

## **The poaching paradox: why South Africa's 'rhino wars' shine a harsh spotlight on security and conservation**

Counter-poaching is becoming part of an increasing global trend of 'militarising' conservation, a process that securitises the protection of biodiversity and involves not just greater use of weapons, but also military and paramilitary personnel, training, technologies and partnerships.

There is, however, a dilemma in South Africa relating to counter-poaching and how it should be delivered. The debate concerns whether poaching should be regarded as an insurgency and combated in a military fashion, or as a crime and broadly handled by the police.

South Africa has become the world's rhino poaching number one 'hotspot' on account of having by far the largest rhino population globally. A large percentage of the rhino population belongs to the southern sub-species of the White rhino, these living either in state-run parks or in privately-owned ranches that host hunting parties or wildlife viewing safaris. It is predominately from within this latter group that the controversial campaign to legalise the trade in rhino horn has been advocated.

While rhino poaching is commonly linked with transnational crime, the act of poaching is only one distinct part of the chain, being essentially a tactic that relies on stealth and evasion as opposed to confrontation (unless under attack).

With poaching there is an assumption that the resource being poached is under either custodianship or ownership. But entwined with the definition of "poaching" are historical definitions and perceptions of what is legal and what is illegal hunting, which are rooted in the question of land ownership.

The South African authorities have responded to rhino poaching in the long-established and historical tradition within the country of relying upon 'hard power' in response to threats, rather than the 'soft power' of discussion, dialogue or negotiation.

Reacting to a huge surge in rhino poaching the South African authorities in 2010 drew up a counter-poaching strategy that involved both elements of the South African Police Service (SAPS) and the South African National Defence Force (SANDF).

Two years later, with South African authorities still clearly losing the 'rhino wars', a retired SANDF Major-General, Johan Jooste, was brought in to lead

the counter-poaching effort. In the view of General Jooste the escalating rhino poaching meant that South Africa was under 'attack' from 'armed foreign nationals' and 'armed foreign criminals' (*South African National Parks, 2012*).

The counter-poaching strategy of General Jooste - the 'Jooste War' – created a rhino poaching narrative that combined highlighting the destructiveness of the poaching with broader issues of national security. This linked immigration and transnational crime as key drivers of rhino poaching, and this fusion of rhino poaching with wider security issues is described here as the 'rhinofication' of South African security.

Additionally, the increasingly securitized approach to counter-poaching bears a notable resemblance to similar trends in late-modern warfare of closely targeting individuals or groups, known as 'man-hunting', which in its most extreme form involves 'shoot to kill', or in the more precise military wording, 'targeted killing'. In these ways and others, counter-poaching operations are presented with new operational, legal and philosophical opportunities and challenges.

Underlying the controversies in what are colloquially called the 'rhino wars', resides not only the problem of defining the security threat posed by rhino poaching but also an often unspoken yet pervasive political subtext that comes from the dark shadow of the years of Apartheid.

The primary focus of this chapter is to examine the effectiveness of the counter-poaching strategy in the 'rhino wars'. In the process key social and political issues surrounding rhino poaching in South Africa will also be discussed, these prominently coalescing around the campaign to legalise the sale of rhino horn in an increasingly bitter and polarising debate about its merits.

Rhino poaching in South Africa is also a highly visible indicator of the country's brittle internal security that reflects a stuttering economy, environmental problems and declining agricultural yields, along with high unemployment levels, industrial unrest and a land restitution programme that is a long way behind schedule.

Additionally, given that poaching is generally not socially threatening, with no implicit intention to murder, rape or kidnap and does not involve any other human-centric crime, the poacher might be viewed by some sections of society, especially the poor, not as a criminal but as an opportunist driven by a normal human desire for economic survival.

If that is the case, without the support of the rural population who live alongside the rhinos, counter-poaching risks merely being seen as an exercise in para-military 'pacification' and thus might be viewed as supporting the interests of a minority elite, which in the case of rhinos in South Africa is related to the ranches and the tourism industry that is predominately run by the white population.

It is the complicated South African mixture of national and international history, politics and economics that frames the backdrop of the 'rhino wars'. Furthermore, South Africa has a long history of 'pacification' by different groups, which follows in the country's historic tradition of reacting to threats, present or potential, with increased violence as leaders invoke images of 'backs-to-the-wall' confrontation and isolation (*Potgieter, 1995*).

### **Poaching: categorisation**

Because of their incredibly high value the targeting of rhinos and other mega-fauna can be categorised as 'mega-poaching'— a supra category separate from other wildlife. The value attached is driven by strong and rising demand from the Far East for body parts, which has increased the involvement of sophisticated crime syndicates. Poaching, as *Brockington et al., (2008)* suggest, refers broadly to two main categories governed by historical definitions and perceptions of legal and illegal hunting.

The first category, 'subsistence' poaching, meets the needs of local communities, and frequently relies on traps and snares because the target is often small game (*Duffy, 2010; Leakey, 2001; Brockington et al., 2008*). The second category is 'commercial' poaching, operated by organised groups that target valuable species, such as rhinos and elephants; these commercial poachers use different technologies to hunt, ranging from differing calibers of firearms, to GPS and mobile-phones (*Milliken and Shaw, 2012*).

Poaching in simple terms is defined as the hunting of any animal not permitted by the state or private owner. Even so, in practice it is anything but simple because as a commercial enterprise poaching involves many people, organizations and networks. These various categories tend to be thrown together under the heading 'poachers' and thus, by implication, all participants are all deemed to be illegal hunters.

However, there is a difference between the 'shooter' who might receive just a few hundred dollars for a successful kill and those people further up the 'supply-chain' receiving thousands of dollars: this distinction is evidenced in

practice with 'shooters' often being lightly punished compared to transnational criminals (*Rademeyer, 2012*).

The debate over poaching as a criminal process pivots on the very subjective definition of ownership of both the wildlife and the land on which they live, framed by Roman law concerning *res nullius* (nobody's property) or *res publicae* (the property of everyone). Poaching has evolved via a process of land enclosure and criminalisation, which intersects with a range of motivations: subsistence, financial gain, and resistance to wildlife protection laws.

The lines between differing poaching identities are eroding, however: for instance there is now a version of 'subsistence' poaching that overlaps with commercial poaching in response to the global demand for bush-meat that is more and more accessible as roads and transportation networks expand in terrain previously considered impenetrable.

#### **'Jooste war' declaration**

Following two years of a rapid escalation in rhino deaths, the South African government in early October 2010 held a 'rhino summit' in Pretoria (*South African Government Information Service, 2010*). The then Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs, Buyelwa Sonjica of the Department of Water and Environmental Affairs (DEA), convened the summit; however, as a demonstration of the dysfunctional response to the rhino poaching, Sonjica was replaced by President Jacob Zuma just days after the meeting amid reports of poor bureaucracy and financial irregularities in the DEA (<http://washafrika.wordpress.com>, 2010).

Two important decisions, nevertheless, were made at the summit. The first was for investigations to be undertaken into South Africa's internal rhino horn market and another into the international market. The second decision was that a Biodiversity Enforcement Directorate would be established within DEA to bring cohesion to the government's counter-poaching efforts Pretoria (*South African Government Information Service, 2010*).

Soon after the summit counter-poaching was upgraded further with overall oversight handed to the National Joints Committee (NatJoints), South Africa's highest authority for the co-ordination, joint planning and implementation of high priority security measures, including co-operation against smuggling across national borders (*South African Government Information Service, 2010*). NatJoints consists of senior members of the South African Police Service

(SAPS), the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) and the South African National Defence Force (SANDF).

In 2012 the scope and depth of counter-poaching initiatives grew when General Jooste was appointed strategic overlord of all anti-poaching operations within the twenty-two national parks controlled by SANParks (South Africa National Parks), arguably, making General Jooste the most important person countering rhino poaching in South Africa, if not the world. Immediately General Jooste threw down the gauntlet to the poachers: 'we are going to take the war to these armed bandits and we aim to win it', and with his 'bush war' experience gained while fighting during Apartheid, General Jooste seemed to be the ideal choice (*South African National Parks, 2012*).

### **Crackdown**

In 2013, Western governments demonstrated a new commitment to dealing with wildlife poaching and trafficking (of both live animals and dead animal by-products, such as rhino-horn, ivory and shark-fin), which had become the third highest category of illegal trading, after drugs and guns (*Coalition Against Wildlife Trafficking (CAWT)*).

In July 2013, President Obama launched the Wildlife Trafficking Taskforce, followed later in the year by the announcement that British Army paratroopers would train the Kenyan Wildlife Service (KWS) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk>, 2013).

US Secretary of State, John Kerry, subsequently offered a \$1million reward for information leading to the break-up of the Laos-based, but operationally global, Xaysavang Network of wildlife traffickers. The most significant project was the \$80 million 3-year Clinton Global Initiative to train 3100 park rangers in 50 trafficking/poaching 'hotspots' in Africa, as well as to increase the use of sniffer-dogs. This development followed from an announcement in 2012 from Hillary Clinton, then the US Secretary of State: 'this is a global challenge that spans continents and crosses oceans, and we need to address it with partnerships that are as robust and far-reaching as the criminal networks we seek to dismantle' (*Braun, 2012*).

However, the rhetoric of 'war' relating to counter-poaching points to an inherent security puzzle posed by rhino poaching as to whether it should be viewed as *crime* or as an *insurgency* that might involve kinetic responses beyond the strictly judicial realm. While the identity of rhino poaching involves external penetration and with it an implication of an insurgent identity, the problem is also internal and with it an implication of a more

criminal identity given the loss of property in the form of rhinos, a highly valuable commodity both in financial and natural resource terms.

Tactically, the focus on hunting down the individual poacher categorises counter-poaching within emerging trends in late-modern combat that have been identified by political geographer, Derek Gregory, as 'the individuation of warfare': 'targets are no longer whole areas of cities—like Cologne or Hamburg in the Second World War—or extensive target boxes like those ravaged by B-52 'Arc Light' strikes over the rainforest of Vietnam. The targets are individuals' (Gregory, 2013).

High profile examples of the 'individuation' of war would be the hunting down of Osama bin Laden or drone 'strikes' such as that killed radical Muslim cleric, Anwar al-Awlaki: not only does 'individuation' represent the most elemental and primal form of group violence, namely 'the hunt', but it also connects with a deep atavistic human impulse to protect and control property, both as a resource (in this case being wildlife) and the land containing the resource.

### **Rhinofication**

The growing 'arms race' between the rhino owners (whether state or private) and poaching gangs has run alongside the growing international trend of fusing wildlife conservation issues with wider security concerns (Humphreys and Smith, 2011). In this way, rhino poaching and conservation in South Africa have become enveloped within the 'rhinofication' wider security narrative.

This strand of national security involving the overlap of state security and mega-fauna poaching was clearly demonstrated in the early 1980's by the intervention of the Botswana Defence Forces (BDF) against well-armed poaching gangs who were taking advantage of widespread conflict and instability across southern Africa stemming from the 'Apartheid Wars' (Henk, 2006).

At stake was both Botswana's internal security and substantial wildlife tourism industry. BDF operations initially employed a specialised commando squadron which comprised small-unit foot patrols of skilled trackers from Botswana's hunter-gatherer society backed up by helicopter-borne rapid-reaction forces. Within months, the poaching gangs had been beaten back (Henk, 2006).

It was during years of Apartheid that the concept of privately-owned wildlife conservancies/reserves being integrated into a grand security plan was developed in South Africa by parks administrator, Nick Steele. For his 'Farm

Patrol Plan', Steele convinced white ranchers during the 1970s to form joint protection forces against poaching, stock-theft and political turmoil, with rangers trained in para-military style. In this way, the 'Farm Patrol Plan' copied counter-insurgency's classic policy of 'inkspots' by creating islands of resistance and power that expanded over time (*Draper, 1998*).

To understand the importance of rhino conservation, one must understand the historic place of the rhino in the political economy of pre- and post-colonial South Africa. While rhinoceros hide has been principally used in South Africa for a variety of leather goods, such as the all-purpose *sjambok* whip, the horn was exported to satisfy the ancient traditional Chinese medicine market and, in more recent years, to Yemen to create handles for *jambiya* ceremonial daggers (<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/episodes/rhinoceros/rhino-horn-use-fact-vs-fiction>).

In pre-colonial days, hunting was important to the economy and diet of the indigenous people providing meat, domestic items and trade goods. The large-scale hunt was also an important element in establishing social and political relations. The Nguni tribe in Natal traditionally placed great emphasis on hunting, both on a small and large scale, which for the chief or king would serve as a means of keeping his soldiers employed in peacetime (*MacKenzie, 1997*).

Hunting could be loosely categorised as either 'defensive', in order to protect humans, crops or stock, as a 'domestic resource', to supply meat, skins and receptacles, or undertaken for 'trading purposes', mainly ivory but also horns, hides and pelts (*MacKenzie, 1997*).

With the arrival of colonial rule, however, the use of wildlife by indigenous people for quotidian purposes was replaced by the 'store' or itinerant traders, while the colonists harnessed the killing of wildlife as a crucial resource in their expansion across Africa, whether for food, trade or as a means of paying for labour, while also giving the colonisers the impetus to expand frontiers.

'Few regions of the world' according to John MacKenzie', 'had richer and more exploitable game resources than southern Africa. Even fewer witnessed such a dramatic decline in the space of half a century'. Mackenzie added that hunting was 'the essential concomitant of missionary endeavour and the initial survival mechanism of the frontier' (*MacKenzie, 1997*).

The killing of wildlife, especially the elephant and rhinoceros, has always sat prominently in the cross-hairs of politics and history in South Africa. Here, the fortunes of wildlife have been closely bound to a battle between protective

legislation versus hunting, raiding and poaching, set against a backdrop of political change and external threats.

South Africa's wildlife- national security nexus began when it was a colony of the British empire that competed with two neighbouring empires, the Portuguese one located in today's Mozambique and Angola, and the German one in today's Namibia.

It is here that the roots of 'rhinofication' lie since while these borders were mostly meaningless to the ivory and rhino horn traders. The First World War demonstrated the need for security buffer areas following uncertainty about Portuguese intentions and a series of battles fought between German and South African forces in and around the Kalahari Desert.

In 1936 the Kalahari Gemsbok Park was set up, abutting both German South West Africa/Namibia and Bechuanaland/Botswana; ten years earlier the old Sabie park on the South African-Mozambique border had been expanded and renamed the Kruger national park after prominent politician, Paul Kruger.

The key security element of national parks was that human occupation and movement was severely controlled within the boundaries, while the security buffering process went even further in the Kruger park with a fence erected in 1959 along the Mozambique border.

The first game legislation in South Africa was introduced as early as 1657 by the Dutch East India Company; by the mid-nineteenth century, both the Orange Free State and the South African Republic had also introduced game laws (*MacKenzie, 1997*).

With global concern growing about the decline in wildlife populations, a split began to emerge at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century between the 'preservationist' supporters at the time who wanted to preserve wildlife for sport and the 'conservationists' who wanted to conserve wildlife for its own sake; over time, however, 'conservation' became dominant (*MacKenzie, 1997*).

This struggle gave rise in Britain to the Society for the Preservation of the Fauna of the Empire (SPFE), a socially and politically well connected group and predecessor of today's equally influential Fauna and Flora International, that spearheaded two fundamental pieces of legislation: (1) the Convention for the Preservation of Wild Animals, Birds and Fish in Africa, which was signed in London in 1900 (the "London Convention"); and (2) the Agreement for the Protection of the Fauna and Flora of Africa of 1933 (*MacKenzie, 1997*).



The London Convention showed its 'preservationist' roots, creating 'reserves' as areas for game management and hunting with humans largely excluded; the later piece of legislation is viewed as being 'conservationist', orientated to conserving wildlife and prohibiting any hunting (*MacKenzie, 1997*).

Overall, both pieces of legislation had three broad impacts: firstly, they handed over the administration and enforcement of wildlife either to White settlers or colonial authorities, often in these designated reserves.; secondly, indigenous Africans were stopped from hunting, and in the process transforming wildlife from a direct resource for food and trade into a secondary resource for sport and tourism (*MacKenzie, 1997*).

The third impact was that the legislative process not only turned these indigenous hunters into 'poachers' but also served as another way for white settlers to establish control over land (which over time became inalienable), as well as developing a 'code' that established Western attitudes and etiquette to hunting as appropriate and correct.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the range of White and Black rhino in South Africa had been reduced to a small area at the junction of the Black and White Umfolozi rivers in Natal, an area that was later turned into the Umfolozi and Hluhluwe Game Parks.

Today in South Africa, large numbers of rhinos live on land owned privately. A survey undertaken by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform in 2013 found that 79 per cent of South African land is privately owned in a variety of forms as opposed to 14 per cent owned by the state. In the Northern Cape district for example, 1.8 million hectares were in state ownership, with 35.2 million hectares in private hands.

Of the private land in South Africa, a sizeable percentage is owned by the White population even though it constitutes just 8.9 per cent of the overall population, with the figure also including Coloureds who are of a mixed race according to the 2011 census.<sup>i</sup> Consequently, it was calculated that the majority black population is concentrated in only 13 per cent (approximately 16 million hectares) in a country that comprises 113 million hectares.

Rhinos in South Africa are protected under both national and international legislation. Domestically, the protection of the rhino is enshrined in the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (NEMBA) for which the maximum penalty for illegal possession of rhino horn is five years imprisonment and a fine (*Government Gazette, 2004*).

On the international level, the trade in rhino parts has been subject to Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) since 1975. CITES both prohibits and controls the export of threatened species and is legally binding on its 170 signatories: Appendix 1 denotes the a species that is considered among the most endangered on Earth and must not be commercially traded except under special circumstances, such as for scientific purposes (*www.cites.org*).

### **‘Armed social work’**

The dilemma of the South African authorities over how to reconcile the policing versus militarised approaches to counter-poaching seemed closer to resolution with General Jooste’s appointment: this suggested a more sophisticated approach to the problem, an understandable assumption given General Jooste’s past record.

Prior to his appointment as SANParks Commanding Officer (Special Projects), General Jooste held the commercially significant position of Director of International Business Development for BAE Systems (Land Systems South Africa); swapping his salesman’s suit for olive-green fatigues and an office in the Kruger national park was a change that General Jooste seemed to relish (*Jooste, www.linkedin.com*).

In 1971, while in his early twenties, General Jooste had joined the former South African Defence Force (SADF) just as the country’s war with neighbouring ‘front-line states’ was entering its bloodiest and most bitter phase. The Apartheid ‘total strategy’ operated by the governing National Party mixed classic counter-insurgency field tactics with a policy of destabilisation both internally and externally and a home-front mantra of ‘total onslaught’ that portrayed white society as under siege (*Davies and O’Meara, 1985*).

Out of the jagged landscape of ‘total onslaught’ one can hear the ‘rhino war’ rhetoric of General Jooste, which is not surprising given that he had over twenty years of close involvement in the ‘Apartheid Wars’ having fought much of the time in the combat ‘cockpit’ of South West Africa/Namibia (*Potgieter, 2007*).

With the end of Apartheid, General Jooste continued in the newly constituted SANDF until retiring in 2006, later gaining degrees in Commerce and in Business Administration, demonstrating General Jooste’s knowledge of a wider non-military world (*Jooste, www.linkedin.com*).

During Apartheid, the counter-insurgency strategy of South Africa and neighbouring Zimbabwe/Rhodesia was heavily influenced by the Malaya Emergency and the British response. General Peter Walls, commander of the Rhodesian army, and one of his top commanders, Lieutenant-Colonel Ron Reid-Daly, founder of the Selous Scouts, both fought in the SAS 'C' Squadron in Malaya (*de Visser, 2011*).

The most influential South African soldier with experience in Malaya was Lieutenant-General Charles 'Pop' Fraser, a veteran also of World War Two. Fraser's influence came both from his operational rank, firstly as Chief of the South African Army in 1966 and then as General Officer Commanding Joint Combat Forces (1967-73), as well as from a series of key writings (*de Visser, 2011*).

Fraser's text, *Lessons learnt from past revolutionary wars*, was published in the early 1960s and followed up with another influential study, *Revolutionary warfare: basic principles of counter-insurgency* (*de Visser, 2011*). Both works distilled lessons not only from the Malaya experience but also from the more ideologically hard-line 'French School' of counter-insurgency embodied in works such as by David Galula (*Galula, 1964*), and Roger Trinquier (*Trinquier, 1964*).

Modern counter-insurgency thinking emphasises a distinction between 'enemy-centric' measures that call for hard kinetic operations aimed at eliminating insurgents versus the 'population-centric' approaches that encourage the general population to think that their best form of protection and social advancement is in supporting the government.

The latter version of counter-insurgency has famously been called 'armed social work' by expert, David Kilcullen, for whom 'hearts and minds' meant: "hearts" means persuading people their best interests are served by your success, "minds" means convincing them that you can protect them and that resisting you is pointless. Note that neither concept has to do with whether people like you. Calculated self-interest, not emotion, is what counts' (*Kilcullen, 2006*).

One of the key difficulties in applying any version of a 'hearts and minds' strategy to counter-poaching is how to devise an effective plan based on the 'enemy-centric' and 'population-centric' formula, which in turn is related to the separation of the law enforcement role of the police from the more kinetic approach of military operations.

Moulded by the long historic traditions of border wars, punitive expeditions and the suppression of civil disturbance, the division of roles between South Africa's army and the police have increasingly become blurred.

During Apartheid these roles often became interchangeable or even reversed, which was clearly demonstrated in the Namibia/South West Africa campaign: while the Army was mounting 'hearts and minds' campaigns alongside combat operations, the paramilitary Koevoet 'Crowbar' force of the then South African Police followed a separate agenda that included 'hit and run' raids, interrogation with torture, and other efforts to generally sow discord (*de Visser, 2011*).

Today, policing in South Africa is underpinned by the tactical interchangeability between domestic policing and paramilitary roles; additionally the increased operational integration between SAPS and SANDF includes joint 'security operations' and the exchange of equipment. Paramilitary SWAT-type units, most notably the Special Task Force (STF) and the Tactical Response Team (TRT), also bridge the gap between the police and the military.

The police forces of Africa were created by the colonial powers with an emphasis on maintaining law and order, ensuring the protection of property and pacifying the local population.

These are still the defining elements of policing in Africa, as the post-colonial rulers of all stripes have maintained a powerful grip on police operations, and in return, the police have been allowed to operate with considerable autonomy (*Shearing, 2007*).

For the South African police, the inherited pacification tradition combined with a lack of training to police increasingly complex societies and 'ungoverned spaces', has led to a tendency to use of force in tense situations. Such incidents, notably in the 2012 confrontation between striking workers at the Marikana mine that resulted in 44 deaths, have led to diminishing public trust in the capacities of the police (*Sosibo, 2012*).

A graphic illustration of this has been the growth of the private security industry in South Africa, which is the largest in the world with some 9000 registered businesses, employing 400,000 registered security guards—more than the combined strength of the South African police and armed forces (*Eastwood, 2013*).

According to the Minister of Police, Nathi Mthethwa, private security firms increasingly performed 'functions which used to be the sole preserve of the

police. This has, and will continue to have a serious influence on the functioning of the criminal justice system as a whole' ([www.defenceweb.co.za](http://www.defenceweb.co.za)). Developments such as these take place against the backdrop of daunting crime statistics for murder, robbery and sexual assault ([www.saps.gov.za/statistics](http://www.saps.gov.za/statistics)).

To summarise, in 'classic' interpretations of counter-insurgency a line is drawn—however obliquely—between counter-insurgency and policing, which marks the precise calibration of the use of force and legality. The former is based on the application of hard military power, sometimes outside the constraints of civil law, whereas in the latter this is not sanctioned—or not supposed to be—given that it is not only the law that confines police forces, but also the need to maintain the support of the population.

### **Manhunting**

With the erosion of distinctions, however, both in terms of defining conflict and the application of armed force, come new patterns of violence which we can see in the evolving counter-poaching dynamic in South Africa.

Most notable in this dynamic is the 'hunt' and more specifically, 'man-hunting'. Gregory links the widening use of drone strikes in anti-terrorist operations with the 'individuation of warfare', a strategy of 'man-hunting' which is 'a new form of networked (para) military violence' (Gregory, 2013).

According to Marks, Meer and Nilson (Marks et al., 2012), 'man-hunting' departs from established practices in war in that there are no battles or need to meet the enemy face-to-face, except briefly 'in the competition between two enemy combatants, [where] the goal is to win the battle by defeating the adversary—both combatants must confront [each other] to win'. The authors continue: 'a man-hunt scenario differs in that each player's strategy is different. The fugitive always wants to avoid capture, while the pursuer always wants to engage and capture the target—the pursuer must *confront* to win, whereas the fugitive must *evade* to win' (Marks et al., 2012).

In 2009, George A. Crawford published a paper that proposed to make 'man-hunting a foundation of US national strategy' (Crawford, 2009). Crawford's widely circulated report addressed not only drones and 'targeted assassinations', but the wider implications of operations specifically focused on human beings (Crawford, 2009).

For Crawford, the aim of 'man-hunting' is 'to detect, deter, disrupt, detain, or destroy networks' (Crawford, 2009). Similarly, for Grégoire Chamayou the

threat 'is not determined by the seriousness of an act committed, but by the estimated danger of an individual' (*Chamayou, 2012*).

The concept and practice of 'man-hunting' was highlighted with the killing of Osama bin Laden by American 'special forces' in May 2011, characterised in popular commentary as 'the hunt for bin Laden' (*Blair, 2012*). Thus, the essential 'hunting' element within counter-poaching, which this chapter has pointed to with respect to efforts to protect the South African rhino, conforms to developments within modern armed violence.

Any doubts about the ethical rationale within 'man-hunting' in relation to rhino counter-poaching are generally subsumed by the relentless media coverage showing the brutal results of poaching.

However, as a sociological counter-narrative there is Eric Hobsbawm's (*Hobsbawm, 1965*) classic analysis of 'bandits' and 'social bandits'. The 'bandit' is someone who 'simultaneously challenges the economic, social and political order by challenging those who hold or lay claim to power, law and the control of resources';<sup>ii</sup> 'social bandits' are 'peasant outlaws whom the lord and state regard as criminals, but who remain within peasant society' (*Hobsbawm, 1965*).

Hobsbawm added that 'social bandits' were viewed in rural areas as 'men to be admired, helped and supported'; here Hobsbawm noted the case of the eighteenth century poacher, Mathias Klostermayer from Bavaria: he terrorised hunters, game-keepers and anyone associated with game, while all the time Klostermayer's own poaching was 'an activity peasants always regarded as legitimate, (and) he was admired and helped' (*Hobsbawm, 1965*).

### **Ungoverned space**

'Ungoverned spaces' do not axiomatically have to be violent because some may be economically productive, either through tourism or agriculture, where the lack of human interference is beneficial, as in the case of the Kruger national park.

The Kruger park has not only become an 'ungoverned space' on South Africa's border but also the world's number one rhino poaching 'hotspot' with images of gunned down and hacked rhinos that in turn draw attention to the high levels of general violence in the country (*Herskovitz and Stoddard, 2012*). In this way, rhino poaching and conservation in South Africa have become part of the country's wider security picture, referred to earlier as 'rhinofication'.

As an indicator and lightning-rod of the country's brittle internal security rhino poaching is highly visible as the sheer scale of the statistics of murder and unemployment have a symbolic symmetry with the number of rhino deaths. Rhino poaching also provides a critical examination of the South African authorities ability to protect the country's borders, its citizens and its biodiversity heritage.

Furthermore, a series of disputes in the armed forces over pay and discipline have cast doubts about their state of preparation and operational ability, crystallised in the humiliating 'battle of Bangui' in 2013, when South African peace-keeping forces in the Central African Republic (CAR) were overwhelmed by the Seleka rebels with severe loss of life and injury ([www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-20889136](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-20889136)).

In the background of events of this kind has been a continuously reinforcing feedback loop consisting of a faltering economy, growing environmental problems and declining agricultural yields, along with high unemployment levels, industrial unrest and political factionalism within the ruling African National Congress (*Molele and Naidoo, 2013*).

These problems have been connected to and exacerbated by the perennial challenge of widespread illegal immigration into South Africa. The great majority of the job-hungry have come from Zimbabwe and Mozambique, with many of the illegal incomers making their way through the porous borders around the Kruger national park (Vale, 2003) and what Clunan and Trinkunas refer to as 'ungoverned spaces' (*Clunan and Trinkunas, 2010*).

### **Rhino Wars**

The intense focus on rhinos in South Africa stems from the ever-expanding 'commodification' of the animals, which lie at the heart not only of the illegal horn selling networks, but also the tourist industry - whether for sport hunting or wildlife viewing - on which more and more parts of South Africa are becoming heavily reliant economically.

Furthermore, 'rhino wars' have become a global brand of sorts, supporting and harnessing a vast array of organisations that in turn are synchronised with graphic media representations, such as the adrenaline-pumping TV series *Battleground: rhino wars* (*Animal Planet, 2013*) filmed in the Kruger National Park with former United States 'special forces' personnel intercepting poaching gangs, or books ranging from the award-winning reportage of Julian Rademeyer's *Killing for profit* (*Rademeyer, 2012*) to Deon Meyer's gritty crime thriller *Trackers* (*Meyer, 2011*).

The whiff of combat and high octane action in rugged terrain has attracted both former soldiers with experience in Afghanistan, Iraq and 'special operations' (Taylor, 2012), as well as veterans of South Africa's own Apartheid 'bush wars' (Marshall, 2013). These operatives work across a wide counter-poaching spectrum, touting field-craft courses, high-tech equipment and active patrolling.

The extent to which the 'rhino wars' narrative has penetrated the security discourse of southern Africa was illustrated by the discovery of a bogus rhino counter-poaching camp in northern South Africa which had been created for an attempted coup against Joseph Kabila, president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Govender, 2013).

The camp demonstrated how much the militarisation of rhino counter-poaching through the use of non-governmental organisations has filled the security void in parts of South Africa, as well as the degree to which paramilitary vigilantism and mercenary activities still flourish in Africa's semi-governed spaces (Govender, 2013).

The social causes and operational elements of the 'rhino wars' were forensically laid bare in 2012 by Julian Rademeyer's lengthy investigation (Rademeyer, 2012).

According to Rademeyer, the 'rhino wars' actually involve three inter-locking 'wars': one involves the protection of an historic and high-profile animal, even though the actual motivations of individuals are a variety of conservation, combat, political and economic; a second 'war' involves competing groups and individuals engaged in brutal, cynical and logistically complex strategies to cash in on a valuable resource; and a third 'war' involves an increasingly bitter 'war of words' between pro and anti-rhino horn legalisation supporters (Rademeyer, 2012).

What also emerges from Rademeyer's analysis is the existence of an almost limitless number of people offering their services as a 'shooter' for comparatively little pay. The demographic and organisational profile of the individual rhino shooter is almost always that of an impoverished black from South Africa and Mozambique. While the principal trigger-pullers are predominantly black, they are organised by middlemen some of whom are white, often with a sport-hunting background and occasionally even in veterinary science (Rademeyer, 2012).

Thus the political economy of rhino wars merges with a legal process that would seem capricious and erratic at best, aided by official corruption and



incompetence, as well as with some self-serving interests such as a pay strike by the Kruger National Park rangers in February 2012 which was viewed by the public as unwarranted (*Broadhead, 2012*).

With these multiple and contrasting elements the phrase 'rhino wars' have become a useful semiotic 'floating signifier': while the moral case against rhino poaching is clear enough the reasons behind rhino poaching, along with the range of outcomes and strategies employed, and how all these mesh into the 'rhino wars' narrative are exceedingly opaque.

### **Rhino poaching roots**

The beginning of the modern rhino poaching crisis in South Africa began with the 'Apartheid Wars' of the 1970s and 1980s (*Reeve and Ellis, 1995*) when elements within the former South African Defence Force (SADF) used the fighting and the draconian security laws promulgated by the Nationalist Party as cover to organise a vast network of smuggling operations involving mainly ivory, rhino horn, drugs and diamonds, particularly in conjunction with UNITA, the former Angolan resistance organisation led by Dr Jonas Savimbi (*Rademeyer, 2012*).

According to Colonel Jan Breytenbach, conservationist and commander of the renowned 32<sup>nd</sup> 'Buffalo Soldiers' Battalion in Angola, who witnessed the slaughter of wildlife in Angola: 'the hundreds of thousands of elephants became thousands, the thousands became hundreds and the hundreds only a very few' (*Potgieter, 1995*).

An integrated southern African smuggling trade that was effectively sanctioned by the state, with Johannesburg as the hub, had even wider strategic implications, the most immediate of which was that the smuggling enabled South African military intelligence to leverage influence over both friends, such as UNITA in Angola, and enemies such as FRELIMO in Mozambique, who were also involved in the illicit trade (*Ellis, 1994*).

Over the long term, however, the state's involvement in smuggling had two even more powerful consequences. First, the lengthy period of fighting allowed the smuggling cartels to establish themselves with little fear of disruption, claiming that they were allied with the security forces in the fight against Communism. Over time, the roots of the smuggling networks grew deeper and wider, bringing greater corruption, evasion and non-compliance.

The second consequence was that no senior military figures were indicted for their part in this enterprise, despite a major investigation carried out soon

after the end of Apartheid. A rebranding and reorganisation of the defence forces from the heavily compromised SADF to the current South African National Defence Force (SANDF) which took place after the end of Apartheid, put further closure on the past (*Ellis, 1998*).

Thus, during the course of the 1970s and 1980s, rhino horn and ivory smuggling became institutionalised within the fabric of the South African state through the collusion of the defence forces, whose participation in smuggling activities and evasion of prosecution sent a powerful political message that the agencies of the state could be compromised and would likely be ineffective in the face of forceful vested interests.

### **Counter-poaching**

Since the 2010 'rhino summit', the over-arching governmental response to rhino counter-poaching comes under 'Operation Rhino', the name deriving from a successful operation in 1960 that involved a mass translocation and distribution of White rhinos from the Umfolozi Game Reserve in today's KwaZulu Natal (*Boynton, 2013*).

In 1994 Ken Maggs became the Kruger national park's one-man anti-poaching operation; within four years Maggs built up a team who were responsible for all SANParks' counter-poaching ([www.sanparks.org/conservation/investigations](http://www.sanparks.org/conservation/investigations)).

Today, while General Jooste directs SANParks' counter-poaching strategy, other regional organizations that control parks and reserves, such as Ezemvelo KZN in KwaZulu Natal, have started their own teams ([www.projectrhinokzn.org](http://www.projectrhinokzn.org)). All these official counter-poaching teams lean heavily on private organisations for additional support.

Currently, all rhino poaching-related crimes are investigated by the Endangered Species section of the SAPS elite Directorate of Priority Crimes Investigations unit, known as the 'Hawks' ([www.saps.gov.za](http://www.saps.gov.za)) and the National Wildlife Crime Investigation Unit (NWCUI) ([www.rhinos.org/africa-regional-programs](http://www.rhinos.org/africa-regional-programs)) both of which are overseen by NatJoints.

Meanwhile, security in the Kruger national park is split into 22 different sections, each managed by a Section Ranger who is supported by a staff compliment of Field Rangers. Counter-poaching in the park is led by SANParks Corporate Investigation Services (CIS), which was developed to provide support to the Section Ranger and the Park manager ([www.sanparks.org/conservation/investigations](http://www.sanparks.org/conservation/investigations)).

General Jooste's role has been to bring greater coherence to these counter-poaching efforts. This has included the task of integrating the role of SANDF, which since 2009 has been assisting 'Operation Rhino', with its counter-poaching activities restricted to patrolling the problematic border areas around the Kruger National Park (*www.rhinos-irf*). To illustrate the challenge facing General Jooste, forty-two rhinos were killed in Kruger national park during January 2013 alone—the area that General Jooste had identified as the main priority of focus (*Helfrich, 2013*).

### **Getting tough**

General Jooste was not alone in voicing strong declarations of a 'war' against poaching, with Dr David Mabunda, chief executive of SANParks, declaring that the poachers 'days were numbered' and that 'we are on their trail and closing quickly on them' (*Strauss, 2012*).

Ironically, the escalating death-count of rhinos was used to justify the case for legalisation of rhino horn sales; at the Conference of the Parties (CoP) of the 2013 CITES meeting held in Bangkok, Minister Molewa, the Water and Environmental affairs minister, stated that 'South Africa cannot continue to be held hostage by the syndicates slaughtering our rhinos', and thus rhino hunting could be curbed by the 'establishment of well-regulated international trade' (*Cohen and Burkhardt, 2013*).

The relentless campaign to legalise rhino horn sales bore fruit in July 2013 when the South African Cabinet announced that it would support legalisation when the issue would be debated at the crucial CITES meeting in 2016.

Proposals included permitting a one-off sale of confiscated rhino horn in order to lower the price to make poaching less economically attractive, as well as seeking a regulatory mechanism similar to the Kimberley Process that seeks to control diamonds from conflict areas (*Clark, 2012*).

As a signal of a heightened 'war' against rhino poaching the appointment of such a senior figure as General Jooste seemed to represent a *coup*, sending a message that there would be no lack of effort, commitment and expertise in the crackdown on illegal poaching.

A further sign of increased counter-poaching activity was the donation of a drone by Denel, South Africa's state-owned arms corporation (*Helfrich, 2013*) as well as a spotter-plane by the Ichikowitz Foundation, run by Ivor Ichikowitz, whose Paramount Group is a key organisation in the local defence industry (*Balt, 2012*). Additionally, a series of financial rewards were instituted for information leading to poaching arrests (*Crawford, 2013*).

There were also several other politically-coded messages contained within General Jooste's appointment. First, since both the conservationist and ranching lobbies in South Africa are White-dominated but have an extremely low percentage within the country's demographics, it meant that Dr. Mabunda could claim that he had made a significant gesture towards the White population's anxieties with the appointment General Jooste.

Secondly, conservation groups and people within SANParks had been alleging widespread mismanagement and corruption within the organisation that had permitted poachers to gain access to the Kruger National Park by bribing rangers (*McLeod, 2012*).

Choosing someone who had been at the very top of the South African security establishment was a forceful response to these accusations, with rhino conservation groups both in South Africa and abroad calling for a much tougher approach to poaching, using tactics such as shoot-to-kill, stop-and-search, drones and other technology to halt the poachers (*Joy, 2013*).

Underpinning the intensified approach to the counter-poaching was the uninhibited and repeated use of words such as 'war', 'fighting' and 'insurgency' (*South African National Parks, 2012*).

Dr. Mabunda described counter-poaching campaign as a 'low intensity war', while General Jooste suggested the poaching constituted an 'insurgency war' (*Helfrich, 2013*), such language according with the time-honoured mantra throughout South African history that the very fabric of society is under dire threat (*Potgieter, 1995*).

### **Horn sale legalisation**

Arguably, Dr. Mabunda was progressing the rhino counter-poaching strategy along classic counter-insurgency lines by expanding the political element of the campaign along twin lines supported by the 'Jooste War'. On the one hand, there was the chance that General Jooste's efforts might reduce the rhino poaching tally; if that failed, then the concurrent government campaign to open up debate about legalising rhino-horn sales could turn into outright support on the grounds that the 'hard power' solution had been tried and failed.

Indeed, it would seem that during the run-up to the 2013 CITES meeting that the South African Cabinet was coming round to supporting legalisation, with Minister Molewa stating in Bangkok: 'our rhinos are killed every day and the numbers are going up. The reality is that we have done all in our power and doing the same thing every day isn't working. We do think that we need to

address this issue of trade in a controlled manner so that we can at least begin to push down this pressure' (Smith, 2013).

Moving towards a legalised rhino horn trade would certainly satisfy the economic interests of the White ranchers, professional hunters (such as the Professional Hunters Association of South Africa) and park managers (Lamprecht, 2013). It also addressed the concern of those few conservationists, like Duan Biggs, who believed that an outright ban only resulted in 'a situation where rhinos are being killed unnecessarily' (Bosworth, 2013).

Biggs had argued that the anti-poaching effort was 'taking resources away from other conservation efforts, and is leading to the situation where there's a pseudo-war taking place in the Kruger national park' (Bosworth, 2013). Biggs proposed legalised mass breeding of rhinos to allow regular trimming of 'live' rhinos for their horn. Here the argument is that legalisation of rhino horn sales would create a safe and humane response to the demand for rhino horn (Bosworth, 2013).

Tangentially, the issue of rhino poaching has provided a convenient political screen for the South African authorities to raise the politically vexatious but sensitive issue of cross-border security with Mozambique, for which an ideal solution for the South Africans would be the complete restoration and upgrading of the existing border-line fence (Marshall, 2013).

To do this, however, would not only be very expensive but would in theory counteract the rebuilding of post-Apartheid regional collaboration; however, according to Dr. Mabunda co-operation between South Africa and Mozambique over poaching had been 'dismal'. 'A poacher will run across the border and fire victory shots. He will sit in sight of the ranger and smoke because rangers dare not cross that line. . . . should a SANParks official or a soldier shoot a poacher across the border it would create a serious international incident and might be seen as an act of war', said Dr. Mabunda (Helfrich, 2013).

### **Legalisation arguments**

At the Bangkok CITES meeting Minister Molewa asked for the legalisation of rhino horn sales at least to be discussed; after some heated talk it was resolved to defer any resolution until the next CoP meeting in 2016, coincidentally to be held in South Africa (Rademeyer, 2013).

Here the question of legalising rhino horn sales will inevitably loom large and provoke stormy debate. One of driving factors behind the South Africa's proposal at the previous CoP meeting was an awareness of the 'rhinomics' at

stake, being not only the rising cost of rhino protection but also that the authorities and ranchers were missing out on the enormous financial returns of rhino horn, fetching in late 2013 between \$US10,000 and \$US40,000 per kilo (*Platt, 2013*).

Both the South African ranchers, heavily reliant on rhinos for sport hunting and wildlife tourism, and the park authorities, who had already been raising funds through auctioning off captured rhinos, had seen the ever-increasing financial rewards amassing to the illegal poaching networks (*Platt, 2013*).

In fact, so certain have the South African ranchers been that the ban would be lifted that they have developed extensive rhino breeding and selling programmes, along with 'horn harvesting' to create stock-piles in advance, as well as being spurred on by reports of rhino breeding in China (*Stoddard, 2013*).

However, those against legalisation of the rhino horn trade have pointed out that there was little evidence suggesting that legalising the trade, or even allowing a one-off sale to flood the market, would do anything more than encourage poaching.

As evidence, they have pointed to the one-off sale of elephant ivory sanctioned by CITES in 2008 ([www.cites.org](http://www.cites.org)). Far from thwarting the market, the sell-off has since been seen as stimulating a huge spike in ivory prices, leading to further pressure on endangered elephant populations (*Knights, 2013*). Another primary concern has been that a legalised trade would not be policed effectively while poaching networks would still flourish given the financial incentives.

The most fundamental moral objection, though, has been that a legalised trade would grant spurious credibility to the 'misconception that this keratinous body part has medicinal qualities'.<sup>iii</sup> For Peter Knights of the charity WildAid, 'legitimizing and promoting demand for rhino horn would inevitably create a far larger consumer base and once this genie is out we could never re-cork the bottle if the experiment went wrong' (*Wildlife Extra, 2013*).

Rhino horn has been widely touted in Asia as a cure for cancer, prompting Will Travers, of the Born Free Foundation, to suggest: 'so what are they saying by legalising the rhino horn trade? Here is a product that every sensible scientist says has no significant impact and they are going to sell it at huge cost to a public that is ill-informed. I wouldn't go to sleep at night' (*Rademeyer, 2013*).

If the rhino horn trade ban is lifted it is quite possible that some conservationists from South Africa and around the world would call for tourists and the sporting world to boycott South Africa, as happened during the Apartheid years (Maromo, 2012). Furthermore, attacks on rhino horn stockpile locations, as well as on ranchers and their families, are also possible, whether by committed wildlife supporters or criminal opportunists.

As such these are echoes of South Africa's long history of social uncertainty that are woven into the country's 'rhino wars', particularly the economic insecurity for both the white ranchers and rural blacks—though for differing reasons—against a background of violence as domestic insecurities and instabilities are coupled with external threats, whether on the border or from foreign organisations embedded within South Africa, which today are the transnational crime networks lying at the heart of the 'rhino wars'.

In addition, the heightened rhetoric of threat has traditionally resonated with the white rancher population and a fear of a political and racial 'total onslaught': historically, this has created a 'laager mentality', or 'backs to the wall' isolation that prolonged the Apartheid regime into the late twentieth century.

However, despite well-publicised murders and attacks on individual ranchers, the main threat to the White rancher population continues to be economic: while current yields in products like wheat have been rising slowly at about 2.4 per cent per annum (Ray *et al.*, 2013) data showing an increasing 'desertification' process of land that was never fertile, requiring either intensive irrigation or large areas for cattle to roam and feed, makes the cost-effectiveness of agricultural production a progressively marginal business (<http://soils.usda.gov>).

Increasingly, South African ranchers have turned to harnessing wildlife as their key economic resource, either for differing types of tourism or for breeding; in both cases, the role of the rhino has been pivotal, while the horn is a lucrative added incentive (Lindsay *et al.*, 2013).

## **Conclusion**

A meaningful 'hearts and minds' strategy in the context of rhino poaching would involve a high-profile, widespread programme focused on South Africa's rural population, using conservation as the centre-piece to address chronic economic and social problems. Without an effective 'hearts and minds' strategy, the 'Jooste War' could therefore only amount to no more than replicating the time-honoured para-military 'pacification' dynamic in South

African history in the protection of minority interests, while also being viewed by some sections of society as a 'war on the poor'.

The poacher clearly presents a political challenge—albeit one without an overt agenda—to the vested interests belonging to both the state and the private sector. This unscripted political element of the poacher's identity is highlighted in Hobsbawm's (*Hobsbawm, 1965*) evaluation of the 'social bandit', who exposes not only the vulnerabilities of state security, but also faltering governance by the state.

From this perspective, even if rhino poaching is merely condoned by rural inhabitants as against being actively supported, then counter-poaching runs the risk of losing its moral standing and of being viewed as a strategy that supports the interests of a minority elite, in this case the whites who run the wildlife ranches and allied tourism industry.

2013 - the first year of the 'Jooste War' - ended with an 'official' total of 1004 rhino poaching deaths (*McGrath, 2014*) the worst total in the modern times and continuing the sky-rocketing upward trend. In fairness there were factors outside of General Jooste's control, such an insatiable demand for rhino horn, ineffective international anti-wildlife trafficking strategies, and corruption at various levels.

However, despite all the 'war-like' rhetoric of counter-poaching neither General Jooste nor Dr. Mabunda had articulated a coherent counter-poaching strategy that mixed their preference for 'hard power' with the social engagement of 'hearts and minds'; instead all their *modus operandi* offered was 'more of the same', being a mixture of patrolling and policing as part of simple para-military enforcement in the fashion of 'man-hunting'.

Therefore, the 'Jooste War' has replicated the same deeply flawed counter-insurgency strategy employed in South West Africa/Namibia during the 'Apartheid Wars': through this strategy failure the 'Jooste War' not only escalated the rhino poaching crisis in South Africa during 2013 but shortened the odds for even higher rhino death tallies in the future.

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