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Land Acknowledgment:

We acknowledge that UBC's Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the Musqueam people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on in their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.

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Blood, Tusks, and Horns:
An Examination of the Militarized Conservation Response to Poaching

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Poaching is a major threat to the extinction of many endangered animals. The rising black market demand for goods like elephant tusks and rhinoceros horns not only harms animals but also creates a violent industry. Governments and conservation organizations are using militarized responses, creating a 'war' between poachers and wildlife agencies. The militarized response to protect animals and quell the poaching industry has largely been ineffective. This is particularly apparent in the case of rhinoceros horn poaching in Southern Africa. This paper will explore the poaching industry, both its demand and suppliers; how specific framing of poachers gains social license for a violent response; and the negative impact on local people caused by militarized conservation policies.

Introduction

Many species are, and will continue to be, threatened and endangered by poaching. As black market demand for elephant tusks and rhinoceros horns continue to rise, poachers are only further incentivized to reap greater profits – in spite of greater risks. Governments and conservation organizations have countered poaching with a militarized response, thus creating a feedback loop that has led to increased armament and violence on both sides. For example, the number of rhino poaching arrests has increased year after year: with 343 in 2013, 267 in 2012, 232 in 2011, and 165 in 2010 (South African Dept. of Environmental Affairs, 2014). The creation of a 'war' between poachers and wildlife agencies has resulted in many negative consequences including human rights abuses, the assault and killing of local people, and the perpetuation of violence.

This paper will argue that a militarized conservation response is ultimately ineffective in addressing the problem of poaching, the underlying socioeconomic factors behind poaching, and in protecting endangered species. This will be explored through first examining what is currently fueling the poaching industry and what motivates individuals to become poachers; secondly, how poachers and the act of poaching is strategically framed in the popular discourse to legitimize a militarized response; and thirdly, the impact of militarized responses and their subsequent policies like 'shoot-on-sight'. A case study of rhinoceros horn poaching in southern Africa will be used to illustrate these topics of focus.

The Poaching Industry

The poaching industry is a global network that supplies animals and valuable parts of animals to the black market. Duffy

(2014) defines poaching as "the hunting of any animal not permitted by the state or private owner" (p. 828). Certain cultures significantly value animal goods, with common examples being elephant ivory, rhinoceros horns, and shark fins. For example, in the 1970s and 1980s, there was large demand in Europe and North America, as well as in China and Japan, for ivory, which was not being met with the legal supply (Duffy, 2014, p. 830). This led to dramatically increased poaching and the stockpiling of illegal ivory, which "halved Africa's elephant population in 20 years, from 1.3 million to just 600,000" (Duffy, 2014, p. 830). The main case that this paper will examine pertains to rhinoceros horn poaching in southern Africa. Rhino poaching has significantly escalated in South Africa, with an average of 1.83 rhino poached per day in 2012, which was up from 1.23 in 2011, 0.91 in 2010, and 0.33 in 2009 (CITES, 2013, p. 5). Moreover, the country of South Africa itself holds "83 percent of Africa's and 73 percent of the world's approximately 28,000 remaining rhino", with over half in Kruger National Park (Lunstrum, 2014, p. 820). Currently, demand is rising for rhinoceros horn from Vietnam and China due to a larger affluent consumer base that places high value on the horn for "perceived medicinal properties" (Lunstrum, 2014, p. 820-821). This rising demand has led to an increase in "the involvement of sophisticated crime syndicates" (Humphreys & Smith, 2014, p. 801). Fetching prices at US$65,000 per kilogram on the black market, criminal organizations are highly motivated to reap the growing financial rewards from poaching these endangered animals (Lunstrum, 2014, p.

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821). Through both the presence of high prices for poached goods, as well as growing demand due to the increased affluence in the Far East, poaching continues to be a thriving and profitable industry- despite its illegality.

The immense profits available and growing demand has transformed both the extent and efficiency of poaching. Previously, a "relatively haphazard activity", poaching has become a "highly organized enterprise and commodity chain" (Lunstrum, 2014, p. 821). These criminal syndicates "actively contract men on the supply end to do the poaching, paying between US$1,000 and US$9,000 per kilogram" (Lunstrum, 2014, p. 821). Those contracted are often vulnerable individuals being exploited by local representatives of larger international poaching syndicates. Their relatively limited pay in contrast to the end sale of the horn reflects the exploitive and callous disregard that is afforded both the animals and the local people; both are treated as disposable. However, it is worth noting that earning between US$1,000 to US$9,000 per kilogram is a significant amount of money in the countries where the poaching is occurring. For example, in 2016, Mozambique's gross national income (GNI) per capita was US$480 (World Bank, 2017, p. 3). The significant amount of money available to potential poachers drives participation, often out of a place of desperation and a lack of consistent employment opportunities. Due to dire socioeconomic prospects and limited alternatives to sustain and provide for their families, individuals are pushed into the poaching trade as it offers a path for sustenance, despite the growing risks of

imprisonment, injury, and death. Describing poaching in South Africa, Humphreys and Smith (2014) state that the "demographic profile of the individual rhino shooter is almost always that of an impoverished black from South Africa or Mozambique" (p. 802). It is not surprising then, given the increasing pressure to obtain the rhino horn, that there has been a parallel increase in violence between the combatants: those who poach and those who wish to stop them.

The Framing of Poaching

Framing is an important strategy used to legitimize, manipulate, and shape certain responses and perceptions. With wildlife under threat of endangerment and extinction due to overexploitation and poaching, how the situation is perceived influences future action and social license of government and conservation agencies. Duffy (2016) argues that poachers are being defined in terms that invite a "more forceful approach to conservation" (p. 243). The framing of threatened animals is important to first unpack. The rhinoceros in South Africa has come to embody the nation due to its symbolism of the Country's rich natural heritage and biodiversity. Thus, as Lunstrum (2014) states, "an attack on the animal becomes an attack on the nation itself, economically, ecologically, and symbolically" (p. 821). In the 1980s, mainstream conservation ideology and rhetoric started to view wildlife as "belonging to an expanded moral community" (Lunstrum, 2014, p. 819). The belief in the intrinsic value of animals, and their connection to national identity legitimizes and allows for a certain

response. By placing such value on the rhinoceros and other animals, militarized and violent actions become justifiable in the name of biodiversity protection and the preservation of a national myth and identity.

Framing poaching, and poachers themselves, as explicitly negative allows for a militarized response. How these individuals are perceived in the greater social consciousness legitimizes violence in the name of, and for the protection of, biodiversity conservation. Poachers are denigrated and construed as "ruthless and morally lacking", thus justifying violent actions against them (Lunstrum, 2014, p. 819). The representation of poachers as "immoral or less civilized in their treatment of wild animals" is used to frame them as "less worthy of full moral consideration" (Neumann, 2004, p. 833). These perceptions and constructions have concrete and material results and consequences. They allow for militarized and violent responses to be seen as "rational and ethical" tools to be employed due to the 'sub-human' values and morals associated with poachers (Neumann, 2004, p. 833). The moral inferiority that poachers are framed as having allows for an acceptance of violent actions in the name of protecting endangered animals. In their efforts to protect endangered elephants, rhinoceroses and other animals from slaughter, these policy makers and conservationists are faced with the difficulty of stopping the poachers at all costs. Military intervention has been seen as the most visible way of preventing further poaching.

A key figure leading South Africa's rhinoceros counter-poaching mission is the retired Major General Johan Jooste, who has framed South Africa as being "under attack from foreign nationals" (Humphreys & Smith, 2014, p. 796). The framing of poaching as having "foreign nationals transgressing the international border and violating national sovereignty" normalizes and further supports the calls for a militarized response (Lunstrum, 2014, p. 827). Poaching becomes not only an issue of biodiversity conservation, but also national security. Duffy (2014) states "categorizing poachers as criminals or rebel groups" justifies militarized responses that lock "poachers, rangers and associated military personnel... into the use of lethal force" (p. 831). Given the insatiable demand for rhino horn, there are few strategies available to those seeking to protect them. Though some of these will be discussed in the conclusion, it is apparent from the literature that both the militarized 'war' against poaching and the propaganda that is used to justify that militarization have not been particularly successful in protecting these animals.

The Militarized Response to Poaching

The militarization of conservation has had various impacts, one of which being the creation of an arms race with poachers. Militaries, in "post-conflict settings", reinvent "themselves and their legitimacy by putting their skills to use as anti-poaching and broader conservation enforcers" (Massé & Lunstrum, 2016, p. 229). Lunstrum (2014) coins the idea of 'green militarization', which is "the use of military and paramilitary personnel, training, technologies, and partnerships in the

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pursuit of conservation efforts" (p. 816). A competition between poachers, and the soldiers and rangers has emerged with each seeking to use more advanced weaponry. Anti-poaching forces have adopted new technologies such as "UAVs (drones), camera traps, thermal imaging and GPS trackers" (Duffy, 2014, p. 826). With both parties constantly advancing their tactics, a violent cycle of militarization and armament is unfolding. Lunstrum (2014) notes that as "both sides beef up resources and force in response to the other, the value of rhino horn increases accordingly, giving poachers even more incentive to poach and to fight back using militarized means" (p. 289). Militarization is a zero-sum game that leads to a focus on improving armaments and security rather than protecting biodiversity conservation and preventing poaching. It creates violent conflict, which distracts and diverts from its initial mission of protecting threatened animals.

Militarization uses violence and weapons as a means to stop the poaching of animals. It also seeks to incentivize local people to aid in anti-poaching efforts. South Africa "offers a cash reward of R100,000 for information which leads to arrest and R1 million for successful conviction of the heads of criminal poaching gangs" (Duffy, 2014, p. 823). Militarization has led to the implementation of shoot-on-sight or shoot-to-kill policies. Orders to shoot-on-sight poachers in protected areas have been issued in Kenya, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Central African Republic, and Malawi (Neumann, 2004, p. 814). Rangers and park officials are "given permission to shoot suspected poachers rather than arrest them"

(Lunstrum, 2014, p. 819). This policy results in widespread violence and death. In Malawi from 1998-2000, park staff (who were trained by South African mercenaries) "were implicated in 300 murders, 325 disappearances, 250 rapes, and numerous instances of torture and intimidation in the Liwonde National Park" (Lunstrum, 2014, p. 819). This policy led to widespread violence and fear due to an abuse of powers by conservation officers and soldiers. Moreover, a report by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) shows that the number of recorded poached rhinos has increased year over year in South Africa. In 2008, there were 83 poached rhinos recorded, which then increased in 2009 to 122, 2010 to 333, 2011 to 448, and 2012 to 668 (CITES, 2013, p. 4). Thus, it must be asked whether militarized conservation is an effective means for protecting animals. This is especially poignant as local people are being threatened, assaulted, and killed – all while the rate of poached rhinos continues to increase.

The shoot-on-sight policy is highly problematic – and not only due to its obvious infringement on human rights. It uses a pre-emptive attack based on the "assumption that anyone found in a privately owned or state-protected area is potentially engaged in criminal behavior" (Duffy, 2014, p. 832). This assumption of guilt and immediate execution follows no due process and is left to the judgment of the militarized conservation officer. These policies have the potential to be incredibly damaging with local rural communities. As previously discussed, those who are often directly responsible for the killing and harvesting of horns and tusks are impoverished rural individuals. Further, many of them hunt small-scale game for subsistence and survival purposes yet are viewed as poachers and thus killed by enforcers (Neumann, 2004, p. 829). These deaths cause tension between communities and conservation officials that inhibit and disrupt "the potential for building strong relationships that successful long-term conservation, including anti-poaching work, depends on" (Lunstrum, 2014, p. 289). Militarized responses to conservation do not constructively address local community needs, instead exacerbating conflict and preventing effective solutions. Improving local socioeconomic conditions offers a peaceful and nonviolent solution to quell the growing poaching industry.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that a militarized conservation response is ultimately ineffective in addressing the problem of poaching, the underlying socioeconomic factors behind poaching, and in reducing the number of poached animals. This has been explored through examining the poaching industry, the framing of poaching, and the militarized response to poaching. Militarized approaches to conservation have been ineffective and counterproductive as they fail to address deeper underlying factors. Alternative actions may include empowering local rural people with meaningful livelihood activity alternatives for prosperous lives. This would prevent the draw to the poaching industry as a way of earning significant amounts of

money. Moreover, there has been a movement towards the legalization of the rhino horn trade, which would allow for the creation of rhino farms. This proposal it not without controversy, but certainly has the potential to quell the illegal poaching industry and its associated violence. Peaceful solutions, focused on combating poverty and desperation, might be the way forward to reduce the circle of violence associated with blood, tusks, and horns.

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