

Namibia: Forgotten Conflict in the Caprivi Strip

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Abstract: The article focuses on the Caprivi conflict that took place in Namibia in 1999. This conflict was a short and low-intensity conflict. Besides, it meets the criteria to be described as a forgotten conflict. This study aims to explain and describe this conflict, to clarify the reasons why the conflict can be described as a forgotten conflict. A public opinion poll was conducted to confirm the hypothesis that this is a forgotten conflict. The results of this public opinion poll together with further media analysis confirm this hypothesis. The second part of the work focuses on the reasons why the conflict was forgotten. Several theories are applied to the case to provide a comprehensive explanation. In practice, it turns out that there are several reasons.

Keywords: Caprivi Strip, conflict, forgotten, Namibia, public opinion, violence.

Introduction

Until its independence in 1990, Namibia was occupied by various state authorities. In 1894, the German Protectorate was declared, with the Germans establishing control through the violent occupation of land (Britannica, 2021). In the following years, a bloody uprising of the indigenous people broke out, but it was suppressed and subsequently, between 1904 and 1907, the genocide of the locals took place (Olusoga, 2015). From 1915, Namibia was administered by the Union of South Africa. However, the Namibian people did not agree with the occupation and the government of the South African Union on their territory. Therefore, they also became involved in the conflict in Angola, against the South African Defense Forces (SADF) (Totemeyer, 2007). It was an instrument to express the disagreement with the South African occupation. The SADF supported the rebel revolutionary

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organization so-called the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA — União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola) and Namibian soldiers supported The People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola — Partido do Trabalho — MPLA). The Namibians formed an organization called the South-West African People's Organization (SWAPO), which fought not only on the side of the MPLA in Angola but also against the SADF in Namibia (Williams, 2009). The fighting lasted until 1988, but that year Namibia's independence agreement (independence since 1990) was signed (Freeman, 1991).

SWAPO became the official political representation in independent Namibia and was no longer involved in the war in Angola. However, even the newly independent Namibia was not united and formations arose in the Caprivi area that did not agree to the inclusion of this area under the newly formed Namibian state and demanded secession. Tensions in the new state gradually escalated and eventually resulted in armed conflict in 1999. This conflict lasted only a few weeks and in terms of intensity, it is a low-intensity conflict (UCDP, 2021). However, in this case, there is a connection with the events in neighboring Angola. One of the goals of this research is to describe this conflict in detail and analyze its reasons. The scientific community has not paid much attention to this conflict so far, so it can be described as a neglected conflict. The main goal of the research is to find out what the Namibian public thinks about the conflict, whether they know their history and know about this conflict or not. The study aims to answer the research question: *Is the conflict in Namibia a forgotten conflict and if so, why?* This research question was based on the hypothesis that the Caprivi conflict is indeed forgotten. This is based on an analysis of the literature. In databases such as Web of Science, Scopus or EBSCO, only one article is dealing with this topic. Besides, the author conducted a preliminary study during her studies in Namibia in 2018, where she interviewed 20 students and university professors about this conflict and only three of them knew about it. This led to the hypothesis that this conflict is forgotten. To answer the research question, an online public poll was conducted during 2020.

The article has the following structure. The theoretical part describes the definition of conflict and the definition of forgotten conflict. The methodological part defines the goals of the research and the research question. At the same time, it describes how the public poll took place. This section is followed by a chapter dealing with the description and analysis of the Namibian conflict. The following is an analysis of public opinion and the reasons why this may be considered a forgotten conflict. In the end, the main research findings are summarized, the research question is answered and all ambiguities are clarified.

Theoretical Framework

Over the years, the definition and classification of conflicts has been discussed by several authors. In the most general sense, a conflict can be expressed as a state of competition between two or more actors who have incompatible interests. However, not every dispute or tense situation can be considered a conflict. A conflict has certain characteristics. According to Holsti (1991), a conflict must have actors, with at least one of the actors being a state actor, a definable area of conflict, tension, and action in the form of measures and actions taken by the parties of the conflict. The criteria mentioned by Smolík and Šmíd (2010) in their book are also frequent. They divide it into qualitative and quantitative criteria. Based on these criteria, national conflicts can be considered a war when at least one of the armed forces is subordinated to governmental power, with a visible controlled organization, a set strategy, and continuity of operations. The quantitative criterion of 1,000 deaths per year determines the most intense type of conflict — war (Smolík & Šmíd, 2010). Based on the number of victims in one year, conflicts can be divided into low, medium, and high-intensity conflicts. Low-intensity conflicts have no more than 100 victims in one year, medium-intensity conflicts have 100–1,000 victims, and high-intensity conflicts have more than 1,000 victims (HIIK, 2021). Based on this division, the Caprivi conflict in Namibia can be defined as a low-intensity conflict.

The term forgotten conflict is most often used for frozen conflicts, which are conflicts that are stuck in a deadlock and have been going on for a long time. The most frequently cited examples are the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (De Waal and Von Twickel, 2020). Darcy and Hofmann (2003) use this term forgotten conflicts for conflicts that the international community has essentially ignored or gradually neglected over time. In general, it is a matter of fact that these are conflicts that do not receive enough attention, whether from the media or important international organizations such as the World Bank (Nielson, 2002). This usually includes ongoing conflicts, but it can also include conflicts that have already been resolved and which have not been addressed. This is a case of the conflict in Namibia, which has not received much attention in the media nor the scientific community. There are only three brief reports in the BBC archives on this conflict and no records in the CNN archives (BBC, 2021).

There are several reasons why some conflicts are neglected or forgotten. According to Nielson (2002), attention is not paid to forgotten conflicts due to the length of conflicts and little media interest. Conflicts that are too long or very short lose public interest. Little media interest, even at a time when the conflict is taking place with the greatest intensity, is influenced by the interest of readers. It is difficult to maintain public interest in protracted crises in distant places. According to the author, a large part of Western press organizations closed foreign offices and reduced the coverage of non-Western news by 75% (Nielson, 2002, p. 4). Therefore, attention is paid only to conflicts in the immediate vicinity of the EU and the US and to conflicts that have some connection

with 9/11 and terrorism. Very popular topics are the Middle East topics, especially Afghanistan and Iraq. On the contrary, not much attention is paid to “unknown” African states. Tisdall (2019), who describes the neglect of African conflicts, takes a similar view. Narang (2016) describes also other reasons. According to him, the political-strategic interests of the permanent members of the UN Security Council (P5 — Russia, USA, China, UK, and France) are important. If the state where the conflict is taking place is not a former colony of one of the P5 or there are no oil fields, it is not getting attention within international organizations. The geographical distance from the P5 states also has an effect, which, if it is not within a maximum horizon of 400 miles, negatively affects the interest of the states important. This lack of interest of international organizations and the largest powers is also related to the lack of interest of the Western media. Some authors state that other factors also affect the interest of the powers in resolving conflicts. Gartzke and Jo (2006) cite affinity as a reason for help and interest. However, this term is quite general and may be related to similar cultural or ideological values. This explains the lack of interest of some actors but it does not explain the lack of interest of all actors.

Ciobanu (2004) describes the influence of the so-called Russian factor on forgotten conflicts in the post-Soviet states. From his work, it can be concluded that the spread of misinformation may also affect the interest of the Western media. The dissemination of misinformation may also affect how the conflict has been presented in the media. In the case of the conflicts that took place in the 1980s and 1990s, at a time when the information was not readily available anywhere on the planet and conflicts in remote and unknown areas about which disinformation was spread could have given a completely unfamiliar impression. At the time, it was even more difficult to find out what was true and what was happening on the other side of the planet. Some authoritarian regimes may seek to present violence against residents or insurgents in their territory in a completely different form. Currently, this is the case of Rohingya violence in Myanmar (BBC, 2017). These four theories explaining why conflict can be forgotten are applied to the case of Namibia in the analytical part. This includes the theory of lack of media attention, the theory of lack of interest of international organizations and P5 states, the theory of affinity, and the theory of misinformation and misinterpretation of events.

Methodological Framework

This research is based on the hypothesis that the conflict in Namibia is forgotten. Attention was not paid to the conflict even at the time when the conflict took place. There are no records of this conflict in the CNN archives and only three short reports in the BBC archives (BBC, 2021). Namibia was a German colony for a long time, so the archive of one of the largest German newspapers (*Der Spiegel*) was examined. It contains only one article on this conflict (*Spiegel*, 2021). In these cases, quantitative content analysis, looking for the number of articles that describe the conflict, was used. There

are also just a few articles related to this topic in databases of scientific journals such as the Web of Science or Scopus. In 2018, the author of this article studied in Namibia, where she conducted a preliminary study involving 20 students and professors, and only three of them knew that there were armed clashes in Caprivi. All this information confirms the hypothesis of a forgotten conflict.

The hypothesis assumes that the research will confirm that the conflict is forgotten. The main goal of the research is to find out whether the Namibian conflict is forgotten or not. In the case that the hypothesis is confirmed, find the reasons why it is forgotten. The research question is defined as follows: *"Is the conflict in Namibia a forgotten conflict and if so, why?"* For these reasons, an online survey of Namibian public opinion has been conducted. When the Western public media and the scientific community hardly wrote about this conflict, what is the awareness in the state where the conflict took place? For these reasons, an online questionnaire was created. The questionnaire contained questions related to the age or employment of the respondents and two questions related to the aim of the research. The closed question asked the respondents whether there had been any armed conflict in Namibia since independence. The second, open-ended question arose when respondents chose option yes and asked what respondents knew about the conflict. Based on the answers to the second question, the answers were categorized. The answers were divided into four categories: *no specific information* (people did not know anything specific about the conflict), *a few details* (people knew the year or area where the conflict took place), *detailed knowledge* (people knew the names of organizations, fighters, date, etc.) and *wrong knowledge* (people described a completely different conflict). The survey was attended by 200 respondents, mostly from universities. Respondents were encouraged to complete it via emails, social networks, websites, and internal communication among several Namibian universities. Interviewing took place during the year 2020. To evaluate the results, quantitative descriptive research is used, which is a kind of survey, thus showing what percentage of people (sometimes divided by other criteria such as age or gender) think, feel or see things in a certain way. It aims to describe what percentage of Namibians know about the conflict and what they know.

One of the limitations of the questionnaire is that it produces results that are only of a short-term nature. It cannot be argued that the conclusions are valid for decades. This is not such a problem, as this research aims at the current knowledge of the people. Another limit for this research was the unwillingness of the Namibians to cooperate in completing the questionnaires. Even though the author addressed a wide range of individuals and dozens of institutions, a large part of these people did not respond. For these reasons, the sample of respondents is not ideally large. The sample of respondents was largely composed of students and people coming from the university environment, but people from other professional fields were also involved. Therefore, the sample

cannot be considered fully representative. Participation of all participants in the research was voluntary. All participants were informed in advance about the purpose of the research. The completion process was completely anonymous, especially because it was completed online. This also guarantees greater anonymity and openness of the respondents. Only the author of this research has access to the results through her account on the website, so the data cannot be misused by a third party.

As only a very limited number of publications on the conflict in Namibia have been written so far, it is also one of the aims of this article to describe this conflict. Descriptive-analytical techniques are used to outline the conflict but also to analyze why the conflict is forgotten. Based on the four theories described in the analytical part of the work, the small interest of the media and the scientific community and other factors that may contribute to the fact that this conflict is neglected are analyzed. These four theories are applied to the Caprivi conflict with the help of analytical-descriptive methods. The last fourth theory deals with the dissemination of misinformation. In this case, we can expect misinformation from SWAPO, which has determined power in the country since independence. In the past, SWAPO was responsible for imprisoning hundreds of people without going to court (Amnesty International, 2015). From this, it can be concluded that there has been a violation of freedom and human rights without a clear and open course of action. Therefore, content analysis is also used to examine articles related to the Caprivi conflict published in the largest Namibian newspaper, *The Namibian*. The aim is to determine whether or not this conflict was reported in the newspapers, whether the information published in the articles was true and what terminology the articles used.

Conflict in Namibia

The Caprivi Strip is an area located in northern Namibia. Climatically and ethnically, this area is very different from the rest of Namibia. Germany incorporated it into their colony in Southwest Africa to have better river access to the Tanganyika colony, which was located in East Africa (today's territory of Tanzania) (Harring & Odenaal, 2012, p. 5). The people in this area come from two ethnic groups, MaSubia and Mafwe, and in the past were part of the Kingdom of Zambia. The MaSubia people have been favored by the government since the beginning of Namibia's independence and therefore mostly support the ruling SWAPO. In contrast, the Mafwe did not have as many economic opportunities and the government disadvantaged them from the beginning, so instead, they supported the local opposition party Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) (Nangoloh, 2013). Some of the DTA members were dissatisfied with the situation in the Caprivi region and therefore in 1994 formed an organization called the Caprivi Liberation Army (CLA), which since its inception has pushed for a violent solution to the problem in the area to achieve complete secession in the Caprivi (Boden, 2009).

The CLA longed for the liberation of all Lozi people, ethnic groups located in the Zambezi River basin, in the states of Zambia, Namibia, Angola, and Botswana (IRIN, 1999). Subsequently, these areas inhabited by Lozi were to be united and a new unified state was created. The Lozi group also includes two main ethnic groups in the Caprivi stripe — MaSubia and Mafwe. CLA was active mainly in the 90s of the 20th century, its most famous member and leader was Mishake Muyongo, other well-known members include Steven Mamili, Martin Tubaundule, Thadeus Ndala, and Moses Mushwena (IRIN, 1999). The second primary actor in the conflict was the governing SWAPO party, which was established in 1960 and took part in the fight against SADF during the administration of the South African Union in Namibia. Since 1990 (independence of Namibia), it is the main state party that regularly wins elections and controls power in the country (Sakeus, 2017). The party helps to achieve this also through non-democratic means and violent campaigns, especially in the countryside. Corruption, clientelism, and nepotism are also typical for this party. In its beginnings, it was a communist organization, and even today the party is left-wing, but not as radical. One of the founders of the party is Sam Nujoma, who was also the first Namibian president in 1990-2005 (Sakeus, 2017).

In the 1990s, the CLA recruited men from the Caprivi area and trained them to fight in several camps hidden in swamps on the borders with Angola and Botswana (Boden, 2009). These were allegedly camps in the Bwabwata and Sifuma area, which were built by SADF units in the 1980s and then under UNITA control in the 1990s. In 1998, Mishake Muyongo, a former SWAPO member and president of DTA, who was head of the organization from 1991–1998, joined the CLA (AllAfrica, 2018). In the same year, the Namibian Defense Force (NDF) discovered one of the CLA training camps. There was a shootout, but the numbers of casualties are unknown. Subsequently, a large part of the CLA members (more than 100) fled to Botswana and Angola, and the civilian population left the area. 2,500 people from the Caprivi area have applied for asylum in Botswana (AllAfrica, 2018).

On August 2, 1999, the CLA launched an offensive against Katima Mulilo, the capital of the Caprivi region (IRIN, 1999). CLA units attacked several facilities, an army base, a police station, and a state radio station. During the fighting, 14 people died and more than 3,000 people were relocated to neighboring Botswana (UCDP, 2021). A state of emergency was declared in the province and the government began arresting all alleged CLA members. More than 300 people have been arrested, more than half of whom have been released in the next two years, but 132 remain in prison without trial (Amnesty International, 2015). Those released were reported inhumanely by the police. There was torture, threats, and rape. During August and September 1999, there were several other armed clashes between the CLA and the NDF. The last one took place in mid-September and three CLA rebels died during it (Forrest, 2003). Major CLA members, including Mishake Muyongo, fled to neighboring countries, most notably Botswana (Melber, 2009).

Some of them have been granted asylum in European countries. Since these events, there have been no further armed clashes.

Analysis of Public Opinion

In 2020, an online questionnaire survey was conducted in Namibia. 44% of all Namibian respondents were people between 16 and 24 years old. The largest group, 49%, was people aged 25 to 45 years old. The smallest group, 7%, was represented by respondents aged 46 to 60 years old. 56% of all respondents were men and 44% were women. Whether or not they know about the conflict in Namibia, 43% of all respondents answered that they know about the Namibian conflict and that there was a conflict in the past. The rest, 57% of respondents said there was no conflict in the recent history of Namibia (since gaining independence in 1990). If we apply age criteria to this question, we will not find any big difference based on age. Roughly 39,7% of all respondents in the 16-24 age group know about the conflict, while 60,3% do not. In the 25-45 age group, 45,9% know the conflict and 54,1% do not. For the last category (age 46-60), 42,8% know the conflict and 57,2% do not. No large differences were noted between the genders. 42% of women knew the conflict and 58% did not know about the conflict. 43,7% of men knew the conflict and 56,3% did not know about the conflict.

Interestingly, these numbers regarding conflict awareness cannot be considered final. Nearly 14% of all respondents who said that there was indeed a conflict in Namibia described a completely different conflict in the open-ended question. They described how some men took part in the fighting in Angola, mentioning UNITA or other Angolan organizations. From their answers, it follows that they described the civil war in Angola (1975-2002) (Brinkman, 2003). Some Namibians, including members of SWAPO, did take part in the civil war in Angola. They have been involved in the war in Angola since its inception. On the one hand, there were SADF government units, which were made up mainly of the inhabitants of today's South Africa, but there were also several Namibians in these units. On the other hand, a much larger part took part in the fighting on the side of the MPLA, which was supported by the revolutionary Namibian organization SWAPO (Williams, 2009). However, after gaining independence, both SWAPO and SADF withdrew from Angolan territory. SWAPO began to focus on events in its new state, the first elections, the creation of a constitution, and the consolidation of power. Respondents mistook the civil war in Angola for the Caprivi conflict. There are certain temporal connections and personal connections between these conflicts. The Caprivi conflict took place at a time when there was still a civil war in Angola (1999). Besides, some sources say that there was cooperation between CLA and UNITA fighters. The CLA received mainly weapons from UNITA (Prendergast, 1999). The mistake is therefore logical but the Angolan Civil War and the Caprivi conflict are two different conflicts. Based on the analysis of these answers, it can be concluded that only 37% of all respondents knew about the Caprivi conflict, while 63% did not know about the conflict.

The answers to an open-ended question that focused on what respondents, who answered yes to the previous question (in the history of independent Namibia — since 1990, there has been some conflict in Namibia), knew about the conflict were as follows. 14% of respondents' answers were categorized as *wrong knowledge*. These respondents described the civil war in Angola, not the Caprivi conflict. 37% of responses were categorized as *no specific information*. These respondents stated that they knew nothing more about the conflict. Alternatively, their answers were completely irrelevant and did not provide anything more detailed. For example — yes, there really was a conflict or my parents or friends told me something about it. 45% of respondents' answers were included in the category *a few details*. Respondents mostly knew that the conflict

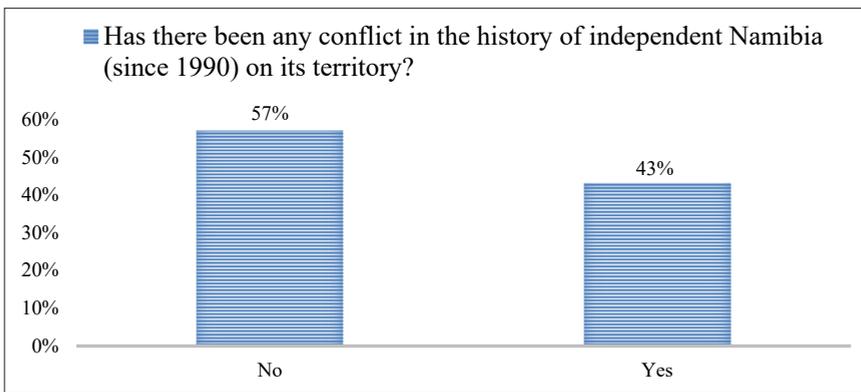


Figure 1: Public Poll in Namibia, First Question.

Source: Own survey.

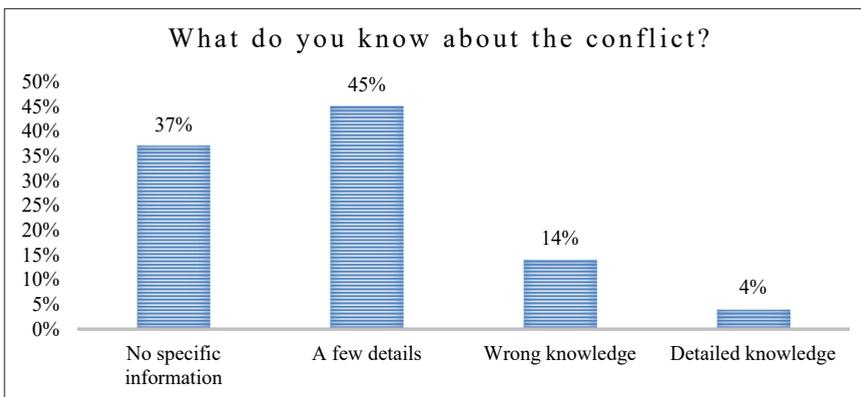


Figure 2: Public Poll in Namibia, Second Question.

Source: Own survey.

took place in the 1990s, that it was a short conflict and that it took place in the north/Caprivi area. Only 4% of respondents knew more information related to the conflict, so these answers were included in the category of *detailed knowledge*. They mentioned the Caprivi Liberation Army or the name Mishake Muyongo. From the answers it can be concluded that even the majority of respondents who know that there was a conflict in Namibia in the 90s do not know anything more about this conflict, it represents 59% of these respondents.

Reasons Why the Namibian Conflict is Forgotten

Although the Caprivi conflict is not a typical forgotten conflict, as it is a short and not ongoing conflict, it can be considered a forgotten conflict for several reasons. The Caprivi conflict lasted in the 1990s, specifically in 1999 for only a few months (Melber, 2009). A typical forgotten conflict usually lasts for several decades, and it is often the so-called frozen conflicts that are stuck in a stalemate. These conflicts do not receive enough attention in the media or through international and non-profit organizations. The conflict in Namibia was hardly mentioned in the world media even at the time of the conflict. There are no records in the CNN archives, only three records in the BCC archives and one in the Der Spiegel archives (Spiegel, 2021). Compared to other short conflicts of the 1990s (their duration did not exceed two years), these conflicts received at least five times more attention in the same media. Examples are the Republic of the Congo civil war (1993–1994), Yemen civil war (1994), the war in Abkhazia (1992–1993), South Ossetia war (1991–1992), Kosovo war (1998–1999), or Guinea-Bissau civil war (1998–1999) (Smith, 2015). Likewise, the Caprivi conflict has not received attention from international organizations (Amnesty International, 2015). The public opinion poll which was carried out in Namibia during 2020 only confirmed these conclusions. As a result, 63% of Namibians did not know about the conflict (including those who described a completely different conflict) and only 21% of all respondents were able to provide some information related to the conflict. Most Namibians have forgotten about the conflict, even though it is a conflict of modern history.

Why is the conflict in Namibia forgotten? There are several explanations. The first explanation relates to the theory of low media attention (Nielson, 2002). According to this theory, the attention of the Western media is focused on conflicts that last for a short time and in remote areas only to a very limited extent. This is also the case of the Caprivi conflict.¹ The conflict took place in a remote area (due to the European states

1 It is sometimes stated that the conflict took place from 1994–1999, as already in 1994 the CLA was formed and one shootout occurred (Harring and Odenaal, 2012, p. 5). However, at that time it was not a classic conflict, as there was no continuity, organization and regular violence or struggles. It was only in 1999.

or the USA), which was little known because it had recently gained independence. The violence phase alone lasted only three months, which can be classified as a very short conflict (UCDP, 2021). The location and nature of the conflict thus negatively affected media interest. At that time, much more attention was paid to events in the Balkans. In Africa, the focus was on the second civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and events in Somalia.

The second explanation relates to the lack of interest of international powers and organizations. Based on this theory, most attention is paid to states that were colonies or administered by any of the P5 states (Narang, 2016). Namibia was first a German colony, then under the administration of South Africa. It was never under the control of Russia, China, France, the USA, or Great Britain. Also, Namibia is not in the geographical vicinity of any of these states. The closest of these countries is France. However, France is still very distant, 4887 miles (7,865 km) (Distance Calculator, 2021). It is therefore far from being within the required perimeter of up to 400 miles, which negatively affects the interest of these states. However, the interests of the powers may be aroused by states in which large deposits of oil and gas are located (Narang, 2016). Nevertheless, these natural resources are not found in Namibia. The country is rich in diamonds, gold, copper, and zinc (Gaborone Declaration, 2022). These resources are not promising enough to attract the interest of the powers. Certainly not on the scale of oil.

Another explanation relates to the theory of affinity. According to this theory, states are close if they share certain values (Gartzke & Jo, 2006). These are primarily cultural and ideological values. Namibia has no common history with any of the P5 countries since it was a German colony but it maintains good relations with Germany, mainly based on trade cooperation (Federal Ministry for Economic Development, 2021). In the case of Germany, it can be argued that relations with European states are much closer and more important (Kappel, 2014). Namibia is a semi-presidential republic, which is considered a democratic state, but with shortcomings. It is rated as flawed democracy and ranked 64th in the overall assessment of the level of democracy in the world (The Economist, 2017). There are several reasons why the country is classified in this way. National elections are not totally free and fair, due to the intimidation campaign of SWAPO. Another problem is underdeveloped political culture. Democracy values are much lower than in the EU or US, whose average is around 8 points (full democracy), in contrast to Namibia, which has an average value of around 6.5 points. From this, it can be concluded that democratic values are not entirely identical. On the other hand, it is closer to these states than to China or Russia, which are considered authoritarian regimes (The Economist, 2017).

The latest theory focuses on the dissemination of misinformation (Ciobanu, 2004). In this case, as no interest of P5 states was noted, it cannot be assumed that these states would be responsible for the dissemination of misinformation. However, it is certainly

appropriate to focus on SWAPO, as it has been repeatedly accused of human rights abuses during the conflict by Amnesty International (Amnesty International, 2015). The Namibian constitution guarantees and protects freedom of the press. In general, the media in Namibia are freer than in many other African countries, but SWAPO's pressure on the media is clear (Press Reference, 2021). This influence has been stronger in the past than at present, especially in the 1990s, which includes the period of conflict (Mwilima, 2008). The government tried to control the media in the country through various prohibitions and restrictions. A well-known is a ban from 2001, which prohibited the largest newspaper in the country, *The Namibian*, from presenting and publishing all advertisements (Ifex, 2011). It can therefore be assumed that there was also some pressure on how the conflict was presented in the media by SWAPO. For these reasons, the content analysis of *The Namibian* was conducted.

When we look at the archive of *The Namibian* articles, the vast majority of articles related to this conflict use terms such as separatist movement, attempted secession, and secessionist movement. Some use other terms such as public violence or surprising attack (*The Namibian*, 2021). The term conflict does not appear in the articles in the vast majority of cases. There were only two articles out of hundreds of articles related to the Caprivi conflict that used the term conflict (*The Namibian*, 2021). This terminology may have affected public perception. In some cases, the public probably did not recognize the Caprivi conflict as a conflict, only as a limited and short-lived attempt at secession. On the other hand, articles by *The Namibian* seem relatively objective. The names of the actors, cities, or descriptions of events are clearly stated. Some articles point out that the lawsuits are lengthy or have not yet taken place. There is a large number of articles that describe some information related to the Caprivi conflict. From this information, it can be concluded that there was no major press censorship in Namibia. The only explanation is therefore related to the terminology of the articles. This only partially explains why 63% of respondents said that there was no conflict. Other reasons can only be hypothetical. It may be influenced by the fact that the conflict took place more than 20 years ago and the vast majority of respondents at that time were small children. As this was a low-intensity conflict, some of them may not consider these events to be a conflict. Education and other factors can also have an impact.

Concluding Remarks

Namibia is a relatively new state that gained independence in 1990. SWAPO took over the decisive role in the new state, trying to consolidate its power during the 1990s. Marginalized groups in the north of the country did not like it and therefore began to form an armed resistance. The conflict itself took place in 1999. This conflict was very short and, in terms of intensity, it is a low-intensity conflict. It ended with the escape of the main representatives of the Caprivi Liberation Army abroad. The rest of the CLA

members have been arrested and thus the conflict officially ended. Minor skirmishes continued in the following years (roughly until 2001), but these events cannot be described as a conflict, as there was no unified insurgent group.

The Caprivi conflict can be considered a forgotten conflict because it meets the definition of Darcy and Hofmann, who use the term for conflicts that the international community has essentially ignored or gradually neglected over time (Darcy & Hofmann, 2003). Neither the world media nor the world powers have paid attention to this conflict. Likewise, very little attention has been paid to the conflict among the scientific community. It is also interesting that the vast majority of the Namibian public is unaware of this conflict or does not consider the events of 1999 to be a conflict. Of all respondents who participated in the online survey, 63% did not know about the conflict (including those who described a completely different conflict). Only 21% were able to provide some more detailed information related to the conflict and only 4% of respondents provided specific information including, for example, the names of organizations, leaders, date, or city names. From these results, it can be concluded that the conflict is relatively forgotten, even among the Namibians themselves. This is certainly influenced by the fact that the conflict ended relatively quickly. On the other hand, it must be borne in mind that the end of the conflict was due to mass arrests, human rights violations, and the exodus of the population, which the international community overlooks.

There are several explanations why this conflict is forgotten. Almost all theories related to the explanation of the forgotten conflict have been confirmed in this case. There was low media attention as the conflict took place in a remote area and a relatively unknown state. The conflict was very short and non-intense, which negatively affects the interest of the foreign press. The interest of the powers and international organizations was also low, as Namibia has no common colonial history with any of the P5 states. From a geographical point of view, it is a state that is very distant, it is not in a perimeter of 400 miles from major world players such as the US, China, Russia, UK, and France. The country is not interesting in terms of natural resources, there are no large deposits of oil such as in Iraq, Libya, Angola, or other states where the war took place. All these facts negatively affect the interest of the powers. From the point of view of the affinity theory, in this case, also no significant closeness can be observed between Namibia and the already mentioned P5 states. Namibia is considered a flawed democracy, but all P5 states are classified differently. European states and the USA are more democratic, while Russia and China are more authoritative. The culture of these states is also very different. Thus, we can find a certain affinity only in the case of Germany, which has a common history and tries to maintain above-standard relations with Namibia.

The last theory deals with the spread of misinformation. Due to the low-interest powers, it cannot be assumed that they were involved in spreading misinformation related to

Namibia. However, as the government and the military violated human rights several times during the conflict (mainly related to arrests and imprisonment without charges and trials, violence, and torture), it can be assumed that they tried to obscure these facts and present the conflict differently (Amnesty International, 2015). Based on the analysis of the contents of The Namibian archive, it can be stated that a lot was written about the conflict, but the events were not classified as conflict, but mostly as an attempt at secession or a surprising attack. It certainly greatly influenced how people perceived these events, some of them may not consider it a classic conflict. The extent to which SWAPO has influenced the content of media reports is not entirely clear. According to some authors, there was indeed pressure on the media and human rights violations (Horn, 2009). For these reasons, events should not be forgotten. In the future, it would be appropriate to try to analyze in detail the public opinion of the Namibians and focus mainly on the analysis of why the public has a relatively low awareness of the Caprivi conflict. In this case, this research provides only a limited explanation related to the terminology used in the Namibian media.

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