

The Making and Unmaking of the Politics of Exceptionality
Studying Processes of Securitisation and Desecuritisation in the
Orange and Okavango River Basins

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Abstract

This study acknowledges the shortcomings of, on the one side, keeping the concept of security in international relations limited and confined to state protection by military means from perceived internal and/or external threats and, on the other side, widening and broadening the concept of security to encompass all aspects of social life perceived to threaten a specific referent objects of security. By drawing upon the work of the Copenhagen School of International Relations (CoS), the study develops a comprehensive framework which examines how securitising actors discursively attempt to construct certain state of affairs or developments as threatening to specific referent objects of security. By also paying attention to the concept of desecuritisation, how to unmake security, which has received scant attention by the Copenhagen School, the thesis delineates the complex dynamics between securitisation and desecuritisation in the context of perceived water scarcity in two international river basins in Southern Africa, the Orange and the Okavango. It is argued that the foundation of the interaction between securitisation and desecuritisation is much dependent on the different ways in which nature has been constructed; the Orange River has become a symbol of “Humankind’s conquest of nature” while the Okavango has been constructed as “God’s gift to humankind”. Drawing upon the discourse theoretical framework of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, it is argued that when enacted through the logic of equivalence, securitisation invokes a Schmittian understanding of the political which reduces social antagonisms between stakeholders in the river basins to a dichotomy between friend and enemy. It is further argued that where attempts of desecuritisation take place, these have the potential of creating a more cooperative climate between the respective stakeholders in the basin states. However, by employing the logic of difference most of these cooperative endeavours are identified as carrying important and unattended side effects, leaving central, contentious issues aside, ultimately making desecuritisation appear in a bleaker light in the Orange and Okavango River Basins.

List of Acronyms

ACADIR	Associação de Conservação do Ambiente e Desenvolvimento Rural Integrado/ Association for Environmental Conservation and Integrated Rural Development
AFDB	African Development Bank
ANC	African National Congress
ARTP	Ai-Ais/Richtersveld Transfrontier Park
AWIRU	African Water Issues Research Unit
BAR	Basins at Risk
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BDF	Botswana Defence Force
CI	Conservation International
CMI	Christian Michelsen Institute (Norway)
COS	Copenhagen School of International Relations
CSCT	Classical Security Complex Theory
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DRFN	Desert Research Foundation of Namibia
DWAF	Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (South Africa)
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ENWC	Eastern National Water Carrier
ERP	Every River has its People Project
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GCI	Green Cross International
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GGP	Gross Geographic Product
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
HOORC	Harry Oppenheimer Okavango Research Centre
IBT	Inter Basin Transfer
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IFR	Instream Flow Requirement
IRBM	Integrated River Basin Management
IRN	International Rivers Network
IUCN	World Conservation Union
IWRM	Integrated Water Resource Management
IWU	International Waters Unit (Botswana)
JIA	Joint Irrigation Authority
JPTC	Joint Permanent Technical Commission
JTC	Joint Technical Commission
KCS	Kalahari Conservation Society
LCD	Lesotho Congress for Democracy
LDF	Lesotho Defence Force
LHDA	Lesotho Highlands Development Authority
LHWC	Lesotho Highlands Water Commission
LHWP	Lesotho Highlands Water Project

LOE	Logic of Equivalence
LOD	Logic of Difference
LORMS	Lower Orange River Management Study
MAWF	Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (Namibia)
MEWT	Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism (Botswana)
MW	Mega Watt
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy Action Plan (Angola)
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NNF	Namibia Nature Foundation
NP	National Party
NSCWP	North-South Carrier Water Project
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OBSC	Okavango Basin Steering Committee
ODMP	Okavango Delta Management Plan
OKACOM	Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission
ORASECOM	Orange-Senqu River Commission
PEA	Preliminary Environmental Assessment
PJTC	Permanent Joint Technical Commission
PPF	Peace Parks Foundation
PWC	Permanent Water Commission
RBC	River Basin Commission
RBO	River Basin Organisation
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAHC	Southern African Hydropolitical Complex
SANDF	South African National Defence Force
SAP	Strategic Action Programme
SIDA	Swedish International Development and Cooperation Agency
SOIWDP	Southern Okavango Integrated Water Development Project
SWAPO	South West Africa Peoples Organisation of Namibia
TBNRM	Transboundary Natural Resource Management
TCTA	Trans Caledon Tunnel Authority
TDA	Transboundary Diagnostics Assessment
TFCA	Transfrontier Conservation Area
TRC	Transformation Resource Centre (Lesotho)
UDF	United Democratic Front
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNIS	United Nations Information Service
UNITA	União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola/The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
ZAR	South African Rand

1 Introduction

“It is commonly believed that water is life. Yet, on closer examination, this is clearly an oversimplification. Water is more than this.”

- Ronnie Kasrils (2002), Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, Republic of South Africa.

Hydropolitics is by Turton (2002:16) defined as the authoritative allocation of values in society with respect to water. This concept is now increasingly being draped in the language of security and crisis¹. Water resources and international rivers are frequently being pointed out as examples of how the effects of degradation and increasing scarcity of a given resource may pave the way for social and political instability in a region. The Director General of the UNESCO has declared that “of all social and natural crises we humans face, the water crisis is the one that lies at the heart of our survival and that of our planet earth” (UNIS 2003) and the BBC (1999) has postulated that “the main conflicts in Africa during the next 25 years could be over that most precious of commodities – water, as countries fight for access to scarce resources”. Ashton (2002:236) identifies that some 85% of Africa’s water resources are compromised of large river basins that are shared between several countries. While these rivers create national expectations of the benefits they can bring (Sadoff and Grey 2005:420), they also elicit competitive sentiments between the riparian states sharing them.

Southern Africa is largely an arid to semi-arid region (Ashton 2000:67) being compromised of no less than 15 international rivers (Moyo and Tevera 2000:120). While van Wyk (2000) asserts that the agricultural sector employs 70% of the region’s population, compromises 35% of its GDP and generates 30% of its foreign exchange, water from rivers is used for a broad range of different purposes; herein for consumption, for maintaining and improving public health, for industry, transportation, tourism and for agriculture.

The Okavango and the Orange are two international rivers in Southern Africa which both include riparian states which rely heavily on water resources². The sensitivity of policy aspects relating to water management in the Okavango and Orange River Basins is demonstrated by Wolf et al. (2003:46), having declared both river basins as being “at risk”, suggesting a potential for political stress or conflicting interests in the coming years.

¹ See for instance Ashton (2000), Bulloch and Darwish (1993), Clarke (1993), Mbaiwa (2004), Schulz (1995) and Phillips et al. (2006). The English words *river* and *rival* have the same root, *rivus*, meaning stream in Latin, from which is derived *rivalis*, which means sharing the same stream (Biswas 1993 cited in Ohlsson 1995:23).

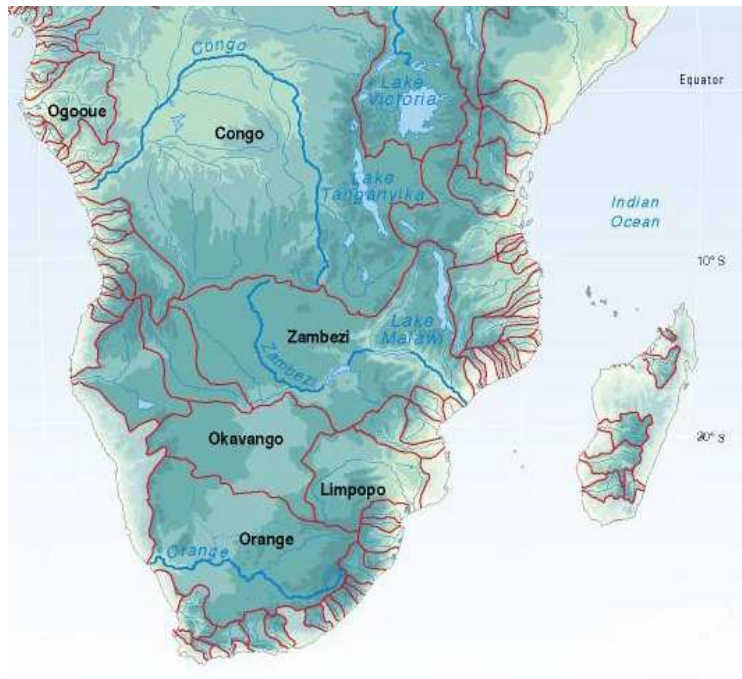
² The Okavango is shared by Angola, Namibia and Botswana while the riparian states of the Orange consist of Lesotho, South Africa, Botswana and Namibia.

This study seeks to examine some of the ramifications of *water management* being “an essentially contested concept”, not by pursuing an instrumental and policy oriented research agenda investigating how best to manage water scarcity, but by following a slightly different trajectory. This is done by exploring the implications of framing certain state of affairs, in this case access to and control over water resources, in the grammar of security. By hooking up with the linguistic turn in social theory, adopting a discourse theoretical approach inspired by the writings of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1994), the study draws on the work by Wæver (1995) and Buzan et al. (1998) who have conceptualized the social construction of threats and vulnerabilities through the theory of *securitisation*. “Security” becomes a *speech act* (Austin 1962, Searle 1980) that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames an issue as a special kind of politics or as above politics. By securitising an issue a *securitising actor* attempts to legitimise the adoption of extraordinary means, allowing for a breakage of the normal rules of the game (e. g. in the form of secrecy, levying taxes or conscriptions, placing limitations on otherwise inviolable rights, or focusing society’s energy and resources on a specific task) in order to protect a *referent object* perceived to be threatened (Buzan et al. 1998:24). By problematising the assumption that the more security the better, the study also seeks to investigate various ways and attempts on how to unmake security representations, these efforts being enacted through the idea of *desecuritisation*.

Contextualised to the river basins under consideration, it is anticipated that the securitisation of water resource management contributes to a mediation of belonging which constructs antagonistic identities of “*friend*” and “*enemy*” (Schmitt 1985[1934], 1996[1932]). Moreover, when water resource management is securitised it is asserted that this process unfolds and is best encapsulated through a conceptualisation of security as a phenomenon located within, though not confined to, different *sectors* (Buzan et al. 1998). Conversely, it is expected that the notion and implementation of *benefit sharing* (Sadoff and Grey 2002/2005, Phillips et al. 2006) between the riparian states of the two river basins will be conducive to the desecuritisation of water resource management. Furthermore, following Schulz (1995) and Turton (e.g. 2003d, 2005a), the existence a Southern Africa Hydropolitical Complex which links most international river basins and riparian states within the SADC³ region is investigated, as well as the positioning of the Okavango and Orange as hydropolitical sub-complexes nested within the larger complex. Consequently, the decisive question becomes if,

³ The Southern African Development Community (SADC) was established in August 1992 and presently consists of fourteen member states: Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. See: <http://www.sadc.int/english/about/history/index.php>

and eventually how, *interdependence* and *reciprocity* can facilitate the desecuritisation of water resource management in the Okavango and Orange River Basins.



Map 1: “Major River Basins in Southern Africa”. The illustration shows the location of the Orange and the Okavango River Basins among other significant river basins in the region (Source: UNEP/GRID-Arendal 2002).

1.1 The Research Question

The overall task of the study is to identify and analyse processes of securitisation and desecuritisation related to water resource management in the Orange and Okavango River Basins. The study will delineate the driving forces underlying these two processes and outline their subsequent implications. For the purpose of research delimitation as well as conceptual demarcation, I set forth four hypotheses⁴.

1.1.1 Securitisation

What is (are) the *referent object(s)* that is existentially threatened and has a legitimate claim to survival? Who are the *securitising actor(s)*, that is, actors who declare a referent object as threatened?

Hypothesis One: If perceived environmental destruction is initiated by one actor while the negative effects are perceived or received by another, that is, if a “we-them” or “victim-

⁴ In accordance with the epistemological foundations of discourse analysis to be elaborated on in the following chapters, these should not be regarded as a set of falsifiable propositions designed to explain and predict securitisation and desecuritisation, but rather serve as propositions aiding a coherent empirical analysis.

perpetrator” dichotomy is prevalent and this dichotomy follows historical patterns of enmity, environmental degradation is likely to increase suspicion, distrust and degree of securitisation (Wallensteen 1992, Ohlsson 1995, Buzan et al. 1998)⁵.

Hypothesis Two: When actors in the riparian states attempt to securitise water issues, the actual referent object of security can be linked to threats specific to different sectors (Buzan et al. 1998). Securitisation of water resource management may not only appear in or be confined to the environmental sector, but may also appear via the other four sectors; herein the military, economic, societal and political sectors as defined by Buzan et al. (1998)⁶.

1.1.2 Desecuritisation

Hypothesis One: The Southern African Hydropolitical Complex; the Orange and the Okavango River Basins being sub-complexes within this, will impact positively on the desecuritisation of water issues as it increases the range of potential options for national actors to draw upon when trying to cope with water management challenges (e.g. Turton 2003d, Turton 2005a, Turton et al. 2003a).

Hypothesis Two: If a sole focus on water sharing has been transformed into a focus on water and benefit sharing among riparian countries, this will have a positive impact on the desecuritisation of water issues in the basins (e.g. Sadoff and Grey 2002, Earle 2003, Sadoff and Grey 2005, Phillips et al. 2006).

1.2 Expectations

Following the assertion by Phillips et al. (2006:xiii) that benefit sharing is conducive to the desecuritisation of water resource management I expect that the more focus on the former, the more desecuritisation and therefore also the less securitisation. Since the Orange is a “closed” river basin, implying that there is already a net deficit of water in the basin (Turton 2003d) and three of the riparian states are among the most economically developed and, arguably water stressed countries in Southern Africa, I expect to find a higher level of securitisation in

⁵ This would refute the notion that environmental threats are threats without enemies (Prins 1993) and Daniel Deudney’s claim that “in the environmental sphere, ‘we’ not ‘they’ – are the enemy” (Deudney 1991).

⁶ A central argument in the book “Security – A New Framework for Analysis” by Buzan et al. (1998) is that security appears in five sectors where each sector has a specific logic of threats and vulnerabilities. Eriksson (1999) is critical to this approach claiming that it contributes to increased securitisation, thus underpinning the rationale and necessity for additional empirical analysis.

this basin than in the case of the Okavango⁷. However, the discursive features of the language of security may also differ between countries, hence; one has to take national particularities into account when analysing and comparing processes of securitisation and desecuritisation.

1.3 Fieldwork

Case oriented research approaches emphasise the importance of getting close to the people, places and situations being studied in order to better understand the realities of daily life (Patton 1990:46). This is why I chose to do field trips to all the five riparian states of the two river basins. These trips include Cape Town, Johannesburg and Pretoria in South Africa; Maseru in Lesotho; Gaborone and Maun in Botswana; Windhoek in Namibia and Luanda and Menongue in Angola.

I was based in Cape Town for the larger part of 2005 where I also worked as an intern at the African Water Issues Research Unit (AWIRU). At the research facility I was able to work in close collaboration with other academics conducting research on numerous issues related to water in Africa. I was also able to take advantage of a broad network of researchers, government officials and non-governmental organisations residing in the basin states of the Orange and Okavango Rivers. During my stay in Cape Town I interacted with various universities and research centres as well as with environmental NGOs. To gain an understanding of the perceptions of the South African Government, national level bureaucrats in the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) were interviewed in Pretoria.

When outside South Africa I often found myself relying on what Bailey (1996) refers to as “key actors”. These individuals were often the first that I met when coming to new locations and they helped me arrange meetings, set up interviews and performed numerous useful tasks.

Most fieldwork conducted outside South Africa took place during June 2005. I spent a week in Maseru where I met with members of the Lesotho delegation to the Orange Senqu River Commission (ORASECOM), the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA) and the Lesotho Highlands Water Commission (LHWC). In addition, I met government officials at the Ministry of Natural Resources as well as the Transformation Resource Centre, a national NGO working for justice, peace and participatory development.

With regards to Botswana I spent around one week in the capital Gaborone where I interviewed representatives of the Botswana delegation to both ORASECOM and the

⁷ This assumption is consistent with Turton (2003d).

Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission (OKACOM). Additionally, I met up with people in the SADC Water Sector Coordinating Unit and NGOs like the Kalahari Conservation Society and the World Conservation Union (IUCN). As I believed it was important to add visual information to the interviews conducted, I also spent time in Maun which is one of the biggest settlements in the Okavango River Basin. The advantage was that I could interact with researchers working at the Harry Oppenheimer Okavango Research Centre (HOORC), the centre itself being solely dedicated to research related to the river in one way or the other. At the centre I did also obtain useful data such as newspaper articles and reports. Furthermore, I also paid a visit to the Okavango Delta Management Plan Office (ODMP). Yet another offshoot of the fieldtrip to Maun was that I could embark on a scenic flight over the Okavango Delta. Seeing the “Jewel of the Kalahari” from above definitely improved my understanding of the functioning of the complex ecosystem and gave me a downstream perspective on the dynamics of river basin management.

Namibia is a co-riparian of both rivers, so in Windhoek I met up with national delegates to the ORASECOM and to the OKACOM in addition to various government officials and academics. Windhoek is also host to a number of environmental NGOs and I conducted interviews with representatives of the Namibian Nature Foundation (NNF) and the Desert Research Foundation (DRFN) among others. A great advantage was that I also got access to huge compilations of primary and secondary data at these institutions.

Due to the outbreak of the Marburg virus in Angola during the first half of 2005, fieldwork in Luanda and Menongue was not conducted until December the same year. By invitation of the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) I conducted interviews in Luanda with representatives of various UN bodies as well as with bureaucrats in the Angolan Government. Additionally, I spent some days in the city of Menongue in the Cuando Cubango Province. The region was an arena of fierce fighting between the MPLA and the UNITA during the Angolan civil war and there are still a large number of un-detonated landmines in the vicinity of Menongue. The myriads of streams found in this area mark the origin of what later becomes known as the Okavango River. Compromising the active catchment of the Okavango, what happens here will impact on settlements downstream in Namibia and Botswana. The stay in Menongue greatly enhanced my understanding of the Okavango River Basin as seen through the outlook of those upstream.

Finally, by attending the World Water Week in Stockholm in August 2005 and the Second International Workshop on Hydro-Hegemony in London in May 2006 I could meet and talk with people that I didn't have the chance to see when in Southern Africa. Both events

addressed topics that were highly relevant to my project and, ultimately, I believe they significantly enhanced my knowledge of the research area.

1.4 Project Outline – Charting the Way Forward

Chapter one has served as an introduction to the topic of hydropolitics, the international river management problematique in Southern Africa and in the Orange and Okavango River Basins in particular. I have sketched out the topic and overall aim of the study and also why I have chosen to focus on processes of securitisation and desecuritisation in relation to these two rivers. Moreover, I have briefly addressed theoretical as well as methodological considerations and given a brief account of the fieldwork conducted in the five riparian states of the two river basins.

Chapter two provides a justification for the study; herein by identifying research gaps related to research on international river basin management. The chapter lines out important delimitations that will ensure a sufficiently coherent and manageable study.

Chapter three addresses methodological issues. The section will deal with matters related to discourse theory and analysis; herein how the discourse analytical framework of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe provides a novel way of analysing securitisation and desecuritisation. Furthermore, I will give a brief overview of interviews and document analysis as the other methods I will apply to shed light on the research question.

Chapter four gives an extensive overview of the two rivers; their topography and hydrology as well as social, economic and political issues. The essential purpose is to disclose the multiplicity of meanings that various actors ascribe to the rivers. These background variables are of great importance for the empirical analysis since they may facilitate securitisation or desecuritisation in the two river basins. The main focus is put on the cases to be used as examples of securitisation and desecuritisation respectively.

Chapter five will first provide an introduction to the environmental security debate and show how securitisation theory follows a different trajectory by creating an understanding of why and how issues become discursively securitised and desecuritised. With regards to securitisation, the main focus will be put on the sectoral approach to security provided by Buzan et al. (1998), how securitisation theory draws heavily on the work by the German legal theorist Carl Schmitt, moreover, how securitisation can contribute to discursive closure by constructing reductionist images of friend and enemy. Conversely, I give an account of how benefit sharing can be conducive to the desecuritisation of water resource management. Lastly, I introduce the main assumptions of hydropolitical security complex theory and sketch

out how reciprocity and interdependence can facilitate desecuritisation of water resource management in the two river basins.

Chapter six contains the empirical analysis of processes of securitisation and desecuritisation. The deliberation proceeds by depicting the various discursive attempts of securitisation and desecuritisation, drawing upon a range of different sources such as newspaper articles, official statements, speeches and interviews. In each case, the most obvious examples will be accounted for first and then the reader is guided through yet more complex rhetorical and semiotic structures which at the end amalgamate with contextual features to make up a comprehensive discussion.

Chapter seven encompasses a comparative study of the two river basins. This chapter also serves so as to review the findings from the empirical analysis. The focus is on how different social constructions of nature can facilitate different degrees and kinds of securitisation and desecuritisation.

In chapter eight I analyse the various dimensions of power tied to the social construction of nature and sketch out how these dimensions have far reaching consequences with regards to both securitisation and desecuritisation in the respective river basins.

Finally, chapter nine reviews the findings of the study and features some concluding remarks.

2 The Importance of the Study – Research Gaps and Delimitations

“Most studies of trends in international basins tend to focus on the world’s most volatile basins – the Jordan, Tigris-Euphrates, Indus and Nile [...] There are several problems with the approaches of much current literature and, as a consequence, questions about their conclusions as well” (Wolf et al. 2003:31)

Torring (2005:26) notes that many discourse theorists have been more inclined towards theoretical and philosophical approaches than towards empirical analysis. For that reason, Howarth (2000a:2) emphasises the importance for discourse analysts to apply their abstract theories and concepts to empirical research questions. Furthermore, Howarth (2005:332) asserts that there is very little reflection on, and subsequent application of comparative perspectives in discourse theory. This study aims at integrating text and context, exploring the ways in which constructions of meaning produce, reproduce, maintain or subvert relations of political power and how this plays out with regards to the dynamics between securitisation and desecuritisation in the Orange and Okavango River Basins.

2.1 Research Gaps and Delimitations

Studies of conflict and cooperation in international rivers have to a large extent tended to put the spotlight on volatile areas in the Middle East, establishing and maintaining a research bias towards water and conflict (Wolf et al. 2003:31). Turton and Ashton (2004:56) postulate that the degree of securitisation within the water sector is far less in Southern Africa than in Middle Eastern basins such as the Euphrates and Tigris. Additionally, Wæver (2000:13) maintains that the concept of desecuritisation is under-articulated and processes of desecuritisation have not been sufficiently studied. This study aims at an exploration and further development of the dynamics of hydropolitics in the Orange and Okavango River Basins in Southern Africa, expected to disclose considerable insights into processes of securitisation as well as desecuritisation.

Hajer (2005:307) asserts that a recurrent discussion among discourse analysts is the detail of analysis needed. A focus on the international-river-basin-level⁸ aides a sufficiently contextualised but also coherent approach to the research question. A river basin can be considered an eco-geographical region, that is to say, a region defined by ecological plus geographical parameters. Such a confined territorial space functions to a large extent

⁸ Though, the hydropolitical complex component of the study makes assertions about the interdependence between all the major international river basins in Southern Africa. The basin level approach is thus not a fixed and static level of analysis.

independently of the regions contiguous to it, of more distant regions and of the world as a whole (Westing 1989:131). The basin approach is also viable since international rivers might be considered in terms of shared hazards and shared resources for the riparians, where context specific variables may influence the overall degree of securitisation and desecuritisation⁹ and where environmental destruction is more or less territorialized to a physical entity. This is still a significant undertaking, involving no less than 5 different riparian states with a broad array of diverse stakeholders. Certainly, while this has implications for the level of detail in the analysis it can also be rewarding, providing a more comprehensive and complete picture of the topic through instigating interaction with the top-level decision makers in the various basin states.

The justification for limiting the study to the period after 1994 is based on the observation made by Turton (2001b:10 and 2005a:15) that while colonialism, the Cold War and Apartheid effectively suppressed the emergence of regional political dynamics in Southern Africa, the demise of the latter unleashed new patterns of conflict and cooperation set to impact on the hydropolitical dynamics within and between the international river basins of the region. In this context, Moyo and Tevera (2000:18) note that the emerging regional environmental politics, SADC level policy formation and the evolving social forces which influence the diverse environmental interests in the region are not yet well researched.

2.2 Selection of Cases

The rationale behind choosing the Orange and the Okavango as the two river basins to be studied is based on the findings by Wolf et al. (2003), declaring that both basins are “at risk”¹⁰, implying that they are susceptible for political stresses or conflicting interests in the coming 5 to 10 years. Turton (2005a) disputes these findings by referring to an increasingly successful regime building in the basins since the BAR study was conducted. With regards to the Okavango, “the basin is probably no longer a Basin at Risk, although it has had little substantial institutional development since 1999” (ibid:29). Regarding the Orange River Basin, it is “the most stable international river basin in the entire SADC region, with the highest number of basin-specific regimes, some of which occurred after 1999 when the initial BAR study was done” (ibid:31). Regardless of this assertion, Conca (2002:9) underlines that

⁹ Lodgaard and Ornäs (1992) and Buzan et al. (1998) among others have stressed the necessity of approaching discourses on environmental security in such a regional or sub regional setting.

¹⁰ As put forward by Turton (2005a:8), the Basins at Risk (BAR) Project involved the identification of areas likely to be flashpoints in the next decade. River basins which had recently become internationalised or basins with little institutional capacity were deemed as likely candidates for being “at risk”.

indicators such as the ratification of environmental treaties or participation in international environmental regimes remain *poor* measures of meaningful cooperation. It is not enough just to cooperate; both the form and the content of that cooperation is critical (ibid:11). Consequently, these contradictory conclusions become a window opportunity which mitigates further empirical investigation which is to be carried out in this study.

With regards to securitisation, five case studies were chosen, three involving the Okavango River Basin and two relating the Orange River Basin. Conversely, regarding the desecuritisation component an overall of seven cases were chosen. The case studies involve an array of environmental issues, but should not be viewed as formal tests of hypothesis concerning securitisation and desecuritisation. The rationale for choosing the respective cases are based on the following assertions.

2.2.1 Securitisation

The overarching rationale for choosing the cases is based on the question whether securitisation does ignite perceptions of friends versus enemies in international river basins and, eventually, whether securitisation is linked via different sectors of security.

Ashton (2000:65) claims that the role of water in virtually all of the water related conflicts that have occurred in Southern Africa has been secondary to considerations of territorial sovereignty. Many of the international borders in Southern Africa are aligned with rivers and watercourses, being arbitrarily demarcated by former colonial powers. How can border issues spark the securitisation of water resources management? The cases chosen are the Orange River Border dispute between South Africa and Namibia and the Kasikili-Sedudu Island dispute between Namibia and Botswana.

Turton (2005c:13) affirms that exogenous water, supplied by means of inter basin transfers, is the lifeblood of the South African economy which would simply collapse if this source of supply was no longer secured. How can heavy dependency on water spark the securitisation of water resources infrastructure? The case chosen is the SADC intervention into Lesotho in 1998, named Operation Boleas.

Wallenstein (1992) avows that differences in user patterns in international river basins can ignite disputes and conflicts between riparian states, facilitating upstream-downstream dilemmas where each part sees the other part as blocking current and future development projects. A distinction can be made between over exploitation of a given resource for the same purpose, herein competition, and over utilization of resources for one purpose that

excludes all other uses, herein monopolization (ibid:53). How this dynamics plays out is the focal point of analysis in the Eastern National Water Carrier (ENWC) case and the controversy around the Popa Falls hydropower station in the Okavango River Basin.

2.2.2 Desecuritisation

With regards to the concept of benefit sharing in international rivers, Phillips et al. (2006: xv) emphasise that there is a need for much more specificity if the idea is to be a successful component of future agreements between riparian states. The sharing of benefits cannot be considered a universal panacea, at best it will be highly complex to establish and will not be implemented without risk (ibid:141). The question is if, eventually how, transboundary benefit sharing can aid the desecuritisation of water resources management in the two river basins.

Moyo and Tevera (2000:18) highlight that issues related to collective natural resource development in Southern Africa are not very well researched. The cases chosen for analysis include the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) and the Lower Orange River Management Study (LORMS). The questions addressed herein will relate to the conceptualisation and effects of benefit sharing and the prospects for desecuritisation.

The idea of transboundary natural resource management (TBNRM) has recently gained much attention within academic as well as political circles (Reyers 2003:1). While the supposed benefits of such are perceived to be large and widespread, most studies have tended to focus too narrowly on the socio-economic and political benefits and largely ignored those relating to biodiversity conservation (ibid). These issues are brought up on the agenda when analysing the Ai-Ais/Richtersveld Transfrontier Park (ARTP) on the Lower Orange River. Eventually, how is desecuritisation to be thought within the framework of TBNRM?

Institutional arrangements for cooperative resource management are on the increase in Southern Africa (Conca 2002:14). The Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission (OKACOM) and the Orange-Senqu River Commission (ORASECOM) will be dealt with under the panoply of benefit sharing. Additionally, issues pertaining to the Every River has its People Project (ERP), which aims at involving local and civil society stakeholders in the management of the Okavango River Basin will be investigated.

Turton and Ashton (2004:65) maintain that the concept of a Hydropolitical Complex needs to be assessed independently in order to determine its value as an analytical tool to understand the dynamics of coalition formation, power structures and negotiations over shared water resources. Moreover, the role of dams and interbasin water transfers (IBTs) in

the context of semi-arid and arid regions needs to be better understood. Additionally the importance and limitations to the utility of IBTs, particularly in places like the Southern African Hydropolitical Complex, need to be understood. As illuminated by Turton et al. (2003a:12), current and future IBTs remain central to the concept of a hydropolitical complex in Southern Africa. The question becomes how, eventually, can reciprocity and interdependence between the riparian states of the Orange and Okavango River Basins facilitate desecuritisation of water resources management?

3 Method

“Problems and solutions are like beauty, they exist in the eye of the beholder. That which people perceive, will determine how they will act” (Brynard 2003:310)

According to Buzan et al. (1998:176) the obvious method to study processes of securitisation and desecuritisation is discourse analysis. Discourse puts perceptions at the centre stage of attention. When adapted to the field of securitisation studies, this implies that the fundamental task becomes not to assess whether an issue is “really” a threat or not, but rather to analyse how issues are securitised and the likely effects of such. This makes discourse analysis a poor strategy for uncovering hidden agendas, revealing the real motives behind an act. However, when built on the assumption that perceptions affect policies and decision making (Brynard 2003), discourse matters and can provide considerable insights into the intricacies of securitisation studies.

Consistent with the traditional and “conventional” conceptualisation of method, the aim is to assure that research is firmly grounded intersubjectively and that the findings are reproducible by the scientific community (Hansen and Sørensen 2005:98)¹¹. Discourse theory renounces the idea that it is possible to produce research that is not affected by the researcher. However, this does not imply that the discursive approach throws methodological considerations out with the bathwater. Indeed, Buzan et al. (1998:188) maintain that reproducibility is also among the essential aims of securitisation theory. Throughout the study I made use of a variety of sources and resources such as interviewing, observations and document analysis. In this way I was also able to cross check and validate empirical findings attained during the field trips. In accordance with Patton (1990:245) such triangulation increases both the validity and reliability of the data obtained.

In the context of the securitisation and desecuritisation discourse between and within the two international river basins, the study primarily opts for an institutional delimitation of discourses to include those ideas, concepts, and categorisations that are produced, reproduced, and transformed within and between the respective riparian states, organisations and institutions. Mathisen (1997:20) sees this as a viable option in giving a discourse formation a clear social basis and at the same time maintaining its analytical coherence. Therefore, this study adopts a methodological perspective which involves interviews of academics,

¹¹ By drawing upon Ernesto Laclau, Hansen and Sørensen (2005:98) refer to method in the traditional sense as implying “the death of the subject”, that good science should not be influenced by those who produce it. However, the discursive approach calls, in the words of Laclau, for “the death of the death of the subject”, implying that any methodological step taken is not neutral but involves an element of social construction.

bureaucrats and representatives of the Okavango Commission (OKACOM) and the Orange-Senqu River Commission (ORASECOM) as well as NGO leaders, being complemented with document analysis of speeches, official papers and newspaper articles.

The discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe represents a novel way of thinking about the relationship between social structures and political agency, the role of different interests and identities in explaining social action and the interwoven nature of meaning and practices. By introducing the concepts of social antagonism and hegemony, they aim at presenting a theory of discourse where the political nature of society is given primacy. The purpose of the first part of the chapter is to address some of the essential ontological and epistemological assumptions of discourse theory, herein also reflect on some of the methodological caveats instigated by the adoption of a discourse analytical approach. The last parts bring about methodological tools for empirical analysis of discourse.

3.1 What is Discourse? – From Theory to Analysis

Discourse theory emerged in the context of the cross disciplinary, post-positivist interpretative tradition, but has deep historical roots in the analysis of ideology, rhetoric and language philosophy ¹²(Hajer 1995:43). The approach is founded on certain ontological and epistemological premises, in theoretical models as well as in methodological techniques for concrete analysis. Accordingly, Howarth (2005:336) makes a useful distinction between discourse theory and discourse analysis; the former provides the underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions while the latter consist of a range of techniques for analysing discursive structures.

3.1.1 The Assumptions of the Discursive Approach

While discourse theory is anti-essentialist and opposes causal explanations of social phenomenon which tie empirical events to universal laws (Howarth 2000a:131), the modus operandi of discourse analysis rejects the mechanical application of free standing sets of rules and neutral techniques to empirical phenomenon (Howarth 2005:317). Thus, the philosophical foundations of discourse analysis postulate that theoretical and methodological considerations cannot be separated (Jørgensen and Philips 1999). The aim of discourse theory is not merely

¹² While a breakdown of the theoretical universe of discourse theory by far exceeds the scope and capacity of this study, a general introduction to discourse theory and analysis is provided by Fairclough (1989), Laclau and Mouffe (1994), Howarth and Stavrakakis (2000), Neumann (2001) and van Dijk (2003). For applications of discourse theory to environmental politics, herein also water management, see for instance Hajer (1995), Solomon (1998), Darier (1999), Simon (2002), Thompson (2002) and Allan (2003).

to provide novel descriptions of the social world, but to construct new interpretations either by rendering visible phenomenon previously unidentified by prevailing theoretical approaches, or by problematising existing accounts and thereby articulate alternative interpretations (Howarth 2005:320). While a political context is to be analysed as a discursive construction (Hajer 1995:55), discourse analysis derives part of its momentum from the concept of deconstruction. This often entails to unveil that a policy discourse is to be understood as a series of unintended consequences, disclosing that seemingly neutral, technical positions conceal highly normative commitments, subsequently investigating who fulfil this role, which institutional arrangements support and endorse them and ultimately reveal that they have significant political consequences (ibid).

Additionally, discourse theory offers a critique of realist, technocratic and positivist ways of analysing environmental problems where the definition of the problem is taken for granted and subsequent analysis attempt to delineate why and what sort of action is needed (Hajer 2005:298). As far as discourses are relational systems of meaning and practice that constitute the identities of subject and objects, attention is drawn to how the structuring elements and principles of social life are created, maintained, disrupted and transformed (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000:6). Discourse involves all kinds of practices in terms of speech, writings, images and gestures that social actors draw upon in their production and interpretation of meaning (Torfinn 2005:7). However, discourse as such is not synonymous with discussion; a discourse refers to a set of concepts that structure the contributions of participants to a discussion (Hajer 2005:300). For instance, discourse analysis would illuminate a particular discursive structure in discussions of transboundary water resource management in Southern Africa.

The analysis of discourse will in this context refer to the practice of analysing empirical raw materials and information, dealing with a range of linguistic and non-linguistic data like speeches, reports, interviews, images and even organisations and institutions as discursive forms. Having sketched out the main assumptions of discourse theory, it is now time to identify some of the under articulated elements of discourse analysis while at the same time counteracting those voices claiming that discourse analysis is subjectivist gibberish; neglecting the material conditions, institutions and natural constraints on the production of meaning, falling prey of conceptual and moral relativism, being incapable of making claims to truth and validity and thus unable to deliver viable accounts of social life (Howarth 2000a:13).

3.1.2 Challenges and Misconceptions

Discourse theorists are increasingly asked what value the discursive approach adds to the study of politics (Torfing 2005:22). For this reason, it has become increasingly important to justify the approach by applying its abstract theories and concepts to empirical analysis. As encapsulated by Torfing (ibid), discourse theory has a somewhat different research agenda than behaviourist, institutionalist and rational choice perspectives and has no intention of developing a general theory of voting, nation building or welfare state reform. Since discourse theory is concerned with understanding and interpreting socially produced meanings, the methodological process of operationalization gains less significance, though, not implying that the discursive approach promotes methodological anarchism since concepts will still be modelled so to fit the particular problems under consideration (Howarth 2000a:133).

Furthermore, as Torfing (2005:25) identifies, it is important that discourse theory does not only restrict itself to the study of 'soft' topics such as gender, ethnicity and social movements, but also deals with more traditional 'core' topics such as security politics. What is more, discourse theory must also openly and critically reflect on questions research design, selection of cases, collection and interpretation of data. A distinctive feature of discourse theory is the attention paid to the interweaving of language and action (Fairclough 1989, Torfing 2005:23). A social constructivist understanding of language implies that a discursive formation is constitutive for the emergence of an object and these two cannot be separated (Huysmans 1999:12). While this draws attention to the role of the researcher as always being part of a particular discourse (see Eriksson 1999) it has also contributed to claims that discourse theory is no more than nihilistic relativism¹³ (Torfing 2005:18). The crucial question is whether discourse analysis precludes or is compatible with comparative studies?

Howarth (2005:332) acknowledges that there is very little reflection on the comparative perspective in discourse theory, but asserts that the two are not incommensurable as long as the latter is detached from purely positivistic and quantitative stances. Discourse theory does not involve the comparison of practices and institutions which are treated as purely equivalent units, what is compared are practices and objects which share certain family resemblances, not essences (ibid:334). Furthermore, discourse theory has also been perceived as ruling out the analysis of political institutions (Howarth 2000a:119). However, discourse

¹³ As Howarth (2000a:124) puts it, "practioners of discourse do not claim to be conducting value free or objective investigations". Stemming from the influence of Immanuel Kant, discourse theorists are always positioned in a particular discursive formation from which there is no Archimedean point to target and criticise alternative world views.

analysis is not at odds with institutional analysis¹⁴. Following Howarth (ibid:120) institutions and organisations should be understood as ‘sedimented’ discourses which have become manifest as relatively permanent and durable. Accordingly, there are no qualitative differences between discourses, only differences with regards to their stability and conformity¹⁵ (ibid).

3.2 Theory, Method and Analysis – The Framework of Laclau and Mouffe

The political scientists Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe have developed a theory of discourse which is sufficiently coherent to apply to empirical cases¹⁶. One of their central assumptions is that social phenomenon are systems of meaning that are contingent and can never completely exhaust a field of meaning (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000:3). Hence, the inherent dynamics of a social field will generate a constant battle over the definitions of society and identity. A river might represent an obstacle to rapid economic development, it might be viewed as a unique ecosystem or a symbol for the nations threatened natural heritage (Howarth 2000a:9). The meaning of river will thus depend on the particular discourses that constitute its identity.

3.2.1 Articulation

Laclau and Mouffe (1994:105) refer to articulation as any practice that establishes a relation among elements such as that their identity is modified¹⁷. The structured totality resulting from

¹⁴ Though, Howarth (2000a:119) strongly cautions against seeing institutions as the outcome of trans-historical trajectories of development or treating institutions as unified subjects endowed with interests and capacities.

¹⁵ In this regard, Hajer (2005:303) uses the term *discourse structuration* when a discourse starts to dominate the way a given social unit conceptualises the world and *discourse institutionalisation* when a discourse crystallises in a particular institutional arrangement. When these two conditions are fulfilled, a discourse can be said to be *hegemonic* in a given field (Hajer 1995:60). The latter is consistent with Allan’s (2003:21) application of the term *sanctioned discourse* to water management, pointing to how policy makers put self serving assumptions and information on the agenda while unwelcome information is demoted, relegated to appendices or ignored. This materialises in its most powerful form when things appear as fixed, normal or unproblematic, implying a *naturalisation* of a given discourse which becomes an effective way of steering away potentially opposing forces. Following Hajer (1995:54), discourse analysis then investigates the boundaries between clean and dirty; how a particular framing of the debate makes certain elements appear as unproblematic or appropriate while other elements can appear as highly contentious.

¹⁶ See Laclau and Mouffe (1994). While Laclau and Mouffe are influenced by social constructivism, post-Marxist and post-structuralist political theory (Torfing 2005:9) they draw upon insights from a remarkably diverse set of academics ranging from Gramsci to right wing legal theorist Carl Schmitt.

¹⁷ Essentially, the practice of articulation is not limited to purely linguistic phenomenon, “but must instead pierce the entire material density of the multifarious institutions, rituals and practices through which a discursive formation is structured” (Laclau and Mouffe 1994:109).

this practice is termed *discourse*. While the differential positions articulated within a discourse are named *moments*, every difference that is not discursively articulated is called an *element*. Elements are characterised by the fact that they may have several different meanings and can simultaneously be linked to different discourses. Howarth (2000a:103) maintains that no matter how successful a particular political project might be in dominating a discursive field, it can never completely articulate all elements, thus there will always be oppositional forces¹⁸. As the transition from element to moment is never entirely fulfilled, a no man's land emerges which becomes the foundation for any articulatory practice (Laclau and Mouffe 1994:111).

Discourses are contingent and historical constructions which are always vulnerable to those political forces excluded in their production (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000:4). Elements that are particularly open for different interpretations or meanings are termed *floating signifiers* (Jørgensen and Philips 1999:39). Laclau and Mouffe (1994:111) stress that neither absolute fixity nor absolute non-fixity of meaning is possible and actors will attempt to dominate the field of discursivity by stabilising the floating signifiers, thus constructing a discursive centre. To account for this partial fixation of meaning Laclau and Mouffe (ibid:112) introduce the term *nodal point*. Nodal points are privileged reference points in a discourse that bind together a particular system of meaning (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000:8). For instance, the meaning of signifiers such as “democracy”, “freedom” and “state” will differ depending on whether they are structured by the nodal point of “communism” or “liberalism”. Where the term nodal point refers to a structuring core *within* a specific discourse, floating signifiers refer to the battles over important signs that take place *between* different discourses (Jørgensen and Philips 1999:39). This explains how a ‘river’ can be a nodal point in an environmental conservation discourse and a floating signifier between an environmental conservation discourse and a national security discourse.

In order to capture the positioning of subjects within a discursive structure, discourse theory distinguishes between subject positions and political subjectivity. The former designates the positioning of subjects within a discourse. Laclau and Mouffe (1994:155) maintain that any individual can hold a plurality of different subject positions such as “man”, “bureaucrat” and “Christian”. The latter refers to how social agents act, or as Howarth (2000a:109) puts it, the subject is forced to take decisions, herein identify with certain political projects when social identities are in crisis and structures need to be recreated and it

¹⁸ As Laclau and Mouffe (1990:130) put it; “there will always be history, the myth of the transparent and homogenous society – which implies the end of politics – must be resolutely abandoned”.

is through this process that political subjectivities are created and, ultimately, transformed into subject positions. As such, the subject is not simply determined by the structure, nor does it constitute the structure.

3.2.2 Discourse Coalitions

As noted, the idea of discursive closure functions as an impossible ideal. The precondition for the emergence and function of this ideal is the production of *empty signifiers* (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000:8). While empty signifiers have not acquired steady and coherent meanings, they await fixation by the intervention of nodal points¹⁹. This aspect becomes crucial if one considers the concept of *discourse coalition* as developed by Hajer (1995). An essential assumption in a discourse coalition approach is that the political power of a text does not come from its consistency, but from its multi-interpretability (ibid:61). The articulation of a discourse can only take place around an empty signifier that functions as a nodal point; hence emptiness becomes a fundamental quality and condition of hegemonic success for the nodal point (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000:9). Congruous with Hajer (2005:302), discourse analysis reveals that people often speak at cross purposes, thus assumptions of mutual understanding are usually flawed. For that reason, discourse coalitions arise due to discursive affinities, meaning that arguments vary in origin but share a similar way of conceptualising the world. For instance, in pollution politics there is a discursive affinity shared by the environmentalist argument that protection is 'the right thing', the economic idea that pollution protection is cost effective and the scientific argument that nature is a complex ecosystem that should not be fiddled with (ibid:304).

Successful discourse coalitions will not only draw boundaries between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' defining membership through identifying a common enemy or 'other', but will also attempt to cover over internal differences within the coalition (Griggs 2005:119). This is enacted through the articulation of empty signifiers which unite diverse interests into a common project.

3.2.3 Social Antagonisms and the Frontiers of Society

Politics might be seen as a struggle for discourse hegemony where discursive battles occur when several different actors claim the right to represent the right solutions of a given

¹⁹ Howarth (2000a:119) notes that the relationship between nodal points and empty signifiers has not been fully specified by Laclau and Mouffe. It is thus a bone of contention whether and eventually how the two terms differ from one another.

problem (Hajer 1995:60). When discursive battles occur, different actors will try to reduce the ambivalence of an element and turn it into a moment. What happens is in a discourse theoretical perspective termed *closure*, that is, a temporary stop in the floating character of meaning. However, this closure is never complete. Although Laclau and Mouffe stress the ultimate contingency of meaning, they nevertheless acknowledge that partial fixations of meaning are both possible and necessary. By doing so, they provide an account of social change that neither reduces all discontinuity to an essential logic, nor denies any continuity and fixity of meaning whatsoever (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000:7).

Hegemonic projects²⁰ will attempt to weave together different threads of discourse in order to dominate a field of meaning (Howarth 2000a:102). Antagonisms occur due to negation of alternative meanings and options and exclusion of those social agents who identify themselves with these, or as Laclau and Mouffe (1994:125) put it, because “the presence of the ‘Other’ prevents me from being totally myself”. As the limits and unity of a discursive system cannot be constructed by reference to an internal essence, social antagonisms occur through the exclusion of a series of identities and meanings which emphasise and highlight the sameness of the same excluded elements (Torring 2005:16). As Mottier (2005:260) affirms that social antagonisms are acted out through the mechanisms of boundary drawing, boundary maintenance, ordering and othering. Social antagonisms reveal themselves through the production of political frontiers drawn between “insiders” and outsiders”, which often breed simplistic, reductionist and stereotyped pictures of friends and enemies. The way in which this plays out on the discursive arena is further elaborated on by Laclau and Mouffe through the logic of equivalence and logic of difference.

3.2.4 The Logic of Equivalence and the Logic of Difference

Laclau and Mouffe (1994) introduce the *logic of equivalence* (LOE) as a function which creates equivalential identities that express a pure negation of a discursive system and the *logic of difference* (LOD) which does the exact opposite by expanding a given system of differences by dissolving existing chains of equivalence and incorporating disarticulated elements into an expanding order (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000:11). For Laclau and Mouffe (1994:130) the former is a logic of simplification of political space which expands the

²⁰ The opposite of hegemony is deconstruction, revealing that a hegemonic intervention is always contingent and that the elements could have been structured in another way (Jørgensen and Philips 1999:61). This is consistent with Huysmans (1999:14) and the way the concept of denaturalisation acts out. The critical task of denaturalising a discursive structure can reveal that the subject positions generated by the discourse are not natural or fixed, but appear as such because of the way the respective discourse constructs history and society.

paradigmatic pole, thus reducing the number of possible subject positions, while the latter is a logic which expands the syntagmatic pole, leading to an increasing complexity and diversity of subject positions to be adopted²¹. Depending on which of these logics are dominant, social space is divided in different ways²². Clohesy (2005:183) asserts that while the former establishes unity within by positing the existence of a common threat outside, the latter seeks to break down frontiers through discursive cooptation. Where relations of equivalence are dominant, interaction between groups tend to take a friend-enemy²³ form and conversely, where the logic of difference predominates the multiplicity of articulations and subject positions makes it more difficult to construct such an enemy (Norval 2000:221).

As advocated by Buzan et al. (1998:177), discourse analysis is not the exclusive method of securitisation studies and should be complemented with other methods in order to get a complete picture of the research question. Qualitative researchers typically rely on four methods for gathering information (Marshall and Rossman 1999:105): Participating in the setting, direct observation, in-depth interviewing and analysing documents and material culture. The latter two will be further elaborated on below.

3.3 Document Analysis

Document analysis refers to the study of published or unpublished information and data (Churton 2000:218). Marshall and Rossman (1999:116) claim that the review of documents often entails a specialized analytic approach called content analysis which implies the examination of documents either produced in the course of everyday events or assembled specifically for the research project. Following Torfing (2005:6), content analysis will here refer to the analysis of particular words, word classes and word combinations appearing in a wide range of reports, treaties, speeches and newspaper articles. The method is advantageous

²¹ Giving and example of the LOE, Howarth (2000b:107) refers to how different segments of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa during Apartheid became united in the fight against white racism, seen to negate and block the avowal of black identity. As a good exemplification of the LOD, Turton (2000:142) refers to how the Apartheid government depended on 'buying' support to sustain its illegitimate minority rule. This was partly done by allocating natural resources, including water, so as to advantage a given constituency and to disadvantage another.

²² As maintained by Clohesy (2005:183), some political projects may seem to incorporate both of these logics. They should therefore not be seen as mutually exclusive. Moreover, Laclau and Mouffe (1994:129) emphasise that neither the logic of equivalence, nor the logic of difference manage to constitute a fully sutured space, thus hegemonic projects are never complete.

²³ Clearly, this division stems from the political philosophy of Carl Schmitt. While the dichotomy is present in the early writings of Laclau and Mouffe (e.g. 1994), it is moderated in later academic contributions (e.g. Mouffe 1999). As Mouffe (1999b:4) emphasises in "The Challenge of Carl Schmitt"; "the category of the *adversary* (my emphasis) is crucial to redefining liberal democracy in a way that does not negate the political in its antagonistic dimension. The adversary is in a certain sense an enemy, but a legitimate enemy with whom there exists a common ground".

as far as it is non-reactive; hence it can be applied to a research project without disturbing the setting in any way (Marshall and Rossman 1999:117). Moreover, content analysis is a relatively comprehensible method where the information used can be checked and validated in subsequent research projects, thus increasing the intersubjectivity of the research project at hand. Even though the non-reactive essence of document analysis can be beneficial with regards to uncovering the perspectives of social agents, it nevertheless poses some challenges.

Hansen and Sørensen (2005:99) note that the level of detail in written material is usually not very high as documents often give schematic and instrumental accounts of the issue under consideration. Moreover, if the reviewed documents are not sufficiently contextualised it becomes difficult to tell whether they are emblematic or exceptional of the discursive setup. Furthermore, content analysis entails interpretation by the researcher which can involve a temptation to impose predefined hypothesis and inferences on to the data at hand. However, this is a problem which does not only apply to the use of content analysis as a research method. As such, an ethos of openness can guard against the enticement of twisting a discursive structure so as to fit one's own perceptions. Finally, documents can provide reductionist accounts of complex processes of negotiation and compromises, telling little about existing discursive patterns of conflict (ibid). However, this is a somewhat nuanced picture. Different documents often serve different purposes and appear in different contexts. While large treaties and official speeches often serve the purpose of creating a common ground of understanding between initially opposed stakeholders, newspaper articles frequently polarise the debate by attempting to construct different perspectives as incommensurable. The task of discourse analysis is to uncover this dynamics, drawing upon analytical tools such as the logic of difference and the logic of difference, ultimately depicting how some documents facilitate securitisation while others are conducive towards the desecuritisation of water resource management.

With regards to the selection of documents, this study opts for a very open method. The aim is not to apply any sophisticated linguistic or quantitative techniques. A search for a particular rhetoric and semiotic structure is carried out and each finding is investigated in its context. With regards to securitisation, elements such as "crisis", "threat" and "emergency" should indicate that a security discourse is at play. The discursive structure is then analysed with regards to securitising actor, the referent object, the threat and last but not least its connection to other sectors. Conversely, as desecuritisation becomes a matter of different speech acts it must be identified and analysed in its own terms. A discursive formation of

desecuritisation should be possible to identify through its articulation of elements such as “cooperation”, “trust” and “benefit sharing”.

Discourse analysts have traditionally focused on the analysis of written documents as these are seen as non-reactive ways of uncovering data (Hansen and Sørensen 2005:98), but in order to account for the multifaceted aspects of securitisation and desecuritisation in the context of the study, document analysis will be complemented with other methods as well.

3.4 Interviews

“If you want to know how people understand their world and their life, why not talk with them?” (Kvale 1996:1)

Kvale (1996:3) elucidates that two metaphors of the interviewer in social research may illustrate the implications of different theoretical and philosophical understandings of interviewing as a research method; the interviewer as a miner or as a traveller. While the former understands interviewing as a process where the researcher digs nuggets of data or meaning out of the respondents pure experiences and where knowledge is predetermined, the latter involves a conversational approach to social research where meaning is constructed in a dynamic process of interaction (ibid:5). Hansen and Sørensen (2005:99) maintain that interviews present discursive images of the world that are much less sanctioned and formalised than documents. Though, the extent to which interviews are structured with predetermined response categories or more or less unstructured as conversations will to a large extent depend on the research question. When the aim is to unfold the meaning and understanding of an issue from the perspective of the respondent, semi structured or unstructured interviews are useful methods to apply (Kvale 1996, Churton 2000).

Approximately 51 semi-structured and unstructured interviews were undertaken during 2005. The amount of interviews and the fact that most respondents appear at the centre stage of decision-making in their respective countries is believed to have significantly enhanced the bearing and quality of the thesis. The interview locations include Cape Town and Pretoria (South Africa), Maseru (Lesotho), Gaborone and Maun (Botswana), Windhoek (Namibia) and Luanda and Menongue (Angola). Additionally, one actor was also interviewed in Stockholm. The respondents were commissioners of the OKACOM and the ORASECOM, high level diplomats as well as actors from relevant national ministries and departments, from academic institutions and non-governmental organisations. As many of the respondents were leading personalities in their respective fields of conduct, the research method that I applied

shows a resemblance with the concept of elite interviewing (Marshall and Rossman 1999:113). Interviewing individuals that are considered to be influential and well informed on the issue under consideration has many advantages. Among them are most often expertise on the issue, a general overview and knowledge of the perceptions of other individuals, groups, communities or states as well as an ability to reveal the history and context of own organisation or unit. The disadvantages are that such people might be difficult to gain access to because they are busy or protected from “everyday” life. The respondent may also, because of his or her expertise, take an active role in the interview, take charge of the interview or even manipulate it (Marshall and Rossman 1999:114).

The sample of respondents was partly put together through prior research and partly through snowballing and recommendations from other respondents at the respective locations. Every interview was based on informed consent as I always disclosed my identity and the purpose of the research project beforehand.

The interviews varied in length from 15 minutes up to two hours depending on the respondent's, as well as my own schedule. Where a sufficient amount of time was available I opted for semi structured interviews. Such interviews have the advantage that they have a sequence of topics to be covered as well as suggested questions, yet at the same time they are sufficiently flexible to allow for follow up questions, letting the respondent deviate from the established course if this is deemed appropriate (Churton 2000:201). Where limited time was available the interviews gained shape as more informal, unstructured conversations (Marshall and Rossman 1999:108). As indicated by Churton (2000:201) informal interviews usually preclude the use of predetermined response categories. Nevertheless, I made use of some organising metaphors and nodal points in order to direct the respondent's attention towards those aspects deemed pertinent to my research question. Informal interviews can be beneficial and rewarding as far as they aid spontaneous and unexpected expressions from the respondent relating to how the individual conceptualises the world and draws boundaries of inclusion and exclusion (Hansen and Sørensen 2005:99). However, they require a high skill in the interviewer as well as an in depth knowledge of the subject under discussion (Churton 2000:201).

While I used a dictaphone during the first interviews, I soon realised that people were willing to speak more freely if I refrained from using such. Therefore, most of the interview transcripts are based on field notes carried out by pen and paper during the interview situation.

All the riparian states except from Angola have English as one of the official languages. While the official language in Angola is Portuguese, most respondents in Luanda and Menongue spoke English. With regards to those who didn't I relied on an interpreter. Although the aim of the study is to interpret the meaning of a condition I believe that my analytical design as well as my awareness of possible linguistic and cultural differences has helped me to be sensitive with regards to the data obtained during the interviews.

Hajer (2005:300) contends that the analysis of discursive constructions; herein narratives, story lines and metaphors, is particularly powerful when conducted in a context which takes socio political and historical aspects sufficiently into account. Having accounted for different strategies for analysing text and talk, the contextual features are now to be further developed through the next chapter.

4 River Basins, Riparian States and Reciprocity²⁴

“The biggest problem is that [the] river means so many different things to different people” (Interview, NGO leader, Gaborone 13 June 2005)

This chapter elaborates on the geographical, hydrological, ecological and political characteristics of the Okavango and Orange River basins. The purpose is to disclose the diversity of meaning that various actors confer to the rivers. A river might be perceived as a gift from divine entities, an obstacle to industrial development, or a unique ecosystem, all depending on the significance and multiplicity of actors that confer meaning to it. Several of the seemingly straightforward background features presented in brief at this stage will be analysed and problematised in detail in the subsequent chapters. The chapter will also serve as an introduction to the various cases in which water has been at the centre stage of securitisation tactics and conversely, how water through diverse cooperative initiatives have been the focal point of desecuritisation strategies in the two river basins.

4.1 The Okavango River Basin

The Okavango River Basin as a transboundary resource is shared by Angola, Namibia and Botswana²⁵. The largest portion of the basin lies in Angola (51,7%), followed by Namibia (33%) and Botswana (15,3%) (Maphanyane 2001:21). Turton et al. (2003a:9) maintain that the Okavango River Basin is the last near pristine river system in Africa being only slightly affected by human interventions. However, the Global Environment Facility (2002:i) asserts that mounting socio-economic pressure in the riparian countries threatens to change its pristine character, something which in the long term may result in irretrievable environmental breakdown and consequent loss of domestic and global benefits. Essentially, the basin is strategically important to a range of diverse stakeholders, it is perceived as an “Oasis in the Desert” (Earle and Mendez 2004), representing a vital resource in an otherwise dry and hostile environment (Mbaiwa 2004:1) and holding diverse and sometimes conflicting values for its riparian states (Mendelsohn and el Obeid 2004:28). For Angola, the river mainly

²⁴ This chapter onwards will feature many references to the people interviewed during my extensive fieldwork. These are referred to in the text using the “author-cite” method, implying that the surname appears together with the year in which the interview took place. For additional information about the respondents, see appendix 2.

²⁵ As remarked by Mendelsohn and el Obeid (2004:17), different actors also hold different positions with regards to the exact delineation of the Okavango River Basin; while some opt for a demarcation that grants riparian status to Angola, Namibia and Botswana, others choose to define the basin as covering a much larger area, including fossil river beds with ancient hydraulic connections to the main basin. Yet others make Zimbabwe a riparian state as the Nata River feeds into the Makgadikgadi salt pans downstream of the Okavango Delta, but most geographically and hydrologically accepted principles establish the Nata and the Okavango rivers as two distinct parts of the Makgadikgadi system (Turton et al. 2003a:21).

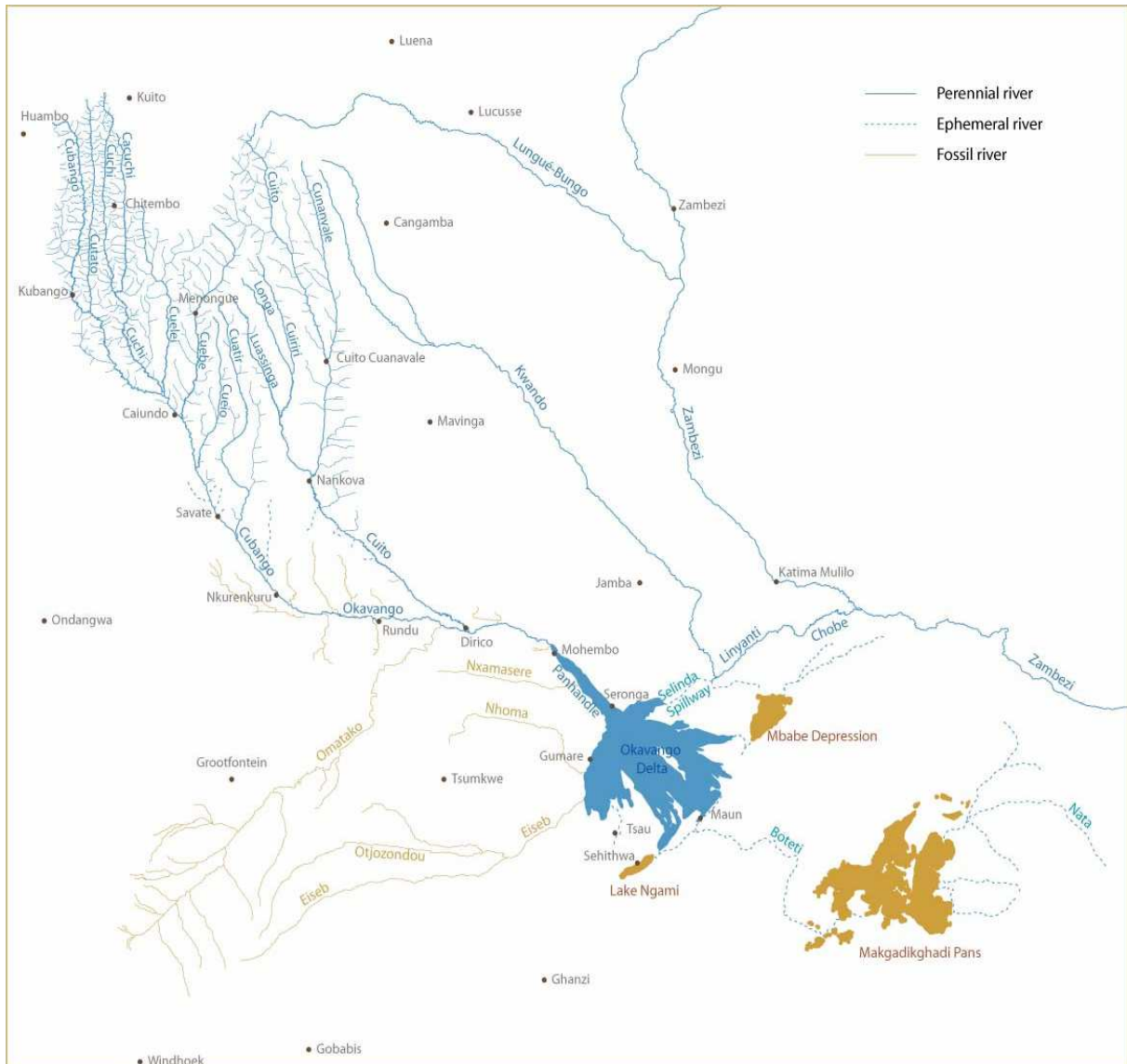
represents a potential hydropower and irrigation resource for reconstruction of areas that were devastated by the Angolan civil war and Namibian war of liberation. As advocated by the Angolan delegate to the Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission (OKACOM) Isidro Pinheiro, contemporary patterns of water use in the Angolan part of the basin can mainly be ascribed to domestic consumption (Pinheiro 2005). For Namibia, being one of the most arid countries in the world (Day 1997:iii), the Kavango River as it is called here is one of the very few and most important sources of perennial water available in the entire country (Turton et al. 2003a:9), making water abstraction from the river an important backup when it comes to supplement supplies to the central area of the country. Many Namibians perceive the Kavango river valley as a potential bread-basket (Mendelsohn and el Obeid 2004:59), underpinning the endeavour of the Government of Namibia in making the country food self-sufficient²⁶. As such, Namibian delegate to the OKACOM Piet Heyns maintains that for Namibia the potential of the Okavango lies in irrigation (Heyns 2005). Botswana lies at the distal end of the Okavango River Basin where the presence of a vast body of water has created a unique world heritage site known as the Okavango Delta. The Okavango is the only perennial river flowing on the national territory of Botswana (Turton et al. 2003b:354) and the Government of Botswana makes all possible efforts to keep the Delta a prime tourist destination based on a low-volume-high-cost policy (Pinheiro et al. 2003:110). Steve Monna in the Botswana delegation to the OKACOM stresses that the Okavango is the nature of Botswana, the source of life for humans and wildlife and forms the basis of the national economy next after diamonds (Monna 2005).

Against the backdrop of this brief introduction, Turton et al. (2003b:354) argue that the fundamental hydropolitical driver in the basin is the high degree of reliance on the river by all three riparian states, with no real viable alternatives. As such, the diversity of water users in the countries, together with their current and future needs, provide an archetypal example of the complex and conflicting demands between human development aspirations and ecological interests (Ashton 2003). Though, before giving a more detailed account of the diverse issues of contention and cooperation within the basin, it is necessary to elaborate on the various environmental aspects of the river.

²⁶ Food self-sufficiency is part of the Namibian Government's Vision 2030 which contains a comprehensive framework for socio-economic development. Herein, the Green Scheme, consisting of agricultural projects to be implemented along the Orange, Okavango and Zambezi rivers was initiated in 2004. See: http://www.grnnet.gov.na/News/Archive/2005/february/week2/session_rpt.htm

4.1.1 Geographical and Hydrological Characteristics of the Okavango River Basin

The Okavango River is a perennial endoreic river with some ephemeral tributaries supporting a unique ecosystem with ample opportunities for use and development (Seely et al. 2003:188)²⁷. The river rises in the central highlands of Angola as two main tributary systems, the Cubango and Cuito Rivers (Ashton 2003:166).



Map 2: “The Okavango River Basin” (Source: Mendelsohn and el Obeid 2004).

²⁷ In a perennial river, water flow is continuous while in an ephemeral river, water flows sporadically and for short periods due to snow melting or heavy rain in its catchment (Seely et al. 2003). A particular river can change from perennial to ephemeral and vice versa, depending on climatic and environmental conditions. An endoreic river implies that the water system is closed, the river ending its journey inland rather than emptying into the sea (ibid: 189).

The Cubango River flows southwards for approximately 600 km from its origin in the Angolan highland until it reaches the Namibian border (Heyns 2001:9²⁸). The river then flows south-eastwards for about 460 km, forming the border between Angola and Namibia, confluences with the Cuito River at Dirico before turning south, crossing the narrow Caprivi Strip in Namibia where the Okavango is called the Kavango River (Heyns 2001). The Okavango then enters Botswana at Mohembo which marks the beginning of the Panhandle. Here the river splits in three major tributaries; the Thaoge in the west, the Boro in the middle and the Ngoge in the east (Mbaiwa 2001:13). This area is referred to as the Okavango Delta²⁹, regarded as one of the most pristine wetlands in the world (Mendelsohn and el Obeid 2004:72) supporting a remarkable diversity of plants and animals, some of which are considered seriously threatened of extinction (Modise 2005).

The Okavango River Basin covers an area of about 413,550 km² (in Angola, Botswana and Namibia), with the Delta in Botswana comprising roughly 15,844 km² (Ashton and Neal 2003:33). The active catchment area lies entirely in Angola and of all the water that enters the Delta, 45% comes down the Cuito and 55% along the Cubango River (Mendelsohn and el Obeid 2004:93). A significant feature of the Okavango River Basin is the clarity and purity of its water, which can be ascribed to the draining of Kalahari sands and the fact that there are few sources of pollution and contamination in the basin. Moreover, nutrients and sediments that do make their way down the river collect in Delta, the biological productivity of the latter being entirely dependent on this accumulation (ibid).

Another important aspect is the large variations in permanent and seasonally flooded areas, this variation having profound effects on ecological processes such as sedimentation and water distribution (Jansen and Madzwamuse 2003:145). In years of exceptional flooding, water flows between the Delta and the Zambezi River via the Selinda Spillway, with back-flooding into the Okavango during periods of extreme high flow in the Linyanti/Chobe/Zambezi (Pinheiro et al. 2003:106). Mendelsohn and el Obeid (2004:86) maintain that the volumes of water passing Mohembo fluctuate greatly from year to year, but don't vary anything like as much as flows at Maun at the distal of the Okavango Delta where the Thamalakane River receives only a trickle of water as compared to previous years (KCS

²⁸ A note on Heyns is required. Piet Heyns is Under Secretary in the Namibian Department of Water Affairs as well as delegate to both the OKACOM and the ORASECOM. He is also a contributor to several academic writings dealing with water issues in the region. This poses no methodological problem, but is rather something to be aware of throughout the subsequent chapters. This does also to a lesser degree apply to the Angolan OKACOM Commissioner Isidro Pinheiro.

²⁹ The Okavango Delta can be divided into four main ecological zones; the panhandle, the permanent swamps in the upper regions, the seasonal swamps in the lower regions and a number of large islands (Mbaiwa 2001:13).

2001a:1). Decline in quality and quantity of water in the basin is affecting communities as well as the total ecosystem of the Okavango and is of serious concern among all stakeholders in the three riparian states (ibid). Set against this pressing situation, Ashton and Neal (2003:55) stress that the absence of sufficient information regarding the scale, significance and resilience of the ecosystem to decreased inflows and human interventions makes it extremely difficult to predict with any accuracy or certainty the effects of such and should be seen as a strong warning that the system *could* face serious risk of irreversible damage.

4.1.2 Socio-Economic, Cultural and Political Aspects of the Okavango River Basin

The river basin contains no more than three urban centres; Menongue in Angola, Rundu in Namibia and Maun in Botswana. The Okavango remains relatively remote from the economic and administrative centres of the riparian states and almost the only interests in the river expressed by the Namibian and Angolan governments are for irrigation, water supply and hydroelectric power schemes (Mendelsohn and el Obeid 2004:167). Around 122 000 people live along the Delta in Botswana and as many as 90 % of these are directly or indirectly associated with the river and the delta wetlands for their socio economic livelihoods (Mbaiwa 2004:3). The current population living next to the river on Namibian territory is approximately 180 000 while in Angola the civil war displaced a large amount of the country's population so that the estimates are of about 140 000 residing in the basin and another 200 000 unconfirmed in the catchment of the basin (ibid:4). Natural vegetation in the basin provide local people with many benefits and there are two centres of craft production in the Okavango; an internationally renowned basket industry in the Delta and woodcarving in the Kavango region (Mendelsohn and el Obeid 2004:108). Agriculture in the basin is by and large limited to small scale farming especially prevalent at the south-western end of the Delta and on the Kavango side where little land remains in its natural condition, however, the basin is not considered optimal for farming as most soils are poor in quality and rainfall is often in short supply (ibid:148).

When it comes to current water demands in the basin, there are some differences in the water use patterns. In Angola, rural and urban populations consume up to 95% of the water used as agricultural activities and large scale irrigation projects have not been possible due to the civil war that ended in 2002 (Mbaiwa 2004:8). In contrast, the agricultural sector accounts for 30% of all the water used in Botswana and 54% of the total consumption in Namibia

(ibid). Future water demands in the basin are also expected to rise, but how much is contested. Angola and Namibia are also likely to use more water than Botswana; hence consultation and agreements between the riparian states are crucial measures in avoiding that access to water becomes the focal point of security concerns for the riparian states (Turton et al. 2003a:25).

Acknowledging the necessity of sustainable and coordinated management of the Okavango River Basin, the riparian states established the Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission (OKACOM) in Windhoek the 16 September 1994 (OKACOM 1994). Among the objectives of the OKACOM is to act as technical advisor to the riparians on matters relating to the conservation, development and utilization of water resources of common interest (ibid). The Commission includes the presence of high-level interministerial representation from each basin state and Turton (2003c:83) notes that the OKACOM has been imperative in de-escalating inherent conflict potentials by creating a common platform in which trust and confidence can be built. The agreement is legally non-binding, does not contain concrete measures to protect the Okavango in its current state, has no time schedule or delegation of special duties and finally, has no sanctions for non-compliance (Wormuth and Buffle 2002:10). Nevertheless, OKACOM provides the most coherent framework for initiating discussions and negotiations between the riparians (Ashton 2003:182) and is supported by numerous domestic, regional and international organisations (Wormuth and Buffle 2002:10). Following the Botswana Government's accession of the Okavango Delta as Ramsar Site of International Importance in 1997, the country is required by the Ramsar Convention to conduct and implement a comprehensive management plan for the designated site (Taylor 2005)³⁰. A delay in agreeing upon and implementing an integrated water management plan for the Okavango resulted in Botswana initiating her own Okavango Delta Management Plan (ODMP), a project started in 2003 (Mbaiwa 2004:11).

Ashton and Neal (2003:51) note that management decisions taken at governmental level have often ignored, marginalised or revoked prior patterns of resource use by communities in the basin, disregarding that the support of these communities is a critical determinant of the overall success and effectiveness of water resource management principles, policies and programmes. The transboundary Every River has its People Project (ERP) was officiated on the 18 October 2001 out of a realisation that the users of the Okavango River Basin should be involved in decision making processes (KCS 2001b:72). Being managed by

³⁰ The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance is an international agreement which seeks to promote awareness and cooperation in the conservation of threatened wetlands (Mbaiwa 2004:11). See <http://www.ramsar.org>

the Kalahari Conservation Society, the rationale of the ERP has been education, capacity building and information sharing among local communities and stakeholders in the Botswana and Namibian parts of the basin and while the project was implemented from 2002 to 2004, subsequent phases aim at including local people and civil society in Angola as well. This task is being undertaken by the Menongue-based NGO called Associação de Conservação do Ambiente e Desenvolvimento Rural Integrado or ACADIR (Chipita 2005).

Having given a brief account of cooperative, benefit sharing initiatives in the basin, the following section will delineate how Angola, Namibia and Botswana, respectively, relate to the basin and how specific national priorities have appeared at the centre stage of processes of securitisation as well as desecuritisation.

4.1.3 The Angolan Perspective

The Cuando-Cubango region in Angola, where the Okavango River originates, was a UNITA stronghold and several battles were fought in this region during the Angolan civil war that came to an end in 2002 (Porto and Clover 2003:65). A large amount of landmines have been laid along roads, at bridges, crossing points and around urban centres making access to towns like Menongue dangerous (ibid:76). The civil war displaced huge numbers of people and the resettlement of refugees, socioeconomic reintegration of former combatants and de-mining are some of the numerous challenges facing the Angolan Government.

During colonial times, south-eastern Angola became known as *terras do fim mundo*, the place at the end of the earth (Mendelsohn and el Obeid 2004:28). As Angola is now slowly starting to recover from the 27 year long civil war, diverse stakeholders in the region as well as internationally is taking a keen interest in the country, hypothesizing whether development plans will require increased water use and what the potentially detrimental effects of such will be on the integrity of the Okavango River Basin as a whole (Porto and Clover 2003:65). With the end of the civil war, there are developments in the Cuando Cubango region of the river that may alter the status of the river as one of the last pristine river systems in Africa and the need to resettle some 250 000 internally displaced people in the river basin implies that resources from the river will be under increased pressure in the future (Mbaiwa 2004:5). Even so, it has been postulated that Angola will not have serious water scarcity problems in the foreseeable future, that is, at least not until 2025 (ibid:6).



Picture 1: “Returning Refugees”.
 During the Angolan civil war the Cuando Cubango region became a UNITA stronghold and the city of Menongue was the only town in the basin held by government forces. The war left in its trail more than four million internally displaced people (Porto and Clover 2003:67). This banner, saluting returning refugees, is in front of the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Menongue and reads “Honour and Glory for the Heroes of Patriotism” (Picture: Pål Arne Davidsen 2005©).

Picture 2: “The Cuebe River”.
 Local people swim, wash their clothes and collect water from the Cuebe River, a tributary of the Cubango River. Resettlement of refugees and increased activity close to and on the river has fuelled perceptions of Angola as a “Sleeping Giant” that will come alive and dramatically alter the pristine character of the river, though Swatuk (2003) claims that at present such perceptions seem to be overstated (Picture: Pål Arne Davidsen 2005©).

The upstream parts of the river basin are suitable for the development of agricultural and industrial projects as well as hydroelectric power generation by building dams (Pinheiro et al. 2003). Such developments have the potential of causing pollution, reduced river flow and water quality which may negatively effect the two downstream riparians. The Angolan OKACOM Commissioner Isidro Pinheiro (2005) resentfully claims that those who destroyed Angola did so in order to prevent Angola from developing. The country is therefore keen to catch up with the other basin states when it comes to socioeconomic development.

4.1.4 The Namibian Perspective

Byers (1997:14) cautions that access to water is the single, dominant, limiting factor in Namibia and major water sources in the interior are virtually fully exploited. Therefore, the country’s economic sustainability will become increasingly dependent on long distance water transfers (ibid). The Kavango River is among the most important sources of perennial water available in the entire country (Mbaiwa 2004:6). As identified by Mendelsohn and el Obeid (2004:44), the soils in the basin are poorly suited to agriculture due to low nutrient levels and poor water retention. Nevertheless, for Namibia the main potential of the Okavango River lies in irrigation and water supply to the central area around Windhoek (Heyns 2005). Due to the poor conditions of the soils, irrigation must be of a high technical level to be efficient and

Namibia is currently irrigating with a loss in some areas, “but agriculture supplies jobs and gives opportunities, it moves the country a little bit” (ibid). Currently, Namibia uses around 20 million cubic metres (Mm³) of water per annum from the Okavango, mainly for agricultural purposes and domestic consumption (Heyns 2000:4).

The Namibian Department of Water Affairs has faced considerable public pressure to relieve the water shortages caused by droughts in the country (Ashton 2000:80). A National Water Master Plan was developed in the early 1970s and proposed, among other issues, importing water from the Okavango River into the arid interior of central Namibia. This involved the construction of the Eastern National Water Carrier (ENWC), a four phased water supply project (Heyns 2000:4). The third phase was completed in 1987, but the fourth phase involving the construction of a pipeline between Grootfontein and Rundu remains to be completed (ibid). Hydrological evaluations have shown that the abstraction scheme would represent a reduction of about 0,32 % in the mean annual flow of the Kavango River at Rundu (Ashton 2000:80).



Map 3: “The Rundu-Grootfontein Pipeline”. The graphic shows the location of the proposed Namibian pipeline (Source: Ramberg 1997).

For the Namibian Government, the pipeline is seen as a form of insurance policy that enables existing water resources to be utilised when available, secure in the knowledge that if these fail, the Kavango is always there as a reliable backup, as a last resort (Turton et al. 2003a:11). This is evocatively captured by the Deputy Director of Water Environment in the Namibian Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry maintaining that “Namibia still desalinates water, but it is very costly. Security wise, to keep Windhoek alive, we must look at these options (*the*

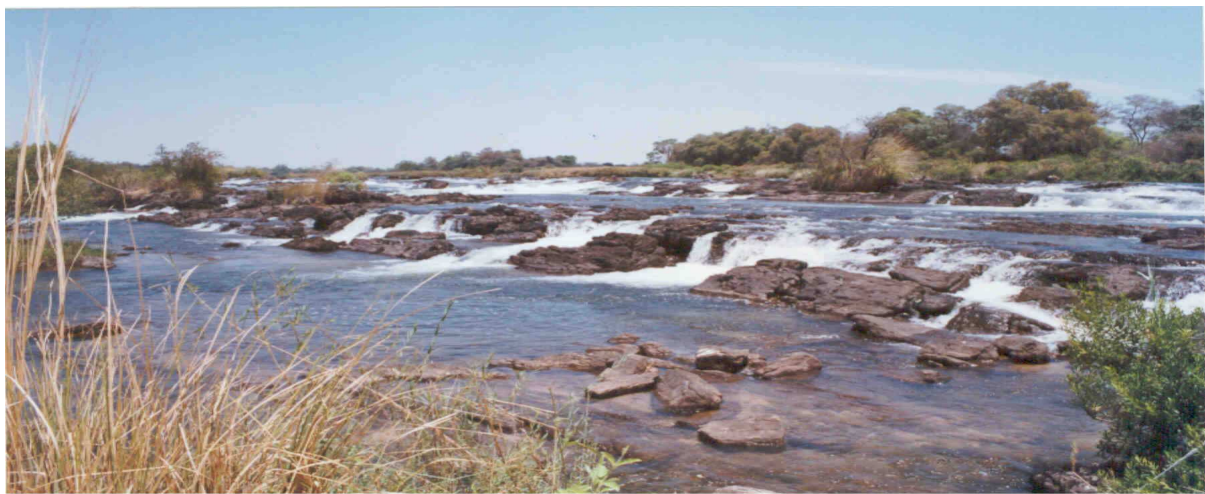
Kavango, my addition). Desalination will on the long term kill Windhoek economically” (de Wet 2005).

Due to droughts in the central parts of Namibia between 1994 and 1997, the pipeline appeared, for the Namibian Government, as the only available option for supplying the central areas of the country (Heyns 2000). The Namibian OKACOM Commissioner Piet Heyns claims that the government informed the other two riparian states about its plans (ibid:6). This triggered a very negative response from stakeholders in Botswana as well as among regional and international environmental communities. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) undertaken for the ENWC found the project to be viable, not representing any fatal flaws (Ashton 2000:82). However, as identified by Swatuk (2001:29), the dispute rested on competing knowledge claims; in Namibia’s case that the proposed abstraction would not affect the ecology of the Delta; in Botswana’s case that any abstraction would set a precedent for the future leading the Delta and, equally, Botswana down the slippery slope of destruction. The pipeline was seen as a potential threat not only to the national security of Botswana (ibid:28), but also to the remarkable diversity of habitats in the Okavango Delta and to the environmental security and integrity of the Delta as such. The Namibian plans led to a rapid increase in the activity of environmental communities, these taking action and lobbying against the plans of the Namibian Government³¹. However, as the 1996-97 seasons were wet in Namibia (Heyns 2000:7), the plan of the Namibian Government was temporarily shelved and has not been started again up to date (2006). Mendelsohn and el Obeid (2004:165) hypothesise that most individual pressures on the river have little effect on its environmental integrity, however, the cumulative effects of all development schemes may be considerable, especially along the Namibian section.

Negative reactions to Namibian development schemes in the Okavango River Basin gained increased momentum as the Namibian Government revealed plans of a small hydropower station at the Popa Falls Rapids in the Caprivi Strip in 2003 (Turton and Earle 2003). A preliminary study was done back in 1969 to investigate the feasibility of a hydropower station in order to meet a growing demand for power in the country and to ensure reliable water supplies to the populous northern regions of Namibia (Heyns 2000). The 1969 study was followed up through a preliminary environmental assessment (PEA) in 2003 and the proposed project would involve the construction of a 20 Mega Watt (MW) hydro power

³¹ The research of some NGOs suggested alternative measures to withstand the pressing drought situation in Namibia (Wormuth and Buffle 2002:8). See for instance the joint report by the International Rivers Network (IRN) and Conservation International (CI) “Meeting Namibia’s Water Needs While Sparing the Okavango” (Rothert 1999).

station on the Okavango River near Divundu (EcoPlan 2003:2). A gated weir would provide the pressure head needed to generate power and the need to ensure that sediments critical to the sustainability of the downstream ecosystem could pass through the weir appeared as a key issue in the feasibility study (ibid). The project faced considerable opposition from stakeholders in Botswana; herein particularly in Maun³². Concerns that the trapping of sediments by the weir would jeopardize the status of the Okavango Delta also attracted attention from a vast array of actors in Southern Africa as well as in the rest of the world (ibid:4), substantiating the claim made by Turton et al. (2003a:9) that the Okavango is an internationalised basin with a range of stakeholders that extend far beyond the norm of most transboundary rivers in Africa.



Picture 3: “Popa Falls”. A proposed hydropower station by Namibia at the falls caused heavy opposition by environmental groupings in Namibia and Botswana as well as in the rest of the world. This image shows water rapids at the Popa Falls (Picture: EcoPlan 2003).

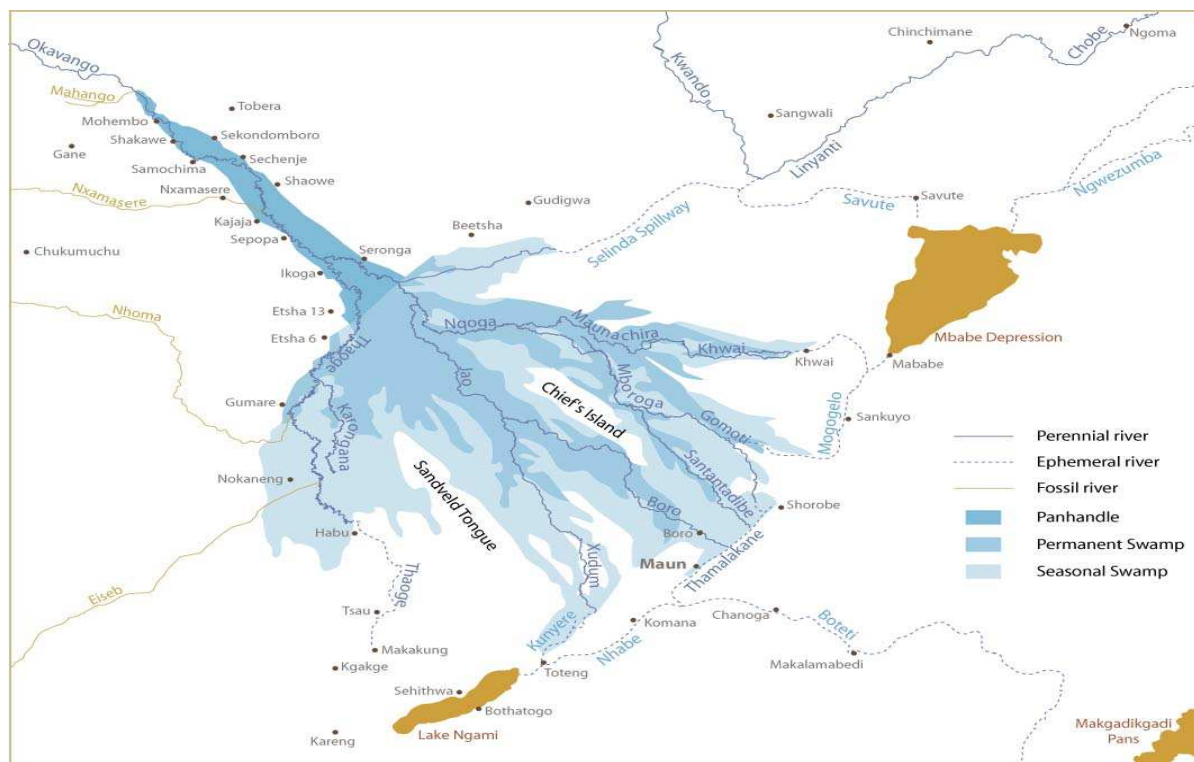
Mbaiwa (2004:7) cautions that in the event that the hydropower scheme goes ahead, it is likely to have serious detriment environmental effects downstream, including the blockage of sediments for a period of about 130 years resulting in the destruction of vegetation in the river bed considered to be of crucial importance to the remarkable diversity of habitats found in the Delta. Although the eagerness of the Namibian Government in developing the hydropower station has been considerably cooled down after the formation and consequent increased

³² Some of the headlines in the local newspaper in Maun, the Ngami Times, were “Okavango project sheer madness”, “Death of Delta if project goes ahead”, “Delta Danger”, and “Stop rape of Delta”. These will be further elaborated on in the empirical chapter.

activity of the OKACOM, an environmental impact assessment (EIA) has been commissioned to further examine the option (Scudder 2005:11)³³.

4.1.5 The Perspective of Botswana

Botswana is situated at the end of the Okavango River Basin where the river drains, forming a vast swamp and floodplain in the north-western parts of the country and this area is known as the Okavango Delta. Mendelsohn and el Obeid (2004:112) note that *Okavango* for many people conjures up two images; one of a vast and pristine swamp and the other an abundance of wildlife. While the Angolan portion of the basin provides 94,5% of the total runoff in the Okavango River, 2,9% originates in Namibia while no more than 2,6% is provided by Botswana (Ashton and Neal 2003:35). To set the stage for the preceding elaboration, as much as 94% of the total amount of water entering Botswana comes from exogenous sources (Gleick 1993b, quoted in Turton 1999:8). This amplifies that the economic as well as ecological vitality of the Okavango Delta is entirely dependent upon the detailed character of volumes, timing, duration and quality of the annual flow regime which is generated in Angola and passes by Namibia before reaching Botswana (Thabeng and Balapi 2001:8).



Map 4: “The Okavango Delta”. Maun as the only urban centre in the Botswana part of the basin is located at the distal end of the Delta (Source: Mendelsohn and el Obeid 2004).

³³ Though, Colin Christian as the Manager of EcoPlan, which conducted the Popa Falls feasibility study in 2003, states that “I doubt that Namibian Government will try again as one is currently looking at options in the Cunene River Basin” (Christian 2005).

The Okavango Delta consists of a range of permanent river channels, semi-permanent drainage channels, lagoons, islands and floodplains that connect and disconnect in a complex dynamic dependent on the annual flood (Turton et al. 2003a:20). Except from small scale farming and crop production, no major engineering interventions have been undertaken in this area (Pinheiro et al. 2003:110). When it comes to water development the only intervention by Botswana is the Mopipi Dam supplying water to the Orapa diamond mine (Swatuk 2001).

The Delta has become a prime tourist destination in Botswana with a unique environment attracting diverse animal and plant species that are heavily dependent upon water. Few places in Africa, perhaps in the world, offer such a concentration of wildlife and both flora and fauna gain value and protection because they are vital to tourists and thus to the ventures and governments that earn money from such (Mendelsohn and el Obeid 2004:120).



Picture 4: “The Okavango Delta”. The Delta is the largest wetland in Southern Africa and the spectacular mosaic of channels, small islands and grasslands provide an oasis in an otherwise dry and hostile environment (Picture: Pål Arne Davidsen 2005).



Picture 5: “Biological diversity”. The Okavango Delta is also home to a great diversity of plants and amphibians as well as larger wildlife such as puku (antelope), spotted hyena, elephants and zebras (Picture: Pål Arne Davidsen 2005).

Tourism is based on safaris and wildlife spotting centred in the Okavango and Chobe regions. The tourism policy is one of “low volume-high cost” and the number of tourists has grown astronomically over the last four decades, making the tourism industry the country’s second

largest economic sector (Mbaiwa 2004:7), significantly contributing to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which is well above the average for countries in Sub-Saharan Africa³⁴.

There are fourteen major groups in the Okavango River Basins that to a greater or lesser degree speak distinct languages or dialects and identify themselves with and depend on the river (Mendelsohn and el Obeid 2004:132). The San are broadly divided into Khwe and Ju language groups, the former mainly living to the east of the river in Kavango and the Delta in Ngamiland where the !Anikhwe subgroup is sometimes called the River Bushmen (ibid). Public pressure to protect and safeguard the pristine status of the Delta is high among these groups and among most stakeholders in Botswana, in particular among people in Maun which is utterly dependent on the resources generated by the river. Namibia is by many actors portrayed as being the bad neighbour wanting to dry up the Okavango by constructing dams or pipelines (see Ramberg 1997). Hence, if Botswana allows itself to develop the Delta in some way, this might create precedence legitimising and opening for proposed development projects by Namibia as well. Arguably, the current picture prevailing is that Botswana has painted itself into a corner, possibly facing unprecedented external challenges should it wish to embark on domestic development initiatives³⁵ (Turton 1999:9).

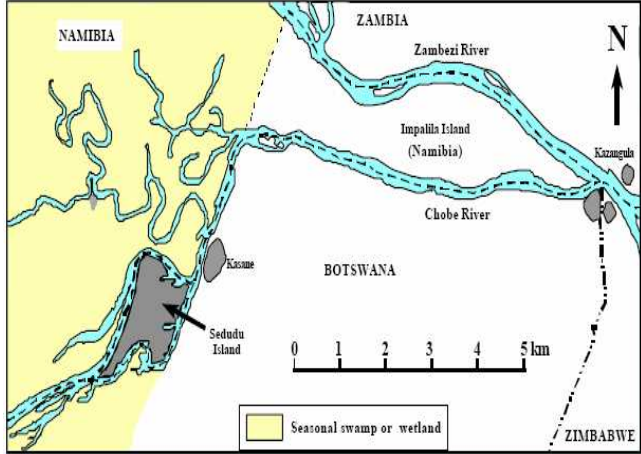
The Government of Botswana acceded to the Ramsar Convention declaring the Okavango Delta a Ramsar site of international importance in April 1997 (Pinheiro et al. 2003:110). In this regard, Botswana is required to promote the conservation and wise use of the Delta, a demand that cannot easily be seen as isolated from the actions taken by the upstream states and the fact that the Okavango Swamp supports some 120 000 people living in or close to the wetlands. Heyns (2001) alleges that the declaration was done without prior consultation with the two upstream states and some observers also feel that the act was based on narrow national interests by attempting to link the hydraulic mission of Botswana state makers to a framework of global environmental interests (Swatuk 2003:127). Both Botswana and Namibia have ratified the Ramsar Convention, while Angola is pending something that worries Ashton and Neal (2003:43) as Angola contributes over 94% of the river inflows to the Delta.

After Namibian independence in 1990 a dispute arose with Botswana over sovereignty of a small island in the Chobe River called Sedudu in Botswana and Kasikili in Namibia

³⁴ In 2003, Botswana had a GDP per capita of USD 8714, while the average for Sub-Saharan countries was 1856 USD per capita pro annum (UNDP 2005).

³⁵ Worth taking note of is that the Botswana Government proposed to divert water from the Delta at the Boteti River in 1992, but the scheme, known as the Southern Okavango Integrated Water Development Plan, was shelved due to severe criticism by among others the World Conservation Union (IUCN) which conducted the environmental impact assessment (EIA). For a detailed account of this process, see Scudder (2005).

(Ashton 2000). The Chobe River is a tributary of the Zambezi and is, politically, not regarded as a part of the Okavango River Basin even though there is a hydraulic connection between the two which is called the Selinda Spillway. The two basins are kept separate in order to avoid a connection between the Okavango and the Zambezi which would complicate hydropolitical matters (Langenhove 2005). The “ownership” of the island had been disputed by local residents in both countries since the Berlin Treaty of 1890, but escalated in 1996 when the two parties submitted their claims of sovereignty to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague (Ashton 2000:12). The case was taken to the Court after decades of intense debate and intermittent threats of military action after Botswana Defence Force (BDF) members occupied the island (Swatuk 2001). Both countries had up to then spent a considerable amount of money on the case, between 30-50 N\$ millions, without reaching an agreement (Langenhove 2005). The ICJ finally ruled in favour of Botswana (ICJ 1999).



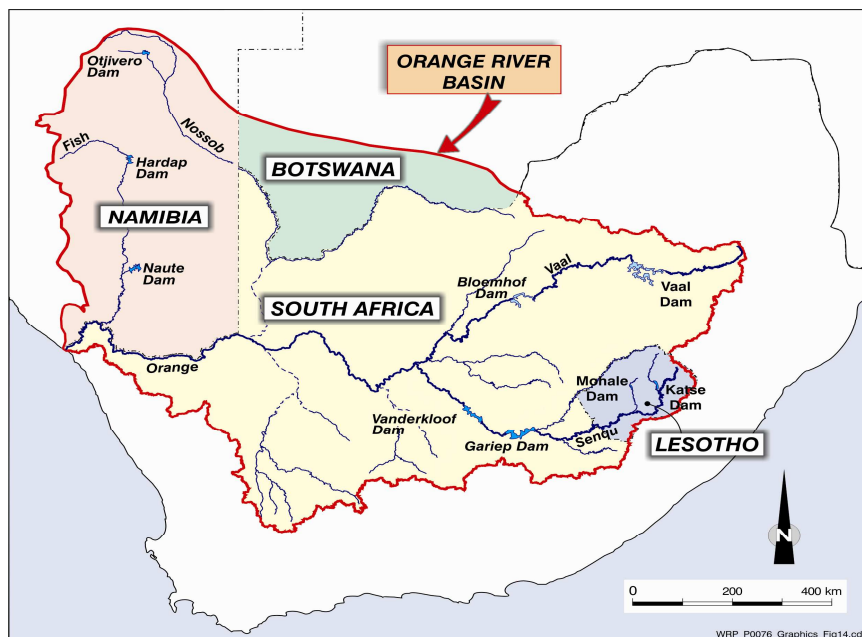
Map 5: “The Sedudu Island”.
 The illustration shows the location of the disputed Sedudu/Kasikili Island in the Chobe River Basin. The dispute centred on the location of the international border between Namibia and Botswana and whether this was to follow northern channel; making Sedudu Botswana territory, or southern channel, thus making the island Namibian territory (Source: Ashton 2000).

Picture 6: “The Sedudu Island”.
 Swatuk (2003) notes that the Sedudu Island is a wetland mirroring parts of the ecological diversity found in the Okavango Delta. The Botswana flag stands in the middle of a horde of buffaloes grazing on the island, making it clear that the Sedudu is the sovereign territory of Botswana (Picture: Pål Arne Davidsen 2004©).

Most actors feel that letting an independent third party deal with the issue was a good solution (Langenhove 2005, Masedi 2005). But while some state that interstate relations between Botswana and Namibia had not been affected and both countries now work well together in the OKACOM and ORASECOM (Heyns 2005, Kalaote 2005), others are more forthright feeling that some aspects of the case are still considered sensitive and that the dispute is by sure not the last between the two states (Sefe 2005).

4.2 The Orange River Basin

The Orange River Basin covers an area of about 896 368 km², the river stretching some 2300 km from its source in Lesotho at an altitude of 3300 metres, flowing westwards to its mouth at Alexander Bay/Oranjemund on the border between Namibia and South Africa (Earle et al. 2005:1-2). The basin is compromised of four riparian states; while 4% of the basin area lies within the borders of Lesotho, 62% is in South Africa, 25% in Namibia and 9% in Botswana³⁶ (Turton 2005c:1). The river has several tributaries, the Vaal River in South Africa and the Fish River in Namibia being the most significant. The basin is one of the most developed in Southern Africa and includes a range of dams and water transfer schemes supplying water to agriculture, industries and for domestic consumption (Earle et al. 2005:1). Further opportunities for development are limited in so far as the Orange is classified as a technically closed river basin, implying that there is already a net deficit of water in the basin (Turton 2003d).



Map 6: “The Orange River Basin”. The illustration shows the location of international borders, tributaries and major dams in the basin (Source: WRP Engineering Consultancy).

More than 30 dams with a capacity of more than 12 million m³ (Mm³) have been constructed in the Orange basin (Angula 2001:6) and while most of these are located in South Africa (the

³⁶ Botswana occupies a special position in the basin as it is considered a legal riparian state even though it makes no visible contribution to the surface runoff and derives no direct benefits from the surface water (Turton 2001a:16). However, there is a groundwater connection is between the ephemeral and endoreic Molopo and Nossob Rivers, linking Botswana to the Orange River (Heyns 2004:6).

Gariiep, Vanderkloof and Vaal dams being the biggest), the Fish River in Namibia is dammed by the Hardap Dam (Day 1997). The Katse Dam in Lesotho is with its 185 metres the highest in Africa which, together with the 145 metre high Mohale Dam form the key components of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) transferring water from Lesotho to South Africa (LHDA 2004). Due to the arid climate in the western parts of the basin, coupled with seasonal runoff and periodic droughts, Namibia and South Africa have found it necessary to regulate the runoff in the lower reaches of the Orange River by building a dam on the common border and feasibility studies are currently conducted under the Lower Orange River Management Study (LOR Consultants 2005). Upstream developments and dams have already greatly modified the water flow in the lower reaches of the river implying that on occasion so little water is allowed downstream that the river ceases to flow to the sea (Day 1997:20).

Conley and van Niekerk (2000:132) take notice of the socio-economic and ecological significance of the Orange and stress that the challenge is to determine how to optimise, on an equitable basis, the sustainable utilisation of the valuable water of the basin. It is therefore decisive that the four riparians gain maximum benefit from the resources of the river and have access to mutually agreed, reasonable and equitable share in the available water. Such issues among others are discussed within the Orange Senqu River Commission (ORASECOM), established by the four states in 2000 in order to better coordinate current and future developments in the basin (Heyns 2004:1).

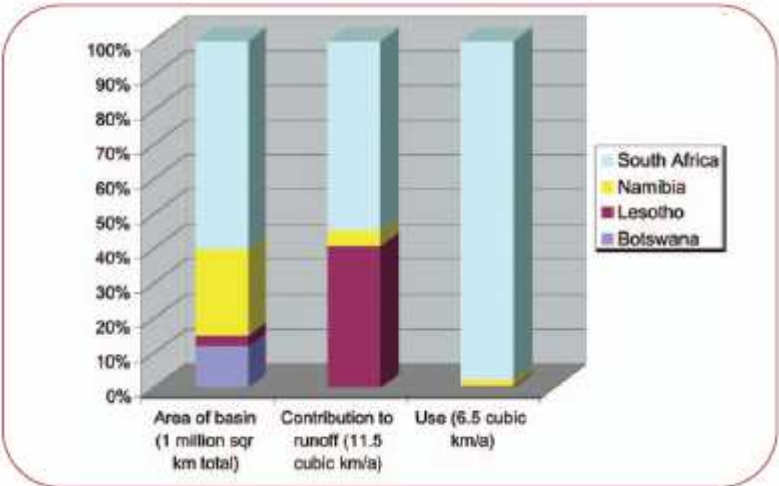


Figure 1: “Riparian contribution to area, runoff and water consumption in the Orange River Basin”. At present South Africa is the largest user of water from the river accounting for around 82% of annual total use (Source: Earle et al. 2005:6, based on data from Heyns 2004).

Owing to its topography, upstream Lesotho is in a position to dispose its surplus water in a more beneficial way than just allowing it to flow downstream into South Africa and the joint

LHWP is a good illustration on how the two states are sharing the benefits of the Orange River (Heyns 2004:6). For Emmanuel Lesoma, Commissioner of Water and Lesotho delegate to the ORASECOM, “in relation to environmental, social and economic aspects the Orange is a symbol of integration; it brings all the riparian states together. South Africa and Lesotho have a bilateral agreement relating to the LHWP where two dams have been built on tributaries to the Orange, giving water to South Africa and revenues to Lesotho. In this aspect we are positively using the resource and it is sustainable because all the other riparians approved the project” (Lesoma 2005).

Turton (2001a:15) maintains that the major developments in the basin have been driven by national interests, the majority of these being initiated and implemented by South Africa during the Apartheid era. As most of the major centres of economic and social development in South Africa are located in areas where water is not naturally found in abundance (Muller 2002), a fundamental component of the South African hydraulic mission has been the development of a series of complex inter basin transfers (IBTs) linking the Orange with most other drainage basins in the country (Conley and van Niekerk 2000:133).

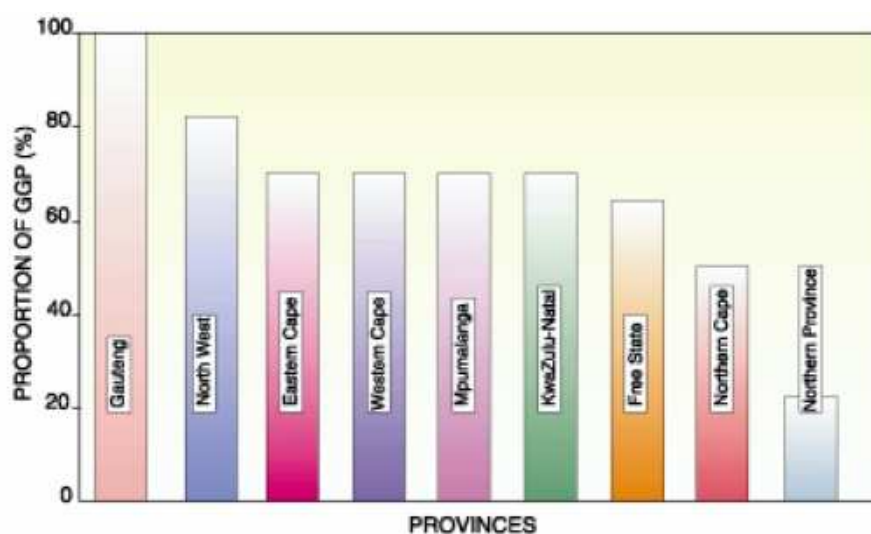


Figure 2: “Provincial GGP dependence on IBTs”. The Gross Geographic Product (GGP³⁷) of the populous Gauteng region, housing both Pretoria and Johannesburg, is 100% dependent on interbasin transfers, most of which are channelled via the Vaal River. The fact that 8 of the 9 provinces in South Africa are more than 50 % dependent on IBTs makes Turton (2005c:13) to claim that the South African economy would collapse if such sources of supply were no longer secured (Source: Basson et al. 1997:55).

The high level of dependency by South Africa on IBTs for economic security is reflected in the National Water Act of 1998, which regards water as a national asset to be moved internally in the country as needed (Turton 2001a:15). The Gauteng region which is the

³⁷ The GGP of a particular province accounts for the total income or payment received by the production factors (labour, land, capital, entrepreneurship) for their participation in the production within that province. See <http://www.environment.gov.za/Enviro-Info/nat/ggp.htm>

metropolitan, economic and industrial powerhouse of South Africa supporting over 40 % of the entire population in the country and generating more than 50% of the country's wealth is staggering 100% dependent on interbasin transfers (Basson et al. 1997:55). Most of these are channelled via the Vaal River regarded as the most strategically important river in South Africa which has links to 8 other basins through a sophisticated network of IBTs (Turton 2005c:4). Although IBTs may clash with other legal systems regarding the Orange River as a holistic ecosystem (Pallet 1997, Yevjevich 2001), Reginald Tekateka being South African delegate to the ORASECOM stresses that South African water law is remarkable in so far as downstream needs are considered before strategic value for South Africa (Tekateka 2005).

The interests of Botswana with regards to the Orange River Basin are manifest in a diplomatic bargaining position where coalitions can be formed with other riparians in return for concessions in other basins being strategically more important for the country, for instance the Limpopo, the Okavango and the Zambezi (Turton 2001a:16). By having convinced the other 3 riparians of its entitlement to legal riparian status in the Orange River Basin, Botswana has formally gained a foothold into negotiations on future water sharing agreements in the basin³⁸ (Turton 2005b:21). This sophisticated water-diplomacy gains increased conceptual strength if one considers that President Festus Mogae of Botswana has stated that it is "highly probable" that Botswana will embark on negotiations in order to abstract water from the LHWP in the future³⁹.

Namibia is heavily dependent on the availability of water along the Lower Orange River where the river supports irrigation, small stock farming, mining, tourism and a growing table grape industry aimed at export to the European market (Angula 2001). The export of table grapes to the European and American markets creates several thousand seasonal job opportunities and represents a comparative advantage for Namibia in so far as the grapes become available on the market 2-3 weeks before South African grapes (Philander 2005). In a hyper arid and poorly populated border region (Day 1997:20), these activities are heavily dependent on the availability of water and Namibia is extremely concerned about its lack of access to a major dam that can store seasonal runoff in the Lower Orange River (Heyns 2004:4). However, joint feasibility studies conducted with South Africa under the panoply of the Lower Orange River Management Study (LORMS) have delineated possible locations of such a dam along the common border. Moreover, Namibia's intentions are related to securing

³⁸ Due to the ambiguous linkage between the Orange River and Botswana, the granting of legal riparian status to the latter was initially rejected by some of the other riparian states, but these controversies were settled at an early stage in the process (Langenhove 2005).

³⁹ Personal communication at Christian Michelsen Institute (CMI), Bergen 29 March 2006.

official rights to the Lower Orange, herein linked to the establishment of the international border in the middle of the river (Meissner 2001), a process being negated by the South African Government (Philander 2005). To resume the position of the Namibian Government with regards to the Orange, Heyns (2005) states that “there is a lack of water in the interior of the country. The only perennial, reliable river water is shared or must be imported and this is a contention for Namibia when it comes to ensuring access. Water for irrigation in the Orange is critical while grape farming is a niche for European export and is very efficient considering the environmental aspects”.

While water scarcity is considered to be one of the most significant limiting natural resources when it comes to social, economic, industrial and agricultural development in Southern Africa (Heyns 2004:1), the aforementioned aspects reveal that the water of the Orange River Basin is used for various purposes with irrigation, industries, power generation, mining and domestic consumption being the main user groups. Before considering national perspectives in greater detail it is necessary to briefly sketch out some of the more physical aspects of the river basin.

4.2.1 Geographical and Hydrological Characteristics of the Orange River Basin

The Orange is a perennial river, however, the runoff is seasonal and extremely variable from one year to the next and the mean annual precipitation changes significantly from around 2000 millimetres (mm) in the Lesotho Highlands to less than 50 mm in the area of the river mouth at the Atlantic Ocean (Heyns 2004:1). While Lesotho covers only 4% of the basin, it contributes 41% of the runoff while South Africa contributes 55% and the remaining 4% is supplied by Namibia (ibid:2). Although the active catchment area is difficult to determine due to the many pan areas and ephemeral tributaries, the river basin is with its 896 368 km² considered the largest south of the Zambezi (Earle et al. 2005:1).

The Orange River rises in the high-rainfall mountainous Maluti area in Lesotho where the river is called the Senqu. The entire country, which is completely landlocked by South Africa, falls within the basin which has a catchment area of 24 485 km² (in Lesotho), providing linkages between all the rivers within the borders of the country (GEF 2005:11). The other major river systems are the Makhaleng with a catchment area of 2911 km² and the Mohokare or Caledon with a catchment area of 6890 km² within Lesotho (ibid:8). The Middle section of the Orange can be defined as the area from the Lesotho-South Africa border to the

section where the Orange confluences with the Vaal River. The Vaal River which rises in north-east South Africa and flows to the south of Johannesburg is considered a river basin in its own right providing the Gauteng province with all of its water (Turton 2005b:18). During the 20th century South African industries expanded exponentially, most activities being concentrated in the Vaal catchment (Conley and van Niekerk 2000:137), thus contributing to the highly modified environment of the catchment at present (Earle et al. 2005:4).

As the river flows further eastwards the ecological conditions change dramatically. The Molopo River which forms the border between South Africa and Botswana once flowed into the Orange, but now it receives most of its infrequent flows from its tributaries in the Northern Cape (Earle et al. 2005:6). The Lower Orange River area⁴⁰ is a poorly populated and hyper arid region where annual rainfall is limited to 50mm (ibid:5), resulting in an immediate loss of up to 83% of precipitation to evaporation (GEF 2005:9). Approximately 60% of the Lower Orange runoff comes from the Fish River originating in Namibia and entering the main Orange close to the river mouth (DWAf 2004:27). While past patterns of use have strongly influenced the environmental state of the basin as a whole, other contemporary detriment impacts range from soil erosion and wetland losses in Lesotho to agricultural pollution and deteriorating environmental integrity of the estuary, the latter being jointly acceded to the Montreux Record of the Ramsar Convention by South Africa and Namibia in 1995 (Earle et al. 2005:36).

The GEF (2005:7) maintains that the management of the basin has to address a host of interrelated issues such as water supply, quality, allocation, pollution, protection and potential conflicts between users since the riparians will soon be faced with greater demand for the basin's resources than supplies can provide. Therefore, it is in the best interests of all to build upon cooperative measures in managing the basin's resources. These aspects will be touched upon in the subsequent section.

4.2.2 Socio-Economic, Cultural and Political Aspects of the Orange River Basin

While agriculture employs more than half of the basin's population, a considerable portion is also employed in the industrial sector (GEF 2005:21). South Africa is by far the largest user of the water resources from the river (Earle et al. 2005:6). Distribution of water use differs substantially between the Vaal River and the Orange River; while most of South Africa's

⁴⁰ Defined by Earle et al. (2005:20) as the area from the Orange-Vaal confluence to the river mouth at Alexander Bay/Oranjemund.

heavy industry and mining activities are situated within the Vaal catchment, making urban and industrial consumption important user groups; irrigation purposes gain more significance in the middle section of the basin, ultimately accounting for 94% of the use on the Lower Orange (ibid:18). The diversity in cultural and socio-economic characteristics of the basin population has emerged against a backdrop of distinctive biophysical properties (GEF 2005:21) and with an estimated population of about 19 million people the Orange River Basin is significantly more populous than the Okavango River Basin (Earle et al. 2005:10).

The GEF (2005:9) asserts that several of the riparians' water resources are under a high level of stress and water scarcity is increasingly putting limits on the ability to meet future demands. Further, it is claimed that since the Orange River Basin is an internationally important watershed seriously threatened at many levels, several of these threats occurring at a transboundary level, the management cannot be effectively addressed by a single country (ibid:15). The vision to facilitate future activities in joint cooperation on dealing with water management in the basin motivated the four riparians in establishing the Orange Senqu River Commission on 3 November 2000 (Heyns 2004). The Commission is to take the necessary measures in investigating the resource potential of the Orange River Basin while simultaneously enhancing human and institutional capacity in the riparian states (ibid:1). Moreover, the Commission is to serve as a technical advisor to the riparians on matters relating to the development, utilisation and conservation of the resources of the basin. In the case of disputes between national interests, matters revert back to the political level for further negotiation (ibid:5).

The Commission has met regularly since 2001 and the emphasis of the discussions has shifted from practical establishment issues to discussions centred on planning and future projects (ibid). Although ORASECOM's progress towards achieving its development goals has been slow and difficult (Mushauri and Makhoalibe 2005:9) it is claimed by Earle et al. (2005:29) that it has improved the spirit of trust between the riparians and the decision to set up a permanent secretariat is expected to further enhance the cooperative climate between the basin states⁴¹. As identified by Turton (2005b:24), since existing agreements in the basin will merely liaise with the ORASECOM and the riparians will still have sovereign rights to establish bilateral agreements, a notable feature of the ORASECOM is that it does not threaten the dominant status of South Africa within regards to the hydropolitical

⁴¹ According to Lesoma (2005) the ORASECOM Secretariat will be established in Pretoria and led by four people.

configurations in the basin. Some of these bilateral configurations will be addressed in the following section.

4.2.3 The Upper Basin – Lesotho and South Africa

As identified by Baillat (2004:14), the water resource relations between Lesotho and South Africa are entirely linked to the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP), the largest and most complex water scheme in Africa initiated in 1986. Until the fall of the Apartheid regime in 1994, international relations between Lesotho and South Africa were influenced by South Africa's racial policies and Lesotho's harbouring of African National Congress (ANC) members (Meissner 2000:26). The Government of South Africa increasingly perceived itself to be the subject to a "total onslaught" from enemies of the Apartheid State from the 1970s and as a response to these perceived threats, the current Prime Minister P. W. Botha launched the "Total National Strategy" for survival in 1980 which placed a heavy emphasis on South Africa's security (Gutteridge 1983). This involved a mobilisation of South Africa's total physical and human resources in a national endeavour to counteract the perceived threats, herein also the securitisation of water resources meaning that access to water, coupled with economic development, became a matter of national security (Turton 2003d). Following this, the LHWP had a strong security element in itself during the 1980s when the political climate between South Africa and Lesotho was still coloured by patterns of enmity.

With the coup d'état in Lesotho in 1986, water management in the country took a dramatic turn as the government of President Leabua Jonathan was replaced by the military government of General Major Lekhanya, which later the same year signed a treaty with South Africa establishing the LHWP (Meissner 2000:26). South Africa's role in the coup is not certain, but speculations have been going on whether removing the Jonathan Government was initiated by the South African Government in order to get the project started⁴² (ibid).

The viability of exporting water from Lesotho to South Africa had been debated since the early 1950s; however, it was not until 24 October 1986 that the two countries signed the Treaty in Maseru (LHDA/TCTA 2001:1). The agreement founded an inter basin cross border project transferring water from the water rich mountain areas in Lesotho via the Ash River to the Vaal Dam in South Africa where water is pumped to Gauteng. The Treaty has four protocols covering complex aspects of design, construction, operation, maintenance and

⁴² Among those supporting the claim that the 1986 incident was a "water coup", see Homer-Dixon (1994) and Mutembwa (1998). Baillat (2004) maintains that it is difficult to show that water was the main motivation behind the coup.

institutional arrangements needed to manage the project (Turton 2005b:21). The Treaty also involves hydropower generation for Lesotho on the basis of royalties from South Africa for the next 50 years, making water “Lesotho’s White Gold” (LHDA/TCTA 2001), creating a win-win situation for both countries (Potloane 2005)⁴³. The LHWP is initially a four-phase project where phase 1A and 1B are already completed (LHDA/TCTA 2001). The project is considered the core of Lesotho’s transboundary water resource management and the 185 metre high Katse Dam is one of the most impressive evidence of the transfer scheme between the two countries.



Picture 7: “The Katse Dam”. Located on the Malibamatso River in Lesotho, the Katse Dam is 185 and has a storage capacity of 1950 million m³ (Picture: TCTA).

The Treaty established a Joint Permanent Technical Commission (JPTC), later renamed Lesotho Highlands Water Commission (LHWC) and a secretariat to monitor and oversee the Treaty (Meissner 2000). In addition, the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA) and the Trans Caledon Tunnel Authority (TCTA) were established in Lesotho and South Africa respectively to implement the project in the two countries. These authorities are important not only as coordination mechanisms, but they play a significant role in the exchange of expertise and information between the two countries as well as in the settlement of disputes (LHDA/TCTA 2001).

Although the LHWP is perceived by many as an example of benefit sharing between two states sharing an international watercourse, the project has not come about without

⁴³ The Lesotho Highlands Water Project was more than ZAR 2,3 billion less expensive than the other option for supplying water to South Africa, the Orange-Vaal Transfer Scheme (OVTS). The cost-benefit of the LHWP is split 56/44 between Lesotho and South Africa respectively. The Lesotho share is paid as an annual fixed royalty over 50 years, currently almost a quarter of Lesotho’s annual export earnings (LHDA/TCTA 2001:24).

significant challenges and opposition. Some of the controversial issues are related to relocation and compensation for affected people, social problems introduced by increased infrastructure and mobility in the Highlands and physical disruption of environmental habitats⁴⁴. Moreover, while the Namibian Government granted a no-objection to Phase 1 of the project, considerable uncertainties regarding the hydrology of the Orange and potentially detriment impacts downstream on the Lower Orange were decisive factors for the government in limiting its support to the first phase (Angula 2001).

After the general elections in Lesotho in May 1998 the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) could declare an unexpected landslide victory in 79 out of the country's 80 voting districts (Mail and Guardian, 14 August 1998). However, the three main opposition parties in the country; the Basotho National Party, the Basotholand Congress Party and the Maramatlou Freedom Party claimed that the elections were rigged in favour of the LCD (ibid). A dispute erupted between the incumbent LCD Government and the opposition as well as within the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) which included factions with conflicting loyalties. Due to a rapidly deteriorating security situation (Coning 1998a:20), the Prime Minister of Lesotho sent an urgent request to South Africa, Botswana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe to intervene militarily in the country in order to restore stability and peace (Vale 2003:127). On the 22 September 1998 a combined task force of troops from South African National Defence Force (SANDF) and Botswana Defence Force (BDF) crossed the border to the Kingdom under the official flag of SADC (ibid). Operation Boleas, as the intervention was named, involved no specific prior authorisation from the UN Security Council or the Organisation of African Unity and the fact that only two countries were involved in the SADC operation itself, led some actors to claim that it was deceitful to try to hide the unilateral nature of the intervention⁴⁵.

When SANDF forces entered Lesotho they met heavy and unexpected resistance from LDF members supporting the opposition. Extensive looting took place in Maseru while a battle between SANDF forces and LDF soldiers close to the Katse Dam resulted in a number of casualties, most notably for the LDF (Turton 1999:7). The intervention was officially a peacekeeping mission aimed at quelling the insurgency led by members of the LDF (Turton et al. 2004:250). However, in the aftermath of the operation speculations were rife about its "real" motives; was its *raison d'être* the safeguarding of South African interests in the country;

⁴⁴ The issues presented here are not exhaustive; see also Horta (1995), Kholumo (2000), van Wyk (2000) and Bond et al. (2002).

⁴⁵ Berman and Sams (1998) claim that the intervention was initiated and led by SADC only in name, receiving such a designation after "a series of frantic phone calls between heads of state".

essentially the Katse Dam and the LHWP? An extensive debate occurred between those actors who saw evidence of a water war (see for instance Pryor 2006) and those, predominantly South African actors, who refused any connection between the intervention and the LHWP (Meissner 1998, Turton et al. 2004:250). To fully unbundled and isolate the role of water among the other variables determining the cause and effect of the military intervention is difficult and beyond the scope of the discourse analytical approach in this study. Water, narrowly defined, is unlikely to have been the sole cause of any war (Wolf 1998), just as it is unlikely that any war has ever been fought for a single purpose or interest. In this case it was more likely that water or water installations like the dam could become a target or victim of armed conflict (ibid:254).

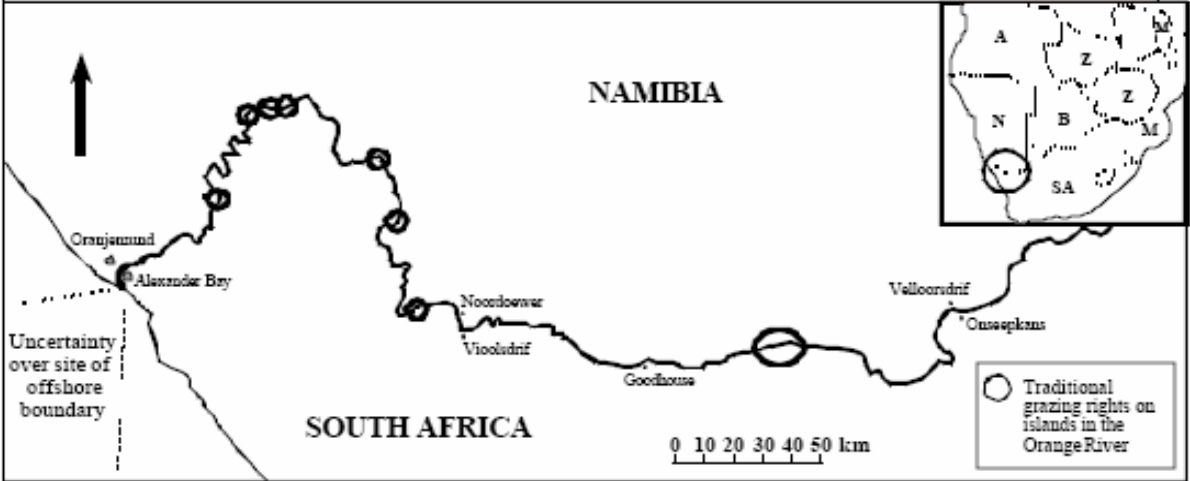
Operation Boleas was, despite some tactical errors and casualties, deemed successful by the SANDF as the security situation in Lesotho was stabilised and South Africa's strategic installations in the country were safeguarded (Neethling 2000:6).

4.2.4 The Lower Basin- South Africa and Namibia

While all of the perennial rivers in Namibia are shared border rivers like the Orange, all non-shared rivers are ephemeral and/or endoreic (Biggs 2005) and since there are no dams on the common border running to the Atlantic Ocean, Namibia is at present dependent on South Africa for river regulation and the release of water from upstream dams (Heyns 2004). In 1992 the two governments signed an agreement establishing the Permanent Water Commission (PWC) to act as a technical advisor on matters relating to the development and utilisation of water resources on the Lower Orange (Mohamed 2003:223). A Joint Irrigation Authority (JIA) was also set up the same year to cater for the development of irrigation schemes in the area (Angula 2001). The possibility of constructing a major dam at Violsdrift is assessed in the Lower Orange River Management Study (LORMS), a joint study initiated in 2000 to investigate matters to improve the management of the Lower Orange River and to share water between the two states (Mohamed 2003:225).

The colonial agreement drawn up by Britain and Germany during the 19th century states that the entire lower reaches of the river belongs to South Africa (Ashton 2000). When Namibia gained independence in 1990, a dispute arose over the precise location of the international border on the river (Meissner 2001). Negotiations took place in 1991 between the newly independent Namibia and the National Party (NP) Government of South Africa and a Joint Technical Commission (JTC) was set up to deal with the issue (ibid). The JTC

consisted of technical experts from both countries who submitted a recommendation that the border be moved to the thalweg⁴⁶ (Turton and Earle 2004b:11). However, while the bilateral negotiations aimed at reaching an agreement for relocation, they simultaneously triggered a range of unanticipated disputes related to mining and grazing rights in South Africa (Ashton 2000:79), ultimately making the South African Government to renege from its previous commitment. Thus, in 2001 the new ANC Government of Thabo Mbeki informed Namibia that the border would not be changed and should remain as it was before Namibian independence (Meissner 2001:35).



Map 7: “The Orange River Border”. The illustration shows the lower reaches of the Orange River where the location of the international border on the northern bank of the river makes the entire river South African territory, formally as well as legally (Source: Ashton 2000).

The dispute centres on conflicting judicial claims; as stated in article 1:4 of the Namibian Constitution⁴⁷:

“The national territory of Namibia shall consist of the whole of the territory recognised by the international community through the organs of the United Nations as Namibia, including the enclave, harbour and port of Walvis Bay, as well as the off-shore islands of Namibia, and its southern boundary shall extend to the middle of the Orange River”

South Africa on the other side firmly adheres to the 1 July 1890 Berlin agreement between Great Britain and Germany which states that the border is on the northern bank of the Orange River (Meissner 2001). Further, by endorsing the statutes of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the South African Government refuses to compromise on its national territory

⁴⁶ The Thalweg is the centre of the deepest portion of the river channel (Ashton 2000:79). The survey departments of both countries produced some 77 maps and beacons linked to satellite to identify the middle of the river (The Namibian, 12 May 1999).

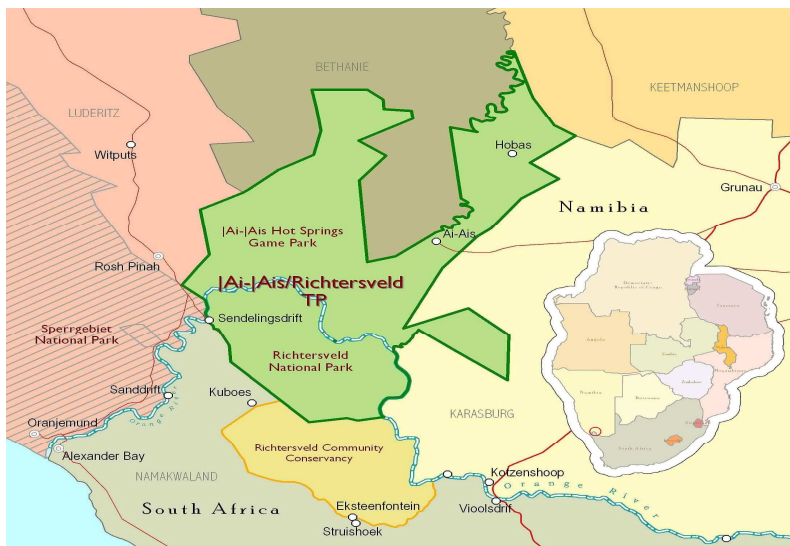
⁴⁷ Available at: <http://www.orusovo.com/namcon>

as African borders are “set in stone and cannot be changed”. As declared in the OAU Resolution 16(I) of July 1964⁴⁸ (OAU 1964):

“...border problems constitute a grave and permanent factor of dissention...considering further that the borders of African States, on the day of their independence, constitute a tangible reality...solemnly declares that all Member States pledge themselves to respect the borders existing on their achievement of national independence”

While the South African Government argues that Namibia has never been denied access to the river (Pyke 2005), the former is afraid it will create a dangerous precedent with respect to land claims from other neighbouring states if South Africa adopts the principles in the Namibian Constitution (Turton et al. 2004:385). Earle et al. (2005:26) note that even though bilateral relations between the two states are good, a solution to the disagreement would be beneficial for joint management of the basin in the future.

The Lower Orange region is arid and poorly populated, but because of the wild and scenic nature of the river and lack of pollution thereof the area is favourable as a tourist attraction with canoeing, rafting, camping and hiking being some of the activities on offer (Day 1997:20). A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Namibia and South Africa on 17 August 2001, establishing the Ai-Ais/Richtersveld Transfrontier Park (ARTP) with the main objective being biodiversity conservation. The park extends on both sides and across the Orange River (Katerere et al. 2001:20).



Map 8: “The Ai-Ais/Richtersveld Transfrontier Park”. The illustration shows the location of the Ai-Ais/Richtersveld Transfrontier Park (ARTP) cutting across the international border on the Lower Orange River (Source: The Peace Parks Foundation).

⁴⁸ Paradoxically, the same meeting also passed several resolutions condemning South Africa’s Apartheid policy which was seen as representing a serious threat to peace and international security (Resolution 5 (I)).

The area of the ARTP is about 6222 km² and lies in two protected areas; the Richtersveld National Park and Namibia's Ai-Ais Hot Springs (van Zyl 2002:5). Significant progress was made in 2005 with regards to the development of the park as a draft tourism strategy was presented, attempting to sketch out some of the potential benefits to be reaped from the joint project⁴⁹. However, Katerere et al. (2001:21) note that due to the arid and fragile nature in the area as well as its remoteness, tourism development is likely to be limited.

⁴⁹ See <http://www.peaceparks.org>

5 Theoretical Framework

“Another gap being filled here is the almost total lack of theory about the problematique of international water. [...] the dialogue has been almost devoid of any theoretical underpinnings” (Wolf 2003:1)

Discourses on hydropolitics are increasingly being draped in the language of security (Turton 2001a), a tendency reflected in much of the contemporary literature on transboundary water resources management (see Gleick 1993a, Homer-Dixon 1994, van Wyk 1998, Wester and Warner 2002, Turton and Ashton 2004, Turton 2005a, Turton 2005c). If taking a policy oriented research angle the most obvious point of departure would then be to investigate ways in which to achieve water security. This study resists such an instrumental, problem-solving perspective by rather reflecting on the implications of framing certain state of affairs, in this case access to and control over water resources, in security terms. By acknowledging that security practices can have detriment effects on social relations by evoking an exceptional politics of crisis and emergency (Wæver 1995, M. Williams 2003), reinforcing an exclusive logic of ‘us versus them’ (Leonard 2004:12), igniting a threat-defence drama between stakeholders in international river basins (Phillips et al. 2006), attention is also paid to those attempts which try to build social life on other foundations than security. The critical question now becomes; how can the process centring on the social construction of something as a security issue and the subsequent process of unmaking this “securitiness” be studied?

The Copenhagen School of International Relations (CoS) has come up with a sophisticated and coherent approach studying security as a speech act, being encircled by the concepts of securitisation, security sectors and desecuritisation. Following the linguistic turn in social theory (see Austin 1962, Searle 1980), the CoS has provided a prominent, innovative and productive research strategy within contemporary security studies (M. Williams 2003:511)⁵⁰. However, on closer examination the framework appears to contain certain conceptual as well as theoretical and methodological shortcomings which will have to be addressed before an empirical analysis can take place. Henceforth, an emphasis will be placed on those aspects of the CoS which are central to this study; namely how securitisation can reduce multifaceted aspects of transboundary water resources management to a dichotomous antagonism between “friend” and “enemy” and how issue linkages and the CoS theory of

⁵⁰ By coupling neo-realism with constructivism the CoS has been mostly concerned with the question on how to move security studies beyond a narrow agenda focusing on military relations between sovereign states while at the same time avoiding ending up with an all embracing concept couching all perceived threats to human collectives in security terms (Huysmans 1998a:482). The most notable contributions have been Wæver et al. (1993), Wæver (1995), Buzan et al. (1998) and Buzan and Wæver (2003).

security sectors can give a more interesting, dynamic and complete picture of securitisation in international river basins. Additionally, how the concept of desecuritisation, when operationalised as benefit sharing and reciprocity, throws many of the inherent assumptions in contemporary transboundary water management discourse into sharp relief.

Now, to be in a better position to understand the endeavour of the CoS it is first necessary to give an account of how the concept of security within the discipline of international relations has somewhat changed during the last decades. The following conceptual delineation is not concerned with testing hypothesis or developing theories, it is concerned with the meaning of what Buzan (1991) has termed “an essentially contested concept”⁵¹.

5.1 Changing Concepts of Security - An Introduction

“Expanding the security agenda is not a simple or trivial act, nor is it without political consequences” (Buzan et al. 1998:195)

For several centuries the Westphalian paradigm of state sovereignty and territorial integrity dominated the sphere of international relations where *security* implied the defence of sovereign states against violent attack, either from other states or from revolutionary or terrorist groups within state borders (Soroos 1994:318). Priority and focus in this paradigm was directed towards military security and diplomatic relations between states regarded high politics, rather than social and environmental issues considered low politics (Warner 2000). From the late 1970s and particularly after the Cold War, an alternative discourse emerged which emphasised the importance of widening, deepening or re-conceptualising the traditional meaning of security, in other words that the concept should encompass more than just state security and that potential threats could come from other entities than foreign states or terrorist groups⁵².

Changes in ecological trends, sometimes with catastrophic outcomes, contributed to a vast number of scholars, activists and political authorities agitating in favour of making the environment a high politics issue as well⁵³. Soroos (1994:318) captures the essence of this by

⁵¹ As the magnitude of academic contributions to the debate by far surpasses the boundary and scope of this study, my account will necessarily be of a very brief nature.

⁵² For a general overview of the criticism of the traditional, state-centric concept of security in international relations, see Buzan et al. (1998:2).

⁵³ Since the literature is too extensive to review in this context, it should suffice to include some of the milestones in the debate. Ullman (1983), Myers (1989 and 1994), Westing (1989), Soroos (1994) and Dokken (1997) among many others argue in favour of expanding the concept of security. Daniel Deudney (1991) has argued against such a coupling on conceptual, theoretical and political grounds. For an excellent account of the concept of security in international relations, see Baldwin (1997).

showing that advocates embracing the concept of environmental security have tended to focus on four aspects:

- i) The *conceptual argument* stresses that since security implies freedom or protection from serious threats to human well-being, whatever poses such threats should be considered a security problem, for instance lack of quantity or quality of water.
- ii) *Theoretical arguments* have centred around empirical analysis on how environmental change may contribute to inter or intra state conflict⁵⁴.
- iii) The *political rationale* seeks to take advantage of the inherent dramatic language of security, thus presenting a problem with a sense of urgency demanding immediate action, and hence elevating it to the arena of high politics.
- iv) *Normative contributions* claim that failure to preserve nature and ecosystems undermines the realization of all other human values. Environmental security becomes, in the words of Norman Myers (1994), the ultimate form of security.

Dokken (1997) makes a distinction between two mainstream camps in the redefining security tradition; those who aim at redefining national security and those with a more holistic approach of common security. In this context, Ullman (1983) attempts to make the concept of national security more adaptable to transboundary challenges posed by environmental problem. Defining national security merely, or even primarily in military terms would imply a profoundly false image of reality which causes states to concentrate efforts on military threats so as to ignore other and perhaps more serious dangers (ibid:129).

The causal link between environmental problems and inter or intra state violence is the topic in a vast amount of research programs. Myers (1989) argues that water shortages in the Middle East present environmental sources of conflict. Resource conflicts will often take the form of military confrontations and in most cases involve neighbouring states in the Third World (ibid). At the extreme, the consequence of environmental scarcity may even lead to resource wars (Ullman 1983:140). This is taken up by Starr (1991), Bulloch and Darwish (1993) and Villiers (1999) who put forward arguments of coming water wars, most likely to take place in the Middle East. As some writings are polemical and with limited evidence of causality, Homer-Dixon (1994, 1996, 1999), Wolf (1998) and Wolf et al. (2003) among others have embarked on the mission of establishing statistical connections between resource

⁵⁴ See for instance the extensive work of Thomas Homer-Dixon (1994, 1996 and 1999).

scarcity and conflict, however, without clearly managing to delineate the essential causal variables⁵⁵.

The political rationale argument directs attention to those actors who try to draw attention to environmental problems by focusing on crisis and emergency. By taking advantage of the potency of the term *security* as a legitimizing tool, policy makers can apply exceptional measures beyond the rules of normal politics (Wæver 1995, Buzan et al. 1998). As identified by Baldwin (1997:20), policy advocates often try to win acceptance for their proposals by declaring them to be security issues.

Normative arguments in favour of linking environment and security claim that a failure to protect the environment from threats posed by modern civilization will ultimately undermine all other human values. The normative rationale often appears in connection to the Gaia Hypothesis and Green ecology advocated by such organisations as Greenpeace.

While these arguments are not exhaustive, the counter arguments have sparked a general debate on the implications of framing environmental threats as security issues. Some of the problematic issues raised are:

- i) The concept security loses clarity and meaning because of the tremendous amount of possible threats to different referent objects. If everything that causes a decline in human well-being is labelled a security threat, the term loses any analytical usefulness⁵⁶ (Deudney 1991:24).
- ii) Environmental threats have little in common with military threats. Organisations providing protection from violence differ to a large extent from those engaged in environmental protection (ibid:24). The “us versus them” thinking found in traditional security studies can not usefully be applied to environmental problems that know no borders.
- iii) Framing environmental problems in the language of security with the intention of gaining broad and immediate support for policy choices of state elites, may have unintended effects. The inherent importance of high politics may reinforce nationalistic or undemocratic tendencies of secrecy and centralization of power

⁵⁵ Gleditsch (1998) has provided an excellent critique of this literature.

⁵⁶ Of course, this claim rests on the presumption that the “traditional” concept of security is clearly defined and demarcated which is, somewhat a flawed assumption (Baldwin 1997). As identified by Conca (2002:8), both the traditionalist and the transformative frames of reference for ecological security have been justly criticized as ambiguous, vague and contradictory.

and exclude other groups than political elites from agenda setting and decision making (Soroos 1994:321).

With regards to the first point, concepts like food security (Day 1997), water security (Turton 2003d), ecological security (Dokken 1997) and ultimate security (Myers 1994) have already led to academic inconsistencies and conceptual fiat due to fuzzy theoretical delimitations. Another problem is that of identifying, conceptually or empirically, the tipping point between an issue of serious concern and an issue that deserves to be considered a security issue. Vulnerabilities and the ability by various actors to respond to insecurities stemming from such will differ, hence, what is a security concern for one actor might just pose a priority challenge for another⁵⁷. The difficulty in establishing an objective threshold has tended to foster reliance on ideological or philosophical preferences as determinants for what gets the security label. Accordingly, such decisions have become matters of normative perceptions (Fidler 2005:14).

The second point refers differences between threats to environmental security versus threats to military security. Depicted by Prins (1993), environmental threats are different from traditional threats as the former are usually not made deliberately and standard military responses are generally inappropriate. As stressed by Deudney (1991:25) environmental threats are threats without enemies, therefore, “in the environmental sphere we, not they, are the enemy”.

The last point brings up the incompatibility between military and environmental security. While the former is usually sought through hierarchical structures defined by secrecy, the latter is dependent on participation and openness involving a broad range of actors. Security comes with a baggage which traditionally has been linked to the defence of states from outside enemies. As such, the concept of security still privileges the state as its referent object (Buzan et al. 1998). State security provokes a sense of urgency and often a corresponding willingness to accept personal sacrifice which can be an excuse for state elites to abolish laws and regulations, apply censorship or in other ways restrict the freedom of individuals. This menace leads Deudney (1991) to reject the amalgamation of security and environment.

⁵⁷ This point is taken up by Baldwin (1997:18-19), claiming that the value of something – gold, security or water – is not an inherent quality in itself but rather a result of external social conditions of supply and demand. Asserting the primacy of security is like asserting the primacy of air, food or water. A certain minimum amount of each is necessary, but this does not mean that the value of a glass of water is the same for a person stranded in a desert and a person drowning in a lake. This point gains increased relevance if one considers that the riparian states in the study differ significantly with regards to dependency on resources from a specific river basin.

By and large, the arguments discussed above tend, in one way or the other, to establish a dichotomy that is hard if not impossible to transcend. Either one endorses a widening and broadening of the concept with the consequence of extending the language of security to all cases where referent objects are perceived to be threatened, or alternatively, one sticks to the traditional conceptualisation.

5.2 The Copenhagen School – To(o) Secure or Not Secure?

“...the values to be secured are variable, the degree of security sought is variable, the potential threats to security are multiple, the means by which security may be pursued are many, the costs of security are inescapable...” (Baldwin 1997:25)

A constructive initiative to overcome the abovementioned dilemma by attempting to underline the position of some wideners, without giving up the analytical power and intellectual coherence of the concept as such has been developed by the Copenhagen School of International Relations (CoS), analysing security as a speech act being mirrored in the ideas of securitisation, security sectors and desecuritisation.

5.2.1 What is security?

Security, according to Wæver (1995:55), can with the help of language theory be regarded as a speech act, not referring to something more real; the utterance itself is the act. By saying the word, something is done⁵⁸ (as in betting, giving a promise or naming a ship). By uttering security a state representative⁵⁹ moves a particular development into a specific area, claiming a special right to use whatever means are necessary to block a threatening development. Just as betting is an effect of language, that is, successfully placing a bet, a security problem results from successfully speaking or writing security (Huysmans 2002:45). A security problem is something that challenges the survival of the political order; it alters the premises for all other questions as the political entity will cease to exist if the security problem is not successfully dealt with (ibid:46). Just as danger is not an objective condition which exists

⁵⁸ The speech act theory developed by the British philosopher John. L. Austin (1962) postulates that a distinction can be drawn between descriptive and performative utterances, the latter being neither true nor false, but rather felicitous or infelicitous. Performative utterances have a certain conventional force that, if felicitous bring about a certain state of affairs; they make things happen (such as order, command, warn). For a speech act to be felicitous it must fulfil both internal and external conditions (Austin 1962:34); the former being linguistic-grammatical conditions, the latter being contextual and social dependent. To create something out of nothing, *creatio ex nihilo*, implies that the utterance of security and the consecutive interaction caused is part of a single moment of both naming and making (Vale 2003:164).

⁵⁹ However, as will become evident in the proceeding elaboration, this process is not limited to state representatives. Nevertheless, in international relations there still appears to be a bias towards considering the state as the privileged object of security, while Buzan et al. (1998:37) draw a useful distinction between a traditionally state dominated field of security studies and a state centric approach to security analysis.

independently of those to whom it may become a threat (Campbell 1998:1), there are no security issues in themselves, only issues created as such by securitising actors (Buzan et al. 1998). As the CoS elaborate in their 1998 book *Security: a New Framework for Analysis*, security is not an objective state of affairs waiting to be discovered, but rather a self-referential process where securitising actors attempt to turn social, economic or environmental issues into security problems (Huysmans 1998a). This process by which problems are turned into security issues by virtue of social construction is by the CoS labelled securitisation (Wæver 1995). Security becomes a life strategy which orders social relations by means of distributions of threat and trust relations (Huysmans 1999:17). In other words, security becomes a matter of survival which takes place

“...when an issue is presented as posing an existential threat to a designated referent object (traditionally, but not necessarily, the state, incorporating government, territory and society). The special nature of security threats justifies the use of extraordinary measures to handle them[...] The essential quality of existence will vary greatly across different sectors and levels of analysis; therefore, so will the nature of existential threats (Buzan et al. 1998:21-22)”

Contextualised, water scarcity or ecosystem degradation do not become security issues just by correlating them with threat and crisis, but the use of the term *security* introduces a particular rhetorical structure, that is a grammar which organises texts, dispositions and social relations in terms of security (ibid:26). Stated differently, issues are securitised by virtue of discursive construction⁶⁰ when securitising actors inject a specific meaning of security into concepts previously dealt with as normal politics. When normal politics fail, it gives way to security politics which injects issues with priority and urgency that legitimises policymakers to adopt extraordinary measures to secure the survival of a political collective (Munster 2004:6). As Wæver (2000:6) puts it, the distinguishing feature of securitisation is a specific rhetorical structure including such issues as survival, priority of action and urgency, because “if the problem is not handled now it will be too late, and we will not exist to remedy our failure”. When studying securitisation the task is not to assess whether objective threats really

⁶⁰ Congruous with Wendt (1995:81), to analyse the social construction of international politics is to analyse how processes of interaction produce and reproduce the social structures, cooperative or conflictual, that shape actors' identities and interests and the importance of their material contexts. In this regard, this study acknowledges “the growing human production of nature” (See Smith 1991, Eder 1996 and Darier 1999). As claimed by Le Billon (2001:565), resources are not; they become, implying that the availability, herein abundance or scarcity, of any resource in nature is not itself a predicative indicator of conflict. Whether or not nature as such is transformed into a resource is related to human desires, needs and practices (ibid). Scarcity or abundance of water should then be regarded as relative social constructs; ingeniously supporting the claim that “there is nothing natural in nature”.

endanger a human collective, but to “understand the processes of constructing a shared understanding of what is to be considered and collectively responded to as a threat” (Buzan et al. 1998:26). The way forward for Wæver (2000:9) is then to analyse who can speak security successfully, on what issues, under what conditions and with what effects.

5.2.2 Who can do security? From agent to process

While Buzan et al. (1998:31) stress that no one decisively holds the power of securitisation they also maintain that the capacity of actors to successfully mobilise security expectations is biased in favour of the state and statesmen which historically have been endowed with security tasks. Likewise, by drawing upon Bourdieuan structuralism, Bigo (2002:74) upholds that some “amateurs”⁶¹ of the security process can intervene in the game of security and insecurity, but professionals have the advantage and privileged capacity of exercising authority by transforming non-security issues into security problems. Amateurs always have to prove their claims, whereas professionals; whether public or private, international or national, corporate or public, can evoke without demonstrating (ibid). The production of security knowledge and successful mobilisation of security dispositions takes place within a transnational field of security professionals (ibid:75) where bureaucratic agents struggle for resources, reputation and recognition. Successful enunciations of security will stem from an amalgamation of a specific habitus, that is, a set of dispositions which incline agents to act and react in certain ways (Bourdieu 1991:12), with a specific social context or social field within which the securitising actor operate⁶². Whilst the habitus provides individuals with a sense of how to act and respond, that is, it gives them a “feel for the game” for what is and what is not appropriate in a certain context (ibid:13), the social field is simultaneously empowering and constraining agents with regards to when, how and with what effects they can voice security concerns (Huysmans 1999:24). In other words, when individuals speak

⁶¹ Bigo refers to associations, churches, parties not integrated in the decision making process and ad-hoc spokespersons of social movements.

⁶² Consistent with Bourdieu (1991:12), these dispositions generate practices, perceptions and attitudes which are regular without being consciously coordinated by any rule. Moreover, the actions of individuals are not seen as merely a product of habitus, but as a product of the relation between habitus and the social field. As such, a field is a structured space of positions where the positions and their interrelations are determined by the distribution of various kinds of resources or “capital”; economic, social, cultural or symbolic. A field becomes an arena of discursive struggles where social agents seek to maintain or alter the distribution of the forms of capital specific to it (Bourdieu 1991:14). As will be elaborated on at a later stage, the Bourdieuan concept of *social field* shows a conceptual and theoretical similarity with the idea of *security sectors* as introduced by the CoS, drawing attention to the claim made by Williams (1997:298) that “the ability to speak security effectively involves the ability to mobilise specific forms of symbolic power within the specific institutional fields (*sectors*, my addition) in which it operates”.

they implicitly and routinely modify their expressions in anticipation of their likely response, thus, the expressions are modified by a certain kind of censorship stemming from the structure of the field under consideration as well as self censorship by the social agent in order to increase the likelihood of the speech act being successful⁶³ (Bourdieu 1991:19).

The imperative question becomes whether performativity's social magic, to use Bourdieu's own idiom, is confined to an a priori institutionalised authority or if such utterances can involve a critical perspective stemming from an actor with no prior authorization. While structuralism provides a rather static account of who can speak security, Butler (1999:122) stresses that the speech act cannot be bound by an epistemological determinism which prescribes institutional position as the finite condition for speech act success, but has to be indeterminate and open for surprises since it is possible to speak with authority without being authorised to speak. This corresponds with Vale (2003:165), asserting that in South Africa the right to securitise has not been the exclusive domain of state power, but has also been dispersed among various interest groups. Therefore, the CoS argues that one cannot make the securitising actors the fixed point of analysis; the practice of securitisation and the subsequent logic of action should be the focal point of investigation⁶⁴ (Buzan et al. 1998:41).

5.2.3 Distinguishing securitising moves from full securitisation: The role of the audience

Following from the CoS framework, successful securitisation consists of three moves: existential threats, emergency action and effects on inter unit relations by breaking free of rules (Buzan et al. 1998:26). Securitisation is certainly not complete only by breaking rules, nor solely by existential threats but by existential threats that legitimize the breaking of rules⁶⁵ (ibid). Furthermore, Wæver (2000:9) maintains that the conditions facilitating speech act success are as follows; 1) linguistic-grammatical conditions stipulating that it must follow the grammar of security, herein security, threat, urgency, point of no return and a possible way

⁶³ Bourdieu (1991) concurs with Austin (1962) that certain conditions must be satisfied for the speech act to be felicitous; however, for Bourdieu these conditions are not merely linguistic-grammatical, but primarily social conditions stemming from the mobilisation of "social capital".

⁶⁴ This study adopts a similar research logic as the securitisation- desecuritisation nexus will be approached through case studies, enclosing specific dynamics with regards to securitising actors and referent objects.

⁶⁵ Crucially, the CoS does *not* set the threshold so high "as to suggest that an emergency measure has to be adopted, only that the existential threat has to be argued and just gain enough resonance for a platform to be made from which it is possible to legitimise emergency measures or other steps that would not have been possible had the discourse not taken the form of existential threat, point of no return and necessity" (Buzan et al. 1998:25).

out, 2) social and contextual conditions requiring that the securitising actor is in a certain position of authority and that (s)he can refer to certain threatening developments, be it hostile tanks or polluted waters.

An important clarifying element is that a discourse or a speech act that presents something as an existential threat does not itself create securitisation, this is a securitising move, but the issue is securitised only if and when the relevant audience⁶⁶ accepts it as such (Buzan et al. 1998:31). While this draws attention to the intersubjective and socially constructed character of security in the framework, it nevertheless introduces delicate matters of measurement, threshold and causality, these issues not being sufficiently brought to attention by the CoS. Measuring the overall acceptance of a securitising speech act in a population does not come without challenges, especially in African countries with high illiteracy rates. Thus, questions should be asked whether the audience really understands a securitising move as being just what it is and not something else (Leonard 2004:16). Moreover, who decides who is to make up the audience and are there different audiences for different speech acts? Finally, if extraordinary measures are adopted, for instance if a dam project is shelved apparently due to heavy environmental lobbyism, how can one assess whether the project was abandoned due to this lobbyism or because of other scientific or economic assessments deeming it unnecessary or too costly?

Essentially, the notion of audience acceptance puts causality into the securitisation equation. Since causality analysis is at odds with the discourse analytical framework put forward in this study, acceptance will necessarily serve as a more general and subtle indicator for the overall approval of the use of extraordinary measures. This is also in accordance with a social constructivist perspective stressing that effects are always intersubjectively constructed and therefore not controlled by the individual agents themselves (Huysmans 1999:20).

5.2.4 Deepening the understanding of security dynamics through sectors

Wæver (2000:10) theorises that security is a generic term with a distinct meaning, but its form fluctuates. Accordingly, security, herein survival will mean different things depending on the specific referent object perceived to be threatened. Moreover, different referent objects will also engender different dynamics with regards to threats and vulnerabilities. Wæver (ibid:11)

⁶⁶ The separate category of “audience” refers to those the securitising act attempts to convince to accept exceptional procedures because of the specific security nature of an issue (Buzan et al. 1998:41). Securitisation can never only be imposed, there is always some need to argue one’s case, hence acceptation will ultimately rest on coercion as well as consent.

brings this to attention by emphasizing that the interest is not so much in single instances of securitisation, but in their interrelatedness. To account for the interrelatedness of different security concerns, Buzan et al. (1998) allege that the security of human collectives and principles is affected by factors located in five different sectors; the political, military, economic, environmental and societal. While the sectoral perspective reflects what actors are actually doing with the language by adding *security* onto sector designators and although some features of security (threat, survival) are common across sector, each sector also has its own distinctive actors, referent objects, dynamics and contradictions that need to be understood in their own terms (ibid:196).

By taking the abovementioned aspects into account, Huysmans (1998a:489) underscores that a sector refers to a specific security dynamic rather than to a collection of particular kinds of threats. The approach does *not* suggest that the world exists in clearly demarcated and mutually exclusive sectors so while the analytical method starts with disaggregation it must end with reassembly (Buzan et al. 1998:8).

The sectoral approach represents a vigorous undertaking, providing an ample account of securitising actors and referent objects without endangering the analytical coherence of the concept of security as such⁶⁷. It is mostly justified on methodological and instrumental grounds; as stressed by Buzan et al. (ibid), while sectors might identify distinctive patterns, the purpose of selecting them is simply to reduce complexity to facilitate analysis. Neither does the cutting up into sectors mean that one should study a concrete situation in one sector only as a specific security issue is likely to have affects across sectors (Wæver 2000:12). A theoretical rationale for supporting the approach is that security perceptions in one field colour the interpretation of what constitutes a security problem in another sector, in other words a threat is often interpreted in the light of another (“pollution is a security threat because it also affects our economic security”). By reassembling security concerns located in each sector into a holistic picture, one avoids linkages between sectors being lost or obscured (Buzan et al. 1998:17). Therefore, the following section will elaborate on the five sectors of

⁶⁷ The CoS acknowledges that securitisation does not always go through the state, it is also possible for other entities to raise an issue to the status of sanctioned urgency, claiming a right to handle it through extraordinary means, to break the normal rules of the game, e.g. in the form of secrecy, levying taxes or conscriptions, placing limitations on otherwise inviolable rights or focusing society’s energy and resources on a specific task (Buzan et al. 1998:24). I will return to the delicate question whether Buzan et al. (1998), by introducing the sectoral approach are not only jeopardising the conceptual integrity of security, but are also actively promoting a widened concept, acting as advocates just as much as observers by securitising yet new areas of social life (see Eriksson 1999). This question becomes even more pertinent as the CoS have introduced a sixth sector of security, religion (see Laustsen and Wæver 2000).

security, attempting to delineate how the multifaceted character of water can give rise to security strategies and ultimately, how these strategies to greater or lesser degrees are linked.

5.2.4.1 The Political Sector

As advocated by Buzan et al. (1998:141), political security refers to the organisational stability of social order(s), herein primarily threats to state sovereignty. Existential threats to a state's survival involve sovereignty since sovereignty is what defines the state as a state and even minor violations of this sovereignty are threats since sovereignty becomes endangered if it becomes partial in any sense (ibid:150). Usually, threats to political security will involve the denial; partly or fully, of recognition, support or legitimacy either of political units or of the essential patterns (structures, processes or institutions) among them. Hence, political threats can either challenge the internal legitimacy of the political unit referring first and foremost to ideologies or other constitutive ideas defining the state, or they can challenge the external legitimacy or recognition of the state (ibid:144).

To speak security within the political sector will involve the articulation of elements such as “territory”, “sovereignty”, “border” and “control”. Likewise, state elites and government representatives will usually be the main actors endowed with the authority to successfully securitise, meaning that performativity's social magic will be relatively structured, predictable and institutionally bound. Buzan et al. (ibid:86) make a useful distinction between the securitisation of causes on the one side and the securitisation of effects on the other side. While the former might entail the construction of regional integration as a threat to state sovereignty, the latter turns the argument on its head by arguing that if integration does not gain momentum and maximum urgency, the consequence will be regional fragmentation and chaos⁶⁸.

While Ashton (2002:239) notes that territorial sovereignty issues have been implicated in practically every dispute or conflict that has taken place over or near to water in Africa, these clashes have usually centred on disagreements over the precise location of territorial boundaries, involving relatively small areas. The possibility that rivers cause conflict by being fuzzy borders is also attended to by Gleditsch et al. (2004:5), stating that normally the boundary follows the thalweg as the deepest channel in the river, but frequently other

⁶⁸ As will become evident in the subsequent chapters, this is exactly what takes place in the Okavango and Orange River basins when some actors claim that if the riparian states do not succeed in jointly managing the watersheds through OKACOM and ORASECOM, the consequence will be increased fragmentation, distrust and conflict.

principles such as the river bank and even the median line between the banks are adopted. While territory can be a symbol of self determination, it can also enclose substantial natural resources, such as food, energy and water (Toset et al. 2000:973). How threats to water can initiate security concerns in the economic sector is the topic of the following section.

5.2.4.2 The Economic Sector

Warner (2000:254) emphasises that something is deemed a strategic security issue when it is essential to the survival of human collectives or principles. What constitutes an existential threat in the economic sector depends on the referent object; for individuals economic security refers to basic human needs such as food, water and shelter while economic security for states often mirror those of “basic human needs”; unless a state acquires the resources needed to feed its population and industry, the national economy can be legitimately securitised (Buzan et al. 1998:105).

Buzan (1991:242) argues that threats to the economic security of a state can be seen as a national security issue since relative economic growth is a key determinant of the power of states within a given system. Security concerns often follow where states have abandoned inefficient self sufficiency policies for more efficient insecurity of dependence on external sources of supply, or vice versa (Buzan et al. 1998:98). This points to the difficulty in separating attempts to securitise economic issues from the more general political contest between liberal and nationalist approaches to economic policy⁶⁹(ibid:99). It does also draw attention to the social construction of resource scarcity as scarcity as such depends on whether the national government adopts an inward looking self sufficiency policy or outward looking strategy aimed at importing commodities from neighbouring countries⁷⁰. Securitisation does not always come primarily for economic reasons, so linkages to political and military concerns are often strong (ibid:116) and economic activity frequently triggers survival issues

⁶⁹ This draws attention to the classic division between (neo) mercantilists and liberalists in international political economy discourse. The former see the state as enclosing both political and social purposes with the aim of generating and providing the security necessary for the operation of firms and markets, hence economic security becomes part of a wider strategy for achieving state or national security (Buzan et al. 1998:95). The latter puts economics first, arguing that the market should be left to operate as freely as possible without state interference (ibid).

⁷⁰ As a consequence, the notion of water as a finite resource should be kept separate from the problems of water scarcity as the latter is, to some extent, a relative concept (Falkenmark and Lundqvist 1995:184). Earle (2003:246) claims that water is not the crucial limiting factor to food production, food security or economic development if a virtual water strategy is adopted, using local water resources in the sector of the economy where they generate the most income and importing high water-consumptive grain instead of aiming at national food self sufficiency.

in other sectors, herein on the basis of economic failures (e.g. famine) or economic success (for instance pollution).

A general trend in Southern Africa is that the population distribution tends to be concentrated in areas that are far from stable supplies of water; Gaborone in Botswana, Harare and Bulawayo in Zimbabwe and the Gauteng area in South Africa, the sustainability of the latter region depending on a complex network of inter basin water transfers (Turton 2000:139). Economic matters cast in the language of security often surround what in engineering parlance is known as security of supply (Turton 2003:86). Turton and Ashton (2004:55) observe that Botswana and Namibia have no perennial rivers flowing on their sovereign soil except for a short stretch of the Okavango, and these countries, together with Zimbabwe and South Africa are currently approaching the limits of their available water resources and water scarcity will pose major limitations to economic growth in the near future.

Correspondingly, Turton (2003c:87) refers to the hydraulic mission of society as the official state policy that seeks to mobilise water as a foundation for social and economic development, which are also key elements of national security. Access to water is a critical component of the national prosperity of a country, being interwoven with irrigation, food production, energy, industry and, increasingly, also tourism (Ashton 2002:239). Actions that restrict the state in its unilateral quest for security of supply will thus often be perceived as threats to national interests and security (ibid). With regards to international rivers a significant predicament is that attempts to improve security of supply by one riparian state merely cascades perceptions of insecurity elsewhere in the basin. This can rapidly escalate into a destructive security dilemma where threat perceptions and suspicion will be the order of the day. As P. Williams (2003:9) puts it, supply side management aggravates conflict by heightening perceptions that one's access to water depends more on another's (mis)use than on the modalities of nature. In such cases, the logic that environmental threats are threats without enemies (Prins 1993) will often be flawed. Since each country in Southern Africa is determined to pursue an agenda of resource security, access to adequate water supplies is usually seen as a life or death issue; any threat to disrupt or prevent access to water turns into an emotionally charged, hot-tempered debate (Ashton 2000:72). How access and control of water resources become swayed by emotional arguments and accusations is also the topic of the next section.

5.2.4.3 The Environmental Sector

Drawing upon the classic distinction between traditional security studies and critical security studies, Swatuk (2004) identifies two competing schools in the environmental security discourse; environmental security studies and critical environmental security studies. While the former considers how environmental degradation, resource depletion and species loss affect the state and state institutions, frequently attempting to link environmental security to national security, the latter applies a more holistic understanding of the ways in which humans interact with nature attempting, intentional or unintentional, to securitise a range of environmental collectives⁷¹(ibid:13).

Attempts of hypothesizing the detriment effects of environmental decay for human collectives have frequently occurred since the 1960s (ibid:6) and Southern Africa has since the fall of the Apartheid regime figured prominently as a region well suited for the theoretical and empirical deployment of `new` security thinking (Solomon 1998:3). While Buzan et al. (1998:71) maintain that attempts to securitise the environment have a significantly shorter history as with regards to the four other sectors, the environmental sector demonstrates more clearly than any other sector the propensity for dramatic and emotional securitising moves, but with little securitising effects leading to extraordinary measures⁷². The linkage between the environmental sector and the other sectors often implies that securitising actors refer to environmental problems as economic, political or military threats (ibid:175). The way in which scientific arguments structure the environmental security discourse appears as striking; while questions of evidence and proof are notoriously dubious, the general public is inclined, apart from general scepticism, to follow whatever claims are made by technocratic and scientific experts (ibid:72).

Different categories of environmental threats; where securitising actors will attempt to deploy “exceptional measures” to handle them, can be sketched out as follows (ibid:74): disruption of ecosystems, herein loss of biodiversity, deforestation and pollution; energy

⁷¹ At the centre stage of this debate is the role of the state and whether security implies stability or change (Warner 2000). Crucially, this study departs from the assertion that securitising the environment automatically implies linking it to national security. As the sectoral approach suggests, it does also distance itself from those asserting that the securitisation of water resource management implies linking water to national security (see Phillips et al. 2006:20). Following Vale (2003:149) my intention is not simply to broaden the concept of security to include water while retaining the state as the primary security referent. The advantage of the sectoral approach is that it opens for considering and analysing other referent objects and securitising actors than merely states and state elites, without necessarily jumping on to the critical security studies wagon aimed at redistributing security to the “security have-nots”.

⁷² Attempting to explain why this is so, Buzan et al. (1998) frequently refer to the point that the environmental security sector does not display the same institutionalisation as the more conventional security sectors.

problems; food problems, in this poverty and famine and economic problems resulting from environmental degradation as such. Buzan et al. (ibid:79) outline three correlations that define the possible universe of environmental security: 1) threats to human civilisation from the natural environment that are not caused by human activities, herein earthquakes and volcanic events, 2) threats from human activity to nature when such *do* seem to pose existential threats to (parts of) civilisation, here global warming or environmental exploitation beyond the carrying capacity of ecosystems and 3) threats from human activity to nature when such *do not* seem to pose existential threats to civilisation. The first logic appears to be the most likely candidate to initiate securitisation, however, as soon as some form of securitisation occurs, that is when some measure of human responsibility (or lack thereof) replaces the role of faith or God, these kinds of threats are likely to develop a social character which ultimately blurs the distinction between natural and manmade hazards⁷³. Now, if these threats are perceived only by experts and their policy recommendations are not heard by the general audience, securitisation is unlikely. Securitisation will be at its most effective when it finds support in everyday life and public awareness will play a decisive role if the process is to be successful (Aradau 2004:400). Securitisation of the environment subsequently legitimises itself on the basis of everyday fears; visual representations of littered or dried out riverbeds, dead trees or animals. In such cases, perceived threats are often represented as disease, dirt or pollution (Campbell 1998:81).

While states can and often do securitise nature, the environmental sector is one of the sectors most open to performativity's social magic and Vale (2003:170) notes that ecological communities such as Greenpeace, World Wildlife Fund and the World Conservation Union (IUCN) have become powerful secondary sites of securitisation in Africa. While the essence of the environmental lobby is to deal with causes, some environmental NGOs also try to securitise effects (Buzan et al. 1998:89). National or local responses to perceived environmental threats may also aggravate tensions in other sectors, leading to political tension, economic distress or societal agony. The latter is the focus of the next section.

⁷³ As will be shown in the empirical section this is often the case in international river basins where local people lack sufficient information about the "real" causes of environmental destruction, making conspiracy theories flourish, attempting to distribute the "social bad" by blaming the neighbour, the village across the river or the country upstream. The focus on how threat perceptions can cumulate, these ultimately taking the form of a "friend vs. enemy" distinction will be put under the spotlight later in this chapter.

5.2.4.4 The Societal Sector

Wæver et al. (1993:23) define societal security as being about “the sustainability, within acceptable conditions for evolution, of traditional patterns of language, culture, association, and religious and national identity and custom. As for society as such, Buzan et al. (1998:119) define it as being about identity, herein the self conception of communities, large self-sustaining identity groups and individuals identifying themselves as members of a community. Therefore, societal insecurity arises when communities of whatever kind define a development or potentiality as a threat to their survival as a community (ibid). For the CoS there is a duality of state security and societal security, the former based on fixed territory and formal membership while the latter refers to social integration as a much more fluid and volatile idea (ibid). As Wæver (1995:67) puts it, both imply survival; if a state loses its sovereignty it does not survive as a state and a society that loses its identity fears that it will no longer be able to live as such.

Huysmans (1995:55) defines security as a centring tale in which the threatened identity is placed at the centre of attention, which hereby also creates the outside, the periphery where the threats are located. Now, the societal security tale is seducing exactly because it turns the centre into an unquestionable given while simultaneously establishing a split between harmony and disharmony, between whom to trust and whom to fear⁷⁴ (Schmitt 1985[1934], Huysmans 1995:57). The CoS conceptualisation of society as reducible to (one) single identity has not come about unnoticed and even though this study does not intend to disclose all critical voices⁷⁵, McSweeney’s (1999:70) accusation that the concept of society loses all touch of fluidity and process, resulting in a near positivist conception of identity, can serve as constructive point of departure. The CoS projects both society and identity as being objective and static concepts⁷⁶, which is sociologically untenable (ibid:77) and risks fostering and legitimising intolerance, encouraging and exacerbating, albeit unconsciously, securitising dynamics between groups (McSweeney cited in M. Williams 2003:519). However, as Wæver (1995:70) puts it; while societal security might strongly imply a homogenous society speaking

⁷⁴ As Huysmans (1998c:577) argues, securitisation is, first of all, a political technique with a capacity to integrate a society politically by staging a credible existential threat in the form of an enemy where the community of friends comes into existence precisely as a reaction to the representation of an enemy. This echoes the determination of friends and enemies beneath Carl Schmitt’s concept of the political (See M. Williams 2003:520).

⁷⁵ For a discussion which particularly involves the challenges of using the concept of societal securitisation, see Leonard (2004).

⁷⁶ This might be deducted from the CoS preference of Durkheimian methodological collectivism. As Buzan et al. (1998:40) explicitly argue, “much of social life is understandable only when collectivities are seen as more than the sum of their “members” and are treated as social realities”.

on its own behalf, societies are, of course, highly differentiated entities where some are better placed than others to speak on behalf of “their societies”. But society never speaks independently, it is only spoken for. Accordingly, it is precisely under the conditions of attempts of securitisation that a monolithic, reified form of identity is declared, that its negotiability and flexibility is suppressed or denied, and a successful securitisation of identity involves the capacity to decide on the limits of a given identity⁷⁷ (M. Williams 2003:519).

When societal insecurity arises, societies can react in two ways (Buzan et al. 1998:122); through carrying out activities themselves or attempt to move the issue to the political or even the military sector by having the threat placed on the state agenda. While the key referent objects are tribes, clans, nations, herein minorities and indigenous groups, religions and race; the media plays a decisive role in defining the situation, constructing simple yet appealing stories of us and them, thus operating as a securitising actor (ibid:123). Wæver (1995:70) stresses that one cannot predict who will successfully speak societal security; “we can only see, with hindsight, how much legitimacy an actor did possess when (s)he tried to speak on behalf of society. Furthermore, securitising actors may speak of security itself, or instead describe threats to the identity of the group through the articulation of synonyms such as “die”, “perish”, “wither”, “weaken” or “decline” (Roe 2004:289). Such dramatic language is also prevalent if one considers the logic of threats and vulnerabilities in the military sector, which will be examined in the next part.

5.2.4.5 The Military Sector

The military security agenda centres on the ability of governments to maintain themselves against internal and external military threats, but it can also involve the use of military power to defend states or governments against non-military threats to their existence, such as migrants or rival ideologies (Buzan et al. 1998:50). When perceived threats are internal, military security is mainly about the capability of the ruling elite to maintain civil peace, territorial integrity and, more contentiously, the machinery of government in face of

⁷⁷ Similarly, Munster (2004:8) shows how security tales radicalise the opposition between self and other by transforming it into a distinction between friend and enemy; “the drama of security turns the other party into a threat or enemy with which there is no shared understanding or common symbolic ground [...] when viewed through the lens of security, the relation between self and other loses its multiple dimensions and is reduced to an antagonistic relationship of enmity”. Agents in security stories are thus created by unification of smaller units into a bigger one, the former setting their differences and conflicts aside to become one agent constituted by a sphere of (flawed?) internal harmony (Huysmans 1995:56). As such, security strategies, especially those involving the societal sector, frequently endorse and apply the logic of equivalence (Laclau and Mouffe 1994). The way this is done will become evident in the proceeding chapters.

challenges from its citizens (ibid). Accordingly, when threats are external, military security is primarily about the dual interplay between armed offensive and defensive capabilities of states on the one hand and their perceptions of each other's capabilities and intentions on the other (ibid:51). Buzan and Wæver (2003:219) note that Africa has retained some of the superficial diplomatic appearance of a Westphalian state system over the past four decades, but it has had rather little of the political, social, or economic reality of functioning states. As a consequence, most security interaction in Africa has been on the domestic level and fragile national states have frequently been challenged by secessionists, unionists and revolutionaries (ibid:249). Just as the state is the most important, though not the only referent object, the ruling elites of state are the most important, though not the only securitising actors (Buzan et al. 1998:49). However, as military threats often require a highly hierarchical and organised response, the military sector is less prone to the ambiguity of "social magic" than the other sectors.

The locus of military threats is strongly influenced by geography; states are more worried about their neighbours than distant powers (Buzan et al. 1998:59). The weakness of most African states as powers as well as states has caused most security interaction to take place either within states or across borders by non-state actors; interstate security dynamics are often spillover of domestic crisis; herein civil wars, electoral riots and refugee flows which have the potential of fuelling threats perceptions in other sectors as well (Buzan and Wæver 2003:229).

With regards to water resources management, the military sector dynamics crystallise in many of those debates focusing on the correlation between water, conflict and war⁷⁸. Wæver (1995:54) argues that the logic of war; challenge – resistance – defence – defeat, "can be metaphorically extended to others sectors, however, when this happens the structure of the game will still be derived from the most classical of classical cases: war"⁷⁹. As identified by Le Billon (2001:564), advocates of the resource wars hypothesis claim that people or nations will fight each other to secure access to resources necessary for their survival. Though, in most of these cases water is referred to as being a tool, weapon or victim of warfare without these definitions being sufficiently demarcated (Wolf et al. 2003:31). Furthermore, Warner

⁷⁸ To account for the outbreak and dynamics of war, Neumann (1998) has proposed that the CoS framework should be extended to include the category of "violisation". As he puts it, "the outbreak of war may of course also be conceptualised as a speech act [...] the waging of war [...] adds something more to the speech act of declaring war, and the crucial thing added is the use of force – that is, a violisation of politics (ibid:16).

⁷⁹ Then, perhaps there is something in the claim made by Campbell (1998:203) that the effort to address environmental issues within the parameters of international relations and national security often simply extends the old register of security to cover this new domain.

(2000:259) suggests that there is a supply and demand side to this. Security institutions in post Apartheid Southern Africa, having lost much of their obvious necessity and thus set about reinventing themselves, are looking for new relevance and keen on identifying new, vital threats⁸⁰. On the demand side, recipient states no longer supported by East or West for ideological reasons are eager to attract strategic funds and international backup (ibid).

Having sketched out the sectoral dynamics of the CoS with water as the focal point of attention it is now time to turn to the legacy of German philosopher and legal theorist Carl Schmitt and his influence on securitisation theory as such. The topic of the next part will be how the language of threat and security, when played out on the arena of international river basin management, can ultimately ignite a dichotomous relationship between amity and enmity, between friends and enemies.

5.3 Securitisation and the legacy of Carl Schmitt

While the analytical framework of the CoS is well entrenched in social constructivism, it can also be derived from the Realist tradition in international relations, particularly from the work of the German jurist and philosopher Carl Schmitt⁸¹ (M. Williams 2003). As Williams (ibid:515) puts it, the specificity of security as a particular kind of speech act in the CoS framework is underpinned by an understanding of the politics of enmity, decision and emergency which has deep roots in Schmitt's understanding of political order. It is to this that attention will now be directed.

5.3.1 A Brief Introduction to Carl Schmitt

The central question for Schmitt is; how does the concept of the political order social relations? Schmitt (1996:29[1932] claims that the political is the most intense and extreme antagonism and every antagonism becomes more political the closer it approaches the most extreme point, that of a "friend-enemy" grouping. Every religious, moral, economic, ethical

⁸⁰ Vale (2003:111) notes that shortly after the end of Apartheid the Institute of Defence Politics (IDP) openly advocated a role for the military beyond the one it enjoyed pre-1994. "Staffed entirely by former officers of the Apartheid defence force, with university degrees in military science, the IDP both constructed and controlled the meaning of security within the national discourse both during, and way beyond, the transition".

⁸¹ It is neither possible nor the intention to give an entirely covering account of the theoretical influence of Schmitt's doctrines on the concept of security in international relations as such. Neither do I suggest, following M. Williams (2003:515) that the CoS uncritically adopts those of Schmitt's ideas stemming from the dark backwaters of authoritarianism (Schmitt was sometimes called the crown jurist of the Nazi Party). Rather, what I advocate is that the understanding of "exceptional measures", "decision" and "emergency" in the academic deliberations of the CoS can be further enhanced by taking the writings of Carl Schmitt as a point of departure.

or other antithesis transforms into a political one if it is sufficiently strong to group human beings effectively according to friend and enemy (ibid:37). By virtue of a monopoly on politics, the state is the only entity able to distinguish friend from enemy and thereby demand of its citizens the readiness to die and this ability raises the state above all other organisations and associations⁸² (Schwab 1985: xxiv).

Schmitt (1985:5[1934]) maintains that the definition of sovereignty has to be associated with an exception and cannot be based on routine, famously declaring that “sovereign is he who decides on the exception”. The political is defined on the grounds of the extraordinary, but the precise details surrounding exception or emergency cannot be anticipated. Sovereignty, and thus the state itself, resides on this condition, that is the authoritative determination of what constitutes public order and security and when they are disturbed or threatened (ibid:9). The state suspends the law in the exception on the basis of its right to survival but, like every order, the legal order rests on a decision and not on a norm (ibid:13). Sovereignty is thus outside the law, since the actions of the sovereign in the state of exception cannot be bound by laws (Hirst 1999:11). These authoritarian undercurrents point to how Schmitt is concerned with the preservation of the state and the defence of the stable institutions of society, in other words how Schmitt attempts to restore order in the political sense⁸³ (ibid:12).

5.3.2 Carl Schmitt and the CoS theory of Securitisation

Whether an issue is political or non-political cannot, as suggested by Schmitt, be determined by the nature of the issue itself, but is rather determined by a specific way of relating to it, that is with regards to a political issue a particularly intense relationship that actors feel towards it (M. Williams 2003:516). For Schmitt (1999:203[1930]), the political, correctly understood, is only the degree of intensity of a unity. Political unity can contain and comprehend different contents. But it always designates the most intensive degree of unity, from which the most intensive distinction, the grouping of friend and enemy, is determined. Accordingly, to borrow a label from Žižek (1999), it is this “ultra-politics”; the division between amity and enmity and the authority to decide when a threat to a human collective has

⁸² The increased attention paid to and subsequent growing influence of Carl Schmitt among many contemporary political theorists of the Left is also due to the fact that both share a central agenda; they wish to rescue the state from a situation of general “discredit” (Dyzenhaus 1999:75).

⁸³ This facet becomes important as Hirst (1999:8) attempts to explain why Schmitt collaborated with the Nazis from 1933 to 1936, referring to how Schmitt, already concerned with order and stability, caught up with conservative currents in German society which saw the choice as either Hitler or chaos.

reached the threshold of “emergency”, requiring the suspension of normal political rules which makes up Schmitt’s concept of the political⁸⁴(M. Williams 2003:516).

Similarly, as for the concept of securitisation, economic well being, water scarcity or identity are not security issues unless they are placed within the category of existential threat, that is cast in terms of friends and enemies (Wæver 1995). The commonality between security discourses is that they mediate a politics of belonging that separate a sphere of trust between friends from the enemy who is perceived to introduce fear, chaos and instability in the social order (Munster 2004:8).

Mouffe (1999b:5) remarks that while Schmitt gives an account of the conflictual nature of the political, he does not permit a differential treatment of this conflictuality. That is, there is no possibility of pluralism neither within the community of friends, nor among the enemies. What is more, Schmitt is usually reproached for neglecting the friend side of his friend-enemy opposition (Mouffe 1999a:47). For Schmitt the political condition arises from the struggle of groups and in this process internal order is imposed to pursue external conflict (Hirst 1999:9). Here, an important distinction has to be made between the general political theory of Schmitt and the diverse political strategies that his theory opens for. As Žižek (1999:27) rightly identifies, Schmittian politics proper, partly mirrored by the CoS concept of securitisation, displaces the inherent antagonism constitutive of the political on to the external relationship between “us and them”. Thus, constructing an external threat in order to attract attention from domestic affairs becomes a powerful discursive strategy for securitising actors to draw upon when attempting to legitimise a variety of political interventions⁸⁵.

While this reductionism can be replayed in all the five sectors of security, the way in which this Schmittian division is mirrored in the work of the CoS is perhaps most clearly illustrated with references to the concept of societal security. Mouffe (1999a:39) shows how a Schmittian conceptualisation of democracy requires homogeneity and, if need arises, eradication of heterogeneity. Preuss (1999:164) claims that the central task for Schmitt is to keep the people’s will as one, to keep it’s sameness alive and to oppose the tendency of the people to revert into a multitude egoist individuals. With regards to societal securitisation, M. Williams (2003:519) maintains that it is under conditions of existential threat to identities that

⁸⁴ It remains unclear how M. Williams positions himself in relation to the state centric approach of Carl Schmitt. Schmitt makes it clear that the monopoly to decide remains firmly entrenched within state authority (See Schmitt 1985[1934]:13). Then pertinent question remains whether the CoS and Williams, drawing upon Schmitt, open for other voices of security than state elites? Or, eventually, does security always have to be read through the state and lens of national security?

⁸⁵ In this regard I am tempted to use the Second Bush Administration as an example; George Bush himself has when making reference to the War on Terror repeatedly declared that “either you’re with us, or you’re against us”, a statement clearly correlated with the concept of decisionism as introduced by Schmitt.

the Schmittian logic of friends and enemies is invoked, and with it a politics of exclusion, discerning “we” from “the others”. As such, when identity is securitised its multiplicity is denied and replaced by a monolithic and reductionist division between friend and enemy.

Crucially, the way in which the CoS departs from Schmittian decisionism is by stressing the intersubjective character of the security speech act; as Buzan et al. (1998:31) maintain, securitisation is intersubjective and socially constructed, it never only be imposed, it is always necessary to legitimise ones case⁸⁶. The CoS avoids the most excessively authoritarian components of Schmitt by embedding securitisation tightly within the ethics of discursive legitimation and audience acceptance, and by doing so stress that securitisation is by and large a phenomenon to be avoided (Buzan et al. 1998:29). Strategies for unmaking the politics of exceptionality are paid attention to in the next part of this chapter.

5.4 Desecuritisation

“The question of desecuritisation therefore becomes one about the kind of politics we want. Do we want politics of exceptional measures or do we want democratic politics of slow procedures which can be contested?” (Aradau 2004:5)

Coherent with Wæver (1995:56) security is always relative; one never lives in complete security because if one did one would not label it security, thus it never appears. The securitisation of an issue may have unintended consequences as the concept of security carries with it a history and a set of connotations that it cannot escape (Wæver 2000:2). Framing a problem in the language of security still evokes an image of threat and defence, usually allocating to the state a vital role in finding appropriate countermeasures, often implying more technocracy and less democracy (ibid). With regards to securitisation, the major problem is “where to stop”, since the concept of security otherwise becomes a synonym for everything that is politically good or desirable⁸⁷ (Wæver 1995:47). For instance, state elites have in the name of national security concerns managed to acquire extended powers, exploiting threat perceptions for domestic purposes, claiming a right to handle problems with less democratic and transparent procedures (Buzan et al. 1998:29). Furthermore, Aradau (2001:2) asserts that securitisation is only liable to breed more insecurity, leading to a vicious spiral of enemy constructions. Therefore, Wæver (2000:7) stresses that security should not be idealised; it is

⁸⁶ Though, the degree to which the deliberation will be free and open to the public is likely to depend on the issue under consideration, moreover whether the issue appears “within” the military and political sector or some of the other sectors. As M. Williams (2003:524) argues, part of the power of securitisation theory lies in its stress on how security issues are often or usually insulated from this process of public debate; they operate in the realm of secrecy, national security and swift decisions.

⁸⁷ Wæver (2000:2) sheds light on a crucial aspect neglected in the wide vs. narrow debate on security; the flawed assumption that security is something we want, and if there are more security issues, we get a better world.

never innocent, neither politically, nor analytically to frame a problem in the grammar of security. Nevertheless, while Huysmans (1999:26) claims that some actors may employ the language of security intentionally in order to securitise an issue, this does not necessarily imply a conservative stance aimed at preserving the status quo since securitisation can also have an emancipatory effect, prioritising an issue and mobilising people with the intention to change conservative biases in the concept of security per se. This Janus face of security is also brought to attention by Jonas (1984:26-27), claiming that

“...we need the threat to the image of man [...] As long as danger is unknown, we do not know what to preserve and why [...] it is doubtful whether anybody would ever have praised health without at least the sight of sickness, praised sincerity without the experience of trickery, praised peace without knowing of war’s misery.

Accordingly, the crucial question does not become whether one should have more or less security, it becomes a question about whether to securitise or not to securitise. Put in a nutshell by Wæver (2000:3);

“We need a better understanding of what is going on when we say ‘security’. To address something as a ‘security’ issue (and a threat) in contrast to an economic/political/environmental/religious [...] issue (and a challenge) is far from innocent. It might be of choice when we lose faith in normal procedures [...] but we always have to weigh the costs.

Asserting that more security is not always better, Wæver (ibid:8) opts for desecuritisation as the optimal long-range goal since securitisation implies that one has failed in dealing with the issue as normal politics. In a conflict resolution perspective the way forward is often desecuritisation rather than the production of more security (ibid). Although Wæver (ibid) labels desecuritisation as a process where issues are moved out of a threat - defence sequence and into the ordinary public sphere, the concept of desecuritisation is seriously underspecified by the CoS and conditions for unmaking security representations have received scant attention (Aradau 2004). Therefore, it is to this research gap that we now must turn.

5.4.1 Doing Desecuritisation⁸⁸

The critical task of desecuritisation entails challenging, reordering or deconstructing assumptions based on the premise that politics proper entails distancing from or eliminating a perceived enemy. As a consequence, desecuritisation seeks to lay bare the assumption that the existence of the self depends on negating or denying the presence of the other (Munster 2004:12). Whereas the objective of security strategies is to establish immunity towards the excluded other, desecuritisation takes the excluded as a point of departure in articulating new forms of community (ibid:20). Desecuritisation thus becomes a process

“...whereby belonging is mediated in a continuous political process that recognises those who have been subjected to securitising processes as part of a public sphere of existence” (ibid:26).

Huysmans (1995) has delineated various strategies of desecuritisation; the easiest being that of ignoring securitisation as a security issue stops being just that if it is no longer understood and acted upon as such. However, as Mouffe (1999b:3) emphasises, denying antagonisms does not make them disappear. Huysmans (1995:65-70) thus sketches out three strategies; the objectivist approach which will try to convince people that a problem “is not really a threat or a security issue”, the constructivist approach which means that one tries to understand how securitisation works in order to be in a better position to stop it and the deconstructivist approach which implies that one seeks to formulate the world in a way that weakens exclusionist security dramas by opening up what is taken for granted (ibid:68).

The objectivist strategy is based on a traditional objectivist – subjectivist conception of security where security has an objective content against which subjective threat perceptions will be either real or illusory (Roe 2004:285). As the objectivist strategy risks re-inscribing the dichotomous relationship between amity and enmity by turning security into a question of perception and misperception, Munster (2004:12) asserts that transcending a security issue cannot happen through framing the issue in terms of security. While the constructivist strategy

⁸⁸ While the CoS treats securitisation not as a normative question, but as an objective process and possibility, the philosophical underpinnings of desecuritisation are much fuzzier. Writings on desecuritisation are fraught with arguments seeing desecuritisation as desirable and emancipatory, as “a critical strategy” (Huysmans 1998a) and as an “ethical-political choice” (Aradau 2004). While critical security studies (CSS) open up for discussion on how things could and, most importantly, should be rather than how they are (Eriksson 1999), the agenda of the CoS is not to develop a security theory that can only tell how everything could or should be different, but to give an account of, in the words of Foucault, the history of the present; how and why actors operate the way they do, how they produce and reproduce social structures and patterns and how the outcome of this interaction is dependent on a range of intentional and unintentional discursive manoeuvres (Buzan et al. 1998:205). This does not imply that the baby is thrown out with the bathwater! As will become evident in the proceeding chapters, studying desecuritisation outside the framework of CSS does not by any means preclude a critical edge.

avoids reproducing the abovementioned Schmittian dichotomy, it still risks reproducing the security agenda when it describes how securitisation works⁸⁹. The deconstructivist strategy looks at how actors, by telling a story in a particular way, contribute to the production and reproduction of the social world (Huysmans 1995:67). A deconstructivist approach will try to make visible the Pandorean box as a social construct which can only exist by silencing differences, that is instead of unity and continuity a deconstructivist story stresses differences and discontinuities as the founding elements of existence (ibid).

Aradau (2004:402) claims that what is needed is a process of dis-identification, a rupture from the assigned identity and a partaking of a universal principle. By appealing to such a universal principle, Aradau (ibid:403) believes that the exclusionary trap of securitisation can be avoided. However, Aradau (ibid:408) deviates from M. Williams (2003), who equates desecuritisation with a-security. While a-security refers to a state of affairs deprived of any security dynamics, desecuritisation is a process which seeks to transform security issues into problems to be dealt with as normal politics⁹⁰.

While different strategies for desecuritisation have now been sketched out, it is time to turn to the area of transboundary water resource management where desecuritisation will involve the construction of less exclusionary ways of mediating the relationship between stakeholders in international river basins.

5.4.2 Desecuritising water resource management

When the abovementioned assertions are contextualised to the arena of transboundary water resource management, Turton (2003d:113) concurs with Wæver (1995) that desecuritisation is desirable. For Turton (2003c:91) desecuritisation is preferable, representing a healthy manifestation because it opens up the discourse and allows for a wider range of stakeholders

⁸⁹ This aspect is taken up by Eriksson (1999) in his critique of the CoS. Eriksson (ibid:316) claims that by adopting an analytical perspective to security crystallising in the sectoral approach, Buzan et al. are contributing to the expansion of the same language they defy. As such, “they might be seen as acting more as politicians than analysts, objectifying security, and spreading the negative connotations of threats and enemies to new issue areas”. Huysmans (1999, 2002) has termed this the “normative dilemma of speaking and writing security”. Social constructivist authors face a normative dilemma which is central to their research project, they are sensitive to how talk about security and the environment can contribute to its securitisation. Nonetheless, Buzan et al. (1998:71) stress that they are not saying that the environment *should* be securitised, but are merely observing that some actors attempt to do so.

⁹⁰ This draws attention to how a security issue can either be managed or it can be transformed. While the former cannot really be termed desecuritisation as it does not seek to return the issue to normal politics (Roe 2004:289), the latter option is clearly preferred by Aradau due to its emancipatory capacity. As identified by Roe (ibid:287), Aradau shows a preference for the transformative strategy as everyday life is also linked with the reproduction of hegemonic structures through unequal distribution of goods and services.

to become involved in the resolution of the core problem. Following this, it becomes important to delineate conditions which facilitate desecuritisation. The focus will be on how the two latter desecuritising strategies of Huysmans (1995) are mirrored in the concepts of benefit sharing and reciprocity, being dealt with under the panoply of hydropolitics.

5.4.3 Desecuritisation as benefit sharing

P. Williams (2003:3) claims that asymmetrical physical interdependence on water resources in international river basins forms a large barrier to constructing a sense of common fate. Accordingly, the shift from focusing on water sharing to focusing on benefit sharing in the discourse on international rivers is stressed by several academics⁹¹. Turton (2004:2) claims that while water sharing as an approach under conditions of endemic scarcity is a driver of conflict because it cuts the pie into pieces, benefit sharing can create a bigger pie that can be shared, laying the foundations for an equitable win-win situation among stakeholders.

When contextualised to the Okavango River Basin, Turton and Earle (2003:5) claim that a water sharing approach is likely to increase tensions since there is simply not enough water to satisfy the legitimate needs of each riparian state without causing significant harm to the downstream Delta⁹². However, benefit sharing can, in the words of Baillat (2004:8), allow a balancing of asymmetrical hydrological structures through the linkage of issues and problems. As identified by Zeitoun and Warner (2005:14-15) mutually beneficial shared water projects have proven an effective incentive for cooperation that can lead to more stable hydro relations. For instance, by playing a leadership role in the Orange River Basin, South Africa has tried to create positive sum configurations through utilitarian compliance mechanisms and incentives of benefit sharing (ibid:21)⁹³.

Phillips et al. (2006: xv) stress that there is a need for much more specificity with regards to benefit sharing mechanisms in international river basins. Moreover, while the

⁹¹ See for instance Sadoff and Grey (2002), Earle (2003), Turton (2004), Turton and Ashton (2004), Sadoff and Grey (2005) and Phillips et al. (2006). Wolf (2004) somewhat broadly operates with a “basket of benefits” to be derived from the river, then distributed and shared among riparian states. Negotiations over water have historically included specific benefit sharing mechanisms such as financial resources (Mekong, Indus), energy (Orange-Senqu), hydrological data (Jordan) as well as more diffuse aspects such as political linkages and regional integration.

⁹² Of course, this raises some interesting questions. Most of all, why water is (perceived as) scarce and who defines when and in what way water is scarce? As brilliantly emphasised by Swatuk (2002:520), if there is freshwater shortage, should not current allocations be the subject of interrogation?

⁹³ As I have used an earlier draft of the paper later to appear in *Water Policy*, Vol. 8, No. 5, Jeroen Warner (Email communication, 23 November 2006) stresses that “downstreamers on the Orange may harbour quite different feelings about South African ‘positive hegemony’”. This ambivalence will, however, be sufficiently explored in the empirical analysis.

concept is still in its initial stage in the academic field, some parties, mainly basin hegemony, are already seeking to impose their will on co-riparians through the guise of equitable benefit sharing⁹⁴.

Sadoff and Grey (2002) have provided a simple, yet viable framework for analysing benefit sharing initiatives in international rivers⁹⁵. They distinguish between four kinds of cooperative benefits that to various degrees are available in river basins; environmental, economic, political and catalytic: Cooperation can yield better management of ecosystems, providing environmental *benefits to the river*. Cooperation, improved management and efficiency can also yield economic *benefits from the river* such as water, food, energy and income. Moreover, cooperation might also *reduce costs because of the river* as long term tensions, disputes and conflicts between riparian actors will generate costs if not prevented or resolved at an early stage. More indirect and less apparent benefits might come from the rivers being catalytic agents paving the way for increased interaction and perhaps even integration among states, thus generating *benefits beyond the river*.

The first category has to do with the ecological integrity of the river basin. A healthy river can improve the availability and quality of resources from the river and pave the way for benefits of the second category such as food production, hydropower and better sanitation (Sadoff and Grey 2002:393). However, an important aspect to take into account is that cooperation might not be endorsed by all parties if the distribution of benefits from the river is perceived as unequal or skewed (Sadoff and Grey 2005:423). Negotiating redistribution and compensation might be imperative in this regard if those who initially do not see the benefits are to “buy into” the process. Without entering further into the debate, trade offs will also often have to be made between conservation and development, but certainly such trade offs do not only apply to policy making processes in international river basins.

The third category elaborates on the fact that cooperation is cheaper than conflict and costs can be saved by endorsing the former. Tensions in international river basin can, if prolonged, spill over to other intra and interstate arenas where possible outcomes might be the

⁹⁴ What then is the academic status of the concept? Is it as one Namibian policy maker states, “yet another buzzword that in the end does not make sense in practice”? While the underlying philosophy has been actively promoted by the World Bank, the concept of benefit sharing has yet to gain resonance beyond the catch phrase level. Moreover, as with sustainable development, most actors having endorsed the concept have used it more as an idealistic appeal for what should be done rather than entering into discussions on the real world applicability of benefit sharing as such (Phillips et al. 2006:29).

⁹⁵ This study does not aim at developing or, for that case, promoting any sophisticated techniques for benefit sharing. As should be obvious by now, the study does not provide a policy oriented, “best practices” approach to water management, but attempts to sketch out how different actors argue and seeks to assess the wider implications of their arguments.

disruption of trade, infrastructure and labour markets. A dysfunctional consequence might be the stimulation of nationalistic tendencies where the adoption of policies focusing on self sufficiency will dominate over bilateral and multilateral integration initiatives (Sadoff and Grey 2002:398). Water issues might be securitised and in extreme cases linked to military responses.

The last category implies that cooperation in the area of international rivers can have positive effects on and result in processes that enables cross border cooperation not necessarily directly related to the river. For instance, cooperation between countries in the Mekong River Basin has improved the political stability in the region and fertilised a number of cross border initiatives⁹⁶.

Ultimately, benefit sharing is possible if riparian states believe and perceive the value of cooperation to be higher than the costs associated with such. As benefit sharing can increase the value of such cooperation, it emerges as an important variable when it comes to the desecuritisation of water management. As the four variables mentioned above will vary greatly in each context, it becomes important to delineate the scenarios at play in the Okavango and Orange River Basins. That is, however, the task of the empirical chapter.

5.5 Desecuritisation and Hydropolitical (Security) Complex

“The multiplicity of transboundary river basins in the SADC is a key water resource management issue. This relates to the interdependence of sovereign states on shared watercourses, the need for regional cooperation...balancing national interest and shared interest” (Piet Heyns (2002), Namibian delegate to the ORASECOM and the OKACOM)

The demise of colonialism, the Cold War and Apartheid unleashed a new set of political dynamics, shaping new patterns of conflict and cooperation within and between states in Southern Africa (Turton 2005b:15). To account for these patterns in the area of transboundary water management, Turton (2001b, 2003a, 2003c, 2005a, 2005b) and Ashton and Turton (2005) have developed a constructive model which examines the hydropolitical dimension of international relations in the SADC region. The rationale is based on the fact that a large number of rivers in the region establish permanent linkages between different states within the Southern African Security Complex as originally defined by Buzan (1991). Before considering how reciprocity and interdependence, operationalised as the existence of a Southern African Hydropolitical Complex (SAHC), can facilitate desecuritisation of water

⁹⁶ The Mekong River Basin is shared by Cambodia, China, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. Even during periods of tense conflictual relationships between the riparian states, water has been a unifying factor diminishing tensions (Sadoff and Grey 2002).

management, a brief background will be given to security complex theory (Buzan 1991, Buzan et al. 1998) and hydro-political security complex theory (Schulz 1995).

5.5.1 Classical Security Complex Theory

Resembling Buzan (1991:187), security is a relational phenomenon implying that one cannot understand the national security of any given state without understanding the international pattern of security interdependence in which it is embedded. In this regard, security complexes are about the relative intensity of interstate security relations that lead to distinctive regional patterns shaped by the distribution of power, security perceptions and historical relations of amity and enmity, in other words relationships ranging from friendship and expectations of protection as well as those interactions shaped by suspicion and fear⁹⁷ (ibid:190).

Classical Security Complex Theory (CSCT) focuses primarily on the state as the key referent object of security and on the political and military sectors as relevant for obtaining state security, and the task of identifying a security complex involves making judgments about the relative strength of security interdependence among different countries (ibid:192). A security complex is a durable and dynamic set of security relations, but changes can be both numerous and continuous. Buzan (ibid:216) identifies four structural options for assessing the impact of change on a security complex; *maintenance of status quo* means that the essential structure of a complex remains largely intact. This does not necessarily imply that change has not taken place, but only that changes which have occurred have either reinforced or not undermined the existing patterns. *Internal transformation* takes place when the essential structure of the complex changes within the context of its external boundaries. Such changes can occur when there is a shift in distribution of power or an alteration of threat perceptions among actors, like for instance after the fall of Apartheid in 1994. *External transformation* may occur when the essential structure of a complex is changed, either by expansion or by contraction of its outer boundary. The addition or removal of states in a complex will have the possibility of creating such change, like the liberation of former colonies in Southern Africa. A crucial variable for understanding the dynamics of security complexes is the impact of

⁹⁷ Importantly, Buzan et al. (1998:14) stress that in one sense security complexes are theoretical constructs, but within the theory they have ontological status as they reflect observable patterns of political interaction which cannot merely be constructed at random. As such, one cannot simply use the term to describe any group of states; a security complex refers to distinctive territorial patterns of security interdependence between states which marks off members of a complex from other neighbouring states. In the context of international river basins, Turton and Ashton (2004:52) claim that stakeholders often prefer to downplay reciprocity and interdependence due to strategic concerns. This will also be paid attention to in the next chapter.

overlay. Overlay is a condition where the direct existence of outside powers in a region is strong enough to suppress the normal operation of security dynamics among local states (Buzan et al. 1998:12). Examples of overlay in Africa may be the presence, until quite recently, of colonial powers as well as superpower rivalry during the Cold War and, specifically for Southern Africa; the destabilising regional effects of the Apartheid State (Gutteridge 1983).

5.5.2 Homogenous and Heterogeneous Security Complexes

When facing the implications of applying a sectoral approach to security, Buzan et al. (1998:201) move beyond CSCT, opening the analysis of regional configurations to encompass other referent objects than the state and other sectors than merely the military and political. The reconceptualised definition of a security complex thus becomes

“a set of units whose processes of securitization, desecuritization, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another”(ibid:201).

Buzan et al. (ibid:16) maintain that the reconceptualisation can be pursued in two ways; the homogenous security complex approach presumes that security interaction is focused around specific sectors where similar types of units operate while the heterogeneous security complex approach predicates that regional dynamics can integrate different types of actors across sectors. By focusing on the regional dynamics of heterogeneous security complexes, two interesting levels of analysis arise; the region itself and the dynamics of interaction among the various units (Buzan 1991:188). Furthermore, heterogeneous complexes have the advantage that it is possible to analyse both the horizontal and the vertical dynamics of security interdependence among units, referring to entities other than states and considering sectors other than the military⁹⁸.

⁹⁸ Is this an unrealistic undertaking? Does this apparent seamless web of interdependence draw towards a holistic perspective too complicated to allow for analysis? The main difficulty is identified by Buzan (1991:187), stating that “if the security of each is related to the security of all, then nothing can be fully understood without understanding everything”. Buzan et al. (1998:5) take the problem into account by analytically establishing a hierarchy of analytic levels within the international system where each level contains durable, significant and self contained feature of security dynamics, thus making it possible to sketch out locations where both outcomes and sources of explanation can be identified.

5.5.3 Hydropolitical Security Complexes

Schulz (1995) has developed a conceptual framework which introduces the idea of hydropolitical security complexes. Primarily basing his analysis on the Middle East, Schulz (ibid:93) claims that water is a concern for national security in most Middle Eastern states. For instance, the Tigris and Euphrates River Basins, among them also the Jordan and the Nile are all shared by states that are heavily dependent on freshwater. In countries like Iraq, Syria and Turkey, the shortage of water has made hydro politics a major issue on the political agenda. At the same time, water issues link these states' national security (ibid:92). The concept of hydropolitical security complex facilitates increased understanding of how water scarcity affects the security situation for states sharing an international river, how water issues are linked with other issues forming overarching regional complexes, but also how hydropolitical complexes can be usefully applied to single rivers shared by two or more water stressed countries creating sub complexes. Consequently, Schulz (1995:97) defines a hydropolitical security complex as consisting of

“those states that are geographically part owners and technically users of the rivers and further, as a consequence, consider the rivers as a major national security issue”.

While political distrust and perceptions of insecurity are among the impediments to solving water management problems, water scarcity does not in itself create tense situations among states as conflict is often exacerbated by complex, sometimes historical, webs of rivalling interests (ibid:96). P. Williams (2003:9) concurs with Schulz and stresses that a hydropolitical security complex cannot be based solely on the premise that joint dependency on river resources imply that the national security of all riparian states is linked since it is not water use per se, but cumulative issue linkages such as exploitation of discontented upstream groups which make securities interdependent. Finally, Allan (2002:246) identifies three separate hydropolitical security complexes in the Middle East – North Africa (MENA) region; the Nile Basin Complex, the Jordan Basin Complex and the Tigris-Euphrates Complex⁹⁹.

One of the theoretical values of using river basins as spatial referents for studying processes of securitisation and desecuritisation is that the state may be seen as one of many actors and interests in the basin. The interesting question is whether and to what extent such

⁹⁹ In addition, Aguilar-Barajas and Mathis (2003) have applied the concept of hydropolitical security complex to water management in the bi-national Lower Rio Grande/Río Bravo Basin on the border between Mexico and the United States.

interaction will be shaped by patterns of amity or enmity. How this plays out in the Southern African context is the subject of the next section.

5.5.4 The Southern African Hydropolitical Complex

As theorised by Turton (2003d), the heavy reliance on water by some of Southern Africa’s most economically developed states; South Africa, Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe makes hydropolitics a crucial issue in an evolving, overarching Southern African regional security complex. It thus becomes decisive to develop an understanding of how states and rivers in the region are linked with one another. To account for the interconnectedness between nine of the regions’ 15 international rivers and the corresponding riparian states, Turton (2001b, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c) has developed model of a Southern African hydropolitical complex (SAHC) consisting of four key elements: pivotal states, pivotal basins, impacted states and impacted basins:

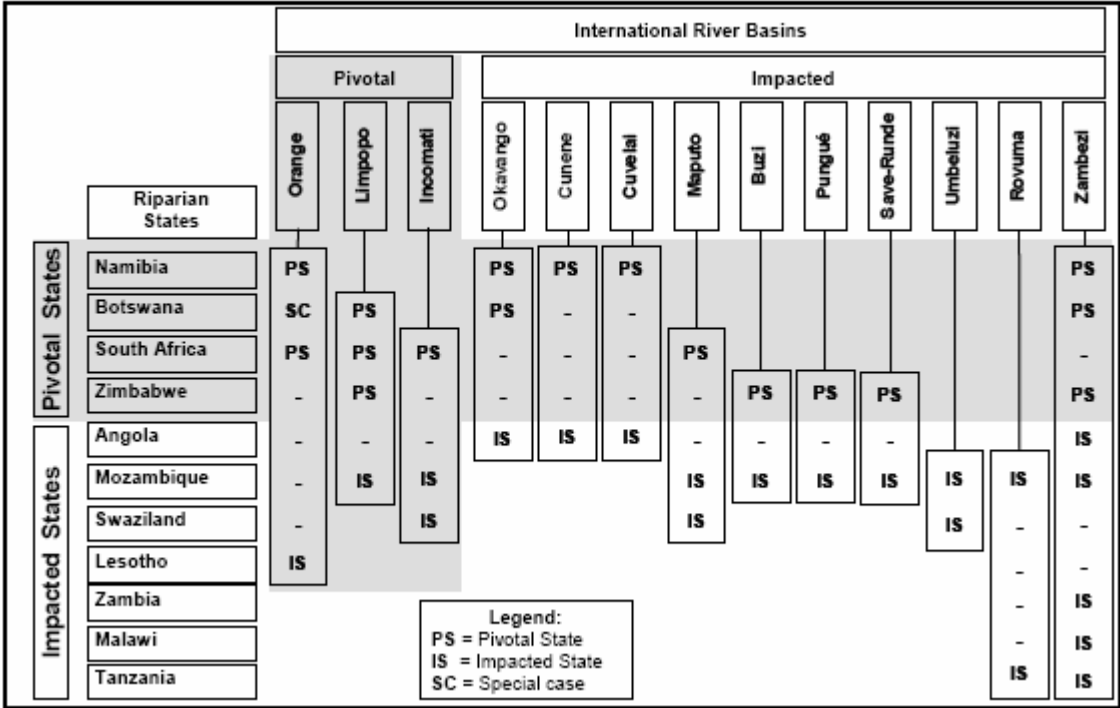


Figure 3: “The Southern African Hydropolitical Complex”. The illustration shows the relationship and reciprocity between international river basins and riparian states in Southern Africa. The “special case” of Botswana in the Orange River Basin has already been dealt with (Source: Turton 2005a).

- **Pivotal States** - are states with a high level of economic development which are highly dependent on shared river basins for strategic sources of water supply. These are *Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa* (Turton and Ashton 2004)

- **Pivotal Basins** - are river basins that face closure or are already closed, implying that they have no utilizable outflow of water or no more water that can be allocated to productive activities. These basins are strategically important to any one (or all) of the four pivotal states due to the magnitude of economic activity that they support (Ashton and Turton 2005:8). This applies to the *Orange*, the Limpopo and the Incomati rivers.
- **Impacted States** – have a critical need for access to water from a basin shared with a pivotal state, but are by virtue of asymmetrical power relations within the respective basin unable to negotiate what they consider to be an equitable share of water. These states are *Angola*, Mozambique, Swaziland, *Lesotho*, Zambia, Malawi and Tanzania.
- **Impacted Basins** - are basins that have at least one of the pivotal states as co-riparians, reducing the freedom of choice for impacted states to develop their own water resources in the basin. Turton (2005a:15) identifies six such basins in the SAHC; the Cunene, Maputo, Pungué, Save, Zambezi and *Okavango*.

Some of the important defining characteristics of the SAHC are that not all the basins are equal in strategic importance for the various riparian states, hence the difference between pivotal basins and impacted basins. Some of the SADC states are also more dependent on a specific river basin for future developments than other states and this dependency might or might not coincide with the economic and military capacity of the state(s) under consideration. Thus, the second configuration makes a distinction between pivotal states and impacted states. Accordingly, Ashton and Turton (2005:8) define the SAHC as being

“...a set of political interactions nested within the Southern African Regional Security Complex, across various levels and between different units, centred on patterns of amity and enmity in the broadest sense, but amplified specifically with respect to water resource management in transboundary river basins”.

Of significant importance is the assertion made by Turton and Ashton (2004:56) that a distinctive feature of the SAHC which distinguishes it from the Euphrates and Tigris Hydropolitical Security Complex introduced by Schulz (1995:96) is that the level of securitisation in the water sector is far less in the former, leading to a conceptual manoeuvre which removes the word security from the chosen name¹⁰⁰.

¹⁰⁰ This conceptualisation is followed up in Ashton and Turton (2005) and Turton (2005a, 2005b, 2005c) who see the SAHC as a desecuritisation tool. However, the conceptualisation is inconsistent as Turton (2001a:10) refers to a Southern African Hydropolitical Security Complex. Even though Turton and Ashton (2004:56) refer

5.5.5 The Southern African Hydropolitical Complex and Desecuritisation

As described by Schulz (1995:121) the states in a hydropolitical security complex can best solve their water problems through cooperation. Moreover, joint dependency on a shared river basin decreases the possibilities for unilaterally implementing national development schemes. While Turton et al. (2003a:12) view planned linkages or transfers of water between international river basins in the SADC region as examples of the interconnected nature of transboundary rivers central to the concept of hydropolitical complex, Turton (2005b:27) notes that in the SAHC certain riparian states have cross-cutting interests. Furthermore, Turton (2005c:22) tentatively concludes that there is an inverse relationship between conflict potential and scale; as geographical scale increases so does alternative options for dispute resolution.

The high degree of dependence of the four pivotal states on shared rivers that arise beyond their borders makes these countries particularly vulnerable to the actions of other states and requires them to cooperate with neighbouring countries to solve their assurance of supply problems (Ashton and Turton 2005:10). The SAHC emerges as a viable mechanism for desecuritisation as it links riparian states in a series of interstate arrangements at a higher geographic scale than the separate river basin. This is important as far as water scarcity appears at the level of the river basin, known as the watershed, while solutions are found at a level other than the basin, in what is called the problemshed (Earle 2003:229). How the dynamics between reciprocity and desecuritisation plays out in the context of the Orange and Okavango River Basins is further pursued in the following section.

5.5.6 The Orange and Okavango River Basin – Subcomplexes in the SAHC

Drawing upon Schulz (1995) and Allan (2002), the dynamics of interstate relations related to water resource management is now further contextualised by conceptualising the Orange and

to “subsequent research” in order to justify the new conceptualisation, their decision rests on a dubious understanding of hydropolitical security complex theory. Their criteria for definition implies an incommensurable dichotomy, “either there is security or there is not”, neglecting the fact that a security complex is simultaneously shaped by patterns of **both** amity and enmity, of securitisation as well as desecuritisation. Turton and Ashton tend to assume that a security complex is shaped solely by patterns of enmity, which it is surely not. This fuzziness might follow from the neorealist approach taken by Turton and Ashton (the SAHC does only consist of states) seeing securitisation as a technique solely in the hands of the state and state elites, hence mechanically linking securitisation to national security. Thus, securitisation does only gain momentum if it goes through the state (for similar conceptualisations see Julien and Greco 2006 and Phillips et al. 2006). Now, if the degree of desecuritisation is greater in the Southern African than in the Middle East water sector, as claimed by Turton and Ashton (2004), why don’t the authors open the SAHC to other role players than states?

the Okavango River Basins as hydropolitical subcomplexes nested within the larger SAHC. When it comes to issues pertaining to water resource management in the Orange and Okavango River Basins in particular, purely inward looking, national strategies that do not gaze beyond the basins for solutions offer few dependable prospects for desecuritisation (Ashton 2002:240). By correlating interdependence with desecuritisation, a nuanced picture of coalition formation emerges; describing how all the riparian states can have their strategic water supply interests met by choosing the path of hydropolitical cooperation (Turton 2005b:27).

5.5.6.1 The Orange River- A Pivotal Basin in the SAHC

Due to the many inter basin transfers and dams in the Orange River Basin, the river system has a high level of complexity, technically as well as economically. Upstream Lesotho is an impacted state which is, by one definition, not water scarce (GEF 2005:8). However, the country faces considerable financial and infrastructural constraints. Lesotho is also heavily dependent on South Africa and further phases of the LHWP will generate more royalties to the country. All the three other downstream riparians are pivotal states, making the basin unique in the context of the SAHC. Turton and Ashton (2004:57) emphasise that the Orange River is extremely important for South Africa; arguable being the strategically most important river it has unfettered access to. There is no dam on the Orange River along the common border between South Africa and Namibia, hence Namibia is currently dependent on South Africa for river regulation and the release of water from South African dams. A future dam on the common border will only be possible through joint cooperation between the two countries (Heyns 2004:7). South Africa on the other hand is dependent on goodwill from Botswana if the country is to realise its future plans involving a communal pipeline from the Zambezi River Basin which has to go through either Botswana or Zimbabwe on its way to Pretoria (Turton 2005a:34).

The diverse national interests of Botswana with regards to the Orange River are manifest in a diplomatic bargaining position where the country may be able to negotiate coalition formations with some riparian states in return for concessions in other basins of higher strategic importance, such as the Limpopo and the Okavango (Turton 2001a:16). One possible scenario could be Botswana and Namibia cooperating in the ORASECOM in return for concessions in the OKACOM. Another future possibility, technically possible but probably too expensive could be to transfer water from the Lesotho Highlands to Gaborone,

also giving Botswana a strategic interest in the Orange (Heyns 2004:6). Whilst strategic interests are of paramount concern in the Orange River Basin, these can become significant facilitators towards a more cooperative hydropolitical milieu in the basin, bringing about desecuritisation inasmuch as all the riparians emerge with their key strategic interests having been met (Turton 2005b:27).

5.5.6.2 The Okavango River – An Impacted Basin in the SAHC

There is one impacted state and two pivotal states in the Okavango River Basin. Angola as an impacted state is situated upstream and is water abundant (Turton 2005a:26). The situation shows some similar characteristics with that in Lesotho in so far as both of the downstream states in the Okavango Basin are pivotal states that rely heavily on water and resources from the river. Turton and Ashton (2004:58) note that Namibia and Botswana as the two pivotal states have a high resource need, but are impeded because of upstream riparian Angola which appears to be reluctant to enter into negotiations which will possibly limit its own hydropolitical manoeuvrability. Botswana derives benefits from the river through its tourism industry in the Okavango Delta and is thus heavily dependent on sufficient quality and quantity of water (Wormuth and Buffle 2002). Angola and Namibia are tied to one another via riparian status in the Cunene River Basin, which is probably the single most important source of water for Namibia (Turton 2005a:23). Angola straddles five international watersheds; the Congo, Cunene, Cuvelai, Okavango and Zambezi. While Namibia and Botswana are co-riparians on the Zambezi, they both share portions of the basin that are unfavourable for water resources development, hence they can find it beneficial to cooperate with Angola in order to gain sufficient access to the Zambezi. This collaboration can also ferment, positively affecting the relationship between the three riparians in the Okavango River Basin and in the OKACOM.

While the purpose of this chapter has been to put forward a new, comprehensive framework for security analysis and delineate how the framework can serve as a platform for analysing processes of securitisation and desecuritisation in the Orange and Okavango River Basins, it is now time for a theoretical summary before embarking on the empirical analysis.

5.6 Summary – Security: A New Framework for Analysis

As Wæver (1995:56) emphasises, security and insecurity do not constitute a binary opposition since the former marks a situation with a perceived security problem and measures taken in

response, while the latter describes a situation with a perceived security problem and no response. Therefore, both conditions are shaped by the grammar of security. The category of a-security (according to Wæver (2000) a situation that has been desecuritized or never securitized) transcends the dichotomy, making the question about being secure or not irrelevant¹⁰¹. As summarised by Buzan et al. (1998:23-24), any public issue can be located on a spectrum ranging from non-politicized (meaning the state doesn't deal with it and it is not an issue of public debate), through politicized (meaning the issue is part of public policy) to securitized (implying that the issue is presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure)¹⁰².

For instance, an ecosystem can be securitized by the successful performance of a speech act correlating that system with the politics of security, and desecuritized by another speech act which unsubscribes to such a connection. Drawing upon Neumann (1998:17) the spectrum can be further expanded by including the category of violisation (where violence takes place on a certain scale). By also adding the corresponding processes of depoliticization, desecuritisation and de-violisation, the following continuum can be sketched out:

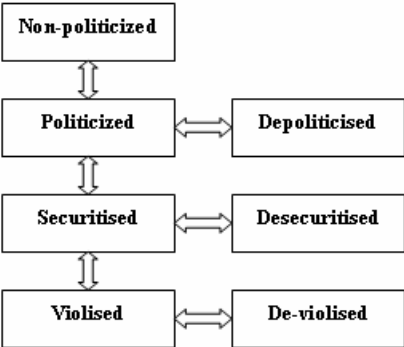


Figure 4: “Security – A new framework for analysis”. The illustration shows the Copenhagen continuum where the nature of an issue can range from non-politicized to securitized. Additionally, Neumann’s concept of violisation has been included together with the respective antonyms.

¹⁰¹ Note that Aradau disagrees with Wæver (2000) and M. Williams (2003) who equate a-security with desecuritisation, “thus taking away the potential for transformation that the concept was meant to have (Aradau 2004:389). Roe (2004:287) identifies Aradau as being sceptical to a conceptualisation of desecuritisation as a “return to normal politics” as everyday life is also necessarily linked with the reproduction of hegemonic structures. This aspect gains further resonance considering that Phillips et al. (2006:20) operationalise desecuritisation as the movement of issues from the reign of the securocrats (herein securitisation) to the *normal* domain of technocrats (herein desecuritisation). However, as will become evident in the empirical section, the enactment of desecuritisation through technocracy does not come without consequences. A **central** task in the consecutive chapters will be to identify how desecuritisation, when acted out under the panoply of technocracy, can also imply depoliticization (see Ferguson 1990, Wester and Warner 2002).

¹⁰² Wæver (2000:7) argues that although in one sense securitisation is an intensification of politicization, it is also opposed to it. Politicization means to make an issue appear to be open and a matter of choice. By contrast, securitisation means to present an issue as urgent and existential, stressing the importance of the issue not being exposed to the haggling of normal politics, but being dealt decisively with by top leaders. Certainly, the way in which securitisation plays out in practice will depend on a range of conditions; the issue(s) being securitized, the constellation of securitising actors and so on.

While Turton and Ashton (2004:56) claim that within the SADC region water has a long history of politicization, having played a prominent role during periods of colonialism, superpower overlay and Apartheid, the way in which the dynamics of securitisation and desecuritisation has played out in the Orange and Okavango River Basins after 1994 is still open to empirical investigation.

6 The Making and Unmaking of the Politics of Exceptionality

An essential facet of the discourse theoretical agenda of Laclau and Mouffe is the tension between continuity and change (Harper 1988). This aspect gains significance considering Turton (2005b:15) who maintains that while three features of overlay, herein colonialism, the Cold War and Apartheid effectively suppressed the emergence of regional political dynamics within the SADC, the democratic transition in South Africa in 1994 represented a watershed, set to shape new patterns of amity and enmity and resultantly impact on the hydropolitical dynamics within international river basins in the region. Buzan and Wæver (2003:223) have simultaneously identified an increasing engagement and significance of non-state actors in political affairs in Sub-Saharan Africa. Attention is now drawn to how this dynamics is enacted on the arena of water resource management in the context of the Orange and Okavango River Basins.

6.1 Securitisation and the Making of the Politics of Exceptionality

“The political enemy need not be morally evil or aesthetically ugly; he need not appear as an economic competitor, and it may even be advantageous to engage with him in business transactions. But he is, nevertheless, the other, the stranger; and it is sufficient for his nature that he is, in a specially intense way, existentially something different and alien, so that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible” (Carl Schmitt, The Concept of the Political, 1996:27 [1932])

Buzan and Wæver (2003:220) postulate that most security problems in Africa can be traced back to the failure of the postcolonial state. Therefore, most analyses of African security policies have also tended place the military and political sectors of security at the centre stage of attention. While Vale (2003:170) argues that non-governmental organisations have become powerful secondary sites of securitisation in the SADC, he concurrently asserts that nearly a decade after the end of Apartheid the discourse on the region’s state system “continues to rely on the narrow binaries of sovereignty which offer inclusion and exclusion as the only explanations of, and solutions to, Southern Africa’s complex life world”. With regards to securitisation the interesting question to be asked is not so much related to who can secure as it is to the effects of doing such. What are the implications of framing access to and control over water resources in the grammar of security? Is securitisation merely a linguistic and symbolic act, or does it have practical and political implications? How does security affect inter-state relations? Does security imply stability and the maintenance of the status quo or

does it signify change and transformation? And, is more security always a bad thing? These are some of the questions to be addressed in the following section.

6.1.1 Securitisation in the Okavango River Basin

“Beautiful Okavango, the true gift from God. How kind and pitiful you are. You support us but we give you nothing, yes we get water from your stomach. Once you are poisoned, no one will stay alive, no animals will survive, no bird will sing, all living things around you will vanish like a bullet” (Kehulakae 2002)

The cases chosen for empirical analysis are the Rundu-Grootfontein pipeline, the heated discussion centring on the construction of the Popa Falls hydropower station and the dispute over the ownership of the Kasikili-Sedudu Island. The golden thread throughout the deliberation will be reflected in the emphasis put on questions of Schmittian enemy-constructions and sectoral dynamics. To facilitate a smooth reading of the selected texts, those rhetorical structures implying a correlation between security and water will be attempted highlighted.

6.1.1.1 The Rundu-Grootfontein Pipeline and the ENWC

The central areas of Namibia suffered from an unexpected period of drought between 1994 and 1997. According to Heyns (2001:11) “there was a real *threat* that the internal water resources would not be able to meet water demand and without heavy rain the following season these areas would face a water *crisis*. For the Namibian Government *the only way* to deal with the *crisis* was to accelerate the completion of the proposed Rundu-Grootfontein pipeline component of the Eastern National Water Carrier (ENWC). The Namibian Minister informed the other basin states about the *emergency* implementation, but when the proposed project entered the regional and international arena it gave rise to *alarmist* reactions” (Heyns 2000:7). Some of the most commonly occurring perceptions are further elaborated on below.

A letter from Okavango Delta communities to the governments of Namibia, Botswana and Angola and to the OKACOM dated 1997 and signed by 2500 people, strongly advises the Namibian Government to shelve its pipeline plans (Ramsar Forum 1997): “Why do the Namibians want to take our only source of water...We depend on the Delta for almost everything. Without it, we would have to *move or die*...therefore; we request that no water be extracted from the Okavango River unless there is no other alternative”.

A report from the Global Environment Facility (GEF 2002) does also deal with the pipeline issues, maintaining that “the *threats* to the Okavango River Basin are real and imminent as evidenced by the unilateral initiative by Namibia to abstract water from the

system under *emergency* drought conditions...it is expected that the opportunity to *protect* this relatively pristine system will not appear again” (ibid:29).

Similarly, an article in the South African Mail and Guardian (6 December 1996) maintains that “...increasingly Namibia’s water planners are seeing the Okavango as the *only option*...desperation has raised *fears* that Namibia will *rush through* its feasibility study...without taking into account the full impact of the scheme on Botswana’s unique Okavango Delta”.

Heyns (2001:11) notes that although adequate rain fell in the 1997-98 seasons, delaying the project for a number of years, threat perceptions within and between the riparian states were fuelled by uncertainty¹⁰³. This is confirmed by Rothert (1999:10) who asks what will happen if Namibia receives no significant rainfall or runoff in the coming rainy season, and the country is faced with a situation similar.

6.1.1.1.1 Analysis – Merging text and context

The proposed completion of the pipeline displays how attempts to improve security of supply by one actor (the Namibian Government) merely fuel perceptions of insecurity for another actor (e.g. Delta People), thus creating some sort of security dilemma (Jervis 1982, Turton 2003d:76). The security dilemma is intensified due to scientific uncertainty which can be ascribed to the factuality that there is an absence of reliable basin-wide in the Okavango River Basin (Turton et al. 2002:1). Recurrent droughts in Namibia, or threats to human civilization from the natural environment (Buzan et al. 1998:80), sparked a hydraulic mission where the Namibian Government saw, as a last resort, to accelerate the completion of the pipeline in order to sustain current levels of economic activity in the country¹⁰⁴.

With regards to securitisation in the economic sector, it is often difficult to separate attempts to securitise economic issues from the more general political contest between liberal and nationalist approaches to economic policy (Buzan et al. 1998:99). But clearly, perceptions in the Namibian Government have been shaped by a mercantilist discourse where economic security is perceived as being part of a wider priority given to state or national security, which

¹⁰³ Ashton (2000:82) argues that many public perceptions in relation to the water abstraction were shaped by personal opinions, relatively widespread rejection of technical findings and a refusal to believe “the facts”. Hence, if a decision would have been taken to go on with the project, the public would most likely have attributed to it any and all adverse situations or circumstances that would have occurred, whether these could be linked to the water scheme or not.

¹⁰⁴ A visual account of this “security dilemma” is provided by the pictures in appendix 3.

can be linked to Vision 2030 and the Green Scheme, both central components of former President Sam Nujoma's mission to make Namibia food self sufficient (Nujoma 2005)¹⁰⁵.

Counter-securitisation by actors in Botswana and in the region as such is shaped by economic as well as environmental and societal concerns. Tourism is one of the most significant contributors to GDP in Botswana and proposals that can jeopardize the environmental integrity of the Okavango Delta are seen with great suspicion. The claim that the Delta communities will have to move; hence, "will not longer be what they are" if the project goes ahead clearly underpins attempts of societal securitisation. As put forward by Buzan et al. (1998:119), societal insecurity arises when communities define a development or potentiality as a threat to their survival as a community. Securitising moves appear to have come, not so much from government offices in Gaborone, but more from actors that depend on the Delta for "survival". For the people putting forward such claims the pipeline becomes a matter of life or death, as exemplified in the emotional letter from the Okavango Delta communities.

Following Huysmans (1998b), security then becomes a practice of postponing death by countering or moderating pressures from the "enemy"¹⁰⁶. The political construction of the pipeline as a threat represents an externalization of fear, which moderates the level of uncertainty¹⁰⁷. The fear of death in security narratives is thus a double fear; it is a fear of the enemy, but at the same time it is also a fear of uncertainty and the unknown¹⁰⁸. The driving force of knowledge construction is a fear of death as the irresolute. Significantly, death thus becomes the condition upon which knowledge is founded (ibid:237).

Huysmans (2002:44) identifies security language has having an integrative capacity that conserves political integration through the identification of existential threats. This is

¹⁰⁵ The Green Scheme was initiated in 2004 and consists of agricultural projects and irrigation schemes along the Orange, Okavango and Zambezi Rivers. The Namibian government has prioritised food production in order to achieve food self sufficiency in the country and the Green Scheme is seen as a means to reach this goal. Vision 2030 is the overarching roadmap outliving a comprehensive framework for socio economic development in Namibia (Nujoma 2005).

¹⁰⁶ Death might sound overly dramatic, but it is in fact the survival of the referent object; be it sovereignty, identity or the environment that is perceived to be at stake following the agitation of the securitising actors.

¹⁰⁷ The externalization of the fear of death constitutes a desire for knowledge and creates a space in which agencies, such as the state or non-governmental organisations can appear, mediate and represent our relation to death (Huysmans 1998b:237).

¹⁰⁸ The double fear has been usefully conceptualized by Huysmans (1998b) as the difference between the idea of the enemy and the idea of the stranger. Strangers are both inside and outside a community, hence they articulate an ambivalence that challenges the very possibility of determinability itself. The externalization of the fear of death guarantees the principle of determinability or at least an acceptable level of certainty. For Carl Schmitt (1985:5[1934] a unit is political and thus sovereign only in so far as it manages to decide on the exception. Undeterminability challenges this sovereignty, and, subsequently, also the Political in Schmitt's terminology (See for instance M. Williams 2003).

achieved through the inscription of boundaries that serve to demarcate an inside from an outside or we from the others. The community of friends comes into existence precisely as a reaction to the representation of an enemy. Herein, the logic of equivalence implies a simplification of political space as reduced to such a distinction between friend and enemy (Laclau and Mouffe 1994:130). The way in which opposition to the pipeline sutures a wide range of stakeholders into a common alliance is brilliantly encapsulated by Swatuk (2001:28), claiming that state makers in Botswana who have long been at odds with NGOs over issues of the environment presently find themselves literally on the same side of the river, lobbying against the proposed pipeline. This discourse coalition is held together by a range of discursive affinities (Hajer 1995); herein the economic idea that pollution protection is cost efficient, the anthropological idea that the identity of indigenous groups should be conserved and the environmental argument that nature should be respected. The discursive power of this coalition stems from its ability to construct environmental protection as morally appealing while simultaneously constructing the pipeline as dirt and pollution (see Campbell 1998:81).

A paradox in security policy surfaces in so far as the cultural identity of the Delta communities relies on the threatening force of the pipeline, nevertheless security policies aim at eliminating this threat, but if this elimination was successful the political identity of the Delta communities would be damaged and perhaps in an extreme case even collapse¹⁰⁹. Thus, perceived threats to identity often rely on the construction of “the other”, often thereby actually contributing to the construction or reproduction of “we” (Buzan et al. 1998:120).

While identity compromises many dimensions and cannot be reduced to any single source (Campbell 1998:74), it is exactly under conditions of attempted securitisation that their negotiability and flexibility is challenged. It is the process of securitisation, which may succeed or fail that marks the difference between a politicised identity on the one side and a securitised identity on the other, as the process underpinning the latter particularly involves the capacity to decide on the limits of the given identity (Schmitt 1985[1934], M. Williams 2003:519).

6.1.1.2 The Popa Falls Hydropower Station

The proposal by the Namibian power corporation NamPower to build a 20 Mega Watt (MW) hydropower station approximately 50km upstream of the Okavango Delta near Divundu came

¹⁰⁹ This resonates Carl Schmitt’s (1996:49-51[1932] understanding of the political: “For as long as people exist in the political sphere, this people must, even if only in the most extreme case...determine by itself the distinction of friend and enemy...Were this distinction to vanish then political life would vanish altogether.

up on the national political agenda in 2003 in order to meet growing demands for power in the country and ensure reliability of supply to the populous northern regions (EcoPlan 2003). The Namibian plans triggered doom-laden and widespread perceptions in Botswana as well as regionally and internationally that the project would lead to the destruction of the Okavango Delta.

The January 2003 newsletter of the World Conservation Union in Botswana (IUCN Botswana 2003b) refers to the Namibian project claiming that “the Okavango Delta, home to over 100,000 people and the mainstay of Botswana’s burgeoning tourist industry, is faced with a *serious new threat*. The Delta, in its current diverse and dynamic form, will be *irreversibly changed* for the worse if plans to build a dam at Popa Falls on the Okavango River in Namibia go ahead... it would alter two natural processes that together would have a *devastating* impact on the Okavango...its potentially far-reaching consequences demand that it be regarded as *the most serious threat the Okavango has faced this century*”.

Concerns about negative effects of the project are also raised by International Rivers Network (IRN) in an article in the Windhoek based newspaper the Namibian (16 December 2002) claiming that “the location of the proposed dam could not be much worse...perhaps *the most alarming threat* posed by the Popa Falls dam is the likely impacts on the downstream Okavango Delta. Nearly 100 000 people live in and around the delta, and the spectacular mosaic of wetlands, pools and dry land forests supports world-renowned wildlife populations and a US\$350 million per year tourism industry”.

An article in the Namibian (10 January 2003) claims that the impacts of the scheme could be felt for several centuries. A team of geologists monitoring the proposed project also express grave concern about the development stating that “sediment is vital to the functioning of the ecosystem... it forces constant change, resulting in continuous ecosystem renewal... responsible for the wide diversity of habitats found in the Okavango Delta...Removal of the bedload sediment will *threaten* this dynamism. Rough calculations based on two of the suggested weir designs indicate that sandy sediment will be cut off for a period of between 130 and 200 years”.

Similarly, an article in the Namibian (20 June 2003) articulates the Okavango as “one of Africa’s most important wildlife areas and an increasingly popular tourist destination...but *threatened* by plans for a hydro-electric generating plant in another country entirely...Roger Hawker, of Birdlife Botswana, is specially concerned for the wattled crane...populations are

in decline because of dam developments, and as flagship species it sounds a *warning* about the whole ecosystem”¹¹⁰.

The intentions of the Namibian Government also attracted the attention of Ngami Times, a local newspaper in Maun, Botswana. The newspaper addressed the Popa Falls case in a number of articles, reports and comments during 2003¹¹¹. Number 154 (Ngami Times, 2003a/2003b) features headings like “Stop Rape of Delta” and “Delta Danger – Namibia Wants to Dam the Okavango”: “...our government, despite protestations over the years that it would never *harm* the Delta, now appears to be quite happy with the development, even if it does affect the livelihoods of 100 000 people and lead to the *eventual destruction* of one of the world’s great tourist destinations. Number 157 (ibid:2003c) follows up with a front page title which reads “Death of Delta if Project goes ahead”: “Damming the Okavango River... in order to generate power, will mean the *death of the delta* and turn Maun into a ghost town...Maun residents...*fear* that construction works will result in erosion, leading to the river failing to contain the desert”.

Number 159 (ibid:2003f) engages the editor, referring to the Okavango as “...our *lifeline*...[being] like our parent. Our lives are based on it and damming it will be tantamount to *killing* everybody living and relying on it”. In the same number Birdlife Botswana refers to how most people present at a public meeting believed that it was “...sheer madness to even contemplate a hydro-electric scheme that could *seriously damage* the delta...how many times we have to keep *fighting* these *battles* as there seem to be *constant threats* from ill-thought schemes both within and outside the country”. Furthermore, number 171 (ibid:2003j) deals with the current water situation in Maun and the front page carries the title “Worst water crisis hits everyone – NOT A DROP!”: “Maun is reeling from the *worst water crisis in its history*...disgruntled industrialists...are threatening to contact the Office of the President”. The next number (ibid:2003k) appears with the title “Water Wars”: “Neighbours are *fighting* neighbours and friends are begging, without success, from friends for precious water in some wards of Maun. “*Water wars*” between neighbours have broken out as some jealously protect their meagre resources”¹¹².

¹¹⁰ Birdlife Botswana is an NGO “striving to conserve birds, their habitats and global biodiversity, working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources” (<http://www.birdlifebotswana.org.bw>).

¹¹¹ The editions referred to include number 154, 157, 159, 163, 169, 171, 172, 183 and 193.

¹¹² Perhaps paradoxically, in the same edition the head of Seronga village suggests that a permanent solution to the problems would be to revisit plans to draw water from the Okavango River that passes on the edge of the village. Threat perceptions in Maun relating to the water crisis have clearly been fuelled by knowledge about Namibia’s upstream intentions on the Okavango, but as Ngami Times (2003g) eloquently puts it, “a case has always two sides...large scale irrigation is being carried out adjacent to the upper reaches of the river inside Botswana...if we are arguing against the take off of water by Namibia, then why are we irrigating, using water

An article in number 183 (ibid:2003m) maintains that “Africa’s most significant inland oasis is under *threat* both from natural and human causes. Joseph Mbaiwa at the University of Botswana’s Harry Oppenheimer Okavango Research Centre in Maun said low rainfall and a proposed hydroelectric scheme will eventually spell the *death* of the delta...one of the *major threats* to the delta is the proposed hydroelectric power station at Popa Falls in Namibia”.

The war metaphor is again present in number 193 (ibid:2003r), putting forward allegations that the low Okavango water level causes “War of Words”: “There’s been no violence, but “*water wars*” have broken out over water levels in the Okavango...Angola says it is not its fault that the volumes are so low and many in Botswana believe that the building of a hydroelectric scheme by Namibia will make things even worse in the years ahead...it has resulted in a *war* of words between Angolans and Batswana, who are accusing the former of constructing dams and using the water for irrigation”.

6.1.1.2.1 Analysis – Merging text and context

The planned construction of the Popa Falls hydropower station fuelled threat perceptions similar to those elaborated on in the ENWC case. Once again, the hydraulic mission of Namibia materialised in a security of supply discourse where the hydropower station had to be built in order to meet growing demands for power in the country. Securitisation in Botswana has primarily come from environmental NGOs, the tourism industry and the media. The commonality among most of these actors in Botswana is that the hydropower station threatens the Okavango Delta; however, while some attempt to securitise through the environmental sector, others do so through the economic and societal sectors. Fear among these actors is also intensified as scientific communities in both countries are uncertain about the potentially negative effects of the weir. In the words of the Manager of EcoPlan in Windhoek who conducted the Popa Falls feasibility study; “the potential in hydropower generation was far too low compared with the environmental risks involved...the issue definitely represents a threat, but the magnitude and seriousness of this threat is relative and a lot of the media in Botswana have not looked at the facts” (Christian 2005).

from the same source and blithely turning a blind eye to it?”. Botswana has also previously considered diverting water from the Delta, but the plan, known as the Southern Okavango Integrated Development Plan, was shelved in 1992 due to heavy lobbying and critique by the World Conservation Union (Swatuk 2001:28).

Securitisation through the environmental sector is often swayed by an emotional argument about what is at stake and in the case of the Okavango this rhetoric is not only confined to environmental NGOs. The founding arguments bolstering this potentially hegemonic policy discourse are based on strong words, myths and symbols constructing the Okavango Delta as “unique”, “pristine”, “one of nature’s wonders” and “the Jewel of the Kalahari”. The Acting Chief of the Department of Environmental Affairs in Gaborone is indicative of this discourse when he speaks of the Okavango as “the nature of Botswana and the source of life for humans and wildlife” (Monna 2005). This discourse coalition (Hajer 1995) merges government officials from the Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism (MEWT) in Gaborone with water professionals, tourism operators and journalists. Similarly, as applicable to the ENWC case, the logic of equivalence works so that actors in Botswana have been able to downscale internal differences by portraying themselves as “victims” opposed to the Namibian “perpetrator”. This depicts how the coalition attempts to create unity among different interests by relating them to a common project and by establishing a frontier to define the forces to be opposed (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000:221).

The coalition articulates empty signifiers such as “harm”, “danger”, “rape” and “death” which acquire a new meaning when expressed in the context of the proposed hydropower scheme. Accusations by securitising actors in Maun that Namibia or Angola are blocking channels upstream in the river, thus impeding the free flow of water into the Delta¹¹³, add up to an argument that goes as follows: at first sight, it might seem that nature threatens society and this is securitised, however, where the means to handle natural threats are thought to exist, the logic of security works less against nature than against the failure of human systems responsible, these systems being located within as well as outside Botswana. When cumulative threat perceptions blur the distinction between natural and human induced hazards (Buzan et al. 1998:81) in this way, the logic of environmental security can indeed be seen as threats with enemies. Likewise, in such cases the claim by Prins (1993) that environmental threats are threats without enemies gets a shallower resonance¹¹⁴.

Actors in Botswana lobbying against the scheme frequently draw upon the powerful metaphor of war. Huysmans (1998c:581) maintains that the political significance of war does

¹¹³ For such perceptions, see for instance Maphanyane (2001). A report under the panoply of the Okavango Delta Management Plan (ODMP) has collected the perceptions and concerns of local communities in the Okavango Delta. Frequently recurring concerns among local stakeholders is the issue of channel blockages, demonstrated through statements such as “we have not heard any solutions to our problems”, “water does not reach our area”, “rivers are drying up”... “what causes the blockage of river channels?” (Bendson 2005:10-14).

¹¹⁴ Of course, Namibia is not a natural enemy but becomes an enemy because of the way the Botswana discourse coalition constructs history, social deprivation and so forth.

not reside in its actualisation but in its radicalisation of the exception into a real limit; war pushes the significance of the enemy to its most extreme realisation where the everyday political routine collapses and the normal rules cannot tell us what to do or where to go. This uneasiness is for Schmitt (1996[1932]) not a negative force, but rather a creative political force which calls into being the moment of political creation. Campbell (1998:81) notes that danger can be experienced positively as a way of constructing boundaries, demarcating space by privileging certain accounts of history instead of others. The Okavango Delta thus appears at the centre stage of identity formation for people in Botswana, constructing an “imagined security community” (Conca 2002), telling people who they are and what they’re not.

Finally, most securitising moves by actors opposed to the Namibian scheme are channelled through the mass media. Buonfino (2004:33) suggests that the mass media often has its most powerful effect when it reinforces and channels pre-existing attitudes and perceptions. Contextualized, the mass media in Maun; herein the Ngami Times transmits a message that resonates with the perceived insecurity of safari operators and local people living on the banks of the Delta, those people that would be the most affected by the scheme. The overarching discourse seems to get much of its potency from what Foster (1965:296) labels the “image of limited good”. Just as peasants in Foster’s case, the behavioural pattern of local people in Maun is structured in such a way as to suggest that all desired things in life such as land, wealth, power and security exist in finite quantity and are always in short supply. By agitating individual discourses on “the limited good” together with other supporting storylines such as environmental and societal threats, the mass media can manufacture a more coherent and unified hegemonic story supposedly based on the collective will; the protection of the Okavango Delta.

6.1.1.3 The Kasikili-Sedudu Dispute

The issue around the ownership of the Sedudu-Kasikili Island in the Chobe River Basin and the subsequent demarcation of the international border between Namibia and Botswana led to a volatile debate between the two countries¹¹⁵. How can the dispute be analysed in the framework of securitisation? What security sector linkages can be identified and do these take form as a friend versus enemy dichotomy? The case evidently attracted the attention of the media in the two countries.

¹¹⁵ For a general introduction to the case I refer to chapter four.

The Namibian (16 February 1999) refers to the case as “Court battle for island underway”: “Namibia and Botswana took their *battle* over the ownership of a tiny river island to the International Court of Justice...hoping to resolve a argument that has dragged on for eight years...Permanent Secretary at the Namibian Justice Ministry told the court that BDF had occupied the island since 1991...[and] *shot and killed* Namibians fishing in the river...Botswana’s statements that there is peace on the border trivialises the actions of the BDF¹¹⁶”. The Permanent Secretary’s proceeding in the court is also referred to in the Namibian on 18 February: “Botswana’s deployment of BDF *soldiers* to *occupy* Namibia’s Kasikili Island in 1991 constituted aggression and a unilateral use of *force* to change the island’s status quo”.

The bilateral relationship between the countries got even frostier when Botswana granted asylum to 15 Namibians that were part of a secession group in the Caprivi, branded “terrorists” by the Namibian Minister of Foreign Affairs (The Namibian, 15 February 1999)¹¹⁷. The announcement coincided with a hearing at the International Court of Justice on the Kasikili-Sedudu dispute and Namibian President Sam Nujoma went on a state visit to Botswana less than a month later where the granting of asylum to the secession group and the Kasikili-Sedudu case were issues high on the agenda (ibid).

The tense political climate worried some actors in Namibia (The Namibian, 19 February 1999): “The Caprivi issue, along with the dispute over Kasikili seems to be bringing out the worst in us...it is evident that we are set upon an anti-Botswana agenda ...radio chat shows, characterising Botswana as an “*evil empire*”. However, actors in Botswana also became increasingly uncomfortable with the situation as depicted in a story in Botswana newspaper Daily News (12 October 1999). The story refers to another article in Botswana newspaper the Guardian, appearing under the headline “Botswana/Namibia under *war cloud*”. The article referred to a confidential report which indicated that all the ingredients of *war*

¹¹⁶ This was disputed by Botswana who claimed that the BDF was present on the island in order to combat poaching: “Namibia’s allegations of harassment and killing of Caprivians are not supported by the facts on the ground. It is a telling point to note that these Namibians from the Caprivi have chosen to seek refuge in Botswana the country which, the Court has been told, has adopted a shoot-to-kill policy of Namibians” (The Namibian, 23 February 1999).

¹¹⁷ The Namibian Minister stated that Botswana’s decision to grant asylum to Mishake Muyongo and 14 other Namibians was “shocking and unacceptable...Muyongo and his fellow secessionists were preparing to achieve their criminal objectives through the use of force...The purpose of his evil plans is to seek assistance to launch military attacks against and destabilise Namibia once he is resettled outside Botswana, with the assistance of Botswana Government”. It is therefore noteworthy that on the 26 February, Muyongo and the secessionists were deemed undesirable in Botswana despite the fact that they had been granted asylum in the country (The Namibian, 26 February 1999).

were in place. Press Secretary to the Botswana President later described the story as “highly speculative and as having misinterpreted the real facts” (ibid).

The final ICJ ruling on the 13 December 1999 was 11-4 in favour of Botswana and the decision was made after the Court had taken into consideration the depth, width, flow and navigability of the two channels and it was concluded that the northern channel was the main channel, thus making Sedudu Botswana territory (ICJ 1999)¹¹⁸. While President Festus Mogae of Botswana described the outcome as “yet another episode of a peaceful resolution of a dispute by African states (Daily News, 22 December 1999)”, President Sam Nujoma of Namibia was more modest saying that “as a law-abiding nation...I wish to ensure the international community that Namibia will abide by the verdict of the ICJ and respect it fully” (The Namibian, 16 December 1999).

Some Caprivians, however, feared Botswana’s future intentions: “Namibians in the Caprivi region...expressed shock at the...decision that Kasikili-Sedudu belongs to Botswana...they *feared* the judgement would prompt Botswana to claim Situngu¹¹⁹ and other islands dotting the Linyanti-Chobe waterway...villagers living in the vicinity of the island could be shot by members of the BDF as a consequence of the ruling (The Namibian, 13 December 1999).

6.1.1.3.1 Analysis – Merging text and context

The dispute first of all displays that colonial overlay is still prevalent in the region as it was the arbitrary demarcation of the colonial border between Namibia and Botswana that led the two countries to the ICJ. This is the “fuzzy border scenario” of international rivers where countries are not necessarily “fighting” over the direct control of the resource, but rather over the political boundary (Gleditsch et al. 2004:1). Remarkably, both the causes and the effects of the dispute prompted securitising speech acts. On the one hand, both states securitised, mainly through the political and/or military sectors by arguing that the dispute was a threat to state sovereignty (Ashton 2000) and by deploying, in the case of Botswana, military personnel on the island (Swatuk 2001). On the other hand, fear and perceptions of regional instability were shaped by geographic proximity (Buzan et al. 1998:59). Hence, the necessity of solving the dispute received utmost attention and importance by both states, since a failure

¹¹⁸ The judgement, with a brief background of the case together with the opinions expressed during the proceedings is available at <http://www.icj-cij.org/icjwww/idocket/ibona/ibonaframe.htm>

¹¹⁹ A dispute over the ownership of the Situngu Island in the Linyanti River was later settled by a joint technical commission in 2003, possibly because the parties wanted to avoid another court case (Turton and Earle 2004).

to solve the issue would in the extreme lead to a prolonged military conflict. In this way, the effect of the dispute was securitised. Indeed, securitisation was evident as a failure by the two countries in dealing with the dispute as normal politics since exceptional measures “beyond the rules of normal politics” were applied as the case was taken to the ICJ (Buzan et al. 1998:29, Allan 2002:244). Previous attempts by Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe to mediate in the conflict in 1992 had then failed and SADC was unable to resolve the dispute, despite specific provisions for dispute resolution in the SADC Protocol on Shared Watercourse Systems (Ngoma 2005:155). Ashton (2000:85) argues that the ICJ ruling was very welcome after a relatively long period of protracted debate and intermittent threats of military action, including formal military occupation of the island by the Botswana Defence Force (BDF)¹²⁰.

Buzan et al. (1998:144) identify political security as being about threats to the legitimacy or recognition either of political units or of the essential patterns (structures, processes or institutions) among them. Such threats can either be made to the internal legitimacy of the state or to the external recognition of the state as an independent unit or actor in the international community. Against this backdrop, P. Williams (2003:5) emphasises that securitising actors frequently resort to issue linkages in order to rally support for their strategies. This point is brought to further attention by Elhance (2000:209), claiming that domestic strife can spill over to and be exploited by antagonistic riparian states to serve their own hydropolitical interests. How does this play out in the context of the island dispute?

At first sight, the denial of external territorial recognition appears as the focal point of contention as the two countries put forward conflicting claims of sovereignty to the island, and hence also disputed the international border in the Chobe River. Existential threats to the state as a referent object of security entail sovereignty, which is exactly what defines the state as a state. Sovereignty is a principle that claims the ultimate right of self governance; it is threatened if it becomes partial in any sense (Buzan et al. 1998:150). Therefore, uncertainty about the external territorial sovereignty of Namibia sparked securitising speech acts from people living in the Caprivi Strip as they feared that Botswana would go on claiming ownership to other islands in the Chobe basin as well (The Namibian, 13 December 1999).

Conspiracy theories flourished in Namibia as the Botswana Government on the same day as a hearing in the ICJ granted asylum for the 15 secessionists in the Caprivi. Namibian

¹²⁰ Swatuk (2001:35) claims that policy makers in Botswana openly acknowledged their fears of regional insecurity. The former commander of the BDF, Ian Khama, said “Botswana acquired no army, no infrastructure, nothing at independence. Now, 18 years on...we are developing a force that will not see our security compromised”.

state elites, via the media, attempted to construct the secessionists as a threat to the internal legitimacy of the Namibian state, and furthermore, accusing the Botswana Government for taking advantage of the intricate situation. When confronted with this “double fear” (Huysmans 1998b) from the internal “stranger” as the secessionists on the one side and the external “enemy” materialised as Botswana on the other side, the political security of Namibia was not only perceived to be threatened, but the duality of threats as stemming from both outside and inside challenged the Namibian Government in so far as the distinction between friend and enemy became blurred¹²¹. As maintained by Huysmans (ibid:241), different from enemies, strangers can juxtapose the ordering function of security as they express the possibility of chaos from within the existing order.

While most securitising efforts go through the political and military sectors, some subordinate attempts of securitisation go through the environmental sector. Tøset et al. (2000:973) argue that while territory can be a symbol of self determination it can also be a proxy for substantial resources found on the territory. Swatuk (2001:36) argues that the Sedudu is of great value to the local ecology of the Chobe National Park, being a natural stopping point for the migration of large mammals, thus mirroring parts of the environmental diversity found in the Okavango Delta. During the hearings at the ICJ, the Botswana delegation made the point that “the future of wildlife species, whose *survival* depends on active anti-poaching patrols of the Botswana authorities, would be *endangered* if the island was judged to be Namibian” (The Namibian, 23 February 1999). Through this discursive manoeuvre, the Botswana Government could further strengthen its rights to the island, substantiating the claim that it would have a number of detriment implications if the island was to be judged to Namibia.

Even so, the dominant discursive configurations prevalent in the dispute are fraught with signifiers bonded to the traditional concept, and, sectors of security. The empty signifiers of “military action”, “court battle”, “soldiers”, “aggression”, “intelligence” and, ultimately “war”, are articulated, mainly by the media and by government officials, in such a way as to reinforce and strengthen the friend-enemy dichotomy. The crucial question to be asked is; what interests are served by this? Vale (2003:166) is unambiguous stating that securitisation reinforces the African state, lopsided colonial borders and traditional security institutions, the latter set about reinventing themselves and seeking new relevance by identifying new threats

¹²¹ When this double fear crystallised and “the stranger” (the secessionists) became associated with “the enemy” (Botswana), the reaction of the Namibian Minister of Foreign Affairs Theo Ben Gurirab was one of “surprise and indeed shock” (see the Namibian, 15 February 1999).

in post-Apartheid Southern Africa. The construction of an external threat becomes a powerful discursive tool for security institutions as it can direct attention away from domestic affairs and towards political projects that, at the end of the day, end of underpinning political arguments and strategies which tend to serve some groups more than others (Wæver 1995, Warner 2000). Consequently, the behaviour of both states in mobilising troops, deterring to the ICJ in order to reach a settlement and Namibia's decision to respect the court's finding, served to reinforce popular perceptions of sovereignty and to maintain the state (Swatuk 2001:35).

As summarised by Ashton (2000:86), the primary dispute was one of territorial sovereignty, rather than one of access to water or water-dependent resources, however, the literally fluid nature of water and possible future changes in the configuration of the main channel can function as driving forces for securitisation if not properly and jointly addressed by both countries.

6.1.2 Securitisation in the Orange River Basin

“Exogenous water, supplied by means of IBT, is therefore the lifeblood of the South African economy, which would simply collapse if this source of supply were no longer secured” (Turton 2005c:13)

The two cases chosen to display securitisation in the Orange River Basin include the Orange River border dispute between Namibia and South Africa and Operation Boleas which took place in Lesotho in 1998. As for the empirical analysis this section will also highlight those discursive signifiers which indicate that a security discourse is at play. While the overarching discussion will be guided by questions relating to Schmittian enemy-construction and sectoral dynamics, other pertinent matters will also be touched upon. These are again related to the tension between continuity and change, set against the backdrop of the Total National Strategy which pre-1994 securitised literally all aspects of South African life deemed strategically important to the survival of the Apartheid State (Turton 2003d). As 1994 is seen as representing a significant breakage with this past (Buzan and Wæver 2003), the related issue is whether continued securitisation falls prey of reinstalling the military and intelligence in far reaching roles, thus coupling security with stability and the maintenance of the status quo instead of with transformation and change.

6.1.2.1 The Orange River Border Dispute

A range of different interests are at stake in the disagreement between Namibia and South Africa over the exact location of the international border on the Lower Orange River. The

Namibian Government on the one side is extremely concerned about its lack of access to a major dam on the river that can store seasonal runoff and meet future demand (Heyns 2004:7)¹²². The labour intensive grape and date industries are also heavily dependent on a continuous supply of water (Meissner 2001). Furthermore, as the international border is not established the implication is that the 200 nautical mile sea boundary is also not defined. Whether the border is in the middle of the river or on the northern bank will directly impact on Namibian access to offshore marine resources and its portion of the Kudu Gas Field (Philander 2005). The South African Government on the other side does not abolish its rights to the whole of the Orange River arguing that if the border would be changed, it would create a dangerous precedence for land claims from other neighbouring countries (Meissner 2001) and politically strong South African actors with private property rights related to mining and farming on the northern bank of the Orange would possibly take the government to court if it agreed to change the border (Biggs 2005).

Namibian discontent with the status quo is taken up in an article in the newspaper Business Day (28 June 2001); “the Namibian Cabinet has disclosed plans to build a dam on the Orange River to *secure* a reliable and permanent water supply, yet there is a *fear* that SA’s reluctance to agree on the border will scupper plans for the dam”. The disputed border has also resulted in “*clashes* over mineral rights in the river and grazing rights on its islands, as well as a “free-for-all” by fishing vessels” (The Namibian, 21 November 2000).

The political climate between the two countries cooled when the Foreign Affairs spokesperson of the South African Government declared that “Namibia should, as an OAU member, respect the current border” and that “President Mbeki personally informed President Nujoma that the Orange River border was on the northern high-water mark” (ibid). This again triggered some diplomatic turmoil as the statement came as an “utter surprise” to Namibian Minister of Foreign Affairs who said that he was “absolutely taken aback” and that it was against the letter and spirit of the Namibian Constitution (ibid). Some months later it was claimed by the Namibian Minister that the statement was made by a junior official and did not represent the official stance of the South African Government (The Namibian, 5 January 2001).

The former Minister of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development, Helmut Angola refers to the dispute in an article in the Allgemeine Zeitung entitled “Namibia *fears* for its

¹²² Analogous to Turton and Earle (2004b:13), the fact that Namibia cannot go ahead with any infrastructural developments, such as dams on the river is significantly limiting the country’s development opportunities.

user rights”¹²³: “We must *secure* user rights to the rivers that we share with other countries and through this establish a legal guarantee for the utilization of these water resources...compared with Angola, Botswana and South Africa, Namibia is disadvantaged as a downstream state. The consequence is that, either we *enforce* our user rights towards these countries, or we run the *risk* that we get the water that our neighbours have left behind and polluted. The Government can strengthen its position through conventions and through these ensure that Namibia’s use of these rivers is not limited. Among these efforts is the most important one to put forward our claims towards the South African Government”.

A member of the Namibian Parliament coming from the South West Africa Peoples Organisation of Namibia (SWAPO) also comments on the current location of the border as being “a serious point of concern to Namibians living near the Orange River as they depend very much on the river for *survival*” (The Namibian, 28 November 2000).

The Namibian power supply situation is the topic in an article in Namibia Economist (7 March 2003). According to John Langford at NamPower, Namibia is looking for new sources of power by 2007: “Projects to increase power supply include the proposed dam at Popa Falls on the Kavango River. The only other projects that could maybe make it to the 2007 deadline are the Orange River Mini Hydro Stations and the Kudu Gas Project. Both, however, have constraints that would make them difficult to develop...NamPower is planning to develop a 72MW power station on the Orange River. However, the project is held up by the border dispute between Namibia and South Africa...the border dispute needs to be resolved ...we also need to *secure* the hydropower rights in the Lower Orange River for Namibia’s use only”.

6.1.2.1.1 Analysis – Merging text with context

The contentious border disagreement shows many similarities with the Kasikili-Sedudu dispute between Botswana and Namibia as both centres on the issue of contested territorial sovereignty and competing judicial claims. Nevertheless, Turton (2001b:16) claims that the Orange dispute has not impacted on the cooperative climate in the Orange Senqu River Commission. In fact, actors in both countries indicate that the issue is not of a major

¹²³ Own translation of Allgemeine Zeitung, Windhoek 7 June 2001: “Wasserstreit droht: Namibia fürchtet um seine Nutzungsrechte”.

concern¹²⁴ since Namibia still has access to the river (Heyns 2005, Pyke 2005) or it is regarded as a “political issue” beyond the scope of ORASECOM (Tekateka 2005)¹²⁵. However, with regards to the legal aspects, “Namibia still pursues the matter and disputes the current location of the border, which should be the thalweg” (Philander 2005).

The concept of border thought of in cognitive as well as physical terms enjoys a pivotal position within securitisation discourse (Ceyhan and Tsoukala 2002). For Carl Schmitt, the political is incomprehensible outside the friend versus enemy nexus and the boundary between the two. The abovementioned security speech acts tend to construct the Orange border controversy as a political and economic threat to, mainly, the state. Noteworthy is the fact that the securitising actors are almost without exception state elites, government institutions and official spokespersons from Namibia. Concerning the various aspects of political security, South Africa refuses to compromise on its national territory. However, as revealed above this does not materialise in any overt attempts of securitisation. Neither do any Namibian actors explicitly argue so as to indicate extensive political securitisation. But, as will become evident securitisation is not always an easily observable phenomenon.

Anthony Turton maintains that the dispute makes an interesting case study in sovereignty as land issues in the region are often hotly contested and function as drivers of securitisation¹²⁶. Furthermore, economic securitisation is prevalent through, on the one side, a security of supply discourse supported by the Namibian Government and NamPower, wanting to secure a reliable and permanent water supply to sustain current and future levels of irrigation and hydropower generation in the country, and, on the other side, fear in the South African Government that powerful miners and farmers would go to court if the government agreed to adjust the border. Therefore, while the Orange dispute resembles the fuzzy border scenario (Gleditsch et al. 2004) identified in the Sedudu case, the former adds another dimension of resource capture and control to the securitisation equation.

What is yet more remarkable is the prevalence and, arguably, hegemony of a technocratic discourse which puts forward the argument, more or less, that it does not matter where the border is located, “since Namibia already has access to the river”. Interestingly, this

¹²⁴ The border dispute does not rank among the potential hydro-political hotspots in the SADC region as identified by Heyns (2001:22). Other interventions that could give rise to conflict are for instance further phases of the LHWP, completion of the ENWC and the proposed Popa Falls hydropower scheme on the Okavango.

¹²⁵ The border issue is not debated within ORASECOM as it is regarded as being beyond the scope of the Commission which deals mainly with resource management, assessing the status of the river and the river mouth. In Namibia the border disagreement is dealt with by the Ministry of Lands and Resettlement (Philander 2005).

¹²⁶ Email communication, Dr. Anthony R. Turton, CSIR Pretoria, 29 March 2005.

claim is made by actors not only in Pretoria, but also in Windhoek. Initially and perhaps not that surprising, Peter Pyke who is chief engineer in the South African DWAF maintains that “from a technical side in the South African Government there are no problems with the issue of the border...it is not an issue since developments in Namibia have not been affected” (Pyke 2005). Likewise, P. J. Liebenberg, chief engineer in the Namibian Department of Agriculture asserts that “since water comes to the border it is not really a (technical) issue for Namibia” (Liebenberg 2005). Finally, Stephan de Wet, being deputy director of Water Environment in the Namibian MAWF retains that “the border issue is not really a dispute; the technical people have always seen the border as being the thalweg. Technically, it is not an issue, that’s probably why politicians make it one” (de Wet 2005). Laclau and Mouffe (1994:125) argue that antagonisms occur due to a blockage of identity where “the presence of the ‘Other’ prevents me from being totally myself”. How do antagonisms materialise in the border dispute and what interests are served through their articulation? The unavoidable question becomes; is politics the problem and technocracy the solution to the dispute¹²⁷?

When taking the larger picture into account where the Orange River is constructed as being a closed basin in technical terms (Turton 2003d) it becomes evident how certain aspects of the river can be securitised and at the same time depoliticised (Wester and Warner 2000). Norval (2000:221) notes that where unambiguous relations of equivalence are present, antagonisms tend evoke a friend-enemy nexus. Conversely, where the logic of difference prevails, the multiplicity of subject positions will make it more difficult to construct such an enemy. Actually, the latter is a discursive strategy which will attempt to displace and weaken antagonisms by co-opting previously disarticulated elements into an expanding order, thus depoliticizing any contentious political issues (Howarth 2000a:107).

Two different discourses with their designated subject positions are at work in the border issue. While the securitisation discourse is in some cases overt in Namibia it is far more covert in South Africa. The border dispute is essentially constructed as a threat to referent objects in Namibia. Does this imply, as previously touched upon, that the South African Government refrains from securitising the border? Captivatingly, the latter does not overtly have to do so if one considers the depoliticizing effects of the technocratic discourse being prevalent in the Department of Water Affairs in both Pretoria and Windhoek.

¹²⁷ In this context it is again interesting to note that while Phillips et al. (2006:20) sustain that the securitisation of water resource management implies that water issues are taken out of the normal domain of technical management and placed in the hands of security officials, the desecuritisation of water resource management implies the opposite, that water issues are taken out of the security domain and subsequently dealt with by technocrats.

Warner (2000:261) distinguishes between two positions with regards to security; on the one side those who see security as a venture for political action and radical change and on the other side those who equal security with stability and the maintenance of status quo. When securitisation and depoliticization go hand in hand in the Orange River Basin, the status quo, that is the location of the international border on the northern bank, is tacitly maintained through the hegemony of those subject positions declaring that “the border issue is not really an issue”¹²⁸. Ultimately, in this way the South African Government can maintain its favourable hydropolitical position in the basin without having to turn to any drastic securitising speech acts, without openly having to declare that South African interests are threatened. The effect is apparent; the persistent supremacy of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry in Pretoria when it comes to defining how water is to be distributed, shared and used between Namibia and South Africa¹²⁹. Essentially, this reveals how hegemonic actors through the logic of difference can co-opt peripheral forces into their political project (Warner 2000). Now, let us dwell on some of the other implications of the border dispute, especially those related to the effects of the technocratic discourse operating in the basin.

Rutherford (1999:56) remarks that a notable feature of technocracy is the role of the state and industrial interests in the manufacture, negotiation and authoritative certification of knowledge, that is, the central role these institutions play in the normative construction of ecological knowledge. What are then the implications of the Orange River Basin being technically “closed”? Molle (2003:1) maintains that a technical closure of a river basin is a situation where most water resources are committed or depleted with very few remaining untapped and people find their productive activities constrained by water shortages. This fuels crisis that, in turn, leads to technical innovations, adjustments and interventions”. Then, one should be prompted to ask, what kind of interventions and by whom? Pyke (2005) states that “the technical closure in the Orange Basin is not immanent, but certainly we’ve reached the limits of the development potential. Increased demand requires increased investments in infrastructure, which again will cater for increased demand”. This tautological speech act and the logic behind emerges as a very powerful strategy in attempting to move the water

¹²⁸ I thus disagree with Buzan et al. (1998:177) who assert that since the security argument is a powerful instrument it is against its nature to be hidden.

¹²⁹ The claim that South Africa abstracts more water from the river than what they are entitled to is put forward by several actors in Namibia, but perhaps most noticeably underscored by Biggs (2005) who declares that “Namibia could get a better deal for utilizing the Orange, but since South Africa was our colonial master we have not gotten the best deal up till now”.

discourse towards, not only a technical, but also a political closure (Wester and Warner 2002); sufficiently closed so that most other storylines (Hajer 1995) are silenced, but still open for “neutral” interventions by engineers, hydrologists and other scientific experts. Security has extensive implications and the decisive task of discourse analysis is to deconstruct these.

Consistent with Litfin (1997), by committing themselves to abstract principles of environmental protection, states open themselves to all kinds of internal and external pressure to adhere to these principles. If territory provides part of the container for state sovereignty and political security, transnational environmental problems can pose a threat to existing patterns of state authority and legitimacy by remoulding that container, or in other words, open up the Pandora’s Box. As Elhance (2000:209) puts it; water related policies can bring into existence new interest groups and constituencies that can seriously undermine or threaten the power and privileges of the established stakeholders. A surfeit of choice and controversy can be frustrating for policy makers and in some cases it becomes attractive for these groupings to present something as fixed, or in the case of the Orange River, give the impression that “there is nothing left”, “all the water has been allocated” or, perhaps more sophisticatedly, state that the environmental integrity of the river “won’t be recovered since it is already far too altered and destroyed” (Liebenberg 2005)¹³⁰. Christian (2005) captures the essence of this discourse by arguing that “the Orange is so heavily utilized that perceptions like ‘the river has to be sacrificed for development’ are common and widespread”. Accordingly, the technical discourse will tell environmental NGOs that “there is nothing for you here but pollution, death and decay”. Now it becomes easier to understand why some actors; it is important to note not all because where there is hegemony there is usually room for counter hegemony, construct the Orange River as a closed basin from which there is nothing more to gain and, further render the border demarcation a “non-issue” or a “political issue over which we have no control”.

But what constitutes the discursive move towards closure? To better understand this process it is enlightening to draw upon Callon and Latour (1981:277) and their concept of black boxing: “An actor grows with the number of relations he or she can put, as we say, in black boxes. A black box contains that which no longer needs to be reconsidered, those things whose contents have become a matter of indifference. The more elements one can place in black boxes – modes of thought, habits, forces and objects – the broader the construction one can raise”. Just as a discourse can never fully close or hegemonise a social field (Howarth and

¹³⁰ The point was made in connection with the declaration of the Orange estuary as a Ramsar Site.

Stavrakakis 2000:8), so are black boxes always leaky and open for contestation (Callon and Latour 1981:285). But social actors can do *as if* the boxes were closed and dark and tacitly attempt to 'fill' the lack of closure.

Sandilands (1999:80) maintains that the concept of 'limits' in the environmental discourse is repeatedly presented as if they come from nature itself, although the 'limits' that appear in ecology have far more to do with specific human and social ideas of the real that tend to provide answers that are entirely consistent with the perpetuation of highly exploitative social relations. Made visible, 'limits', whether they refer to water scarcity or state sovereignty, *can* be negotiated. This highlights the often neglected fact that 'territory' and 'sovereignty' are socially constructed concepts and outcomes of deliberation and negotiation where some voices have become authoritative at the cost of others. Territory, therefore, should not be understood simply as an empty and undifferentiated container of state sovereignty, but as an intersubjectively constructed and potentially negotiable construct (Litfin 1997:186). Crucially, it is not until this process of negotiation is denied, as in this case, that territory becomes securitised.

The security language identified in relation to the Orange River border dispute is also evident if one takes a closer look at the SADC intervention in Lesotho in 1998. This is the topic of the next section.

6.1.2.2 Operation Boleas

How do security speech acts materialise in debates centring on the SADC intervention and in what way does the water component of the operation fit into the larger securitisation equation? A briefing by Acting President of South Africa, Dr MG Buthelezi, shortly after the intervention took place at 0500 in the morning on the 22 September 1998 establishes water as one of the decisive factors legitimising the manoeuvre: "The aim of the intervention is to restore stability as quickly as possible...to create a safe environment by *securing or controlling*...power and water supply facilities" (Buthelezi 1998).

The water component of the intervention is also addressed by Professor Lebohang K. Moleko, the Lesotho ambassador to the United States, stating that "South Africa and Lesotho have invested heavily in the Highlands Water Project, and that asset is normally *secured* by the LDF. It became necessary, therefore, to send a detachment there to ensure the *security of the dam*" (Mail and Guardian, 7 April 2000).

Likewise, an article in Mail and Guardian (17 March 2000) claims that “the SANDF *targeted* Katse for its *strategic value* to South Africa: Katse Dam is part of the multibillion-rand Highlands Water Project... [though] it seemed the SANDF overreacted because of South Africa’s strategic interest in the water project...If Katse had to be *attacked* in that manner, why weren’t all the other outposts attacked”. Van Wyk (2000) also claims that “South Africa’s intervention...was to *defend*, among others, the Katse Dam...Although there were indications that the Lesotho Defence Force troops attempted to *bombard* the Katse Dam...it never materialised”.

Finally, the water-war discourse is initiated in Dispatch Online (24 October 1998) asserting that “It has often been said that the next *war* in southern Africa will be *fought* over water. South Africa, like the rest of the region is water stressed...While South Africa’s recent military intervention in Lesotho has much to do with politics; it was also pushed by a need to *secure* its vital supply of water from the just completed Lesotho Highlands Water Project which is the mainstay of its industrial heartland in Gauteng province”.

6.1.2.2.1 Analysis – Merging text and context

Securitisation speech acts in the context of Operation Boleas have by and large come from state leaders, diplomats and scholars of international relations; the media being an important facilitator. Some observers maintain that the operation was highly successful in military terms considering the fact that order and stability was restored in Lesotho (Neethling 2000), yet a broad range of actors assert that the mission was dubious on political as well as ethical grounds (see Vale 2003). The proceeding deliberation will not attempt to disentangle the intricate, causal factors underlying the water war argument. Attention is rather paid to what logic shaped the action behind the intervention and how this logic has implications that reach far beyond the intervention itself.

Securitisation is demonstrated through the application of exceptional measures beyond the rules of normal politics (Buzan et al. 1998) as the operation bypassed conventional political deliberation due to the perceived urgency of the matter. The urgent nature of the decision making process in the three countries involved, together with the swift character of the intervention itself clearly resonates the notion of decisionism as conceptualised by Carl Schmitt. Securitisation is also prevalent if one views the intervention as a last resort when other peaceful means of solving the dispute had failed.

Giordano et al. (2002:294) refer to how water security concerns were among the factors motivating the South African engagement in the operation. As disclosed above, fear in Pretoria was shaped by perceptions that the dissident LDF soldiers would blow up the Katse Dam, substantiating the claim that perceptions are decisive in shaping policy and decision making. When perceived as threatened, the Katse Dam became securitised and needy of protection by military means. Operation Boleas was also initiated due to fear of regional instability and flows of refugees across the South African border (Matlosa 2001:95).

Military security often requires a highly structured and well organised collective response and is thus less prone to ambiguity with regards to legitimate securitising actors (Buzan et al. 1998:56). Bigo (2002:65) refers to a specific field of security being compromised of military actors, intelligence services, providers of surveillance and experts on risk assessments. These actors ascribe to a specific habitus with an ethos of secrecy and a concern for the management of unease, having created security as the legitimate object of their discourses. Associating resource scarcity with security is never innocent; as cast by Wæver (1995:55) it makes things happen. The yet more polarized water war argument rests on perceptions of heavy downstream dependence on river water, an upstream threat to cut it off, a history of bilateral tensions and a downstream perception that it can prevent the cut off by force (Homer-Dixon 1994:19). The correlation of signifiers such as security and war with nature and ecology can have profound implications. Campbell (1998:203) puts it this way; when submitted through the metaphor of “war”, efforts to address environmental issues within these strictures risk extending the old register of security to cover this new domain. What exactly does the “old register of security” refer to in this case?

Carl Schmitt (1985:9[1934]) declares that sovereignty resides in the monopoly of the state in deciding what constitutes public order and security and when these are threatened. This legal order rests on decision and not on a norm as the state suspends the law in the exception on the basis of its survival (ibid:13)¹³¹. As identified by Hirst (1999:12), Schmitt is concerned with the preservation of the state and the legitimate government; essentially the stable institutions of society. Perceived ecological dangers can therefore replace fading military threats as the basis of sustaining sovereignty. Matlosa (2001:98) is thus illuminating claiming that the military intervention was driven primarily by concerns with South African state security, perceived in realist military terms. What substantiates the allegation that the 1998 intervention was a continuation of South Africa’s “big brother tactics”; simply a way of

¹³¹ It has previously been stressed how Schmitt’s concept of the exception resonates with the CoS’s theory of securitisation, more specifically the component of “breaking free of rules” (see Buzan et al. 1998:25).

not only sustaining, but even enhancing its political and military hegemony in the region (ibid:84)? What interests are served by articulation of the “water scarcity-water war” nexus?

Vale (2003:145) is unequivocal stating that perceptions of interstate war over White Gold serve the status quo; in South Africa that is state sovereignty and water allocation primarily to white settlers and to irrigation, mining and industry. The economic sustainability of the Gauteng region housing Pretoria and Johannesburg has previously been constructed as being totally dependent on water channelled through the LHWP (Turton 2005c:4). The hydropolitical dimension of this is developed by Turton (2005b:1) who brands South Africa as a hydro-hegemon with a history of military conflict and desire to “capture” water resources as a strategic asset in order to sustain its national security. Moreover, Turton (2005a:31) asserts that water security was during the years of Apartheid regarded as essential for the future economic growth and stability of South Africa and herein, the LHWP was a crucial component providing such state or national security. Seen against the incident at the Katse Dam, South Africa’s hydraulic mission pre as well as post 1994 shows that to capture and protect are to sides of the same coin; security and securitisation. Evidently, many actors seeing the SADC intervention as a sole South African mission or even invasion get their discursive clout from the above mentioned actualities.

The “echoes of the past” argument is further substantiated by Coning (1998b) and Matlosa (2001:96): the Langa Commission which investigated accusations of electoral fraud was led by and named after Pius Langa¹³², a South African citizen; subsequent negotiations were led by South Africa; the military intervention was led by a South African officer and the vast majority of soldiers in the joint force came from the South African National Defence Force (SANDF); it was only SANDF soldiers that crossed the border on the 22 of September; SANDF forces were arguably also involved in the fiercest battles in the first hours of the intervention and ultimately, even the media relations for the mission were handled by South Africa. The question now becomes what discourse types the proponents of the operation drew upon in order to justify the mission? What were their referent objects of security?

At a meeting of the Frontline States¹³³ organisation in Harare in 1994, the newly elected South African President Nelson Mandela declared that the country would play a role

¹³² To underscore the “securitiness” of the process it was South Africa’s Minister of Safety and Security, not Foreign Affairs, that led the delegation which delivered the Langa Report to the Lesotho people and the LCD Government (Vale 2003:126).

¹³³ The term “frontline states” referred to countries in Southern Africa opposed to and geographically close to the South African Apartheid state (Turton 2005b). The former group of countries formed the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) in 1980, to become known as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in 1992.

in helping to solve Southern Africa's problems, thus sparking the idea that post-Apartheid South Africa could actively intervene in the region (Vale 2003:120). Yet, to reiterate Vale and Matlosa (1995:81), "all life is based on memory: without its golden thread, there is no building a future". The memory referred to is reminiscences among people in Lesotho of the Apartheid State launching attacks against ANC targets in Maseru during the 1980s in order to destabilize what the National Party perceived as terrorists. The memory is also imprinted with the Apartheid state's involvement in the military coup d' état in Lesotho in 1986 which was perceived to ease the signing of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project the same year (Homer-Dixon 1994:19). Last, but not least memory is coloured by the exercise of preventative diplomacy by Botswana, Zimbabwe and South Africa as they intervened in Lesotho in 1994 to solve the constitutional crisis in the country, turning the Troika¹³⁴ into guarantors of Lesotho's democracy and effectively ceding the sovereignty of the latter to powerful neighbouring states (Vale 2003:120). Drawing a passage from Vale and Matlosa (1995:83), the imposition of peace by foreign powers "undermined the sovereignty of Lesotho and made a mockery of its institutions of state and symbols of independence".

By bearing in mind the statement made by President Nelson Mandela in 1994, Matlosa (2001:88) notes that the new regionalism driven by the SADC seemed to go beyond a narrow and conventional economic integration to encompass collective security through preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution. The aim is, arguably to lay the foundation for a future regional security community (Neethling 2004) in Southern Africa. Some of the many heroic signifiers underpinning this discourse is "peace", "sacrifices for democracy", "good governance", "regionalism", "African Renaissance", but also "order" and "stability". The new era in the spirit of SADC is brilliantly captured in an article in the South African newspaper Mail and Guardian (2 October 1998); "[A]s a regional power, we (*South Africa*, my addition) have an undeniable and unavoidable responsibility to promote and support democracy. Sometimes it will be necessary to use force to quell disorder and limit the political excesses of demagogues. Life will unfortunately be lost in creating a nobler society". Just as the old South African Defence Force (SADF) was protector of the Apartheid State, the new SANDF now consists of "peace warriors" aimed at spreading democracy to all corners of the region. As such, the underlying justification for the intervention was above all that Lesotho was anarchy

¹³⁴ The term refers to the three presidents; South Africa's Nelson Mandela, Botswana's Ketumile Masire and Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe (Vale 2003:120).

and chaos to bring to order and the way this ordering was done shows just as much resemblance with the old “Apartheid State” as with the new era of “African Renaissance”.

Broadening and deepening the security agenda after 1994 might have demised the monopoly of military and state security in the region, but defiantly it also empowered the military which redefined its role in multiple new ways (Vale 2003). The wider discursive implications of portraying Lesotho as “primordial”, “fragile”, “unstable” and “in need of protection” are that Pretoria can continue to exercise its hegemony in the country; be it political, economic, military or hydropolitical, the latter impossible not to see in relation to negotiations over further phases of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project. This will, however, be dealt with under the panoply of desecuritisation.

6.2 Desecuritisation and the Unmaking of the Politics of Exceptionality

*“One must pass to the other side – the good side – but by trying to turn off these mechanisms which cause the appearance of two separate sides, by dissolving the false unity, the illusory ‘nature’ of this other side with which we have taken sides”
(Michel Foucault 1988:120-121)*

Desecuritisation aims at depicting that the existence of the self does not negate the presence of the other (Munster 2004:12). Accordingly, a desecuritisng speech act will attempt to articulate new forms of community and new political structures that refuse to define the political as a question of distancing from or eliminating the enemy¹³⁵. Aradau (2001) somewhat naively embraces desecuritisation as the good practice to be endorsed over the evil securitising one. However, this study does not tag along with those seeing desecuritisation as a normative, critical approach for emancipation aimed at describing how the world ought to be. Neither does it address the policy oriented question related to what desecuritisation strategies would best fit a given context. Rather, it addresses ontological and epistemological questions pertaining to how political interaction produce, reproduce and maintain social structures. The task is to deconstruct seemingly natural and fixed assumptions prevalent in the water discourse and reveal that these serve some interests more than others. The principal agenda is directed towards a questioning of the postulation that the apparatuses of benefit sharing and hydropolitical complex offer feasible prospects for a transformative

¹³⁵ Munster (2004:12) argues that this will certainly not mean “the end of politics”, only that the concept of the political is emptied of its Schmittian connotations.

desecuritisation of water resource management in the respective riparian states. This will be the venture of the following deliberation.

6.2.1 Desecuritisation in the Orange River Basin

“The Orange River is in the state of significantly altered in terms of development. It is no longer a natural river system” (Peter Pyke, DWAF Pretoria, 2005)

Buzan et al. (1998:68) claim that South Africa and its neighbouring countries have since the demise of Apartheid gone through a process of unprecedented desecuritisation. The question is now if and eventually how this is reflected in water resource management in the Orange River Basin. The cases chosen for empirical analysis include the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, the Ai-Ais/Richtersveld Transfrontier Park, the Lower Orange River Management Study and the Orange Senqu River Commission. For practical purposes, I have chosen to highlight those signifiers indicating that a desecuritisation discourse is at play.

6.2.1.1 The Lesotho Highlands Water Project

The 1986 Treaty between South Africa and Lesotho, establishing the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, recognises “the advantages of regional development” and that “*cooperation...* with regard to the development of mutual water resources can significantly contribute towards the *peace* and prosperity of the Southern African region and the welfare of its peoples” (Treaty 1986). The Treaty also considers “the *mutual benefits* for the Kingdom of Lesotho and the Republic of South Africa to be derived from the enhancement, *conservation* and *equitable sharing* of the water resources of the Senqu/Orange River” (ibid).

The South African Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, Ronnie Kasrils being present at Matsoku in Lesotho on 26 October 2001 states that “our own growth can only be assured through *joint development* with our neighbours...we can proudly say that we have gone further than merely *sharing the watercourse*, but are happily *sharing its benefits...*exploring the possibilities of jointly developing the Lesotho Lowlands Water Scheme...the potential for tourism that the project brings to the Maluti Mountains stand to benefit Lesotho immensely...the challenge to the Project is to ensure that the Communities that have been affected by it as well as their host and other rural communities benefit directly from the tourism industry (Kasrils 2001).

King Letsie III of Lesotho stresses the importance of keeping a good relationship between all the countries with riparian rights in the Orange River Basin stating that “I have every confidence that the two Governments of South Africa and Lesotho will ensure that

agreed water releases will reach the peoples of those neighbouring countries. We do not wish the Lesotho Highlands Water Project to be a source of conflicts over water”. The King goes on further stating that the project also “calls for aggressive efforts to exploit the new situation in respect of tourism activities for the *benefit of the people* of the two countries” (Letsie 2004).

The President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, addresses various aspects of the LHWP in a speech in connection with the opening of Phase 1B at Mohale Dam 16 March 2004 (Mbeki 2004); “the Katse Dam is the first of our highly successful joint ventures in *sharing water resources...the pure white gold...the economic destinies of our people and countries are inextricably linked together...the Lesotho Highlands Water Project...great potential to bring long term benefits that could be shared by both countries...from both sides of the border we have already seen the benefits in terms of job opportunities and the gift of ‘cold water to a thirsty soul’ of industries and homes in South Africa...For South Africa, the project brings improved security of water supply...Lesotho enjoys the benefit of new infrastructure including roads, expanded communication and electricity systems, health facilities, job opportunities, improved water supply and sanitation”.*

Finally, the Chief Executive of the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority, Junior Potloane, gives an account of the LHWP at the World Bank Water Week in 2005 (Potloane 2005), maintaining that instream flow requirements (IFR) for the project are developed “to ensure that sufficient water is released from the dams for the *benefit of biodiversity and people downstream...Benefits to Basotho...[include] more than 16 000 jobs, valuable contracts and supply of goods and services...M 1.4 billion¹³⁶ in royalties revenue to date...infrastructure including roads, bridges, power lines and work camps...Benefits to South Africa...[include] high quality water transferred...job opportunities...improved infrastructure...[creating] a win-win situation for Lesotho & RSA”.*

6.2.1.1.1 Analysis – Merging text and context

What are the prospects for desecuritisation considering the abovementioned articulations? Benefits to the river are put forward as “instream flow requirements”, “sustainability” and “conservation” and even though civil servants in Maseru and Pretoria acknowledge that the environmental aspects of the project were not sufficiently addressed during Phase 1A, these have been thoroughly dealt with in Phase 1B and onwards (Mothepeu 2005) . The project has

¹³⁶ Approximately USD 200 million.

also enabled water releases upstream to be controlled so that people and ecosystems downstream now benefit from access to water at all times (Pyke 2005).

Furthermore, the almost endless record of benefits from the river, or rather from the project itself to Lesotho and South Africa are communicated as “infrastructure”, “electricity”, “jobs”, “royalties”, “camps” and “clinics” among others. These signifiers are structured by the existence of three nodal points; “white gold”, “development” and “security of supply”. The first nodal point emphasises that since Lesotho is short on most other commodities and export articles, water has become its primary and most important article of trade. This is directly related to the second nodal point which encloses signifiers depicting Lesotho as “primitive”, “rural” and “agricultural”, therefore in need of “development”. As maintained by Vale (2003:146), economically poor and landlocked Lesotho’s only strategic asset, water, is set against water scarcity in rich and developed South Africa. For the latter, the LHWP becomes a way of assuring security of supply to Gauteng where current and future levels of consumption can be maintained. The conclusion, as commonly cited by project authorities, is a “win-win” situation where all parties benefit.

The benefits accrued because of the river and the project, meaning costs saved by the two respective governments by choosing cooperation instead of non-cooperation (Sadoff and Grey 2002), are summarised by nodal points such as “peace and prosperity” and “good neighbourliness”. However, awareness of the potential for disputes and conflicts over “white gold” is also evident as seen in the speech by King Letsie III, stressing that the interests of downstream Namibia also have to be taken into account (Letsie 2004).

The perceived benefits enabled beyond the river, with a significant amount of overlapping with other benefits, take the form of “tourism potential” and “regional integration”. In addition, the two countries are also jointly involved in feasibility studies with regards to the Lesotho Lowlands Water Supply Scheme (Tekateka 2005) which aims at ensuring water security for the Lesotho Lowlands (Maliehe 2005). Serious drought conditions in Lesotho in 2003 disclosed the need for a more reliable water supply to the Lowlands as water had to be released from the LHWP to sustain productivity in Maseru, such emergency releases being perceived as representing additional benefits of the LHWP¹³⁷ (DWA 2003).

Analysing contemporary water discourses, Thompson (2002:231) brilliantly identifies that the way a problem is defined has a lot to do with who is defining it, for whom and for what purpose. Drawing upon Swatuk (2002:508), it becomes decisive to understand both the

¹³⁷ See picture in appendix 3 for a visual representation of this.

socially constructed nature of water scarcity and the human impact on water availability¹³⁸. As follows, a discourse around a belief in water scarcity generates a limited range of outcomes specific to those assumptions. Mehta (2000) shows how “water scarcity” and “water-crisis” arguments can be powerful tools in obscuring issues concerning unequal access to and control over water. Water scarcity is usually presented in absolute terms, concealing the repeatedly neglected fact that water allocation and distribution more often than not are outcomes of socio-political choices, these being mediated by power relationships (Wester and Warner 2002:62). Scarcity can also be discursively manufactured, making it an effective instrument in meeting political ends such as the building of large dams (Mehta 2000:11). By contrasting “water-rich” and economic poor Lesotho with “water-poor” and economic rich South Africa and by further claiming that the LHWP will create a win-win situation for both countries “which would both be losers otherwise” (Conley and van Niekerk 2000:137) puts an irresistible offer on the negotiating table. Such offers do, however, often come with side effects¹³⁹. Three states of affairs are simultaneously concealed through the aforementioned discursive manoeuvre.

Firstly, the fact that not all people in Lesotho have benefited from the project in the same way. As a contrast to perceived national benefits, Phase 1 has caused significant losses of both arable and grazing land as well as relocation of poor communities in the Highlands, many of these communities now being dependent on handouts of grain as compensation (Kholumo 2000). The issue of compensation is a controversial one where the Lesotho Government and the LHDA claim that affected communities have been sufficiently reimbursed and are in fact better off now than before the project commenced (Mothepeu 2005), while organisations such as the Transformation Resource Centre in Maseru argue on behalf of affected communities that the compensation is too little or has not been satisfactorily effectuated (Lenka 2005). Moreover, the prevalence of HIV positive persons in the vicinity of the project sites has also increased due to improved infrastructure and the migrant labour system (Mail and Guardian, 15 June 2004).

Secondly, the “water scarcity” argument conceals that there are major discrepancies between water use and consumption in Lesotho as opposed to Gauteng. For instance, Rand Water whose services include Johannesburg and Pretoria estimates that around 52 percent of

¹³⁸ Certainly, this is not to dismiss the physical factors giving rise to water scarcity. However, the aim is to reveal that the discourse on scarcity as such is “underpinned by some rather superficial and poorly interrogated assumptions” (Thompson 2002:235).

¹³⁹ As expressed by Don Corleone in an excerpt from the Godfather: “I’m going to make him an offer he can’t refuse”. Essentially, the offer is so irresistible no one in their right mind would turn it down.

its water is wasted through leaks, illegal connections and inefficiency (Rothert and Macy 2000). Another aspect of this is that South Africa can continue to exercise its power as a hydro hegemon in the Orange River Basin (Turton 2005b) as benefit sharing exercised through the LHWP is easily combined with a security of supply strategy providing water to Gauteng. The logic of difference implies that hegemonic actors *can* afford to embark on goodwill strategies to integrate centrifugal forces in their political project, the latter built on the idea of a “common good” which must continually be renegotiated to prevent counter hegemonic movements (Warner 2000:252). Swatuk (2002:529) maintains that supply oriented thinking is still the order of the day in Southern Africa, bringing together state makers, water technocrats and companies in a powerful discourse coalition. Therefore, just as pipelines are discursively constructed so as to sustain life, they are simultaneously needed to sustain governments under conditions of perceived water scarcity (Turton 2000:144).

Thirdly, as elaborated on by Swatuk (2001:17), water, while providing power for South Africa’s economic heartland, also allows Basotho state makers to wield power over others. This is eloquently brought forward by Ferguson (1990:254) stating that “it may be that what is most important about a development project is not so much what it fails to do but what it does do; it may be that its real importance in the end lies in its “side effects”.

The development of infrastructure in the Lesotho Highlands might or might not have improved the livelihoods of local people, though it would not be farfetched to assume that it has given the Lesotho Government a much stronger presence in the area than it had before. As such, government services are never simply services, in the end it may be least as appropriate to think of services which serve to govern (ibid:253).

6.2.1.2 The Ai - Ais/Richtersveld Transfrontier Park

The treaty establishing the Ai-Ais/Richtersveld Transfrontier Conservation Park (ARTP) was signed in Windhoek 1 August 2001 by Namibian Minister of Environment and Tourism Philemon Malima and his South African counterpart Valli Moosa (Government News Namibia, August 2001). According to the Namibian Minister, the project will “significantly contribute to the *social and economic benefits* and boost the living standard of the people in the area”. The South African Minister stated that both countries “have acknowledged at presidential level that the Namib is a shared ecosystem and...by improving its regional ecological management, a *benefit of sustainable economic development* will arise...we focus on the development of partnerships...with the aim of *deriving optimal and equitable benefits*

from the management of these shared natural resources...[and] we are creating a very special conservation area that will be yet another step towards consolidating *regional economic integration* in Southern Africa...with proper planning and a sound vision, *benefits from a conservation-based action*...have the potential to compete with other livelihoods such as livestock farming” (Moosa 2001).

The park is “part of a regional collaboration aimed at the *eradication of political fences* in the interest of responsible environmental management and conservation” (The Namibian, 19 June 2003). The principle of transfrontier cooperation is embedded in the SADC Treaty with a view to neutralize development constraints caused by artificial political or administrative boundaries and in order to facilitate cross border tourism in the ARTP, the Namibian Cabinet agreed in 2005 to establish two new border posts at Mata Mata and Sendlingsdrift (The Namibian, 5 December 2005).

The South African based Peace Parks Foundation (PPF) asserts that the local communities in Richtersveld were keen to see the park established, as “they would all benefit from *increased tourism* to the area, while at the same time conserving its unique biodiversity” (PPF 2006a). Likewise, South Africa Info (12 August 2003) claims that the establishment “*virtually takes down the border fence* between the two countries, and creates a massive tourism hotspot...among the *potential tourism projects* are...hiking trails, overnight camping, angling, river rafting as well as canoeing...Nama communities living in and around the park are set to reap the benefits of the treaty”.

Accordingly, the core objective of the ARTP is “to develop frameworks and strategies through which local communities can participate in, and tangibly benefit from, the management and sustainable use of natural resources that occur within the proposed TP” (PPF 2006b). DLIST (2006) being an information sharing process focusing on the transboundary coastal zone of South Africa and Namibia maintains that an offshoot of the park is that “*finally proper control* can be exercised over usage of the Orange River for river-based tourism” and a cross border road system “will also open up significant possibilities for Orange River-based agriculture” (ibid).

6.2.1.2.1 Analysis – Merging text with context

What benefits accrue due to the ARTP and in what ways are these thought to be distributed and shared among the entitled stakeholders? With regards to benefits to the river, the main objective of the park is biodiversity conservation (Katerere et al. 2001:20) and under this

discursive banner the empty signifier “sustainable development” acts as a structuring nodal point. Benefits from the river, that is, from the park itself are articulated under such headlines as “sustainable economic development” and “social benefits”. These perceived profits are seldom specified, perhaps with the exception of revenues from tourism, seen as “boosting” the living standard of people in the area. Moreover, the beneficiaries of the initiative are discursively constructed as “people in the area”, “local communities” and more specifically “Nama communities”. Furthermore, the *raison d’être* for benefit sharing which stresses the joint character of the initiative is emphasised through phrases such as “equitable” and “partnership”.

When it comes to benefits because of the river, it is worth noting that transfrontier conservation areas (TFCAs) in Southern Africa are largely driven and controlled by state conservation agencies, often with considerable input from the Peace Parks Foundation (Katerere et al. 2001:2). As pointed out by Simon (2002:17), the idea of linking together conservation areas that straddle international borders has since its institutional inception in the 1980s focused on the potential of promoting peace in erstwhile conflict zones, hence the term “peace park”. The wider implication of this becomes evident if one looks at the perceived benefits beyond the river, which tend to take the form of “regional economic integration” and “economic collaboration” being articulated by state elites with reference to the SADC Treaty. Another offshoot of the park is the opening of new border posts which operates under the discursive panoply of “taking down” or “eradicating” artificial colonial borders. As for sure, there is a considerable overlap between the different benefit sharing categories and they should not be seen as mutually exclusive.

The proponents of the ARTP initiative put forward a number of signifiers which fall neatly within the discursive panoply of desecuritisation. These signifiers are essentially articulated so as to facilitate a process of dis-identification (Aradau 2004:402) meaning that people on both sides of the river are to partake in the development of the park and that its benefits are to be equally shared among the stakeholders. Nevertheless, seemingly palpable benefits do also come with a baggage of by-products. Ramutsindela and Tsheola (2002:204) emphasise that the establishment of a peace park is not solely an environmental exercise, but serves a variety of purposes; some of which will be addressed below.

As cautioned by Wolmer (2003:262) discourses centring on transboundary natural resource management (TBNRM) often involve an idealistic and eco-centric understanding of the reality they purport to change. As such, they construct themselves as representing the moral high ground for what is authentic and natural as opposed to what is seen as artificial

and manmade; the latter often exemplified as alienating administrative or political borders. Moreover, they frequently apply romanticised rhetoric and images of traditional indigenous cultures living in harmony with nature (ibid:263). This overarching longing for the past, for an Africa without fences, becomes a strategy in which state elites attempt to break the legacy of Apartheid and colonialism by freeing people and animals. Transboundary natural resource management becomes a decolonisation strategy (Ramutsindela and Tsheola 2002); however, it is not necessarily an Africa without fences that materialises in the ARTP.

Howarth and Stavrakakis (2000:9) maintain that social antagonisms reveal the limits in society in which social meaning is contested and cannot be stabilised, hence antagonisms are evidence of the frontiers of social formation. Moreover, Laclau (1990:160) alleges that the concept of political frontier is central to the question of hegemony as it is through the consolidation or dissolution of frontiers that a historic bloc is constructed or fragmented. Simon (2002:23) notes that many transboundary park initiatives in Southern Africa reveal strong elements of continuity with the past, which militates against simplistic dichotomies such as “old versus new” and “top-down versus bottom-up”. What is this past referred to time and again?

By considering “past” as both an empty signifier and a nodal point it becomes possible to understand how the border between Namibia and South Africa on the Orange River can appear as a frontier in physical terms as well as a boundary of social formation in cognitive terms. Discursively, this discloses a paradoxical situation where desecuritisation and securitisation simultaneously open up and close the social meaning of *border*.

On the one side, Turton and Earle (2004a) argue that local people, who frequently feel alienated by arbitrarily demarcated colonial borders and the concept of the state, sometimes find it easier to identify with people living across the border, on the other side of the river, than with institutions based in the capital city¹⁴⁰. This leads to widespread interaction between groups on the opposing side of the river bank, either in the form of trade, access to resources, ceremonies or social events (ibid:2). Essentially, by revealing the multitude and complexity of social identities in the river basin, the empty signifier *border* acquires a new meaning, now acting as a nodal point under a desecuritisation discourse, thus opening the border.

On the other side, however, the symbolic power of border as representing sovereignty, delineating identity and protecting what’s inside from what’s outside continues to fuel

¹⁴⁰ The authors use the term “Parallel National Action Approach” to show how states, when dealing with neighbouring states, can strengthen bilateral bonds leading to the pooling of skills and resources and the harmonization of policies to mutual benefit (Turton and Earle 2004a:5).

processes of securitisation. Borders, in physical term as well as cognitive terms are fraught with signifiers such as “control” and “order” which make out the core of contemporary securitisation discourses. Borders continue to make sense to political authorities and security agencies, even if they are sometimes of less significance for people in transboundary areas (Ceyhan and Tsoukala 2002:33). Ramutsindela and Tsheola (2002:202) stress that conservation rhetoric is commonly merged with demands for national security and the protection of sovereignty. This is clearly manifest in the claim that “the park will facilitate proper control over usage of the Orange River” (see DLIST 2006). As Swatuk (2004:20) rightly points out; joint management is to pose no challenge to the ultimate authority of the state’s involved. Thus, it becomes impossible to see the development of the ARTP independently of the already securitised Orange River border (the Orange River border dispute).

What is more, the TBNRM discourse can simultaneously have a strong depoliticizing effect by naturalising the concept of “local communities” and “indigenous culture”, internally as well as externally (Mehta 2000). Internally by applying a simplistic and apolitical notion of “community” where all individuals participate on equal grounds, without internal power disparities and conflicts. Externally and perhaps particularly relevant in the context of the ARTP, by giving the impression that benefits from the project will be distributed evenly between communities on both sides of the river. Dr. Fanuel Demas (2005) at the Namibian Ministry of Environment and Tourism detects that benefit sharing scenarios with regards to the ARTP differ between South Africa and Namibia. While it is more or less clear what communities will benefit directly on the South African side (the Richtersveld), it is not so clear in Namibia. This draws attention to how the supposedly desecuritising signifier of community can serve as a definition of inclusion as well as exclusion (Cleaver 1999:608). Against this backdrop, Vale (2003:144); assessing contemporary, post-Apartheid and transboundary conservation initiatives in the region, is concerned that these projects will “empower the already empowered and further weaken the already weakened”. Katerere et al. (2001:21) also take note of the dominant role played by South Africa in implementing TBNRM initiatives in the region, stating that the type or success of cross border cooperation and economic integration is very much dependent on power relations between the collaborating countries.

Laclau (1990:130) stresses that “there will always be history; the myth of a transparent and homogenous society must be resolutely abandoned”. Wolmer (2003:265) maintains that transboundary conservation efforts can be interpreted as security strategies, having the effect

that they can make possible policing to previously remote border areas, bringing these further under the panoply of state control and political security. When seen in this light, the 'peace park' thesis of benefits beyond boundaries is just as likely to increase and domesticate state security strategies as it is to unmake these same strategies.

6.2.1.3 The Lower Orange River Management Study

The main purpose of the LORMS, which falls under the jurisdiction of the Permanent Water Commission (PWC) between Namibia and South Africa, has been to study and make recommendations on the more efficient management and use of the Lower Orange River for the benefits of both countries (DWAF/DWA 2005)¹⁴¹. The task now becomes to analyse how benefit sharing is articulated within the context of the study.

The main report of the Lower Orange River Management Study (LORMS) maintains that "upstream development has altered the natural flow patterns and reduced annual average flows in the Lower Orange. *Equitable sharing of benefits* of the system to achieve a *win-win situation* for all involved...is therefore required. The sharing solutions should be such that vested interests and country sovereignty are not threatened (LOR Consultants 2005:12)".

The Northern Cape State of the Environment Report 2004 states that the LORMS is "a *joint initiative* by...Namibia and South Africa aimed at developing *joint strategies* for the management of the Orange River...the strategic objectives of the LORMS are regional economic development; poverty reduction, job creation, protection of the environment...assuring water supply to *downstream users*...necessitated by proposed economic opportunities which require water resources as well as difficulties in the past in regulating the flow of water along the Orange River" (Department of Tourism, Environment & Conservation 2005).

A report dealing specifically with irrigation under the auspices of the Permanent Water Commission (PWC) is set to determine the "financial viability of the Vioolsdrift and Noordoewer Irrigation Scheme including possible further investments, and the *socio-economic benefits* of the scheme in the area...Its position astride an international boundary brings many challenges and one of the keys to sustainability and viability of the scheme is to secure an appropriate level of integrate management at local level, whilst *securing the*

¹⁴¹ Water conservation and demand management together with new infrastructure developments, herein new dams, are seen as options to achieve the objective of the study (DWAF/DWA 2005).

maximum benefit available through the institutional networks of both South Africa and Namibia” (PWC 2004).

The South African Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry addresses the Northern Cape Water Summit 2005, stressing that “we have an international *responsibility* towards our *downstream Orange River neighbour*, Namibia, to ensure that their water entitlement out of the river is honoured. My Department is currently involved in a joint study with Namibia on the possibility of building a new dam on the Lower Orange to ensure future stability of water supply...The Northern Cape will obviously *benefit* by such developments during construction time and beyond. So, whilst using our water efficiently and being “*water wise*”, we must continue to ensure that we also protect the interests of our neighbouring states” (Sonjica 2005).

Finally, an article in the Namibian newspaper the Economist (23 August 2002) addresses the joint research conducted on the Lower Orange River, stating that “the nature of the river, being a seasonal river and severely affected by periodic droughts, has prompted a study into *water conservation and demand management* measures...to recommend measures to improve the availability of water along the Lower Orange River and to facilitate the *equitable distribution* of water between the two countries in support of *strategic objectives*”.

6.2.1.3.1 Analysis – Merging text and context

Benefits to the river are articulated by the media and government officials as “environmental protection”, “water conservation” and “demand management”. Furthermore, benefits from the river or from the subsequent projects under the LORMS are perceived to be “water supply”, “job creation”, “poverty reduction” and “economic development”. These benefits are simultaneously being promoted as “shared benefits” through the articulation of signifiers such as “equitable” and “joint management”, perhaps most strongly communicated through the “win-win” argument in the main report. Achieving maximum benefits from the project and at the same protecting the interests of all the basin states can arguably be seen as a move towards desecuritisation.

Nevertheless, what appears to be the case in the context of the LORMS is that a desecuritisation strategy of benefit sharing works together with a securitisation discourse where focus is on attaining security of water supply. This is highlighted in a paper by the Namibian Minister of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development (Angula 2001), stating that “the development of national and shared water resources can never be without strategic

considerations. Any State has the responsibility to provide security of access to water sources”. While the future construction and location of a dam on the common border on the Orange River is expected to boost local economies in the project area and benefit landowners both socially and economically (DWAF/DWA 2005:40)¹⁴², more abstraction, impounding and artificial management of the Lower Orange is also perceived to “bring along *threats* of species extinction” (Brown 2004:15) and “the technically pristine inland deltas and shoreline and island vegetation along the inaccessible floodplain stretches of the study area’s main river channel will be *threatened*” (Alexander and van Wyk 2005:45).

Furthermore, benefits because of the river are communicated through signifiers which emphasise that Namibia and South Africa are “jointly” conducting the study, that both parties have a “responsibility” in ensuring that the interests of the other part is taken into account and that it is important to be “water wise”, the latter exemplified in the speech by the South African Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry. The monetary benefits of cooperation, that is, the costs saved by both countries by choosing a bilateral, cooperative approach instead of unilateral developments is estimated to be ZAR 181 million, approximately USD 28 million (LOR Consultants 2005:106). The cooperative approach adopts a bilateral focus implicitly attempting to downscale tensions through the abovementioned signifiers, but this is a mixed blessing as it in the same moment stresses that the “sharing solutions should be such that vested interests and country sovereignty are not threatened” (ibid:48).

Because of the bilateral, instrumental nature of the LORMS, it appears that benefits beyond the river have not received much attention beyond what is perceived as “regional development”. This is encapsulated in the Main Report which sets forth that “the benefits of improved availability of water resources for the environment and consumptive use will support the sustainable social and economic development of the region (ibid:120). Having accounted for the various ways in which benefit sharing is argued in the context of the LORMS, it is now necessary to disaggregate and analyse the broader implications of the abovementioned scenarios.

The way in which technological arguments underpin most of the reasoning for benefit sharing under the LORMS appears as striking. The clearest evidence of this is the adoption of the term “management” in almost all aspects related to the river. The concept has reached the stage of becoming a nodal point with underlying signifiers such as “measure”, “balance” and “regulate”. At a first glance, the study appears as a promising facilitator of desecuritisation

¹⁴² Locating the dam at Violsdrift is perceived to yield significantly higher benefits and lower costs than other alternative locations considered in the study (DWAF/DWA 2005:40).

between the two countries, considering that Phillips et al. (2006:20) conceptualise desecuritisation as a normalisation of water resource management where technocrats instead of securocrats reign supreme. Though, this is far from as straightforward as it might seem.

Bernauer (2002:2) emphasises that technological innovation is important in order to deal with freshwater problems; however, the most serious obstacles to successful river management do not appear on the technical but on the political arena. While the format in which policy discourses are developed has an immense influence on the construction of policy problems and the outcome of political processes, Hajer (1995:279) discloses an uneasiness towards technocratic approaches as they reinforce policy making practices which aim to control and subsequently solve a set of predefined problems rather than leaving space open for discursive contestation. As put forward by Hoppe (2002:28), depoliticization is a key in technocratic policy making; “Good policy is spoiled by politics” is the technocrat’s adage. Moreover, Thompson (2002:231) asserts that the technocratic approach is primarily oriented towards state centric policy solutions, these being largely negligent of the larger power dimensions of development discourse. Two contentious issues are simultaneously kept at bay via the “common good” and “joint” efforts of the LORMS.

Firstly, a point which applies to both countries is the fact that irrigation is by large the biggest user of water in the lower basin, that irrigation is hugely inefficient in some locations and that more “crop per drop” could be obtained by importing food through the concept of virtual water instead of focussing on national food self sufficiency (Earle 2003). As justly remarked by Sandilands (1999:86), the number of acres of land deforested for marginal agriculture is so firmly drawn through discursive space that its impacts is seldom questioned at all.

Secondly, the current flow regime is perceived as disfavoured by the Namibian Government which is eager to renegotiate its entitlements to water on the Lower Orange¹⁴³. Here, Namibia certainly benefits from being perceived as a “victim”, thus having a self interest in portraying itself as powerless as possible in order to rally international support. Nevertheless, the sanctioned discourse which is chiefly generated by South Africa is that benefit sharing is alive and working well on the Orange while, in reality, Namibia actually gets very little from the basin (Phillips 2006). Paradoxically then, benefit sharing appears to be a viable desecuritisation strategy for some state elites to draw upon if it fits neatly with

¹⁴³ Diplomatically put forward by Piet Heyns (2005) at the Namibian MAWF as “Namibia wants agreements and commitments from other riparian states. When it comes to the Orange, Namibia wants acceptable rights to the river vested in our interests”.

national security strategies, implying security of water supply or food security. This is brought to attention by the Chief South African delegate to the Permanent Water Commission (Tekateka 2005), conveying that “in any country where there is water scarcity or water stress, water is clearly a security issue. The critical question, however, is how do we respond to this fact? The way we (*South Africa*, my addition) see it, water is a factor facilitating regional stability, it is a building block for interaction and integration among states”. However, the benefits of “jointly carrying the load” through water demand management as elaborated in the LORMS get a much shallower discursive clout if the abovementioned factualities are taken into account.

Benefit sharing under the panoply of “common good” can ultimately create tensions and distrust as not all parties will benefit in the same way or to the same extent. The crucial issue is, when the point of departure is perceived to be biased in favour of one part, benefit sharing can easily maintain and strengthen disparate political and economic relations in the name of “common good”. In such cases, the transformative potential of desecuritisation (Aradau 2004) is thrown out with the baptismal bathwater of the progressive, but yet depoliticizing management discourse.

6.2.1.4 The Orange Senqu River Commission

The agreement establishing the Orange Senqu River Commission (ORASECOM) was signed in Windhoek, Namibia on 3 November 2000 (Heyns 2004). The signing ceremony was hosted by the Namibian Minister of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development Helmut Angula, who stated that the agreement was a “culmination of fruitful negotiations and...a *joint commitment to work together* in the development of the Orange River for the *benefit of all* in the respective basin states” (Daily News, 9 November 2000). Angula said the commission will develop “a comprehensive perspective on the Orange Basin, study the present and planned future uses of the river system and determine the requirements for flow monitoring and flood management... undertake a *joint situation assessment* of all the resources and uses of the basin as a whole” (The Namibian, 7 November 2000). The Namibian Minister also emphasised that since “the demand for water from this magnificent natural resource increases, we will have to meet new challenges for economic, social and environmentally sustainable development”. The South African Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry also termed the agreement a “tremendous reflection of a new democratic liberated Southern Africa” (ibid).

A press release from the South African Department of Water Affairs and Forestry refers to the establishment of the ORASECOM as “a major step towards *greater cooperation* between the four countries and of significance to the region as a whole. It will strengthen *regional solidarity*, contribute to *peace* and *harmony* and enhance socio-economic cooperation, all of which are in the consonance with the mission of SADC” (DWAF 2000).

Some of larger implications of the ORASECOM are captured by Piet Heyns who is part of the Namibian delegation to the Commission (Heyns 2004). Heyns states that “the Commission is in a position to stimulate and *coordinate development* on the Orange by advising the Parties about the availability of water, the results of feasibility studies and the most viable options for infrastructure development (ibid:5). The proposed joint study by the ORASECOM on the Molopo-Nossob River System in the Orange River Basin, will determine the potential of this river system and enhance *joint cooperation* between Botswana, Namibia and South Africa (ibid:6). Lesotho will be able to share in the exchange of information and the building of capacity...All parties in the Commission wish to share information on the river flow, droughts, floods, irrigation development, water use and infrastructure operations...Pollution must be prevented...In this way it would be possible to ensure that the resources of the Orange Senqu River is *utilized optimally for the benefits of all Parties*” (ibid:9).

6.2.1.4.1 Analysis – Merging text and context

The benefits of the ORASECOM are chiefly cast in a diplomatic language stressing the importance of “working together” by putting forward empty signifiers such as “cooperation”, “regional solidarity”, “peace” and “harmony”¹⁴⁴. These perceived benefits because of the river and beyond the river are implicitly structured by the existence of at least two nodal points; “Integrated Water Resource Management” (IWRM) and “SADC”; both stressing that international rivers should be managed holistically on a basin wide scale. Moreover, benefits to the river due to the work of the ORASECOM are present as “holistic” and “integrated” management embedded in the framework of economic, social and environmentally sustainable development. The riparian states also expect increased benefits from the river due to the cooperative measure. A distinction can be made between the more explicit benefits

¹⁴⁴ These signifiers are extracted from a press release by the South African DWAF (2000), but are found to be sufficiently representative to stand as indicators of the high-level diplomatic discourse taking place between the ORASECOM states.

such as “flood management” and “flood monitoring” on the one side and the more implicit, subtle benefits such as “coordination”, “information sharing”, “capacity building” and “trust” on the other side. As elaborated on previously, the four categories of benefit sharing should not be considered mutually exclusive as certain benefits accumulate through all the categories.

A significant proportion of the benefits expected to accrue due to the ORASECOM are communicated as “technical” benefits in one way or the other. The Namibian Minister of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development maintains that the Commission is to serve as a “*technical advisor*” to the Parties, serving as a forum to discuss water issues of mutual interests at a “*technical level*” and recommend the most feasible “*technical solutions*”, based on “*hard facts*” (Angula 2001). On a general level, Mostert et al. (1999:15) argue that technical cooperation is often the first step towards cooperation on more substantive issues since issues such as information sharing and joint monitoring are often much less controversial than the more political issues at stake. Therefore, taking technical issues as a point of departure can facilitate the development of mutual trust between riparian states. Furthermore, Savenije and van der Zaag (2000:26) claim that technical cooperation is the centrepiece of transboundary river management as technical experts are often the locus of institutional memory averting tensions created by simplified assumptions held by riparians about each other. Finally, Jägerskog (2002:75) maintains that the Commission is well established and functioning, despite the border dispute between South Africa and Namibia. Noteworthy, though, is the fact that the border dispute; considered a “contentious” and “political” issue, is not debated and dealt with in the ORASECOM (Philander 2005), further demarcating the scope and mission of the latter within the frame of “technical” cooperation.

Nevertheless, commissioners from the basin states agree that the ORASECOM is important as “a way to improve capacity and share data” (Tekateka 2005), being “the watchdog for peace and stability in the river basin” (Lesoma 2005). Similarly, Dudley Biggs in the Namibian MAWF states that “ORASECOM is progressing much faster than most river basin organisations in the area, but that doesn’t mean it goes fast” (Biggs 2005)¹⁴⁵. In this context, Thomas Chiramba at the SADC Water Division claims that “there is a huge, mounting pressure on ORASECOM due to the fact that water is stressed. Some say river basin commissions should have planning responsibility, others say an implementation role, yet others say they should be independent. Content and meaning have to be given to the

¹⁴⁵ Biggs also mentions that the formation of the ORASECOM was delayed for two years because Lesotho wanted to call it the Senqu River Basin Commission.

Commission and this will ensure its long term sustainability” (Chiramba 2005). Clearly, *ORASECOM* functions as an empty signifier where a diversity of actors attempt to fill its lack of fixed meaning by articulating nodal points, thus bringing *ORASECOM* towards a discursive closure.

As commended by Conca (2002:10), the first step in transboundary environmental cooperation involves transforming problems of mistrust, suspicion and uncertainty. Obonetse Masedi at the International Waters Unit in Botswana asserts that there is “a climate of trust in *ORASECOM*, the formative no-trust stage is passed. Previously it was difficult to make decisions, but now all the parties agree on a common destiny” (Masedi 2005). However, the depiction of trust gets more nuanced if one considers issues pertaining to the establishment of a permanent secretariat for *ORASECOM*. The Lesotho Commissioner of Water adds texture to the picture, emphasising that “we are concerned that the downstream states are taking more water and we will be left with zero in the end, this is the biggest challenge facing Lesotho. The position of Lesotho is that we would love to see a neutral secretariat by someone from outside. The four *ORASECOM* countries are not at the same level of development and Lesotho is the smallest state in relation to economic aspects. It is therefore very, very important to have a secretariat that is our voice” (Lesoma 2005).

Noteworthy, this string of reasoning does not seem to appeal to the other *ORASECOM* states and to the SADC Water Division, maintaining that “Lesotho’s claim doesn’t make sense as all riparian states should compete equally” (Modise 2005) and that it will contribute to “lack of ownership” to the Secretariat (Chiramba 2005). Henceforth, while some individuals or groups have the skill or the authority to present personal interest in more generally valid terms, others exemplified by Lesotho reveal how expressions of purportedly illegitimate interests get suppressed. What appears to be the case is that trust, being one of the crucial benefits expected to follow from the *ORASECOM* is not perceived uniformly and the riparian states argue in accordance with their current hydropolitical position in the basin. Further substance to this claim is provided by Piet Heyns (2005), stating that “South Africa is not really interested in *ORASECOM*, but is nevertheless playing around”.

Lowi (1993:203) sustains that cooperation in an international river basin reflects the distribution of power; implying that it is not achieved unless the dominant power in the basin accepts it or it has been induced to do so by external powers. As such, Elhance (2000:208) maintains that states frequently forego the benefits of hydropolitical cooperation when they fear that they may become dependent on the vagaries of other states for access to water resources. The Lesotho delegation wanted the *ORASECOM* to supersede the existing bilateral

agreement between South Africa and Lesotho on the LHWP, something which was not perceived as viable due to the high complexity of the latter (Turton 2003b:149). As a result, the ORASECOM does *not* replace existing bilateral commissions, but does rather “provide a broader forum for overall consultation and coordination between the watercourse states for sound, integrated water resources management and development in the Orange River Basin” (Beekman et al. 2003:39). The decisive question to be asked is; if South Africa is not really interested in the ORASECOM, why did it join in the first place?

Zeitoun and Warner (2005:21) note that by playing the leadership role in the Orange River Basin, South Africa has attempted to create a positive sum hydro hegemonic configuration through benefit sharing incentives. However, this image gets considerably more nuanced if one takes into account that the ORASECOM does not threaten the hegemonic status of South Africa within the basin as the country’s existing bilateral agreements will merely liaise with the former (Turton 2005b:24). As an empty signifier *ORASECOM* is theoretically open to a multiplicity of meanings. However, being buttressed by the nodal point of “sovereignty” its meaning is essentially confined to technical advisory and optional consultative assignments, thus becoming a humble servant of the status quo in the Orange River Basin. As such, it would not be too farfetched to assume that when the Commission could be stripped of most of its political clout and power, the powerful (South Africa) found it beneficial to join. But, as summarised by Beekman et al. (2003:39) “despite all good intentions, the central problem of unequal access to water still remains essentially unresolved”. This does not, however, provide the full account of benefit sharing scenarios in the ORASECOM.

Wester and Warner (2002) claim that contemporary discourses on transboundary waters under the panoply of IWRM often have strong depoliticizing effects. By arguing that the preferred unit for river management is the basin and by discursively putting *nature* and *natural* into the equation, the outcome, *river basin management*, is presented as something static and predetermined. But, the definition of river basins and the selection of boundaries are matters of choice (Schlager and Blomquist 2000:14). Therefore, river basins are as much political units as they are natural units (Wester and Warner 2002:68). Duly, the demarcation of the Orange River Basin and the subsequent involvement of Botswana in the ORASECOM should thus be regarded as a political decision, both of choice and contestation, where some arguments were favoured instead of others. As maintained by one of the South African ORASECOM Commissioners, “Botswana is a legal riparian because surface and groundwater cannot be separated. This is really about sharing benefits. Botswana is thirsty and needs

water. Others in the South African delegation were against it; I was in favour of Botswana together with the Lesotho delegation” (Tekateka 2005). Involving Botswana was probably not without strategic considerations for South Africa, considering the latter’s interest in and intention of abstracting water from both the Zambezi and the Congo Rivers which will be partly dependent on the goodwill of Botswana¹⁴⁶. This adds yet more clout to the argument that politics is brought into the river basin equation if it provides strategic gains and benefits for the dominant part, in this case South Africa.

Significantly, when benefit sharing is articulated under the conceptual panoply of the logic of difference, some states such as South Africa can have their strategic security aspirations met, while simultaneously maintaining lopsided patterns of access to and usage of water in the basin legitimised by the common good of river basin management. As such, South Africa can continue to exploit the water resources in the region to benefit itself (Henwood and Funke 2002:184).

6.2.2 Desecuritisation in the Okavango River Basin

“Every cloud has a `silver lining`. There was no development in the Angolan parts of the basin during the civil war. This has left the basin largely untouched” (Masedi 2005)

Porto and Clover (2003:65) note that the Angolan Civil War made large areas of the Okavango River Basin inaccessible. As previously indicated, contemporary discursive constructions of the Okavango are also presented so as to suggest that pristine nature is still the order of the day. How does the relatively untouched character of the basin impact on the prospects for benefit sharing projects? The cases chosen for analysis include the Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission (OKACOM) and the Every River has its People Project (ERP).

6.2.2.1 The Permanent Okavango River Basin Commission

The Agreement of 16 September 1994 which establishes the OKACOM stipulates that it is “conscious that cooperation between the Contracting Parties with regard to the judicious development of *joint projects* in respect of the water resources of *common interest* in the Okavango River Basin will contribute towards the *prosperity and welfare* of their peoples...desirous to consolidate the existing friendly relations by promoting *coordinated* and

¹⁴⁶ These options are considered in a DWAF report by Basson et al. (1997), discussing water resources availability and utilisation in South Africa.

environmentally acceptable regional water resources development objectives” (OKACOM 1994).

A project document by the Global Environment Facility anticipates that “mounting socio-economic pressures on the basin...may result in irretrievable environmental breakdown and consequent loss of domestic and global benefits (GEF 2002:i). Maintaining these benefits requires agreement over the *sharing of both the benefits and associated liabilities*...through joint management of the basin’s water resources...will take into account a much deeper economic analysis of the transboundary benefits linked to the Okavango River Basin” (ibid).

The first edition of OKAFLOW, the newsletter of the OKACOM refers to the objectives of the latter as to “develop a *coherent approach* to managing the whole river basin based on *equitable allocation*, sustainable utilization, sound environmental management and *sharing of benefits*” (OKAFLOW 2005:4).

At a workshop of the Okavango Pilot Project in Maun 13 September 2002, former President of Botswana Sir Ketumile Masire states that the “resources of the basin has to be utilised in a sustainable manner to *ensure maximum benefit*...[being] vital that Angola, Namibia and Botswana...cooperate in the management of the resource” (Daily News, 13 September 2002). Likewise, the Botswana Minister of Minerals, Energy and Water Affairs, Boometswe Mokgothu, while attending the first OKACOM workshop for ministers responsible for water and environment in Maun in May 2003, cautions “that the resources of the Okavango River basin must be utilised in an environmentally sound, economically beneficial and sustainable manner... Together we must ensure that we move forward in a way that *all of our interests are taken into consideration* and that ultimately we all *share in the benefits* that this international treasure which we are entrusted can afford us” (Daily News, 9 May 2003). At the same workshop, Botswana’s Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Minerals, Energy and Water Affairs, Dr Akolang Tombale, said that “though shared, water can be a source of conflict; therefore it is *vital that any projects should benefit others*” (Daily News, 12 May 2003). As an example, Tombale referred to transboundary projects in tourism, saying they could be undertaken to “*benefit all the three countries*”¹⁴⁷.

¹⁴⁷ A benefit sharing scenario frequently referred to in this context is Botswana compensating Angola for not going on with infrastructure projects upstream which, in the final case, will have the potential of altering the quality or quantity of water that reaches the Okavango Delta. A problem is, however, that a significant part of the tourism-generated revenues in the Delta stem from the activities of foreign companies, hence, for the scenario to be viable one will have to establish some mechanism to keep revenues in the Delta (I am thankful to Dr. Scott McCormick, USAID, for pointing this out to me).

A paper by Piet Heyns in the Namibian delegation to the OKACOM argues that the Commission “was established because the parties understood the importance of *working together before a conflict situation would arise*...the value of the OKACOM [having]...enhanced the development of *mutual understanding and trust* between the parties (Heyns 2000:7). Furthermore, discussions between OKACOM delegates centred on how to manage the basin “in a way that all three countries derive *equal benefit* from its resources...Experts say there is a need to *move beyond sharing water* to considering the numerous wetland and *social benefits of the basin*” (The Namibian, 31 March 2004).

6.2.2.1.1 Analysis – Merging text with context

Since the OKACOM was formed six years before the ORASECOM, can it be expected that the former encloses more developed and sophisticated benefit sharing mechanisms than the latter? Needless to say, the perceived benefits of the OKACOM are not articulated in an entirely coherent way among the diverse stakeholders in the basin. Benefits to the river due to the OKACOM are set forth by for instance the Botswana Minister of Minerals, Energy and Water Affairs as “sustainability”, herein “protection” and “conservation” of a “fragile” ecosystem. These benefits are articulated so as to further endorse the social construction of the Okavango as a “unique” and “God given treasure”. The pristine character of the basin, perhaps especially the Delta, underpins claims about the Okavango as being exceptional and by far irreplaceable. “Unique” thus becomes a nodal point in discourses centring on the river. Furthermore, benefits from the river due to increased cooperation range from “prosperity” and “welfare” for the people of the basin, to more tangible benefits such as “transboundary tourism” activities set to benefit all three riparians¹⁴⁸.

The benefits expected to accumulate because of the river tend to be of significant importance to the actors supporting the OKACOM. The former are articulated as trust, confidence building and equitable sharing of benefits in order to avoid conflictual outcomes. This focus becomes particularly pertinent as Nicol (2003:182) notes that there is lack of coordination between national policies and institutional arrangements in the basin. An agreement which holistically and coherently encourage joint management of the basin is seen as a precondition for peaceful coexistence, cooperation and sustainable development within

¹⁴⁸ Among the most relevant initiatives in this regard are Transfrontier Peace Parks such as the Four Corners Initiative whose aim is to facilitate regional cooperation and the management of shared natural resources between Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Botswana and where possibly Angola as a ‘fifth corner’ can be included at a later stage. For further information see: <http://www.worldwilderness.org>

and between the riparian states. As Howe (2005:29) puts it; across many river basins, benefits lost through lack of coordination will grow unless ways are found to manage the rivers in a comprehensive way. Furthermore, Sadoff and Grey (2002:398) maintain that cooperation can ease tensions over shared waters, and provide gains in the form of the saving that can be achieved, or the costs on non-cooperation or disputes that can be averted.

Considering the disputes over the ENWC and the Popa Falls hydropower, it should be evident that the problem pressure¹⁴⁹ in the Okavango River Basin is perceived to be fairly high by most actors. On this background, Lowi (1993:198) argues that the factor that will almost invariably lead states to seek cooperation is that of acute need for water resources and/or dependence upon a specific, shared body of water. The failure to establish a water-sharing regime would, according to Lowi, be considered threatening to the state's continued survival (ibid). Captivatingly, this string of reasoning shows a salient resemblance with what Buzan et al. (1998:86) have termed the securitisation of effects in environmental discourse. A remark by Piet Heyns serves as a luminous example of how this relates to the OKACOM case; "we've spent considerable time and energy on these river basin commissions, it is therefore important that they do not die an early death" (Heyns 2005). Swatuk (2000:181) claims that in the Okavango basin, cooperation has emerged in a fairly ad-hoc manner, driven by the response to a crisis rather than by an overarching desire to cooperate¹⁵⁰. When Namibia hastily initiated plans related to the finalisation of the ENWC in 1996, the country effectively bypassed the OKACOM as a consultative organ, making the latter appear as no more than a paper tiger (Ramberg 1997). As a consequence, Botswana promptly applied to UNESCO to have the Okavango Delta declared a Ramsar Site in 1997 (Turton 1999:9). As resentfully illuminated by Piet Heyns (2000:4) this was done without prior consultation with the other delegations in the OKACOM. Swatuk (2003:127) also affirms that the act was based on narrow national interests in so far as perceived upstream threats to the Delta, in particular the perceived devastating effects of the Rundu-Grootfontein pipeline, could be located within and possibly prevented through a framework of global environmental interests¹⁵¹.

¹⁴⁹ Problem pressure refers to the perceived visibility of a given problem leading to political pressure to handle it, for instance recurrent floods or water pollution (Lindemann 2005:6). If the problem pressure is high, there are good prospects for the creation of effective water regimes (ibid: 17).

¹⁵⁰ Though, this conclusion is challenged by Turton et al. (2002:3) arguing that crisis has had nothing to do with the rationale behind the establishment of any cooperative measures in the Okavango River Basin. To underpin this, it is noteworthy that Namibia played an active and important role in setting up the OKACOM as well as the ORASECOM.

¹⁵¹ Noteworthy, Namibia used the same strategy in the Orange River Basin, using the Ramsar status of the estuary as a leverage to strengthen its claims against South Africa to renegotiate the flow regime on the Lower Orange River (Turton and Earle 2003:13).

Botswana's decision, trying to protect its share of benefits from the Delta by acting unilaterally, left a bitter aftertaste in the mouths of its OKACOM partners (ibid:129). Botswana, taking the moral high ground with regards to environmental protection, was thus hoping to tie its upstream neighbours into a regime of sustainable river basin management (ibid:135). Resolutely, President Festus Mogae of Botswana states that the 1997 accession was not divorced from national self interest and security strategies as the economic sustainability of Botswana is very much dependent on tourism generated revenues from the Delta¹⁵². Like this, the logic of difference can work so as to merge the "common good" of environmental protection with the national security strategy of the Botswana Government.

Paradoxically, just as it is possible to see the Okavango Delta Ramsar Site as both a form of institutionalised securitisation established to counteract recurrent threats¹⁵³ (Buzan et al. 1998:27) and as a venue for desecuritisation providing benefits to the river through protection and conservation; so is it possible to view the OKACOM as an arena for desecuritisation through the harmonisation of national policies, but also as a regime being inherently securitised from the moment of its inception since, ultimately, a failure to provide for integrated river basin management would be considered a threat to the river and its riparians (Lowi 1993, Scudder 2005). Ultimately, behind all the diplomatic and cooperative language, a hidden menace lures; the threat of uncoordinated river basin management. This explains why the initially disparate processes of securitisation and desecuritisation appear simultaneously on the discursive arena under the common panoply of OKACOM.

Sadoff and Grey (2005:426) argue that the experience of successful cooperation can facilitate the development of trust and relationships between riparian states in international river basins. However, Turton and Earle (2003:6) emphasise that one of the core problems in the Okavango is the general absence of trust between the parties. This observation is consistent with, among others, Dr Hartmut Krugmann at the United Nations in Luanda stressing that "for OKACOM, a good secretariat is essential because there is still mistrust among the riparians" (Krugmann 2005). Furthermore, lack of uncontested basin-wide data is hampering efforts to develop policy options in the basin for the mutual benefit of all riparian states (Turton et al. 2002:15).

¹⁵² Personal communication, H. E. President Festus Mogae. Christian Michelsen Institute, Bergen 29 March 2006.

¹⁵³ For instance, a report to the 7th Meeting of the RAMSAR Convention in 1999, dealing with the Okavango Delta, is fraught with discursive signifiers establishing the latter as "threatened" in one way or another. The report is available at: http://www.ramsar.org/cop7/cop7_doc_20.5_e.htm. The RAMSAR Convention perceives wetlands and forests as being "two of the most threatened ecosystems in world terms" in "urgent need of protection and conservation". Available at: http://www.ramsar.org/lib/lib_bio1.htm

An indication of the considerable discursive diversity in the basin is given by Masego Madzwamuse at the World Conservation Union (IUCN) Botswana, stating that “the biggest problem is that the river means so many different things to different actors, there is no shared vision” (Madzwamuse 2005). Likewise, not all the riparians are equally committed to and derive the equal type and amount of benefits from the OKACOM. Swatuk (2003:129-130) portrays Angola as playing a relatively inactive role in the Commission and on a more general basis lack of or poor communication between and within OKACOM member governments is considered a problem¹⁵⁴. Several respondents concur with the abovementioned, stating that “Angola is not interested in the OKACOM” (Heyns 2005) or that “Angola is not putting serious efforts into the OKACOM” (Quintino 2005). An explanation is partly given by the Angolan OKACOM Commissioner Isidro Pinheiro, saying that “we derive mainly hassles and very few benefits from the river. Botswana has the upper hand in the whole basin and they can come and build lodges in Angola, but it is a problem that Namibia wants to fetch water in Angola and use it in Namibia” (Pinheiro 2005). Similarly, the Executive Director of the Angolan NGO Associação de Conservação do Ambiente e Desenvolvimento Rural Integrado (ACADIR), Antonio Chipita, affirms that “trust is difficult when one part is eating when the other is not. One can talk of equality in sharing, but in reality some benefit more than others” (Chipita 2005).

With regards to Botswana, the view of the Acting Chief of the Department of Environmental Affairs Steve Monna is that “there is mistrust among the riparians already due to Angolan developments. The Commission is an arena of suspicion and uncertainty because one does not know about the activities of the other riparians, but it is nonetheless very important as the riparians have reached the negotiating table and can develop a formula for shared management of the basin” (Monna 2005). A yet more encouraging attitude is disclosed by Heyns (2000:1), stating that the OKACOM has taken important steps towards IWRM, that activities that are and have been taking place have built confidence, mutual understanding and trust between the parties. This is in accord with Turton et al. (2003b:358) who claim that a high level of goodwill exists among the so called ‘hydropolitical elite’ from all the three riparian states, particularly among OKACOM commissioners¹⁵⁵.

The overarching question though, is whether this perceived high-level “goodwill” is

¹⁵⁴ The fact the official language in Namibia and Botswana is English, while it in Angola is Portuguese was considered a problem by many of the actors interviewed. When in Angola I had to use an interpreter on several occasions.

¹⁵⁵ De Wet (2005) refers to an important cross fertilization of ideas between ORASECOM and the OKACOM as well as between the commissioners as some of these appear in both commissions.

sufficiently strong to surpass perceived asymmetrical benefit sharing conditions within the OKACOM and, equally important, whether this benevolence reaches beyond what one Botswana actor perceives as “a much closed commission”¹⁵⁶. This matter will be dealt with in the following section.

6.2.2.2 The Every River has its People Project

The Every River has its People Project (ERP) was officially launched in Maun, Botswana, on the 18 October 2001 (KCS 2001b:72). The overall goal of the project is “to promote the sustainable management of natural resources in the Okavango River Basin for the *benefit of the basin residents* and states through promoting and facilitating the effective *participation of basin stakeholders* in natural resource decision-making and management” (ibid).

The ERP is intended to benefit participating national level NGOs, but the regional level NGOs will also take advantage of the project. Moreover, “since one of the key elements of the basin planning processes identified by OKACOM is *public participation*, the OKACOM will also be able to reap benefits from the project...OKACOM is a high level government institution lacking significant expertise with, or effective links to, riparian communities and many other stakeholders...the project can establish an important link between OKACOM and communities” (ERP 2006).

A booklet by the ERP discusses best practices with regards to shared river basin management and puts forward the argument that when developing mechanisms for managing tensions and conflict, “a focus on *optimising benefits* and ways of *equitable benefit sharing* across a basin, may be more constructive for all stakeholders (including basin states) than simply allocating water volumes” (NNF 2003:7).

The ERP initiated a massive AIDS awareness drive in September 2005 covering the three basin countries in two weeks (Daily News, 23 September 2005). The chairperson of OKACOM, Akolang Tombale, referred to the campaign as being instigated by the ERP which chose to “highlight HIV/AIDS and its impact on the river people of the three countries”. Tombale stressed that the road show will “bring the river communities of the three countries together and thus *dispel suspicion* and perceptions they might have towards each other...feelings of mistrust and cross border accusations arising from misinformation, misconception and ignorance regarding the use of the Okavango is the order of the day...the

¹⁵⁶ Interview of NGO leader in Botswana (name withheld).

road show is in our view the only way that we can *avert serious water conflicts* and bring about *regional integration*” (ibid).

The ERP also arranged a Basin Craft Exhibition in Windhoek in November 2005 where people from all the three basin states showcased their crafts (The Namibian, 15 November 2005). The Namibian Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development, Paul Smit, opened the exhibition stating that “handcrafts are one of the ways in which basin residents draw *benefits from their natural resources*” and the project aims to “enhance the livelihoods and wellbeing of the Okavango basin craft producers...establishing self-managed, viable and sustainable enterprises with *community involvement* and *empowerment* from the onset” (ibid).

6.2.2.2.1 Analysis - Empowerment or “tyranny of participation”¹⁵⁷?

As highlighted by Davidsen (2006:131), there appears to be a broad discursive consensus in the area of water resource management with regards to the challenge of identifying and involving the relevant stakeholders in river basin decision making. The benefits of participatory approaches to development are often dichotomized into means-ends classifications; as tools for achieving better and more visible project outcomes and as processes set to empower previously disadvantaged and marginalized individuals or groups (Cleaver 1999:598).

The ERP is perceived as an important measure when it comes to engaging communities in river basin management. The Project is articulated as a true “bottom-up perspective which functions as the watchdog of OKACOM” (Chiramba 2005), as a way of “educating people about the regional character of the Okavango River Basin, which will ultimately make the OKACOM more efficient” (Andrade 2005), “filling a need, a niche taking local communities as a point of departure in promoting sustainability, cooperation and wise utilisation of the basin” (Montshiwa 2005) and finally as a measure “to avoid a pure technical OKACOM” (Bethune 2005).

Essentially, the benefits of the ERP are articulated as “sustainable management” and “effective participation” perceived to “avert serious water conflicts” by “bringing river communities together”. An important aspect of the project is that “the ERP and the OKACOM complement each other when it comes to measures of benefit sharing in the

¹⁵⁷ Excerpt from the title of a book dealing with participatory approaches to development (see Cooke and Kothari 2001).

Okavango basin” (Barbosa 2005). Accordingly, Turton (2003c:91) emphasises that the desecuritisation of water resource management is a healthy manifestation because it opens up the discourse to a wider range of stakeholders. This is allegedly what the ERP does by adding another dimension of meaning to the Okavango River Basin, opening the discourse to a broader range of players, thus surpassing the pitfall of what Swatuk and Van der Zaag (2003:19) term the “Westphalian trap”, that is to focus too heavily on the state as the sole provider of river basin management.

While acknowledging the vast amount of shortcomings in contemporary attempts to involve “local people” in decision making¹⁵⁸, the discussion will advance not so much by assessing what the project fails to do, but rather what it actually does and what lies in its side-effects (Foucault 1976, Ferguson 1990). Noteworthy is the fact that proponents of participatory development do identify potential problems with such, but the accounts of such problems are almost invariably inward looking and instrumental and do rarely question the legitimacy and agenda of participatory development per se¹⁵⁹(Cooke 2001:104).

As cautioned by Cleaver (1999:599), empowerment has become a buzzword in development, the concept itself often implicitly rather than explicitly referred to in policy documents. It is often unclear exactly who is to be empowered, who is to benefit, who is to pay the costs and perhaps most importantly, who is to assess when and to what extent others have benefited. While the ERP discourse facilitates desecuritisation by incorporating previously disarticulated dimensions of meaning into existing discourses relating to the Okavango, it simultaneously reduces other dimensions of meaning by claiming that the individuals to be empowered are “basin residents”, “riparian communities or “river people”. Significantly, the discourse acts as a depoliticizing tool in so far as it represents certain groups as a homogenizations of diverse interests and aspirations (Davidsen 2006:132). ‘Participation’ becomes an easily exploitable empty signifier whose origin and usage is not derived from some Archimedean Point ‘out there’, but socially constructed by a range of development professionals whose ability to create and maintain this discourse is indicative of the power they possess. As participatory development covers a spectrum of meaning (Arnstein 1969),

¹⁵⁸ For a discussion of some of these challenges, see for instance Mehta (2000), Cooke and Kothari (2001), Mosse (2001), Bernauer (2002), Laungaramsri (2002), Wester et al. (2003) and Davidsen (2006). For an excellent review and critique of the underlying assumptions of participatory development in general, see Henkel and Stirrat (2001).

¹⁵⁹ My intention is not to dismiss out of hand the usefulness of people centred approaches to natural resource management, nor to turn down all attempts at community based resource management as well-meaning but ineffective. However, it appears that many discourses on stakeholder participation in natural resource management are underpinned by some rather superficial and poorly interrogated assumptions (Thompson 2002:235). Some of these are to be critically engaged with in the subsequent analysis.

the critical task becomes to understand whose meanings prevail and whose meanings have been excluded.

The participatory development discourse is maintained through the articulation of a number of dichotomies or oppositions; in this context as “OKACOM vs. ERP”, “top-down vs. bottom-up” and “professional knowledge vs. local knowledge”; these dichotomies maintaining perceptions of the morally ‘good’ and the morally ‘bad’ and strengthening the assumption that power is located at easily identifiable centres (Kothari 2001:140). The outcome of this dichotomization is that participatory approaches tend to reinscribe relations of authority between the ‘powerful’ and the ‘grassroots’, maintaining the perceived asymmetrical patterns of power that these initiatives were established to counteract in the first place. Participatory approaches commonly deploy reductionist subject positions in their deliberations, they provide certain subject positions to the participants, positions that there is nothing innate in these groups having, positions which shape the latter from the very beginning.

The participatory development discourse is caught up with what Cooke and Kothari (2001) term the “tyranny of method” and Cleaver (1999:608) labels “toolboxes”; instrumental and policy oriented “learning lessons”¹⁶⁰ and “best practices”¹⁶¹. The development industry is in the business of selling packages, in this case the adage of participatory development and benefit sharing wrapped as Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM) and Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM). Therefore, as brilliantly captured by Ferguson (1990:69), academic analysis is of no use to a “development agency” unless it creates a place for the agency to plug itself in, unless it constructs a charter for the sort of intervention the agency is set up to do. For an analysis to meet the needs of development institutions it must do what the academic discourse inevitably fails to do; it must construct the Okavango as an enormously promising candidate for participatory development and for the sort of intervention a development institution is able to initiate; apolitical, technical development interventions (ibid:69). What lies beneath the claim that the securitisation of water resource management undermines investor confidence (Turton 2001b:3) and that OKACOM Commissioners “consciously refrain from using the word “conflict” in their deliberations” (Turton et al. 2003b:360)?

¹⁶⁰ For such an example which assesses participatory approaches to development in the Okavango River Basin, see Bethune (2006).

¹⁶¹ Several of the ERP reports are titled “Best Practices” in one way or the other, see for instance Namibia Nature Foundation (2003) “Best Practices Guide for Promoting Shared River Basin Management” and the Kalahari Conservation Society (2004) “Best Practices and Approaches for Promoting Shared River Basin Management”.

Being tacitly enacted through the logic of difference, ‘participation’ in the context of the ERP does not only provide benefits because of the river, but does also become an attractive response to widespread popular unrest. The ERP subsequently provides a window opportunity for conflict resolution mechanisms where conflict resolution agencies do fit neatly into the bigger picture of “Water for Peace”¹⁶² in the Okavango River Basin. Certainly, an important *raison d’être* for donor agencies such as Green Cross International (GCI) and Swedish International Development and Cooperation Agency (SIDA) to become involved in the ERP in the first place can also be derived from the fact that the Okavango was defined as a “basin at risk” by Wolf et al. in 2003.

However, as maintained by the Executive Director of ACADIR, the NGO which is implementing the ERP in Angola, “the ERP will not be able to meet the social needs of local people, hence a lot of similar projects are needed and many donors are already involved” (Chipita 2005). This draws attention to the challenge identified by Scudder (2005:14) that the Okavango River Basin has attracted an incredible number of well meaning international institutions, but unless they can better coordinate their activities, “their sheer number pose a threat simply because they overwhelm the institutional capacity of the three riparian states”. The challenge of coordination is stressed by several respondents, for instance by Vladimir Russo, Manager of the National Biodiversity Strategy Action Plan (NBSAP) in Angola, referring to “conflicts between the Sharing Water Project and the ERP in the initial stages as there were problems of coordination since the two projects are similar and both wanted publicity” (Russo 2005)¹⁶³.

Ultimately, as the overall performance of the ERP is nevertheless assessed as being fairly successful (Bethune 2005), its real challenges lies not so much in what it fails to do, but rather in what it implicitly does and its final outcomes can be beneficial to “local people” just as well as they can be, diametrically, detriment to the same individuals that the project intends to benefit.

¹⁶² “Water for Peace” is the title of a report by Green Cross International (GCI) which assesses the role of civil society in conflict resolution in the Okavango River Basin. The report claims that “conflicts related to water resources tend to be at their most intense at the local level” (Curtin and Charrier 2004:16), hence providing the rationale for GCI’s development intervention and civil society approach in the first place.

¹⁶³ The challenge of coordination is also identified by Bethune (2005).

6.3 The Orange and the Okavango – Subcomplexes in the SAHC

Ashton (2004:164) claims that development constraints posed by domestic water scarcity can only be dealt with successfully if a wider, regional policy perspective is adopted. Simultaneously, Turton and Ashton (2004:62) emphasise the need to enlarge the degree of regional development equity between the SADC member states. Herein, mutually beneficial water projects have proven an efficient motivation for cooperation, leading to more stable hydropolitical relations (Zeitoun and Warner 2005:15).

The essential task becomes to analyse how the grammar of reciprocity and desecuritisation materialises in articulations by stakeholders inhabiting the riparian states of the Orange and Okavango River Basins. Specific attention will be paid to the role of interbasin transfers of water and how these materialise in a diversity of coalition formations and benefit sharing scenarios. Subsequently, can empirical evidence be found supporting the claim that the SAHC has validity beyond the pure academic and theoretical spheres? Additionally, what are the wider implications of promoting water resource management under the conceptual panoply of hydropolitical complex theory?

6.3.1 Articulating interdependence

Heyns (2002:158) reveals that the “main purpose of...water transfer projects is to effect more efficient water resource management...in this way it is possible to improve operating procedures and optimise operations to *spread the available water resources more evenly* across the region...the transfer of water will become even more important in the future to achieve the objectives of *regional economic integration* as advocated in the SADC Treaty”. Furthermore, “while a country may be able to act unilaterally if the scheme is within its own territory, *cooperation* and *joint planning* will always be a prerequisite in the case of a transboundary project” (ibid:166).

The controversies around the Popa Falls Hydropower and the Eastern National Water Carrier have previously revealed that Namibia has a pressing need for improved assurance of water supply to the Windhoek area. Attributable to the significantly internationalised character of the Okavango River Basin the latter has caught the attention of a world wide network of environmentalists that will not see the pristine nature of the river compromised in any way (Turton 2005a:27). Accordingly, the Namibian Government has looked at options pertaining to water abstraction from other less internationalised river basins in the region.

As suggested by Heyns (2002:164-165) the level of water scarcity in the SADC region increases dramatically if the yield of the Congo River is not considered in the equation. A possible remedy being investigated is the construction of an inter basin transfer from the Congo River via the Zambezi into the upper reaches of the Okavango (ibid:166). An article in the Namibian states that “plans for a feasibility study have reached an advanced stage and plans are well underway to set up a pipeline stretch over 1000 km from the Congo River in the DRC to other river basins in the region” (The Namibian, 2 August 2000). In this regard, Dudley Biggs in the Namibian Department of Water Affairs stresses that the Congo-Zambezi-Okavango transfer scheme “would give Namibia *many options*” with regards to water resource management (Biggs 2005).

The significance of this water diplomacy is further accentuated in a paper by the Namibian Minister of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development, Helmut Angula (Angula 2001). The Minister attempts to justify the perspective of the Namibian Government with regards to Botswana’s inclusion in the ORASECOM, stating that “although there is a limited contribution to the surface runoff in the Orange from Botswana territory, it was felt that Botswana should be included in the proposed Commission because Botswana would remain an important role player as far as the future augmentation of the water resources in Southern Africa from the Zambezi River is concerned. The *good neighbourliness* between Botswana and Namibia was also important as far as it relates to the future Namibian designs on the waters of the Okavango River” (ibid). The Namibian Minister continues, stating that “South Africa will need further augmentation of its water resources by 2020...One possibility [...] would be to utilise surplus water from the Zambezi River...[and] Namibia is a Zambezi Basin state that might be able to *support* South Africa” (ibid).

This open invitation gains texture considering that the South African Government has previously revealed an interest in the Zambezi River. A report by the DWAF (Basson et al. 1997) states that “importation of water from large under utilised rivers within reasonable proximity of South Africa could most likely be a viable and *sustainable option* for the augmentation of local water resources...the Vaal River system would probably be the logical recipient basin. The Zambezi River is the only river that is reasonably close and of sufficient size to serve as a source for the importation of water...it should, however, be recognized that South Africa, not being a co-basin state has no right to the water of the Zambezi...there are eight co-basin states which must agree to the export of water to South Africa before this possibility can become a reality” (ibid:67).

Against this setting the former Director General of the South African DWAF, Mike Muller, puts across that “the benefits of diversity of supply and reliability as well as the increase in the quantum of water available will certainly ensure that the construction of inter basin transfers continues” (Muller 2002), further stressing that it is also “important to highlight the need for an appropriate framework of cooperation wherever and IBT is planned for a watercourse shared with another state” (ibid). For South Africa, it now becomes important to maintain a good relationship with Botswana and Namibia as these states are both riparians of the Zambezi River. Namibia on the other side has expressed an interest in obtaining more water from the Lower Orange River (Amakali 2005). At the same time, South Africa and Lesotho are jointly conducting a feasibility study over further phases of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (Mail and Guardian, 19 September 2005). For that reason, it is of significant importance that Namibia has only given its “no objection” to Phase 1 of the LHWP. Hydropolitical diplomacy is yet again brought up on the agenda, now by Dudley Biggs in the Namibian Department of Water Affairs, vigorously expressing that “Phase 2 is a bargaining chip for Namibia which we will have to use since we have so few other chips. As such, we can kill the goose that lays the golden egg” (Biggs 2005).

Botswana has also limited development-manoeuvrability when it comes to the Okavango River Basin, purportedly having painted itself into a corner where it would face considerable opposition should it wish to develop any water schemes from upstream of the Okavango Delta (Turton 1999:9). To meet increasing demands for water in the Gaborone area, the Botswana Government developed the North – South Carrier Water Project (NSCWP) transferring water from the north of the country to the capital in the south east (ibid). The project was completed and inaugurated by President Festus Mogae in May 2002 (Daily News, 20 May 2002). Turton (2005b) alleges that the hydropolitical relations between South Africa and Botswana are good as the two countries have a history of close collaboration in the Limpopo River Basin. Heyns (2002:8) thus maintains that by linking the Letsibogo dam on the Ngotwane, which is the main source of water for the NSCWP, with the Zambezi River close to Kazungula, a regional approach could be implemented which would entail a transfer scheme from the Zambezi via the Letsibogo dam to the Gauteng Province in South Africa.

Heyns (2002:164) states that another spin off of the regional water transfer from the Zambezi to Gauteng could be that a branch line could be constructed across the Eastern Caprivi in Namibia via Francistown in Botswana, to serve Bulawayo, the second largest city in Zimbabwe as well. Zimbabwe also plans to pump water from the Zambezi at a point

downstream of Victoria Falls in order to serve Bulawayo, but the former alternative would entail a shorter pumping distance of about 200 km (ibid).

Additionally, Botswana, having obtained rights as a legal riparian of the Orange River Basin through the ephemeral Nossob and Molopo Rivers, has a considerable manoeuvrability when it comes to voting either one way or the other in ORASECOM and OKACOM. This interrelatedness between the basin states of the Orange and Okavango rivers is further exemplified if attention is drawn towards the fact that President Mogae has opened the door for future transfers of water from the LHWP to Botswana, though, stating that it “would be costly...and the water and power would have to go through South Africa” (Daily News, 19 April 2004).

Turton and Ashton (2004:57) note that while Namibia and Botswana are co-riparians on the Zambezi, their portions of the basin are unfavourable for development of the resource. As such, by cooperating with Angola which enjoys a more favourable riparian position in the basin, they can both increase their leverage in the management of the Zambezi. As all three countries share the Okavango River, cooperation in the Zambezi can also positively affect hydro-relations and negotiations in the OKACOM (ibid:58).

When it comes to the linkage between the Cunene and Okavango River Basins, Heyns (2002:164) maintains that “the headwaters of the Cubango can easily be diverted under gravity...into the Cunene Basin which has a much steeper gradient in its lower reaches than the Okavango, making the latter extremely suitable for the generation of hydropower and Angola can act unilaterally because such transfer could be done within Angolan territory”. Though, the OKACOM and the Permanent Joint Technical Commission (PJTC) on the Cunene have been set up to deal with such issues, making provisions for the reasonable and equitable share of each basin state in the waters of the basins (ibid). Dudley Biggs stresses that Namibia is “acutely sensitive from a security point of view when it comes to the Cunene, which is the single most important river for the country” (Biggs 2005). At Ruacana Falls the river is a source of hydro-electric power and an inter basin transfer to the Cuvelai basin, the latter supporting the densest human population of any basin in Namibia (Turton 2005a).

While approximately 500 000 Namibians in the north of the country are dependent on the pumping of water from Angola to Namibia, current negotiations between the two countries have revealed a tense relationship between the respective water departments (Biggs 2005)¹⁶⁴. When referring to the reinstated PJTC between Angola and Namibia on the Cunene,

¹⁶⁴ Biggs (2005) emphasises that the tense climate is due to bad personal relations between people in the respective water departments in Luanda and Windhoek and does not affect the work in OKACOM.

the Angolan OKACOM Commissioner Isidro Pinheiro declares that “it can never go well in the Cunene Commission...we have a good relationship with Botswana, but our relationship with Namibia is not so good due to water issues...If OKACOM only consisted of Angola and Namibia, the Okavango Delta would be at risk due to bad relationships. My perception is that the work in the Cunene Commission affects the work in OKACOM ...Namibia is always trying to play clever. Don’t tell me trust is important, we will never trust Namibia. If Namibia continues to be jealous, let them be. Nature will betray them, not Angola” (Pinheiro 2005).

This string of reasoning makes it evident that the SAHC is shaped by patterns of amity just as well as those of enmity. With the intention of setting the stage for further discussion, the development of water infrastructure to reduce the impacts of water deficits is a complex process often associated with controversy. Heyns (2002:169) notes that the SADC Protocol on Shared Watercourse Systems “may not be able to prevent wars”, but nonetheless represents “an *attempt to facilitate communication, joint cooperation and sustainable development*...when inter basin transfer schemes are developed along these lines, water transfers may even be an *instrument for cooperation* instead of conflict”. As such, interbasin water transfers can ultimately become “an *act of solidarity* between states if water is provided to alleviate scarcity” (ibid:173).

6.3.2 Analysis – Desecuritisation through interdependency?

Turton and Ashton (2004:61) identify a burgeoning regionalisation in post-Apartheid Southern Africa in which the political structures and processes of the future are unlikely to mirror those of the past. Concurrently, Ashton and Turton (2005:8) emphasise that while the dynamics of Southern African hydropolitics has changed somewhat after 1994, the underlying drivers remain largely unchanged. This ambivalence does not preclude Turton (2005b:27) from asserting that the essential desecuritising component of the SAHC materialise in a plus sum outcome where all the riparian states emerge with their key strategic interests having been met. Additionally, Ashton and Turton (2005:6) also emphasise the necessity of launching an extensive regional hydraulic mission in order to support future economic growth in the SADC region.

From the deliberation above a fairly consistent picture of interdependence emerges, this set to decrease the possibility, both physically and legitimately, of riparian states unilaterally embarking on national development strategies without somehow acknowledging

the complex web of reciprocity that they are part of. Stemming from the assumption that securitisation occurs due to a reduction of possibilities; as a dichotomy materialising in the friend versus enemy nexus with clear cut borders separating them; desecuritisation consequently opens up the discourse and allows for more flexibility and dynamics. The hydropolitical complex somehow creates a more unclear and multifaceted image of interstate relations over water where state actors are more reluctant in playing out their conflictual cards as relations in one river can affect relations in another river.

A notable feature is that interdependence is vigorously downplayed by most water bureaucrats in the five riparian states. As stressed by the Deputy Director of the Department of Water Affairs in Gaborone; “we are not that dependent on the other riparians. Rather, we have our own way of looking at water issues vested within the spirit of SADC and the Revised Protocol on Shared Watercourses” (Katai 2005). Similarly, Piet Heyns in the corresponding department in Windhoek retains that “we are talking about sovereign states here, each country can have its own policy, but in the river basin commissions there is a kind of collective sovereignty enacted through shared governance” (Heyns 2005). Finally, Peter Pyke at DWAF in Pretoria claims that “different countries have different levels of development, but most of the other states have not yet reached the same level of development as South Africa. Eventually contentious issues, are, however, largely addressed in the SADC Protocol” (Pyke 2005). While water bureaucrats in the pivotal states of Botswana, Namibia and South Africa emphasise the importance of aligning and harmonizing national policies, being “politically correct” by approaching the respective basins in a holistic way in accordance with the “Spirit of SADC”, Swatuk (2003:129) rightfully points out that each of the riparians are determined to pursue national development plans, often holding jealously to their sovereign right to do so. As suggested by Simon (2002:7), Southern Africa’s political leaders are lukewarm towards most forms of integration that substantially diminish the power of state sovereignty.

With regards to perceived reciprocity the picture is slightly different for the two impacted states of Lesotho and Angola. The Lesotho Commissioner of Water emphasises that “in relation to environmental and social as well as economic aspects the Orange is a symbol of integration; it brings all the riparians together” (Lesoma 2005). Lucy Sekoboto at the Lesotho Ministry of Natural Resources stresses that “the policies of Lesotho are dependent. We face commitments with regards to development in so far as we have to make sure that whatever we do does not conflict with what other actors do or would like to do” (Sekoboto 2005). Likewise, Isidro Pinheiro being Angolan OKACOM Commissioner declares that

“Angola has water and is supposed to share it as reflected in the SADC Protocol, but our policies are actually not that dependent on the other riparians” (Pinheiro 2005). Further, Carlos Andrade, Angolan delegate to the Okavango Basin Steering Committee (OBSC) states that “Angola has started its economic recovery and will have to develop hydropower and irrigation schemes. A benefit sharing scenario where Botswana compensates Angola for not embarking on some of these schemes can be advantageous for all the basin states. Angola is a sleeping giant in all aspects in the SADC region, but to wake up it will need support from the international community” (Andrade 2005). While the future development aspirations of impacted states such as Lesotho and Angola are impeded by asymmetric power relations compared to the economically and politically stronger pivotal states (Ashton and Turton 2004:7), Angola is perceived, at least by domestic actors, as having the potential to become a significant role player in Southern African hydrogeopolitics.

The essential nodal points in the SAHC discourse are “cooperation”, “joint development”, “diplomatic negotiation” and “coalition formation”. This *I support you if you support me* logic is an essential component of the concept of high politics defined by Dokken (1997:84-86) as “politics that concerns vital national interests, politics that the actors regard as sensitive to the state and that is to be dealt with by the highest authorities of the state”. As anticipated, the actors supporting the regional water development scenario are essentially government elites from, most notably, the three pivotal basins. By acknowledging the transformative endeavour of desecuritisation (Aradau 2004), it becomes crucial to understand the wider implications of the discourse which puts forward the claim that interdependence through inter basin transfers is beneficial to the Orange and Okavango riparians as well as for regional peace and stability.

Firstly, when states cooperate one should ask who, beyond the state as a container, benefits and loses from such cooperation (Furlong 2006:445). The interdependency and reciprocity envisaged in the Southern African Hydrogeopolitical Complex describe perceived benefits of cooperation, but efficiently excludes the perceptions of local individuals and groups. While the SAHC is perceived to build interdependence, the limitation is that benefit sharing is articulated in such a way that it becomes limited to and, most importantly, defined by the same set of competing actors; diplomats, small groups of civil servants; primarily engineers and hydrologists, perhaps also some international donors¹⁶⁵. Therefore, the

¹⁶⁵ For instance, seen against the diplomatically, state-elite declared “win-win” situation of the LHWP, Bond et al. (2002:131) argue that the project is a “costly, corrupt, poorly designed, badly implemented, economically-damaging, ecologically-disastrous and distributionally-regressive megaproject” where the consequent

consequence is that states decide when states have benefited. The way in which the SAHC discourse maintains and strengthens the Westphalian trap of methodological collectivism (Agnew 1994) is expressively identified by Slavoj Žižek (1999:29) in his critique of Carl Schmitt, claiming that the clearest indication of Schmitt's disavowal of the political is the primacy of external relations (relations between sovereign states) over internal politics (inner social antagonisms), effectively disavowing the *internal* struggle which traverses the social body. While academics and bureaucrats focus on interstate relations, exploitation of water resources within states is effectively neglected (Furlong 2006:442).

The relative negligence of benefits that may accrue beyond the state as a container somehow appears as a paradox, considering that the strongest proponents of the SAHC; Ashton (2004) and Turton (2005a), claim that conflict is inversely related to scale and that the desecuritisation component of the SAHC lies in the perceived increase in management options for politicians and bureaucrats to draw upon when taking the hydropolitical complex level as a point of departure for policy making. The picture becomes even more puzzling when considering the vast amount of conflict resolution efforts in the water sector in the SADC region, these set to provide benefits *because of the river*, though on a state to state level and not on a local scale where conflicts and securitisation is perceived to be at its most intense and where such measures should be most welcome as hypothesised by Ashton and Turton. Maintaining the state as the focal point of analysis and promoting state elites as the only actors able to securitise and desecuritise is flawed. Just as the capability of securitising an issue is, in theory, open to performativity's social magic, so should desecuritisation also be a strategy for non-state actors to draw upon.

Secondly, it becomes important to understand the political role that IBTs already play in South African hydropolitics (see Turton 2005c), these being critical components of the country's hydraulic mission thus underpinning much of its economic sustainability. Turton (2005c:19) emphasises that strategic interests have been of supreme concern, having become significant drivers of cooperation when South Africa has embarked on water development projects. Decisively, Turton (2001b:4) introduces the concept of "hydosolidarity"¹⁶⁶ when describing how a desecuritisation discourse of cooperation and benefit sharing can coexist with a security of supply discourse. This balancing on the knife's edge between securitisation

hydropolitical power struggles over the costs and benefits of the mega-dams have tainted the taste of Lesotho's water. In this context, Graeme Monro, the technical advisor to the Commissioner of Water in Lesotho, also raises the pertinent question whether the South African royalties actually contribute to a "better life for all" in Lesotho (Monro 2005).

¹⁶⁶ The concept of hydosolidarity (Falkenmark and Folke 2002) is to be analysed in greater detail in chapter 8.

and desecuritisation turns into a powerful discursive tool in promoting and facilitating national development projects under the banner of the common good of the region, the latter articulated through such nodal points as “regional integration”, “stability” and “peace”.

Those voices that generally assume that water users in the basin from which water is diverted will lose the future benefits by that diversion¹⁶⁷ (Yevjevich 2001:342), those arguing that an increase in the number of IBTs in the Orange is likely to increase the conflict potential within the basin (Turton 2005b:25), yet further those maintaining that IBTs challenge the inherent norms in IWRM proposing that each river basin is to be managed as a single, hydrological unit and finally, those who claim that IBTs will further aggravate the disparities between those riparians that can and cannot embark on such resource demanding missions¹⁶⁸ (Ashton 2004:167), are all more or less silenced as it is hard if not impossible to argue against the benefits of “regional peace and stability”.

The purportedly noble task of unmaking the past where arbitrarily demarcated borders in the basin states caused major population centres to be located far from adequate freshwater resources, becomes a value laden decolonising strategy in post Apartheid Southern Africa (Simon 2002) legitimising belligerent supply oriented thinking in the area of water resource management¹⁶⁹. However, Simon (ibid:23) suggests that many contemporary development initiatives in the region reveal strong elements of continuity with the past. The moral gesture of hydrosolidarity appears as no more than a badly lit vision if one takes into account that in many SADC states, contemporary water management echoes the past by giving preference to white settlers, industry, mining and large scale inefficient agriculture (Swatuk 2002:511). Similarly, the South African state has shown itself to be a hard-liner in pursuit of its own perceived strategic interests in the region (Simon 2002:23).

¹⁶⁷ Mutembwa (1998) claims that Lesotho might actually export itself into water scarcity. It is noteworthy that the former DG of DWAF in Pretoria claims that the LHWP is not an international project and that South Africa would be able to abstract the water to be transferred entirely within its own territory (Muller 2002:6), thus avoiding many of the legal implications of international water law that would normally apply. As brutally put forward by Peter Pyke at DWAF, “Lesotho has an economic incentive to honour the Treaty. They give us water and we give them money. If they don’t give us water, we don’t give them money and we get the water in any case” (Pyke 2005).

¹⁶⁸ According to Heyns (2002:162), existing water transfer schemes on internationally shared rivers in Southern Africa involve Angola, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Lesotho. Acknowledging the dominant role of South Africa in the LHWP, the ratio between pivotal versus impacted states when it comes to IBTs is then 4:1. The relative higher level of economic development means that pivotal states have the capacity to project their power outside their own sovereign territories, which eventually becomes important in understanding the dynamics of hydrohegemony (Turton 2005b:15). This is also to be elaborated on later.

¹⁶⁹ Mehta (2000) and Allan (2003) put forward the claim that the developing world is still caught in the phase of hydraulic mission where demand driven discourses are yet to be translated into practice.

The way in which the development of IBTs will continue in the future is tellingly encapsulated by Peter Pyke at the DWAF, proclaiming that “South Africa is an arid country so love it or leave it, dam and infrastructure developments will always be with us and domestic supply is not enough to sustain current and future levels of development. Technically, it is possible to put water, in any amount of quantity, everywhere, but between politics and economics it is not so easy because water flows uphill towards money” (Pyke 2005). Such technocratic strings of reasoning where politics is seen as *the* problem are illustrative of the way in which the attempt to unmake asymmetrical patterns of development through the development of IBTs might in fact create new disparities. As such, the essential question is related to the distribution and relative magnitude of benefits, as well as, and equally important; the dispersion of costs among stakeholders directly or indirectly affected by “development”. The concept of development is evocatively used to describe change; however, it is also frequently used so as to sustain and strengthen an existing situation or system with little transformation or improvement having taken place (Ashton 2004:157).

7 The Social Construction of Nature – A Comparison

“When anyone says the word ‘nature’, we should ask the question, ‘Which nature?’
[...] There are manifold reminders of the fact that the meanings of ‘nature’ do not
grow on trees, but must be constructed” (Ulrich Beck 1995:39)

This chapter provides some analytical reflections with regards to the overarching research subject while simultaneously serving as a review of some of the findings from the empirical analysis in the previous chapter. Attention is drawn to how different constructions of nature can have a significant impact on the dynamics between securitisation and desecuritisation in the two river basins under consideration.

As suggested by Eder (1996), the relationship between nature and society can be posited theoretically in two different ways; as a natural constitution of society or as a social construction of nature, the two positions to be termed *naturalist* and *culturalist*. The naturalistic analysis of the relationship is opposed by a culturalistic elucidation which perceives nature as something that is constructed symbolically rather than objectively given (ibid:9). Furthermore, Eder (ibid:21) puts forward a simple distinction between two kinds of activities that determine interaction with nature; the metaphor of a craftsman and that of a farmer. The former sanctions a mechanical state of nature which aims at shaping and transforming nature through calculating it while the latter, by contrast, establishes an organic relationship which ensures that nature can continue to reproduce itself. While these positions are not incommensurable and mutually exclusive, the former implies an “exploitation of nature” which organises the nature-society nexus as a power relationship whereas the latter struggles with nature, not with the goal of dominating it, but with the goal of being able to preserve it (ibid:26). Ultimately, the concept of *nature* becomes a social product as the very act of positing nature requires entering a certain relation *with* nature, from which there is no Archimedean point or value neutral ground for discursive articulation¹⁷⁰ (Smith 1991:18).

Since a normative definition of nature cannot be disconnected from the production and reproduction of a normative order of society per se, it becomes decisive to identify not only *how* different actors produce nature and *who* controls this production, but it becomes equally important to ask exactly *what* kind of nature is produced. Herewith, discursive battles commonly occur over what is to be considered natural and artificial and ultimately over which

¹⁷⁰ To recap Laclau and Mouffe (1994:108), this Kantian distinction has nothing to do with whether there is a world external to thought. What is denied is not that nature exists externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that it can constitute itself as an object outside any discursive condition of emergence.

of the two are to be preferred. At the centre stage of the debate is the symbolic meaning of nature.

Fischer (1990:29) claims that the expanding influence of technocracy in the field of environmental decision making rests on the former's ability, through the process of depoliticization, to shield state elites and institutions from political pressure from below. Consequently, this naturalisation of nature blurs and makes difficult to identify issues pertaining to the social construction of nature and who controls this production. Discourse analysis then investigates the boundaries of acceptability, how certain framings of nature appear, literally, as natural and unproblematic in some contexts, while in other settings they trigger chains of counteractive discursive articulations. By deconstructing technocratic¹⁷¹ policy discourses relating to distinct constructions of 'river', seemingly straightforward positions can be laid bare as concealing highly controversial and normative commitments to be identified as important mediators in facilitating securitisation and desecuritisation while simultaneously and tacitly protecting the status quo in a river basin.

While Allan (1999:6) stresses that a river basin remains a conceptual entity of immense material and symbolic value to a diversity of individuals and groups, the remaining task is to comparatively identify how certain constructions of nature, herein river go together with and is susceptible to certain kinds of securitisation and not with others and how prospects for desecuritisation through benefit sharing and reciprocity are also dependent on the very nature of these constructions.

7.1 Securitising nature

The previous chapters have shown that the degree to which a human collective perceives a development as a potential threat to a designated referent object differs substantially between as well as within the riparian states. Lee (2002:17) suggests that public awareness relating to a problem can affect the level of sensitivity, and subsequently the degree of securitisation of an issue. As noted by Campbell (1998:2), events or factors identified as dangerous come to be recognized as such only through an interpretation of their various dimensions of dangerousness. This calls attention to the diametrically divergent ways in which the nodal point *river* has been articulated in securitisation discourse. Why are there no significant attempts of environmental securitisation in the Orange River Basin, while perceived threats to the Okavango Delta have triggered a vast amount of alarmist reactions and subsequent

¹⁷¹ Fischer (1990:17) defines *technocracy* as "a system of governance in which technically trained experts rule by virtue of their special knowledge and position in dominant political and economic institutions".

securitisation? Does this at all correspond with the fact that the former is described as heavily polluted and significantly altered while the latter is pristine and untouched? Certainly, the former does not contain any “less” nature or ecology than the latter.

7.1.1 A comparative account of environmental securitisation

Buzan et al. (1998:72) claim that scientific arguments often enjoy a striking legitimacy and authority within environmental debates. While this observation applies to both the Okavango and the Orange, the discursive power of technological science appears as exceptional in the context of the latter. Why is this and how does it affect the degree of environmental securitisation? Consider this edifying string of reasoning put forward by Peter Pyke at the South African DWAF; “the Orange River is in the state of significantly altered in terms of development, no longer a natural river system, but significantly altered by man made interventions” (Pyke 2005). Further, by attempting to capture the level of awareness with regards to water scarcity in the Orange, Pyke (ibid) stresses that “with better publicity it will be possible to create awareness. For many people, if opening a tap and water *does* come out, then water is not an issue. If opening the tap and water does not come out, then water becomes an issue, but how water gets to the tap most people are blissfully ignorant about”. Conversely, with regards to the Okavango River, Caspar Bonyongo at the Harry Oppenheimer Okavango Research Centre (HOORC) in Maun emphasises that “Botswana is worried about the unknown impacts of upstream water abstraction...there are very poor water supplies in Maun and developments are already suffering because of water shortages. This year (2005, my note) has been particularly bad (Bonyongo 2005)”.

These two different narratives draw attention to a point brilliantly captured by Beck (1995:46), claiming that environmental destruction and protest are isolated from one another by cultural inclination to accept devastation. Acceptance wears thin only where people see their way of life jeopardized in a manner they can both know and interpret. The calming modus operandi of technology has the precise opposite effect, clarifying why perhaps those most gravely affected do not fight most tenaciously against a proposed development (ibid:47). For this reason, ecological protest; herein environmental securitisation becomes a matter not of natural, but of cultural fact and interpretation. With regards to the Orange River Basin, potential environmental threats can be compared away and legally and scientifically normalised through the implementation of instream flow requirements (IFRs) and environmental impact assessments (EIAs), making it possible to stigmatise attempts of

environmental securitisation as outbreak of irrationality¹⁷². By defining science, technocratic agencies have also in important respects defined society by tacitly drawing the borderline between what protests are to be considered legitimate and which should be ruled out as absurd in the environmental discourse. The Okavango River Basin, herein most notably the Delta, is being constructed as “unspoilt, untouched, pristine and virtually unexplored wilderness”¹⁷³. Whilst being mediated by geographical scale and proximity, it is precisely the everyday visibility of potential threats, the image of a littered and polluted Okavango Delta and the picture of dried out riverbeds that make people in Maun to conclude that “the river is not what it used to be” and “we must find out who’s responsible”¹⁷⁴. Essentially, in order to be successful environmental securitisation must free itself from technology’s self-blockade and address injuries to economic, social and cultural conditions with reference to human experience.

Protest strategies by securitising actors in Botswana get an emotional clout through the application of strong metaphors of death and survival which cumulate as they tend to merge threats without enemies with those that are perceived to be attributable to a perpetrator, be it upstream Namibian or Angolan communities. Thus, conspiracy theories can flourish in the Delta, being underpinned by scientific uncertainty with regards to the potential impacts of the ENWC Pipeline and the Popa Falls Hydropower. An archetypal example extracted from a workshop initiated by the Kalahari Conservation Society in Maun in 2001 reveals the high level of insecurity in the Delta: “I am pleased that we have an Angolan representative among us and also hope she is best placed to explain the reduction in water-flow downstream” (KCS 2001a:25). Even if it never becomes quite clear whether everything or nothing has been changed or polluted and, eventually, what the causes are, it is clear that the climate has become polluted by suspicion and mistrust.

¹⁷² Of course, environmental concerns are also addressed by actors in the Orange River Basin, but these do not gain the same significance as those in the Okavango River Basin where nature has been constructed as pristine and vulnerable. With regards to environmental securitisation, the Orange River might be considered ‘under-securitised’ (Buzan and Wæver 2003), however environmental issues are likely to increase in relevance in the future following the declaration of the Orange Estuary as a Ramsar Site of International Importance in 1995.

¹⁷³ Excerpt from “Maun – A Visitors Guide” (2004).

¹⁷⁴ Michael Williams (2003) deals with the ways in which images impact on securitisation and how visual representations of different policy options influence security practices. The way in which the Okavango has caught the attention of the international community is much due to the mass media in sounding social alarm through “pictures of tree skeletons and worm-infested fish” (Beck 1995:100). But, as stressed by Buzan et al. (1998:88), it is only when cameras are present that the local drama can perform important symbolic and mythic functions. Images thus play an important role in facilitating securitisation, consequently justifying my use of such throughout this study!

However, it is not necessarily the destruction of nature per se, but the jeopardization of a specific cultural model of nature that provides the platform for ecological alarms and securitisation. As advocated by Buzan et al. (1998:84), the environmental sector provides a lens that highlight root causes of existential threats that become manifest in other sectors. The linking of different security issues, held together by the discursive cement of 'Okavango' and 'threatened', ignite different securitising moves as a threat to the Okavango can become a matter of national security, herein also economic security for the Botswana Government, a matter of economic security for safari operators, a matter of environmental security for environmental communities and ultimately, a matter of societal security for local communities in the Delta which "will no longer be what they are" if perceived destructive developments are initiated. These issue linkages make Caspar Bonyongo at the Harry Oppenheimer Okavango Research Centre (HOORC) to conclude that "the security situation is extreme in Maun" (Bonyongo 2005).

By transcending internal antagonistic divisions, the abovementioned groups have created a discourse coalition centred on the protection of the Okavango Delta (Swatuk 2001). Notions of "pristine nature" constructed as "fragile nature" being vulnerable to dam construction forms the basis of this coalition which attracts substantial support from international environmental communities as far away as California (the International Rivers Network). Attention has been further expanded through notions of river as local culture, brought up on the agenda by the Ngami Times in Maun, among others. This is manifest in an excerpt from the newspaper in 2003 where a Delta tribe raises concerns over upstream developments; "We worry a lot when we hear that Namibians are to set up a dam within our Okavango River. Basically we depend for the most of our life on the Delta, and if people go ahead with their plans, then there would be trouble to the !!Anikhwe people" (Ngami Times, 2003h).

While environmental aspects are subordinate they are not entirely absent in the Orange River discourse. However, in this case 'river' has become associated with dam construction and pipelines, lacking attraction of vast and pristine wilderness. Nevertheless, Deputy Director in the Namibian DWA expressively maintains that "you must keep your house in order to attract financial resources and everybody is climbing on this environmental wagon nowadays. You must protect your source, you can't pump it dry" (de Wet 2005). Correspondingly, it becomes increasingly difficult for countries like Namibia to attract such resources if not Western World-defined environmental aspects are put into the larger equation of river basin management.

7.1.2 Technical uncertainty and social conflict – the motors of bureaucratic expansionism

What is the role between technical uncertainty and social conflict in transboundary water resource management? Turton (2003a:81) emphasises that uncontested, reliable, basin-wide data is essential for conflict mitigation. Accordingly, cases where such data has been collected jointly, such as in the Orange River Basin, generally demonstrate a low potential for conflict. Conversely, cases where uncontested basin-wide data is missing, as in the Okavango River Basin, reveal a higher potential for conflict particularly under conditions of drought. Wynne (1992:751) argues that the response to uncertainty and conflict is to invest in more science. This draws attention to how the rise of technocracy and its embedded agencies is inextricably linked to the rise of environmental concerns. While the threshold for accepting scientific conclusions appears to be much higher in the Okavango than in the Orange, scientific uncertainty generally appears as a motor of bureaucratic and technocratic expansion as the possibility of detriment impacts of dams and pipelines can never be totally disregarded.

Compelled by the dilemma of whether to follow the same argumentative path as technocrats, the protests of environmental movements must in order to be successful speak the language of technocracy that serves as much to bring about the threats protested against as it serves the cause of protest itself, and of those who counteract it (Beck 1995:62). While this technologization of environmental discourse creates market opportunities for embedded subject positions such as engineers and hydrologists, Fischer (1990:19) notes that technocratic discourses to a large extent operate in an administrative vacuum where they are typically shielded from public scrutiny. The risk debate can therefore thunder back and forth in a self-sustaining dynamic couched in an infinite technocratic jargon which effectively leaves political issues and power relations untouched.

While exposure to threats aggravates the everyday dependency on science, it simultaneously opens the scientific monopoly on truth to public deliberation (Beck 1995:161). However, while the scientific community as the institution controlling the definition of nature has lost credibility in the Okavango River Basin, its authority and influence is still immense in the case of the Orange River Basin.

7.1.3 Unique or recurrent threats – replaying the security drama

A distinction can be drawn between those attempts of securitisation which centre on events, like the Kasikili-Sedudu dispute and Operation Boleas, and those perceived threats that are

recurrent and constantly replay the security drama such as water abstraction and dam building exemplified by the ENWC and the Popa Falls. In the context of the Okavango it is essential to remember the shelving of the Southern Okavango Integrated Water Development Project (SOIWDP) in 1992 due to heavy environmental lobbyism. The project was initiated by the Botswana Government which aimed at developing large scale commercial agriculture in the Okavango Delta, but after a report by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) which concluded that the environmental costs by far outweighed the benefits of the scheme, the government chose to suspend the project (Scudder 2005). Eleven years later a similar situation arises with regards to the Popa Falls, but now the perceived threat comes from Namibia. The reaction by Roger Hawker at Birdlife Botswana is indicative of the environmental security discourse taking place in the Delta; “as we all know, the Okavango is far too beautiful and a precious resource for it to be damaged...One does begin to wonder *how many times* (my emphasis) we have to keep fighting these battles as there seem to be constant threats from ill-thought out schemes both within and outside the country” (Ngami Times, 2003e). When the Okavango once again is perceived as threatened, it is then possible, more or less, to predict who will securitise and eventually succeed in performativity’s social magic (Butler 1999).

7.1.4 Different user patterns as drivers of securitisation

Another aspect which further intensifies securitisation in the Okavango (Delta) is the difference in user patterns between Namibia and Botswana. While over exploitation of water mainly for the same purpose is the order of the day in the Orange River (chiefly irrigation and industrial consumption), water for the purpose of tourism in Botswana and irrigation in Namibia strengthens perceptions of monopolisation of use (Wallenstein 1992); that tourism and agriculture are ultimately incommensurable. This aspect is delicately brought up by Piet Heyns in the Namibian DWA when commenting on the Okavango Delta Ramsar Site; “A Ramsar site doesn’t say the river can’t be utilized. Indirectly we accept Botswana, but we do not accept that all the water evaporates in the Delta when Namibia has water shortage. If Botswana wants conservation then income from tourism should be divided. Namibia can then irrigate and Botswana can sit under a tree” (Heyns 2005). As Laclau and Mouffe (1994:125) claim, antagonisms occur due to a blockage of identity. And, as previously revealed these are most powerful when working through the logic of equivalence where clear cut divisions exist between those to fear and those to trust.

7.1.5 Top-down versus bottom-up securitisation

The Orange River border dispute and Operation Boleas triggered securitisation which primarily materialised through the political and military sectors, thus providing a fairly coherent picture of state elites as the main securitising actors. The Kasikili-Sedudu dispute in the Chobe Basin followed much of the same trajectory while securitisation in connection with the ENWC and the Popa Falls issues appears as less predictable and, as seen, open for a diversity of securitising actors such as government officials, the media, environmental NGOs and tribal leaders.

Consequently, Gottwald (2005) makes a useful distinction between top-down securitisation and bottom-up securitisation. The former refers to securitisation as a process mediated by state agents while the latter depicts how a broad range of actors can have the magic of performativity at hand. Moreover, Gottwald (ibid:12) also refers to how state agents can utilize bottom-up securitisation and increased public awareness to promote their own agenda. This is arguably the case with the environmental security discourse coalition in Botswana. While the two categories of securitisation are not mutually exclusive, they draw attention to the often neglected fact that securitisation is a multifaceted phenomenon. While top-down securitisation is perhaps most easily reconciled with the traditional concept of security prescribing urgency, priority, secrecy and the maintenance of the status quo; the latter can in fact add new dimensions of meaning to and broaden the range of stakeholders involved in the management of a river (see Jonas 1984:27). While securitisation in the Orange River Basin has been largely closed and top-down, securitisation merges the bottom-up and top-down typologies in the Okavango River Basin. The degree to which the Orange is a more politically closed river basin than the Okavango ultimately affects the level of diversity with regards to what kind of and how many actors participate in the water resource management discourses in the respective basins.

7.2 Desecuritisation in the Orange and Okavango River Basins

As identified by Phillips et al. (2006), the applicability and eventual success of benefit sharing enterprises in transboundary river basins is by large dependent on the overall degree of securitisation. A high degree of top-down securitisation as found, for instance, in the Jordan basin is less conducive to benefit sharing as the political agenda will be dictated by security apprehensions, whilst a basin characterised by a larger degree of desecuritisation will be more

favourable and open for discussions on benefit sharing (ibid:xiii). What similarities and differences can then be delineated with regards to benefit sharing as desecuritisation in the Orange and the Okavango basins? How, eventually to what extent can the evaluated benefit sharing schemes serve as indicators of the nature and degree of desecuritisation in the two basins? Why has the Orange River Basin become recipient of numerous transboundary benefit sharing initiatives, not disregarding some of their detriment side effects, whereas significant cross border benefit sharing programmes in the Okavango River Basin is limited to the OKACOM and the ERP? Again, the decisive question is to what extent the social construction of nature has implications for the degree and nature of benefits to be harvested from transboundary water resource management.

7.2.1 The craftsman and the farmer

Whereas the social construction of nature describes how civilization interacts with nature, the character of this interaction is dependent on the symbolisation of nature (Eder 1996:31). In this process nature is only the signifier as the signified in the description of nature is society itself. Thus, a depiction of nature can also be part of a self-description of society. Beck (1995:39) claims that those who talk of nature in the sense of an untouched and pristine entity have always refuted themselves as the history of concepts of nature is the history of nature's subjugation, cultivation and destruction. Even the purest nature cannot escape culture, and a direct experience of nature is now only the experience of its impossibility (Eder 1996:146).

Nevertheless, some actors have the discursive power to authoritatively give the impression that purity is still the order of the day. The double signification of nature as represented by the allegories of the craftsman and the farmer tends to enter into a dichotomous antagonism between cultivated land and wilderness, between city and country, and between perceptions of what is impure and what is pure. Arguably, while the metaphor of the craftsman correlates with the significantly altered environment in the Orange River Basin, the symbol of the farmer resembles the pristine nature of the Okavango River Basin. However, this is not to say that the two categorizations are mutually exclusive; each category is over determined as envisaged by the increased attention paid to environmental matters in the Orange River Basin and conversely, a mounting pressure to develop in the Okavango River Basin. Nonetheless, these deviating storylines are subordinate to the sanctioned discourse which plays out as a choice between development and exploitation on the one side and conservation and protection on the other side. This dichotomy basically corresponds with

the distinction between benefits from the river and benefits to the river¹⁷⁵ as conceptualised by Sadoff and Grey (2002).

7.2.2 Process outcomes versus project outcomes

Allan (2003:19) argues that water institutions are transaction cost reducing¹⁷⁶, but that policy reforms facilitating such cost reducing may not be perceived in such a way by either policy makers or those who such reform might impact. Furthermore, protecting a water resource may also be transaction cost reducing, but the nature and scale of benefits of cost reduction are impossible to define and quantify at the level of community or state (ibid). This incapability in defining and quantifying future benefits is by Allan (ibid) identified as being one of the most serious impediments to water policy reform and the implementation of such reform.

While it is relatively easy to identify how a dam stabilises water flow downstream, it is not so straightforward to tell if and when exactly the environment has been protected and conserved. Likewise, making visible the benefits of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project and the Lower Orange River Management Study is done through cost saving calculations and mathematical equations, but how does one operationalise and measure more long term and ambiguous benefits such as trust and regional integration to be derived from the ERP, OKACOM and the ORASECOM? This complicated matter has crucial implications for desecuritisation, considering that stakeholders in international river basins are unlikely to embark on any cooperative efforts if the costs of such are perceived to outweigh the benefits. Accordingly, while instrumental, technological innovation is obviously an important measure in finding solutions to perceived water scarcity, in most cases the most serious obstacles to successful international river management do appear not at the technical but at the political level (Bernauer 2002:2).

While project outcomes are the decisive benefits to be derived from infrastructure schemes such as the LHWP and the LORMS, process outcomes are often subordinate. Indeed, Furlong (2006:450) notices that although information sharing is perceived as being a critical component in the development of transboundary water management institutions, the most significant interactions in the SADC are the extensive network of IBTs where information

¹⁷⁵ Certainly, the water bureaucrats of the five riparian states will argue that these two positions are far from incommensurable as the spirit of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) depicts that water management should be undertaken in a holistic and integrative manner with due attention paid to social, cultural and environmental issues.

¹⁷⁶ Transaction costs refer to the costs involved in a market transaction. These can be categorized as administrative costs; herein expenses related to contract negotiation and costs induced by policy implementation, meaning regulation, monitoring and compliance costs (See Archibald and Renwick 1998).

sharing usually follows in the footsteps of these and not vice versa. Several respondents working in the ERP, the OKACOM and the ORASECOM stressed the way in which these measures created trust between the riparian states and that this was a long term process. As tellingly put forward by Piet Heyns, “the development of river basin commissions is a long term process, but you can’t really wait until you need them” (Heyns 2005).

A report initiated by German GTZ assesses the progress of the ORASECOM and stresses that indicators need to measure more the impact of activities carried out rather than narrowly focussing on the completion of such (Makhoalibe and Mushauri 2005:v). The report maintains that process and organisational development needs to be given prominence, but that current indicators do not sufficiently capture the qualitative elements of these processes. Moreover, too much emphasis is also put on formal outcomes as opposed to more informal, but equally important process outcomes, as envisaged in the report (ibid:18):

“...negotiating teams from different countries have mentioned that relationships amongst them have become much closer, cordial and trusting. This is a very important outcome as it facilitates the work of RBOs whose nature is usually clouded in secrecy, suspicions and distrust as each country tries to maximise benefits to itself at the expense of others who share the same river resources”

These abovementioned relationships referred to by Turton et al. (2003c) as a “goodwill between the hydropolitical elite” in the respective basin states, are of significant importance with regards to the generation of more long term, process centred benefits later to be reaped from multilateral initiatives such as the two river basin commissions and the ERP. With regards to the latter, one is also looking at options for applying the ERP model to the Orange River Basin, but this project is still in its infancy (Mwazi 2005). As identified by Ruben Philander, legal advisor to the ORASECOM, “in the Orange River Basin one has not dealt with local communities in the same ways as has been done in the Okavango, herein through the ERP. Hence, it is difficult to sketch out the perceptions of local people with regards to river basin management in the Orange catchment” (Philander 2005).

Accordingly, while the benefits of an institutionalized involvement of local stakeholders have so far not gained momentum in the Orange River Basin, the absence of pressure from below might in fact have made it easier for state elites, chiefly in Pretoria, to initiate and embark on large scale infrastructure projects perceived to benefit river basin stakeholders and domestic electorates. Fischer (1990:35) highlights that social movements represent potentially powerful challenges to the technocratic development paradigm. In this

regard, Eder (1996:188) notes that an active and questioning relationship with nature is a presupposition for a practical concern with nature. Lack of access to information will effectively hamper the possibility of active and meaningful involvement in political decision making for the large majority of the public (Fischer 1990:28). This also draws attention to some of the additional paradoxes evident in the discourse on benefit sharing and desecuritisation. These will be elaborated on in the final section.

7.2.3 South Africa's hydraulic mission and the silver lining legacy

Whilst reviewing contemporary water management policies in developing countries, Allan (2003:15) claims that the development of large scale infrastructure schemes in order to ensure security of water supply is still very much the order of the day as socio economic development priorities are perceived to be urgent. The hydraulic mission of South Africa has been crucial in making the Orange the most “developed” river basin in Southern Africa (Turton 2005b:18). Development in this case has denoted the construction of dams, pipelines as well as intra and interbasin water transfers chiefly undertaken by South Africa. These projects have generated easily identifiable benefits from the river, notwithstanding controversies pertaining to the distribution of these. The river has simultaneously been essential for the economic prosperity of South Africa. As Peter Pyke at the DWAF puts it; “South Africa would not have been where it is today without the Orange River” (Pyke 2005). This statement depicts how the river has served as an important nodal point of post colonial development in South Africa, something which has had and still has strong implications for the kind of benefits to be derived from the river.

Consistent with Sadoff and Grey (2005:423), a perception by all riparian actors that cooperative basin management which maximizes overall benefits in a fair and equitable way will be decisive in motivating the endorsement of benefit sharing as a concept per se. Nevertheless, while benefits have been identified as important measures in enlarging the “pie” to be shared, a larger pie will not necessarily satisfy all actors if their particular “slice” of the pie is not larger (ibid). As already identified by Phillips et al. (2006: xv) there is a need to specify, conceptualize and measure benefits more closely as some parties, mainly basin hegemon, are already seeking to exploit the concept, imposing their will on other co-riparians in the disguise of benefits for all, win-win situations and the common good. Such cooptation (Laungaramsri 2002) enacted through the logic of difference is specifically pertinent in situations where benefits are ambiguous process outcomes such as trust and

regional integration to be reaped at some unidentifiable stage in the future. In such cases, benefit sharing may be little more than a façade behind which a hegemon may continue its former practices (Phillips et al. 2006:31). Nonetheless, as identified by Warner (2006) this is often a twofold, Janus-faced condition as it is in the interest of a hegemonic actor to deny any conflicts claiming that its policy is beneficial to all riparians, while it is in the interest of non-hegemonic actors to play the victim, presenting grievances as loudly as possible in order to rally external support. This scenario is arguably the case in the Orange River Basin.

The current water management regime in the river is by and large defined and controlled by South Africa, with the other 3 basin states subordinate to the dominant hegemon. However, as summarised by Makhoalibe and Mushauri (2005:16), experience has shown that South Africa so far has been able to intricately balance its self interests with the interests of the other countries. Nevertheless, this kind of hegemonic stability does only disclose that there is no overt conflict and how this stability is assessed depends on how happy the hegemonized are with the benefits to be reaped through maintenance of the status quo in the basin (Warner 2005:4). Dissatisfaction with the status quo is proficiently voiced by Maria Amakali at the Namibian Department of Water Affairs (Amakali 2005);

“[...] from my side it seems that one country always benefit more than others. The problem is that the countries sharing are at different levels of development...RSA do with the water as they want, develops their industries and hydro-power...Namibia wants to develop its agricultural sector; RSA has overdeveloped its agricultural and industry sector...Namibia wants more water; RSA does not give more water, at least not without costs...benefit sharing is not for everyone, and not always applicable. Some countries might do it to help their neighbours but how many good Samaritans are out there?”

The concept of benefit sharing envisages how hydrohegemony is a political relation in which the hegemon has the ability to draw upon a range of compliance mechanisms in order to ensure that its interest are served, some of these mechanisms being more covert and appealing to shared interest than others. This also draws attention to the crucial point that before distributing social good, social actors have to define and agree upon what the common good is and how this good is to be distributed in river basins characterized by asymmetrical patterns of hydropolitical power. The dominant role played by South Africa in the Orange River is brought to further attention by Liebenberg (2005) at the Department of Agriculture in Windhoek, subtly maintaining that “we will have insecurity and distrust with South Africa, but Namibia is too weak to fight. We won’t fight because we can’t”. This somewhat reflects

the adage that if you can't beat your enemy you are forced to join him. Similarly, where one actor has the upper hand in defining and implementing benefit sharing schemes and where status quo is adopted as a point of departure for negotiations, desecuritisation will as a result appear in a dim light.

The benefit sharing scenarios in the Okavango River Basin are slightly different compared to the Orange as the hydropolitical power relations between the riparians are more symmetrical in the former. The prospective for desecuritisation through benefit sharing also appears in a different light inasmuch as development has different connotations here than in the Orange River Basin. The Okavango has played a more peripheral role as recipient basin of large scale infrastructure schemes due to the absence of South Africa as a riparian and the prolonged civil war in Angola, but also because of the way in which the river, especially the Delta, has been constructed as a nearly untouchable entity to be protected and conserved. How this has impacted on the total amount of benefits derived from the river is captured by Obonetse Masedi at the International Waters Unit (IWU) Botswana, saying that “every cloud has a silver lining. There was no development in the Angolan part of the basin during the civil war and this, the silver lining, left the basin largely untouched. Today, the Okavango still has this silver lining legacy and hence, not many activities have taken place in the basin yet” (Masedi 2005). As for the Okavango, the concepts of protection and conservation have gained significance as a common good, endorsed by a range of stakeholders from all three riparian states. As stressed by Manuel Quintino (2005), National Coordinator for the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in Angola;

“We need to be wise...by the end of the day the ecosystem must be preserved because we can create damage...we need to fight for the preservation of the Delta”

While Sadoff and Grey (2005:420) maintain that it is entirely rational that states will have a “national agenda” for a river that they share with other states, what is momentous in the Okavango is the way in which environmental security and preservation has tacitly become linked with the national security of Botswana. This is avowed by the Press Secretary of the Botswana President stating that with regards to the riparian position of Botswana in the Okavango, environmental protection and national security aspirations are not mutually exclusive, and “at any rate all of the SADC States are committed to cooperation...we thus have multilateral riparian management agreements governing all our shared watercourses” (Ramsay 2006). While there is nothing extraordinary about this, the really interesting aspect is

related to the nearly incontestable value of environmental conservation as such. The notion of discursive exposure involves making this powerful and invisible moral superiority visible and explicit, revealing that it serves some interests more than other. Ultimately, the statement above points to that nature, as a common good, is an ideal case for defining what is perceived to be good for all and where, tellingly, national security strategies can become venues depicting that water can be a driver of securitisation if perceived to be threatened, but simultaneously also a site for benefit sharing and desecuritisation.

8 Water - A multidimensional account of power relations

“Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes; I fear the Greeks even bearing gifts” (Virgilius Maronis, Aeneid II, 49)¹⁷⁷

The discourse analytical approach advocated throughout this study has put power and power struggles at the centre stage of attention. Accordingly, discourse is constructed in and through hegemonic battles that aim to establish political as well as moral leadership through the articulation of meaning and identity (Torfing 2005:15). Whilst the power of language lies in its capacity to do things with words (Austin 1962), to create signs, symbols and concepts that can change power balances and impact on institutions and decision making, power in discourse is here conceived in terms of political acts of inclusion and exclusion which create social antagonisms and political frontiers. This section will in brief draw attention to the various ways in which power manifests itself in discourses on water in Southern Africa. The deliberation will suggest that power is a multidimensional phenomenon everywhere present in discourses focussing on the two river basins under consideration.

8.1 Three dimensions of power

The work of Lukes (e.g. 1992, 2005) suggests that there are three dimensions of power. The first dimension draws attention to who actually prevails in decision making through studying concrete, observable behaviour. Consistent with this view, conflict is perceived as providing an experimental test of power attributions (Lukes 1992:14). The first dimension can be conceptualised as structural power; ‘power as might’ which is equivalent of the French term *puissance* (Turton 2005b). Structural power lies within the state and depicts its capacity to possess and mobilize political, economic and military capabilities. When applied to the area of water resource management, power will herein be decided by riparian position, riparian size, and value of territory (Warner 2005). Turton (2005b:3) refers to how the Total National Strategy of the Apartheid State effectively made use of *puissance*; herein military strength to protect itself from enemies of the incumbent National Party Government. Within this strategy water resources were also mobilised in order to sustain national security. Lukes (2005:478) sustains that a sole focus on structural power capabilities recurrently fall prey of the exercise

¹⁷⁷ This line from the poet Virgilius refers to the incident in which the ancient Greeks offered the Trojans the alleged “gift” of a large wooden horse. The quote draws attention to the risk of trusting enemies even when they appear as friendly.

fallacy; that power can only mean the causing of an observable sequence of events, thus neglecting that power identifies a potentiality and not necessarily an actuality¹⁷⁸.

Therefore, the second facet of power incorporates both decision making and non-decision making, referring to, for instance how demands for change in the existing allocation of benefits and privileges can be suffocated before they are even voiced (Bachrach and Baratz 1974:44). This dimension of power can be termed bargaining power or power as a relation, coined by the French term *pouvoir* (Turton 2005b). Hydropolitical bargaining power is generally derived from discussions leading to agreements, obligations and establishment of the moral high ground all of which lead to the construction of legitimacy (Zeitoun and Warner 2005:10). Drawing upon Daoudy (2005), bargaining power can display how purportedly disadvantaged riparians are often not as weak as they may appear. The negotiations and coalition formations occurring within the SAHC display how Namibia uses *pouvoir*, herein planned further phases of the LHWP between Lesotho and South Africa as leverage for renegotiating the flow regime with South Africa on the Lower Orange River. Similarly, Botswana acts as a balancer of power within both the ORASECOM and the OKACOM, using its bargaining position in order to enhance its strategic interests in both the Okavango and Orange Rivers (Turton 2005b:20).

By exemplifying the third dimension, Lukes (1992:24) refers to the way in which power can prevent people to whatever degree from having grievances by shaping their perceptions and preferences in such a way that they accept the status quo, either because they can see or imagine no alternative, because they see it as natural or because they value it as beneficial. As Lukes (2005:480) puts it;

“...the features of agents that make them powerful include those that render activity unnecessary. If I can achieve the appropriate outcomes without having to act, because of the attitudes of others towards me or because of a favourable alignment...my power is surely all the greater¹⁷⁹”

This third dimension of power largely coincides with the concept of soft power as advocated by Nye (e.g. 1990, 2004). Subsequently, Nye (1990) makes a distinction between hard power;

¹⁷⁸ Bachrach and Baratz (1974:18) refer to how a narrow focus on the behavioural aspect of power neglects the equally important area of non-decision making, that is the practice of restricting or limiting the scope of actual decision making to non-controversial matters or issues by manipulating values, myths, political institutions and procedures. This potentiality is by the authors labelled the ‘second face of power’.

¹⁷⁹ As such, the three dimensions of power are also related to efficiency. As maintained by Lukes (2005:481), the distinction between active and inactive power can be thought of in terms of the connection between power and costs. If power declines as the costs of exercising it increases, the exercise of inactive power reduces this cost towards zero.

most notably referring to economic and military capabilities resting on inducements (carrots) and threats (sticks), and soft power which creates the desirable effects by co-opting people rather than coercing them. Soft power is often attached to intangible resources such as culture, political values and policies seen as legitimate or having moral authority (Nye 2004:7). Botswana enjoys political clout far greater than its hard power would suggest as it defines its national interests to include the attractive cause of “environmental protection”. Accordingly, as the concept displays a moral authority which has gained resonance internationally, other countries enthusiastically follow Botswana in protecting the Okavango Delta, thus underpinning the national security strategy of that country¹⁸⁰. Soft power does not reside in the hands of governments to the same degree as hard power and non-governmental groups can utilize the former in such a way that it may reinforce or be at odds with official foreign policy goals (ibid:17). While information technology has greatly enhanced the soft power of NGOs, the potency and relative success of the environmental lobby in the context of the Okavango Delta can arguably be ascribed to the broad discourse coalition between the Botswana Government, safari operators, indigenous groups and the international environmental lobby making environmental protection the lingua franca par excellence.

Likewise, the third dimension of power is often revealed in discussions on benefit sharing schemes; be it the “win-win” situation of the LHWP or “regional peace and prosperity” articulated under the panoply of the ORASECOM and the OKACOM. The commonality between all these nodal points is that they are, literally, impossible to contest or refute because they signify the desirable and the good.

8.2 Hydrosolidarity and the discourse of goodness

The discourse of goodness (Loga 2003, Loga 2005) is compromised of concepts such as ethics, solidarity, tolerance and justice, focuses on certain topics like violence, death, peace and war and asks questions about whether we care enough about others. Attention is drawn towards idealistic centred values and norms seen as the Durkheimian cement set to evade the dissolution of society. Loga (2003:68) points to the various ways in which the discourse of

¹⁸⁰ What explains the success of soft power in the case of Botswana? Nye (2004:15) claims that soft power is more likely to succeed where cultures are somewhat similar. This draws attention to the role of the sanctioned discourse in shaping what can and what cannot legitimately be said in the water discourse. Turton and Meissner (2002:39) define the sanctioned discourse as the prevailing or dominant discourse that has been legitimised by the discursive elite within the water sector at any moment in time. Within the area of hydropolitics, Allan (2003) conceptualises Integrated Water Resource Management as a sanctioned discourse. Briefly, IWRM sets forth that water is to be managed on a basin wide scale with sufficient attention paid to economic and social welfare as well as to environmental sustainability. According to Jägerskog (2003:37) it is extremely hard to put forward ideas that run contrary to the sanctioned discourse. It is therefore also extremely difficult to argue against environmental sustainability. This latter point will be further addressed below.

goodness displays relations of power. Firstly, a distinction can be made between overt and covert goodness. The former is a goodness which aims at throwing an advantageous light on the actor who displays it. Overt goodness distributes power since the good act(s) is made visible for an audience to appraise; however, its power diminishes when the distribution of goodness becomes too obvious or approaches the level of a show-off. The latter is arguably a more “altruistic” goodness distributed by one actor who does not necessarily expect something in return for being “good”.

Secondly, the power of the discourse of goodness can be derived from the factuality that it builds on asymmetry (ibid:71). The good becomes a phenomenon of surplus that one, supposedly strong actor gives to one allegedly weak actor. The dispersion of goodness materialises in an asymmetric relation of power since its effect can make the receiver feel dependent, helpless and disgraceful. As such, the discourse becomes a discourse of power since it establishes a dichotomy between the powerful and the weak, placing the latter within the category of a victim (ibid:74). Although the powerful can have power over the weak, the weak can also have power over the supposedly stronger part by exploiting its position as a victim, for instance by rallying support from external actors.

Thirdly, the discourse of goodness displays universal values that most actors can support such as empathy, solidarity and cooperation. The power of the discourse lies in its capability of portraying challengers as egoistic, cynical or perhaps even evil. Therefore, its effects are paralysing since it builds on common sense, and to common sense there is no alternative¹⁸¹.

The way in which the discourse of goodness crystallizes in contemporary debates on international river basin management is perhaps best captured by the concept of hydrosolidarity. Falkenmark and Folke (2002:4) define hydrosolidarity as “reconciliation of conflicts of interest with a solidarity-based balancing of human livelihood interests”. Hydrosolidarity is seen as a way to counteract perceived “hydro-egoism” or self interests among stakeholders in the water sector (SIWI 2002:18). Hydrosolidarity represents ethically based water resource management which ultimately stands in contradiction to “hydrocide” where downstream stakeholders are left with polluted and unusable water (Lundqvist 1998).

¹⁸¹ Wester and Warner (2002:66) suggest that it is often attractive for decision makers to present a development or outcome as unavoidable, positing a point of no return. Margaret Thatcher frequently used depoliticizing as a policy making strategy by claiming that “There Is No Alternative” (TINA). This becomes a powerful discursive strategy in moving an issue towards discursive closure; if the issue is uncontroversial there is nothing to choose from, hence there is no freedom and ultimately no politics (ibid).

The latter occurs when life giving qualities of water are obstructed, thus threatening human health and socio-economic development (ibid:428).

On a domestic scale water transfers between water abundant and water scarce areas are seen as durable manifestations of solidarity. Moreover, on a basin wide-scale hydrosolidarity materialises in policies that support water and benefit sharing between upstream and downstream riparians (SIWI 2002:18). The task now becomes to briefly address how hydrosolidarity is articulated so as to turn into a discourse of goodness in the river basins considered in this study.

Turton (2001b) maintains that water regimes such as the LHWP, the OKACOM and the ORASECOM are durable manifestations of hydrosolidarity because they institutionalise conflict potential and generate consensus on critical issues by providing a common platform for the development of trust. As such, regimes desecuritize water resource management while enhancing the security of supply for each riparian state in a shared river basin (ibid:4). Hydrosolidarity is displayed as an overt goodness when emergency water releases from the LHWP also benefit water thirsty Maseru in Lesotho. Discussions centring on the inclusion of Botswana in the ORASECOM reveal similar idealistic sentiments. Reginald Tekateka in the South African delegation stresses that since Botswana needs water, the inclusion was really about sharing benefits. The preceding chapters have, however, revealed that this solidarity does not come without a price¹⁸². The decisive discourse analytical endeavour of this study has been to undress the Emperor of his new clothes; to reveal that his interests sometimes coincide with highly asymmetrical and exploitative social relations, serving some more than others and sometimes someone is not served at all.

¹⁸² As the French philosopher and sociologist Michel Foucault notes; “power is tolerable only on condition that it masks a substantial part of itself”. The efficiency of power is thus proportional to the ability to hide its own mechanisms” (Foucault 1976:86).

9 Concluding Remarks

“No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it is not the same river and he is not the same man” (Heraclitus)

This academic journey has sought to delineate the complex dynamics between securitisation and desecuritisation in the context of perceived water scarcity in the Orange and Okavango River Basins in Southern Africa following the period after 1994. By moving beyond an objectivist conceptualisation of security which adheres to the adage that “the more security the better”, the study has ascribed to an understanding of both the making and the unmaking of the politics of exceptionality as processes of social construction. This facilitated an analysis centring on the ways in which access to and control over water resources has been filled as well as purged of the potency of security. With due consideration to the discourse analytical agenda advocated by Laclau and Mouffe (1994), the argument that “there is nothing intrinsically natural in nature” has been put forward.

Accordingly, the study suggests that the foundation and character of the interaction between securitisation and desecuritisation in the two river basins is much dependent on the different ways in which nature has been constructed; the Orange River has become as symbol of “Humankind’s conquest of nature” while the Okavango River has been constructed as “God’s gift to humankind”. Throughout the study emphasis has been put not so much on the technicalities of the securitisation versus desecuritisation nexus, but rather on its implications.

Securitisation, when enacted through the logic of equivalence, invokes a Schmittian understanding of the political which reduces multifaceted identities and features to a dichotomy between “friends” and “enemies”. While the authority and capacity to legitimately securitise matters pertaining to water resources has been narrowly confined to state elites, diplomats and bureaucrats in the Orange River Basin, the Okavango River Basin displays a broad array and diversity of securitising actors such as state elites and bureaucrats, but also environmental epistemic communities and local tribes in the Okavango Delta. The study draws upon Gottwald (2005) in advocating a distinction between “top-down” and “bottom-up” securitisation, the former being dominant in the Orange River Basin while the latter prevails in the Okavango River Basin. This further epitomizes how the Orange is on the brink of becoming a discursively “closed” river basin, while the Okavango is a discursively “open” river basin.

The Schmittian friend versus enemy dichotomy is at its strongest when securitisation is prolonged and threat perceptions find support in everyday life. In such cases, securitising

actors frequently adhere to issue linkages which merge naturally occurring threats with those perceived to be induced by humans. Securitisation has diverse ramifications; in the Orange River Basin it is used as a tactical move by the South African Government in order to effectively and tacitly maintain the continuation of a flow regime perceived as unfair by the Namibian Government. As envisaged through the SADC intervention in Lesotho in 1998, securitisation can also successfully draw attention away from domestic and bilateral disparities and inequality with regards to access to water. In the Okavango River Basin, securitisation has been used by a diverse discourse coalition so as to unify public support for the protection of the Okavango Delta. The Botswana Government implicitly plays a crucial role in this coalition and has been able to forge an alliance where the “common good” and morally appealing cause of environmental protection is used as a “fig leaf” underpinning the country’s national security strategy. Securitisation in the Okavango River Basin has aggravated tensions between the riparian states by heightening perceptions that access to water depends more on the use or misuse of such by neighbouring states than on domestic consumption or on the vagaries of nature. The latter reveals how securitisation leads to policy responses informed by a desire to protect the “here” from the “elsewhere”. This habitually causes the threatened community to emerge as a homogenous and harmonious entity whose common values and shared identity becomes a matter of indifference.

From the selected cases I have also found substantial evidence suggesting that securitisation materialises through different sectors and that the sectoral approach gives a more covering picture of the process centring on the social construction of threats and vulnerabilities. While much of the contemporary literature on international rivers and securitisation gives resonance to securitisation only if it is acted out through national security, this study shows that the securitisation of water resources is in fact a multifaceted phenomenon. While securitisation in the Orange River Basin mainly goes through the political, military and economic sectors; securitisation in the Okavango River Basin involves the political, military and economic as well as the societal and environmental sectors. These disparities further strengthen the social construction of the Orange as closed river basin while the Okavango appears as an open river basin, having further implications for the kind of actors involved in the water management discourse in the respective riparian states.

While benefit sharing entails certain prospects for the unmaking of security, this is most so when the former serves the strategic interests of dominant actors. Benefit sharing appears as an easily exploitable aspiration, having disquieting effects by often failing to address crucial and contentious issues of power relations. The concept is easily co-opted

(Laungaramsri 2002) and thus contributes to the preservation of the status quo, herein maintaining asymmetrical relations of power as well as lopsided access to and control over water resources. When the logic of difference is invoked through benefit sharing in the Orange River Basin, South Africa can continue to exercise its hegemony, even expand its hegemonic bloc by claiming that benefit sharing is up and working well in the basin. With regards to the Okavango River Basin, benefit sharing scenarios are considerably less complex and intricate, though environmental protection has been successfully articulated as benefit sharing, partly due to the fact that the latter coincides with the national security strategy of Botswana.

A conceptualisation of the Southern African Hydropolitical Complex (SAHC) as a desecuritisising tool was put forward. The study has revealed that contrary to rhetorical flourishes, interdependency does not necessarily mean harmony, but often unevenly balanced mutual dependency. While empirical evidence suggests that interdependence and reciprocity can facilitate desecuritisisation as well as securitisation, it was pointed out that inter basin transfers, being central components of the SAHC are as likely to benefit the riparian states as they are to further strengthen disparities between those states that can and those states that cannot be dispatchers and recipients of such. I also maintained that the conceptualisation of the SAHC as confined to a state-to-state interaction contributes to and strengthens the state as the sole provider of solutions to the multiplicity of challenges to water resource management in the basin states. Ultimately, when desecuritisisation goes hand in hand with depoliticization, the former is effectively stripped of its transformative potential through technocratic management and the maintenance of the status quo.

The time interval of the study, being confined to post-Apartheid Southern Africa, put the tension between continuity and change descriptively at the centre stage of attention. Laclau and Mouffe (1994:107) claim that the meaning of social formations is never entirely closed with regards to alternative interpretations. But to say that these are socially constructed is no guarantee that they can be changed. As expressively put forward by Hajer (1995:275), discourse contains structures that can be as effective in resisting political change as walls and barbed wire can in preventing trespassing. Contemporary South Africa, where barbed wired, gated communities blossom, should thus be indicative of the prospects for creating “a better life for all” in the basin states under consideration¹⁸³. The “African Renaissance” gains a shallow resonance if it is perceived as no more than “old wine in new casks”.

¹⁸³ “A Better Life for All” is the election slogan of the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Basic guide for conducting interviews

This basic model for conducting semi-structured and unstructured interviews was used for my fieldwork in the five riparian states of the two river basins during 2005. The model served more as a general guideline than a predetermined formula. As such, it was sufficiently flexible to incorporate changes depending on the position or role of the respondent as well as the total amount of time available. The respondents could also partly depart from the questions and elaborate on topics they deemed relevant. All respondents knew that I was conducting a study into perceptions related to the Orange and Okavango River Basins. While a key issue with respect to the interviewer is the enticement to ask leading questions in order to support preexisting paradigms and assumptions, I approached the respondent with an 'ethos of openness' (e. g. Howarth 2005). As such, since an important aim of the interview was to identify those actors who coupled river management with security the answers provided on the second and third question shaped the rest of the interview.

Before each interview commenced, the respondent was informed that the information gathered during the interview was solely to be used for the purpose of the research project. In those cases where dictaphone was used, the permission to make use of such was granted in advance.

Question 1: What is your name and what position do you hold within your affiliated organization?

Question 2: How would you define the current development status of the Orange and/or Okavango River Basins?

Question 3: What are the current main water uses? Do you consider this an efficient use of water? What future uses of water are likely?

Question 4: How are transboundary rivers in general and the Okavango and Orange rivers in particular perceived in South Africa/Lesotho/Botswana/Namibia?

Question 5: What do the rivers, as resources, represent for South Africa/Lesotho/Botswana/Namibia? How important are the rivers for South Africa/Lesotho/Botswana/Namibia?

There are two possible answers to these questions; one that includes security and one which does not. If security is not included in the answers, question X is asked:

Question X: In my research I have come across different discourses relating to the Orange and Okavango River Basins. Many discussions involve pure technical aspects, but the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have spoken of transboundary rivers in relation to security and stated that diminishing quantity and quality of freshwater might pose a threat to regional or national security. To what extent do you agree with such a notion?

There are two possible answers to question X: one is that the respondent has either forgotten to make this connection or thought it relevant after I mentioned it, or the interview object might have excluded the connection deliberately as it was not considered relevant.

Question 6: In your opinion, does this perception (asked about in question 4 and 5) differ between different levels of society, ministries or between different actors in society?

Question 7: What is the role of other actors in the management of the Orange and Okavango River Basins? Who or what might influence the perception of the river(s) today?

Question 8: Who, in your opinion, has the authoritative power to manage the Orange and Okavango River Basins today?

Question 9: What is the biggest problem/virtue with the meaning and perception of the Orange and Okavango River Basins today?

Question 10: What priority does water issues in general and river management relating to the Orange/Okavango rivers in particular, have on the policy agenda?

Question 11: In your opinion, to what extent are the national policies of Namibia/Botswana/South Africa/Lesotho dependent on the policies of other riparian states when it comes to the river(s)? How is this dependency reflected in the hydropolitical range of policy options of national decision making relating to the river?

Question 12: In the research on transboundary rivers internationally, I have come across cases where upstream developments in the basin have affected downstream states and communities negatively and where this has contributed to a climate of distrust and insecurity. To what extent is such a scenario relevant to the Orange/Okavango River Basins?

Question 13: Which variable, human developments or natural phenomenon, would you say have the potential of posing the largest impact on the river(s) and what does your organisation do to cope with this?

The Orange River Basin

Question 1: What is your view of the ORASECOM (the Orange-Senqu River Commission)? How important is this mechanism?

Question 2: How important is the Lesotho Highlands Water Project for South Africa/Lesotho? What is the role of inter basin transfers for South Africa?

Question 3: Could you elaborate on the circumstances around the South African intervention in Lesotho in 1998? Some sources say that the protection of the LHWP (Lesotho Highlands Water Project) and the Katse Dam was one contributing factor. What is your opinion?

Question 4: Namibia and South Africa are involved in a dispute relating to the national border on the Orange River. Could you elaborate on this?

Question 5: Why is Botswana a member of ORASECOM even though the country contributes no stream flow to the Orange River system?

Question 6: The estuary of the Orange River has been declared a Ramsar site and what are the implications of this for ORASECOM members?

The Okavango River Basin

Question 1: What is your view of the OKACOM (the Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission)? How important is this mechanism?

Question 2: Botswana and Namibia have been involved in a dispute relating to the Sedudu Island. Could you elaborate on this? Has the issue been resolved and eventually what consequences does this dispute have on future cooperation between Botswana and Namibia?

Question 3: Botswana declared the Okavango Delta a Ramsar site of international importance in April 1997. How does this affect future developments in the river basin as a whole?

Question 4: Namibia has several times (for ex. dam, Popa Falls 2000) looked at different dam building and piping options for extracting water from the Okavango River Basin. How will such developments affect other riparian states? And what will the impacts be on river side communities in Namibia and Botswana?

By the end

Are there any comments you would like to add or are there any specific issues you would like to elaborate on?

Thank you for contributing to the study.

Appendix 2: List of interviews and miscellaneous communication

This list displays all the interviews conducted during the research project. The interviews in South Africa (Cape Town and Pretoria) were carried out during 2005. Interviews in Lesotho (Maseru), Namibia (Windhoek) and Botswana (Gaborone and Maun) were conducted during a fieldtrip in June 2005 while fieldwork in Luanda and Menongue in December 2005 caught the perspectives of the Angolan stakeholders. One actor was also interviewed and during the World Water Week in Stockholm in August 2005. Additionally, I had personal communication with people at the University of Cape Town, at the African Water Issues Research in Cape Town, in Stockholm in August 2005 in connection with the World Water Week 2005, at Christian Michelsen Institute in Bergen in March 2006 (in connection with a speech held by Botswana President Festus Mogae) and in London in May 2006 in relation to the Second International Workshop on Hydro-Hegemony.

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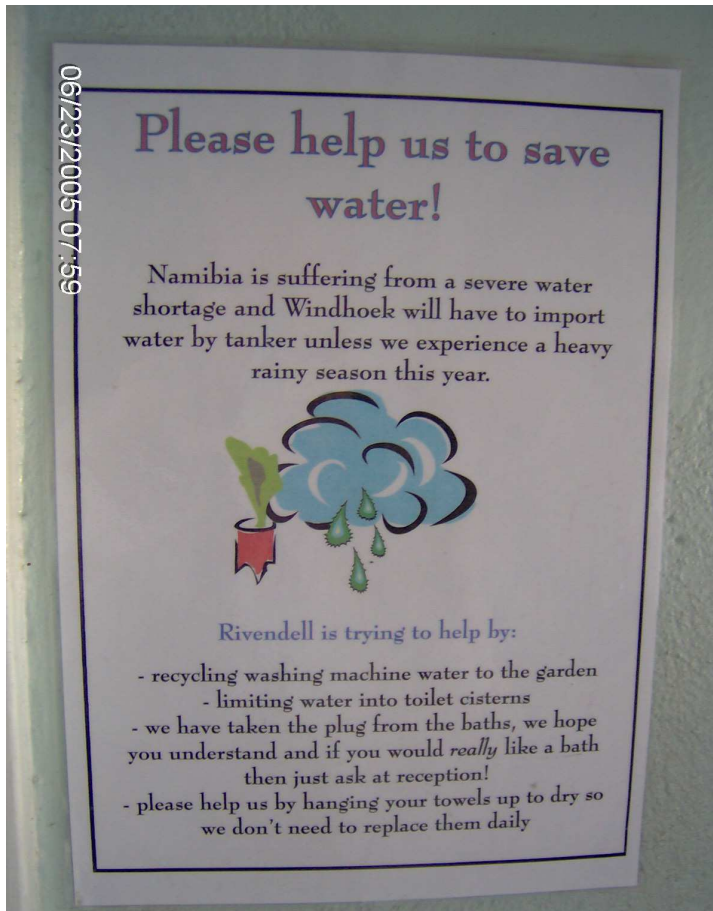
Cape Town- during 2004 and 2005

Anton Earle

Deputy Director, Africa Water Issues Research Unit (AWIRU)

Cape Town – during 2004 and 2005

Appendix 3: Additional pictures from the fieldtrips



“Namibian Water Crisis”.
This poster from a lodge in central Windhoek displays the severity of the water shortages that occasionally occur in Namibia. (Picture: P. A. Davidsen 2005).



“Water Crisis in Maun?” Only in years with high flows does water reach the Thamalakane River outside Maun. This picture shows a dried-out riverbed in one of its main channels. Will water come this year? (Picture: P. A. Davidsen 2005)



“Hydraulic Mission”. Dams like this compromise the centrepiece of South Africa’s hydraulic mission. The National Water Act states that water can be moved freely around the country to where it is needed the most. As Peter Pyke (2005) at the DWAF states; “while economic development activities are static, water is a mobile commodity easy to transfer” (Picture: Pål Arne Davidsen 2005).



“The Caledon River”. The water supply in Maseru is vulnerable to drought (GEF 2005:12). Water releases from the LHWP, augmenting the flow in the Caledon has been raised as one possibility in sustaining the level of economic productivity in the Lesotho capital. An act of hydrosolidarity? (Picture: P. A. Davidsen 2005).

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