Faites vos jeux!
Interests and socio-economic development in the Caprivi Region from a historical perspective

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1. Introduction

1. Aim of the study

A key interest in writing this study was to identify external, as well as local interests in the Caprivi Region, and to discuss how they affected Caprivi in their respective historical contexts. It attempts to trace and outline the interests of planners and decision-makers in Berlin, Pretoria, Windhoek and elsewhere that shaped the way in which they viewed the maps on their walls and tables, as well as the various priorities of the Caprivians themselves.

Were Caprivi, with its characteristically shaped outlines, to be viewed as a gambling table, the aim would be to clarify the name of the game, who sat at the table at what time, which were the stakes that the players invested, and why. This comparison, however, has several interesting shortcomings: Since its construction in 1890 in Berlin, and continuously until the present, the gambling table itself has been reshaped numerous times, most recently in the decision of the International Court of Justice over Kasikili/Sedu du Island. The reshaping largely took place on maps and, related to that, in the heads of those, who drew or consumed them. Although they were generally subject to intense negotiation between powerful players, those processes of reshaping mostly had a very limited impact on the physical reality on the ground in Caprivi, and there has never been a "rien ne va plus".

Not only the outlines of the table, also the name and rules of the game have been repeatedly renegotiated between the players, much in the same fashion as in British filmmaker Peter Greenaway's movie "Drowning by Numbers". The only fixed rule of the game, which is being played throughout the movie, is that none of its rules are fixed, and all are invented as the game goes on. To be dominant in such a game, it is naturally crucial to be both inventive in making up the rules, and to have at ones' disposal the means to impose them on the other players. Translated into the context of Caprivi near the end of the 19th century, we could, for example, say the name of the game was "Scramble for Africa".

Scramble for Africa was played in European capitals by politicians, church-, business-, military leaders, scientists and the media. Necessary paraphernalia were (highly inaccurate) maps, straight rulers and red pens and immense amounts of paper and ink. The rules were made up by the players, justified through invented traditions and imagined natural rights, and played out in the drawing of (still highly inaccurate) maps, parliament speeches, diplomatic notes, protection contracts with the indigenous people, church
sermons, profit calculations, marching orders, lectures and headlines. The stakes the players placed on the table were political, public and scientific credibility, missionaries, investments and soldiers. The expected gains were seats in parliament and history, new territories, souls, profits, natural resources for Europe's growing industries, export markets, medals and promotions, degrees and scientific fame, adventure, life experience, readers, and in some cases a less inaccurate map or a street sign with ones' own name written all over it. In the present context near the beginning of the 21st century, the stakeholders play "Nation Building and Reconciliation", "SADC Corridor", "Traditional Authority", "Peace and security" and "Development Cooperation", to name a few.

It is not my intention to reiterate this never-ending story for the rest of this study. Rather, I would like to invite the readers to creatively use and play with the game approach I proposed, and draw their own conclusions from the information I will present, or their own better knowledge.

The most enduring, and therefore arguably most experienced players so far have been the Caprivians themselves, though, as we will see, they also are comprised of many different groups with their own agendas. The Caprivians are also the most directly involved of all players, their interest not to lose is in many cases a vital one.

The author, his employer, many of his Informants, and probably most of the readers are not Caprivians living in Caprivi. Yet, they all have their own agendas, stakes and expectations in relation to Caprivi. The report should not be read as a cynical or non-compassionate suggestion how these agendas are to be valued, although the author is far from claiming to have written in a value-free space, himself. The Sanlam Center in downtown Windhoek offers the classical view of the powerful (from above), and one can hardly call it a value-free environment. The walls of the office where writing took place were covered with various maps of the Caprivi Strip, Deutsch Südwest Afirka and Namibia, from 1891 to space age. The key achievement the author hopes to make is to illuminate the past and stimulate the future discussion on Caprivi by telling the story of the game. The fact that this study has been carried out at a time when the Caprivi Region is making international headlines is not entirely a coincidence, but rather part of the story. Accordingly, recent events have not changed the approach to the subject, but strengthened it.

2. Mapping out the study

Particularly aimed at those who do not yet have a basic background knowledge about
Caprivi, chapter II sketches out the natural environment and history of the region and gives an overview of its current inhabitants and their livelihoods. The political economy will be dealt with in greater depth with a more detailed look into the history, structure and responsibilities of customary authorities, as well as their relation to the colonial and post-colonial state authority. A sub-chapter follows with a brief account of recent developments in the Caprivi since the wake of the secessionist movement in 1998 until the time of writing (March 2000).

Chapter III forms the core of the study. It begins with an account how the European colonial powers arrived on the scene and placed their bets for Caprivi as part of the Scramble for Africa. It continues with the German, British and South African periods of white colonial rule. The names of the game and players since Namibian independence are the following subchapter's issue. I attempt to trace how Caprivi's role has been "scaled up" over the past 10 years to the extent that the area has developed from a white to a red flashing spot on the mental maps of politicians, development planners and international security analysts. An attempt to describe what are the Caprivians' own perceptions and priorities marks the end of chapter III.

Finally, the study is rounded up with a discussion of whether the Caprivi Region deserves the special attention it currently receives and, if so, what should be its focus.

II. Description of the study area

1. Physical environment

Caprivi is one of Namibia's 13 regions, which were proclaimed by the Namibian government in 1991. In 1998, the eastern regional boundary of Caprivi was changed and now runs across the West Caprivi Game Park from north to south east of Omega. The area west of the new boundary was added to the Kavango Region. I have decided to include this area in my study of Caprivi, since historical and much of the contemporary statistical material on the Caprivi Region treat it as part of Caprivi.

In its boundaries before 1998, Caprivi covers an area of just over 20 000 km² and stretches 450 km from east to west and up to 100 km from north to south. Two rivers divide Caprivi into three distinct areas:

- the westernmost section between the Kavango Region and the Kavango River,
- the area between the Kavango and Kwando Rivers, largely made up by the West Caprivi
Game Park, and
- eastern Caprivi from the Kwando to Impalila Island in the easternmost corner.

Caprivi characteristically sticks out from the rest of Namibia and extends almost to the centre of southern Africa. The region's international borders with Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana were largely defined at the Berlin Conference of 1890 and, in the fashion of the time, follow rivers or purely mathematical straight lines. As Mendelsohn and Roberts point out in their atlas of Caprivi, these borders do not follow any distinct environmental or cultural boundaries (Mendelsohn and Roberts 1997). The habitats of plants and animals living in the Caprivi extend into the neighbouring countries' adjoining areas, and the same is true for the region's human population. Especially for larger mammals, free migration across the artificial colonial boundary is a crucial necessity to survive in the semi-arid environment.

Caprivi is part of the Kalahari Basin. Soil samples and climatic data indicate that earlier, the area was a part of the Kalahari Desert, which later retreated southwards due to changes in the Southern African climatic regime. Today, it lies in a transitional zone between the northern edge of the Kalahari Desert and the semitropical mountainous Southern Angola. Caprivi shows only little variations in the surface relief and slightly slopes from west (1100 m above sea level) to east (930 m). Virtually the whole area is covered with thick deposits of Kalahari sands. Due to their low organic and nutrient status, they are generally unsuitable for a sustained agricultural production without fertilisation. Having a low water holding capacity, they dry out rapidly after rain and are easily susceptible to water- and wind erosion. In the channels and floodplains of the Kavango, Kwando-Chobe and Zambezi Rivers, as well as in fossil drainage lines, there are generally more fertile soils deposited and cultivation by local farmers is mainly concentrated in those areas.

Temperatures in Caprivi are ranging from a daily average of +5°C in winter to +33°C in summer (Naerea et al. 1993, p.34). The rainfall data gathered for Katima Mulilo since 1945 shows an average of about 700 mm per year, while Andara receives 600 mm during a rainy season that lasts from November to March. Information on the long-term average does not reveal, however, that rainfall varies strongly from year to year. Statistically, over a period of 100 years ten rainy seasons must be expected to bring exceptionally high or low rainfall, which can cause severe drought or contribute to strong floods in the floodplains. Apart from the overall amount of annual rain, its timely distribution within the rainy season is a crucial factor influencing the conditions for agriculture (Naerea et al. 1993, p.34; Olszewski and Moorsom 1995, p.41). With contemporary meteorological methods, long-term rainfall
forecasts for Caprivi are very hard to make. Farmers have to mainly rely on their experience, informal security systems and adapted farming methods to increase their food security, apart from emergency drought relief provided by external donors and the Namibian government.

During an average rainy season, the water level of the Zambezi along Caprivi's border with Zambia rises 5 – 8 m above the dry season's level. As with the Kavango and Kwando Rivers, the Zambezi reaches its peak around April. If the 8 m margin is exceeded, its waters push the Chobe River from the junction at Impalila Island upstream, and the eastern grasslands get flooded for several weeks, except for some elevated sandy hills and land bridges extending from the forested lowland. Local rains in Caprivi are not the only factor influencing the rivers' water levels. The climatic conditions which affect the precipitation in eastern Angola and western Zambia - the catchment areas of the Kavango, Kwando and Zambezi also plays a major role (Pallett 1997, p. 73).

Retreating floodwaters leave behind them canal-like ditches and pools, called "mulapo". They provide water and other important natural resources, such as edible plants and reeds for the local population and their cattle herds during the dry season. In the 1957/58, and 1973/74 seasons, exceptionally strong rains temporarily created the Lake Llamezi, which dried up in 1965 and 1985 respectively. The remaining soil is now highly fertile farmland and has been repeatedly the subject of heated land disputes among the locals.

The strong fluctuations of the Chobe's water levels are the key natural factor that led to the past and present border disputes along its course. Countless meanders and temporary river islands have to date confused attempts to clearly demarcate and demarcate the Chobe section of the Namibia-Botswana border. While the Zambezi border with Zambia is similarly complicated, a joint South African – Northern Rhodesian border commission completed the task to clarify its course already in 1933 (Hangula 1993, p.71).

Caprivi's probably most stunning natural feature, especially to visitors coming from the drier parts of Namibia, are its rich forest and veld areas with their immense diversity in plants and animal species. Especially when Caprivi turns green after the first seasonal rains, the state-protected national parks and state forests that cover over 40% of Caprivi, as well as the communal areas (56%) give the impression that plant and animal life is abundant and in balance with itself. However, Caprivi's natural environment has changed considerably since South Africa actively began imposing colonial rule there in the 1960s. The most direct action taken were the uncontrolled decimating, and even extinction of large mammals by the
occupying military forces, professional and spare-time poachers, and locals who had been introduced to firearms (Breytenbach 1997). I will come back to these events in chapter III.1.3. The forestry administration, which was established in Caprivi during that time not only constructed fire cut-lines and protected forest areas, it was also involved in the extraction of considerable amounts of valuable timber, and helped clearing border- and military areas of their woody vegetation (Kwenani in interview).

Since Namibian independence, the driving factor behind environmental degradation in Caprivi has been the growing population pressure, which I will address in the following chapter. Land for settlement, cultivation and grazing is not yet critically short in Caprivi as a whole. Nevertheless, the delicate balance of the regional ecosystem is already disturbed, in some areas severely. One key issue where several processes of environmental degradation become visible as interrelated is fire. Throughout Caprivi, large forest and grassland areas are subject to burning every year towards the end of the dry season from September to November. Older trees can survive small fires, but after repeated burning the forest’s density, diversity and ability to regenerate is meanwhile seriously affected in some areas. Local people cause majority of the fires, and for various reasons: Clearing and fertilising of agricultural land, speeding up the growth of fresh grass in the pasture areas, expected advantages for fishing and hunting. Often fires are started or spread due to careless action by individuals, or a lack of control and accountability in the remote rural areas. Repeated burning contributes to negative effects of forest clearing and overgrazing, and all processes together eventually lead to land degradation, in the form of soil erosion and bush encroachment.

2. A brief history of Caprivi

The following account of Caprivi’s history is only a deliberately short overview, as some of the points I touch upon will come up again in greater detail in Chapter III.

The ancestors of most of the present-day native Caprivians have probably moved into the Caprivi and adjacent areas during the 17th and 18th century. Prior to that various San communities made use of the territory as part of their hunting and gathering grounds. By the 1830s, the whole of eastern Caprivi was incorporated into the Barotse Empire established by the Lozi, whose power base was located in what is now southwestern Zambia. Their dominance over the Subiya, Fwe and Yeyi people was, however, challenged and interrupted between 1838 and 1865 by the Kololo, so that David Livingstone found a
Kololo chief ruling in eastern Caprivi when he entered the area in 1851. In the western part of Caprivi, the Mbukushu living near the Kavango river were invaded by the Tawana who had expanded their Ngami Empire northwards from what is now mainly Botswana. During the second half of the 19th century, the first whites arrived on the scene, mostly adventurous travelling traders and explorers, and very committed missionaries from Europe and the Cape colony.

Caprivi became part of German Southwest Africa in 1890 as the result of a German-British agreement to establish a land corridor from the existing German Southwest African protectorate to the Zambezi. The Germans initially referred to the area as "Deutsch Bechuanaland" or "Sambesi Korridor". After the publication of the results of Franz Seiner's 1905/6 expedition to the area, the name "Caprivi Zipfel" became commonly and officially accepted (Seiner 1909). Graf Leo von Caprivi was the successor of German Reichskanzler Bismarck, and under his administration the contract of 1890 had been settled. Colonial rule in Caprivi was, however, not exercised until 1909 when the German colonial army officer Hauptmann Kurt Streitwolf set up the administrative outpost Schuckmannsburg on the banks of the Zambezi. He engaged in negotiations for protection contracts with the natives in the areas east of the Kwando, and in the following years a small police unit consisting of Germans and trained natives exercised German colonial rule in Caprivi. No German settlers moved into Caprivi, and only a handful Europeans maintained trade posts with German permission (Fisch 1996).

The territory was seized by British troops from Rhodesia in 1914. After the end of World War I, the League of Nations in 1920 empowered the South African Union to mandate the former German colony. However, due to the remoteness of the area South Africa in 1921 transferred the administrative duties over Caprivi to the British Bechuanaland authorities. The bureaucratic ping-pong continued: In 1929, Caprivi was incorporated back into South West Africa, and the regional administration moved from Schuckmannsburg to Katima Mulilo in 1935. This setup didn't work out, either. In 1939, the Ministry of Native Affairs in Pretoria took over the administration of Caprivi east of the Kavango River, while for the rest Windhoek remained responsible. All along, the customary authorities, which Streitwolf had empowered to carry out the will of the Kaiser remained in power, and all ensuing colonial bureaucracies worked through and with them.

Apart from frequently changing the administrative settings, few efforts were made to develop Caprivi, and especially the eastern part to which road access remained difficult. The Katima Mulilo hospital was built in 1945, and the Roman Catholic Church and Seven Day
Adventists maintained missionary stations, schools and hospitals for natives. The first massive changes came after the rise of the armed movement in the late 1960s. Regional development efforts were strongly influenced by the homeland concept, which the Odendaal Commission issued in 1964 and directed from Pretoria (Fisch 1998, p.14). The South Africans introduced basic infrastructure development projects (roads, water supply, agriculture, health and education). In 1972, East Caprivi obtained its own Legislative Council, which incorporated once again the customary authorities into regional decision-making. De facto however, all crucial decisions concerning development projects were still directed from South Africa (Fisch 1998, p.14).

After independence, the Namibian government implemented fundamental reforms of the administrative system, which included the delimitation of new regions and constituencies. The reforms re-established the former Caprivi Strip in its old borders from the German period and divided it into five constituencies (Delimitation Commission 1991, p.9). However, until the present date many aspects of the actual administrative practice in Caprivi have hardly changed since 1990.

3. The people of Caprivi

Caprivi is among the most densely populated areas of Namibia. In 1996, an estimated 110 000 people lived in the Caprivi Region. Eastern Caprivi was home to 2/3 of all Caprivians, in the area between the Kavango and Kwando Rivers lived 6%, and in the westernmost parts 27% (Mendelsohn and Roberts 1997, p.13). The composition and total size of Caprivi's population has changed significantly over the last decade. Since independence, many ex-combatants, former SWAPO fighters and men recruited by the SADF, have returned to Caprivi. New groups, e.g. from Zambia and Namibia's central northern regions have also migrated into Caprivi. The Zambians often cross into Namibia without permission. Migration from Caprivi into Namibia's urban centres has also increased after independence. Yet, in comparison to the national average, a disproportionately high number of people return after a certain period of working or studying to their home communities (Melber 1996, p.8). The imbalance in interregional migration and the birth rate of 3.06% (in 1991) are the reasons for a fast growth of the region's population with 4.6% annually in 1991 (National Planning Commission 1992).

The largest language groups living in eastern Caprivi are the Subiya, Fwe and Yeyi. While the Fwe can be further subdivided into six different sub-groups, the Subia and Yeyi
are rather homogenous (Fosse 1992, p.22). Each group has their own language, but all speak Lozi, the lingua franca of eastern Caprivi and southwestern Zambia. A small number of Mbukushu and Khoe-San people live in eastern Caprivi as well, some of them have settled in their own villages, mainly in the western parts of East Caprivi near the Kwando. Through intermarriage, they have partly mixed into the other groups. The Caprivi Game Reserve has only some 7000 inhabitants, mainly Khoe who are concentrated around Omega. They were settled in the area during the 1960s by the SADF who used them as scouts in the war against the liberation movement. Finally, the westernmost section is home to Mbukushu and Gciricu people. Throughout Caprivi, close family ties with people from the nearby regions in Botswana, Zambia, and Zimbabwe have existed for a long time and led to strong personal and economic exchange between these areas. The same goes for the Mbukushu and Gciricu in the west and their neighbours on the Angolan side of the Kavango and in Botswana. Only some few hundred Namibians with European background, and expatriates who mainly work in development cooperation live in KM and Divundu, or on game lodges in remote areas.

Until the early 1970s, Caprivi’s population was concentrated in areas where a diversified use of different ecosystems was possible, for example on the edge of forests and floodplains in the well-watered areas near the region’s rivers and floodplains (Naeraa et al. 1993, p.35). The San communities and the inhabitants of the river floodplains were particularly mobile, a necessary reaction to the seasonal change in availability of natural resources, especially water. Intra-regional migration patterns and the spatial distribution of Caprivi’s population have since then changed fundamentally. The people have become more permanently settled, often near the transport-, water-, health-, education- and agricultural facilities built by the colonial administration, church- and other aid organisations. The population concentration has strongly increased in the proximity of the Trans Caprivi Highway. On the edges of Katima Mulilo migrants have built large informal housing areas. Better opportunities for employment and education are the main pull-factors behind the migration from the rural villages, Angola and Zambia to Katima Mulilo and smaller towns like Mukwe, Divundu, Omega and Sibbinda. Rising land pressure, and worsening conditions for agricultural production are the major push-factors in the rural areas. The poor state of the economy in Zambia and the Angolan war drive people there to search for better opportunities in Namibia. Still, those who have moved usually maintain strong personal connections to their home communities, and many people return to their rural villages and across the border over the weekends or after periods of temporary employment (Naeraa et
4. Human development and socio-economic environment

Studying the 1999 UNDP Report for Namibia, one notices that in comparison to the other 12 regions of the country the Caprivi Region has climbed down the Human Development Index (HDI) for Namibia rank from No.11 in 1996 to 13 since 1998. The HDI has also dropped in absolute value during that period (from 0.53 to 0.468). In 1999, Caprivi was the taillight in life expectancy, and on rank 11 in adjusted per capita income. Accordingly, the 1999 Human Poverty Index (HPI) for Namibia places Caprivi at the top of all regions, largely due to the high (46.8%) likelihood for Caprivians to die before reaching the age of forty. The dramatic spread of HIV/AIDS in recent years is the prime reason for the worsening situation (UNDP 1999). In 1996, one out of every four pregnant women tested were HIV positive (UNDP 1997). Malaria and tuberculosis continue to be other major killers. Educational factors place Caprivi in mid-field among Namibian regions, but illiteracy among the elderly and middle-aged remains very high (Mendesohn and Roberts 1997, p.14). Despite a marked drop since 1998, Namibia in global comparison still ranks in the field of countries with "medium human development". Caprivi, however, is clearly in the "low human development" group as defined by the UNDP. In its summary introduction, the Namibia Human Development Report 1999 accordingly points out, that Caprivi and its western neighbour Kavango "merit special attention in national efforts to improve human welfare" (UNDP 1999, p.3).

The present state of public health in Caprivi gives reason for grave concern among public health workers and aid organisations that are active in the region. Since it directly affects other crucial sectors, such as employment, agricultural production and education, the health situation must be regarded as the single most important constraint to the long-term development of the socioeconomic environment in Caprivi (Aaron in interview). The frequent occurrence of tuberculosis and malaria is related to the special environmental conditions of the wetland ecology in Caprivi's river valleys and floodplain areas. Food insecurity due to droughts and floods further affect the general resistance to disease (Eriksson 1998, pp. 16, 30). Eriksson points out that the fast spread of HIV/AIDS is related to cultural beliefs, tradition, gender roles and lifestyles in Caprivi. Crucial factors are also of historical and geographic nature. Many socially uprooted and displaced people from the armed struggle, the close proximity to four other countries, and the intra-regional migration generally cause a high mobility of locals, and large numbers of foreigners passing through (Eriksson 1998, p.21). Katima Mulilo in this respect is a highly sensitive spot (Aaron in interview).
HIV/AIDS is to some locals still a taboo theme or matter of witchcraft, but many people, the state authorities and civil society groups meanwhile widely recognise the epidemic as the most pressing problem in the region, as well as on a national level. All public sectors and numerous aid organisations are, at least formally, involved in addressing the epidemic in Caprivi. But Trudy Mantel, former HIV/AIDS co-ordinator in Katima Mulilo says: “The crucial point is in how far counselling, condom distribution and awareness campaigns can influence who is in charge and what really happens in the bedroom” (Mantel in interview).

The Caprivi Region has two hospitals in Katima Mulilo and Andara with 220 and 100 beds respectively, three health centres with 2-4 beds and 30 clinics in the rural areas with only very basic facilities. Poor transport access to health services and a lack of communication facilities are major constraints in the rural areas (Caprivi Regional Health Management Team 1998). Traditional healers, herbalists and traditional birth attendants play a crucial role in health care in Caprivi (Aaron, Fisch and Mantel in interviews; Eriksson 1998, p.14). Locals widely make use of the services of the men and women whose treatment is generally a mixture of psychological counselling, herbal medicine treatment and shaman ritual. Whole villages take part in the healing rituals, which therefore can have a strengthening effect on the community spirit as a whole (Eirola et al. pp.58 – 65; author’s observation). In some villages, church members are opposed to the practice of healing and rain-making ceremonies, but often faith in forefather spirits and Jesus don’t exclude each other, and people practice both.

Some traditional healers and birth attendants are also educated in western medicine and formally employed by the state. An association of traditional healers exists, and public and traditional health care workers often co-operate and forward patients to each other (Fisch and Mantel in interviews). The expressed wish by both sides for more co-operation in Caprivi has resulted in concrete steps, but resources to support such initiatives are scarce (Eriksson 1998, p.39; Mantel in interview). One constraint that is brought up frequently is the fact that some traditional healers claim to be capable of healing AIDS. Healers who have received formal training on the nature of the disease often resign from their claims, though. Those doctors openly say, that AIDS is not witchcraft and admit that they can only treat, not heal HIV infection (Eriksson 1998, p.40). A 1999 UNDP conference in Lusaka highlighted the knowledge and use of herbal medicine in Southern Africa as a valuable asset that needs to be developed and applied. The South African Medical Research Council promotes research collaboration at the University of the Western Cape between traditional healers.
and western-trained scientists to tap into still-existing rich indigenous knowledge systems (Makagoba 1999, p.367).

One of the most striking features of Caprivi during the colonial period was the region's relative inaccessibility. Until the 1950s, accounts of expeditions to eastern Caprivi which challenged the territory by land through the dry Kalahari or dense bush of western Caprivi resemble the good old Africa explorer's accounts of heroic attempts to penetrate into the unknown innermost "heart of darkness" (compare Seiner, Deutsch Südwestafrikanische Zeitung, Streitwolf and Fisch with Conrad and von Mecklenburg). For obvious reasons, the German Caprivi residents' usual access route to Schuckmannsburg went: Via railway from Windhoek to the coast, ship to Cape Town, railway to Livingstone, and by boat up the Zambezi - a good three week journey. Mail, and later telegraph connections went via Sesheke. From the 1940s until present, government bureaucrats, development aid workers and the military often prefer to fly into Caprivi. Via the Trans Caprivi Highway, the road distance to Windhoek is 1250 km. Private mini buses normally drive between Katima Mulilo, Victoria Falls and Windhoek several times a week. The civilian airport near Katima Mulilo has regular flight connections to several destinations in Namibia and throughout Southern Africa. The nearest rail links are in Tsumeb, Victoria Falls and Livingstone. There is no public transportation available in Caprivi. People instead hitch paid rides with the owners of private pick-up cars. Maize meal bags and other large goods are charged extra. The road network to the rural areas off the main highway is poor, and during the rainy season many villages can be cut off for several weeks, or are only accessible with 4X4 vehicles. Villagers until present widely use wooden sleds pulled by oxen, a simple, cheap and reliable technology, which is well adapted to the sandy environment and allows rural people to transport heavy goods over many kilometres, if necessary. Bicycles are widely in use as well. The most commonly seen Indian model is cheap, and obviously sturdy enough to manage heavy loads and sandy tracks.

Road Bridges exist across the Kavango at Bagani, the Kwando at Kongola and the Chobe at Ngoma, but the Zambezi river can so far only be crossed by ferry, boat or dugout canoe. A bridge across the Zambezi near Katima Mulilo on the Zambian side of the border has been part of the planned SADC Corridor that includes the upgraded Trans Caprivi Highway. The contract for the construction of the bridge between the German donor and the Zambian government has been signed lately, and construction is expected to be complete by 2003 (Küllmer in interview). I will come back to this project in chapter III.1.4.
Outside the larger towns, Caprivi's rural areas are not electrified. Some wealthier villagers operate generators or solar panels. Western Caprivi is connected to the Namibian grid system, while eastern Caprivi receives electricity from Zambia and produces additional power with a small generator at Katima Mulilo. Clean potable water is generally available, although in the dry season there can be shortages. Sewage treatment is virtually non-existent in villages and towns. The communication infrastructure has been improved over the past years. Public phones are available in Katima Mulilo and smaller towns along the main highway. Telecom Namibia is currently installing a new glass-fibre cable to Katima Mulilo, since the presently existing line is in a deplorable state, and cellular phone coverage is expected to include Caprivi in the near future. Electronic communication to the rural areas remains poor so far, though. Some health stations have radio units, but the equipment is usually out of order. NBC radio broadcasts are a crucial source of information, since many households in the villages have transistor radios. The stations at Katima Mulilo and Rundu broadcast information, entertainment and personal messages in Lozi, English and other languages spoken in the area (Nalisa and Nawa in interviews). Otherwise, the "bush drum" is the most effective way of local communication, and children are quick and reliable messengers in the village areas.

The livelihoods of the Caprivi people in pre-colonial time were almost entirely dependent on the use of natural resources: Fishing, hunting and gathering, shifting cultivation and pastoral land use were the key elements of the rural subsistence economy. The people traded their surplus and crafts within the region and across the rivers. In the 1920s, the European missionaries began to introduce ploughing with oxen and other agricultural techniques to the local population.

The colonial government's agricultural development activities since the 1970s were intended to establish permanent cultivation. The South Africans built agricultural extension stations to provide training, technical help, and veterinary services for farmers. The colonial authorities constructed wells to make the rural groundwater resources available and markets for selling agricultural produce. Several commercial farming projects were carried out, most notably the First National Development Corporation farm.

The heightened military presence in Caprivi since the late 1960s led to a considerable number of people, mainly men, leaving their home areas to join the armed struggle or the SADF (Munihango and Kwenani in interviews). In 1976, thousands of Khoi San people fled from Angola into West Caprivi, and many were recruited by the SADF as
scouts to track SWAPO fighters in the bush war (Fisch 1998, p.6). They were settled at Omega in the West Caprivi Game Park. After independence, some of the Khoi were resettled to South Africa. The relationship of those who remained at Omega with the Namibian authorities is troubled by their image as apartheid-era and UNITA collaborateurs. They have been frequently intimidated by security forces, a major reason for the exodus of over 2000 Khoi to Botswana since 1998 (Nangoloh and Fisch in interviews). The Khoi of West Caprivi generally rely on subsistence farming, but hunting and gathering plays a major role in their livelihoods as well. Efforts by the Namibian Ministry of Environment and Tourism to involve Khoi in community based wildlife conservation and tourism projects have become an important income opportunity for locals over the past few years. Events in 1998 and the security situation along the northern border have, however, put those efforts in jeopardy.

Cross-border trade in eastern and western Caprivi was adversely affected when the South Africans tried to seal off Caprivi. On the other hand, the regional economy flourished due to the South African’s demand for food, natural resources, crafts and labour. Demand slumped when during the 1980s, SWAPO concentrated its activities further west, but reached another brief peak shortly before independence due to the UN troop’s presence. The regional economy shrunk after 1990, but was until 1999 slowly recovering largely due to the growing tourism sector. Since the Angula conflict began to spill over into Caprivi and Kavango, tourism in the entire region has practically collapsed.

In 1994, subsistence farming ranked first (59%) before paid wages (17%), pensions (16%), business (5%) and cash remittances (2%) among the sources of income for rural households in Caprivi (CSO 1995). The majority of people are therefore directly dependent on the natural resources they find near their home villages. The share of female-headed households from the total was 39% in 1993, and therefore clearly among the highest in the country (Mendelsohn and Roberts 1997, p.14). The Namibian government partly continued the former South African agricultural extension services, but so far no clear national policy on rural agriculture has been decided upon. The most important crops people cultivate are millet, sorghum and maize. Maize is the only commercially valuable crop produced in relevant quantities. The overall annual crop yield is highly variable depending on the amount and distribution of rain, and the Caprivi region as a whole is a netto importer of maize meal in most years. Cheap illegal imports from Zambia account for an unknown, but undoubtedly significant share of the maize meal sold in the region (Naeraa et al. 1993, p.35). Plans of foreign investors and the Namibian government for large-scale commercial farming of cash crops, e.g. sugar cane, cotton and tobacco are constrained by land rights questions and the
availability of water and have not been implemented so far.

Rural subsistence farmer's agricultural practice is highly diversified and adapted to the constraints and opportunities posed by the natural environment. State agricultural extension has so far failed to enhance farmer's experience and focussed on technical assistance and large-scale production for export, with little success. Extension workers in state employment are at present generally not Caprivians. They do not easily interact with the locals and lack a basic understanding of the complex farming practice, its social and ecological framework (Mbeha, Bebi and Bagnall-Oakeley in interviews). An agricultural extension project funded by DFID is presently assessing the functioning of the wetland farming system, including the institutional framework of natural resource management in Caprivi (Bagnall-Oakeley in interview).

Over the last three decades, the number of cattle in East Caprivi has risen fast and steadily (Siambango in interview, Mendelsohn and Roberts 1997, p.26). Since 1990, the numbers have roughly doubled, which reflects improvements in veterinary services and better access to grazing areas due to limited flooding in the river floodplains. These facts cannot sufficiently explain why cattle owners, despite apparent overgrazing and shortages of drinking water for the livestock do not reduce the size of their herds. Mr. Isaaks from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development stated that after independence, the gradual lifting of marketing restrictions for meat from the areas north of the Red Line Cordon Fence has made cattle farming in East Caprivi more attractive (Isaaks in interview). For people in the rural areas who have limited access to banking services, cattle constitute the primary opportunity to invest and store capital. Several successive seasons with poor rainfall in the early 1990's have forced many farmers to abandon their livestock in emergency sales and caused a dramatic drop of up to 50% in Namibian cattle market prices. The situation was further worsened by ongoing exports of subsidised beef from European Union countries to Namibia and South Africa which, in 1997 alone, have caused the Namibian beef producers estimated losses of around 360 million N$ (Germanwatch 1997, p.1). In effect, local livestock owners preferred to postpone their sales, if possible, and wait for better prices (compare Amutenya and van der Linden 1993, pp.4-5). The regional market for livestock is strongly regulated by Meatco, a parastatal company. Meatco holds regular auctions in the rural areas to buy livestock from the farmers and runs a centre for disease- and meat quality control and slaughtering, as well as a cannery in Katima Mulilo's industrial district (Siambango in interview 1996; NEPRU 1991, p.248).

In 1993, there were 32 000 economically active people living in Caprivi. 4000 people
had formal employment, concentrated around Katima Mulilo and Divundu (CSO 1995). Unemployment has increased since the withdrawal of the SADF after independence and due to the rapid rural-urban migration (Naeraa et al. 1993, pp.41-42). With 70%, the civil service sector is the largest formal employer in the towns and virtually the only one in the rural areas. Other urban employers are banks, trading and retail businesses, tourist lodges, petrol stations, crop mills, and Meatco. A company producing high quality furniture from teak wood harvested in Caprivi is one of the more recent success stories. The production and trading of crafts made locally has been on the increase in past years and has the potential to give a considerable number of Caprivians an additional income. The basic materials for the crafts, such as palm leaves, clay, wood, reed and grass are available in Caprivi, and studies are under way which identify and map the natural resources’ availability and give recommendations for their extended, but sustainable use. The level of skills among men and women already in the business is very high. Some external players, who aim at strengthening a self-sufficient regional economy are already providing additional training in crafts techniques and marketing of the products, but far more could be done.

A sharp increase in the number of tourists visiting Caprivi since independence has created new income opportunities along the Trans Caprivi Highway, around Bogani/Divundu, Kongola and in Katima Mulilo. Many visitors, however, only quickly pass through on the way between the major tourist attractions Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe, the Okavango Delta in Botswana and Namibia’s Etosha Pan. Numerous projects currently under way in Caprivi, such as community-based crafts markets, campsites and traditional villages. New lodges in the Kwando river area are also aimed at attracting customers with an interest in Caprivi itself and its rare wetland ecology and wildlife. To date, four communal area conservancies have been gazetted in eastern Caprivi, allowing residents conditional rights over wildlife. These institutions should provide greater opportunities for income generation.

In the rural areas, various informal employment schemes still exist or have developed into new forms. Typical activities for which men get hired by neighbours and relatives are construction, transporting, and farming work. Women are more frequently self-employed, e.g. they process and market agricultural produce, crafts, and various forest and veld products (UNDP 1995, p.21). Informal employment is often connected to various forms of informal social security. During times of scarcity, wealthier households often help providing for the basic needs of poorer ones who, in return, offer their labour to the donor household. Construction work in the villages and collecting construction material from the nearby forest and marshland areas is a typical activity that earns poor rural households an
additional income. Villagers sell firewood, reed bundles and construction poles to traders, other villagers and tourist lodges. Especially the trade with thatching grass has developed into a lucrative business in recent years. Rural households often also rely on cash remittances or food transfers from household members in formal employment and formal transfers by the Namibian state, such as pensions and drought relief aid. The additional cash income and food donations are often the only way economically weak households can gain access to food during the crucial time from January to March, when food stocks are low, school fees have to be paid and the planting of new crops demands a heightened labour input.

Without sufficient analysis, statistical information on the economic activities of Caprivians fails to illustrate two very important aspects of people's livelihoods: Their diversity and dynamic nature. It is very hard to pin down what the individual or household is doing to make a living by carrying out surveys that give a snapshot account of people's activities. A Caprivan man may, at different times in his life, earn a living as a copper miner in Zambia, fisherman on the Chobe, subsistence farmer and cattle owner, grass roof thatcher working on his neighbour's house. A Caprivan woman may have a vegetable garden and sell her surplus in Divundu. The year before, she was a secretary in Windhoek and decided that she prefers to return to live in Caprivi. In the dry season, she is also a weekday domestic worker in a lodge near Kongola, and a manager of a community based crafts center (examples are based on real life histories). These examples should not indicate that people do not specialise according to their preferences or skills on certain activities. The point is that in the Caprivan context, with frequently and unpredictably changing environmental, socio-economic and political conditions, it is diversification and the ability to combine different activities according to the options available that secures people an income.

This study has occasionally touched upon the structures and institutions through which various communities of Caprivians organise their ways of living together. To try and provide a comprehensive description now would surely exhaust the author and readers of this study, as there are a number of different groups in Caprivi, each with their own version and history of handling their affairs. I will, therefore, only give an overview of the institutions in place and their structures, and use some examples to explain their history, practice and interaction. The following points on administrative structures, customary authority and the sensitive field of politics and ethnicity in Caprivi will later be taken into consideration when I discuss,
whether Caprivians are, and have been, capable of acting on behalf of their own interests when dealing with powerful external players. In other words: The intention is to clarify the Caprivians' role in the games which interested actors play over the land they are living on, whether they manage to be active players themselves, or only spectators looking on.

5. Administration and political economy

The European colonial powers set up and frequently changed administrative control over Caprivi after 1909. The territory was far removed from the centres of colonial administration and had very limited practical value for the colonisers until the late 1960s. Caprivians were allowed to have their own representatives and institutions for decision-making in most fields that concerned their everyday lives, most notably the management of the land and its resources. The institutions of governance the Caprivians had for that purpose are widely referred to as "traditional authorities", but I prefer to use the term "customary authority", for reasons I will still explain.

Despite their relative autonomy since the arrival of Streitwolf in Caprivi until Namibian independence, the native Caprivan's customary authorities have always been formally linked to a colonial administrative apparatus, and therefore were to some degree an integral part of it. External influence on decision-making in Caprivi did not start with the arrival of the Europeans. Fundamental changes in the regional groups' social organisation had begun to take place already in the 19th century under the influence of the Kololo and Lozi (Otto 1982; p.91; Schneider and Richter 1991, p.67). The institution of the Khuta (a formal meeting of customary leaders, see below) in eastern Caprivi has striking similarities with pre-colonial institutions for decision-making among the Lozi, and the Tswana "Kgotla" which existed in pre-colonial Botswana. I therefore assume that the Khutas are an arrangement, which was imported and functioned already during the pre-colonial period.

In 1909, Streitwolf took over and remodelled the existing system of colonial administration through "tribal governments" which were part of the existing Lozi administrative structure. The Lozi were at that time under the influence of the British, since the British Chartered Company of South Africa de facto carried out colonial rule in the region. Convincing the region's chiefs to pledge their loyalty to the German Kaiser was rather achieved my means of diplomatic skills in negotiations with the British and local African leaders, than with military force. Streitwolf was only in command of 17 soldiers
armed with light guns and had very difficult access to reinforcements - his march over more than 1000 km from Gobabis through the Kalahari Desert to eastern Caprivi had taken three months (Streitwolf 1911). Two results of Streitwolf's successful negotiations in 1909 were that the Lozi ended their political and economic control of Caprivi, and the return of several hundred Caprivians, mainly Subiya with their livestock from across the Zambezi. The people had fled prior to Streitwolf's arrival under pressure from their Lozi masters, and for fear of the unknown Germans. Streitwolf faced the challenge to create an atmosphere of trust among the locals, and carefully modelled the eastern Caprivian system of two separate customary authorities with their respective chiefs, which was still in place until independence (Streitwolf 1911).

As mentioned earlier on, the British and South African authorities showed comparably little interest in Caprivi after 1914 up until the late 1950s. With the beginning of the SWAPO's armed struggle and the enforcement of "banthusanisation" based on the Odendaal Commission Report, this attitude changed, and Caprivi was woken up from its state of sleepiness on the colonial periphery. Sources from the time of the armed struggle for independence indicate that "winning the hearts and minds of the people", so they would not co-operate with the "terrorists" was a central element of the South African strategy. Direct force was executed through the military and secret underground operations, not through the customary authorities (compare Walker 1978). In the course of the South African government's efforts for regional development that began during the 1970s, the authorities in Windhoek involved representatives of both the Fwe and Subiya (eastern Caprivi) and MbuKushu (western Caprivi) customary authorities in building up a formal system of regional self-administration. Colonial and customary authorities worked together in setting up a regional administration for agriculture, forestry, education, health, finances and laws in Katima Mulilo. A new Khuta for Katima Mulilo was established, comprised of equal numbers of Fwe and Subiya headmen.

When the map of administrative entities of Namibia was redrawn after independence, Caprivi was established as a region with six constituencies and Katima Mulilo as the region's capital. After the constituency and regional boundary change of 1998, Caprivi still has six constituencies, but with partly different borders. It should be noted here that the excellent atlas of Caprivi by Mendelsohn and Roberts, since it was published shortly before the latest change of boundaries, is not entirely up to date anymore. This fact is likely to cause some confusion among scholars and planners in the coming years.

As part of a countrywide program of administrative decentralisation, the current aim
is to build up regional offices of all relevant government ministries in Katima Mulilo. This process is yet far from completion, as several important administrative sectors, for example health and agriculture, are still run from outside Caprivi (Mantel and Bagnall-Oakeley in interviews). Important decisions cannot be made without consulting a distant bureaucratic apparatus with a limited understanding of the needs and reality on the ground. De facto, the customary authorities are still the only functioning decision-making institutions in the rural areas of Caprivi (Nawa and Kojwang in interviews).

The Namibian constitution explicitly mentions customary law in force at the date of independence as a legitimate source of administrative action in the areas where it originates, provided it does not conflict with the constitution or any other statutory law (Constitution of the Republic of Namibia, Article 140(1)). In 1995, the parliament in Windhoek passed a Traditional Authority Act that laid out specific responsibilities and rights for the customary authorities in the country, including the procedures for the choice of new customary leaders. The Namibian government has yet to resolve a number of questions over customary authorities' responsibilities and rights in relation to land and resource management. The communal land reform bill has been slowly ground through the bureaucratic mills since 1991. After it had finally passed through parliament in February 2000, it came under heavy criticism for allegedly failing to address the interests of non-governmental organisations and communal farmers.

While the state authorities regard all communal land as state property, and therefore as a national resource, the majority of people living on the land adhere to the communal property concept, which is fundamental to the functioning of customary authorities. A study on land reform and the land question concluded that the Caprivians strongly support their headmen being in charge of land allocation and prefer the current system to a possible management by the national authorities (NEPRU 1991, p.250). In the communal form of land management, the headmen have the role of custodians of the land, and the other members of the community measure them according to their ability to allocate and distribute it for the benefit of the community as a whole (Bebi in interview). In practice, this means that land tenure is based on the premise that each male adult member has the right to use land sufficient for his residence and feeding his family (Naeraa et al. 1993, p.39; NEPRU 1991, p.260).

Five distinct customary authorities exist presently in the Caprivi Region, though only four are
officially recognised by the government, and only two are undisputedly recognised by the other customary authorities, their subject people and the state authorities.

The Mbutshu people in western Caprivi are headed by their chief, or "fumu" Erwin Mbambo and his council of headmen, called "majami". The person of the current chief is highly controversial, and the same is true for his predecessor and current rival (compare chapter II.6). The Mbutshu community is currently split in their support, but the state authorities have officially recognised Mbambo, a violation of the 1995 Traditional Authority Act, his opponents claim (Fisch in interview; newspaper articles in Allgemeine Zeitung and The Namibian). The Mbutshu customary leadership has existed in some form since before, and all through the colonial period. The same is true for the Fwe and Subiya, which I will describe in greater detail in the next paragraph. In 1992, the Yeyi of eastern Caprivi declared themselves an autonomous tribe after, according to Maria Fisch, "for more than 120 years, they had been loyally subordinate to the chiefs of the Fwe" (Fisch 1998, p.32). The new Yeyi leadership received government recognition as well, in the opinion of opponents from the Fwe community also a violation of the Traditional Authority Act. The Act rules out the appointment of customary leaders, that are disputed by members within their community, and by existent customary authorities or the government. Finally, Chief Kipi George is the head of the Khoe living between the Kavango and the Kwando. Within his community, the chief is not disputed, but the Mbutshu leadership has so far prevented government recognition of the Khoe leader by using the veto powers granted to existing recognised customary leaders. Erwin Mbambo claims the Khoe are under his sovereign leadership, against the expressed will of the Khoe community.

The highest representatives of the Subiya and Mafwe customary authorities are the two chiefs and heads of the royal families. Their actual functions have an important ritual and representative nature. The chieftainship is nowadays always male and inherited through patrilineal succession, but the other headmen and the common people must also approve the successor formally (Otto 1982, p.87, Munihango in interview). The central element of customary authorities’ actual decision-making is the "Khuta", a formal meeting of customary authority’s representatives. District Level Khutas follow the Main Khuta in the hierarchy of customary authority: A group of villages constitute a District Ward, led by a district headman who is appointed by the Main Khuta from among the district's village headmen after consulting with them. The district and village headmen hold Khutas to decide over matters within the area they represent. The decision-making structure on the local level follows a similar pattern as on the higher levels. One of the headmen of the families that have settled
in a village area becomes the village Induna. His successor is normally, but not necessarily, a son or other close male relative and must be approved by the chief, the local public and the other family headmen. Together with them, the village Induna holds village Khutas over matters of local concern. If solutions cannot be found, the case can be passed on to the District- or Main Khuta for a final decision. Finally, the headmen of the extended families constitute the lowest level of the customary authority system.

Hierarchy of the Subiya customary authority system

sources: Interview with James Munihango on September 20th 1996; Fosse 1992, pp. 32f.

Although the formal structure of the customary authority systems in eastern Caprivi appears rather hierarchical, their actual way of functioning is far more complex. The customary leaders on all levels are often required to act as negotiators between disagreeing parties, rather than making decisions that exclude one group's or individual's interest while favouring another one's. Closer studies of customary authority systems carried out in different parts of the African continent have shown that the leaders' role as mediator is a recurring feature of many societies that existed before European colonisation (Ngcongco 1989). Two elements in the Subiya and Fwe customary authority systems give common people the possibility to hold their leaders accountable for their decisions:
• Personal access to the leaders: An Induna's decisions have to be acceptable for the members of their home communities, otherwise complaints will be brought before them personally. Leaders falling in the negotiator's role soon lose the respect and support of the people affected negatively by their decisions.

• Option of appeal: People discontent with their local leaders' decisions can demand that their case is dealt with on a higher level of the authority system where local decisions can be reconsidered and eventually overruled. The institution of the Khutas on several different levels also ensures that cases going beyond the lower authority's responsibility can be handled involving all affected parties, while the decentralised structure keeps local issues within the local authority's responsibility.

It is important to understand that customary authority in eastern Caprivi does not function as an isolated administrative body. The systems and their representatives are an indivisible part of people's livelihoods, and common people themselves (women and men) frequently refer to them as a cultural institution which binds their societies together and keeps up the direct link to their people's history (Caprivians in several interviews). The effectiveness of the customary way of decision-making is strongly dependent on a tight network of personal relationships and social control. Indunas must have a good knowledge of the history of their people and the land's use to be able to make decisions that are balanced between all parties' interests (Bebi in interview).

The norms underlying people's interpretation of what is "just" are not laid out in a written formal legal system. Like many African societies with customary authority elements, the Subiya and Fwe adhere to a body of orally transmitted customary law, a concept which Woodman defines as "norms generated by social practice and acceptance" (Woodman 1994). Bentzon and Berry point out, that customary law is based on the social reality of the society in which it is applied, and therefore changes in that society affect it. This characteristic feature contributes to a common perception that customary law tends to be unreliable and arbitrary - although, as Bentzon points out, formal law and its interpretation in practice are subject to continuous change as well (Bentzon 1994, p.94 and Berry 1993, p.13).

Prior to European colonial rule and, with some restrictions and declining effectiveness until Namibian independence, the customary authorities in eastern Caprivi had a variety of measures at their disposal to enforce customary law in the region. The Germans, British and South Africans would only intervene directly in cases of murder and other heavy crimes (Schneider and Richter 1991, p.47). Khutas had the right to arrest
suspect criminals and detain them in jails (Mbeha in interview). As an example for the enforcement of natural resource management principles, the sustainable use of the forest resources was regulated by a number of restrictions. Already the Lozi authorities declared forest reserve areas, certain tree species, and individual trees as protected. The hunting of so-called "royal game" was strictly controlled. The chiefs also declared hunting seasons and certain areas where hunting was allowed. For the felling or hunting of unprotected species, permissions had to be obtained from the local Indunas. Fees, usually paid in form of livestock, were collected from individuals or groups convicted of unlawful harvesting of natural resources, hunting, fishing, careless fire starting and other crimes. A communal forest fire warning and -fighting system existed as well (Hangula 1995, p.17; UNDP 1995, p.32). The Indunas of each village collected taxes once every year and forwarded them to the Khutas in Bukalo and Linyanti. At Katima Mulilo, the joint Fwe-Subiya Khuta carried out the tax collection (Bebi in interview).

Studies into women's formal participation in authority systems carried out in other parts of sub-Saharan Africa have revealed that before colonisation, their rights and status was often more equal, and in those systems created under colonial influence generally more restricted compared to men's. Diana Lee-Smith points out, however, that the view that women have lost out in the colonial modernisation process must be balanced against the strategies of women to gain access to land as independent persons by taking advantage of colonial laws and regulations (Lee-Smith 1996, p.59). Women were not necessarily always dependent and powerless, though often disadvantaged, but their strategies to gain access to resources were often less recognised by outsiders than the formal aspects of authority structures. Fact is, that during the earlier part of the colonial period the customary authority system in East Caprivi had a clear gender division in formal participation to the advantage of men. The separation, if in practice ever fully realised, opened up during the armed struggle for independence when women increasingly headed households and had to take over numerous typical male functions in the management and use of productive resources. Still, the formal involvement in customary authorities' bodies is until present strictly male. In property rights and access to farmland, there are definitely gender inequalities to the disadvantage of women (Bebi in interview). However, Caprivian women frequently find support for their social and economic interests through informal local channels and by associating themselves with powerful outside institutions, for example church organisations and other NGOs or the SWAPO women's league (compare Ranger 1983, pp.257-259).
Local people in Caprivi say that their "traditional authorities" have existed since "times immemorial", or have "always been there". In his classic definition, Max Weber described "traditional authority" as based in a belief in "sacred traditions in force since time immemorial, and the legitimacy of those who are called to govern by the said traditions" (cited in Hinz 1998, p.4). Various scholars have argued convincingly that "tradition" throughout colonial Africa was largely a colonial era's construct invented by Europeans and Africans who co-operated with them to justify and consolidate their control over the African majority population. The main line of argumentation starts with Ranger's suggestion that "custom in African pre-colonial societies was loosely defined and infinitely flexible. It provided a strong sense of identity, but also allowed for a high level of adaptation when necessary (Ranger 1983, p.247). Among the variety of precolonial social conditions and institutional frameworks, colonial powers isolated and reinforced those which best reflected the conditions in the motherland: The German and British colonies' "crafting models were all monarchical, authoritarian and patriarchal" (Mamdani 1996, p.39). As Mamdani points out, especially the British did not rest with only encouraging those tendencies in the societies they found, they "creatively sculpted tradition and custom as and when the need arose." They thereby "crystallised a range of usually district-level native authorities, each armed with a whip and protected by a halo of custom" (Mamdani 1996, p.49). Writing about the Zambian context, Gould concludes that the need for this arose from the joint wish of colonial officers and African leaders to "promote their own interests in the establishment and maintenance of a new order of political and economic control on the spatially dispersed and independent rural populations" (Gould 1997, p.157). This assessment is very well applicable to the situation in northeastern Namibia in 1909. In view of the information presented above on the former livelihood- and settlement pattern of the Caprivians, their transmigration into the region and the alternating Lozi, Kololo and Tawana dominance before the late 19th century, there is clear evidence that the precolonial societies in Caprivi indeed were spatially dispersed and in constant flux. The latter point also shows that Caprivians have experienced domination by powerful intruding societies since well before the Europeans imposed their rule.

Studying the actual practice of "traditional authority" in northern Namibia, Hinz finds that it "differs substantially from Weber's ideal type", and points out that "the tradition that traditional authority is based on is not untouchable" (Hinz 1998, p.4). Therefore, development of a tradition is possible, yet the developed tradition can be still understood by those who adhere to it as deriving from the same root as the practice, leaders etc. that
preceded the current ones (Hinz 1998, pp.4f). In this definition, the use of the attribute "traditional" acknowledges the fact that the authority structure is neither a solid institution of primordial origins, nor entirely a European colonial construct, but that it has developed onwards all through the period of colonisation, and continues to do so today. It is my impression that in the broader non-academic discussion, the term "traditional authority" is not used in the appropriate sense in which Hinz understands it. I therefore prefer to apply the term "customary authority".

Will customary authorities have sufficient public support and the ability to meet changing requirements to their leadership in the future, as their social and physical environment is undergoing rapid and fundamental changes? This question is central to the debate in Namibia and other countries where similar bodies of customary law and authorities still exist. (compare d'Engelbronner et al.). In areas of Namibia with predominantly communal land tenure, cases of land-grabbing and illegal fencing have occurred repeatedly. In the western part of Caprivi, Khoe have accused Mbukushu people from the Kavango river of illegally felling and fencing off forest areas in the West Caprivi Game Park that were previously used by the Khoe as hunting and gathering grounds. Local headmen in some cases appear to be lacking the power to control such action by economically and politically powerful individuals, in other cases there has been evidence that customary leaders took bribes for granting exclusive user rights to wealthy farmers (Hangula 1995, p.8). Among the younger generation of Caprivians, a declining respect for the customary authorities can already be noted, yet this is hardly shown openly in the rural areas. In discussions with secondary school students from Sibbinda, a town situated close to the Trans Caprivi Highway 40 km west of Katima Mulilo, the young people acknowledged their headmen's' social and cultural role, understanding of the natural environment and experience in the management of natural resources as very valuable. Still, in their point of view, the Indunas often lacked a formal education, and therefore failed to include factors in their decisions that are new or outside their direct perception. Such factors are the fast-changing role of women in Caprivi's social and economic environment, newcomers immigrating in large numbers into the region and the danger of serious long-term damage to the environment and natural resources (Sibbinda Secondary School students, Mbeha in interviews).

One crucial issue that has affected the functioning of customary authority in Caprivi since independence is the problematic interaction of customary authority's and political agendas. This subject is, in fact, the entry point into a labyrinth of multi-layered interests
spread out over a political minefield that originates from the colonial era. It has become an exercise of duty for outsiders interested in Caprivi, such as scholars who claim not to be affiliated to any of the involved parties, to plead “not guilty” for any political interpretations others make of their work. Yet, they usually find themselves being verbally crucified by some or all of those mentioned in their writings. With full knowledge of this, I will now submerge into the muddy waters.

6. Politics and ethnicity

The Fwe and the Subiya, despite their different origins, have lived in eastern Caprivi as neighbours for over two centuries, and inevitably have much in common. Both groups were under Lozi and Kololo domination. The people speak Lozi and their own languages, which are close to Lozi, they are partly intermarried with each other, and their livelihoods have been very similar up to the present. As mentioned earlier, Streitwolf carefully sculpted the existing authority structures he encountered into two separate, hierarchical and equal customary authorities under German control. The South African authorities later reinforced the separation of Fwe and Subiya as distinct “tribes”, but an exact spatial demarcation of separate tribal territories, an integral part of apartheid politics since the Odendaal Commission, was never fully realised in Caprivi. In 1982, both groups rejected a South African border commission’s recommendations for a definitive demarcation, and there has been no final agreement since. Disputes have flared up repeatedly, especially over the highly fertile farmland in the former Lake Liambezi area, but rarely lead to physical confrontation between the locals. Since the 1970s, the respective customary leaders have attempted to gain territorial and political superiority over each other by means of formal claims they brought before higher-level state authorities.

Since independence, this and other disputes have taken on a party-political dimension. As in other parts of Africa, the electoral preferences of Caprivians are strongly influenced by those of their customary leaders. The Fwe have a strong affiliation to the DTA, and the long-time former president of the party Mishake Muyongo is a member of the Fwe royal family. DTA had a regional majority in Caprivi until 1998, but since the separation of the Yeyi from the Fwe customary leadership, the DTA’s power base has shrunk. For over 120 years, the Yeyi had been subordinate to the Fwe leaders, but in the 1980s, some Yeyi leaders, against the opposition of others, demanded the Fwe to release them from the
coalition, arguing they had been treated to their disadvantage. The Fwe rejected the demand and sanctioned the "deserters", but in 1993, after seeking the support of the SWAPO government, they inaugurated their own chief Boniface Lutibezi Sangwall. The dispute continued, as the Fwe in 1995 argued the inauguration was illegal according to both existing customary law and the new Traditional Authority Act. The SWAPO government actively engaged in shuttle diplomacy as emotions in Caprivi ran high and police had to enforce order. Although the Yeyi chieftainship is now an irreversible fact, many Fwe and government critics regard the way in which it came about as an example of political interference by the SAWPO government with customary authority matters. On the other hand, the Yeyi undeniably are a group with an identity and language different from the other Fwe groups. Their claim for an independent chieftainship is therefore not an illegitimate one. Either way, the episode is not forgotten yet and has raised general concern for the chances of future peaceful cohabitation by different groups in Caprivi.

The clear majority of Subiya have since independence been loyal SWAPO supporters. While Muyongo repeatedly claimed, the SWAPO government was favouring their Subiya voters in directing development funds, administrative positions and drought relief aid, SWAPO and also some Fwe leaders accused Muyongo and his party of willingly blocking government efforts for regional development. In the 1998 regional elections, DTA for the first time lost the Katima Mulilo constituency and the regional majority to SWAPO. DTA accused SWAPO of voters' intimidation and other unlawful practices, and an embittered Mishake Muyongo saw himself unfairly defeated on his own ground. He apparently reactivated old allies from the period of the armed struggle in Botswana, South Africa and Zambia and made secret plans for an armed secessionist movement to take over the Caprivi Region by force.

In late 1998, Namibian Special Field Force (SFF) units and the police were alerted by intelligence information on ongoing military training to prepare for an armed coup and conducted searches in areas mainly inhabited by Fwe and Khoe people. Locals were arbitrarily arrested, questioned and harassed in clear violation of the Namibian Constitution and international agreements on human rights to which Namibia is a signatory. The events lead to an exodus of some 2500 Caprivians, most of them either Fwe or Khoe people, who fled across the border into Botswana and were accommodated at the Dukwe refugee camp. Muyongo, the Fwe chief Mamili and Khoe chief Kipi George were among the refugees. UNHCR later relocated Muyongo and Mamili to Denmark where they were granted political asylum. DTA excluded them from the party and strongly condemned the secessionist
movement. There are clear indications that, while some of the refugee Fwe were indeed supporters of the secessionist cause, the Khoe had no political motivations apart from fearing the Namibian security forces. Muyongo and his followers apparently tried to manipulate the Khoe in a de-facto hostage situation inside the Dukwe camp in order to give the public impression that a majority of Caprivians supported their cause. This adds to the testimony of numerous Fwe refugees, and later armed secessionists who claimed Muyongo and his close companions had promised them university scholarships and well-paid jobs once Caprivan independence would be achieved. Several hundred refugees have been repatriated since, but many Khoe, including their chief, remain in Botswana. An unknown number of additional Khoe have fled the western Caprivi since security in the Angolan border region began to deteriorate in December 1999.

On August 2nd 1999, some one hundred armed secessionists attacked strategic targets in eastern Caprivi, but were soon defeated by Namibian armed forces. President Nujoma declared a state of emergency in Caprivi, the borders were closed and search operations for supporters of the secessionists began throughout Caprivi. Unlawful treatment of suspects, including severe torture committed by members of the Special Field Force (SFF) and regular police in Katima Mulilo in the aftermath led to a wave of strongly worded domestic and international protests and news media attention in a way unprecedented in Namibia since independence. The tourism sector in the area suffered severely, and Namibia's reputation as peaceful prospering democracy was shredded.

Eastern Caprivi has remained peaceful since, but cases of arrests in connection with the August attack still occur and there is no clarity, in how far the secessionist movement still exists in an organised way. The SFF is still in the area, but in reduced numbers since the Angolan border situation demands their presence further west. The Fwe have meanwhile appointed their new chief George Simasiku, who was not opposed by the government. During the 1999 National Assembly and Presidential Elections, which went peaceful and smooth in Caprivi, the DTA lost their former strongholds largely to the new CoD party while SWAPO remained strong in the other parts.

In the westernmost part of the Caprivi region, the Mbukushu community is divided over the current chieftainship of Erwin Mbambo, who is known to be a dedicated SWAPO supporter. His predecessor and DTA member Alfons Mayavero was voted out of office by his people for his continuous inability to deliver the services expected from his office, and for personal failures. The current chief who worked with the United Nations Institute for Namibia in Lusaka until 1989 is known to exercise his leadership with dictatorial methods, some of
them in clear violation of both customary and formal laws of Namibia. Various efforts to promote development projects, such as community-based conservancies in western Caprivi have continuously been blocked and plotted against by the current MbuKushu leadership. A majority vote to reinstall Alfons Mayavero was not accepted by the SWAPO government, which maintains the vote did not comply with the regulations of the Traditional Authority Act.

The current MbuKushu leadership is also known to have a hard hand with the Khoe in the neighbouring Caprivi Game Park. As mentioned above, Erwin Mbambo vetoed against Kipi George's official recognition as chief. George was even "summoned", or rather forcefully abducted to appear before the MbuKushu leaders and received orders fitted with threats of sanctions in case he should not carry them out. The Khoe generally have a poor relationship with the SWAPO government as well, since the former freedom fighters continue to perceive them as collaborators with the regime that violently suppressed them for decades.

Fitted with the information provided in the previous chapters, the reader should now have a sufficient background on the history and current situation in Caprivi, as well as an understanding of the past and present key players in the region. Their interests have sparked through the text occasionally, in the following they will be in the centre of my attention.

III. A discussion of the role of Caprivi

1. Historic account of external interests before independence

One can only speculate about the motives that led the present Caprivians' ancestors to migrate into the area, but its richness in natural resources was certainly a factor. In precolonial Africa with its low population density, population movements were also often a way for weaker groups to avoid confrontation or dominance by other more powerful ones. The ancestors of the Caprivians could not avoid such external influence for long, though. When the Lozi, Kololo and Tswana extended their power over Caprivi, the locals had to pay their masters' tributes in the form of goods and slave labour (Fisch 1996, p.54).

Livingstone, the first European to set foot on Caprivi in 1851 was on a Christian, as well as an adventurous explorer's mission. He wanted to find out if the largely unknown
Zambezi would make long-distance trade from the interior of the continent to the coast possible. Having identified slavery and slave trade as the prime evils that prevented the spread of Christianity in Africa, he sought for ways in which the Africans could engage in more humane economic activities, and ivory trade seemed to him one possible solution (Livingstone 1857). Those who facilitated Livingstone’s expedition were certainly not indifferent to the prospect of new streams of ivory, gold etc. flowing into European trade harbours. The scientific community naturally celebrated Livingstone’s achievements in eliminating some of the largest white spots on the world map of his time, the churches praised his good intentions, and the British public was particularly pleased that it was “one of them” who did the job. The new trade route was a disappointment, since the Zambezi did not turn out to be the easily navigable river going to the nearby Atlantic, which Livingstone had hoped to find.

During the following five decades, Europeans rarely visited Caprivi. Missionaries, traders and explorers learned to fear the malaria infested remote area. Those who did try must have been driven by a good portion of adventure spirit and, in case they returned alive, could expect the admiration of their peers for making their name as one of the Africa explorers. One should not underestimate the importance of such motivations for the colonial period and up to the present. Caprivi always had, and still has the image of the remote, exotic, primordial and “real” Africa where fishermen in dugout canoes and pachyderms navigate the rivers, and where the dense bush is full of exotic animals and beautifully primitive people. Such images had the power to attract generations of tourists, scientists and development workers to Caprivi.

1.1. German period

The Caprivi Corridor was by no means a major issue in negotiations for the 1890 treaty, at the height of the Scramble for Africa. Rather, it was a by-product in the course of a far more important exchange of territory. The islands Helgoland and Zanzibar were central to the German-British agreement, and Germany made very far-reaching concessions to the British interests in East Africa to regain the small, but symbolically and, at that time, strategically crucial rock in the North Sea (compare Pakenham 1991, p.356). Since the 1890 agreement included the final settlement of Southwest Africa’s eastern border with British Bechuanaland, the Zambezi Corridor was Germany’s last chance to squeeze out any extra land for their
protectorate. The 1885 agreement with Portugal on the northern border of the German Southwest African protectorate had come under heavy criticism within the Germany colonial lobby. It effectively blocked the further expansion of the territory towards Northeast, where natural resources (especially game, forests and water) and human labour were believed to be abundant. The Zambezi Corridor at least seemed to offer access opportunities to these resources to some extent in the distant future. Distant and theoretical as well, but nevertheless inspiring high-flying German colonial ambitions was the prospect of bringing the two existing German colonies in Southern Africa 450km closer together, and the possibility of making the Zambezi navigable one day was not written off yet. One has to consider the spirit of the time: The colonial powers were in Africa to stay, so there seemed to be plenty of time to establish canals, dams, rail links and ship lifting facilities, which European engineering spirit had already embarked on bringing to the rest of the world. From the point of view of European statesmen who were looking at their large-scale maps, such plans seemed very real. Another aspect not to be underestimated was the eagerness of European royalties to pick up exotic mountains, lakes and rivers all over the world. The German emperor didn't mind adding the Zambezi to his collection, after he had already presented the empress with the Kilimandjaro.

Chancellor von Caprivi was a known sceptic of the German colonial project (and not the only one), but conceded in his inaugural speech at the Reichstag that there was no turning back anymore. He is known for his remark following the 1890 agreement that "the period of hoisting flags and concluding treaties must come to an end, so that what has been acquired can be utilised. Now the time for serious, inconspicuous work begins" (DKL 1920, p.264). During the next 15 years, the work was done anywhere else than in Caprivi. The area existed as a German territory only in a virtual sense, on maps. The attitude in the colony and the motherland was either indifferent or ironic. The name "Caprivizipfel" was not given as a way of honouring the Graf Caprivi. The German word "Zipfel" bears the connotation of something insignificant or useless, an appendix, and came gradually into common public use after Caprivi had become a controversial figure and stepped down in 1894. Its character as a joking or unofficial nickname can be seen in the quotation marks or the prefix "so-called", which Seiner and others still applied in 1906 before, in 1911, Streitwolf finally put the name "Caprivizipfel" straightforward without false shame into his writings and maps.

The territory continued to carry the stigma of an extremely remote and unhealthy place, and the fact that direct access to the eastern part via the waterless bush in the west
was virtually impossible effectively kept German administration out of the area. A debate over the actual economic value of the strip commenced in 1902, when the British signalled an interest in regaining the territory, which, they realised, the Germans had been unable to administer for well over a decade. In a long article from 1904 published in one of the leading newspapers of the German colony titled “the Caprivi Strip and its significance for the development of South West Africa”, the author Rothe calls for an extension of the Otavi railway line to the Zambezi. In his view, the significantly faster transport of goods, passengers and mail from the Southern African interior to the coastal harbours of the German colony, and onwards to Europe and America would make such a project economically viable. Rothe’s idea revived the original German intention to use the Caprivi Strip as an access corridor to the interior. In 1929, the Allgemeine Zeitung of South West Africa republished the original article in full length. Rothe’s proposal was obviously good enough to be reconsidered a quarter century later, but not to be carried out (Rothe, AZ 7.9. 1929). The debate in 1904 gained momentum as rumours of mineral deposits, fertile farmland and large game herds circled South Africa. In unofficial talks in July 1905, a commissioner of the Bechuanaland protectorate proposed to his German counterpart an exchange of eastern Caprivi for an area of the same size adjacent to the southern edge of the western section of the strip. The German authorities became suspicious of what might be the British motives behind the proposal and decided that a scientific exploration and evaluation of the actual potential for economic development of the Caprivi Strip was necessary prior to any further deliberations. The prevailing view was that a scientific expedition would be cheaper and raise less attention than a military operation, and in 1905 the German government appointed journalist and scientist Franz Seiner to lead an expedition. Seiner provided a vast amount of data on the land, its natural environment and human population. The first detailed map of the Caprivi Strip based on his measurements revolutionised the perception of the territory. Like his predecessors, the adventurous and authoritarian Seiner was not able to find an access route to eastern Caprivi through German territory, and the crucial question of how to administer the area through native authorities could not be based on Seiner’s sketchy results, and sometimes superficial conclusions (compare Fisch 1996).

By 1908, British pressure on the German authorities to become active in Caprivi had mounted considerably. Situated within a broader international debate that had been sparked by the brutal handling of the Nama and Herero uprising and similar events in Tanganyika, the British questioned if Germany was capable of administering its overseas territories in a
sound manner. With one eye on the bible and the other on their account books, the colonial lobbies in Europe at the time were fiercely debating who deserved having colonies, and what was the most humane and effective way to treat the savages. Due to the lack of administrative control, eastern Caprivi had meanwhile turned into an El Dorado for all sorts of shady (white) characters, criminals who went into hiding, as well as free-time or professional poachers who quickly decimated the rich game resources. The British demanded to see action, and in July 1908 their High Commissioner in South Africa submitted an official, proposal to the Germans for an exchange of territory. The Germans turned down the offer, and in October 1908, Governor Schuckmann passed a decree that prohibited anyone without special permission from entering the German territory east of the Kavango, except the Caprivi natives.

The Streitwolf expedition departed soon afterwards. According to the official message published through the newspapers, he had orders to "clarify the state of the land and its people" (DSWAZ no. 86, 1908). This unusually imprecise definition of the purpose of the mission is interesting. The Germans authorities were obviously careful not to announce publicly that Streitwolf had orders to establish administrative control over the area and make concrete proposals about its economic potential (compare Fisch 1995). This was probably done in order to avoid further criticism from the British if the mission turned out to be a failure.

As district chief in Gobabis, Streitwolf had gathered a range of experience in military strategy and negotiation with natives. He spoke fluent English and was well trained in topographic measuring techniques and cartography. Streitwolf himself made the suggestion to take the route through the Kalahari, instead of the convenient railway and ship journey via Cape Town. It was important to prove that Germans could reach Caprivi without using British infrastructure, although it was still necessary to step on British soil. The single most challenging task Streitwolf faced was the handling of the natives in Caprivi. Germany could under no circumstances afford the financial and political burden of another violent uprising, or an exodus of natives. After the brutal decimation of the Nama and Herero people, the colony was in dire need of labour. Rumours had it that before Streitwolf's arrival agents from the British territories had sought to sign Caprivians into labour contracts (see below). Streitwolf claimed he managed to put an end to poaching and illegal trading in Caprivi. Through this, and extensive negotiations with the natives, their former Lozi masters and the British authorities, he achieved what was in the utmost interest of the colonial authorities: Order, the natives' confidence in the new masters, and sound information on the land and its
economic potential – a solid German basis for a smooth and humane exploitation of Caprivi’s resources for the future benefit of the colonisers.

Meanwhile on the home front in Germany and Windhoek, wild rumours of possible coal and diamond deposits in Caprivi were circulating and boosted the morale of the colonial lobby (compare DSWAZ no.20, 1910). With water, labour and coal abundant, and a good reason to go there, the construction of a railway to Caprivi seemed more possible than ever. In his own realistic assessment, Streitwolf was sceptical about mineral deposits in Caprivi and cautious about the area’s potential for commercial farming. The forest-and wildlife resources, however, were considerably rich according to his estimations and could serve to attract game hunters who were willing to pay high prices for the licensed shooting of seldom species (Streitwolf 1911). The main value of the territory, however was to be seen in its human population. Streitwolf estimated a total population of 10 - 12 000 for the whole of Caprivi in 1909, but stressed the land had a carrying capacity of at least 100 000 people. It could therefore serve as a “labour recruitment district” the leading newspaper in the colony was thrilled to announce (DSWAZ no.9, 1911). Streitwolf regarded the potential value of the region for the British as very high, and therefore claimed the only territory that could make an exchange deal with the British worthwhile for the Germans would be Walvis Bay (Streitwolf 1909, p.31). Such a deal was not acceptable to the British, though, since it met with strong opposition in the Cape Colony (Hangula 1993, p.86).

The aroused German interest in Caprivi soon came down again. The labour potential made the area highly attractive, but concrete plans for a commercial exploitation seemed utopian for the time being as the entire Northeast remained inaccessible (DSWAZ no.100, 1911). The successful transgression of the previously impenetrable bush of western Caprivi by Schuckmannsburg Resident von Frankenberg in 1911 was celebrated as a heroic achievement, but did not actually change the difficult access problem to eastern Caprivi. When rumours about an attack by natives on von Frankenberg’s expedition reached Windhoek, 200 German troops were immediately dispatched to the Northeast, and the newspapers in the colony and Germany extensively covered the events. This reaction shows the nervousness of the German authorities, which were under pressure to uphold control and order in the northern periphery, but it also reminds of the practical constraints, which the task posed at the time. When the rumours turned out to be a story invented by a native youngster, the German newspapers expressed relief, but the sentiment remained that the Northeast was not really under control. Lengthy newspaper reviews mirror the intense public debate at the time. While some regarded the territory as an invaluable asset, others
made sarcastic comments on the "art of statesmanship" of former chancellor Caprivi that had left the German colony with the burden of an expensive and unproductive stretch of land (DSWAZ no.100, 1911; DSWAZ no.60, 1911).

Three years later, the non-violent surrender of the Caprivi resident to the invading British troops was not even noted in the newspapers. Information from Caprivi still came via British territory, but a curfew imposed at the outbreak of the war left Windhoek without notice from the strip. The German public was much more immediately concerned with the war operations in Europe and the colony's central and southern parts. The first loss of German territory in the First World War went peaceful and quiet and largely unnoticed.

1.2. British interests

A look at the map reveals that the concession to grant the Germans their Zambezi Corridor in 1890 did not constitute a severe setback to British interests in southern central Africa at the time. All major rivers that crossed or bordered the corridor were accessible from British territory, and the strip was not an obstacle to important traffic routes. An important reason why Britain agreed on Germany's bid for the Zambezi Corridor, apart from her interests in East Africa, was the German's attempt before 1890 to include the Ngamiland with Lake Ngami into Southwest Africa. This area which includes the Okavango Delta was however of great importance to the British Bechuanaland, since there were no comparable natural and human resources available anywhere nearby. The loss of access to them would have posed a severe restriction to the colonial project in Bechuanaland. The Zambezi Corridor was less vital to the British than it seemed to Germany at the time. British interest in the Strip never ceased, however, as the later negotiations over a territorial exchange with the Germans show.

The deplorable state of control in Caprivi in the absence of any German administration was naturally a reason for concern among British authorities, businessmen and missionaries. The negative impact white outlaw elements had on natives to whom they often traded guns and alcohol were well known since the early days of colonisation. A spilling-over effect into British territory was most unwelcome. On the other hand, besides a suspected majority of Boers, numerous Englishmen from the areas adjacent to Caprivi, Livingstone and Bulawayo were actively involved in the illegal activities going on in Caprivi (compare Rafalski 1930, p.155; Seiner 1906, p.134). It would seem hard to believe that such
action could have been possible without any (active or passive) involvement by representatives of the British authorities in the region.

At the time of the Streitwolf expedition, the rising demand for labour which the Germans experienced was also an issue of utmost importance to the other colonies of southern Africa. Labour shortages were the single most limiting factor to agricultural-, mining-, infrastructure- and industrial development. Already before the Germans lost Caprivi in 1914, Streitwolf had in 1909 encountered British agents of the Labour Agent Bureau in Bulawayo, who tried to recruit Fwe on German territory. On his journey to western Caprivi in 1911, von Frankenberg came across another British agent who recruited Mbutuku for mines in South Africa (ZBU 118 and ZBU 1010, cited in Fisch 1996, pp.108, 126). I was unable to verify to what extent Caprivians did migrate for work into the British colonies after 1914. In interviews, Caprivians told that at least as far back as 1950s considerable numbers of their men went to the North Rhodesian Copper Belt, to the Hwange coal mines and to the Johannesburg gold mines to work. Labour recruitment offices apparently existed in Katima Mulilo and Sesheke at the time (Munhango and Kwenani in interviews). Given the relatively easy access to these industrial areas from Caprivi, this is not surprising.

The general interest of the British authorities during the years between 1914 and 1929 in all areas adjacent to Caprivi was not to disturb the existing administrative setup in Caprivi, and to reassure the local population of the same protection they had enjoyed under German rule. Any disturbance that would have required costly operations and threatened the area's potential as labour pool, were to be avoided (compare Venning 1914, pp.4-7). Hopes by the Chartered Company and the Lozi for a re-incorporation of the area into Barotseland did not materialise, therefore. Moderate attempts to bring development to Caprivi did not cause massive changes in the local's livelihoods. A veterinary service sought to prevent the spread of animal diseases into the bordering territories (Trollope 1940, p.9). A final settlement of the question to which territory Caprivi formally belonged was apparently not high on the agenda of any of the three involved British colonial administrations, Barotseland, North Rhodesia and the South African Union. There was no immediate pressure to find such a solution. Instead, in the absence of a long-term vision, the authorities of Sesheke and Kasane cooperated in carrying out their duties pragmatically on a day-to-day basis. In Kruger's view, this was a missed opportunity to reverse "the outrage to geography and all common sense" (Kruger 1984, p.16).
1.3. South Africa

It is hard to understand why the South African Union government did not agree with Bechuanaland or North Rhodesia on a definite handing over of the Caprivi Strip between 1914 and 1929. Three different motives or a combination of them seem likely:

- Bechuanaland and North Rhodesia were not interested enough in the backwash territory to enter into serious negotiations, and there was no pressure from the British motherland, since before the South African Republic's independence in 1961 the area remained "in the family" of her colonies anyhow.

- The South African Union government sought not to give the impression that it would easily be willing to give up a section of the former German colony, since the Union was bidding to be declared the mandatory of Southwest Africa by the League of Nations before 1920.

- Visionary South African decision-makers in the 1920s already anticipated the coming end of British overseas colonies and were reluctant to give away the maybe-not-so-useless Zambezi corridor and labour reserve.

In the first three decades after 1929 under the South African Union's administration (East Caprivi) and the Central Government in Windhoek (West Caprivi), development and change in Caprivi continued at the same moderate pace as before. The authorities made no attempts to take a massive influence on the lives of the people and the area was "quiet". In 1929, an official delegation from Andara, bound to celebrate the latest administrative setup with the first motorised journey to East Caprivi, came to a grinding halt as their motor vehicles literally got stuck in the sand near Kongola. The probably first successful journey by car took place in 1933, and was still a real adventure then. Only in the 1950s, regular but still laborious road travelling to eastern Caprivi became possible (Fisch 1996, p.13). After the new headquarters of administration moved to Katima Mulilo in 1935, the town gradually grew into a small centre for trade and services. Health care improved when, in 1945, the hospital at Katima was built. The Roman Catholic Church and Seven Day Adventist missions provided schooling to several hundred native children and educated locals in agricultural techniques and crafts.

For Caprivi, as for the rest of South West Africa South Africa's independence 1961 marked an important change. At a time when all over the African continent, former European colonies were striving towards independence, the new Republic was determined to continue
its administration of South West Africa and the implementation of her racial policies there and in the Republic. Against the background of domestic and international pressure, the new government in Pretoria appointed the Odendaal Commission of Enquiry in 1962 to investigate the social, economic and political conditions in the "Territory", as South West Africa was called during that time, and to make concrete proposals how to accelerate the black population's socio-economic development (du Pisani 1986, p.159). South Africa's official ideology of ethnic particularism was to be implemented through policies based on comprehensive five-year plans with concrete proposals for development projects and the building up of separate native territories. Three sets of interrelated interests were behind the South African proposals:

- South Africa's new apartheid government needed to demonstrate to domestic and international critics, and especially the United Nations and the International Court of Justice, that their future plans for the Territory were designed to promote "the material and moral welfare and the social progress of the inhabitants of South West Africa, and more particularly its non-white inhabitants (Odendaal Commission Report 1964, p.3).
- South Africa sought to consolidate and intensify her use of the resource-rich Territory and its native labour force" (compare Odendaal Commission Report 1964, p.3).
- The proposals fitted into the wider foreign policy framework towards black Africa, the creation of a cordon sanitaire, a buffer zone of controlled development to minimise the impact of decolonisation in the rest of Africa on South Africa herself (du Pisani 1986, p.159).

For the practical administration of the new "homelands", the Odendaal Commission applied a rather static definition of ethnicity where clearly distinct groups had different abilities and needs for development. Mixing these groups, they believed, would adversely affect the climate for socioeconomic progress and ultimately lead to discontent and violence (Cockram 1976, pp.305f). The administrative system which the plan proposed for the homelands Okavangoland, East Caprivi and five others was a legislative council with limited political autonomy, composed of traditional leaders and elected representatives (du Pisani 1986, p.162).

A closer look at the details of the three five-year plans laid out by the Odendaal Commission Report reveals that not social services and agricultural development, but large-scale infrastructure projects were to receive the bulk of development funds for East Caprivi and Kavangoland. The second five-year plan contained irrigation schemes for 5 000 ha farmland along the Kavango and a water pipeline from the Okavango to Hereroland. The
third five-year plan proposed dams for electric power generation and irrigation for Andara and Popa Falls, and an irrigation scheme for East Caprivi using the Zambezi and Chobe rivers. A dubious plan envisioned the “possible development of iron and steel production in the vicinity of Ongaba (Kaokoveld) with coal transported from Hwange (Zimbabwe) by pipeline of water” (cited in du Pisani 1986, p.166). The project presumably intended to use Caprivi as an east-west transport route. The majority of these projects never materialised.

To sum it up, the Odendaal Commission advised the development of Caprivi as one of several clearly demarcated, well-fed, peaceful, healthy and controllable agricultural production units. Caprivi could begin to administer its own regional affairs and would benefit the state through its water resources, agricultural surplus production and as a breeding ground for future generations of cheap migrant industrial labour and soldiers. One should acknowledge that the development priorities of the huge and distant South African planning bureaucracy were not necessarily identical with those of the individuals that were doing their work in e.g. church missions, health- and agricultural extension services in Caprivi. These people worked in close daily contact with the local population, and often their personal priorities rather reflected those of the people in their direct surrounding than the agenda of distant decision-makers in Pretoria and Windhoek.

Domestic reactions to the Odendaal Commission’s proposals were diverse. Among those white political parties in South West Africa who did object to the plans, demands for greater autonomy from the Republic and concerns over future resettlement of white farmers were voiced. Those who questioned the homeland development concept feared that it would ultimately lead to a fragmentation of the territory (du Pisani 1986, pp.167-170).

SWAPO made the following statement:

“The South African attempt to impose Bantustans in Namibia through chiefs will ultimately prove to be an inconsequential gesture, since chieftainship as an institution has long lost its potency and value in all of Namibia. As the terror rages against the population in the northern region and across Namibia, counter-terror will in turn unfold against the rule and lives of all the chiefs who arrange themselves with the white racists against their people” (United Nations 1974, p.25).

SWANU informed the United Nations:

“The South African agents in our country are methodically wooing and buying off chiefs, headmen and other frustrated elements in collaborating with their diabolic schemes. (...) The main function of these ‘homeland’ schemes is not only to facilitate the recruitment of cheap labour in the mines, white farms and industry, but also for defence purposes. The ‘homelands’ are the best possible outposts for the apartheid system and the continuation of colonialism in our country” (Ibid.).

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International reactions opposed the Report as well: The UN condemned it and in 1965, the General Assembly protested through the adoption of Resolution 2074. The Organisation of African Unity rejected the Report and decided on a more aggressive approach towards South Africa (du Pisani 1986, p.166).

South Africa was not impressed and went ahead as planned. The first administrative step, which the authorities undertook in Caprivi was the exact delimitation of the southern border between the Kavango and Kwando Rivers in 1964. The Chobe section of the border was, however excluded, in Hangula's opinion a way of avoiding the "Pandora's box" of the ownership of river islands, such as Kasikili (Hangula 1993, p.98).

By the early 1970s, road and water infrastructure projects, schools and health care facilities, agricultural extension and housing projects had been launched in Caprivi. Katima Mulilo saw a rapid expansion and increasing population during those years. In 1970 and 1972, legislative and executive councils were created for the Kavangoland and the "Native Nation of Eastern Caprivi" respectively (Dugard 1973, p.435).

Two police vehicles struck landmines in Caprivi on October 5 in 1971. Apparently, PLAN fighters from Zambia had placed the explosives and the South Africans subsequently increased their security presence in the region and carried out search operations. A new frontier in the armed struggle against South Africa's grip on the Territory opened up, which required costly military operations in Caprivi and further weakened South Africa's international reputation. As PLAN attacks from across the northern border intensified, the South African forces discovered the vast and remote bush of the Caprivi Game Park and northern East Caprivi as ideal locations to quietly establish military facilities for launching air raids on PLAN fighters across the border. In 1976, the SADF settled several hundred Khoe San people, most of whom were refugees from Angola, at Omega in the Caprivi Game Park. Many joined the SADF and received training as scouts for the notorious Khovoet unit. Caprivi's borders to neighbouring states were closed during that time to block off PLAN fighters who infiltrated from Zambia and Angola, and East Caprivi was thereby practically sealed off. The South Africans carefully controlled information on Caprivi as well. The general line represented in ethnographic studies and domestic news was that the population of Caprivi was peaceful and not interested in the "terrorists" agenda (compare Otto 1982). The two 1:250 000 map sheets of Caprivi from 1977 were classified "restricted", and do not show strategically important features, such as the army facilities at Omega and Mpacha. The broader public image of Caprivi on the home front was fed by movies, such as "Kaptein
Caprivi" and "Terrorist", which showed the heroic SADF defending the free world against the communist bad guys (Mail and Guardian, December 23 1999).

As in the first decade of the 20th century, Caprivi during the 1970s and 80s developed into an area where unlicensed hunting quickly decimated the wildlife. This time, the perpetrators were not regular outlaws, but army personnel, civil servants and entrepreneurs living in the area. Many law enforcement officers apparently also partook in the mass slaughter, or turned a blind eye (Breytenbach 1997, pp.38ff). Valuable and rare animals were reportedly not only shot at with machine guns from low-flying helicopters, but also captured and flown out to game parks in South Africa for high prices (Kwenani in interview). Caprivians hunted as well, and the SADF sometimes paid their San scouts with game meat. By the time of independence, ruthless plundering and massacres had lead to the extinction of several mammal species and the severe decimation of many others throughout Caprivi (Breytenbach 1997).

The massive development efforts of the 1970s lined out by the Odendaal Plan lost their pace in Caprivi towards the end of the decade. Costly military operations and a shrinking South African economy limited the further availability of financial resources for the implementation of development efforts in the decade before independence. While the armed struggle concentrated further west in the Ovamboland region and developed into a full-scale war, East Caprivi was once again quiet and still remote.

2. Namibian government and business, foreign donors and investors

The SWAPO government came into office with a bid to bring development and prosperity for all Namibians, to promote national unity and reconciliation, and to rid the country of the colonial legacy. To accomplish these tasks in Caprivi was from the beginning not an easy challenge. The region had one of the country's lowest human development levels, the infrastructural and administrative ties with the rest of the country were weak and the population had few personal, linguistic and cultural links to most other Namibians. The Namibian government therefore gladly accepted the offers by external players, such as NGOs, foreign governments and private investors to assist the SWAPO administration in promoting socio-economic development in Caprivi. A great variety of individuals and organisations, each operating according to their own specific sets of interests, are at present actively involved in shaping the region's future. Very few of the players, or rather their
representatives who are acting in pursuit of these interests are, however, from Caprivi, do they intend to live there for the foreseeable long-term future. It is interesting to ask “who is presently developing Caprivi, and for whom.”

A body as complex as a national government is naturally not just pursuing a single straight set of interests. Individuals or groups in different ministries and at various levels in their bureaucracies, for example, may be pursuing very different agendas, and strategic long-term interests may be different from short-term tactical priorities. Naturally, overall interests may change over time as new priorities rise above old ones. The other players active in Caprivi are also not just simple, uniform and static units, and there are differences in power between players.

As I suggested in the introduction, the activities of different actors involved with Caprivi can be understood as a game in which the players invest various resources in the hope to win, which would in turn serve their interests. Players may also form alliances with the intention to strengthen their position in the game. This report is part of such a game. It is called “socio-economic development in Caprivi”. The formation and activities of alliances between players are “development cooperation”.

Two general interests of those involved in development cooperation since the 1990s are to promote “sustainable development” and “peace and security”. One can safely assume that all those playing “socio-economic development in Caprivi” would define their idea of winning as achieving those two, possibly among others. These general interests are very broad and loosely defined, however. The players therefore choose their “priorities”, more specific aspects of the general interest. The players choose those priorities, which they feel they are especially qualified to pursue successfully, and which reflect their own societies’, organisations’ or personal priorities best.

In the following paragraphs I will describe how, as part of the currently ongoing “socio-economic development in Caprivi game”, various external players are forming alliances around the following priorities: Decentralisation and democracy, infrastructure, health and natural resource conservation. The analysis will show that there are connections between the different priorities. Under the impression of the events in Caprivi since 1998, I have chosen to use the theme “peace and security” as an example to describe the dynamic nature of the game in an extra chapter.

Since the late 1980s, policies for decentralisation of government services in developing
countries have been strongly advocated by governmental donors and international financial institutions. They have also been connected with pressures from Structural Adjustment Programs to cut central governments’ expenditures (Crook 1997, p.1). Many benefits and disadvantages are claimed to originate from decentralised government on different levels of the political hierarchy. Theoreticians argue that decentralised governments and people’s broader participation in local administration in developing countries will foster more efficient and democratic decision-making. Under such conditions, it is expected that addressing the locally defined needs of all groups, including poor and marginal people is enhanced, new channels for decision’s accountability are opened, and ultimately the development process, especially in rural areas is strengthened (Crook 1997, p.2).

This opinion is, however, not unanimously shared, as some see evidence that decentralising governmental structures can contribute to the multiplication of ineffective and costly governmental agencies on the local level. As Mukandala concludes in his review of a constitutional amendment on decentralisation passed by the Tanzanian parliment in 1982, the ruling state-party’s motivation in passing the law was not to democratise society, but to consolidate its control and strengthen its support in the rural areas (Mukandala 1995, p.74). Some find reason to be concerned that shifting decision-making power to communities can weaken the external control over local decision-making and consequently leave more room for a local elite to accumulate power, a situation believed to reinforce inequality and facilitate corruption (Crook 1997 p.2).

As part of the Finnish-Namibian development cooperation, the government of Finland promotes equality, democracy, human rights and good governance in Namibia. Finnish people have given their elected government the mandate to spend their tax money on projects that would enhance these objectives, and one such project is to support decentralisation. The two sides have formed an alliance to play “decentralisation” for a certain period, since they feel, by playing together, the chance to achieve what is in their interest are higher. To terminate the alliance before the game is over would make losing more likely, and neither side wants that. But if the Finns regard the promotion of equality etc. in Namibia as a hopeless undertaking, they will eventually urge their government to use their tax money to play the game with someone else, or a whole different game altogether, as long as there is a better chance to win.

The Mayor of Katima Mulilo is very interested in decentralisation. He feels helpless to disappoint citizens of his town who demand development when they see him on the street. He wants the sewage treatment to be improved, but without the legal background to
establish a functioning accounting and tax collection system on the local level, he cannot provide such services. The mayor might be viewed as a mere spectator, not an active player in the decentralisation game, since the decisions over central government decentralisation and empowerment of his office are not up to him. However, by requesting from those who are players to take up these issues, he also becomes a player in the game, a less powerful one however. Naturally, in most games not all players are equally powerful.

Namibia is a relatively young nation-state. Its state bureaucracy is still in a process of consolidation. To enhance this process, the national government wants to speed up decentralisation. However, the government cannot give away central power to the periphery of a territory, which has no clearly defined border. The Kasikili Island episode was part of an attempt to bring about this clarity, and the importance of the affair becomes evident in the resources the government mobilised for it.

A government perceiving itself as identical with the nation-state ("l'etat, c'est moi"), which it has been given the mandate to run for a limited period by the majority of the electorate naturally has a tendency to edge out any opposition within what it perceives as its territory. To decentralise power or direct funds to an area dominated by government opposition would be to strengthen an illegitimate or unnecessary competitor and compromise national security. The present government is not promoting the idea that it is identical with the state in public. Prime Minister Geingob stressed in the NBC program ‘talk of the nation’ on January 2, 2000, that nation building is a process, part of which is reconciliation. He made clear that in Namibia, there is "enough space for all of us". In referring to the secessionist uprising, however, he also stated that "those who sabotage, they have to pack up and go".

Those who sabotaged naturally wanted to make the SWAPO government look undemocratic, and were successful at that, since the brutal handling of suspects in the aftermath of August 2nd 1999 made headlines that were at least as big as those on Muyongo’s senseless and criminal attempt to take over Caprivi.

The government’s predominant method of government decentralisation in Namibia at present is the extension or transport of actors loyal to the central government into the periphery. In Caprivi, this happens in three ways:

- On a short-term basis, the president and other high-level government officials travel to Caprivi, meet with local government representatives and headmen and hold public speeches. This assures the local, as well as the TV news audience elsewhere, that the government is well informed, willing and able to act in Caprivi.
• For a certain period, loyal and well-trained law enforcement units are sent to Caprivi to act out the will of the central government in the interest of national security, i.e. to uncover and contain internal disloyal tendencies and external aggression, and provide security for the loyal citizens.

• As a long-term process, the central government chooses its employees and those it cooperates with from among its loyal supporters. The result is that SWAPO-member headmen and Oshivismbo-speaking decision-makers are increasingly found in Caprivi.

Regardless the approach and reality of government decentralisation, for any sector of government services to successfully carry out its duties, there needs to be a working infrastructure.

A working infrastructure is also a crucial prerequisite for a large variety of non-governmental actors to be able to work in Caprivi. The issue therefore attracts a large number of players, which form a coalition. The players are, for example, government bureaucrats, the security forces, health workers, villagers who want to sell products in Katima Mulilo, tourists, private business companies, road construction companies, European donors and the SADC. For any player whose idea of winning is that a maximum number of other players loose, disturbing the construction or the use of the infrastructure would be a very clever way to play. Armed secessionists and UNITA obviously know that.

As with decentralisation, one can identify more and less powerful players in the infrastructure game. Road construction is extremely costly, powerful players therefore generally need to have considerable financial resources. The Trans Caprivi Highway (TCH) project has cost 700 million N\$ since independence, provided by the German government, the EU funds for SADC, the African Development Bank and the Namibian government (The Namibian 23.12.1998). The TCH is part of a larger project, the so-called "SADC Walfis Bay-Caprivi-Lusaka-Copper Belt Corridor". Among the players from foreign countries who want to see the SADC Corridor finalised are investors based in Japan, USA, Germany and Italy (AZ 18.12.1998). According to Namibian Deputy Minister Dierks the other investments for the TCH are worthless, as long as the missing link, a 900m long road bridge across the Zambezi near Katima Mulilo is not ready. The project is currently in the early planning phase and scheduled to be ready by 2003 (Küllner in interview). Once finalised, the investors hope that the corridor will speed up the transport of copper ore by truck from the Zambian Copper Belt to Tsumeb or Walfis Bay, and from there to overseas. Faster transport and better capacity utilisation are expected to make the project economically feasible. Besides that, it
should create new opportunities for transport enterprises and advantages for tourism in Caprivi (AZ 18.5.1999; Stanley in interview).

The TCH and Zambezi bridge are a very good example for the fact that interests can exist on various geographic scales. The priorities of very powerful players are often defined through large-scale interests. In relation to the size and importance of the final project, the size and relevance of Caprivi shrinks. The Caprivi population and their small-scale interests appear not to be significant for the success of the project as a whole. Their land is merely needed to provide the ground on which the powerful players build. There is a problem, however: No investor wants to see his trucks caught in the crossfire between fighting parties in the middle of a war zone. Tourists do not want their children to be slaughtered by hungry civil warriors. The insecurity of any section of the planned corridor can easily cause the entire project to become a "white elephant". If the small-scale interests of the Caprivians and other groups along the highway are not taken seriously, this might well affect the large-scale interests negatively.

All donors for the SADC Corridor are convinced that it is ultimately going to contribute to sustainable development in the SADC region as a whole. But the project could severely endanger the sustainable development of Caprivi and other areas along its course. According to the two main donors of the SADC Corridor project, no accompanying studies or concrete projects have so far been considered that would address the potential need for roadside facilities for motorists, and the potential side-effects of the increased traffic for the local communities (Küllmer in interview). What is a truck driver going to do after a whole day of driving from the Copper Belt or Walvis Bay when he settles to spend the night in Katima Mulilo or Sesheke until the border opens in the morning?

In chapter II.4 I have already dealt with the present state of public health and a number of players directly involved with health care in Caprivi, and therefore don’t have to come back to the details at this point.

Studies about HIV/AIDS in Africa have been trying to identify risk groups most endangered to become infected and spread the virus. Employed mobile men are one of them. They have more opportunities than others for sexual contacts with changing partners, they are less under the control of a social environment and have above average resources to pay for sex than non-mobile and unemployed men. Young urban women with a low income security and limited income opportunities are more likely than rural or wealthy ones to offer sex for pay. Should the SADC Corridor ever produce the amount of traffic that its
planners and investors are hoping for, towns like Sesheke, Katima Mulilo, Bagani and Rundu will inevitably be affected considerably. On its entire length, the road runs through areas that have the world's highest HIV/AIDS infection rates, but apparently none of those who play socio-economic development in Caprivi address, or are aware of these issues, so far. More precisely, those who finance and plan the Corridor are not in a direct dialogue with those working in the public health sector in Caprivi.

Development cooperation for health issues, and especially in the case of HIV/AIDS is another example of upscaling within the socio-economic development of Caprivi game. When a priority becomes a "top priority", a maximum number of players that are already involved in playing for other priorities can become attracted to participate in a game which they normally would not play. The new National Development Plan for Namibia calls on all government sectors to incorporate the need to address the HIV/AIDS problem in their policies. Government requests for assistance from donors also make the epidemic a priority (Rumpf in presentation). When experts regard health issues as the single most important constraint to socio-economic development (compare chapter II.4.), none of the players with other priorities than health, but an overall interest in sustainable development, can afford to stay outside the alliance.

A problematic aspect of scales of priorities becomes evident in the SADC Corridor issue. While the Corridor project alliance has a perspective, where Caprivi's health situation is on a scale too small to have an impact on the project planning as a whole, the health sector alliance does not immediately recognise the potential impact of the large-scale and long-term Corridor project on their work. Therefore, the players don't form a larger alliance.

An example of a more integrated approach becomes evident in the "assessment of health services, health status and health risks in East Caprivi" which Helena Eriksson prepared for the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in 1998. The study forms part of the Zambezi Basin Wetlands Conservation and Resource Utilisation Project implemented by the IUCN. The project recognises that the priority nature conservation can only be met when knowledge of large- and small-scale aspects is combined, and related priorities are integrated. To clarify this: The ecosystem of the Zambezi river basin as a whole is a network of interdependent sub-systems, one of which are the Caprivi wetlands. Environmental degradation of any of the sub-systems negatively affects the river basin as a whole. Large- and small-scale perception inform each other. The health of the people of Caprivi is affected by their living environment, and the way Caprivians utilise the natural resources around them has an impact on the regional ecosystem. Caprivians and the
Caprivi wetlands are interdependent factors in an integrated sub-system of the Zambezi river basin. Caprivians' health status must therefore be an integrated priority in nature conservation in the Zambezi river basin. An alliance between players in health care and nature conservation serves the overall interest of all players in sustainable development in Caprivi. To encounter such an advanced understanding of sustainable development in the context of environmental protection is not surprising, because the sustainable development concept originally emerged from the environmental protection movement of the 1980s.

As the above example demonstrates, successful approaches to natural resource conservation cannot disregard the utilisation of those resources by human beings. In comparison to the rest of the country, Caprivi is particularly rich in natural resources, such as forests, animal wildlife and water. Since not only locals in Caprivi want to make use of the area's wealth, a wide variety of players are gathered around the priority of protecting them and regulating their use.

Namibian Deputy Minister of Environment and Tourism Nangolo Ithele said in 1997, that natural resources are the key to the future development of Caprivi, and added that the region has a "comparative advantage" to other areas in the country mainly due to its wildlife and tourism potential (The Namibian, 2.12.1997). By protecting and developing the sustainable use of the local resources, the government hopes to strengthen socio-economic development in Caprivi. The fact that the tourism industry is already one of the most dynamically growing sectors in the Namibian economy supports such expectations. Tourist lodges near the Kavango and Kwando rivers, Katima Mulilo and in the various game parks and reserves of Caprivi strongly rely on the region's natural environment to attract visitors.

A look across the border into Botswana shows that also in the neighbouring country the protection of wildlife is a priority. The Chobe park of Botswana, one of the country's key tourist attractions, is situated directly across the Chobe river south from Caprivi, and wildlife from the park often migrates across the river-border during the dry season. The West Caprivi Game park is also part of the territory used by elephants and other animals for their annual migration from Botswana into southern Angola and Zambia, despite the uncontrolled killings of the 1970s and 80s (compare Mendelsohn and Roberts 1997, p.32). Although the protection of wildlife is a concern of conservationists and tourist businesses on both side of the border, the governments of Namibia and Botswana disagree over several aspects of the cross-border use of their common natural resources. Differences in land use on the two sides of the border are at the root of the problems, which arise from the spreading of animal
diseases, veld fires and the poaching of game by Caprivians. After an outbreak of a cattle disease in 1996 in Botswana, the country erected several cattle fences along parts of its northern border with Namibia from where the disease had allegedly spread into Botswana. The 30km electric ‘Northern Buffalo Kwando River Fence’ was taken down again in 1998, after numerous wild animals had died during their annual migration.

Another issue with far greater politically and environmentally dangerous potential are Namibia’s plans to substract water from the Okavango river to secure water supplies for Windhoek. The river springs in Angola, crosses Namibia in western Caprivi, and ends in the Okavango Delta on Botswanaan territory. From the Windhoek perspective, it is a vital resource to secure the Namibian capital’s dwindling water supply in the long term. Gaborone sees the Okavango and its delta as the nation’s number one wildlife resource and tourist attraction. Environmentalists are concerned that a permanently reduced inflow of water into the delta could tip the delicate balance of the region’s unique ecosystem. The Namibian government appears to have backed down under strong international pressure against the water extraction, but has not officially cancelled the scheme.

The above episodes demonstrate that, despite shared interests (protection and sustainable use of natural resources), there are clear differences in priorities between the two countries’ governments. Also within Namibia, the use and protection of natural resources is constantly under debate between different players with different priorities.

As I described in detail in chapter II.5, the actual control and management of natural resources in Caprivi is to a large extent in the hands of the regional customary authorities. They provide the platform for negotiation within and between the different population groups in the area, and are also the most widely accepted institutions to handle the negotiations between locals and external players. Nobody who wants to work towards sustainable development and use of natural resources in Caprivi can afford not to talk with the customary leaders. Playing without or against them severely reduces any other player’s chances for a successful outcome.

Although it is in the interests of Caprivians to use their natural resources in a sustainable way, their life circumstances often force them to over-utilise their resources, resulting in environmental degradation. Institutions such as the Ministry of Environment and Tourism have realised that, although they have the mandate to care for the environment, they cannot not do so without involving the people who live alongside wildlife and other natural resources. Examples of similar programmes in neighbouring countries such as Zimbabwe and Zambia helped to understand why environmental degradation takes place.
and how to address the situation. The national CBNRM Programme, with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism as the lead agency, seeks to improve the quality of life of rural area residents by empowering people to manage their own resources. One of the ways in which this can be achieved is through the establishment of communal area conservancies (compare chapter II.4.).

An example for an unsuccessful attempt to play without the local customary authorities was the early 1990s attempt by the Namibian government and a foreign investor to establish a 10 000 ha commercial sugar cane plantation on land under the control of the Fwe authorities. The locals were angered to hear of the ongoing plans that had been made without any consultation of their customary leaders. Due to public criticism and because the investor turned out a corrupted and bankrupt enterprise, the project was finally abandoned.

3. Present peace and security concerns

All through the three months of writing this study, the main news coming out of Caprivi were the daily body count of innocent civilians who died as a result of the Angolan internal conflict spilling over the border into Namibia. In early 2000, there was no quick solution in sight to end this situation. All parties to the conflict apparently can allocate sufficient financial resources and military equipment to continue warfare for an indefinite period, and refuse to engage in negotiations. The way in which the situation in the Northeast of Namibia has evolved since the beginning of Namibian security forces' operations against alleged secessionists in 1998 shows an important aspect of the socio-economic development game, its dynamic nature. More precisely, there are two kinds of related dynamics currently evident.

The first involves a dramatic change in the priorities of players to an extent where not only tactical adjustments take place while players pursue the same larger overall interest "sustainable development", as in the case of HIV/AIDS. What we currently witness is a shift of the overall interest of a large number of active players from sustainable development to peace and security. Since peace and security are broadly considered as inevitable prerequisites for anyone who wants to play socio-economic development, one could argue that there is only a temporary shift in priorities. This does, however, not reflect the full scale of the shift. As I will further explain, some of the players are currently abandoning or compromising crucial aspects, or priorities of their previous overall strategy.
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The second dynamic involves a dramatic change of the composition of players itself. As the security situation deteriorates, players of socio-economic development in Caprivi with an interest in sustainable development find it increasingly hard to play successfully. They eventually pull out, while new or previously passive players with an interest in peace and security step into the playing field to actively participate in the new game. It is in the nature of this and other similar crisis situations, that some of the new players are particularly powerful and known to play for particularly large-scale interests.

All players involved in Caprivi are at the moment concerned about some aspect of peace and security in the region. As before, different players have specific priorities and form alliances. Some are mainly concerned about the local people and their sufferings, some about the security of their staff, some about the project they are involved in, some about their readers' opinions, and some about what the international community will think of the country they represent. In accordance with the question posed earlier, the question at hand is now: "Who wants peace and security in Caprivi, and for whom?"

Since the first information about secessionist tendencies in Caprivi surfaced, the government of Namibia has left no doubt that it is willing and able to take action against any internal and external threat to the territorial integrity of the country, and made extensive use of its "monopoly on legitimate violence", a term coined by Max Weber. The SWAPO government has even agreed to give up their monopoly by allowing a foreign army (FAA) to enter Namibian territory and engage in military operations against an external enemy (UNITA in Angola). The rationale behind this, as the government repeatedly explained, is Namibia's own interest to put a definitive end to UNITA's violent activities, which have troubled the northern border region since 1994. Besides, the Angolan government is an old ally of SWAPO from the time of the independence struggle. A proposal made by President Nujoma in January 2000 to hand out firearms for self-defence to civilians in Caprivi was another move towards giving up the monopoly.

The last point also shows that the SWAPO government seeks to attract domestic players to form an alliance against the external enemy UNITA. On several trips to the Northeast of the country (referred to above as "shuttle diplomacy"), the president and government ministers have met with customary leaders in the region to discuss the security situation. Appeals to the domestic media to show "patriotism" and support the government in the interest of "national unity" are also clearly aimed at strengthening the alliance.

The state monopoly on legitimate violence is not an unlimited one. The constitution
of Namibia regulates the extent and circumstances under which government can exercise power, and Namibia is signatory to numerous international treaties on human rights, e.g. the treatment of war refugees, all generally aimed at limiting and regulating state violence. The constitution, under the state of emergency laws, allows the government to temporarily take measures that compromise some basic citizen rights in the interest of national security. The extent to which this has happened in Caprivi and Kavango since 1998, however, raises the question of how far state violence can go before it turns illegitimate. This is generally a matter for the Namibian legal system, and in severe cases the international legal system to decide upon, but before cases can be brought to court, the victims need to make them known. In areas like Kavango and Caprivi, where the Namibian judiciary is not very well represented, and especially when the alleged perpetrators are themselves working for law enforcement, other players must step in to bring crimes to the attention of the judiciary. Not lastly through the SWAPO government’s action, Namibia’s Northeast is now in the spotlight of domestic and international attention.

A lively debate on the northern border region has emerged in Namibia since 1998. The political opposition parties are involved besides civil society groups, such as the National Society for Human Rights, the Legal Assistance Centre and the Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN). The main platforms for the debate are the parliament and the printing press. Their impact on government decisions has been little to zero, though. Namibia’s political leaders meanwhile generally denounce critical opinions, accuse critics of conspiring with the enemy and brush aside initiatives calling for a constructive dialogue between the warring parties, as in the case of the CoD and the CCN (compare US State Department 1999). Domestically, the SWAPO government, which was recently re-elected with a three-quarter majority in parliament is powerful enough to play without a dire need to search for allies among its critics, but it is facing a more challenging situation internationally.

Within the network of international players, there are those particularly specialised in conflict situations and government’s violations of human rights. The players of this game, and the rules according to which they play are well beyond the influence of the Namibian government. Organisations like Amnesty International, which recently for the first time since independence sent an investigation team to Namibia, are protected by their reputation, and any government which denounces their members’ findings risks to loose its international credibility. Representatives of foreign governments and the UNHCR are protected by international treaties, diplomatic immunity and the threat of political and economic sanctions.
The news media is closely watching their moves. Reports in "The Economist" or news features in BBC worldwide, the Voice of America, French and Finnish TV broadcasts brought their views on the peace and security game in Namibia out to the broader non-Namibian public.

The careful reader has noticed the mentioning of "rules" of the game in the last paragraph. The way in which peace and security is played in Namibia reveals that what makes players powerful are not the resources at their disposal alone, but also their ability to invent rules, and then impose them onto the other players (compare with the introduction). The Namibian government has its own ideas about how to play peace and security, and through their political majority and state security forces imposes the rules it created upon the political opposition, its critics and the local population in the Northeast. Foreign NGOs and the international community, in turn, have their own idea of how the game should be played, and will eventually try to impose them upon the SWAPO government through sanctions and pressure. One could accuse the players of "state terrorism" or "neo-colonialism", but that only puts a different name to the game, a rather weak attempt to change the actual rules of the game, which continues anyway.

The American Peace Corps, VSO and other aid organisations, as well as tourist enterprises and the company building the Trans Caprivi Highway have since August 1999 pulled all or some of their staff out of the conflict areas in Namibia's Northeast. Many projects were left unfinished and the local employees are without cash income. The donor's priority to continue their projects could not be reconciled with the priority of safety for their staff. The development cooperation broke down, and they are no longer active players for the time being. There is a broad consensus among all donors active in Caprivi, that the recent developments are a severe setback to the efforts that governments and NGOs have undertaken over the past years to promote socio-economic development, and that the overall economic fall-out will be substantial in the long run. It is already now unavoidable that the loss in peace and security will further consolidate the position of the Caprivi Region at the very bottom of human development and at the top in human poverty in Namibia for an indefinitely long time to come (compare chapter II.4). The Caprivi people and their neighbours in the Kavango Region are being socio-economically and, to some extent, politically marginalised within their country.

For the future of peace and security, in turn, these developments give rise to grave concern among security analysts, who believe that the region could develop into a source of
growing instability within the central and western parts of southern Africa (Eirola in interview). More concretely, four interrelated scenarios appear possible at present:

- A revival of secessionist tendencies within eastern Caprivi, possibly feeding into sentiments of marginalised Lozi speakers in Zambia and Angola to form a larger cross-border alliance that could involve members of the Caprivi Liberation Army, Barotse Patriotic Front and UNITA.
- A rise in existing tensions inside Caprivi between more and less disadvantaged groups, such as the Fwe and Subiya, or within groups with internal disputes; such as the Mbukushu, when income opportunities and resources are getting more scarce and external political pressure is rising.
- New tensions between Windhoek and Gaborone as more refugees leave Namibia to Botswana, while unsettled disputes over territorial ownership in the Chobe area and the use of shared natural resources continue.
- A further escalation and prolonging of the Angolan armed conflict through a full-scale involvement of Namibia that would turn some of Namibia's most densely populated areas into a war zone.

Any of those scenarios would have repercussions for the possibility to play socio-economic development in Caprivi and the chances for sustainable development, free and constructive public debate, democracy and human rights in Namibia as a whole.

4. The Caprivians' perspective

For the inhabitants of Caprivi the beginning of European colonial rule was not a negative experience. The ruthless exploitation they had experienced under their previous rulers, the Tawana, Lozi and Kololo, came to an end. For several decades they were able to continue their livelihoods with relatively little interference from the economic and administrative players of various colonial powers. On the one hand, this was possible because the remote location of the area protected Caprivi and its people from the full scale of exploitation which Germans, British and South Africans actually had in mind. On the other hand, the Caprivians were skilfully arranging themselves with the frequently changing external players. They were not necessarily powerless spectators on the gallery looking on, but always tried, and to a certain extent managed to play their own game. How were the people in Caprivi able to do that?
The complex decision-making system, which I described in chapter 11.5 was formally incorporated into the colonial administrative system, but in practice the pre-colonial structures and functions have changed little. Changes did not overthrow the system, since it was able to adapt to them. Caprivians are very skilful at imposing their own rules of interaction onto external players. Anyone who has ever attended a meeting with customary leaders in Caprivi made the experience that they know how to run such an event. The setting of the venue, the rituals of greeting and interaction, the sitting and speaking orders are all very carefully arranged, and an outsider is friendly but strongly guided into his or her proper place, both spatially and socially. With great dignity, the headmen make clear to the outsider that they know what they want and that they consider the ground on which the meeting takes place as their land. It is very hard, even for Presidents, to simply ignore such strength. In my opinion, the past and current powerful position of customary authorities in Caprivi is rooted in the leaders' skilful tactics, the support they have among their people and the Caprivians' continuing commitment to control and make a living off their land. While pursuing their overall interest to make a better living, they adhere to their distinct way of life, their identity and culture. As I explained, those elements are not static, but Caprivians are very sensitive to any interference by external players in their natural resource- and land use planning. Even more problematic is the interference with the choice of new leaders and the relations between different groups.

The South Africans did take an influence on those relations. They were not the first to do so, but the intensity of change in all aspects of life in Caprivi was unprecedented. For Caprivians, independence came with a rather general expectation that they would once again be fully in charge of their own affairs, allowed to move freely, and generally prosper with the help of a government and donor organisations that provide them with services and security.

As we have seen, the relations between different population groups of Caprivi, and especially their leaders bear the potential for unrest. It seems unlikely that radical leaders would be able to arouse their people to commit serious atrocities against their neighbours, though. Most Caprivians have more important things to do, and there is a long history of coexistence between e.g. Gciri and Mbukushu people in western-, and Fwe and Subiya people in eastern Caprivi. Nevertheless, some Caprivians are concerned that negative stereotypes and sentiments could be exploited by irresponsible leaders when the general political climate destabilises and party political interests continue to interfere with "tribal politics". A comment by Hoster Bebi, a member of the Fwe royal family sums up the delicate
balance in eastern Caprivi: "Peaceful cohabitation of Caprivians in Caprivi is a reality. However, the Fwe and Subiya will not compromise soon over their tribalism, it will continue, and especially so if one group gets more power. If outside interference continues, there will be serious problems" (Bebi in interview).

The hopes at independence for a general improvement in the standard of living have not materialised for many in Caprivi, a fact that is clearly reflected in the UNDP statistics. The SWAPO government points out, that schools, hospitals, housing, road and communication infrastructure have been upgraded, but in the largely rural areas of Caprivi, little has improved over the past years. The view that "the government does not deliver and does not make local people a priority" was already widespread before the secessionist uprising, and trust in the government's ability to bring socio-economic development to Caprivi has since deteriorated dramatically.

As I pointed out earlier, there was apparently little support for the secessionist's ideas in Caprivi. Some locals, nevertheless, acknowledge that the movement was not lastly sparked off by the SWAPO government's failure to provide for socio-economic development in Caprivi and to address the needs of people whom they regard as political opponents. Caprivians from all groups condemned the aggressive way in which particularly the SFF interrogated villagers in 1998, and the hard handling of suspects in the aftermath, the style of which reminded many of the South African army.

Obbie Mbeha from Kahunikwa described what happened in his village:

"Prior to October '98, and again after August '99, Special Field Force men came to my village. Their appearance and attitude were frightening, as they questioned people in their own homesteads in angry tones with automatic weapons at hand. The soldiers spoke Oshiwambo, and not Lozi or English, and got angry when people failed to understand their questions. They were beating people in my village."

Villagers from all over Caprivi and eastern Kavango told of similar events in their communities since 1998.

The SFF's behaviour and their continued presence in Caprivi could easily lead to a situation where the locals feel they are under the occupation of an alien force. This poses a serious threat to the project of Nation-building and reconciliation put forward by the SWAPO
government since independence. The security forces' action adds to the anger of many Caprivians over an increasing number of Oshivambo-speakers that have been transferred into administrative posts and other government jobs in the region. People complain that the newcomers have no knowledge of the life reality of the locals, and therefore often fail to address local needs and to follow the basics of local behaviour and social interaction. "Caprivians are very conservative people, such things are very important to them", says Hoster Bebi.

The suffering of Caprivians at the hands of Namibian security forces in connection with the secessionist plot was the result of the government's inability to respond appropriately to an internal security threat. Since late 1999, the people of Caprivi and Kavango are dying and suffering severely from the government's inability to respond appropriately to an external security threat. Not only are the locals now, as they were to a far lesser extent before, exposed to violence and plundering by armed robbers from Angola, they are again treated as suspect collaborators at the hands of their own government security forces and a foreign army in their own country. The ongoing maltreatment of Namibian citizens in Caprivi and Kavango exposes another aspect of the government's and security forces' failure to understand local people's perspective and locally defined needs: The everyday life reality in the border area.

The former colonial powers Germany and Portugal carry the historical responsibility for the creation of the artificial line, which today marks the Namibian-Angolan border. But across the red line on maps, life has continued since. Locals have relatives and friends on the other side of the colonial border. Whether they are Namibians, Angolans, UNITA members, sympathisers, neutral or opposed to anyone is generally unclear. Most individuals apparently are simply caught in the crossfire and try to stay out of the way of the conflicting parties. Also in Eastern Caprivi, and particularly across the rivers regular trading and trafficking are a vital part of local people's social life and the regional economy. These movements belong to a routine from before 1890 which continued through the decades since the Germans and the British sealed their deal.

In parts of eastern Kavango and western Caprivi, there has been an overall breakdown of regular everyday life since December 1999. All daily activities and the provision of all services are affected or have been suspended. Locals are reportedly fleeing the area to find shelter in the safe hinterland of the river valley, in refugee camps or with relatives.
elsewhere. The overall interest of all involved players must be the restoration of peace and security before any socio-economic development can take place. If good treatment of the locals is not a priority in such attempts, any peace will not be a lasting one.

Caprivi east of the Kwando River is at present rather peaceful, and the people can apparently continue with their daily lives for the time being. Regional business, services and development projects are severely affected, but partly continuing as well. Like half a century ago, access by road through western Caprivi is once again a dangerous challenge. Those who can afford it choose to drive through Botswana on Streitwolf’s tracks, or fly in like the British and South Africans did. Ironically, eastern Caprivi’s inhabitants at present find themselves once again in the hardly accessible periphery of a territory that mainly exists on maps and in the minds of distant decision-makers who have a limited understanding of the reality on the ground. Relative economic self-sufficiency, the ability to adapt their lives to unforeseeably changing situations, relative autonomy in decision-making and strong cross-border relations are once again a source of strength and economic security in eastern Caprivi. It’s rather obvious why the locals want external players to assist them, but not to interfere with their affairs. They have played long enough to be experienced.

IV. Conclusion: Caprivi – a special case within Namibia?

A week after the secessionist attacks in August 1999 one of the Caprivi chiefs made the following comment: “Caprivi doesn’t want war, it wants development” (Mail and Guardian, 10.8.1999). The region is not different in that from any other part of Namibia, but the options and ideas of the people in Caprivi how to bring about development are. Many nation-states all over the world have a similar situation and are able to benefit from such internal diversity, rather than seeing it as a threat to national unity. Efforts made within the Namibian government, but also within Caprivi to enhance this diversity deserve all the support they can get.

There is a striking continuity throughout the colonial history up to the present day in the attempts of respective administrations and the distant, largely urban public to make sense of what is now the Caprivi Region of Namibia. We have seen ignorance and enthusiastic hopes, disinterest and high-flying plans, hot-headed tactics and careful strategic planning come and go through the heads of external players. We have seen that independence has
not put to halt this ever-changing display of multiple priorities and interests.

A summary of interests cannot be comprehensive, but among the respective
government players, two major tendencies are clearly visible:

- Caprivi seems attractive for its economic potential, which is lying in the resources that are
  scarce in the rest of the country. The interests of players are to gain access, develop,
  exploit or preserve them.

- Caprivi seems attractive for its strategic value. The interests of players are to build
  transport corridors, security zones or to use it as an exchange object.

In both cases the external players want stability in Caprivi to pursue their interests
undisturbed. It is one of the choices, which the players make if stability is to be achieved by
force and control, or support for efforts made and defined by the locals.

Over the past years since independence, Caprivi has developed an image among outsiders
of an exotic and attractive, but troubled place. “Low human development, diseases, fires,
floods, drought, territorial disputes, tribalism, secessionists, human rights violations”, and
now “war” are the themes which make the headlines. Such images are powerful, they affect
the ways in which interests are defined and decisions are made. Everyone willing to become
involved with Caprivi needs to deconstruct the positive and negative images first and make
up his or her own mind. In trying to achieve this, taking a look from a historical perspective at
the interests of various players in Caprivi has been a fruitful exercise.

The game approach which I applied was intended to provide an analytical framework
that is sufficiently structured and understandable, but also open enough to creatively work
with a great diversity of actors, their agendas, and the ways in which they interact. I hope it
also enabled the reader to get an occasional glimpse of the people, which tend to stay
hidden behind abstract institutions and interests. Everybody likes to play.
## References

### Abbreviations

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AZ</td>
<td>Allgemeine Zeitung</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBNRM</td>
<td>Community-Based Natural Resource Management</td>
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<td>CCN</td>
<td>Council of Churches in Namibia</td>
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<td>CoD</td>
<td>Congress of Democrats</td>
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<td>DSWAZ</td>
<td>Deutsch Südwestafrikanische Zeitung</td>
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<tr>
<td>DTA</td>
<td>Democratic Turnhalle Alliance</td>
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<td>FAA</td>
<td>Angolan government armed forces</td>
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<td>HDI</td>
<td>Human Development Index</td>
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<td>HPI</td>
<td>Human Poverty Index</td>
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<td>NDF</td>
<td>Namibian Defence Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLAN</td>
<td>People’s Liberation Army of Namibia</td>
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<td>SADF</td>
<td>South African Defence Force</td>
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<td>SFF</td>
<td>Special Field Force</td>
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<td>SWAPO</td>
<td>South West African People’s Organisation</td>
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<td>TCH</td>
<td>Trans Caprivi Highway</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Program</td>
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<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
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<td>UNITA</td>
<td>Union for the total liberation of Angola (Angolan rebel movement)</td>
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<tr>
<td>VSO</td>
<td>Voluntary Service Organisation</td>
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