of a state depends on the state's ability to exploit its natural resources and leverage infrastructure and technology to create an efficient production system.

The physical configuration of a state's environment sets the arena in which struggles over power occur. Elements of physical geography are the most permanent features of the international system. They are, however, not immune to changes in the long-term due to causes such as climate change. War and secession movements have also changed boundaries in the past. Human geography, which focuses on how people interact within their



environment, is more prone to changes over time. These interactions in some cases do influence physical geography. Economic activities, such as the exploration of new resources like minerals in the ocean, have the potential to change the geographic conditions of states. Demography, economic activity and infrastructure and technology are more dynamic features of geography, affecting the activities of the state as they are more susceptible to shocks in the international system. Unpredictable events such as pandemics and war and terrorism can change demographic trends and economic production.

### **2.2.2. The political component**

Politics and geography are the arenas in which political processes transpire (Sloan 2017: 13). The political aspect of geopolitics is rooted in the control or desired control of geographical spaces by states as well as the pursuit of interests and related decision-making processes of states within the physical environment (Puntigliano 2016: 5). The link between geography and politics can be identified in contemporary political discourse which is still dominated by terms conjured up from geographic images such as North versus South and East versus West (Young 1987: 391). These mental images, or mental cartographies, are the state's notions or perceptions of the regional and international system and its position or identity in relation to that. They are key to conducting effective geopolitical analysis. Important political aspects of geopolitics linked to decision-making processes and control of spatial zones include the domestic politics of the state, regional relations (including bilateral and multilateral agreements), political stability and military strength and national security. Military strength is the traditional gauge for national power. National power has been historically measured by the state's ability to fend off enemies and win wars in a competitive international system (Jablonsky 2006: 134). Military technology has also been used to project national power as it enhances the ability of combat (Tellis 2015: 10).

### 2.2.3. Geopolitics as an analytical framework

The framework is designed to show how geopolitics will be analysed in this study and it is summarised in Table 1 below:

<b>Geopolitics</b>	
<b>Analytical Components: Geography</b>	<b>Analytical Components: Politics</b>
<b>Physical Geography</b>	<b>Internal Politics</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location and size</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domestic politics</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National power</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Topography</li> </ul>	<b>External Politics</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frontiers and boundaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional relations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foreign policy</li> </ul>
<b>Human Geography</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demography</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure and technology</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic activity</li> </ul>	

*Table 1: Geopolitics as an analytical framework*

In the next section the analytical framework is broadened to include national security as the first conceptual addition.

### 2.3. National Security

National security is closely linked to the political component of geopolitics as it involves decision-making about the position of the state in the international system and how to exploit opportunities and thwart threats that may harm the existence of the state and its populace. The concept of national security refers to the practice of how political communities, such as nation-states, pursue and protect their interests and guard against potential harm (Liss 2022: 2). Traditional notions of the concept associate national security with realpolitik, power and

defence. More recent conceptions of national security have been broadened to include issues beyond military and defence pursuits. Liss (2022: 2) argues that the traditional notion of national security is outdated and should include socio-political matters and address questions of the role of the state in protecting national values and interests. National security is also a reflection of a nation state's "mechanism for arriving at social choices" through the commitment, extraction and mobilisation of societal resources" (Liss 2022: 3). It is influenced by the ability of a nation-state to project power in the international system in order to pursue its interests. National security is therefore dependent on the state's military capability, political stability, economic productivity and social cohesion (Liss 2022: 3). This encompasses the decisions, mechanisms and actions aimed at protecting the state and its domestic values from external threats (Leffler 1990: 143). These decisions and mechanisms must encompass defence strategy, military policy and political economy (Leffler 1990: 143). Economic and social aspects of the nation are key components of national security as poor economic performance or severe economic regress and political unrest are valid concerns that may threaten the internal stability of a nation. Some conceptualizations of national security include a more comprehensive scope of national affairs. Grizold (1994: 41), for example, describes national security as the "state of security of the nation-state". This "state of security" entails protecting its sovereignty and territorial integrity, protecting the lives of its population and protecting the basic sociopolitical, cultural, economic and ecological functions of its society. National security is linked to the maritime sector as the ocean can act as a source of threats to the nation. The maritime domain is an important element of the economies of littoral states and maritime threats such as transportation of illicit goods have the potential to negatively affect economies across the region (Blaine & Nel 2019: 110).

While the notion of national security is rather broad, the national security quintet, which was developed by the South African National Defence College, serves as a practical framework to compartmentalise and understand the different elements of national security (South African National Defence College 2017, Ferguson 2019: 45). The framework identifies national identity, national values, national interests, national power and national will as key elements that impact the security of the state (Ferguson 2019: 45). Due to the limited nature of the study, this paper only discusses the component of national power from the national security quintet as it is key to conducting geopolitical analysis which is more concerned with material resources.

### **2.3.2. National Power**

The concept of power refers to the capacity to induce a certain action (Guzzini 20019: 7). It is the capacity or strength to influence the behaviour of other actors to act in a way that they

would not have acted otherwise, with the aim of achieving one's goals (Jablonsky 2006: 139, Wilson 2008:114). National power is the ability of a nation to defend interests such as territory and material resources and attain its national strategic ends (Jablonsky 2006: 139). In an anarchic international system where there is no higher authority than the state, entities are propelled to rely on their own abilities and enlarge their material capabilities in order to advance their own interests and minimise the prospect of harm arising from one's own relative weakness (Tellis 2015: 4).

National power can be divided into hard power and soft power. Hard power refers to coercive forms of power. Through soft power, states use their influence to set the international agenda, particularly through international regimes and institutions. National power in the traditional sense has been associated with hard power or coercion which is associated with warfare, military troops, naval power, nuclear power and the air force (Jablonsky 2006: 127). It is also linked to non-military coercive means such as economic sanctions (Wilson 2008: 114). However, power is not only limited to a state's ability to coerce actors but is also about a state's ability to influence actors to act in a particular way consistent with its interests. This ability to persuade or influence the disposition of actors is based on cooperation rather than ordering others (Nye 1990: 166). States can use soft power to enhance their legitimacy in the view of other actors through less coercive and less tangible means. This is achieved through ideology, cultural attraction and cooperation of international institutions (Nye 1990: 167).

Power is rather complex and difficult to evaluate due to several characteristics. Firstly, power is relative (Jablonsky 2006: 128). This means that nations do not have absolute power in a vacuum but can have power in relation to other actors (Jablonsky 2006: 128). Secondly, power is dynamic. This means that all power relationships are vulnerable to change in the international system. Technological developments, for example, may drastically change the power of one nation over another. Thirdly, national power is multidimensional (Jablonsky 2006: 127). One element of power cannot describe the overall national power of a state as it is linked to other manifestations of power. Fourthly, national power is situational or context dependent (Jablonsky 2006: 129). It is not unconditionally applicable to all circumstances. Not all elements of power, such as nuclear power, can be used to achieve goals or objectives in all circumstances. The United States, for example, is a nuclear power. However, its nuclear capacity may not be relevant in discussions pertaining to global trade and economics. In issues such as global climate change mitigation and adaptation platforms, the country's soft power may be more relevant. Its use is dependent on the circumstance (Jablonsky 2006: 128). Some actors in the international system will respond to other elements of power while others will not be effective (Jablonsky 2006: 129). Multinational corporations, for example, are more likely to respond to economic challenges compared to terrorist organisations.

Jablonsky (2006: 130) demonstrates the significance of geography and politics as determinants of power by distinguishing between natural and social determinants of power. The former refers to the inhabitants of a nation and their physical environment. It includes elements such as geography, resources and demography and population — all geographical elements which have been described in the second section of this chapter. The latter refers to how people organise themselves and alter their environment. This includes economic capacity, military strength, domestic political processes, national will and character, and information and communication capacity (Jablonsky 2006: 133). Jablonsky distinguishes between two types of power — potential power and actual or operational power (Jablonsky 2006: 128). Potential power refers to the capacity to coerce or influence others. Actual power is the actual exercise of that capacity. Tellis (2015: 10), posits a similar conception of power describing it as a nation's ability to effectively convert raw materials into physical and social products. This definition of power means that untapped resources are not true power until mobilised and utilised to effect and advantage. The power of a state lies in its ability to leverage its unique characteristics to pursue its interests in the international arena through planning, calculation and deliberate action to utilise resources. National power is the ability of a state to convert potential power into actual power (Jablonsky 2006: 128). The capacity of a state to achieve this relies on several determinants of power such as geography, economics, military, political, psychological and military factors. The ability to derive actual power to achieve desired outcomes is also determined by non-material aspects such as aptitude for innovation, quality of knowledge and the efficiency of social institutions (Tellis 2015: 4).

Through this lens, power is seen as a chain of relations. It is determined by how people relate to their environment and how they leverage those conditions to influence relations with others. The ability to navigate those inequalities and leverage one's resources determines power. Geographical inequality lays out the conditions for power dynamics. However, geographical disadvantages such as landlockedness do not doom a state to less power. By leveraging state resources and processes such as economic activity and infrastructure and technology, states may be able to overcome geographical curses such as landlockedness.

### **2.3.3. National security from a landlocked perspective**

A landlocked country is one that possesses no coast (Menefee 1992: 6). It is geographically isolated from the sea and relies on passage through a neighbouring country, known as a transit state, to gain access to the sea (Bayeh 2015: 29). Lack of access to the sea has a range of national security consequences for landlocked countries. Landlocked nations, for example, typically have fewer natural trading partners than littoral states due to their geographic disposition (Voss 2016). "Without access to sea, LLCs experience two vulnerabilities. The first

vulnerability refers to the inability to develop effective sea power or lines of communication to strengthen national defence and the second refers to their reliance on other states for access to the sea (Mishra & Singh 2008: 55). LLCs, according to Mishra & Singh (2008: 58), gain access to the ocean in three ways: navigating rivers which connect LLCs to the coast and the sea, accessing a corridor or strip of land and using guaranteed routes such as roads, railways or internal waterways. They consequently face poorer development prospects compared to their coastal counterparts due to the high transport costs and dependence on passage through transit countries to access external trade (Faye *et al.* 2004: 32).

Transboundary cooperation is vital for the national security of landlocked countries. Inland states have to negotiate territorial corridors to the sea and this relies on the goodwill of neighbours, shared goals and mutual trust. According to Flint (2006: 146), transboundary cooperation is dependent on five conditions. The first is the absence of territorial questions. Boundaries are established and demarcated. The second is transboundary interaction within the law. This means that there is a legal system permitting and regulating the flow of goods and people between the two states. The third condition is that the boundary is perceived as providing a sense of security rather than a source of conflict (Flint 2006: 146). Strong transboundary relations see boundaries as a sign of strength. The fourth condition is the possibility of joint resource exploitation for mutual economic growth. The fifth is the coordination of local administration. This means that logistics “can create functional integrated areas that straddle an international boundary” (Flint 2006: 146).

Faye *et al.* (2004: 43), identify four aspects regarding LLC dependence on transit states: (1) dependence on transit states’ infrastructure; (2) dependence on neighbours’ peace and stability; (3) dependence on cooperative cross-border political relations; and (4) dependence on neighbours’ administrative practices. Firstly, landlocked countries depend on their transit neighbours’ infrastructure to gain access to the sea. This can be negatively affected by conflict, natural disasters and a lack of resources in the transit country (Faye *et al.* 2004: 43). Secondly, a landlocked state is vulnerable to civil conflict within transit countries and relies on peace and stability as conflict and instability may lead to damaged or closed transit routes. Thirdly, landlocked countries depend on strong relationships with adjacent transit states. All political decisions are influenced to avoid military or diplomatic conflict that may jeopardise the relationship (Faye *et al.* 2004: 45). The fourth aspect involves the high administrative burden due to transit. International transit can be costly due to burdensome paperwork and bureaucratic procedures (Faye *et al.* 2004: 47). Faye *et al.* (2004: 47) add that the viable policy options for landlocked countries to gain effective access to the sea are developing their local transportation infrastructure, developing regional infrastructure integration strategies, and coordinating administrative practices in the regional integration strategies (Faye *et al.* 2004:

31). These constraints severely restrict the state's geostrategic orientations and foreign policy choices, possibly leading to feelings of national claustrophobia in LLCs which Glassner (1970: 14) called "geographical strangulation". Due to the reliance on maritime neighbours, LLCs are more inclined to adopt neutral foreign policies to maintain stability and security (Mishra & Singh 2008: 57). Goodwill and cooperation are important for gaining access to transit states and landlocked states that are encircled by powers have to balance their foreign policies towards maritime neighbours in order to neutralise threats (Mishra & Singh 2008: 69).

The geographical configuration of landlocked states may constrain the national power of LLCs and their ability to pursue national interests. The power is diminished in two ways: the inability to develop sea power and the forced reliance on transit states, therefore lowering their bargaining position in negotiating access to the sea. Peace is a precondition for maritime access, making it in the interests of the landlocked states to maintain peaceful relations in the region. LLCs have to manage access to the maritime which is already set up or determined by littoral states making them have diminished agency. Another impact of landlockedness on LLCs is the lack of opportunities to expand national interest. LLCs are often boxed in between one or more states, with less developed or non-existent sea power or naval technology to explore the ocean as a new frontier.

#### **2.4. Defining the maritime domain**

The maritime domain refers to all activities pertaining to the ocean including diplomacy, international law and regional and international cooperation (Lekunze 2022: 2855). This paper adopts Bueger's (2015a: 160) definition of the maritime domain which is defined as "all areas and things of, on, under, relating to, adjacent to, or bordering on a sea, ocean, or other navigable waterway, including all maritime-related activities, infrastructure, people, cargo, and vessels and other conveyances". De Nevers (2015: 597) describes the ocean as a "zone of anarchy outside any state's control". This is because the maritime domain is part of the global commons. The global commons refers to areas that are considered as the common heritage of mankind. They are not subject to state sovereignty of any one state and are open to access and resource exploitation by state actors and non-state actors (Riddervold & Newsome 2021: 366). As a source of many resources such as oil and gas, minerals, petroleum and fish, the ocean is open to exploitation, making it a zone of competition in which various actors, including states, international organisations and commercial entities compete for interests (Lekunze 2022: 2855). Because the maritime domain offers opportunities for growth and development, affecting industries and populations across the world through employment, commerce and trade, food security, research and innovation, transport and communications, it is a strategic domain that is important for a state's security and prosperity (African Union 2012: 8, Lekunze

2022: 2855). LLCs, which were referred to as “landly connected” by the AU also benefit from these opportunities (African Union 2012: 7). The term depicts that LLCs, while not directly connected to the ocean, are connected to the ocean through other coastal states. LLCs are actors in the maritime domain as they are also beneficiaries of the maritime environment. The maritime domain is also fraught with threats of insecurity as various threats emanate from the ocean such as human, arms and drug trafficking and piracy (African Union 2012: 10).

Maritime security is an important element of the maritime domain, involving the range of actions and measures taken to prevent, minimise or eliminate threats emanating from the high seas (Germond 2015: 138). It refers to the preservation of the freedom of the seas, maintenance of good governance and monitoring and regulation of all activities within the maritime domain (Feldt *et al.* 2013: 2). Maritime security lacks a universal definition. However, it broadly refers to a range of activities linked to the high seas such as piracy, illegal fishing and marine pollution as well as measures and policies undertaken to ensure the security of those areas (Klein 2012: 10). An all-encompassing definition of maritime security, according to Klein 2012: 11, is the protection of a state’s land and maritime territory, infrastructure, environment and society from harmful acts occurring at sea. This involves the protection of maritime trade, environmental conservation and preservation and the jurisdiction of accountable authorities (Smed 2016: 6).

According to Klein (2012: 11), maritime security has a context-specific meaning as its definition is dependent on the actors involved and the lens through which they perceive activities in the ocean. Shipping industries, for example, would perceive maritime security as related to vessel safety and regulation while environmental conservation groups are inclined to focus on the maritime ecosystem, biodiversity and pollution (Klein 2012: 9). In a similar vein, maritime security in the context of landlocked countries, may not entail power projection exercise on the high seas or regulation of piracy but could entail maritime trade. Landlocked states are not exempt from the maritime domain as they have maritime-related infrastructures such as dry ports and populations that benefit from maritime activities such as trade. Bueger & Edmunds (2017: 1299), categorise maritime security into four domains: national security, economic development, marine environment and human security. National security is the traditional domain of maritime security linked to military and national defence concerns, naval strategy and seapower projection (Bueger & Edmunds 2017: 1299). The second domain of economic development is associated with global trade, the exploitation of marine resources and the blue economy. The third domain of the marine environment comprises ecological issues such as marine pollution, climate change and biodiversity as well as the safety and regulation of vessels at sea (Bueger & Edmunds 2017: 1299). The final domain, human security, focuses on the security of individuals and coastal communities linked to threats emanating from the



ocean (Bueger & Edmunds 2017: 1300). Although each domain is separate, one could argue that they are all important components of national security with varying degrees of importance. Economic development, for example, is key to the survival of any nation and marine environmental disruptions such as large-scale depletion of fishing resources may have significant consequences on a nation-state and its constituents.

In addition to that, Bueger & Edmunds (2017: 1300) attribute four characteristics to maritime security. Firstly, it is interconnected. Maritime security can be linked to themes of national security, human security and economic development (Bueger & Edmunds 2017: 1300). The second characteristic, and possibly most relevant to this paper given the context of landlocked states, is its liminality. Liminality brings in the spatial perspective of the phenomenon, linking the land and the sea (Barry 2019: 1057). Maritime security concerns do not implicate the seas alone but extend to consequences on land. Maritime terrorism, for example, may destabilise the lives of coastal communities on land. Land is also key for the construction of maritime infrastructures such as ports and coastal zones. This liminal characteristic of the maritime domain links inland states to the ocean. Landlocked countries, despite their inaccessibility to the sea, are also reliant on the ocean for trade and the extraction of resources. Thirdly, maritime security is a transnational concern as the ocean is a space over which no state or entity has absolute sovereignty. Rather, coordination is needed among different actors to ensure peaceful uses of the ocean. The fourth characteristic of maritime security lies in its cross-jurisdictional complexity. The maritime domain is governed by different levels of authority and a wide range of actors across all levels such as governments, international maritime law bodies, multinational shipping companies, private security companies, local communities and environmental activist groups (Bueger & Edmunds 2017: 1301). The existence of various laws and regulatory frameworks created by these entities may overlap or contradict (Bueger & Edmunds 2017: 1301).

The ocean is clearly a competitive arena for the expansion of state control and influence. Its control is complicated by the existence of a multitude of actors with competing interests, lack of overarching authority and its status as a frontier yet to be fully explored. The universal management of the high seas is subject to goodwill and cooperation that can be overridden due to self-interest by states with stronger sea power. Additionally, smaller actors such as LLCs may be perceived legitimacy in the international negotiation of maritime domain interests. Without direct access to the sea, sea power or technology and underdeveloped expertise direct control and influence on maritime matters are likely to remain elusive.

## **2.5. Challenges in the maritime domain for landlocked countries**

The maritime domain comprises a complex web of political processes spanning various actors at domestic, regional and international levels. States, international bodies such as the International Maritime Organization, communities and advocacy groups all have vested interests in the maritime domain. Policies and frameworks such as the Africa Maritime Transport Charter and the FAO instruments on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IUU) Fishing have been established to regulate interactions among the various actors and the ocean. Complexity in the maritime domain is heightened for landlocked states that carry the additional burden of pursuing maritime interests through their littoral neighbours. Another geopolitical consequence of inaccessibility to the maritime domain for inland states also means limited access to the exploitation of maritime resources, therefore impeding their economic growth and development. Coordinating infrastructure across borders is a difficult task due to logistic and administrative costs and transit charges such as quota restrictions and port charges as well as higher import and export costs, raising trading costs and hindering access to world markets (Lahiri 2012: 506, UNECE 2002: 5). For this reason, landlocked states generally lag behind their littoral counterparts in growth and development (In On Africa 2017). Furthermore, landlocked countries have inferior influence and bargaining power in the international management of the maritime domain given their distance from any coastal land and lack of territorial waters. LLCs are recognised as actors in the maritime domain and their rights to access the ocean are clearly stipulated in international law. Access to the ocean is a globally recognised basic right for all states, espoused in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The high seas are “open to all States, whether coastal or land-locked” (United Nations 1998: 57). This is articulated in Article 87 of the UNCLOS granting universal freedom of transit and navigation of the high seas. It also provides for a range of activities including the laying of key infrastructures such as cables and pipelines, the construction of artificial islands, fishing and scientific research. Article 17 of the Convention sanctions that “ships of all States, whether coastal or land-locked, enjoy the right of innocent passage through the territorial sea” (United Nations 1998: 30). "Innocent passage" refers to any passage of ships that is not detrimental to the peace, good order or security of the coastal State. Article 69 then further grants rights to landlocked states to participate in “the exploitation of an appropriate part of the surplus of the living resources of the exclusive economic zones of coastal States of the same subregion or region” (United Nations 1998: 50). This right of access to the sea depends on regional, sub-regional or bilateral agreements between countries. Article 125 provides for the “freedom of transit of land-locked states through the territory of transit states by all means of transport” (United Nations 1998: 68). However, the practical application of these laws is not guaranteed and is dependent on the goodwill of the

transit states (Swanepoel 2020: 7). As sovereign nations, transit states have their own political, economic and military agendas, thus reducing the influence over maritime activities by inland countries (UNECE 2002: 9). They may even have a monopoly of power, granting them a strong advantage in negotiating transit agreements with landlocked states.

The maritime domain and geopolitics are irrefutably linked. Geopolitics explains how states try to bypass geographical constraints to pursue aspirations or achieve desired outcomes (Germond 2015: 137). The sea is no exception to this and maritime activities can be perceived as spatial politics of the sea. The sea is a political “seascape”, a geographical domain through which states can project power and influence (Barry 2019: 1055). Within this “seascape”, countries make claims to maritime zones in the high seas where they exercise jurisdiction and maintain or seek to exercise control. These zones are multidimensional spatial demarcations of legal authority that are used to manage space (Barry 2019: 1055). This spatial partitioning of the sea, similar to the boundary-making on land, creates a complex web of overlapping and interconnecting zones in maritime space. The transnational and cross-jurisdictional nature of the sea complicated claims to sovereignty over maritime zones, making it more unstable and contested than on land (Barry 2019: 1058). The geopolitical dimension of the maritime domain can be seen in the constraints and opportunities set forth by the ocean. Threats are constructed along geographical lines and the ability to address these threats is determined by one’s boundaries within the natural environment (Germond 2015: 141). For landlocked countries, the lack of access to the sea presents a challenge (Germond 2015: 138). States also use threats in the maritime domain such as piracy and robbery to justify the projection of sea power and control of distant high seas beyond their external boundaries.

## **2.6. Analytical and conceptual framework**

*Figure 3* provides a visual representation of the conceptual framework in the geopolitical analysis of landlocked countries and the maritime domain. The two main components of geopolitics, geography and politics, form the conditions characterising the country of analysis, Botswana, as a landlocked country. The geographical disposition of the country and political characteristics set the conditions for national power that the country is able to project in the external environment in order to pursue and protect its interests in the maritime domain. These maritime interests comprise economic development, human security, marine environment and national or defence interests.

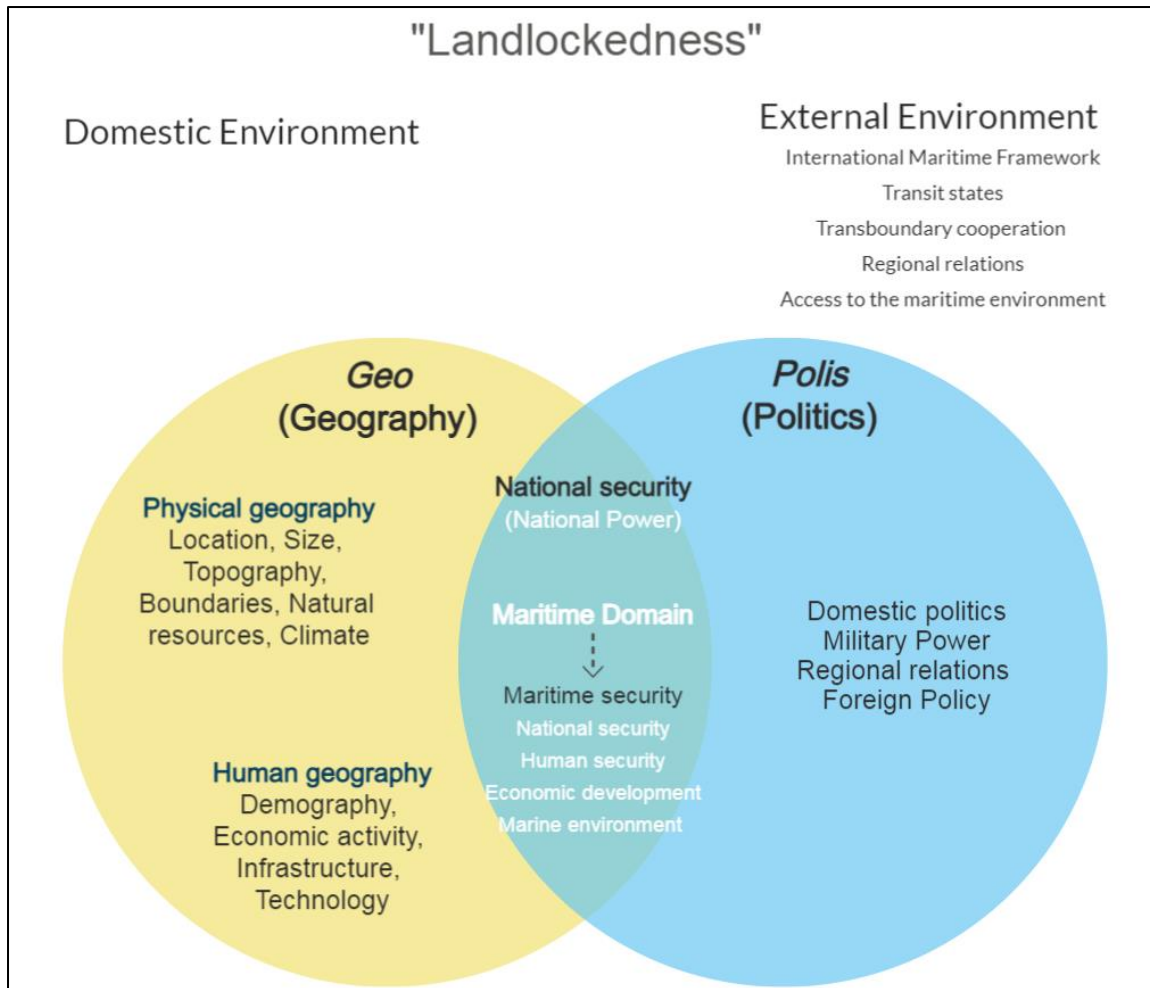


Figure 3: Geopolitics of Landlocked Countries

## 2.7. Conclusion

This chapter provided an explanation of the concepts of geopolitics, the maritime domain and national security that will frame the paper. Today geopolitics is used as a fluid term to describe foreign policy choices of nations because of the opportunities and constraints created by its geographic disposition. Understanding the interactions between power and geographical settings and spatial relationships of political entities is useful as it helps us to understand the behavioural characteristics of certain states. The value of geopolitics as a tool of analysis lies in its prescriptive nature, which capacitates scholars and policymakers to make strategic decisions by identifying the state's constraints and opportunities in its natural environment.

The maritime domain is a key component of the natural environment in the international system. Access to the sea also plays a significant role in geopolitics. Similar to land, the maritime domain is an arena in which states seek to project power, protect interests and compete for resources. Control of the sea, or rather key areas of the sea, is a strategic advantage, allowing states to access trade routes, display military capabilities and extract key

resources that may be key to promoting economic prosperity. The maritime domain is therefore inherently geopolitical. This chapter has also perused the different definitions of the maritime domain for academic literature. The concept of maritime security refers to the state of stability and good governance at sea. It is an end goal that states aim to achieve. Maritime security as a practice entails the range of activities and regulations implemented in order to deter and eliminate threats emerging from the high seas, or lack of control thereof. From the literature surveyed, it is clear that LLCs face serious geopolitical implications in the maritime realm. The state of landlockedness is akin to a geopolitical straitjacket, severely restraining state decision-making. To survive and develop within their finite boundaries, LLCs are compelled to rely on transit states to gain access to the sea. LLCs also have a direct interest in the maritime domain as a national security imperative.

Furthermore, the chapter has identified national security as a key component of the maritime domain. The traditional notion of national security is tied to power politics and coercive power. Many scholars have argued that the traditional approach to national security is too narrow as it fails to accommodate key areas that affect national security such as economic growth and institutional functions. While landlocked states have no coast to project sea power and defence, their national security interests are reflected in key maritime activities such as trade that affect the prosperity of the state, institutions, and its inhabitants. Essentially, geopolitics is an integration of geography and politics. The geographic branch comprises matters of the land and the sea while the political branch comprises processes and decision-making such as strategy and national security policies. All three concepts are interlinked and cannot forgo each other.

## CHAPTER 3: GEOPOLITICAL ANALYSIS OF BOTSWANA

### 3.1. Introduction

As a LLC in Southern Africa, Botswana faces an array of geopolitical constraints and opportunities in terms of pursuing its national security, particularly within the maritime domain. The aim of this chapter is to apply the analytical and conceptual framework, stipulated in Chapter 2, to the case of Botswana as a LLC. It begins with a geopolitical analysis of the domestic context of the country. This is followed by an analysis of the regional context of the country. The domestic and regional contexts are thereupon integrated within the national security concept with a specific focus on the maritime domain before ending with the conclusion.

### 3.2. Domestic geopolitical context of Botswana

#### 3.2.1. Physical geography

Physical geography under geopolitical analysis refers to the location and size, climate, topography, borders and boundaries and natural resources. Botswana is a landlocked country of approximately 582,000 square kilometres positioned at the centre of Southern Africa and 500 km from the nearest coastline to the Southwest (Republic of Botswana 2021, Spangler 2005: 103). It is bordered by Namibia to the west, Zambia to the north, Zimbabwe to the northeast and South Africa to the south. As illustrated in *Figure 4* and *Figure 5*, Zambia, Namibia and Zimbabwe converge with Botswana at a quadripoint known as Kazungula in the Zambezi River in the north of Botswana (Republic of Botswana 2021, Spangler 2005: 103).



*Figure 4: Map of the Botswana-Namibia-Zambia-Zimbabwe Quadripoint in Southern Africa* (Wikimedia Commons 2012)



*Figure 5: Map of Quadripoint in Southern Africa at the Zambezi River junction of Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe & Botswana.*

(Wikimedia Commons 2006)

Botswana is located in the Southern African region which is vulnerable to climate change (Maddocks et al. 2015, Southern African Regional Universities Association 2014:220). The country has an arid and semi-arid climate. It is characterised by low and irregular precipitation, with a mean of 416mm rainfall per year and high rates of evaporation (Republic of Botswana 2020: 15). It has a relatively flat topography with more than 70% of the land surface covered by the Kalahari Desert in the central and southwest regions of the country (Griffiths 2019: 23, SADC 2012b). These geophysical conditions render Botswana susceptible to droughts and desertification, making it a “water-stressed” and disaster-prone country (Republic of Botswana 2020: 22). Groundwater is the main source of water in the country. However, the country’s flat topography and high evaporation rate severely limit the quantity of groundwater and the storage capacity, contributing to water scarcity (Government of Botswana 2012: 8, United Nations Development Programme 2012: 1, Republic of Botswana 2020: 22). Most of the water is located in Botswana’s northwestern region which is far from higher population concentrations (Government of Botswana 2012: 6). Water security and food security are particularly vulnerable, due to erratic rainfall and unpredictable agricultural yields. The lack of water hinders the agricultural sector which relies on water for irrigation, livestock rearing and other indispensable activities as well as livelihoods linked to the sector (Qamar 2013). Health and sanitation and mining are also sectors that are heavily reliant on water. Recent studies have projected an increase in water scarcity by 2040, making access to water a key short-term and long-term interest for the country. Botswana is therefore forced to rely on

transboundary cooperation to meet current water needs and generate future water solutions with its neighbours.

Botswana is also home to the Okavango Delta, a permanent wetland delta in the north of the country which covers about 16,800 km<sup>2</sup> in area, making it the world's largest inland delta (Griffiths 2019: 23, SADC Groundwater Management Institute 2019: 3). The delta, which is also shared with Angola and Namibia, is the only region in the country that has periodically delivered a surplus of water (Scholvin 2010: 71). In addition to the delta, all of the country's perennial rivers and water drainage basins are shared with other countries (Government of Botswana 2012: 6, United Nations Development Programme 2012: 1). These are the Shashe-Limpopo River basin, South Interior, Zambezi River basin and the Orange-Senqu River basin. This makes Botswana highly dependent on internationally shared waters and transboundary water schemes such as the SADC Shared Watercourse Protocol and the Regional Water Policy and Strategy which monitor shared watercourse systems in the region (SADC 2000, SADC 2006). Botswana's domestic geographic context cannot be isolated from its regional geography because it is intrinsically connected to the broader Southern African region. For example, key features such as the Okavango Delta and rivers mentioned above are shared with neighbours and rely on mutual sharing and cooperation, therefore reducing the agency of the country and increasing interdependence.

### **3.2.2. Human Geography**

#### **3.2.2.1. Demography and population**

Botswana is sparsely populated and has a relatively small population of roughly 2 300 000 people (Qamar 2013, Statistics Botswana 2021: 1). A third of the population live in Gaborone, the capital city located in the southeast of the country. Other densely populated settlements include Francistown, Lobatse, Selebi-Phikwe and Jwaneng (Statistics Botswana 2021: 7). Many of these are mining towns which have attracted workers who have migrated from other cities in search of employment.

#### **3.2.2.2. Economic activity**

Since independence in 1966, Botswana's economy has been largely driven by key mineral resources that are crucial to the global market (Government of Botswana 2012: 2). The abundance of minerals has enabled the establishment of mining activities, mainly centred in Jwaneng and Orapa. The country is one of the world's largest exporters of diamonds and also produces gold, nickel-copper, coal, silver, soda ash, granite and semi-precious stones (Republic of Botswana 2021, Statistics Botswana 2021: 4). The abundance of mineral



resources has also made a major contribution to the country's growth. Diamond mining makes up the majority of income generated from exports. The sector has been a major contributor to the economic growth and development of the country, constituting approximately 25% of the GDP (Republic of Botswana 2021). Mining activities are mainly centred in the mining towns of Jwaneng and Orapa. Minerals have been a blessing and a curse to the economy. The income, employment and infrastructure generated for the country have strengthened the economy. However, heavy dependence on mineral wealth makes the economy vulnerable to shocks in the global mineral market which determine mineral prices. A drop in mineral demand or a fall in the prices of diamonds, for example, would mean falling revenue for Botswana. The government has acknowledged this weakness, committing to diversifying the economy and investing in infrastructure and human development (SADC 2012b). The mining sector has vacillated between 20% and 50% contribution to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) (Statistics Botswana 2022: 11).

The Government of Botswana is actively seeking to enhance economic diversification to reduce the country's mineral dependence (Qamar 2013). Access to key markets on the continent is key to any national economic diversification strategies. The country mainly relies on air transportation for diamond exports (Statistics Botswana 2018: 8). The use of alternative means of transport such as road and rail is key for economic diversification as it promotes the expansion of intra-African trade. Road and rail systems also link Botswana to transit states to overseas markets through transit states. As a landlocked country, Botswana is therefore reliant on its neighbours to access the regional, continental and global markets. Expansion cannot occur without cooperation with these transit states.

Nature-based tourism plays a significant role in the diversification of the economy. Resources such as the Okavango Delta have permitted the growth of the tourism industry. Botswana has also leveraged its image and reputation for peace and stability as well as its wildlife in the northern regions of Okavango and Chobe to develop a nature-based tourism industry (Stone 58). The Government adopted the Tourism Policy in 1990 to promote the industry. It has now contributed to job creation and infrastructure development and became one of the biggest contributors to GDP after diamond mining (Department of Tourism 2011). Agriculture is also an important contributor to Botswana's economy, making up less than 2% of GDP. The livestock industry constitutes about 80 % of production in the agricultural sector (World Bank 2022). Despite the seemingly small numbers, many subsistence farmers rely on the industry. In addition to supporting millions of livelihoods, the sector promotes food security and self-sufficiency in the country (International Trade Administration 2022).

Botswana has been heralded as a model nation due to its generally positive image on global

rankings such as the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance, UN Human Development Index and the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index. Botswana's economy, which was one of the fastest-growing in the world, has been hailed internationally as a success story. Upon independence, the country was one of the world's poorest countries (World Bank 2022). It now carries an image of prosperity and stability. This status has changed as living conditions have improved and poverty has fallen significantly over the years. The development has been attributed to good governance, prudent macroeconomic management, sound development policies, a lack of corruption, democracy and internal stability (Qamar 2013). The country experienced rapid economic growth and became an upper-middle-income country. Botswana aims to maintain this momentum and achieve high-income status by the year 2036 (World Bank 2022). The agricultural industry, which is dominated by beef production, is also a particularly important economic activity. The livestock industry constitutes roughly 80% of agriculture's contribution to GDP. The relatively dry climate in the country has been a hindrance to the production of more diversified agricultural products (Qamar 2013).

As a landlocked country, Botswana is forced to rely on road, rail and air transport for the import and export of goods. In December 2021, Botswana's export merchandise comprised 91.6% diamonds and 2.2% copper. In the same month, air transport accounted for 92.8% of all exports (Statistics Botswana 2021: 4). Road is the second most popular means of transportation of goods, with 7% of goods transported by road in December 2021. The transportation of goods by air, road and rail via transit states makes it difficult to estimate the amount of goods transported by ship. 65.9% of goods imported were transported by road, while air accounted for 30.9% and rail accounted for 3.2% (Statistics Botswana 2021: 11). The main goods exported are diamond and copper destined for Asia (the United Arab Emirates and India) (Statistics Botswana 2021: 10). Main imports include fuel, food, beverages, tobacco, chemicals & rubber products and machinery & electrical equipment, which mainly come from South Africa, the European Union and Asia.

### **3.2.2.3. Infrastructure and technology**

Botswana's Ministry of Works and Transport is responsible for overseeing safe and efficient transport services, infrastructure and communication in the country. Its major cities are linked by the major modes of transport, road, rail and air. There are airports located in Gaborone, Francistown, Kasane and Maun, with the main airport, Sir Seretse Khama International Airport, based in Gaborone (Republic of Botswana 2021). Road transport is the major mode of surface travel in Botswana, covering about 93% of the total volume of passenger transport. Road infrastructure is relatively developed with a public highway network of over 18,400 km with over 7300 km of paved and 11060.6 km of unpaved roads (Republic of Botswana 2021,

Raboloko 2019: 1). The railway line, which is managed by Botswana Railways, runs from the south to north on the eastern side of Botswana. As road is the most dominant means of transport, rail and air transport, only comprise about 7% of passenger transportation (Cross Border Road Transport Agency 2018: 39). The government has invested its mineral revenue in the construction and maintenance of roads. This is because a well-maintained road network is particularly important for access to transit states for the delivery of imports and exports. Because Botswana is landlocked, marine transport is critical for the transportation of goods to overseas markets. The nearest ports to Botswana are the Port of Walvis Bay in Namibia via the Trans-Kalahari Corridor and the Port of Maputo in Mozambique and the Port of Durban in South Africa (EENI Global Business School 2022). Control over the ports and maritime transport are not directly under the influence of the Government of Botswana, therefore restricting control over Botswana's maritime interests (Kaboyakgosi 2003: 3). Botswana Railways' Freight Service, for example, relies on cooperation with external actors such as South Africa's Transnet Freight Rail and the National Railways of Zimbabwe, for imports, exports and freight transportation within SADC and through to seaports (Commonwealth of Nations 2020). Botswana has access to ports in Namibia, South Africa and Mozambique. The country has dry ports with container terminals at Gaborone, Francistown and Selebi Pikwe, which connect shipping cargo to inland road and rail networks. Botswana Railways has three dry ports with container terminals in Gaborone, Palapye, Francistown and an additional dry port in Walvis Bay, Namibia, which is managed by Sea Rail Botswana (Botswana Guardian 2021). The dry ports were constructed to provide cheaper, faster and safer alternatives to road transport. The Walvis Bay Dry Port on the western coast of Africa is particularly important because it is closer to the American and European market (Botswana Guardian 2021).

### **3.2.3. The domestic political dimension**

#### **3.2.3.1. Domestic Politics**

Botswana is a sovereign territory whose borders were established as a result of occupation by British rule (Griffiths 2019: 39). The country gained independence on 30 September 1966, in the colonial era when it was recognised as Bechuanaland and has since then been a multiparty democracy. It has maintained the Westphalian model of government adopted during colonial rule and is governed by a constitution and the National Assembly. Today the country is characterised by a stable political environment. Although the ruling party, the Botswana Democratic Party, has been in power since independence, elections are held every five years without threats of major instability (Brosché 2017: 2).

### **3.2.3.2. National Power and military strength**

One of the most visible elements of national power in Botswana is the Botswana Defence Force (BDF). The mission of the defence force is to defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national interests of Botswana (Government of Botswana 2022). Its primary role is to ensure the country's national security and stability with the Ground Forces Command, the Air Arm Command and the Defence Logistics Command. Because the country is landlocked, there has been no major development of a naval force to project power on the seas. However, the Botswana Ground Forces has a marine unit that conducts or supports border patrol, transport and anti-poaching operations along waterways such as the Chobe River and Okavango swamps (DefenceWeb 2013, GlobalSecurity.org 2016). As a landlocked country, Botswana is closed off from the sea and forced to rely on its neighbours for access. Due to its position at the centre of Southern Africa, the country has the advantage of reliance on multiple countries for access to the ocean. The country's population is concentrated in Gaborone, Serowe and Francistown which are located in the east and southeastern parts of the country where the South African border lies, making it heavily dependent on South Africa for the provision of port facilities (Spangler 2005: 105). The Port of Durban in South Africa is a major point of entry and exit for goods transported to overseas markets (International Trade Administration 2022). The development of infrastructure towards the west from population concentrations such as Gaborone would be beneficial for the country as it provides alternative access to the sea through Namibia. The existence of four neighbouring states is also an opportunity to strengthen economic ties with other states north of Botswana and towards East and Central Africa in the long term. The aforementioned domestic conditions in Botswana set the basis for its foreign policy in the international system. As a result of limited material power and high reliance on transit states, the country has to rely on a regional strategy that will strengthen ties with neighbour states and allow for the exercise of power, primarily through non-military means.

## **3.3. Regional and continental geopolitical context of Botswana**

### **3.3.1. Foreign policy of Botswana**

Foreign policy is the external expression of domestic interest in the external environment (the international system) (South African Institute of International Affairs 2021: 2). Botswana's landlockedness, unfavourable agricultural and harsh climatic conditions, limited economic opportunities and heavy reliance on imports have influenced its foreign policy (Lekoa 2019: 118). The country is reliant on cooperation with its neighbours and transit states to secure its interests. Taking its position at the heart of Southern Africa, a region of relative political stability

in the African context and some sense of cultural affinity tied to the region, Botswana rests its foreign policy on multilateralism and regional cooperation achieved through regional and international mechanisms in the region such as SADC (Lekoa 2019: 119). The country is a key SADC actor with ties to the conception of the organisation. Botswana's first democratic President, Sir Seretse Khama, was one of the founding fathers of its predecessor, the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC). The country's capital, Gaborone, is also home to the SADC headquarters (South African Institute of International Affairs 2021: 4). In addition to the cultural affinity, the region also has a historical affinity tied to the struggle against colonialism and aspirations towards addressing deep-seated inequality, poverty and underdevelopment. Positioned just above a regional power, South Africa, Botswana lacks the hard power to influence the region and is therefore more reliant on using its soft power to promote cooperation (Lekoa 2019: 119). This soft power is bolstered by the country's international reputation as a paragon of democracy and good governance in the African context. Multilateralism is therefore a key opportunity for Botswana to promote its national interests as broader regional interests. Elements of soft power, such as diplomacy, negotiations and dialogue are key avenues for Botswana to exert its international influence. The country's reputation for good governance and democracy allows for peaceful and cordial foreign policy behaviour.

Botswana's foreign policy, according to its current President Mokgweetsi Masisi, is informed by its domestic policy based on the best interests of Botswana and seen through the lens of Botswana. There is no clear codification of the country's foreign policy. However, the principles that underpin its foreign policy are well articulated in a policy statement of Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) written by the first President, Sir Seretse Khama in 1970 (ISS 2021). The statement is a particularly important representation of Botswana's foreign policy as the BDP has ruled the country uninterruptedly since independence in 1966 and the statement continues to serve as a guide for Botswana's leaders, therefore setting the tone for foreign policy (Seabo & Molebatsi 2017: 1). The document outlines main principles as democracy, development, self-reliance, unity, self-reliance, and human dignity. Botswana highly values democracy as a paramount political orientation and the country has been vocal about democratic dispensation in the international system (Council of Foreign Relations 2018, Khama 1970: 6). The country's commitment to human rights and democracy has been lauded by western countries, particularly the United States, which is also a key trading partner. Botswana hosts several US institutions including the U.S. Agency for Global Media broadcasting station and the International Law Enforcement Academy for Africa (United States Department of Defense 2022: 1). In addition, the United States is a key market for Botswana's diamond exports and a key source of tourists to Botswana (United States Department of

Defense 2022: 1). The United States has even highlighted Botswana as a key security partner for partnership in defence and cybersecurity and environmental issues, resolution of armed conflict as well as for cooperation with the country's security institutions (United States Department of Defense 2022: 16). Democracy is also seen as a key precondition for the development of the country which is needed to address poverty and inequality (Khama 1970: 9). In addition, the Botswana government has relied on additional support from development partners to address the HIV/AIDS crisis in the country in the early twenty-first century. Organisations such as the United Nations, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the United States Agency for International Development contributed aid in the form of loans and technical assistance towards economic development and eradication of HIV/AIDS (Lekoa 2019: 121). Reliance on external financial assistance established aspirations for self-reliance and development. Following years of reliance on donor assistance after independence, the country was the first to graduate from the group of Least Developed Countries in 1994 and reliance on external donors steadily declined (Calleja & Prizzon 2019: 23, Kerapeletswe et al 2016: 18).

While Botswana's foreign policy has remained broadly consistent since independence, changes in political leadership have influenced distinctive changes in bilateral and multilateral relations (South African Institute of International Affairs 2021). While the Botswana Government prides itself on "good governance", sound economic management, prudent institutional management and an unswerving respect for human rights and the rule of law", as espoused by the former President Festus Mogae, the country places economic development as a key foreign policy priority in the face of globalisation (Mogae 2003: 5). Mogae, who served from 1998 to 2008, underscored the importance of adapting and growing in the competing global economy as a prerequisite to achieve a prosperous and productive Botswana (Mogae 2003: 6). As a trained economist, with a career background at the International Monetary Fund and the African Development Bank, Mogae valued Western institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for economic growth and development of the country although there was a general distrust among African states towards the institutions (Boustany 2003, Republic of Botswana 2008: 2). He was also known for his frequent travels and participation in international conventions and agreements to strengthen economic relations with the East and West and attract foreign direct investment to the country (Osei-Hwedie & Mokhawa 2013: 5). Under Botswana's fourth President, Ian Khama, Botswana's departed from traditionally cordial and diplomatic relations in the international system and took on a more outspoken and vociferous character. On several occasions during his incumbency between 2008 and 2018, Khama was vociferous about the lack of democracy in other countries such as Zimbabwe and Sudan (Haden 2017, Fagan 2018). During the Libyan crisis

in 2011 when the Libyan government violently quashed protests the Government of Botswana severed relations with the country and called for action to be taken against the perpetrators of crimes against humanity (Sunday Standard 2011).

In 2016 he publicly criticised Robert Mugabe for undermining democracy in Zimbabwe, calling for him to step down. The Zimbabwean government described the comments as “uncharacteristic behaviour” and “taboo in African etiquette and diplomacy” (News24 2016). Khama was also known for his disregard for international and multilateral forums. During his ten years as President, he had never attended the UN General Assembly (UNGA), often sending subordinate officers to attend on his behalf (News24 2016). Khama’s successor and current president, Mokgweetsi Masisi, restored Botswana’s emphasis on multilateralism and regular diplomatic engagements, through more participation in multilateral forums such as the UNGA and the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (Sunday Standard 2018). He emphasised friendly ties between Botswana and Zimbabwe’s governments, calling for the removal of sanctions against Zimbabwe (Independent Online 2022). He has, however, made it clear that the country will not hesitate to denounce undemocratic practices (Council of Foreign Relations 2018).

Botswana shares some cultural similarities to some extent with its neighbours. The national language is Setswana, which it shares with some of its neighbours such as South Africa. English is the official language and Christianity is the main religion, as is in its neighbouring countries (SADC 2012b). The cultural affinity sets a basis for integration within the region. According to Botswana “the southern African region is highly integrated through social, economic and cultural ties through shared natural resources of economic value such as water, wildlife and forests. The region offers market opportunities for the members of SADC. (Government of Botswana 2016: 7).

### **3.3.2. Bilateral and multilateral ties**

As a LLC, multilateral participation is particularly important for Botswana to promote its interests such as market access and industrialisation within the region (Republic of South Africa 2022a). Nurturing stable relations with the governments of transit states and enhancing trade connectivity to secure or expand markets is crucial. Barriers to trade, including customs, border management, administrative costs and poor infrastructure cannot be addressed individually but only through joint efforts aimed at coordination, implementation and monitoring (Wei 2018). It is through multilateralism that landlocked countries can access trade and development opportunities, becoming more land-linked, rather than landlocked (Wei 2018). Regional cooperation is key to establishing and enhancing mutually beneficial economic

frameworks and infrastructural projects that remove barriers to economic growth for landlocked countries. One regional economic integration agreement is the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), the oldest customs union in the world, which promotes development, regional integration and economic and industrial diversification (SACU 2021: 3). A key feature of SACU is the movement of duty-free goods in Southern Africa with a common external tariff on goods, the sharing of revenue from customs and excise duties and harmonised customs and policies in the region. Multilateralism alone is insufficient to promote Botswana's interests. It is underpinned by bilateral agreements that foster stronger relations and promote a symbiotic development agenda with all of Botswana's neighbours. The Botswana-South Africa and Botswana-Zimbabwe Bi-National Commissions established a structured framework of bilateral cooperation to promote mutual socio-economic, defence and security interests (Republic of South Africa 2022b, New Zimbabwe 2022). The most recent BNC, which is the Botswana-Namibia Bi-national Commission, was established in 2022 to promote cooperation in addressing various mutual areas including trade and transport (Nangara 2022). There is also a Botswana/Zambia Joint Permanent Commission on Cooperation which will be upgraded to a BNC in the near future (Boti 2021). It is, however, important to note that bilateral cooperation in some sectors may not always be mutually beneficial for both parties. Botswana's economy is heavily tied to that of South Africa, the regional economic power and the biggest source of imports for the country (Republic of South Africa 2022a). The Botswana government has noted that South Africa benefits more from bilateral relations (Council of Foreign Relations 2018). This has prompted Botswana to implement measures in contravention of bilateral and multilateral agreements in order to protect national interests. In August 2020 the Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry restricted the import of a variety of baked products, including bread and pastries, in order to protect micro, small, medium and large enterprises in the sector (Republic of Botswana 2020). In August 2022, the country also banned the importation of a selection of agricultural produce from South Africa, violating the SACU agreement. This measure by the Botswana government was implemented in order to protect the domestic agricultural sector and support local farmers in line with the country's key interest in promoting self-reliance (Arnoldi 2022, Thukwana 2022). The Botswana government has expressed aspirations to be prosperous and highly integrated into the global community. The country also aims to transition from an upper middle-income country to a high-income country (Government of Botswana 2016: 11). This impetus has driven the establishment of economic ties with overseas markets through trade programmes that promote economic and trade cooperation such as the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) with the United States and the Cotonou Agreement with the European Union (European Commission 2010: 47, Republic of Botswana 2021: 8).



### **3.3.3. Regional cooperation agreements**

Positioned at the heart of Southern Africa and with a foreign policy based on multilateralism, Botswana is a key agent of regional integration. It is a transit hub for the movement of goods from South Africa to other SADC neighbours in the north and west and to a lesser extent from other SADC countries to South Africa (Kaboyakgosi 2003: 3). The region's transport corridors form a critical part of the region's aspirations of economic integration which have been espoused by regional trade agreements and regional and spatial development initiatives such as the SACU and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) free trade area.

Botswana is a member of SACU along with South Africa, Lesotho, Namibia, and eSwatini. It is a duty-free trading area with a common external tariff to reduce trading costs and promote investment within the region. The aim of SACU includes promoting the integration of member states into the global economy through enhanced trade and facilitating the cross-border movement of goods between the territories of the Member States (Southern African Customs Union 2017). Botswana also participates in the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) which went into force in January 2021 and is expected to provide member states with greater access to markets across the continent. The country is also a signatory to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Trade (1996). Trade in goods and services constitute a major area of cooperation that supports SADC's goals of economic development and poverty eradication. On 24th August 1996 SADC passed the Protocol on Trade in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Region to promote trade cooperation in the region. The SADC Protocol on Trade reduces customs duties and other barriers to trade on imported products among SADC member states. The Free Trade Area was officially launched by 12 of the 15 SADC member states during the 28th SADC Summit held in Johannesburg in 2008 (SADC 2012a). The Protocol intends to further liberalise intra-regional trade by creating mutually beneficial trade arrangements, thereby improving investment and productivity in the region. It advocates that the member States eliminate barriers to trade, ease customs procedures, harmonise trade policies based on international standards, and prohibit unfair business practices (SADC 2012B).

### **3.3.4. Transboundary cooperation for integration of infrastructure**

As a member of SADC, transport and infrastructure development is a key priority in Botswana. The SADC Protocol on Transport, Communications and Meteorology (TCM) of 1996 aims to integrate the transport sector in the region to intra-regional trade and promote development in Southern Africa. It focuses on transport infrastructure maintenance and development, road transport facilitation and the regulation of road users (Cronjé 2015). The Protocol also aims to

commercialise transport services provision and promote private sector involvement in road transport infrastructure maintenance and development. It also provides an institutional framework for its implementation, placing great emphasis on developing transport corridors as well as facilitating and regulating border customs and transit measures along these corridors (Cronjé 2015, SADC 1996). Effective transport systems are a precondition for economic growth and development of the SADC member states, including Botswana. The following are important transport corridors that are key to Botswana's national security as they link Botswana to transit states and the ocean.

The Trans Kalahari Corridor (TKC), illustrated in *Figure 6* and *Figure 7*, is a road network spanning approximately 1900 kilometres across South Africa, Botswana and Namibia. It is a transboundary corridor management agreement that was established to promote deeper regional and economic integration within southern Africa. The Trans-Kalahari Corridor is a highway corridor directly connecting Walvis Bay and Windhoek in central Namibia to Botswana, and Johannesburg and Pretoria in South Africa. The TKC starts in the Gauteng Province in South Africa passing through Rustenburg and Zeerust in the North-West Province. It then proceeds through Lobatse and Kanye in Botswana, the Mamuno and Trans Kalahari Border Posts by the Botswana-Namibia border, through Gobabis, Windhoek and Okahandja in Namibia and then ends at the port of Walvis Bay on the Atlantic coast of Namibia (Trans-Kalahari Corridor Secretariat 2014). In Namibia, the TKC connects to the Trans Cunene Corridor, Walvis Bay-Ndola-Lubumbashi Corridor, Windhoek-Luanda Corridor and Trans Oranje Corridor which link to other regions on the continent. The TKC also creates a coast-to-coast corridor (*Figure 8*) as it connects the ports of Walvis Bay with the Maputo Corridor (Trans-Kalahari Corridor Secretariat 2014). The corridor also includes railway lines linking Walvis Bay in Namibia, Johannesburg in South Africa and Lobatse in Botswana. Although Botswana is a landlocked country, it is positioned at the centre of the TKC, giving it the advantage of links to the Southern African subcontinent, the Americas and East European markets (Trans-Kalahari Corridor Secretariat 2014).

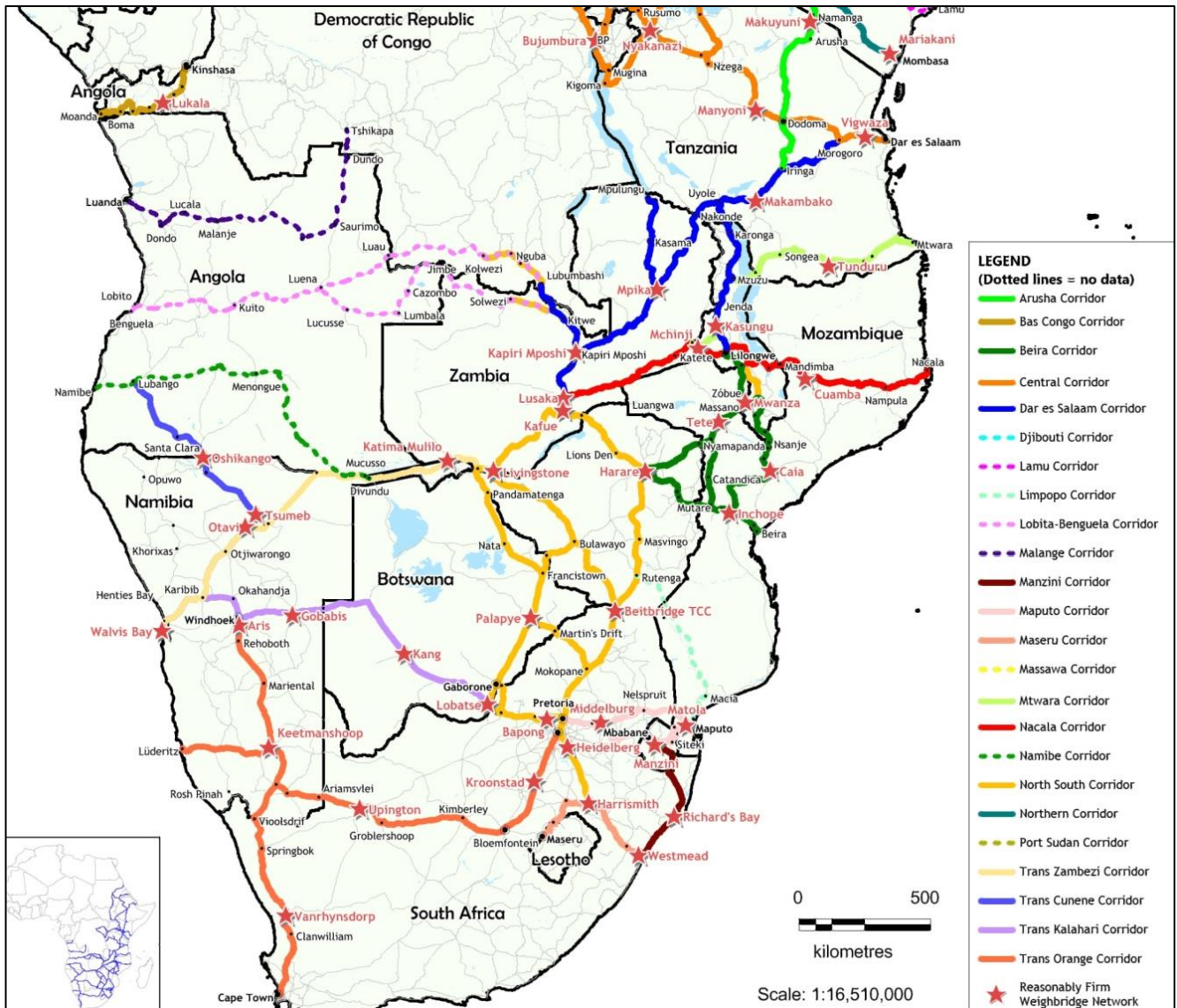


Figure 6: Transport corridors in Southern Africa (Tripartite Transport & Transit Facilitation Programme 2019a)

The North-South Rail Corridor (Figure 9), which is a rail network of over 3000 km, from Durban in South Africa through Zimbabwe and Botswana, linking to the Democratic Republic of Congo and passing through Zambia, is another important transport network in Southern Africa (NEPAD Business Foundation 2017, African Export–Import Bank 2021: 194). The North-South Rail Corridor is SADC’s main international rail gateway for the transportation of imports and exports. The North-South Corridor has two major routes. The first links Durban and Johannesburg in South Africa, Beitbridge, Harare and Chirundu in Zimbabwe and Lusaka in Zambia. The alternative route links Durban, Johannesburg, Lobatse, Gaborone, Kazungula, Livingstone and Lusaka. Export cargo from inland African countries is transported through the North-South Corridor to the main hub, the Port of Durban, and imports from overseas are transported through this route. The Corridor is a gateway to international trade for Botswana,

constituting more than half of the road transport to and from Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi. Botswana Railways (BR) operates a railway network consisting of a mainline (from Ramatlabama to Bakaranga via the capital city Gaborone) (Japan International Cooperation Agency 2010).

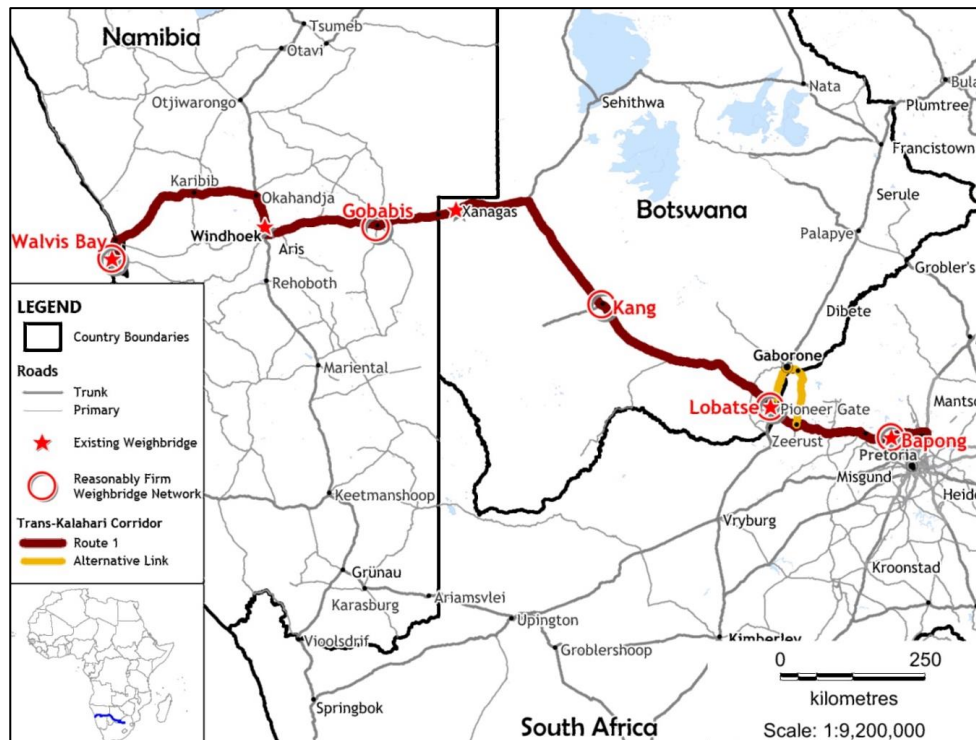


Figure 7. Trans-Kalahari corridor

(Tripartite Transport & Transit Facilitation Programme 2019b)

### 3.3.5. Current and future integration efforts

Botswana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe are collaborating to develop a new corridor known as the Techobanine corridor. It is expected to span 1 700 kilometres from southern Mozambique connecting to Botswana and Zimbabwe with the potential to link to the North region of South Africa (Goddard 2020). The project, which will include a railway line, will help Botswana to transport coal from its eastern regions to a new port at Techobanine in Mozambique (Goddard 2020). According to the Botswana head of state, the aim of the Techobanine corridor project is to boost trade relations between the three countries and facilitate the export and import of products, particularly oil (Africa Press 2022).

A key project that enhances the integration of Botswana and its Southern African counterparts is the construction of the Kazungula Bridge rail and road bridge. The bridge (*Figure 10*), which is 923 metres in length, links the town of Kazungula in Zambia with Botswana and traverses the intersection of the Zambezi and Chobe rivers, where Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and



Zimbabwe meet. The road and rail bridge construction has been facilitated by a tripartite arrangement between Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe and is part of the North-South Corridor within the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) (African Development Bank Group 2019: 17).



*Figure 8: Coast-to-coast corridor that forms part of the TKC*

(Van Niekerk 2009)

The bridge, whose construction officially started in 2014, is a project to improve the regional connectivity of the North-South Corridor, improve cross-border cooperation and strengthen economic ties in the SADC region. The bridge is expected to reduce transit time and costs for imports and exports (Mukeredzi 2021). It is a critical geographic point as five countries, Angola, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana lie within 100km of the structure (Mukeredzi 2021). The bridge is managed jointly by the governments of Botswana and Zambia and the Kazungula Bridge Authority. The completion of the bridge is evidence of the political will and commitment of Southern African states to promote greater growth and development through regional integration (Mukeredzi 2021). The Kazungula Bridge connects the southern African region traffic to the central region of Africa, making trade facilitation easier and supporting economic growth. The bridge is a key transboundary and transnational infrastructure that will enable the realisation of the goals of key regional frameworks such as the African Continental Free Trade Area. AfCFTA aims to enhance intra-African trade,

develop regional value chains, facilitate smooth flow of goods, and promote agricultural development and food security (Mudzingwa 2021).

As a LLC, Botswana has managed to use its soft power to promote multilateralism and integration in the region through active participation in multilateral institutions such as SADC and its mechanisms. The external environment, characterised by relative stability, historical and cultural affinity and common developmental goals has proven advantageous to the country. The country's position at the heart of the region means that it has geopolitical interests in all directions. South Africa, a key source of imports and destination for exports lies to the South where Botswana's population concentrations and centres of economic productivity lie. In the West lies Namibia which provides a key gateway to the Americas and

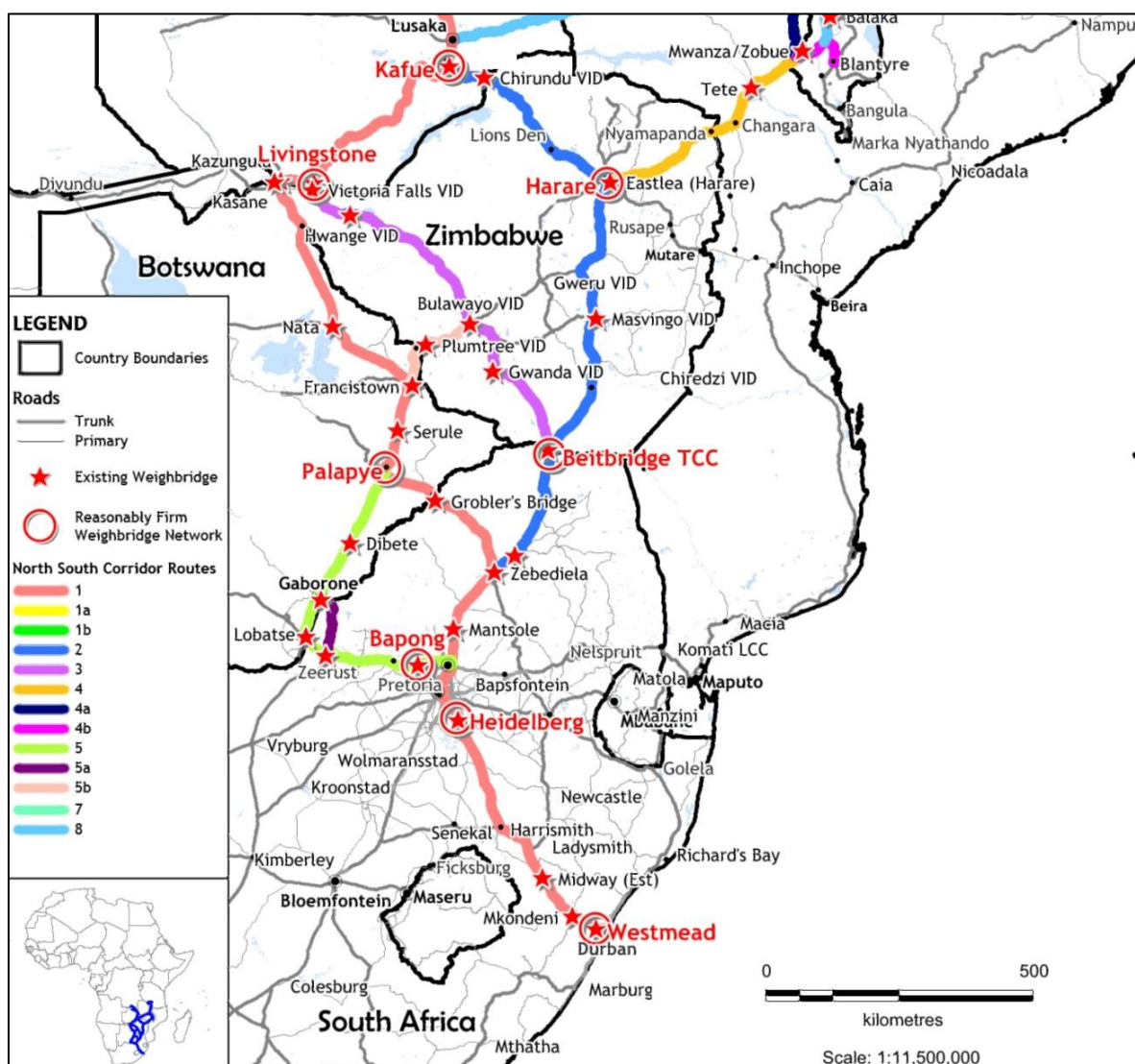


Figure 9: North-South Corridor  
(Tripartite Transport & Transit Facilitation Programme 2019c)

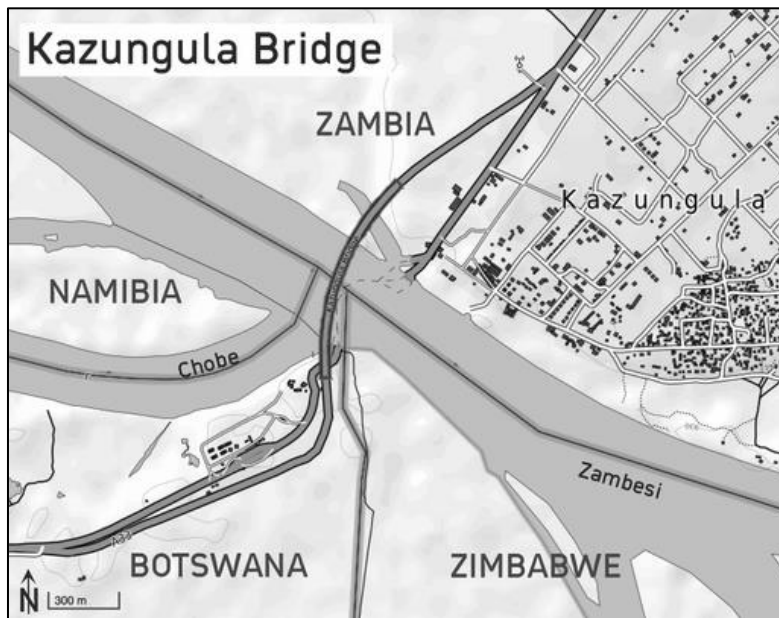


Figure 10: Kazungula Bridge (completed in 2020) in Botswana/Zambia (OpenTopoMap 2020)

European markets. Zimbabwe, a key trading partner, lies in the northeast. Mozambique, although not a direct neighbour, provides key ports that serve as a gateway to Asia. Economic integration frameworks such as AfCFTA create the opportunity for Botswana to expand its economic ties northwards, towards Central and East African countries. The expansion of economic ties would benefit Botswana's national security as it would diversify the country's economy, moving it away from reliance on mining commodities which are susceptible to shocks from global markets.

Unfortunately, Botswana's maritime domain is linked to that of its transit states. This hinders the country's agency in maritime interests such as intercontinental imports and exports. The country has to draw influence from its bilateral and multilateral relations to create conditions favourable to its national security. Through greater economic integration schemes, supported by a harmony of regional infrastructure, Botswana overcomes its geographical strangulations, linking to other states beyond its four neighbours.

### 3.4. Conclusion

Botswana's foreign policy behaviour is an expression of its vulnerability and domestic interests as a landlocked country. The vulnerability stems from the country's heavy reliance on transit states in accessing the ocean and its domestic interests. Economic development and the promotion of strong regional alliances through multilateral platforms are at the core of the

country's foreign policy. The chapter showed that multilateralism and regional and international cooperation are crucial for geographically disadvantaged or landlocked states to mobilise political power and material resources to achieve common sociopolitical, economic and defence needs (Lekoa 2019: 119). LLCs are highly dependent on their neighbours' goodwill and infrastructure for access to the sea (Mishra & Singh 2008: 55). This access is subject to several preconditions such as peace and stability within the region, cooperative cross-border political relations and mutual administrative practices with transit states. In the case of Botswana, the geographical constraints of being landlocked are overcome creating conditions that encourage shared goals, goodwill and mutual trust among neighbours and transit states.

The chapter also demonstrated that key interests driving foreign policy are territorial integrity, national sovereignty and economic security, all upheld by cordial and peaceful relations with neighbours and distant partners. Botswana's foreign policy is clearly driven by economic ambitions to address domestic issues such as poverty and inequality. Political stability and a reputation as a peaceful and middle-income country have given the country a degree of clout in the international system. This influence is translated into soft power which is used to promote national security interests in the region, particularly through bilateral and multilateral platforms. A multilateral approach promotes the development of local transportation infrastructure, regional infrastructure strategies, and coordination of administrative practices with several partner states, securing viable transit options for Botswana from several countries, including Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa. Botswana has used her soft power and geographic position, as a landlocked country in the heart of Africa, to promote strong regional alliances that enhance cooperation, particularly to secure economic security. The country's foreign policy is based on establishing and maintaining cordial and diplomatic relations with countries on all geographical fronts, the immediate region of Southern Africa and the distant East and the West, therefore increasing global engagement as a landlocked country.



## CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION AND FINDINGS

### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter summarises the arguments, main findings and conclusions of the paper based on discussions in the previous chapters drawn from the main aim and objectives of this study. It also indicates areas of research that could be discussed in future research. The following research question guided the study: How has Botswana, as a landlocked country, navigated its geopolitical circumstances of “landlockedness” to enhance its national security through the maritime domain? This study problematized the prevailing assumption that LLCs have very little interest in the maritime domain by exploring the geopolitical implications of landlockedness, specifically within the maritime domain. Exclusion from the maritime domain reduces the agency of landlocked states in international maritime relations and has a negative impact on national development. In order to achieve this study, a qualitative research design and a conceptual framework based on geopolitics were used to create a better understanding of the constraints and opportunities facing LLCs in the international arena. Using Botswana as a single case, this study demonstrated that the maritime domain is not the sole preserve of littoral states but is also relevant to the national security of LLCs. This approach identified elements of geopolitics, mainly under geography, economics and politics, which are crucial to understanding the interests of a land-locked country.

The paper has shown the significance of linking LLCs to the maritime domain despite their geographical isolation from the ocean. In attempting to answer the main question, Chapter One provided a background and context of geopolitics as an analytical approach and the maritime domain in relation to LLCs. The literature review in Chapter One showed LLCs as geographically disadvantaged and excluded from the maritime discourse. What is the conceptual framework that can be applied to study the case of Botswana as a LLC? Chapter Two provided a conceptual framework comprising the analytic elements under geopolitics, including a diagram portraying the interrelatedness of the different concepts. The analytical framework divided geopolitics into two components of geography and politics. These components were further divided into the local context and the regional context. The geographic conditions, comprising both physical and human geography, included location and size, climate, topography, frontiers and boundaries, natural resources, demography, infrastructure and technology and economic activity. The political component included domestic politics, national power, regional relations and foreign policy. The geopolitical analytical framework demonstrated that the domestic physical conditions of a state influence its position in the international system. The physical geography and politics determine the interests of the state and ultimately shape the foreign policy. Foreign policy is a product and

expression of the geopolitical realities of trends linked to the country. The chapter also clarified the rights that Botswana, as a landlocked country, has in accessing the sea according to international law and regional frameworks. Chapter Three applied the conceptual framework to the Botswana context, answering the main research sub-questions stipulated in Chapter 1. It explained how Botswana is dependent on the infrastructure of transit states — Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe — in gaining access to the sea. It also demonstrated how Botswana has fostered sound cross-border political, economic and military relations and administrative cooperation to protect and secure its maritime interests in the region. Finally, Chapter Four discusses the observations of Botswana's position as a landlocked country in Southern Africa and how it can leverage its geopolitical advantages to secure its maritime interests.

## **4.2. Discussion and findings**

The research question of the study was: how has Botswana, as a LLC, navigated its geopolitical condition to enhance its national security through the maritime domain? The study found that Botswana has relied on multilateralism and regionalism to protect its interests in the maritime domain which affect national security.

### **4.2.1. Challenges of accessing the maritime domain**

“Landlockedness” is perceived as a geographical curse posing severe constraints to landlocked countries in the international system such as an overreliance on transit states and limited display of hard power due to isolation from the sea. As a LLC, Botswana can only access the maritime domain through transit states, thus reducing its agency in maritime affairs. International maritime frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea grant LLCs the universal right to access the ocean through transit states. However, the conditions of this access are subject to relations and agreements between the LLC and the transit state. It is reliant on political goodwill and effective transboundary cooperative practices. Political stability is also a key precondition for safe transportation of goods to and from LLCs.

The physical configuration of the state, Botswana in this case, and its surroundings is a key determinant of its behaviour towards other states and international organisations. Physical geography and human geography within the country's domestic context determine the country's position in a competitive environment and the measures that it will pursue to secure its key interests. As a landlocked country, Botswana faces particular constraints which drive its behaviour with key neighbouring states such as South Africa and on regional and international platforms such as SADC and the United Nations. In Chapter Three, it was demonstrated that Botswana is at the very heart of Southern Africa and is directly linked to

four countries—Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. With the absence of a coastline, the country has to rely on access to the sea through Namibia, Mozambique and South Africa. Access to continental and overseas markets through these transit states is crucial to the country's economy, which is also highly dependent on imports. Botswana's foreign policy is guided by its precarious reliance on external resources which is offset by access to multiple options of transit in a region that has relative political stability and promotes infrastructural and economic regional integration through institutions such as SADC. In addition, Botswana is dependent on the infrastructure of transit states to gain access to the sea. The maintenance of road and rail networks, as well as projects to harmonise infrastructure in the region, is mainly undertaken by SADC.

#### **4.2.2. Overcoming landlockedness**

Botswana escaped its geographical curse through its natural resources. Its abundance of minerals as a natural resource has enabled the country to establish itself on the global map as a key exporter of minerals such as diamonds and coal. It is key to note that the mere existence of natural resources does not necessarily translate to power. The country's domestic political landscape played an important role in facilitating the management of natural resources. Through the export of the commodities, the country was able to divert income towards growth and development, earning a reputation as one of Africa's most developed nations. Through the export of the commodities, Botswana experienced faster economic growth and development compared to its landlocked counterparts on the continent.

As a LLC, Botswana can overcome its geopolitical straitjacket in the maritime domain to enhance its national security through enhanced regional integration and maintained multilateral relations within the region. Due to its geographic position, at the very centre of Southern Africa, has managed to leverage its position to access the ocean from various directions. The country has established ties with its transit states through bilateral and multilateral agreements. Botswana's ability to promote and partake in transboundary cooperation schemes for resources such as water and for transportation and relevant infrastructure is largely due to the region's relative stability and cultural similarity. The region has a common legacy of colonialism, similarity of languages, climate and economic aspirations, setting a platform for cooperation. The development of key infrastructure facilities such as the Walvis Bay Dry Port have linked the country to key road and rail routes, making transportation of cargo cheaper and easier.

#### **4.2.3. Botswana beyond Southern Africa?**

However, Botswana has untapped potential to leverage its position at the centre of Southern

Africa. In order to achieve the country's goal of greater self-reliance and economic growth, the country needs to establish cross-border political and economic relations beyond South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Mozambique which are within the immediate region of Southern Africa. The key to Botswana's development is linked to accessing more markets. Increasing pressures against Botswana exports in Southern African countries mean that it may be worth exploring more markets further north on the continent. However, challenges linked to market expansion northwards on the continent may include poorer infrastructure and more political instability, particularly on rail and road transport. The harmonisation of infrastructure within Southern Africa and beyond is therefore an important precondition, making it a long-term goal that can only be achieved through greater multilateral cooperation. In addition, Botswana may need to enhance its uncodified foreign policy to place the development of bilateral and multilateral relations outside of Southern Africa as a key priority in the long term.

### **4.3. Conclusion**

The chapter outlined the key conclusions and findings of the study. As a landlocked state, Botswana is explicitly and implicitly distanced from the maritime domain. Despite its 'landlockedness', it is a stable and economically prosperous country compared to its Southern African counterparts. By exploring the nature of Botswana's maritime domain, the study analysed how the country has overcome its 'geopolitical straitjacket' in the maritime domain as a necessary but insufficient condition for ensuring its national security. The research studied the nexus between geopolitics, the maritime domain and national security in the African context which is understudied by scholars and practitioners, particularly in terms of LLCs.

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