

Botswana Political Scenario: The Sedudu Confrontation

Focus Question: How should the Sedudu island land dispute be resolved?

The Context – Botswana, Namibia and the Caprivi Strip

Geography



Botswana is a landlocked country located in southern Africa, neighboring South Africa to the south, Namibia to the west, Zimbabwe to the east, and Zambia (partially) to the north.

Relationship Between Botswana and Namibia

Botswana and its' western neighbor Namibia share common experiences and histories and have had good relations since their independence from the British and Germans, in 1966 and 1988 respectively except, however, for a conflict between these two countries over some islands, in a strip they both share known as the **Caprivi Strip**.

The Caprivi strip, creates an unusual shape, highlighted in purple on the map below left. **Sedudu island**, located in the Choebe river within this Caprivi strip, is 5 squared km with no permanent residents (see the image below right).



Historical Background

There was a historical “scramble for Africa” between 1880 and 1900 by European nations who carved up the African continent for access to resources. Many of the borders that were created during that period by European countries colonizing African nations, such as Britain, France, Portugal, Spain and Germany, still exist today.

Germany colonized Namibia and at the time hoped to own the Caprivi strip in order to have water access via the Zambezi river for easy trade across west to east Africa, hoping it would lead to the Indian Ocean. What they didn’t realize at the time was that Victoria Falls, considered the largest waterfall in the world, is on that same route, making it impossible to access the Indian Ocean.

The Context – The Origins of the Sedudu Conflict

There are five islands in the Caprivi Strip whose ownership or territorial sovereignty is contested by Botswana and Namibia, three in the Chobe River, including Sedudu island, and two in the Zambezi River. However two disputes, Situngu and Sedudu, have been more vocal for years.

See the history of Sedudu conflict below:

Botswana Claims

- Botswana claimed that Sedudu Island is its own territory unless it could be proven that the main channel passes through the south region of the Island, and therefore falls within the sovereignty of Namibia. Botswana held the view that the north and west channels of the Chobe River constitute the main channel, and in accordance with the Anglo German Treaty of 1890, which established the boundary between the two nations. Hence, accordingly making the Sedudu Islands fall exclusively within the sovereignty of Botswana. (See the map above)

Namibia Claims

- Namibia claimed that the main channel of the Chobe River indeed passes through the south of the Island and that Namibia and its predecessors had occupied, used, and exercised sovereign over the Sedudu Islands since 1890. As such Sedudu Islands is a territory governed by the sovereignty of Namibia.

As a result of these claims there has been a push and pull as demonstrated in the cases below:

- In November 1993 two British tourists were kidnapped while at Sedudu Island within the Caprivi Strip by alleged Namibians. This led to an exchange of fire between the Botswana and Namibia troops and also following claims by the Namibian government that the Botswana troops had flown the Botswana National flag on the island and that Botswana troops tried to take the Island through the “Barrel of the gun”.
- As a result of these issues, in the 1990s, Botswana accelerated its’ arms procurement program. In June 1996, it was reported in the mainstream media that Botswana was in the

process of negotiating the purchase of a Canadian built F-35 fighter bombers for the Botswana Defense Forces and also main battle tanks from the Netherlands. These actions raised eyebrows especially from the Namibia government, which publicly stated in 1996 that Botswana was acquiring weapons to attack Namibia over the border disputes.

Definitions

Colonization: When a group of people from one country claim land and build settlement in another territory (colony) for the original country. The original country has some control over the new colony.

Territorial sovereignty: Having independent control over a land/region

Stakeholder: A person, group, or organization who is involved in and/or affected by a course of action

International Law: A body of rules established by custom or treaty and recognized by nations as binding in their relations with one another.

Conflict Management: Conflict management is the process of limiting the negative aspects of conflict while increasing the positive aspects of conflict. The aim of conflict management is to enhance learning and group outcomes, including effectiveness or performance in an organizational setting

Use of Force: The use of force, in the context of law enforcement, may be defined as the "amount of effort required by police to compel compliance by an unwilling subject".

The Stakeholders

For the purposes of this case study, the stakeholders we will be investigating are:

- The Government of Botswana
- The Government of Namibia
- The Batswana – the people of Botswana
- The Namibians – the people of Namibia
- The South African Development Community (SADC) - a Regional Economic Community comprising 15 Member States: Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Established in 1992, SADC is committed to Regional Integration and poverty eradication within Southern Africa through economic development and ensuring peace and security.

Student's Instructions:

Prior to the Discussion, Sign Up to WorldVuze

Week 1 (January 23rd to January 27th)

1. Read this Botswana- Sedudu Confrontation case study
2. Put yourself in the shoes of your assigned stakeholder and debate as a class what you think would be the most sustainable solution to this problem:

How should the Sedudu land dispute be resolved?

Base your decisions only on the information provided in this case study.

3. Log onto WorldVuze and answer the Know Your World Initiative Botswana discussion questions (tagged **KYWI-Botswana**) as your assigned stakeholder.

Week 2 (January 30th to February 3rd)

1. Investigate perspectives shared by students in other classrooms internationally, who were to the same stakeholder group as you, to the Know Your World Initiative Botswana questions on WorldVuze (tagged **KYWI-Botswana**).
2. Discuss as a class any similarities or differences in how other students approached this same problem.
3. Share your reflections on WorldVuze on whether you would address this problem any differently.

Remember, when it comes to the complex issues you are discussing, such as in this case study, you are making a decision with limited information and there is no one “correct” or “perfect” choice.