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Comparing Discourse to Officer Perceptions:

The Problems of ‘War’ and Militarization in Wildlife Crime Enforcement

Siv Rebekka Runhovde

Abstract

‘War’ has become a common model and metaphor for biodiversity conservation in Africa. By discussing the specific challenges of wildlife crime enforcement in Uganda, this article challenges the ‘war on wildlife crime’ discourse. It concludes that in the context of Uganda, the discourse is profoundly unhelpful because of a lack of alignment between the problems highlighted by Ugandan law enforcement officers interviewed and the solutions typically favoured in the ‘wars on crime’. Most wildlife crimes are subsistence-driven and interviewees’ requests are for basic equipment and conventional capacity building. Findings demonstrate that the language of war, militarization and securitization should be used with caution as it risks constructing an image of wildlife crime that is misleading—and one that prevents responses that are effective in the long term.

Introduction

Wildlife crime¹ has historically been treated as a low-level offence committed by subsistence hunters and the occasional minor player seeking supplemental income. Mainly regarded as a conservation issue, it was left to park wardens, game rangers and conservationist scientists to address it (Rademeyer, 2016). In recent decades, however, wildlife crime has seen a formidable increase in both volume and value, and it is rapidly gaining greater attention within the broader policy and enforcement community.

In 2012, the United Nations Security Council and the General Assembly for the first time acknowledged the links between transnational organized crime, wildlife trafficking and regional security, and in 2013, the UN Security Council recognized poaching as one of the factors fuelling

¹For the purposes of this article, ‘wildlife crime’ includes ‘any harm to (or intent to harm or subsequent trade of) non-domesticated wild animals, plants or fungi, in contravention of national and international laws and conventions’ (Harrison et al., 2015). The key international convention is the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which pertains to international trade in wildlife species (and their parts or derivatives). ‘Poaching’, in turn, is used in this article to refer to the illegal *taking* of wildlife (Moreto & Lemieux, 2015).

various crises in Central Africa. In 2014, the Interpol General Assembly adopted a resolution on emerging threats to environmental security (CITES, 2015a). The controversial ‘poaching funds terrorism’ narrative has gained much attention. Although the links between poaching and terrorism have been questioned (see e.g. Duffy et al. 2015; 2016; Maguire and Haenlein 2015), this narrative is shaping policies in Sub-Saharan Africa, making conservation an element of global security with material consequences at the ground level (Duffy, 2016b). Today, illegal sourcing of wildlife and trade is presented as a grave economic, social and security challenge and concern (UNODC, 2015), threatening sustainable development and peace and stability in areas of Africa and Asia, where it is linked to weak governance and corruption (Fajardo del Castillo, 2016). At the international policy level, among governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and in the media, the discourse—the terms, assumptions, categories and narratives used to describe wildlife crime—has become increasingly belligerent. ‘War’ is now a common model and metaphor for biodiversity conservation in Africa (Neumann, 2004). Owing to the new interest in the security implications of poaching and trafficking, conservation is becoming increasingly militarized (Duffy, 2014, 2016a; Humphreys, 2012; Lunstrum, 2014; McClanahan & Wall, 2016; Wall & McClanahan, 2015),² and the development is comparable to the ‘wars’ on crime, drugs and terrorism.

Drawing on qualitative interviews with law enforcement officers in the East African state of Uganda, this study discusses several implications of the ‘war on wildlife crime’ discourse. The metaphor of war can be used as a dramatic way to draw attention to a perceived serious threat to an economic or social way of life thereby necessitating significant governmental resources (see, e.g., McClanahan and Brisman 2015). Using metaphors (as understanding and experiencing one domain in terms of another), we proceed to draw inferences, set goals, make commitments and execute plans, often making metaphors self-fulfilling prophecies (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Considering the respondents’ accounts of challenges at local levels, this paper asks: to what extent do the solutions associated with the language of war and a militarized approach meet the needs of enforcement officers? Throughout, the discussion will consider alternate interventions for, potential consequences

² ‘Green militarization’ is defined by Lunstrum (2014, p. 817) as ‘the use of military and paramilitary actors, techniques, technologies and partnerships in the pursuit of conservation’.

of, as well as explanations for, the trend towards militarization of conservation policies. While the article's analytical approach is thematic coding of interview text (Gibbs, 2007), the discussion is motivated by discourse theory as it is concerned with the intrinsic connection between linguistic and social processes, and its implications for the way we think and act (George, 1994, p. 191; Milliken, 1999). Here, the 'war on wildlife crime' is considered as a rhetorical tool *and* a security offensive, having led to a normalization of violence in the enforcement of conservation laws (Neumann, 2004) and to military interventions with little effect in countering insecurity and poaching (Duffy, 2014, 2016a, 2016b). An introduction to wildlife crime and the 'war' and securitization discourse is given before an account of the methodology. Next, findings regarding wildlife crime characteristics, enforcement challenges and officers' decision-making are presented, followed by a discussion on whether war and militarization are warranted responses to wildlife crime in Uganda. Alternative solutions are offered prior to the conclusion.

Wildlife Crime and Conservation in Uganda

Despite many years of poverty, poor governance and civil war, Uganda has set aside biologically important savannahs and forests as national parks. The Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), a semi-autonomous, paramilitary government agency, was established in 1996 to manage wildlife in and outside protected areas.³ Today, there are ten national parks and twelve wildlife reserves and other nature areas throughout the country (UWA, 2016). Wildlife crime in Uganda is diverse and includes illegal hunting, firewood collection and timber harvesting (Harrison et al., 2015), as well as human-wildlife conflict and overfishing (WCS, 2016). The main drivers of wildlife crime are subsistence,⁴ commercial trade, a response to perceived injustice, culture (for medicinal or ceremonial purposes) and influence from local leaders who encourage encroachment (Harrison et al., 2015). Wildlife traded transnationally comes into the hands of smugglers by illegal acts of poaching. Although Uganda is not a site of extensive elephant poaching, an upward trend has been detected and illegal trade in pangolins may be on the rise. Rhinoceroses are found only in one heavily guarded sanctuary (Harrison et al.,

³ The Uganda Wildlife Act, Cap 200 of 2000, charges the Uganda Wildlife Authority with conservation and management of wildlife and wildlife protected areas in Uganda and defines offences relating to wildlife.

⁴ Subsistence-providing forest resources include medicinal plants, timber, bamboo, firewood and wild foods, such as honey, mushrooms, fruits and meat (Tumusiime et al., 2011).

2015). Uganda is a key transit country in the large-scale movement of ivory (Runhovde, 2017), however, and according to the Uganda Police (2014), a target for organized criminal groups involved in wildlife crime.

Around the world, the dominant approach to conservation has been to seal off natural areas and exclude people through so-called ‘fortress conservation,’ while declaring the use of the area’s resources to be illegal (Brockington, 2002). The cost is born by the neighbouring communities, who often view such practices as an illegitimate and oppressive imposition, as well as exclusion from places to which they had prior/traditional access (Siurua, 2006). While disputes over land are a serious cause of disorder and tension in Uganda (Baker, 2005), studies have found a complex mixture of positive and negative attitudes towards protected areas in the adjacent communities (Hartter & Goldman, 2009; Lepp & Holland, 2006). Some have questioned the effectiveness of strict conservation policies in reducing environmental degradation, habitat loss and extinction of endangered species (Hulme & Murphree, 2001), and have suggested that such policies may increase poverty because people rely on forest resources for cash income or subsistence (Tumusiime et al., 2011). Since the 1980s, a more community-based counter-narrative has been evolving (Siurua, 2006). Recognizing the link between poverty, people’s access to natural resources and the ecological health of the national parks, the Uganda Wildlife Act (2000) stipulates that 20 per cent of a park’s entrance fee should go to the neighbouring communities. Nevertheless, initiatives integrating biodiversity conservation and rural development have not enjoyed uniform success (Newmark & Hough, 2000), and in Uganda, corruption has compromised revenue sharing (Harrison et al. 2015). Led by a powerful global ‘back to the barriers’ narrative stressing the urgency of conservation action and authoritarian approaches (Hutton et al., 2005) strict exclusionary policies and military-style responses have started to displace community-oriented approaches in parts of Africa (Büscher, 2015). Identifying security as the main driving objective, Duffy (2016b) proposes that biodiversity conservation is actually of secondary importance in this new phase.

Securitization and Militarization in the War on Crime Discourse

According to Childress (2001), the war metaphor is employed when a perceived serious threat to a large number of human lives requires the mobilization of vast societal resources. Yet critics have warned against applying the war metaphor to policing (see Neocleous 2008; 2006; McCulloch and Wilson 2016). The integral portrayal of ‘crimes’ as national security threats is used to justify often unproductive, highly repressive and coercive policies, such as with the ‘War on Crime’, ‘War on Drugs’ and the ‘War on Terror’ in the United States. Such metaphorical wars, albeit with many casualties, have been fought in the name of *security* (Linnemann, 2013; Neocleous & Rigakos, 2011; Rigakos, 2011); a concept that through its lack of definitional clarity has permitted expansive interpretation and provided justification for security measures and policies that would be indefensible in peacetime (Zedner, 2009, p. 121; see also Brisman & South, in press). The ability to discriminate between legitimate and illegitimate targets is a criterion in war (Childress, 2001), and human rights violations have repeatedly been observed in the above-mentioned ‘wars’ (Heroux, 2011, p. 108; Wood & Shearing, 2007, p. 92). The war metaphor has also been criticized for blurring the line between warfare and security, on one side, and criminality and crime control, on the other (Delmas-Marty, 2007; McCulloch & Wilson, 2016, p. 26; Zedner, 2009). Moreover, such discourse leads to a construction of suspects as *presumptive* enemies who can be punished in advance of wrongdoing because enemies by definition are guilty of hostile intentions (Zedner, 2010, p. 26).

Warfare and traditional policing involve different notions of risk, however. Hallsworth and Lea (2011) explain that while police action aims to arrest, gather evidence and apprehend suspects for prosecution in the courts, in warfare the aim is to ‘take out’, ‘inflict unacceptable casualties’ or otherwise neutralize the enemy’s threat. A link may be drawn to the process of ‘othering’ (Young, 2007, p. 35), which promotes and facilitates aggression through dehumanization of those regarded as threats. Law enforcement officers generally wield considerable discretion and are expected to exercise individual judgement prior to a decision or action, outside of the direct command of superiors (Lipsky, 2010; Reiner, 2010). It is likely that regarding suspected offenders as ‘enemies’ impacts how officers

exercise discretion and make decisions, perhaps allowing the transgression of general prohibitions against violence.

Across Africa, the context for the turn towards war in conservation has been the rise of 'environmental security', where an emphasis on militarized responses to environmental problems is accompanied by increased possibilities for authoritarian controls (Neumann, 2004). One consequence is an increase in anti-poaching efforts with armed patrols, tracking equipment and aerial surveillance using helicopters, airplanes and drones (Wall & McClanahan, 2015). This development is increasingly called into question, and referred to as a 'counterproductive distraction' (Duffy 2016), that risks disguising the complex and unique nature of transnational environmental crime (Wright 2011) and reducing a complicated struggle against transnational criminal networks to a war between rangers and poachers (Rademeyer, 2016). Human rights violations are witnessed, as 'shoot-to-kill' policies have been ordered upon suspected hunters in the Central African Republic, Malawi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe (Neumann, 2004), while estimates of the number of killed poachers are often unattainable and unreliable (Wall & McClanahan, 2015).

Towards a War on Wildlife Crime in Uganda?

Policing in Uganda is a complex pattern of overlapping policing agencies, and the line between the conventional police (a continuance of a colonial-style paramilitary police force), the military and various security agencies is unclear (Kagari & Edroma, 2006). The militarization of the conventional Ugandan police force has gradually increased (Alemika, 2009) and central military units to address serious crimes (such as armed robbery), combined with shoot to kill policies and the use of military courts to try suspects, is weakening judicial procedures (Baker, 2005). The military is not subject to the same rules relating to arrest and detention of suspects that applies to the police, nor to external complaint mechanisms that support accountability, even when involved in civilian policing matters (Kagari & Edroma, 2006, p. 13). 'Green militarization' in Uganda has received little attention from the academic community compared to other Sub-Saharan African countries, likely because Uganda is considered less as a site for large-scale, commercial poaching. Nonetheless, there are signs of increasing securitization and military involvement in conservation. A force of 600 Ugandan soldiers

has been assigned to work alongside UWA in protected areas (CITES, 2013). In 2013, an inter-agency wildlife and forest crime task force was established, which included representatives of the Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces (UPDF), and 80 rangers were trained at the School of Military Intelligence in operational and counter-intelligence, criminal investigation and evidence gathering (CITES, 2015b). A conservation area manager has publically stated that UWA has declared war on hunters who target elephants for ivory, and a government representative urged a close working relationship with security forces to eliminate the threat of armed poachers (AllAfrica, 2016). Poachers can pose a genuine threat to Ugandan rangers; UWA records show that at least ten rangers have been killed by poachers since 2014 following clashes in protected areas across Uganda (Onyango, 2016). Illustrating how coercive policies may be utilized and extended by precedents set in other African countries (Duffy, 2016b), President Yoweri Museveni has granted UPDF and UWA the power to shoot suspected poachers inside the country's national parks (Tetana, 2014).

The war metaphor represents a particular way of addressing wildlife crime, and arguably, in turn, a way of dealing with it. Exposing the discourse to critical questioning is important because policies and practices grounded in myth and stereotypes are unlikely to be successful. Metaphorical analysis, as developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), focuses upon metaphors as ways of structuring possibilities for human reasoning and action (Milliken, 1999, p. 236). What falls within the domain of criminal law (and what does not) is a socially constructed process that is ongoing and inherently political (White, 2011; Zedner, 2004). In Uganda, the political pressure to curb wildlife crime is driven by the recognition that wildlife conservation is crucial for continued social economic development. The tourism sector, which is largely dependent on wildlife conservation, is a leading source of foreign exchange and a major provider of employment (Ministry of Tourism Wildlife and Antiquities, 2014).

Henry and Milovanovic (1999), in promulgating their notion of a *constitutive criminology*, argue that the dialectic of control must be addressed because 'crime' is constructed through a series of social interaction processes, and language and particular ways of talking create concrete social realities. Once constituted, their existence depends on their continued and often unwitting reconstruction in everyday discourse. With this perspective in mind, the keys to the argument in this

article are first the idea that *what* we speak about is partly a function of *how* we speak (Richardson, 1990), and second that a discourse articulated by authorities may serve to legitimize and produce policy practices (Milliken, 1999, p. 236). The goal is not to describe the extent of green militarization in Uganda, nor to provide a comprehensive record of the in(adequacies) of this approach. Rather, drawing on securitization literature, the relevance and consequences of a war on wildlife crime discourse will be considered in light of the ground-level experiences of law enforcement officers.

Methodology

This article is based on research in Uganda that was conducted intermittently between August 2013 and May 2015, involving semi-structured interviews with law enforcement officers. It is considered a 'collective' or 'multi-site case study' (Stake, 2006) as data were gathered across multiple sites or cases to provide a diverse material and improved understanding of the phenomenon. The sites were purposively selected in different regions to capture geographical variations. Respondents were individuals working for UWA, the Uganda Police Force (UPF) and the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA). Personnel from UPDF, who were serving UWA, were also respondents in the study.

Within UWA, twenty-one law enforcement rangers and supervisors were interviewed at UWA headquarters in Kampala, as well as in the Queen Elizabeth, Bwindi Impenetrable, Kidepo Valley and Murchison Falls national parks.⁵ In the UPF, twenty-one police investigators and managers were interviewed at nine sites, covering both central units and local stations responsible for investigating crimes occurring inside protected areas and large ivory seizures. In URA, interviews with twenty-two customs inspectors and supervisors were conducted at thirteen sites, including terrestrial border points, two transit-monitoring stations in the interior, at Entebbe International Airport and URA headquarters in Kampala. The total number of sites was twenty-seven. Respondents were recruited through managers and through snowball sampling. Participation was voluntary and respondents were promised confidentiality. To permit disclosure of locations without compromising the anonymity of the respondents, quotes are accredited to 'rangers,' 'officers' or 'inspectors' representing UWA, UPF and URA respectively. Interview questions did not focus specifically on securitization and militarization in

⁵ Hereafter referred to as Queen, Bwindi, Kidepo and Murchison.

conservation. Rather, questions sought unguided responses about issues pertinent to the respondents' work. While the majority of the questions remained unaltered, the interview guide was continually reviewed and updated, as new insight inspired further questions. Therefore, data collection and analysis were partly concurrent. Ranger interviews explored the characteristics of offenders, offences, training and equipment. Police interviews involved questions regarding the circumstances surrounding investigation and prosecution. Interviews with inspectors covered the nature of wildlife smuggling, as well as factors relevant to border control and detection.

Thirty-five interviews were conducted with sixty-four respondents (five of whom were female), with periods of service ranging from three months to thirty-six years. Interviews were conducted in groups (16) or individually (19), depending on the number of respondents available at the time of the visit. Except for one interview (with 11 respondents), no groups exceeded three interviewees. Although group respondents interacted and added to or otherwise commented on each other's statements, the main line of communication was between interviewer and interviewees. Interviews were not electronically recorded. Interviews lasted for approximately one hour, and the handwritten notes were transcribed electronically on the same day as each interview was conducted so that details could be noted while still fresh. Transcripts were kept as true to the original statements as possible. Analysis of the transcripts began with identifying and highlighting keywords in the text of each printed interview (such as 'firearms' or 'encroachment'), providing an inventory of data-driven codes. For the purpose of this article, the codes were later developed into broader, more analytical and theoretically informed themes (Gibbs, 2007) that were deemed relevant for the research question. These often traversed the interviews and guided the layout of the findings section.

While respondents frequently revealed negative and challenging aspects of their work situation, group interviews are vulnerable to pressures of conformity. By contractual agreement, interviews with rangers were conducted in the presence of a senior staff member, which might have pressured respondents to provide answers that they considered acceptable, for fear of reprisal. Moreover, because some respondents are more knowledgeable, articulate or forthcoming than others, it is the researcher's responsibility to prevent them from acquiring disproportional influence in the

analysis (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Thus, conscious efforts were made to include statements from numerous respondents. All generalizations are based on dominant patterns in the data and quotations from particular interviews may represent a common interview theme, or disagreement between respondents, thereby demonstrating the complexity of the issues discussed.

Results

Wildlife Crime for Local Subsistence

Interviews suggest that while the range of wildlife-related challenges is diverse, most offenders are local people, driven by subsistence and basic income generation. Officer (1) stated that ‘crimes in Murchison are illegal entry to the park, poaching for consumption and sale locally,’ and there are ‘incidents almost every week’ (...) ‘Bush meat is sold locally and to restaurants and hotels in other districts.’ In the eastern Kapchorwa district, ‘wildlife-related crimes are illegal entry to the park for grazing and collection of firewood, and poaching for game meat’ according to Officer (2). While illegal grazing and firewood collection were reported up to four times a week, there had been three recorded incidents of hunting so far that year (April 2015).

Hunting varies with the seasons and employment opportunities. Ranger (1) in Murchison commented that ‘during the dry season, local farmers and people have less to do and become redundant, so the poaching increases.’ ‘The poachers are local people [from] around the park’ and ‘[rangers] meet local hunters on every patrol.’ Local hunters were also said to work for people living outside of the district or for foreign nationals travelling to the area. For instance, Ranger (2) stated that ‘restaurants in Kampala offer bush meat to customers.’ While bush meat is known to primarily supply domestic markets (UNODC, 2011), Officer (3) in the western Kasese district revealed that ‘the poachers are often local people’ but ‘meat is also exported to rebels in the Congo,’ highlighting a transnational component of the bush meat trade.

With a growing population of more than 35 million people, the pressure on Uganda’s natural resources is substantial. To Ranger (3), human population growth represents a challenge for wildlife in two ways, as this ‘accounts for the loss of habitat for wildlife’ and leads to ‘increased hunting for bush

meat'. In Queen, fishing villages lie within the park boundaries. The rangers fear the spread of diseases from village livestock to wildlife, and Ranger (4) stated that 'waste from the villagers poses a serious danger to wild animals.' 'The population of leopards is declining due to the animals being hit by cars speeding on the public roads [that run] through the park,' according to Ranger (2). In Kidepo, rangers are concerned with the threat posed by the failure to disarm people in South Sudan. According to Ranger (5), if hunters come in from across the border, 'rapid fire can kill ten buffalos instantly'. While this assessment might seem to support the war metaphor, Ranger (6) maintained that a greater challenge than poaching in Kidepo is the setting of fires within the savannah park by residents of surrounding communities. Moghari (2009) found that in Queen, such fires are used to herd wild animals towards traps.

Overall, rangers were reluctant to admit that poaching is becoming an increasing problem in their respective parks—perhaps because to do so would acknowledge failure on their part. Owing to the size of the areas and the relative paucity of rangers, many crimes are never detected. Poaching also takes place outside park boundaries and Ranger (5) emphasized that 'poaching [in Kidepo] is not done deep inside the park but in the outer areas, in the buffer zone between public or private land and the national park.' Because protected areas commonly make up a very small part of the total landscape, Hutton and Leader-Williams (2003) maintain that conservation must extend to where people make their livelihoods, making sustainable use and community-based approaches among the few practical options.

Ignorance of the Law is No Defence

As a 'folk crime' phenomenon, wildlife crime is relegated to offences of custom and continuity, and the offenders construed as conventional community members (von Essen et al., 2014). Ranger (3) touched on this by emphasizing that the local people have relied on forest resources for generations: '[They] call themselves hunters, not poachers, [with the practice] going from father to son.' Then, 'local politicians collect votes by encouraging people to move into the sanctuaries' and as a result, 'there have been violent conflicts between local people and the rangers'. Concerns have been raised by the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC, 2015) after complaints of harassment and

forceful evictions of local communities from protected areas by UWA. Wild animals are sometimes killed to protect livestock and Ranger (7) explained that ‘there are no laws to compensate farmers when crops are destroyed or people are hurt or killed by wild animals.’ He continued: ‘some of the leaders, the politicians, are little supportive. They try to get votes and act on behalf of the poachers when they are arrested and demand them to be released.’ In Kidepo, politicians were said to promise land in exchange for votes. Political influence has also led to encroachment at Mount Elgon, Queen and Murchison (Harrison et al., 2015). Respondents across the agencies stressed the importance of building relationships with residents and local leaders. While unawareness may be a conscious defence strategy adopted by apprehended offenders (Jacoby, 2001), interviews suggest that knowledge of wildlife laws in the general population, among leaders and even within the enforcement agencies, is limited.

Officer (2) worked in an area with remote settlements and said, ‘many [locals] are illiterate and are not aware that they are breaking the law when entering the park.’ He also indicated that he had urged UWA to encourage local leaders to educate villagers and to use local radio stations for public service announcements about the illegality of poaching. For this officer, ‘ignorance of the law is no defence,’ illustrating how victims are turned into offenders as a result of criminalizing the everyday subsistence activities of local people (Jacoby, 2001, p. 2; White, 2013, p. 102). Implying that limited familiarity with wildlife laws extends to the criminal justice system, Officer (4) in the northern Kaabong district asked for copies of the Uganda Wildlife Act to be distributed to the local police and court to ‘be more up to date with the penal codes.’ The findings thus suggest that beyond subsistence and economic profit, wildlife crimes are committed somewhat unwittingly, as a response to political influence or as protection or retaliation following loss of livestock.

Diversified Techniques of Poachers

Maintaining that the poachers are heavily armed, Ranger (3), a UPDF Major deployed with UWA, described the Ugandan army as ‘a significant contributor to the enforcement of wildlife crime,’ partly as a result of placing UPDF throughout UWA. While rangers across the sample confirmed that poaching with firearms occurs regularly, hunters also use arrows, nets, metal traps, poison, snares and

spears. According to Ranger (1), 'most poachers use guns. They also use snares and poison fruit with battery acid and leave it on the ground for the animals to eat.' Ranger (8) from Bwindi stated that 'local people enter the forest to gather firewood and building material' and described illegal hunting in the following way: 'Poachers hunt with dogs and spears. They hunt small antelopes, bushbucks and wild pigs. (...) Hunters put up snares to trap antelopes and end up catching other wild animals not meant for eating.'

Despite the presence of forest elephants in Bwindi, poaching for ivory is not described as a problem, although 'hunters and local people that come across dead animals will remove the tusks,' Ranger (8) added. The declining use of firearms is attributed to weapons being less available following the government's efforts to disarm local people. Officer (3) pointed out that when firearms are used, poaching becomes only one of a number of crimes or potential crimes committed: 'the offenders are charged with illegal possession of firearms, and quarrels between the poachers arise when they are to share the loot between them, sometimes resulting in violence, even murder.'

In addition to having their natural resource base depleted, conflict and the illicit use of weapons represent a threat to people living near the poaching sites. Not one of the rangers interviewed reported having been injured personally in confrontations with poachers, but Ranger (9) stated that 'some resist arrest or try to run away,' while Ranger (7) said that 'they sometimes use metal traps that the rangers get caught in.' Interviewees also mentioned the possibility of injuries from encounters with animals, of which some had first-hand experience.

Based on the statements in the interviews, poaching in Uganda is multifaceted. Firearms are commonly used and meat has been exported across the border. In addition, many poachers use traditional hunting equipment, such as snares and traps, and regardless of method, most are driven by subsistence and basic income generation rather than commercial, transnational trade. This arguably calls into question the necessity of repressive, military-style anti-poaching responses. Contrary to popular images of organized crime and professional poachers armed with night sights, semi-automatic

weapons and helicopters, most wildlife offenders are poorly equipped, opportunistic locals (Pires & Moreto, 2011; Rademeyer, 2016).

A Chronic Lack of Resources

While the poachers are often poorly equipped, local authorities in Uganda, even if fully devoted to the task, struggle with limited resources. The lack of staff and sufficient equipment is a challenge for all the agencies. For the rangers, the lack of staff means that the rangers on duty are left with vast areas to patrol, but without the necessary gear. Ranger (4) in Queen stated ‘the biggest challenge of doing the fieldwork is lack of equipment.’ The rangers complain of not having proper backpacks, sufficient medical aid, good-sized water bottles and suitable boots for walking long distances. Similar shortcomings were expressed in Murchison, where the lack of tents for overnight patrols is also an issue. The rangers in Kidepo expressed a need for GPS cameras, compasses and uniforms, as well as boots and tents. In light of these requests, it is somewhat sobering to note that in the ‘war on poachers’ in Zimbabwe, international NGOs and donors raised their public profile through donations of trucks and aircraft, rather than providing basic equipment such as sleeping bags, firearms and rations, because these would attract less publicity (Duffy, 1999).

For the customs inspectors, the shortage of staff impedes the ability to control cross-border traffic and monitor the extensive network of small roads and footpaths leading through the forests. Inspector (1) on the Tanzanian border said, ‘there are not enough people to sufficiently monitor the areas along the border.’ There are few electronic scanners or detection dogs available, so security checks and verifications at checkpoints are conducted manually at the officers’ discretion.⁶ Even with scanners, Inspector (2) at the airport in Entebbe said that wildlife products are slipping through controls because ‘the scanning machines are not made for detecting organic materials’ and ‘the operating officers are not trained to recognize wildlife on the screens.’ Without specialized training, the technical distinction between legal and illegal wildlife products is often beyond the capacity of ordinary law enforcement personnel (Wright, 2011). Inspector (3), working at a transit-monitoring station in the interior, had never seen a CITES permit and admitted he would not know a false permit

⁶ Detection dogs are now being trained (CITES, 2015b). During data collection, the author observed drive-through scanning devices being built at some locations.

from a genuine one, which is disconcerting because forgery of documentation is a well-known problem throughout the wildlife trade (Wyatt, 2013).

As an institution, the police have undergone several positive reforms, yet the capacity to conduct investigations remains restricted. Officer (3) lamented that ‘there are no specialized detectives; the cases are handled by criminal investigation detectives in the general crime squad.’ Officer (5) asked for ‘more investment in specialization and training of investigators.’ The large number of local languages among different tribes was said to complicate the taking of statements and verification of their authenticity. Donated equipment, such as vehicles and computers, are rendered useless through shortages of petrol, power and parts. Files are often logged and stored manually, with records going back several decades—a system that, according to Officer (2), ‘makes it a very time-consuming enterprise to search for information from old files.’ Officer (4) revealed that the station had no computers, only an old typewriter; most files were written by hand. These findings are supported by a report from the UNODC (2013, p. 47), concluding that the police in Eastern Africa are generally under-resourced, lacking both equipment and training.

Discretion in Interaction with Offenders

Law enforcement rangers have the authority to make arrests, and Ranger (2) described how ‘when poachers are detected within the parks, the rangers perform an arrest and take the suspect back to park headquarters to record a statement.’ Rangers ‘can choose to give the poachers a caution [a warning] and let them go, or they can bring them to the police,’ explained Officer (6), inferring that rangers exercise discretion when dealing with suspected offenders.

Most wildlife cases handled by the police are brought to their attention by UWA. Officer (2) explained that when rangers come across people inside a protected area carrying snares, for example, ‘strict liability’ applies, meaning that there is no question of guilt. A detective will be assigned to the case, depending on his workload. Officer (2) continued: ‘A detective takes a statement from the arresting ranger and the suspect. Usually the suspect will confess to the crime. The investigator prepares the file and the case is brought to court. The sentence is dependent on the discretion of the magistrate.’

The magistrate's sentencing is typically based on prior convictions and the goal is to deter further poaching activities. Describing their recent cases, the police respondents provided a general depiction of the type of offences prosecuted and the level of sentencing. A man apprehended in Bwindi with a spear and a dog was sentenced to a year and a half in prison. A man apprehended while looking for building material in Mgahinga was described as 'not remorseful,' and sentenced to one year of imprisonment. Having been cautioned for illegal hunting previously, another man carrying the carcass of an antelope was sentenced to two years' imprisonment.⁷ Although few in number, the cases exemplify that penalties can be quite significant. According to Harrison and colleagues (2015, p. 68), offenders are often given the choice between a fine and imprisonment. Those convicted of subsistence-driven wildlife crimes are unlikely to be able to afford fines and are therefore imprisoned, which could result in further negative impacts on their livelihoods, and those of their families. People involved in commercial, profit-driven crimes, however, may have the means to pay the fines or bribe officials, and for that reason are less likely to be deterred.

It is unknown whether respondents in this study discriminate depending on the perceived motivations of the offenders; for instance, if they are more likely to caution subsistence-driven offenders than profit-driven commercial offenders. After the killing of six elephants in Queen in 2015, the conservation area manager stated 'those who come with guns into the park have come to wage war on us' but added that 'rules of engagement will apply and those found with firewood and grazing animals will be prosecuted' (The Citizen, 2016). This suggests that the perceived motivation of offenders influence ranger discretion, and previous research has found that in Uganda, both protected areas (Moreto et al., 2015) and borders (Runhovde, 2017; Titeca & Herdt, 2010) are operated through compromises and discretionary decision-making seeking to sustain a sound relationship with sometimes uncooperative community members. Over time, this could change should law enforcement officers come to regard themselves as being at war with poachers and traffickers. Denigration and dehumanization of offenders as the enemy mobilizes aggression (Young, 2007) and could inhibit peaceful conflict resolution as well as diminish the accountability of officers. Indeed, in Queen,

⁷ In accordance with the The Uganda Wildlife Act (2000), offenders are typically fined between 100,000 and 1 million Ugandan shillings, or sentenced to three to 18 months of imprisonment (Habati 2012 cited in Harrison et al. 2015).

Moghari (2009) noted that while park authorities believed that a ‘tough outlook’ was helpful for enforcing park regulations, the communities complained of verbal hostility, alleged beatings and attempted extortion from rangers.

Discussion

Is a War on Wildlife Crime Warranted in Uganda?

In this study, respondents who worked in various roles in several agencies highlighted that beyond consumption and cash income, political interference and lack of knowledge of the law are the main incentives for engaging in wildlife crime in protected areas of Uganda. Both rangers and police officers maintained that the poachers they apprehend and reprimand are mostly local people from the nearby rural communities. The respondents’ accounts suggest prevalence in the use of firearms, but a widespread use of traditional methods, such as snares and wire traps were also emphasized. Respondents indicated that when the poachers were motivated by profit, wildlife products mainly supplied markets *within* Uganda.

Respondents’ needs centred on basic equipment and conventional capacity building. Rangers stressed the importance of walking boots and water bottles; customs inspectors expressed a desire for more training, detection dogs and scanners, while police officers lamented the lack of computers, petrol and health care. In this light, the recent combative rhetoric used to describe the threat of wildlife crime, combined with shoot-to-kill orders for armed poachers, seems inconsistent with the respondents’ descriptions of the principal challenges at the local level.

Militarization strategies are unlikely to keep subsistence hunters out of Uganda’s national parks and do little to build support for conservation locally or provide alternative means of subsistence. While military-style responses can offer the appearance of heightened concern for wildlife, Duffy (2016a) warns that it ultimately undermine conservation because they pit local communities against wildlife and reduce the support of those who live with it. Moreover, the thought of being at war with the poachers, arguably places rangers in a perpetually combative mind-set that can influence their discretion and decision-making and can lead to more hostility, anger and confrontation that is hardly conducive to community relations. While the threat to rangers from armed

poachers is genuine, the complexity of wildlife crime challenges compels the inclusion of multiple stakeholders, theories and interventions, and militarized responses should be the last resort in a much wider and nuanced strategy.

A Need for a Multidimensional Approach

Legislative and policing policy must be shaped with the complexity of criminality in mind (Nurse, 2015, p. 102). Findings suggest that many offenders are relatively powerless, economically vulnerable individuals, hunting and gathering forest resources out of necessity. According to Tumusiime and colleagues (2011), such people are already living under threat of arrest and imprisonment by park authorities and increased law enforcement alone is unlikely to restrain exploitative use. Interventions must therefore go beyond regulation and law enforcement, accounting for the complex relationship between poverty and wildlife crime and the different reasons for engaging in such crimes (see, e.g., Hartter and Goldman 2009; Harrison et al. 2015; Moreto and Lemieux 2015). There is a danger that community-based approaches will be swept aside by narratives about war and wildlife crime as a global security threat. In the context of security, criminal justice systems tend to focus on short-term, coercive solutions as opposed to long-term investment in education and jobs (Hallsworth & Lea, 2011). Invasive strategies are instigated against groups regarded as the least useful members of the population (Neocleous & Rigakos, 2011, pp. 45-46) and new laws that criminalize impoverished people are created along with demands for tougher jail sentences (Heroux, 2011, p. 108).

With regard to large-scale, organized wildlife crime, a successful response begins in the context of larger long-term reform towards a democratic, competent and effective police service, where the police is separated from the military, and internal and external control mechanisms are implemented to improve accountability and transparency. As Kagari and Edroma (2006) argue, continued militarization in policing is unlikely to promote such development and the police should be resourced and trained to work independently. The police and the military have separate mandates, cultures and hierarchies, and their training is geared accordingly. Ugandan police officers have testified to undue interference by the army and other security agencies in investigations. Feeling

intimidated and threatened, police would often withdraw from investigations when the military became involved (Kagari & Edroma, 2006). Given the limited success in apprehending high-level wildlife offenders (Runhovde, 2017), and the pragmatic needs of the officers interviewed, a strengthened criminal justice response arguably relies on investigations being managed by officers trained in conventional law enforcement methods and forensic investigation techniques that will help secure successful prosecutions.

Conclusion

Based on the findings from this study, wildlife crime should not be considered a manifestation of war and insurgency waged against the state. Why, then, is there such a willingness to promote the idea that wildlife crime threatens security? One explanation is that it creates an argument for parks and wildlife departments, NGOs and private security companies to tap into funds available for security and anti-terrorism projects (Duffy, 1999, 2016a). Second, US environmental foreign aid policy in particular has influenced African biodiversity conservation by integrating it into wider sets of policy debates and initiatives linked to global security (Duffy, 2016b). Uganda is a key partner in the pursuit of US strategic interests in Sub-Saharan Africa and receives considerable foreign aid. Given that protecting biodiversity and combating wildlife trafficking are among the priorities (The Department of State, 2016), further incorporation between security issues and conservation is a prospective scenario in Uganda. Third, the academic community may inadvertently promote security narratives by making them their focus of study and by operating within the same discursive practices (for a discussion, see, e.g., Neocleous 2008:161; White and Heckenberg 2014:115). While criminology *should* examine critically the consequences of wildlife crime for national security, societal peace and social and ecological well-being, it should also be aware that, as maintained by Henry and Milovanovic (1999), those who oppose images of deviance, risk inadvertently affirming the reality of their existence through oppositional attacks that take these same concepts for granted. Shaw and Rademeyer (2016) have already called the link between biodiversity conservation, national security concerns and militarization ‘overplayed’ in the academic literature, finding a troubling incongruence between the emerging academic consensus and their own research. Even so, while risking indirect promotion of a

war on wildlife crime discourse by arguing against it, this critical analysis has sought to provide a limited but timely illustration of how a flourishing discourse may be disproportionate to the situation at the ground level and therefore should be used with caution.

This case study has some limitations in that large-scale, organized forms of poaching are less pronounced in Uganda than in some other African nations, rendering green militarization less of an issue in Uganda. Nevertheless, cultivating a transgressive politic of 'anti-security' (Neocleous & Rigakos, 2011) begins with recognizing and challenging the tiny moments in the drift towards securitization (Linnemann, 2013). A language of war risks constructing an image of crime based on false assumptions and misdirected arguments that oversimplify the challenges and fail to encourage responses that are more relevant. There are signs of intent and a range of promising initiatives to address wildlife crime is being undertaken in Uganda. Through systematic evaluation and by drawing on the unique ground-level experience of officers, a successful response may be further developed.

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