



UiT The Arctic University of Norway

Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Education  
Centre for Peace Studies

**The influence of illicit wildlife trafficking in security matters. The case of illicit trafficking of elephant ivory and rhino horn in Africa.**

Adelina Judith Gonzalez Estrada

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Illicit wildlife trafficking  
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TO MY DAUGHTER, **ASTRID**, YOU ARE A SHINING STAR FOR MY HEART AND SOUL,  
THANKS FOR LIVING THIS ADVENTURE WITH ME,  
AND  
IN LOVING MEMORY OF **MARÍA CRISTINA ESTRADA SANDOVAL**, WHO  
ACCOMPANIED AND INSPIRED ME FROM ABOVE. ¡GRACIAS, ABUE!

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## Abstract

Threatened wildlife is being poached at an alarming rate to feed the global illicit wildlife trafficking (IWT). Poachers and armed non-state actors – including rebel forces such as the Lord's Resistance Army – are targeting elephants and rhinos across Africa in order to meet growing global demand.

This thesis places a particular emphasis on the worldwide security implications of the IWT in a time span from 2010 to 2017. The majority of study regarding the IWT's influence tends to focus on biodiversity and endangered species conservation issues. The thesis examines the security implications of poaching in IWT, focusing on the African elephant tusk and rhino horn illicit trafficking. 65 sources, including books chapters, journal articles, news items, data from multinational environmental agencies, and transcripts of high-level debates from which 37 documents and short films were studied using actor-based discourse analysis. The analysis considered the presence of organized crime groups and armed non-state actors that take part in IWT and influences security concerns.

One of the thesis' key findings is that Think Tanks have contributed to the securitization discourse about IWT, stressing how the lucrative ivory trafficking fuels conflict in Africa and feeds international terrorist groups and crime syndicates. While poaching of elephants and rhinos may have increased recently because to increased demand for illicit wildlife products, instability and armed non-state actors in source countries have made large-scale poaching possible. Through a discourse analysis of 37 documents, the thesis shows how in recent times, the work of Think Tanks has contributed to shifting focus towards how poaching in IWT and suspected links to other unlawful (possibly terrorist) activities threaten long-term peace.

Keywords: Africa, poaching, illicit wildlife trafficking, elephant ivory, rhino horn, security, securitization, terrorism



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## ACRONYMS

AFRICOM	U.S. Africa Command
AMCEN	African Ministerial Conference on the Environment
AQIM	al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
AU	African Union
CAR	Central African Republic
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CoP 16	Conference of Parties
COPRI	Copenhagen Peace Research Institute
CS	Copenhagen School
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Resettlement
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EAGLE	Eco Activists for Governance and Law Enforcement
EAL	Elephant Action League
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EIA	Environmental Investigation Agency
ESAAMLG	Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group
ETIS	Elephant Trade Information System
EU	European Union
EUROPOL	European Police Office
FARDC	Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. French: Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo
GAO	U.S. Government Accountability Office
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
ICCWC	International Consortium Combating Wildlife Crime
IFAW	International Fund for Animal Welfare
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization





IPI	International Peace Institute
IR	International Relations
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
IWT	Illicit Wildlife Trafficking
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MIKE	Monitoring Illicit Elephant Killing
NDU	National Defense University
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIKE	Percentage of Illicit Elephant Killing
PMCs	Private Military Companies
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
TRAFFIC	Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce
U.S.	United States
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UPDF	Uganda People's Defense Force
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WCO	World Customs Organization
WCS	World Conservation Society
WHO	World Health Organization
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

## 1 Chapter 1 Introduction

The Illicit Wildlife Trafficking (IWT), commonly positioned alongside the illicit drugs and arms trafficking and human trafficking, is one of the fastest growing illicit markets worldwide. IWT includes a wide range of species such as insects, reptiles, amphibians, fish and mammals. It concerns both, live and dead specimens, or products thereof. The specimens and products are used for pharmaceutical, ornamental, or traditional medicinal purposes. Trafficking in tropical fish, primates, and reptiles benefit greatly from IWT in the transnational pet commerce. Gorillas, orangutans, elephants, rhinos, Chiru antelope and bears are just a few of the fauna that are illicitly poached and trafficked for their ivory, horns, and skins. The term wildlife usually includes both flora and fauna, but in the present case study focus is on fauna, whether trafficked alive or transformed into products. Importantly, fauna, as sentient beings, demand focused consideration due to the substantial harm they suffer. It is important to acknowledge, that for the fauna, whether trafficked legally or illicitly, the consequences are the same suffering and trauma, often resulting in captivity or death (Sollund, 2011). This work takes an approach to researching the IWT from a securitization perspective, in that it focuses specifically on the role the IWT plays in fuelling armed conflicts and in calls to see these conflicts mostly from the perspective of human security.

Growing awareness of the widespread impacts of the IWT has led to increased international attention in recent years, evidenced by the role the United Nations, Interpol, Europol, EU and UK have played in bringing together global leaders and stakeholders to help eradicate the IWT. The clandestine character of the IWT, and weak controls and enforcement, make it difficult to measure the scale of its scope, though it has been estimated to be worth 7–23 billion dollars annually (Nellemann, Henriksen, Raxter, Ash, & Mrema, 2014; OECD, 2012; UNEP & INTERPOL, 2012; UNODC, 2011). Research suggests the IWT contributes to civil conflict, economic loss, poverty, climate change and negatively impacts on national security and stability, state authority and biodiversity and public health. In particular, the links between the IWT and organized crime and the demise of iconic species has stimulated current international debate. A criminal network in alliance with corrupt representatives from national economies can profit greatly from all these resources. Environmental crime is a significant economic, environmental, and security threat that has received little attention because it operates outside of government regulation and management.

Evidence suggests the IWT also consequently erodes state authority, fuels civil conflict, threatens national stability and international security, and provokes substantial economic losses internationally (Lawson & Vines, 2014; Wyatt, 2013). The IWT also increases poverty and negatively

impacts on food security, public health (e.g., zoonotic diseases), climate change and biodiversity. As recognition of these widespread impacts' increases, so too does international political attention and efforts to eradicate the IWT. However, unlike other serious organized crimes, the potential rewards of IWT, (Rhino horn, for example, is worth more than gold or cocaine) simply put, far outweigh the risk to offenders (as a result of low detection rates and lenient punishments) (European Commission, 2014; Europol, 2013).

## 1.1 Problem Statement

Armed groups profit from the following activities: direct control of resources such as timber concessions; leasing concessions to companies in exchange for capital, arms, and equipment; taxation of roads and transportation through militia-held territory; organized poaching of high-value species such as elephants and rhinos; and opportunistic wildlife poaching. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) suggests that natural resources have been connected to as many as 40% of intrastate disputes over the last sixty years. Eighty percent of the 34 biodiversity hotspots found across the world experienced major conflict over the same time span (UNEP, 2021):

*“Environmental factors are rarely, if ever, the sole cause of violent conflict. However, it is clear that the exploitation of natural resources and related environmental stresses can become significant drivers of violence”.*

Natural resource depletion exacerbates intercommunal conflict, fuels crime and corruption, and creates uncertainty. Small arms and light guns are widely available in areas where armed groups are active. They are used to kill birds, wildlife rangers, and anti-poaching units, as well as to intimidate and assault members of the local community who are involved in other crimes. Threats, violence, forced labor, child soldier recruitment, human trafficking, sex slavery, mass rapes/sexual harassment, and murder are all common in local communities.

Non-state armed groups need funding for operations, which can be obtained through patronage and structured relationships or through 'self-financing,' which is also accomplished through the exploitation of natural resources (UNSC, 2013a). Conflict zones offer a safe zone for transnational criminal organizations to operate, as well as opportunities for collusion with corrupt state officials and non-state armed groups (Shelley, 2005).

When armed groups start poaching resources and profiting from exploitation, the resources become a critical factor in sustaining and prolonging war. Natural resource disputes last longer and

have a higher risk of reviving after resolution than other forms of conflicts. Groups engaged in illicit resource mining have little incentives to negotiate or preserve peace. These groups are also less vulnerable to external influence or coercion because they are self-financed and well-connected. Peace deals are jeopardized by belligerents who do not want to risk exclusive access to lucrative profit-generating natural resources (Le Billon, 2004).

IWT represents diverse threats and risks to several different aspects of societies, communities, and ecosystems worldwide. These aspects can be categorised into environmental, economic, human well-being and national security impacts. Human well-being and security can be jeopardized economically by the IWT (economic aspect); physically by the introduction of zoonotic diseases from unregulated wildlife, such as SARS from civet cats and Ebola from monkeys (health and environmental aspect); and it can be jeopardized by the violent nature of the illicit activity (national security aspect) (Wyatt, 2013, p. 46).

The majority of research on the topic has been conducted by conservationists and criminologists; however, the Security Council recognized wildlife poaching and trafficking as a threat to peace in two resolutions in 2014 on the Central African Republic (UNSC, 2014a) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UNSC, 2014b). In the future, government agencies and scholars might be able to examine conflicting social constructions of wildlife among social groups during the early stages of policy implementation and incorporate those understandings into conflict resolution processes.

## **1.1.1 Research Objectives**

This study investigates an already recognized yet understudied securitization approach to the role that illicit wildlife trafficking plays in fueling conflict. It aims to provide a wider perspective and contribute to the understanding that IWT, is becoming an increasingly important factor in peace and security.

Consequently, this thesis aims to gain a deeper understanding how poaching in IWT of elephant ivory and rhino horns fuels conflict in Africa. What are the main elements that link wildlife trafficking with security in this case, which components of them are involved in fuelling conflict, and how these elements influence peace and security?

## **1.1.2 Research Questions**

To meet the research objectives, and to provide a response to the problem mentioned above, the research questions are as follows:

- Which elements of IWT are linked to security concerns?
  - *How is the illicit wildlife trafficking-security nexus studied and presented in the available literature?*
- Who are the main actors involved in or dealing with IWT?
  - *What are the discourses on securitization present in these actors' public communications?*
- How does illicit trafficking of elephant ivory and rhino horns influence peace and security in Africa?
  - *Building on the above review of literature and study of actors and discourses, what is currently argued to be the impact of IWT on security?*

## 1.2 Scope of the Study

This thesis aims to provide in depth overview into the influence of IWT on conflict in Africa, as the title of the project suggests. The issue is sought as one of the elements that takes part of a greater context within Transnational Organized Crime and more specifically within Green Crimes, the latter is shortly mentioned.

Buzan believes that what defines an existent threat in one sector is not always equivalent to threats in other sectors, and that these sectors should be viewed as unique and diverse to facilitate securitization analysis. While sectors commonly overlap, as Buzan points out, disaggregating security into discrete sectors enables us to recognise specific patterns or dynamics of security found in each, as well as to identify potential securitizing actors and potential for securitization (Buzan et al., 1998). The following table summarises Buzan's framework for analysis, which provides context for determining how dynamics operate in the military, environmental, economic, social, and political sectors:

<i>Sector</i>	<i>Type of interaction</i>	<i>Dynamic of securitisation</i>
Military	Relationships of forceful coercion	Existential threat to state/populace/ territory/military capacity
Environmental	Relationships between human activity and the planetary biosphere	Existential threat to biosphere/ species/natural environment

Economic	Relationships of trade, production, and finance	Existential threat to markets/finance/resources
Societal	Relationships of collective identity	Existential threat to collective identity/language/culture
Political	Relationships of authority, governing status and recognition	Existential threat to sovereignty/organisational stability/ideology of a social order

*Table 1 Dynamics of securitization according to sector of security*

Source: adapted from Buzan et al. (1998)

The present work does not aim to explore every aspect around the IWT impact. The thesis considers the aspect of national security addressed by Wyatt (Wyatt, 2013): “*illegal wildlife trade is a national security threat because of its connection to corruption, terrorism and insurgency, and organized crime...*”, aiming to complement existing work in fields such as criminology and environment.

It is being said that organized crime groups operating in Africa are involved in IWT, particularly elephant ivory and rhino horns, which trafficking routes are being tracked by organizations such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (*see map 1*), as well as the trafficking of drugs, arms, human beings, and illegal products. Consequently, this thesis aims to gain a deeper understanding how the IWT of elephant ivory and rhino horns fuels conflict in Africa by exploring the discourse from different actors.

There has been little academic emphasis to the relationship between conflicts and natural resource theft, such as wildlife trafficking (Wyatt, 2013, p. 55). For this matter, the present thesis focuses on the IWT and more specifically in poaching, and its links to conflict within the time frame from 2010-2017 since during this time frame linkages between security and IWT became mainstream.



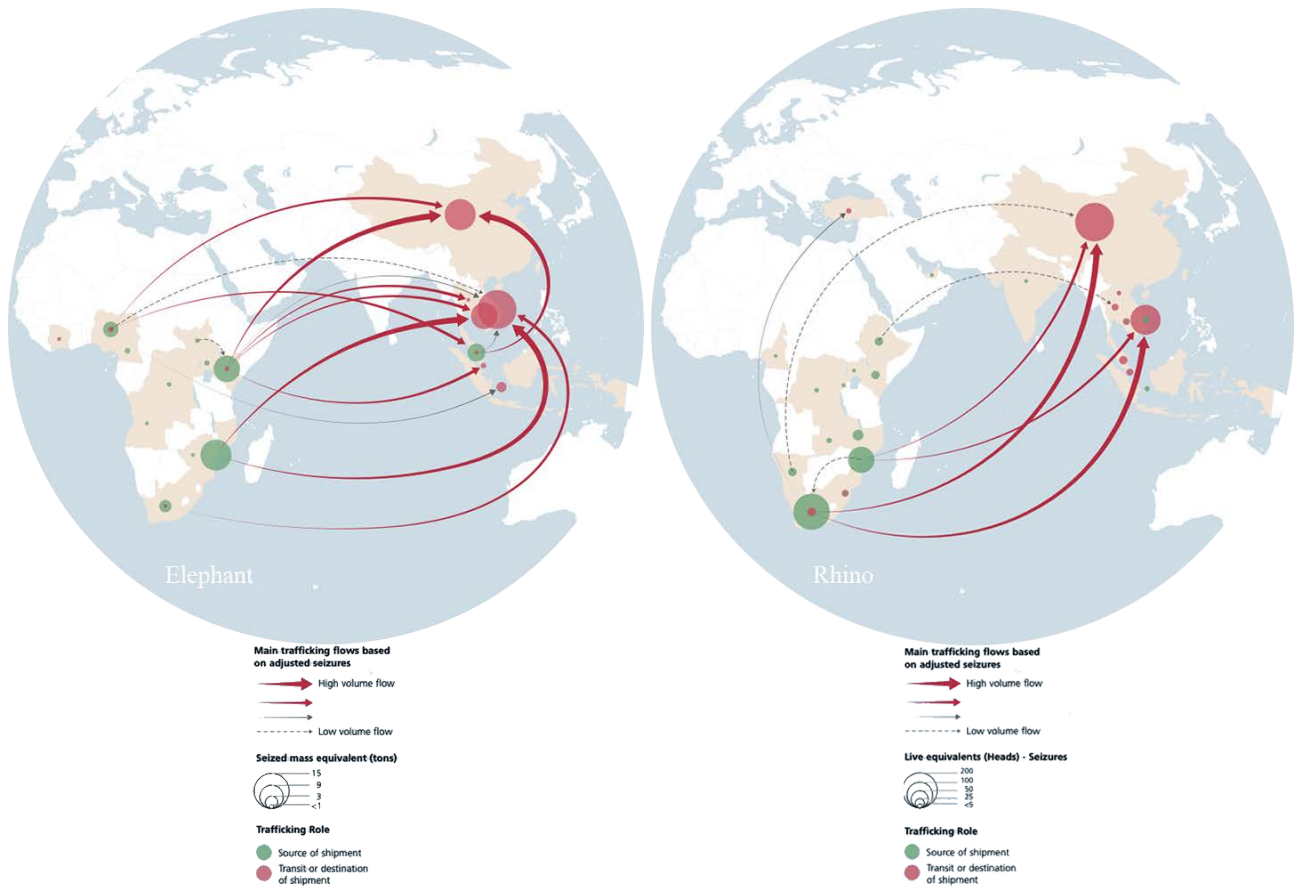


Figure 1 Trafficking flow map of African elephant ivory and African rhinoceros' horns (2014-2018)

Source: adapted from UNODC World WISE Database (UNODC, 2018)

### 1.3 Motivation

My passion for helping animals began when I was going to elementary school. I distinctly remember the sinking ache I felt in my chest hearing about animal killings, such as seals, tigers, whales, elephants, wolves were the most I would hear about. Since then, I would take the opportunity every time I had the chance to rescue stray dogs and cats, and even rats, mice nests, dragonflies, lizards, bees and flies. As a teenager and until 2019 I would go to protests and raise my voice on animals' behalf and perform other activities towards their welfare. My academic experience made me realize the way international trade agreements contribute to stimulating and sustaining growth for developing countries. We analyzed scenarios where economic growth was catalyzed not only by trade negotiations but also by peacebuilding activities and other modes of bilateral cooperation. I started to see how sustainable development could contribute to peaceful societies, and vice versa in a virtuous

circle. But then my passion for animals met my growing interest in global dynamics. I started to wonder, what about illicit trafficking? And more specifically, illicit wildlife trafficking?

The rate at which we are depleting the world's natural resources exceeds the rate at which they are being replaced. We kill animal's habitats, food, water, and air too. As more birds' nests are poached to create skyscrapers, or elephants, tigers and rhinos are killed to make decorative objects, the number and diversity of wildlife is reduced.

IWT increases the danger to our wildlife. The illicit trafficking of fauna and their parts on the black market is increasing. The increased demand for products derived from elephants, rhinos and tigers, as well as other emblematic land wildlife, is not only a threat to these species and the peace, health and prosperity of the people who live near them. IWT reduces the safety of citizens and the profits of legitimate businesses. My motivation for this project is based on my concern for the wildlife. I worry for the catastrophic impact of IWT in human lives, not just for this generation, but for the coming ones and the violations to their human rights and consequently negatively impact in human security. The more I kept myself informed about the different ways the IWT takes place and the diverse negative influence in societies, the more I realize that most of the available information about the topic included scholars and researchers are from the nature sciences, criminology, international law and environmentalist fields. Most of them mention to some extent the impact in human security and peace, but research from peace and security studies view is limited. This gave me the impression that approaching to this issue from a peace and security studies perspective is in-fact needed.

## 1.4 Relevance and Importance

Despite the word “conflict” is commonly seen within the IWT discourse linked to the previous mentioned fields, its use has not been directly linked to the field of peace and security studies under the same topic, i.e., without elaborating on the concept or making further use of securitization theory applied to IWT. This work aims to contribute towards filling this knowledge gap. Wildlife trafficking contributes not just to ecosystem destabilization, but also to conflict, violence, and insecure human habitats. My research examines the relationship (influence) of wildlife trafficking on human security.

Wildlife crime, such as poaching and wildlife trafficking, endangers the survival of specific species. Until now, most research on wildlife crime has been conducted by those with backgrounds in environment studies, biological sciences and criminological IWT literature. The latter employs traditional criminological approaches to provide theoretical explanations for IWT and potential

responses to it (J. F. Hill, 2015; Lemieux, 2014; S. Pires & Clarke, 2012; S. F. Pires & Moreto, 2011; J. Schneider, 2012; Wellsmith, 2010, 2011).

On the 12th and 13th of February 2014, chiefs of state gathered in London for a forum on the trafficking of endangered species, which was hosted by British Prime Minister at the time, David Cameron. The background of this endeavor is the growing recognition of a link between wildlife poachers, traffickers, and armed conflict in some African regions. According to the WWF, over 20,000 elephants are poached each year for their ivory tusks, with many of them succumbing in conflict zones in central Africa. By adopting resolutions 2134 and 2136 in January 2014, the UN Security Council (SC) authorized targeted penalties on poachers, wildlife product traffickers, and individuals and organizations with sway over policy in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The resolutions were primarily intended to target a group of armed rebel forces operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's eastern region (UNSC, 2014a) and in the Central African Republic (UNSC, 2014b). The United Nations (UN) suspects that different armed groups, including the Lord's Resistance Army, Somalia's Al-Shabaab Islamist terrorist group, and Sudan's Janjaweed militia, are using the illicit ivory trafficking to generate funds or otherwise gain from it. With these resolutions, the Council effectively designated wildlife poaching and trafficking as a danger to international peace and security. Despite the fact that this remark is at least implicit in the resolutions, the argument is nonetheless anthropocentric.

In res. 2127 (concerning the CAR), the Security Council considered for the first time the "complete breakdown of law and order" in a state, as well as "the absence of a rule of law", as a "threat to international peace and security" (UNSC, 2013c). The resolutions on CAR were based on the Secretary-General's report on CAR on 15 November 2013. That report lamented "the country's near-total lack of State administration and services". The absence of justice and prison systems contributes to a state of lawlessness and fosters an environment of impunity for human rights crimes". and a "widespread breakdown of law and order" (UNSC, 2013b).

The approach taken by the Security Council builds on and expands on previous Council practice. As is well acknowledged, the Security Council has continuously broadened the idea of a "threat to the peace" since the Cold War's end, moving beyond the "classical" threat of inter-state armed confrontation. The new Council resolutions' most novel feature is their emphasis on wildlife. UN Security Council resolution 2136 on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (30 January 2014) promulgated financial and travel restrictions, among other things, on "*individuals or entities that*

*support armed groups in the DRC through the illicit trafficking of natural resources, including gold or wildlife, as well as wildlife products " (paragraph 4UNSC, 2014b):*

The Council here:

*“Reiterates its call to the DRC and States in the Great Lakes region to require their customs authorities to strengthen their control on exports and imports of minerals from the DRC, and to cooperate at the regional level to investigate and combat regional criminal networks and armed groups involved in the illicit exploitation of natural resources, including **wildlife poaching and trafficking** (...). (para. 24, emphasis added).*

The resolution’s preamble recalled:

*“The linkage between the illicit exploitation of natural resources, including **poaching and illicit trafficking of wildlife, illicit trade in such resources**, and the proliferation and trafficking of arms as one of the major factors fueling and exacerbating conflicts in the Great Lakes region of Africa”,*

Anthropocentrism dominates Security Council resolutions, political and legal procedures. The emphasis is on organized crime, weaponry proliferation and trafficking, financing of armed groups, and the creation of radical networks. Biodiversity is sought primarily for anthropocentric purposes. The most frequently cited reasons for protecting endangered species are the desire to utilize genetic features, potential chemical and medical uses, the development of new goods, indigenous peoples' food and shelter needs, pollution management, and tourism.

Arguably, the Security Council would not have taken any robust action at all if human needs and interests were not prioritized. From this vantage point, one may argue that the anthropocentric approach benefits central African elephants. Thus, pitting human security against wildlife security is incorrect, as both are ultimately in the same boat. However, in the long run, an approach that considers environment to peace and security appears to be more appropriate for ensuring a sustainable peace for all living things on the planet. I believe that considering not only human security, but also the integrity of nature, species survival, and wildlife welfare, will become an increasingly important issue in law and politics concerning peace and security.

## 1.5 Structure of the thesis

The Chapter 1 Introduction, provides an overview of the issue addressed in this thesis, including the reasons of exploring poaching in illicit wildlife trafficking's influence in peace and security, the delimitation of the time frame to 2010 to 2017 and what is not aimed to explore. It also presents the motivation for approaching the topic from a peace and security studies perspective, the relevance of this contribution towards increase consideration of environment into peace and security field. It lastly, presents the structure of the thesis as an outline of the research carried out.

In Chapter 2 Background and Literature Review, I present the different approaches to IWT, from ecologists and biologists to social scientists and criminologists. Providing context on how nature is socially constructed and as a result the value of wildlife. I also talk about the environmental, economic and legal elements around IWT. Lastly, this Chapter also explains how IWT is linked to violence through poaching in Africa.

The Chapter 3 Theoretical Framework, presents the conceptualization of terms as guiding tools for performing the analysis, being poaching, illicit wildlife trafficking, security and securitization the key concepts of this thesis. At the end of the Chapter, it includes the portrayal of the IWT within a security context, considering environmental, health, economic and national security concerns.

The Chapter 4 Methodological Framework, outlines the qualitative research approach, explaining why I decided to perform discourse analysis of documents, the elements for selecting the sampling of documents with perspectives from Africa, the European Union, the United States and Think Tanks around the IWT topic.

The Chapter 5 Analysis and Conclusion expresses the linkages between security matters and IWT, how the different perspectives from Africa, the European Union, Think Tanks and the United States depict IWT. It also reveals how IWT can be seen through the securitization spectrum lens, the variables that takes part in the securitization process and the influence of IWT in security. And lastly, the conclusion wraps the analysis and provides clear response to the research questions that inspired this thesis.

## 2 Chapter 2 Background and Literature Review

Research from a variety of fields has been conducted on IWT and poaching. Tensions exist amongst different disciplinary perspectives, since research in different sectors frequently focuses on different parts of the trafficking, although the methods used may be comparable. Theoretical viewpoints often differ, and at times are also in conflict with the goals of practitioners.

Ecologists and biologists focus on the consequences of the illicit trafficking on existing populations of wildlife in diverse environments (Bennett, 2015; Eniang, Eniang, & Akpan, 2008; Weston & Memon, 2009). Through annual reports to CITES, national governments have provided most recent information on the scale and type of IWT. United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) has frequently collaborated with other organizations like INTERPOL or UNESCO to report on issues related to conservation, poaching, and IWT. General reports on the role of natural resources in conflict (UNEP, 2009a) and the application of international law to safeguard the environment during conflict are examples of this (UNEP, 2009b). Reports on specific situations, such as those involving Congolese gorillas and the impact of environmental crime on them (Nellemann, Redmond, & Refisch, 2010) and the illicit trafficking in chimpanzees (Stiles, Redmond, Cress, Nellemann, & Formo, 2013), have also been published. These natural science-oriented conservationists commonly judge conservation success or failure based on its direct influence on ecosystems.

In contrast, social scientists focus on the social, political, and human ramifications of various conservation approaches, with research done on conservation policies in many contexts and their benefits and drawbacks for human livelihoods (Calfucura, 2018; Duffy, 2014). Smaller studies in the social sciences have examined the relationship between militarisation, violence, and conservatism in the United States. Conservation techniques and anti-poaching enforcement efforts are being examined in several academic research. Duffy (2010-2016) and White (2014-2016) investigated if anti-poaching techniques are beginning to mimic those of law enforcement “conflict in Poaching”. “Green militarism” (Lunstrum, 2014; Marijnen & Verweijen, 2016), “green security” (Kelly & Ybarra, 2016), or “green violence” are all terms used to describe this phenomenon. Shaw and Rademeyer suggest that militaristic responses and a language of “war” is not a new phenomenon in Afrocentric contexts (Shaw & Rademeyer, 2016). Also, they contend, notions like “green militarization” obscure rather than clarify what is truly happening on the grotesque landscapes of our planet. Rather, they believe, attention should be paid to determining where militarization should stop and how such urgent responses might be linked to longer-term engagement. In his study of the debate surrounding the illicit ivory trafficking, Somerville examines what he considers “demoralizing developments in the



insurgency seize the opportunity” (Somerville, 2017). Poaching and IWT have been linked to human security, conflict, terrorism and organized crime in a recent Whitehall Paper published by Haenlein and Smith (Haenlein & Smith, 2016). They discovered a wide range of misconceptions and misperceptions, notably in Africa. It has been applied to a wide range of topics from health to transnational crime, according to securitization theory. Similarly, Emmers, Greener, Thomas, and Jackson have applied it to transnational crime and human trafficking in Asia (Emmers, 2003; Emmers, Greener, & Thomas, 2008; N. J. Jackson, 2006).

Poaching and IWT have also become more of a focus for criminologists in recent years. The "green criminology" concept is particularly applicable. Research into how and why various types of environmental harm are committed is carried out by green criminology, which examines the societal conditions and financial motivations that enable and encourage such actions. There are also philosophical discussions among criminologists on what exactly constitutes "crime" in relation to the environment (Potter, 2010). Studies by criminologists on poaching and IWT usually focus on defining criminal profiles and motivations and analysing the consequences of law enforcement and sanctions. (Moreto, Brunson, & Braga, 2016) examined the role and experiences of law enforcement rangers with their own wrongdoings, such as corruption, while Runhovde (Runhovde, 2018) and (Maher & Sollund, 2016) take a macro-level perspective, looking at Uganda's role in the illicit ivory trafficking and features of the IWT in the UK, Norway, Columbia, and Brazil, respectively. Local people's exclusion from protected areas and conservation-poverty discussion have been given particular attention in political ecology (Bocarejo & Ojeda, 2016) as well as in political ecology (Daniel Brockington & Igoe, 2006). Another prominent topic for political ecologists is the accumulation and control of the state through conservation (Benjaminsen & Bryceson, 2012; Benjaminsen, Goldman, Minwary, & Maganga, 2013). There is a growing interest in the "accumulation through securitization" of conservation, when security considerations are used by authorities to remove people from their property (Lunstrum and Ybarra, 2018; Massé and Lunstrum, 2016; Lunstrum and Ybarra, 2016). There has also been work influenced by market research and political economy to determine the supply and demand of wildlife resources, with an emphasis on elephant ivory and rhino horns (Hübschle 2016; Schneider 2008; Zimmerman 200).

Finally, practitioners combine these perspectives in work done via Think Tanks and other types of NGOs. The World Wildlife Fund and TRAFFIC, two of the largest conservation Think Tanks in the world, also contribute to information about IWT in Africa. Such as studies regarding ivory trafficking in Africa, including rhino horn trafficking between South Africa and Vietnam (Milliken,

Shaw, Emslie, Taylor, & Turton, 2012); and also, research about the linkages between security and IWT (Ratchford, Allgood, & Todd, 2013).

In the next sections, I further present perspectives from this body of literature that are central for the thesis.

## 2.1 Shaping nature as a social construct

The components of nature (for example, mountains, lakes, and trees) are shaped by interactions, attitudes, cultural settings, and expectations (Fine, 2014; Herda-Rapp & Goedeke, 2005; Scarce, 1998). When historical context, perceptions, and values are used to define natural elements, they are socially constructed. Such social constructions can have dire consequences for wildlife, insofar as they determine whether and how we value and protect it. For this reason, the discussion in this thesis starts with a brief overview of social and cultural conceptions of wildlife that currently shape debates about IWT. Scarce (1998) uses the term "social constructs" interchangeably with "meaning". According to the authors mentioned above, the multiplicity of societal constructs frequently results in opposing interpretations of natural aspects such as landscapes, wildlife, and oceans. Steinberg recognizes the presence of conflicting representations of particular elements and their consequences by comprehending the numerous definitions attributed to nature (Steinberg, 2001). This is an effective tool for examining the divergent interpretations of wildlife among various social groups, as well as the origins of those interpretations in the context of human-animal conflict.

Collard claimed that "questions about how nature is constructed, how people acquire knowledge about it, how expertise is developed, and how representations of nature circulate and compete frequently incorporate wildlife as a component of nature" (Collard, 2015, p. 132). Wildlife social constructs take the form of lists, classifications, rhetoric, and land-use policies, all of which have diverse repercussions and impacts and frequently determine the fate of the wildlife (Herda-Rapp & Marotz, 2005; Lawrence, 1994, 1997; Russell, 1995; Scarce, 1998). According to Hill, competing social constructions of species demonstrate how wildlife can be highly valued and, in some cases, legally protected while also being loathed and demonized (C. M. Hill, 2015).

Social constructs concerning nature, and especially wildlife, reveal grounds of contention and (dis)agreements regarding their use, their appropriate habitats (e.g., national parks, households, and zoos), and management objectives and procedures (Goedeke, 2005; Leong, 2009). Wildlife has evolved into a metaphor for political, economic, and societal issues, as well as conflict between diverse human groups. Government agencies may be able to evaluate opposing social conceptions of

wildlife among social groups during the early phases of policy implementation and apply these understandings into conflict resolution processes in the future (Scarce, 1998).

## 2.2 Environmental, economic, and legal aspects of IWT

Natural ecosystems are critical for agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, particularly in emerging nations (UNEP, 2011), as they provide income, capacity for expansion, livelihoods, and long-term resources. Ecosystems support tourism, which accounts for between 5% and 10% of national economies. Ecosystems also provide critical services, such as mitigating the effects of severe weather events such as flooding, drought, and cyclones, and ensuring the security of urban water supplies. They are estimated to be valued up to USD 72 trillion on a global scale. Sustainably managed environments lay the groundwork for future food supply and economic growth (Godfray et al., 2010; UNEP, Nellemann, MacDevette, & GRID--Arendal, 2009). Additionally, opportunities, management, and future growth are challenged by extreme and increasingly sophisticated international organized environmental crime, which jeopardizes development goals and good governance (UNEP, 2010). Transnational organized environmental crime includes illicit logging, wildlife hunting and trafficking, illicit fishing, mining, and hazardous waste disposal. It is a growing threat to the environment, natural resource revenues, state security, and long-term sustainability. According to the OECD, UNEP, INTERPOL, and UNODC, the annual monetary worth of various forms of transnational organized environmental crime is between USD 70 and 213 billion.

IWT is not a new phenomenon. the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), United Nations Security Council (UNSC), United Nations General Assembly, INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization (WCO) have all made decisions acknowledging both the scope and nature of the problem. High-level political conferences have also discussed the subject, in Botswana and Paris (December 2013), London (February 2014), and Dar es Salaam (Dar es Salaam) (May 2014). Responses, however, are still lagging behind the extent and evolution of the biodiversity problem, including forests, and, increasingly, development goals, in terms of their effects on the field. By definition, IWT occurs outside of official government supervision and management, presenting a major economic, environmental, and security threat that has gotten little attention in the past (OECD, 2012; UNEP & INTERPOL, 2012; UNODC, 2011). IWT's economic and environmental consequences can be severe enough to destroy entire economies and ecosystems, hurting environmentally viable activities and limiting future resource use alternatives. There may be spillover effects, which have an indirect

influence. For example, IWT can erode the rule of law and fuel armed conflict in fragile states. Any real endeavor to combat IWT in the sectors discussed here would benefit from a comprehensive assessment of the consequences.

Many non-state militant groups, including terrorist organizations, are funded in part by IWT and forest crime. Besides ivory, armed organizations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Central African Republic (CAR) make money from the sale of ivory, which may be the principal source of income for the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Additionally, the Janjaweed and other horse gangs operating in the Niger-Sudan border area profit from the sale of ivory. A militia's annual income from ivory in Sub-Saharan Africa is estimated to be in the range of USD 4.0–12.2 million based on projected elephant populations and the number of elephants killed within striking distance from these militia parties (UNEP, CITES, IUCN, & TRAFFIC, 2013).

Environmental crime legislation is still in its early stages in a number of countries. Sentencing guidelines are primarily focused on minor offenses and do not take into account the serious nature and involvement of organized crime, as well as the effects it has on the environment, social and economic development of countries and local communities or populations. They give no consideration for the magnitude of resource loss, money laundering, or threats to state security. While most countries currently have laws in place to address such significant crimes, there is general ignorance about how environmental crime frequently overlaps with other categories of considerably more serious offenses. Frequently, the wrong laws are utilized in court, such as those pertaining to pure environmental offenses, rather than those addressing organized crime, tax fraud, violence, trafficking, and even financing of non-state armed groups. Due to a lack of information regarding the role of environmental crime in threat finance – the financing of criminal networks and non-state armed groups such as militias, extremists, and terrorism – fairly trivial sentences consisting of only minor fines and, on occasion, brief prison sentences are imposed. Inadequate analysis of the involvement of networks in environmental crime, which frequently involves threat funding, tends to result in prosecution failing. Organized crime makes extensive use of this gap to exploit natural resources, develop their illicit business sectors, and contribute to conflicts with little or no risk (Nellemann et al., 2014).

## **2.3 IWT's connection to violence in Africa**

The connection between poaching and violence in Africa, and the threat they pose to the international community, is becoming more widely understood. UNESCO Secretary-General Ban Ki-

moon warned in May that "illicit ivory trade may currently constitute an important source of funding for armed groups", and urged governments to "consider the issue of poaching as a major national and sub-regional security concern requiring their concerted and coordinate response" in Africa, citing the link between poaching and "other criminal, even terrorist, activities" (Pham, 2013). A month after signing an executive order establishing a Presidential Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking, President Obama announced \$10 million in State Department funding for regional and bilateral training and technical assistance in Africa to combat poaching during a visit to Tanzania, where he met with Tanzanian officials. This anti-poaching program was unveiled in September at the Clinton Global Initiative meeting in New York by former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, in partnership with several prominent conservation organizations and the governments of Botswana, Côte d'Ivoire; Gabon; Kenya; Malawi; South Sudan; and Uganda (Barack Obama, 2013). "The size of illicit revenues from rhino horn, ivory and other wildlife items, has made organized criminal networks bolder and more aggressive", Gabonese President Ali Bongo Ondimba said at the United Nations General Assembly last month.

Organized crime groups seem to be becoming more interested in the IWT because they think it has low risk and high profit. These criminal groups move poached animals using the same sophisticated methods and networks they use to move people, weapons, drugs, and other illegal goods (UNEP & INTERPOL, 2012). At the same time, local groups like artisanal poachers, militias, and even terrorist groups often get wildlife from the wild. Weru asserts that networks for poaching and trafficking are usually dispersed but very well connected.

Most of the time, *artisanal poachers* are locals who know the area well and work with one or more middlemen (Weru, 2016). Analysis done by the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group (ESAAMLG) in 2016 showed that member countries thought that subsistence poachers were motivated by poverty, which was then used by syndicates to force people to take part in poaching activities. The poachers take a lot of risks for a small amount of money. After the killing, they usually give the horns to a member of the gang (ESAAMLG, 2016). At first, these groups poached to supply local markets, but now they are being co-opted or pushed out by an illicit trade that is dominated by organized crime and made possible by government officials, security forces, and businessmen (Weru, 2016). Poachers who aren't part of a network often kill animals, but they usually put themselves at risk of being caught while looking for buyers. Poachers may also offer to buy the wildlife products they want from local hunters. There are records of well-run groups, and it's clear that some of them have turned the IWT into a business (ESAAMLG, 2016).

ESAAMLG found in 2016 that, unlike artisanal poachers, *professional poachers/snipers* have well-organized operations and use high-tech tools when they hunt. They are formally employed in another profession or run a business (e.g., police officers, soldiers, security intelligence operatives, etc.). Their role is to get guns, find or track the animals, and kill them. In contrast to poachers who kill animals for food, snipers are hired because they are thought to be experts at killing specific animals and are good with guns. ESAAMLG report argues that poachers in some countries, especially those that have recently been at war, have been trained as soldiers. Some experienced criminal gangs that are part of a more organized and structured group are sometimes part of this group.

On the other hand, there are also *corrupt officials*. Every year, several animals are stolen from national parks in Africa and Asia. It is not clear how many of these cases rangers have helped with. When endangered species are all in one place, like in a park, it may be easier for a professional poacher to take them. If they can bribe the park wardens, they can get a steady supply of animals that have been monitored and are healthy (UNODC, 2010, p. 152). Even though the links between the IWT and militant and terrorist groups have gotten a lot of attention, they are not very strong.

A study commissioned by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and INTERPOL shows how poaching and trafficking elephants brings in money for *terrorist groups*. For example the money generated from IWT is used to fund a variety of armed movements in Central and Southern Africa by selling wildlife items (Pham, 2013). Another example is when in October 2013 the al-Qaeda-affiliated militant group al-Shabaab, which is based in Somalia, has been accused -by independent researchers who completed an 18-month undercover investigation- being the "premier broker" in the black market for ivory, by allowing recruiting fighters and pay them large amounts. Shabab fighters are paid about \$300 a month, while those in Somalia's regular army have often earned far less (Neme, Crosta, & Kalron, 2013).

On the other hand, engagement with the *military* in conservation also means looking into and talking about the everyday problems and challenges that people who live in or near areas where militarized conservation happens face, including how it can affect their rights and daily lives. Militarized conservation can bring up and repeat wrongs from the past, which could make people who live in conservation areas feel uncomfortable. For example, in some parts of South Africa, militarized conservation tactics look a lot like counterinsurgency tactics from the time of apartheid, when people were trying to win the support of local people while also using tactics of intimidation and violence. Mozambique is also affected by these methods, which include building networks of informants, co-opting people, and making communities distrust each other (Annecke & Masubelele,



2016; Lunstrum, 2015; Massé & Lunstrum, 2016). It seems that the claims about IWT funding terrorist activities, increase the urgency to save species when there is a lot of or growing armed conflict. And thus, these claims are used to justify a shift toward more militarized forms of conservation (Somerville, 2017; White, 2014).

Wildlife *rangers (non-state armed groups)* today face combat scenarios akin to those faced by Special Forces in armed conflicts on a regular basis. Irresponsible wildlife commerce is threatening the stability of entire countries and stifling economic prosperity. Non-state armed groups, such as the rangers, are becoming increasingly active in the fight against poaching. When protecting elephants and rhinos, park rangers frequently have inadequate training and obsolete equipment, putting them at danger of injury or death when confronting armed poachers. Even the most diligent attempts to monitor and safeguard wildlife in their parks cannot withstand the magnitude of poachers' assaults (Neme, 2014). When operating in conflict zones, there is presence of armed organizations and heavily equipped poachers. When faced with such dangers, it may seem 'common sense' for rangers to resort to force to protect species and themselves. An example of this is the attack to the Virunga National Park in the DRC on April 9, 2018. Where members of the Mai-Mai militia ambushed and killed five park rangers and a driver. This is not the first attack and now it brings to 175 the toll of Virunga rangers who have been killed while guarding the park. This park is the Africa's oldest national park and a UNESCO World Heritage Site that "continues to be plagued by the long-running armed conflict wracking the eastern DRC" (Dasgupta, 2018). Furthermore, when using force arbitrarily, armed groups for conservation purposes, such as the rangers, may be viewed as just another armed group involved in conflict. This can lead to an escalation of weapons and levels of violence, and once this dynamic has been established, it is difficult to de-escalate the situation (Duffy, 2014; Humphreys & Smith, 2011). well.

Things are different now than they were before. Better infrastructure, technology, and personal freedom have made it easier for illegal activities like IWT to grow. Since then, most subsistence or artisanal poaching for local markets has been taken over or pushed out by an illegal trade that is dominated by organized crime and made possible by government officials, security forces, and businessmen markets (Vira & Ewing, 2014).

Elephant tusks are increasingly being trafficked for weapons, ammo, food, and other supplies by Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) fugitives, a study by the Enough Project and its partners found in June 2013. When contacted for this research, former group members described how mysterious buyers arrived in helicopters and connected with the gang in far-flung locations in either

the DRC or CAR (Agger & Hudson, 2013). According to the World Wildlife Fund, at least twenty-six elephants were killed in the Dzanga Bai World Heritage Site in the southwestern portion of the Central African Republic by armed men from the Séleka party that seized power in January 2013 (WWF, 2013). It was previously reported that Sudan's notorious Janjaweed militias, which have been blamed for killing tens of thousands in the Darfur region, have become "major poachers" who range across the continent as far west as Cameroon and are thought to be responsible for the slaughter of thousands of elephants, including at least 300 elephants in January 2012, one of the worst episodes of the mass slaughtering of elephants in history (Times, 2012). As demand for ivory trinkets and rhino horn "medicine" grows in China, Vietnam, and other East Asian countries, well-organized criminal syndicates enter the trafficking, providing them with everything from night-vision goggles to high-powered guns and even the horns themselves, which they use to supply militant groups in Africa with weapons and supplies. Once armed combatants have this armament at their disposal, of course, they can use it to hunt out human victims.

More than a third of all intrastate conflicts during the last half-century have involved natural resources of some sort (Matthew, Brown, Jensen, UNEP, & UNEP. Expert Advisory Group on Environment, 2009). Eighty percent of the 34 biodiversity hotspots discovered around the world experienced major conflict during the same period (Hanson et al., 2009). According to reports, in the 1970s, an estimated 100,000 elephants were killed to raise money for the Angolan and Mozambican civil wars (Leão, 2007). Cambodia, timber resources helped the Khmer Rouge, and they also fueled wars in Burma, Côte d'Ivoire, and DRC. Ultimately, in the worst-case scenario, resources take precedence over dynamic social, economic, cultural and ethnic considerations. There are "armed conflicts in which the regulation and revenue of natural resources are substantially implicated in both the conflict's economics and/or the belligerent aims", which are known as "resource wars".

Ultimately, in the worst-case scenario, resources take precedence over dynamic social, economic, cultural and ethnic considerations. Because of their role in the economics and/or the reasons, "resource wars" occur when "armed conflict occurs where natural resource regulation and revenue play a significant role" in the conflict (Nellemann et al., 2014). The loss of natural resources and keystone species as a result of this violence, as well as the development of conditions favorable to major human rights violations, are some of the consequences of this violence. Humans who live near major wildlife resources face a short-term threat from large-scale environmental crime. Increased intercommunal violence is exacerbated by the depletion of natural resources. Where armed organizations operate, there is a wide supply of small arms and light weapons. Assault and

intimidation of members of the local community who are involved in other crimes is also a common usage of these weapons. Violence, threats, forced labor, recruitment of children for the military, human trafficking, sex slavery, mass rapes/sexual harassment, and murder are all frequent in the local communities (NDU, 2012). As armed organizations and transnational criminal networks needed to transport wildlife items to international markets come together, they promote corruption, undermine the rule of law, limit the ability to collect income from taxation and mining, and put local economies at risk in the long term.

In order to conduct operations, non-state armed groups require financial support, which they can receive through sponsorship, established connections, or "self-financing", which can also be achieved by the extraction of natural resources from the environment. For transnational criminal organizations, conflict zones provide a safe place for operations and opportunity for cooperation with corrupt state officials and non-state armed organizations. As a result, war economies are formed in conflict zones by bringing together transnational criminal organizations, militias, terrorists, and other non-state armed groups into cross-border networks. In light of this, cooperation with non-state armed groups, such as militants, can be justified. Both have little interest in resolving conflicts or restoring peace, security, or government in a given region. They are challenged with armed, militarily trained criminals who destroy park infrastructures and wildlife, intimidate and threaten local communities and participate in deliberate environmental destruction. Illicit operations like smuggling and illicit charcoal processing have been reported to have been disrupted by park personnel. Over the past decade, more than 1,000 rangers have been killed in 35 nations (IFAW, 2013). Armed gangs have been accused of torturing and killing park guards who are responsible for protecting wildlife.

According to Le Sage (2010), war can be sustained and prolonged when state and non-state armed organizations begin poaching resources and reaping the benefits of exploitation. It is more difficult to end a quarrel over a natural resource than it is to end a conflict over anything else. Predation and accumulation can occur when profit motives outweigh political objectives. Regardless of alliances or affiliations, parties could collaborate with ostensible adversaries to control money in certain situations. Competition for resources can destabilize groups and undermine hierarchies, organizational structures, and command and control systems. As a result of this, armed organizations that engage in violent rivalry are also formed. Additionally, insurgents and war profiteers could be linked to transnational criminal networks as well. Wildlife conservationists, businessmen and women, customs and border agents, as well as foreign political leaders are implicated in illicit wildlife exploitation through these networks (Le Sage, 2010). Fights often lead to the formation of entrenched

networks and war economies, which expand throughout the region and even to other countries. Resources can only be misused by these groups if they are in a state of constant insecurity and violence.

There is no interest in parties who participate in illicit resource extraction to negotiate or maintain peace once they are part of conflict economies. Self-funding and well-connected organizations are also less susceptible to external influence or coercion. Belligerents do not want to give up exclusive rights to profit-generating natural resources to reach a peace accord. They are frequently split, making it difficult to get all parties to the table for negotiations. Armed groups view their weapons as essential economic assets after decades of resource depletion, making DDR agreements difficult to enforce. Individuals and groups' decisions to lay down their weapons are influenced by the economic opportunities and incentives offered in the criminal economy and war economies. Destroying local infrastructure and depleting local human, financial and institutional resources are hallmarks of war economies. While peace treaties are signed, criminals who participated in economic exploitation during war desire to continue their self-enrichment operations even when warfare is over. Terrorists can tap into a ready supply of ex-combatants by transforming them into criminal gangs to continue their unlawful activities. With large-scale criminal resource extraction in the shadows of the legitimate economy, the prospects for long-term peace and stability are dwindling as well as efforts to conserve natural resources (Nellemann et al., 2014).

## **3 Chapter 3 Theoretical framework**

Prior to beginning the analysis, it is vital to establish the fundamental principles behind my study topics. Conceptualization is critical because well-defined concepts provide the researcher with "thinking tools" that guide the remainder of the analysis (Leander, 2008). Therefore, it is vital to define key concepts utilized throughout this thesis, most notably "poaching", "illicit wildlife trafficking", "security" and "securitization".

### **3.1 Poaching in Illicit wildlife trafficking (IWT)**

There is no universally agreed-upon definition of unlawful hunting or capture of wildlife, as well as the subsequent trading of these items up to the point of consumption. Wildlife crime, illicit wildlife trade, and wildlife trafficking all appear to be used interchangeably and frequently without a precise definition. The term "poaching", which refers to the actual acquisition of wildlife by hunting and,

most frequently, killing, is included at times and not at others. This discovery is consistent with Haenlein and Smith, who assert that the international community lacks a standardized definition and understanding of what constitutes IWT (Haenlein & Smith, 2016). The International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC), a partnership of CITES, INTERPOL, UNODC, the World Bank Group, and the World Customs Organization, uses the phrase "wildlife crime" and defines it as "all fauna and flora" (CITES, n.d). The EU's action plan defines "wildlife trafficking" as "international and non-international unlawful commerce in wildlife, and their derivatives, as well as closely related offenses such as poaching" (European Commission, 2016b). UNEP and INTERPOL use the term "illicit trading and poaching of wildlife and flora" in their report on environmental crime, distinguishing it from other forms of environmental crime such as illicit fishing, logging, and mining (Nellemann et al., 2016). TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, defines "wildlife trade" as "any sale or exchange of wild animal and plant resources by people" and makes distinction between legal and illicit trade (TRAFFIC, n.d.), whereas CITES, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, uses the term "wildlife crime" to encompass the entire process from poaching to processing, transport, export, sale, possession, and money laundering (CITES, n.d).

Due to the lack of a universally accepted definition, I chose the term illicit wildlife trafficking, because is the one that I felt provided the most direct representation of the situation. Moreover, since the analysed texts are frequently imprecise and rarely distinguish between the terms poaching and illicit wildlife trafficking, they were analysed collectively, but I would like to highlight then that, the term "*poaching*" has been used throughout this thesis to denote to the illicit killing and/or taking of wildlife from their native habitats, excluding flora, fishing, and logging. On the other hand, the following transportation, purchasing, and selling of wildlife is referred to as the "*illicit wildlife trafficking*" or IWT.

Notably, the term "poaching" is not harmless. Originating during the colonial era, the term "poaching" referred to traditional African hunting activities that had been criminalized by the settlers, whilst "hunting" referred to European hunting practices that remained legal, thereby ceding sovereignty over wildlife resources to Europeans. According to Somerville, "colonial colonialism's criminalization of indigenous hunting enabling corruption to become the foundation of illicit hunting and trafficking networks" (Somerville, 2017, p. 242). The legality or illegality of many sorts of hunting is still hotly argued, and the criminalization of poaching is explored extensively elsewhere. Despite its historical associations, I used the term in this thesis because it is still commonly used in

oral language and academic writing. Thus, I take existing definitions of illicit wildlife slaughtering at face value, without debating whether the underlying criminalization is correct or incorrect, or whether the case involves subsistence hunting by indigenous peoples or organized activities by professional, foreign players.

Poaching can be classified into two broad categories. "Poaching for the pot" refers to subsistence hunting in rural communities, which often entails the slaughter of small and medium-sized game for meat ("bushmeat"). While this type of hunting may provide an important source of protein in many areas, it may be illicit regardless of whether it harms endangered species, for example, because it occurs within a protected area or makes use of traditional hunting methods such as snares or poisoned arrows that are no longer permitted (Simonetta, 2009). Another kind of poaching is "poaching for profit", which occurs when hunting is conducted for purposes other than meat and is frequently conducted by external rather than local players. The classic example of this is elephant ivory hunting, in which the elephant's tusks are cut off and removed, leaving the remainder of the elephant carcass behind. To what extent one type predominates, and to what extent profiteering poaching has become professionalized, are debatable (Simonetta, 2009). While some argue that the bulk of poachers remain impoverished subsistence hunters regardless of their opportunistic connection with larger networks, others emphasize the significance of large mafia-like cartels that hunt professionally using high-tech military equipment and even helicopters. As it is presented, the security discourse frequently glosses over this distinction. To add to the confusion, bushmeat hunting is no longer synonymous with subsistence hunting. Bushmeat is increasingly trafficked and exported nationally, particularly to metropolitan groups that have little difficulty acquiring alternative kinds of meat but use bushmeat for traditional or cultural reasons (Lindsey et al., 2013).

## 3.2 Security

The concept of security is as contentious as it is fascinating. The Oxford online dictionary defines security as "the state of being free from danger or threat" (Oxford, n.d.). Most of us understand what security entails in our daily lives. Part of what makes the notion so intriguing is that it merges the objective and the subjective. It is a well-known contradiction that humans can feel secure while driving a car yet insecure while flying, even though the car ride is statistically much more likely to pose a threat. Terrorism is another example of a problem that, while factually unlikely to endanger our security, can have a significant impact on our subjective sense of being (in)secure. To put it another way, security entails both being and feeling protected (Booth, 2005, p. 21). This nuance is



significant in the case of poaching and IWT because a discursive shift toward security is likely to reflect and/or affect our subjective perception of the threat, and thus the strategy and potential countermeasures, regardless of the objective facts or reliability of the underlying evidence.

The term "security" has several definitions in International Relations (IR), but there is a common understanding that security has to do with threats to something (a referent object, e.g., what is to be secured). The so-called realist approach has traditionally dominated security studies. Realist security studies consider the state to be the obvious referent object, and security addressing state matters, such as threats to its territory or military capability, are often examined using rational choice models (Booth, 2005, p. 2). They see threats as material conditions that exist regardless of our attention or opinion of them, minimizing the subjective aspect of security. Instead, security (and insecurity) refers to material situations that can be viewed "out there" and inspected, counted, or measured without regard for our subjective assessment of them (Glaser, 2018). Consider a state's security in terms of the strength of its military or the number of nuclear weapons it possesses vs the number of nuclear weapons possessed by its adversary.

This realist security perspective was increasingly criticized for being too narrow in scope, and when it failed to predict and explain the Cold War's end, alternative security views began to develop. A new branch of security studies has emerged alongside the realism branch during the 1990s. Because they reject the realist view of threats as merely objective phenomena and consider subjective security experiences, these alternative approaches are frequently grouped together as "critical security studies". Instead, they share a broader understanding of what security may entail, focusing less on the state and the military and more on how culture and identity impact our subjective sense of security (Knudsen, 2001).

Security and dangers are viewed as social and discursive constructions in critical security studies. Threat representations may be understood as inseparable from our construction of them, or as having a subjective and objective side that can be examined separately (Booth, 2005). The threat construction of poaching and IWT as a matter of security was the focus of discourse analysis in this thesis. This emphasis on threat production and "actual" existential threat is a feature of Copenhagen School securitization theory (Emmers, 2018, p. 172).

### 3.3 Securitization

The concept of "securitization" is one of the most prominent conceptual innovations to emerge from recent debates about the nature of security. Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver are two of the most

prominent "Copenhagen School" scholars in the field of security studies. The title "Copenhagen School" comes from the Center for Peace and Conflict Research's affiliation with this school of thinking (latterly known as the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute or COPRI). For Buzan et al., a security issue is one that poses an existential threat to the survival of the referent object. This is what it takes to distinguish between what is and is not a security concern (Buzan et al., 1998). When discussing security studies, the phrase "*referent object*" can be used to refer to any entity that serves as the subject of investigation (e.g., a state, a human, or an ecosystem). When it comes to national security and defense, "*existential threat*" refers to the fact that a conflict might threaten the very existence of a specific item, such as a country. Regarding the concept of national safety, we presume that because of the necessity of maintaining a state, we must have standing armies, weapons production and procurement facilities as well as intelligence organizations.

While our understanding of what security includes has grown deeper and broader, so have the challenges that can be investigated via a security lens, because "the theoretical method you adopt to investigating security will decide the type of subject matter that you perceive to be security" (Collins, 2016, p. 7). Threats that can be studied from a security standpoint are no longer limited to military conflict and terrorism, but also include intra-state conflict and terrorism, health-related issues such as hunger or pandemics, and environmental issues such as climate change or, as in this thesis, how poaching and IWT fuel conflict. The expansion of the security agenda has allowed non-state players, ranging from ethnic groups to international organizations to be included in the study (Dunne & Schmidt, 2019).

The perspective towards securitization differs from one school to another. The Welsh School is explicitly normative, viewing emancipation and security as "two sides of the same coin", with emancipation defined as "the liberation of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints that prevent them from carrying out what they would freely choose to do" (Booth, 1991, p. 319). Knowledge is viewed as social, and it is always in someone's interest, and the Welsh School seeks to uncover these interests in order to contribute to societal change and betterment (Booth, 2005). The so-called Paris School and feminist security studies are two more types of critical security studies. This research did not investigate either of these techniques further since it instead applied ideas from the Copenhagen School (CS), notably its notion of securitization. The perspective of choice for this thesis was the latter's securitization theory.

According to securitization theory, treating a problem as a security issue justifies taking extraordinary political steps to address it. To put it another way, it is securitized when a problem is given the same priority as a military danger as illustrated in the spectrum of securitization where an issue goes from non-politicized (not a political problem) through politicized (part of a public policy debate) to securitized (meaning that the issue is thought of as an existential threat and therefore justifies that go beyond normal political practices) (Figure 1).

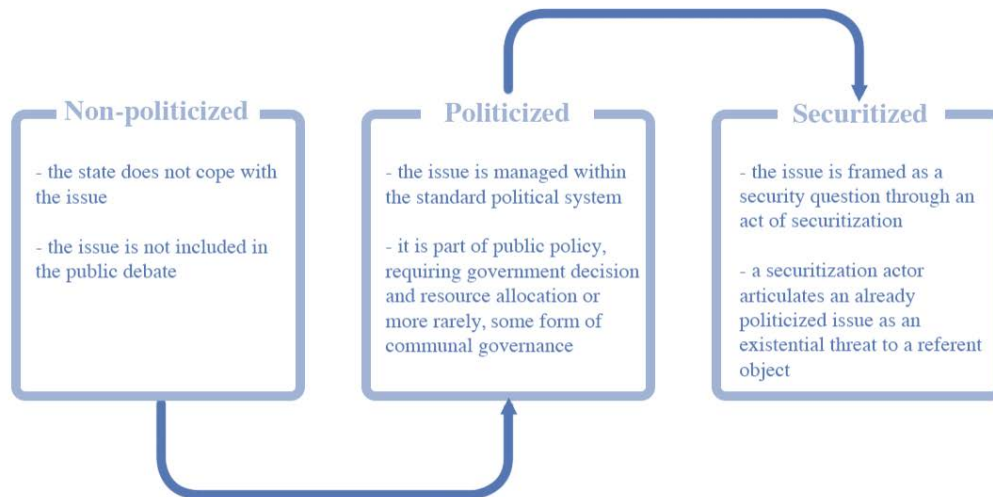


Figure 2 Securitization Spectrum

Source: adapted from Ralf Emmers, "Securitization", in *Contemporary Security Studies (Fourth Edition)*, ed. Alan Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) (Emmers, 2016, p. 170)

From non-politicized to politicized to securitized, the Copenhagen School devised a spectrum for classifying public issues. A non-political issue is one that is not addressed by the state and is not discussed in the public arena. Politicized topics are dealt with in the political arena and are part of government policy. Security-related issues are those that necessitate extraordinary measures, beyond the normal political procedures of the state, to be addressed (Emmers, 2018). Furthermore, according to Buzan securitization is "the action that takes politics beyond the established rules and presents the issue either as a specific kind of political or as above politics", which makes it a more extreme kind of politicization (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 23). As mentioned above, securitization requires that a *securitizing actor* makes a *securitizing move* by framing and issue as an *existential threat* to a *referent object*.

Securitization, according to Emmers, involves both a security act and a political act (by using the language of security and requesting the adoption of extreme countermeasures) (a political decision to articulate the threat in such a way as to convince the target audience) (Emmers, 2018). Buzan

emphasized the importance of constituency in recognizing and 'backing up' a speech act in addition to generally endorsing this concept (Buzan et al., 1998). Whenever there is agreement to securitize, a speaking act become a *securitization move*. As a result, speech acts move from being "security-enhancing" to "a component of intersubjective security creation" (McDonald, 2008, p. 566).

Securitization begins with the portrayal of specific topics, people, groups, or entities as existential dangers to a target item or community by state or non-state actors, such as trade unions or popular movements (Emmers, 2018). Because some challenges are regarded more serious than others, they are referred to be national or international security issues. Having them portrayed as a "supreme priority" allows securitizing actors to deal with them first before tackling anything else. That's how we learn that security is socially created (self-referential practice) (Buzan et al., 1998) since a problem may be made into a security concern simply through framing it as a threat, rather than because an actual existential danger exists. Securitization, as a model, appears to be increasingly dominated by "powerful individuals in privileged positions", most of them at the state level (Collins, 2016; Emmers, 2018). To recognize this act, the researcher must understand the process of establishing a shared understanding of what is to be regarded and collectively responded to as a threat (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2015).

*Securitizing actors* must convince a relevant audience (such as the public, politicians, or military officers) that a specific reference object is in substantial danger in the second stage of the procedure. Only after the public acknowledges the danger can drastic political measures be enacted. This level of "urgency" also allows for "counteractants outside the normal bounds of political procedures" to be tolerated by the audience, or more specifically constituencies (Emmers, 2018). A successful securitization does not necessitate the use of such extreme measures, however, but rather the audience's recognition of a security risk. To be clear, in this interpretation of securitization, the target audience "excludes the wider population and consists solely of political elites and some state institutions such as the military" (Emmers, 2018). The securitization move can succeed even if the majority of the population reject a security discourse and consider the extraordinary measures to be illegitimate (Collins, 2016).

### 3.4 Depicting IWT in security matters

Poaching frequently occurs in underdeveloped locations where impoverished indigenous people subsist on forest resources, the IWT can be detrimental to these indigenous groups, they represent collateral damage from the depletion of natural resources (Wyatt, 2013). Additionally,

militarization of the IWT as a securitized referent object has the potential to result in direct human casualties on both sides of conflicts. Each year, rangers are killed in poacher raids throughout the world (L. S. Wyler & Sheikh, 2008). IWT can be detrimental to an ecosystem's biodiversity and balance, owing to the complex symbiotic relationship between flora and fauna (L. S. Mills, Soulé, & Doak, 1993). Moreover, IWT's influence can be seen in the context of many security concerns associated with the IWT. During the last century, the rate of species extinction was around 50–500 times greater than the "normal" rate, as determined by the dating of fossils from prior mass extinctions. Ecosystems may become unbalanced or even collapse as a result of global defaunation (Lindsey et al., 2013; Myers, Baum, Shepherd, Powers, & Peterson, 2007). As a result, these can jeopardize ecosystems and ecosystem services, hence jeopardizing environmental security. Furthermore, the expanding volume of global IWT, facilitated by speedy and inexpensive transit, temporary storage facilities, and shared network nodes, increases the danger of infectious disease transmission (Burgos & Burgos, 2007). An example of this is when the Ebola virus was linked to the trafficking in meat from infected fruit bats and monkeys in West Africa in 2014, with a total of 23,860 suspected cases and 9,675 deaths (WHO, 2015). Apart from human health, biosecurity is jeopardized by zoonotic disease transmission in crops and livestock, indigenous wildlife populations, and invasive alien species (Karesh, Cook, Bennett, & Newcomb, 2005).

Additionally, the wildlife trafficking adds to difficulties of livelihoods; specifically, economic security, which refers to a guaranteed minimum income (Cao & Wyatt, 2016). Globalization increases criminal opportunities and creates new international inequities, particularly between the Global South and the developed world (Passas, 1999, 2000). For instance, natural resource exploitation occurs in relatively impoverished source countries (e.g., in the last primaeval forests of the Amazon and Congo basin). In these developing regions, rainforests are home to millions of people who rely on the rainforest's wildlife resources, which are dwindling in part due to the IWT (Boekhout van Solinge, 2010; Roe, 2002). In a social sense, damaged ecosystems are useless when the habitat is lost, and have a decreased economic value when natural resources are depleted. Finally, there is the threat that IWT poses to national security in governments throughout the world. Currently, the IWT is associated with organized crime, terrorism, and corruption (Van Uhm, 2016). These factors might jeopardize state sovereignty, hence eroding a state's legitimacy. As previously stated, countries with a high biodiversity density tend to have higher levels of corruption and lower levels of development, which attract criminal groups. Additionally, organized crime has benefited from the opportunities created by the globalization of borders (Aas, 2007). Also, some sources indicated that "terrorist" groups such

as the Sudanese Janjaweed, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), and the Somali Al-Shabaab may have been involved (L. Wyler & Sheikh, 2013). Thus, the link between IWT and security concerns are illustrated at an environmental, health, economic, and national security levels, where the IWT represents a substantial social and environmental influence.

## 4 Chapter 4 Methodological framework

### 4.1 Methodology

Qualitative research on the human dimensions of conservation and the environment is increasing in volume, necessitating thorough syntheses of such research. To analyse the influence of wildlife trafficking on human security, I have performed a discourse analysis of documents, namely policy documents and reports from organizations tackling the issue from disciplines such as international law, criminal justice, and the environment. A qualitative methodology was suited for this topic since I examined the human dimension of a subject that criminologists and environmentalists frequently address. This required an inductive research technique that connected theory to the challenges affecting human security because of wildlife trafficking.

To obtain a "thick description" of a single phenomenon—one that is nuanced and in-depth—case study research thoroughly and methodically explores a specific environment, event, or issue (Lune & Berg, 2017). To gain a better understanding of how and why IWT can be relevant to peace studies, I determined that a case study such as the elephant ivory and rhino horn in Africa would be an appropriate choice for my research project.

My data collection was guided by the vocabulary I established in the context of peace studies, more precisely within securitization. I was not interested in testing peace theory or developing grounded theory with this setting. Rather than that, I intended to investigate a constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology. This places greater emphasis on the studied phenomena and interprets both data and analysis as outcomes of shared experiences and interactions between sources. The case study's major objective is to explain how IWT become the focus of security, as well as the debate that emerged. Additionally, I intended to investigate the issue's origins and speculate on its repercussions.

### 4.2 Methods of data collection

Data was collected from documents as a primary source regarding the underlying topics in the field of IWT and peace studies as an attempt to identify the dynamics and linkages between the



two fields. Discourse analysis is a method for analyzing conversation and other types of discourse that focuses on the ways in which versions of reality are formed through language and how they contribute to the social world's construction (Bryman, 2015). As with other analytical methodologies in qualitative research, discourse analysis can be applied to non-verbal forms of communication such as texts. It relates to an object and the ways in which they are shown frame our understanding of that object. I gathered the documents from organizations, institutions, government, and academia in form of organizational or institutional reports, books, peer reviewed papers, brochures, journals, maps, charts, and press releases. The documents were evaluated in a systematic manner. This analytical approach involved locating, choosing, evaluating, and synthesizing material contained in papers that had been organized into primary subjects and categories via discourse analysis. I compiled a list of the papers I intended to analyze, as well as a list of the predefined codes I intended to use.

The utilization of the materials provides context and historical insight into the issue's origins. Additionally, documents served to suggest questions to be asked that were not initially considered but were pertinent to the research. Among the advantages of documents are the following: they are an efficient method, as they require less time and data selection; they are accessible, as the majority of documents are in the public domain; additionally, as a result of the pandemic, information online is more accessible; they are cost-effective, as they are less expensive than other research methods and the collection of new data is feasible; they are stable, as they are not affected by the researcher's presence and are suitable for revisiting; they have exactness, since they are detailed; and provide wide coverage, since they cover a long span of time. One of the constraints I saw was a lack of detail, as documents are created for a certain purpose and audience. Another issue is low retrievability, since certain documents were difficult to retrieve or were prohibited entirely. Another constraint is biased selection, or in other words, an insufficient collection of documents.

While documents are a reliable source of material, I carefully picked and employed them in my research; established the document's significance and contribution to the problem explored; I determined the documents' relevance to the research questions and purpose; I determined whether the content was appropriate for the conceptual framework of the research; I assessed the documents' authenticity, credibility, accuracy, and representativeness; I determined whether the documents were even (balanced) or uneven (containing great detail on some aspects of the subject but little or no detail on others); I kept in mind the document's original purpose.

## 4.3 Data analysis

At first, I decided to perform document analysis as appropriate applicable to this project, providing rich description of the phenomenon. Document analysis includes superficial examination, thorough examination, and interpretation. This is an iterative process that combines elements of content analysis and thematic analysis. It takes from the content analysis technique the organization of the information into categories related to the research questions. In this technique, meaningful and relevant passages data were identified. But as I was deepening more and more in the information, I decided to better consider performing discourse analysis.

Discourse analysis fits for this thesis in peace studies since it allows for the examination of how discursive politics transform previously "normal" issues into security concerns (Balzacq, 2010). According to Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, "the best method to understand securitization is to examine discourse and political constellations" (Buzan et al., 1998).

Discourse is a term that has several definitions. Phillips & Jørgensen (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 1) define it as "patterns that people's utterances follow when they engage in many domains of social interaction" and "a distinctive manner of speaking and perceiving the world". Discourse analysis is predicated on the concept that language does not simply represent the reality in a neutral manner, but rather embodies multiple perspectives on it. Contrasting discourses express conflicting claims to knowledge and worldviews. As a result, using discourse analysis to investigate the genesis of unique threat presentations makes sense. According to Bartelson, discourse can be viewed as a "war for truth", which fits with securitization theory's basic concept that threat presentations are influenced by power relations (Bartelson, 1995).

Discourse analysis is predicated on particular ontological and epistemological presuppositions. As with securitization theory, it falls within the wide category of social constructivist perspectives, which view human knowledge of the world as socially created rather than objective. Although the existence of a material world cannot be ignored, the importance of language and discourse is critical since it is via language and discourse that physical objects acquire meaning. Our language reflects our understanding of the world, and these understandings are structured in patterns with varying meanings. These patterns, which frequently vary according to context and subject, can be analyzed as discourses (Gee & Handford, 2013).

It is critical to study discourse because our worldview has an effect on the possibilities, challenges, and courses of action that we believe are feasible in every given situation. Discourses

frequently symbolize distinct truths, each with its own set of difficulties and potential answers. Discourses can be constantly generated and re-formed through discursive practice and social interaction because they are flexible and not dictated by external circumstances. While language does not alter physical reality in and of itself, "Diverse discourses each suggest a variety of feasible and appropriate routes of action. As a result, the ascription of meaning in discourses contributes to the formation and transformation of the world" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 9). On a global scale, this could indicate a shift in political leadership. Iver Neumann asserts that discourse "creates preconditions for action" that are likely to influence the policies and acts that are implemented (Neumann, 2008, p. 62). In the case of poaching and IWT, a discursive shift toward security may imply a shift in ground practices.

Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde argue that "the choice of a certain conceptualization is always a choice - it is political; it is not feasible to decide scientifically" (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 32). Wetherell refers to this deliberate selection of particular conceptualizations as "representational politics" (Wetherell, 2001, p. 25). The subject of discourse analysis is this social conflict in which diverse individuals, organizations, and institutions advance disparate worldviews. Although control of a discourse can be a source of power, there is no assurance that a particular interpretation will remain dominant over time due to the fluid nature of social meaning. This is an important topic for critical discourse analysis, as discussed in greater detail below.

"Poaching" became a relevant term because it was around it were most of the security concerns were linked. Notably, discourse analysis makes no claim to elucidate what individuals "really" intend or to disclose the "true truth" underlying discourse. The discourse itself is the object of analysis, with various representational patterns and their effects being examined. In the case of poaching and IWT, an examination of the evidence supporting these allegations would require a distinct thesis, which Haenlein and Smith have previously undertaken (Haenlein & Smith, 2016). However, as previously stated, while discourse analysis does not evaluate truth claims, it is possible to do a critical examination of the discourse's statements as part of the analysis.

Neumann believes that "the more behaviors that the analysis can account for by establishing its preconditions, and the more precisely this can be accomplished, the more effective the discourse analysis" (Neumann, 2008, p. 63). By conducting a discourse study of the leading global players' framing, as well as taking contextual elements into consideration, I want to account for the most critical preconditions explaining how and why IWT places a role in peace and conflict. To do so, I identified relevant information and separated it from which is not relevant for the research. Thematic

analysis is a form of pattern recognition within the data, with emerging themes becoming the categories for analysis. Then, I performed coding and category construction, based on the particularities of the data with the aim to uncover themes relevant to the issue. I used predefined codes related to the conceptual framework and research questions. The codes and themes served to integrate data gathered by those two methods, thus demonstrating objectivity. The analysis required a process of evaluating the documents to produce knowledge and develop understanding about the dynamics and linkages between wildlife trafficking and peace and conflict.

To perform the analysis, I conducted an iterative comparison method to guide the data analysis based on an inductive approach to identify patterns and discovered theoretical properties in the data. I revisited the key codes and concepts, and I compared data with codes to organize ideas and distinguish concepts that seemed to cluster together. Afterwards, I compared the substantive categories (category codes) and data from documents. In that way I was able to identify similarities, differences, and general patterns (Bowen, 2008, p. 144). It resulted on the emergence of new categories. For this, I was able to fill underdeveloped categories and narrow the excess of the others. Hence, the comparison was useful to refine ideas, pinpoint conceptual boundaries, and identifying the ad-hoc and relevant categories.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) encompasses a variety of methodologies that all share the goal of promoting social change through the development of "critical language awareness". As previously stated, discourse can impact both perceptions and policies. CDA aims to raise knowledge about discourse and its implications in order to empower people to challenge dominant discourses, fight oppression, and alter the discursive order (Fairclough, 2013).

CDA regards discourses as a form of social activity that is both formative and constituted: it contributes to the formation of the social world while also reflecting it. This is in contrast to purely poststructuralist conceptions of discourse, which view language as completely constituting the world (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Fairclough elaborates on this relationship between the real world and discourse within CDA, stating that "the discursive constitutions of society do not emerge from a free play of ideas in people's heads, but rather from a social practice that is firmly rooted in and oriented toward real, material social structures" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 66). As a result, any CDA analysis must consider the role of political and social forces in the formation of discourse.

Another critical component of CDA is the possibility of discourse having ideological consequences. This implies that rhetoric has the capacity to legitimate and reinforce existing uneven power relations (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Because discourse is viewed as having this productive

capacity, it is critical to consider who benefits from a specific discourse to ascertain how discursive practices alter pre-existing power relations. Which can be related as in securitization theory's emphasis on context and power relations.

A critical component of CDA is the connection of texts to social practice. This is the point at which discourse intersects with broader social philosophy. Along with the interdiscursivity issues stated previously, it encompasses other contextual elements that may influence discourse, such as economic, historical, or institutional factors: the discourse's "social matrix" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 237). Often, it is only by shifting the focus away from language intricacies and toward viewing discourses in context that findings and conclusions may be summarized.

### **4.3.1 Units and levels of analysis**

The Copenhagen School approach places greater emphasis on three analytical units: the referent object, securitizing actors, and functional actors (Buzan et al., 1998). They place a premium on the agents, emphasize the textual nature of discourse, and employ linguistic analysis to assess identities, norms, and values. While this is beneficial, as previously noted, I believe it needs to also place focus on factors such as the role of the spectators, for a better understanding of the securitization of IWT. As a result, I selected to conduct my research using Balzacq's view of securitization that includes the audience in the securitization process: "Securitization is not a self-referential practice but an intersubjective process" (Balzacq, 2010).

This vocabulary provides additional levels and variables not included in the CS approach. It is composed of three levels and their associated units. While it is possible to focus exclusively on one of the three levels, "a more legitimate examination of securitization demands consideration of all three aspects, namely "how", "who", and "what" (Balzacq, 2010, p. 38). Since my research questions encompass all three dimensions, they must be incorporated in my analysis as well.

### **4.3.2 Document sampling**

To present a detailed account of how and why poaching and IWT got securitized, it was important to conduct extensive research across a range of sources. Political and social processes in the contemporary day depend on far more than language. According to Williams, the international communicative environment has transformed to place a greater focus on visuals and video in political communication (Williams, 2003). Lene Hansen makes a similar argument, arguing that securitization does not have to be expressed in words but can alternatively take the shape of non-textual behaviors (Hansen, 2000). As a result, I shifted the emphasis away from securitization as a speaking act and onto pictures and actions. Although written materials such as policy documents, resolutions, and

reports were analyzed, the examination also included speeches, photographs, a short film and news and specialized magazine's articles. As it is shown, Think Tanks adopted the concept of poaching and IWT as a security issue, and photographs and films helped raise public awareness, which was undoubtedly critical for the securitization process.

### 4.3.3 Sampling procedure

I choose to include the United States, the European Union, and Africa as represented by the African Union, as well as any relevant regional African efforts and several significant Think Tanks.

The United Nations (UN) was not included in the securitization analysis as a distinct player. This is because, even though the UN has made comments connecting poaching, IWT, and security, official UN pronouncements are the result of negotiations and political struggles between member states. The UN exists in its own realm, where internal, discursive fights over securitization occur amongst global state actors. I consider that the UN, rather than representing an autonomous securitizing actor, mostly mirrors the state players previously included in my theoretical framework.

Since I chose to examine many actors, it was critical to narrow my emphasis to the most pertinent texts dealing with the subject of poaching and IWT from a security standpoint. This meant that official conference reports, resolutions, declarations, and strategy documents took precedence, while other documents typically had more information, such as Think Tank's reports, conference background materials, and findings from U.S. Senate hearings. Most of the data was gathered from the official websites of the respective countries, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, and news organizations. Each actor's analysis began with a few central texts, and in cases where a security argument was made, I traced the references to other texts. The data collecting and analysis processes were carried out concurrently, with frequent back and forth between the two. The first stage in analyzing any text was to determine whether a security argument was there. If not, this was recorded, but the specific text was not further explored. When a security argument was detected, the material was thoroughly evaluated considering my research questions.

Because both Africa and the EU are clearly made up of numerous countries that are all implicated in some way in the issue of poaching and IWT, I chose to focus on official documents representing several countries. This included African Union-wide initiatives, summaries of regional summits, and declarations from regional African gatherings on poaching and IWT. I examined official EU policy documents on wildlife trading and conservation in Africa for the EU. The United States' role was explored through an examination of congressional records, witness testimony, laws, and presidential directives pertaining to security, poaching, and IWT. Reports on the security implications



of poaching and IWT were abundant in the Think Tank sector, and I analyzed as many as possible from diverse organizations, including TRAFFIC, the World Conservation Society, the International Fund for Animal Welfare, and the World Wildlife Fund (*see table below*).

<i>Perspectives</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Organization/author</i>	<i>Year</i>
Africa	Speech	Integrated Strategic Management of Rhinoceros	Edna Molewa, Environmental Affairs Minister	2017
Africa	Government document	Law enforcement and anti-poaching strategy 2016-2021	Southern African Development Community	2016
Africa	Report	6th African Ministerial Conference on the Environment	AMCEN	2016
Africa	Conference	International Conference on Illegal Exploitation and Illicit Trade in Wild Flora and Fauna in Africa: Brazzaville Declaration	Brazzaville Declaration	2015
Africa	Report	African Strategy on Combating Illegal Exploitation and Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora in Africa	African Union	2015
Africa	Web article	Poaching-terrorism link that contributed to tribes' persecution 'largely wrong'	Survival International	2015
Africa	Web article	Africa: Wildlife Crime Requires African Solutions, Governments in the Region Say	All Africa	2014
Africa	Report	The Arusha Declaration on Regional Conservation and Combating Wildlife/Environmental Crime	International Conservation	2014
Africa	News article	Execute elephant poachers on the spot, Tanzanian minister urges	The Guardian David Smith, Africa correspondent	2013
Africa	Web article	The Path to Defeating the al-Shabaab Terrorists	Uhuru Kenyatta for The Wall Street Journal	2013
EU	Report	Larger Than Elephants: Inputs for an EU strategic approach to wildlife conservation in Africa	European Commission	2017
EU	Plan	EU action plan against wildlife trafficking	European Commission	2016
EU	Report	Analysis and Evidence in support of the EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking	European Commission	2016
EU	Report	Action Plan for strengthening the fight against terrorist financing	European Commission	2016
Think Tanks	Report	The EAGLE Network Annual Report 2017	EAGLE	2017
Think Tanks	Report	Al-Shabaab and the illegal ivory trade	Crosta and Shuterland	2016
Think Tanks	Web article	Role of the Private Sector	Kalron	2015
Think Tanks	Report	Tusk Wars: Inside the LRA and the Bloody Business of Ivory	Ledio Cakaj for the enough project	2015
Think Tanks	Report	Ivory, non-State armed groups and terrorism	WWF	2015
Think Tanks	Web article	Poaching-terrorism link that contributed to tribes' persecution 'largely wrong'	Survival International	2015
Think Tanks	Report	Ivory's Curse. The Militarization & Professionalization of Poaching in Africa. Washington: Born Free USA and C4ADS	Vira and Ewing	2014

Think Tanks	Short film	Last Days film	Last days of ivory	2014
Think Tanks	Short film	Poaching Is Threat to International Peace and Security	International Peace Institute	2013
Think Tanks	Web article	Criminal Nature: The Global Security Implications of the Illegal Wildlife Trade. IFAW.	IFAW	2013
Think Tanks	Web article	Is elephant and rhino poaching funding terrorism?	Save The Rhino	2013
Think Tanks	Report	Criminal Nature: The Global Security Implications of the Illegal Wildlife Trade	IFAW	2008
United States	Act	Eliminate, Neutralize, and Disrupt Wildlife Trafficking Act of 2016	U.S. Senate	2016
United States	Hearing	Poaching and terrorism: a national security challenge	U.S. House of Representatives	2015
United States	Report	2015 Annual Progress Assessment on U.S. National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking	Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking	2015
United States	Remarks	GEOINT Wildlife Security and Illicit Trafficking	Terrance Ford	2015
United States	Government document	U.S. National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking	Barak Obama	2014
United States	Remarks	Trans-African Security: Combating Illicit Trafficking Along the Crime-Terror Continuum	David Luna	2014
United States	Hearing	The Escalating International Wildlife Trafficking Crisis: Ecological, Economic and National Security Issues	U.S. Committee on Foreign Relations	2014
United States	Hearing	The Escalating International Wildlife Trafficking Crisis: Ecological, Economic and National Security Issues. Joint hearing before the Subcommittee on African Affairs and the Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office.	U.S. Committee on Foreign Relations	2014
United States	Executive order	Executive Order -- Combating Wildlife Trafficking	Barak Obama	2013
United States	Remarks	Remarks at the Partnership Meeting on Wildlife Trafficking	Hillary Clinton	2012
United States	Hearing	Ivory and Insecurity: The Global Implications of Poaching in Africa. Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Relations	U.S. Senate	2012
United States	Hearing	Poaching American Security: impacts of illegal wildlife trade	U.S. House of representatives	2008

Table 2 Selected documents for discourse analysis

#### 4.3.4 Criteria for size of dataset: reaching saturation

The amount of data to collect is a crucial factor in discourse analysis. Finally, the amount of data collected must be sufficient to address the study questions. According to Neumann (Neumann, 2008, p. 71), "in order to understand the breadth and depth of securitization processes, the analyst

cannot focus on a single text but must instead investigate a variety of text genres at various moments in time and in unique social settings". While it is required to read a great number of texts for any discourse analysis, when the meaning in a category of texts begins to repeat and delivers no new meaning, there is reason to suspect that you are approaching saturation. When subsequent texts began to mimic earlier patterns and contained little new information in the case of poaching and IWT, this was regarded as an indication that I had read enough texts from that specific actor.

Examining a big volume of texts from numerous actors posed a significant challenge. To include sufficient breadth to provide a comprehensive picture of the securitization process and related participants, certain depth concessions had to be made. Nonetheless, when faced with the decision of including only the most critical texts from many players or "any and all" texts from a select few, I determined that the former would be the most appropriate for a securitization analysis. Another factor that I considered was the time frame. Since the thesis is about the timeframe when the link to security was most prominent (2010-2017), I left aside documents dated after 2017. See table below where the selected documents are highlighted in blue:

	Perspectives	Type	Title	Organization/author	Year	Selected
1	Africa	Report	Annual report 2020	African Wildlife Foundation	2020	0
2	Africa	Web article	To trade or not to trade. The ivory question	Institute for Security Studies	2019	0
3	Africa	Speech	Integrated Strategic Management of Rhinoceros	Edna Molewa, Environmental Affairs Minister	2017	1
4	Africa	Government document	Law enforcement and anti-poaching strategy 2016-2021	Southern African Development Community	2016	1
5	Africa	Report	6th African Ministerial Conference on the Environment	AMCEN	2016	1
6	Africa	Conference	International Conference on Illegal Exploitation and Illicit Trade in Wild Flora and Fauna in Africa: Brazzaville Declaration	Brazzaville Declaration	2015	1
7	Africa	Report	African Strategy on Combating Illegal Exploitation and Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora in Africa	African Union	2015	1
8	Africa	Web article	Poaching-terrorism link that contributed to tribes' persecution 'largely wrong'	Survival International	2015	1
9	Africa	Report	Wildlife poaching: Africa's surging trafficking threat	Wildlife Poaching: Africa's Surging Trafficking Threat	2014	0

10	Africa	Summit report	Fourth Eu-Africa Summit Roadmap 2014-2017	Heads of State and Government of the European Union (EU) and Africa	2014	0
11	Africa	Web article	Africa: Wildlife Crime Requires African Solutions, Governments in the Region Say	All Africa	2014	1
12	Africa	Report	The Arusha Declaration on Regional Conservation and Combating Wildlife/Environmental Crime	International Conservation	2014	1
13	Africa	News article	Execute elephant poachers on the spot, Tanzanian minister urges	The Guardian David Smith, Africa correspondent	2013	1
14	Africa	Web article	The Path to Defeating the al-Shabaab Terrorists	Uhuru Kenyatta for The Wall Street Journal	2013	1
15	EU	Report	Study on the interaction between security and wildlife conservation in Sub-Saharan Africa. Part I	European Commission	2020	0
16	EU	Report	Study on the interaction between security and wildlife conservation in Sub-Saharan Africa. Part II Case studies	European Commission	2020	0
17	EU	Report	Larger than elephants. Inputs for an EU strategic approach to wildlife conservation in Africa: synthesis	European Commission	2017	0
18	EU	Report	Larger Than Elephants: Inputs for an EU strategic approach to wildlife conservation in Africa	European Commission	2017	1
19	EU	Plan	EU action plan against wildlife trafficking	European Commission	2016	1
20	EU	Report	Analysis and Evidence in support of the EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking	European Commission	2016	1
21	EU	Report	Action Plan for strengthening the fight against terrorist financing	European Commission	2016	1
22	EU	Paper	An illusion of complicity. Terrorism and the illegal ivory trade in East Africa	Royal United Services Institute	2015	0
23	Think Tanks	Paper	Tackling illegal wildlife trade in Africa	Chatam House	2018	0
24	Think Tanks	Article	Wildlife and drug trafficking, terrorism, and human security	Brookings	2018	0
25	Think Tanks	Report	The EAGLE Network Annual Report 2017	EAGLE	2017	1
26	Think Tanks	Short film	Interview: the extinction market: wildlife trafficking and how to counter it	Centre for policy research of the United Nations University	2017	0
27	Think Tanks	Blog entry	The global poaching vortex	Brookings	2016	0

28	Think Tanks	Report	Al-Shabaab and the illegal ivory trade	Elephant Action League	2016	0
29	Think Tanks	Report	Ivory and Terrorism in East Africa: Dispelling the Myth	Saunders, Jones and Stuart	2016	0
30	Think Tanks	Report	Al-Shabaab and the illegal ivory trade	Crosta and Shuterland	2016	1
31	Think Tanks	Article	Measuring illicit activities: will it be worth the trouble?	Centre for policy research of the United Nations University	2015	0
32	Think Tanks	Web article	Al-Shabaab's Ivory trade, the elephant action leagues' reply	Earth League International	2015	0
33	Think Tanks	Web article	Role of the Private Sector	Kalron	2015	1
34	Think Tanks	Report	Tusk Wars: Inside the LRA and the Bloody Business of Ivory	Ledio Cakaj for the enough project	2015	1
35	Think Tanks	Report	Ivory, non-State armed groups and terrorism	WWF	2015	1
36	Think Tanks	Web article	Poaching-terrorism link that contributed to tribes' persecution 'largely wrong'	Survival International	2015	1
37	Think Tanks	Report	Illegal trade in ivory and rhino horn: an assessment to improve law enforcement	TRAFFIC	2014	0
38	Think Tanks	Report	Ivory's Curse. The Militarization & Professionalization of Poaching in Africa. Washington: Born Free USA and C4ADS	Vira and Ewing	2014	1
39	Think Tanks	Short film	Last Days film	Last days of ivory	2014	1
40	Think Tanks	Short film	Poaching Is Threat to International Peace and Security	International Peace Institute	2013	1
41	Think Tanks	Web article	Ivory and terrorism: Africa's White gold of Jihad	Earth League International	2013	0
42	Think Tanks	Web article	Kony's Ivory: How Elephant Poaching in Congo Helps Support the Lord's Resistance Army.	Agger and Hutson	2013	0
43	Think Tanks	Web article	Criminal Nature: The Global Security Implications of the Illegal Wildlife Trade. IFAW.	IFAW	2013	1
44	Think Tanks	Web article	Is elephant and rhino poaching funding terrorism?	Save The Rhino	2013	1
45	Think Tanks	Report	Criminal Nature: The Global Security Implications of the Illegal Wildlife Trade	IFAW	2008	1
46	United States		Conservation is wildlife	USAID	ND	0
47	United States	Article	End the terror of ivory trade: column	USA TODAY	ND	0

48	United States	Report	Wildlife poaching and trafficking in Africa: An overview	Congressional Research Service of the United States	2021	0
49	United States	web page	Combating wildlife trafficking	USAID	2021	0
50	United States	Report	Eliminate, neutralize, and disrupt wildlife trafficking Act of 2016	U.S. Government Publishing Office	2016	0
51	United States	Act	Eliminate, Neutralize, and Disrupt Wildlife Trafficking Act of 2016	U.S. Senate	2016	1
52	United States	Hearing	Poaching and terrorism: a national security challenge	U.S. House of Representatives	2015	1
53	United States	Article	Ivory trafficking as a tool for fueling conflict in sub-Saharan Africa	Innovative Research in Conflict Analysis	2015	0
54	United States	Report	2015 Annual Progress Assessment on U.S. National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking	Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking	2015	1
55	United States	Remarks	GEOINT Wildlife Security and Illicit Trafficking	Terrance Ford	2015	1
56	United States	Press release	Fact sheet: National strategy for combating wildlife trafficking and commercial ban on trade in elephant ivory	U.S Senate	2014	0
57	United States	Government document	U.S. National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking	Barak Obama	2014	1
58	United States	Remarks	Trans-African Security: Combating Illicit Trafficking Along the Crime-Terror Continuum	David Luna	2014	1
59	United States	Hearing	The Escalating International Wildlife Trafficking Crisis: Ecological, Economic and National Security Issues	U.S. Committee on Foreign Relations	2014	1
60	United States	Hearing	The Escalating International Wildlife Trafficking Crisis: Ecological, Economic and National Security Issues. Joint hearing before the Subcommittee on African Affairs and the Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office.	U.S. Committee on Foreign Relations	2014	1
61	United States	Article	Blood Ivory	The New York Times	2013	0
62	United States	Executive order	Executive Order -- Combating Wildlife Trafficking	Barak Obama	2013	1



63	United States	Report	Ivory and insecurity: the global implications of poaching in Africa	Global Financial Integrity	2012	0
64	United States	Remarks	Remarks at the Partnership Meeting on Wildlife Trafficking	Hillary Clinton	2012	1
65	United States	Hearing	Ivory and Insecurity: The Global Implications of Poaching in Africa. Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Relations	U.S. Senate	2012	1
66	United States	Hearing	Poaching American Security: impacts of illegal wildlife trade	U.S. House of representatives	2008	1

Table 3 Full list of gathered documents. In blue the documents selected to perform discourse analysis according to the criteria.

In sum, the criteria for the selection of the analyzed documents were:

- Documents dated from 2007 to 2017
- Authored by desired actors (Africa, EU, Think Tanks, U.S)
- Sources (reports, conferences reports, hearings, resolutions, declarations, strategy documents):
  - governmental
  - intergovernmental organizations
  - non-governmental organizations
  - news organizations
- Relevant for research questions:
  - Arguments addressing a peace threat
  - Arguments addressing IWT-security nexus
  - Arguments addressing terrorism implication

#### 4.3.5 Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability are concerned with the research's quality: whether the procedures used are carefully followed and whether the interpretations and findings are trustworthy. The validity and reliability standards used in qualitative research are distinct from those used in quantitative research. It is especially difficult to apply normal quality criteria to social constructivist research methodologies such as discourse analysis since the nature of post-positivist epistemologies precludes the existence

of pure knowledge or an accurate version of reality (Flick, 2009). Despite this, different standards for qualitative research evaluation have been proposed.

Lincoln and Guba emphasize the importance of trustworthiness (Lincoln, Guba, & Publishing, 1985), while Jackson emphasizes the importance of internal validity, which means that the evidence and reasoning lead to a logical conclusion (P. Jackson, 2011). Flick emphasizes the reliability of methodological thoroughness: complying to specific methodological criteria while also detailing the methods and research process sufficiently for the reader to gain an understanding: "the more detailed the research process is documented as a whole, the more reliable the entire process will be". He also emphasizes the importance of avoiding "selective plausibility" in discourse analysis. This entails paying close attention to how data quotes are chosen to represent the conclusions (Flick, 2009, p. 387). While citing typical texts makes sense, it is critical that the study also explains nuances or even conflicts in the primary conclusions. I took special effort in this thesis to be truthful about my own biases, to be methodologically solid, and to provide adequate detail to the reader throughout the analysis.

Generalization, also known as external validity, refers to the extent to which a study's conclusions may be generalized. It is a frequently used criterion of quality in quantitative research, in particular (Flick, 2009). Although its applicability to qualitative research is debatable, one may argue that even findings from a case study such as this could be applied to other areas. This work may add to a broader knowledge of how securitizations arise in the environmental sphere and how they may influence the field of peace and conflict. Additionally, by investigating the interactions of a range of parties in the field of global environmental politics, it may give light on the dynamics between the key actors that may be important in other comparable circumstances.

## 4.4 Reflexivity and Ethical Considerations

### 4.4.1 Researcher's role

The idea of academic research's neutrality is widely contested. A "increasing recognition" is being made, according to Bryman, that "it is not practicable to hold the values that a researcher has completely in balance" (Bryman, 2015). "The personal beliefs or feelings of a researcher" are what values refer to, and these views and feelings can influence the researcher and his or her research in a variety of ways. After acknowledging that no researcher can be devoid of values, it is important for them to examine their own study for biases and assess how that prejudice may have impacted the findings. The researcher has a direct impact on every step of the process, from "choosing a study field

to formulating a research question to selecting a methodology to developing a research design and data collection procedures to putting these into practice" (Bryman, 2015). Chapter 1's "Motivation" section describes why this thesis was undertaken, as well as how I, the researcher, have influenced the study ever since I first conceived of my research topic.

#### 4.4.2 Researcher's position

Working with texts is difficult because they have several interpretations: they might be perceived differently by different readers. Depending on the reader's background and skills, she or he could notice different nuances and highlight certain sections of the text as more relevant than other readers. According to Neumann, "a researcher need a fundamental level of cultural competency in order to discover shared understandings that contribute to the formation of a common frame of reference" (Neumann, 2008, p. 63). This means that to analyse and comprehend literature on poaching and IWT, as well as peace scholarship, the researcher must possess a foundational level of cultural and academic competency in the field of wildlife and peace studies.

For nearly seventeen years, I have been hooked in the realm of IWT. I recall the moment I realized this was the direction I should take. I was pregnant and watching the news when photographs of new-born seals being slaughtered appeared. My fascination escalated to the point where I conducted a quick search for scholarly work in this field. This rapidly demonstrated that this was a novel area of research, one about which I felt immediately interested and committed. Since then, I've joined in protests against animal abuse in Mexico and other interactive ways to speak out on behalf of animals. In 2010, I joined a non-profit organization dedicated to agricultural research for development. I discovered that the founder received the 1970 Nobel Peace Prize for his contributions to world peace through increased food supply. This prompted me to consider how peace studies and my interest in wildlife care might connect. It sparked an intense desire within me to acquire a degree that would enable me to participate to discussions about environmental policy and IWT.

That takes me to my current situation as a master's student studying Peace and Conflict Transformation with an emphasis on wildlife trafficking and the convergence of the peace and security fields, with an interest in the damages that plague our planet. This is my first academic approach to research. Its purpose is to provide a comprehensive overview of wildlife trafficking, to advance the conceptualization and understanding of its relationship to peace studies.

In sum, I determined that I possessed the requisite level of competency to conduct this study. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it is necessary to be conscious of one's own background and to reflect on how it shapes one's views (Neumann, 2008). I hope that the introduction above has shown

my personal stance and any prejudices as someone who is passionate about wildlife conservation but also critical of power dynamics in conservation, the relationship between wildlife and human livelihoods, and how Africa is portrayed in the West. While it is hard to be completely free of these potential biases, I have tried to be aware of them throughout the research process. There is always the possibility that another person made a different interpretation.

### **4.4.3 Ethical considerations**

Ethical concerns such as do no harm to participants, lack of informed consent, and deception are less relevant in this thesis because I did not interact directly with individuals and relied on publicly available documents and sources. However, I recognize the value of self-reflection and the significance of being aware of my own opinions and preconceptions to avoid them interfering with my study.

Ethical considerations are critical in the study of discourse, as they are in other sciences. In some ways, these challenges are more prominent today than they were in the past, partially because to the emergence of ethical regulation, but also due to some basic arguments among researchers about the politics and ethics of their work. While the difficulties differ significantly every discourse discipline, certain core ideals underlying the practical judgments made by academics.

I considered what Hammersley (Hammersley, 2020) refers to as epistemic values that pertain to the process of inquiry itself – for example, the obligation to pursue worthwhile knowledge and to do so effectively; the obligation to provide adequate evidence in publications, such as proper citations of sources; the obligation to be truthful about how the research was conducted, as described throughout this work; and the obligation to engage legitimately with critics. These values contribute to discourse analysis, which entails looking into the complexity. It is highlighted that ethical behaviour is not a question of following a set of rules; rather, it requires judgment, in which pertinent values, as well as prudential and methodological factors, are considered in relation to the researcher.

### **4.4.4 Limitations and challenges**

It was recently that the link between security, poaching, and IWT became widely known. I studied the period between 2010 and 2017. I was particularly interested in the security-related aspects of the debates around poaching and IWT.

An exhaustive examination of the poaching and IWT conversation would be intriguing, but this thesis does not include such an investigation. This means that, even though I tried to include a wide range of actors in each actor group, I selected only those which where the security discourse was highlighted.

While my focus on security is important, it also means that I am focusing on stopping IWT at its source. However, the supply-side of the trade chain is what I'm going to focus on in this work, even if issues like as smuggling and demand are also critical.

African elephants and rhinos are also commonly cited in terms of security. I focused on poaching and IWT on the African continent, avoiding, for example, documents describing the illicit trafficking in tiger parts, even though many documents about IWT did not specify species or even area.

Data on elephants and rhinos, which I had no intention of focusing on at first, is by far the most extensive and easily available. In addition, because they are the most frequently linked to security concerns, they played a significant role in my investigation.

I opted to examine the issue on a worldwide scale since IWT transcends boundaries and because the security ramifications are supposedly global. To put it another way, I study the framing by powerful international players like states and non-governmental organizations (Think Tanks). Because I had to focus on global and regional organizations and nations, I had to ignore their internal arguments and complexities. I am aware that presenting the entire United States or EU, every environmental Think Tank, or the entire continent of Africa as having a uniform opinion on a complex issue like poaching and illicit wildlife trading is a somewhat problematic simplification. Despite this, these actors frequently share a set of roles at global events. Even if anti-poaching practices vary from nation to country, a distinction between East and South was not apparent in the African materials that I studied. For the sake of a master's thesis, I believe that this simplification was justified.

## **5 Chapter 5 Analysis and conclusion**

### **5.1 Security concerns linked to IWT**

Concerns regarding the security implications of poaching and IWT initially surfaced in 2007, when a story in *The Guardian* stated that Al-Qaeda-affiliated groups profited from poaching. In the years that followed, a few further claims were made, including the Taliban's involvement throughout the IWT of falcons, tigers, elephants, and rhino in Asia, but these received little attention (Elliott & Schaedla, 2016). However, when the assertion was made in relation to the African continent around 2010, it began to spread among high-level actors (Duffy, 2014; Elliott & Schaedla, 2016; White, 2014). Between 2012 and 2015, notable events addressing the issue of poaching and IWT took place, including conferences, resolutions, declarations, and ivory fires (CITES, 2014). To familiarize the

reader with the broader context before looking deeper into the individual discourses, I provided in this chapter a brief outline of the significant global events over the last decade in which the subject of poaching and IWT has been handled as a security concern.

In 2008, the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) produced a paper titled "Criminal Nature: The Global Security Implications of the Illicit Wildlife Trade", which examined the relationship between poaching, IWT, and security. According to the report, IWT is "not only a significant worldwide environmental crime with profoundly detrimental consequences for endangered species protection, ecological stability, and biodiversity conservation, but also a real and growing threat to national and global security" (IFAW, 2008, p. 4). Additionally, the study quotes the United States Department of State as noting that "wildlife trafficking is frequently deeply connected to international organized crime and increasingly involves many of the same criminals and smuggling routes as arms, drug, and people trafficking" (IFAW, 2008). Later the same year, the United States House of Representatives convened a hearing titled "Poaching American Security: Impacts of the Illicit Wildlife Trade" (U.S. House of Representatives, 2008). Importantly, this hearing was held before the Committee on Natural Resources, indicating that despite the title, the subject was certainly still recognized to be in the environmental sector at the time. In comparison, further U.S. Senate hearings on poaching and IWT were held in 2012 and 2014 before the Committee on Foreign Relations (U.S. Committee on Foreign Relations, 2014; U.S. Senate, 2012), and in 2015 before the House Committee on Foreign Relations' subcommittee on terrorism, nonproliferation, and trade (U.S. House of Representatives, 2015).

In 2016, a report detailing the findings of an undercover investigation in Kenya stated that Al-Shabaab was "actively buying and selling ivory to fuel their military operations" (Crosta & Sutherland, 2016). The report, stated that Al-Shabaab earns between \$200 and \$600,000 per month from ivory trafficking and that "trafficking in "conflict ivory" should raise warning signals throughout the security and conservation worlds because these "undetected funds enable Al-Shabaab to continue financing its war for control of Somalia and perpetrate acts of terror" (Crosta & Sutherland, 2016). The UN Security Council recognized for the first time in December 2012 a relationship between wildlife crime and regional security, following seeking an investigation into the Lord's Resistance Army's role in poaching and illicit ivory trafficking. The United Nations General Assembly also expressed concern about the impact of transnational crime on wildlife (CITES, 2015; United Nations, 2012).



Parallel to the CITES Conference of Parties (CoP 16) in Bangkok in 2013, the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) held a symposium in which the impacts of wildlife and forest crimes "on species and ecosystems, livelihoods, economies, and national and regional security" were acknowledged (CITES, 2013). Later that year, the G8 summit and the UN Security Council highlighted the need of combating wildlife trafficking, stating that poaching was one of the elements fueling conflict and instability in Central Africa (CITES, 2015; IISD SDG Knowledge Hub, 2013). Additionally, the Economic Community of Central African States issued a Declaration on the Fight Against Poaching in Central Africa, recognizing that poaching and illicit trafficking in ivory and wild fauna have a detrimental effect on the environment, peace, and security, as well as endanger innocent lives and economic growth (ECCAS, 2013). President Barack Obama of the United States also issued an executive order on combating wildlife trafficking in 2013, describing it as an international crisis that "continues to escalate" and is "generating billions of illicit revenues each year, contributing to the illicit economy, fueling instability, and undermining security" (Barak Obama, 2013). Obama launched a Task Force in response to this executive order. The Task Force include members from the Council on Environmental Quality and USAID, the Department of Homeland Security, the Directorate of National Intelligence, and the National Security Staff, reiterating the importance of poaching and IWT to U.S. national security.

Following 2013, other worldwide documents recognizing the security risks associated with poaching and illicit wildlife trading continued to be produced throughout the world. In 2015, the African Union adopted a Common Strategy for Combating Illicit Trade in Fauna and Flora, and China launched a series of anti-wildlife trafficking measures (African Union, 2015). The Senate of the United States of America sponsored the "Eradicate, Neutralize, and Disrupt Wildlife Trafficking Act". One of its objectives was to "prevent the illicit wildlife trade from being exploited to finance criminal organizations that threaten the United States' and global security interests" (U.S. Senate, 2016). Numerous African countries have also implemented national action plans to address poaching and illegal wildlife trading. The European Commission produced an Action Plan against wildlife trafficking in 2016 (European Commission, 2016b), and in their Communication on an Action Plan to Combat Terrorist Financing, they linked IWT to threat finance (European Commission, 2016a).

## **5.2 Discourse attributes of the actors**

Is illegal wildlife trafficking truly a source of conflict? This may appear to be an odd question considering the numerous references to this in the international arena. It becomes clear that the

perceived connections between poaching, illegal wildlife trafficking, and security, have expanded to all the world's major actors. However, what distinguishes this security discourse and threat presentation? What is meant by "security"? Who provides metaphors or stereotypes? In keeping aligned with the research questions, this is examined in this section.

## 5.2.1 Africa

There are relatively few allusions to security in the texts analyzed from African states. When the term "security" is used, it most frequently refers to human security, i.e. the threat to wildlife rangers in the field or to local communities living in areas prone to poaching: "It is communities that feel the consequences of increased insecurity caused by poaching-related activity in their immediate vicinity" (Molewa, 2017). Notably, the African discourse emphasizes the importance of ensuring that "any measures implemented to combat wildlife crime adhere to the requirements imposed by international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and indigenous/marginalized people rights" (Brazzaville Declaration, 2015). This is rarely discussed by the rest of the world's actors. African discourse, on the other hand, contains contradictory opinions on this. One example is a Tanzanian Minister's support for shoot-to-kill policies, stating that "I am fully aware that some alleged human rights activists will raise an uproar, claiming that poachers have the same right to face justice as the rest of us, but let's face it, poachers not only kill wildlife, but also frequently do not hesitate to shoot any innocent person standing in their way" (Brownstone, 2013).

When African states use the term "security" in contexts other than human security, they are frequently broad and imprecise, as in "the economic, security, and stability implications of wildlife crime" (African Union, 2015). A major exception is a depiction of poaching and IWT as a threat to "national security, via weapon proliferation and the potential formation of armed groups" (SADC, 2015). Another example is the African Union's Common Strategy, which refers to "terrorism or armed groups" and makes a particular reference to Al-Shabaab (African Union, 2015). Notably, Al-Shabaab's role in illegal charcoal taxation is addressed, not poaching. However, the poacher-terrorist narrative does not entirely disappear from African discourse. According to Botswana's President Khama, "proceeds from trafficking are used to finance other crimes such as terrorism, guns, and narcotics trafficking" (Survival International, 2015). Similarly, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta authored a Wall Street Journal piece titled "The path to defeating the Al-Shabaab terrorists". There, he analyzes the dual menace of poaching and terrorism and asserts that "the battle on poaching should be viewed as a double-edged sword capable of annihilating two evils simultaneously" (Kenyatta, 2013).

Nonetheless, the concern is viewed as a threat to Africa's "natural capital", impeding local livelihoods, development, and economic growth. Natural resources are frequently referred to as the "backbone of national socioeconomic development", as evidenced by the fact that "the loss of African wildlife directly and indirectly affects the livelihoods of African people" (African Union, 2015) and "deprives our people of our natural heritage, but also handicaps our economies" (Arusha Declaration, 2014). This importance of wildlife as natural capital is especially emphasized in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda. Remarkably, references to illegal financial flows are not uncommon in African discourse, for example, highlighting how illicit financial flows, which include natural resources, "constitute a drain on the resources necessary for Africa's development" (African Union, 2015). According to the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN, 2016), Africa "loses an estimated 195 billion USD of its natural capital annually through illicit financial flows", which includes losses from illicit wildlife trading. Additionally, the African discourse emphasizes the demand for bushmeat as a driver for poaching and IWT.

In general, African discourse views human and economic security as reference points for the problem of poaching and IWT. It gives minimal attention to claimed connections to violence or terrorism. The threat presentation emphasizes the importance of wildlife not only for African identity and heritage, but also for Africa's development goals. The African discourse places greater emphasis on the human repercussions of anti-poaching policies, as well as illegal financial flows.

## 5.2.2 European Union

The EU discourse places a greater focus on the security implications of poaching and IWT than the African narrative does. While the environment is explicitly highlighted as the referent object, the environmental threat is presented as being tightly correlated to militias, terrorist groups, and transnational organized crime networks: "Illicit wildlife trafficking is increasingly regarded as a source of financing for terrorist and related activities" and "the proceeds of these illicit activities have funded militia groups and fueled armed conflict" (European Commission, 2016b) and "fuels a vicious cycle of further poverty, corruption, and illicit operations by terrorist organizations" (European Commission et al., 2017). Despite highlighting these connections, the EU discourse frequently emphasizes a lack of knowledge and uses qualifiers to qualify statements about security: "in some cases, it also threatens national and regional security", "given the substantial knowledge gap regarding the scale of links between poaching and wildlife trafficking on the one hand and militia financial support on the other, there are reports confirming the existence of such links with several militias"

(European Commission, 2016a). The degree of similarities is high, with references to Think Tank reports such as "Kony's Ivory" and "Tusk Wars" as well as several mentions of how other global actors such as the United Nations General Assembly, the United Nations Security Council, the Group of Seven, and the United States view IWT as a security threat.

The EU rhetoric, portrays Africa as a beautiful and "wild" place; "iconic wildlife continent", "the cradle of human evolution", and "a continent of extraordinary wildlife", but it is also severely underdeveloped, lacking infrastructure, stability, and political agency: "a context of poverty, political instability, weak governance, and porous international borders", "frequent civil wars, coups, rebellions, and cross-border incursions", and "heavily reliant on external support" (European Commission et al., 2017). The threat to international security is inextricably linked to this setting, with numerous references to various armed organizations operating outside of government control as possible beneficiaries of poaching and IWT. Asians or Chinese demand are frequently highlighted as underlying issues. Additionally, poverty, ineffective governance, and corruption are highlighted on occasion. Local populations' consumption of bushmeat and firewood is framed as a problem in which "many communities are depleting the resources that ensure their present and future livelihoods" (European Commission et al., 2017), despite the fact that the causal relationship between poverty and environmental overexploitation is highly contested. Public-private partnerships are highlighted as a possible solution to the problems of insufficient governance and political priorities. There is insufficient consideration of the difficulties inherent in coexisting with wildlife, as well as the potentially problematic aspects of anti-poaching initiatives.

### 5.2.3 Think Tanks

It's easy to see that, while studying the conversation in Think Tanks, a recurring theme among them is the idea that poaching funds terrorist organizations. Poaching and IWT are described as security concerns in UN and U.S. reports, as well as by other reports and declarations. The poacher-terrorist narrative is prevalent, with examples including statements like "ivory is bush currency for militants, militias, and terrorists" (Vira & Ewing, 2014, p. 3), "It is not our job as rangers to fight armed rebels", said a ranger, "but we cannot take any chances with the LRA, Janjaweed or the SPLA who shoot at us to kill, without thinking twice" (Cakaj, 2015), and even noting that "Wildlife products have become a considerable source of income for terrorist organizations in Africa" (Save the rhino, 2013). There are many various terms used to refer to these groups in EU and U.S. discourses, such as "criminal gangs" and "extremists". Other terms used to describe them include "terrorism", "rebel groups", and "organized crime syndicates". In certain cases, the terms are used interchangeably,

making it difficult to determine exactly what is intended or to evaluate the validity of any evidence provided.

IFAW and Wyler and Sheik presented the poacher-terrorist narrative in 2008; their claims frequently included markers such as "These reports, while at times vague or anecdotal, indicate that an increasing number of poaching incidents may be linked to organized crime, militias, or terrorist groups" (IFAW, 2008, p. 4). However, the same assertions are made more confidently in more recent documents from the same organization: "Organized criminal syndicates, insurgent groups, ruthless militias, and corrupt military units are among the principal actors involved in large-scale, commercial-scale wildlife trafficking" (IFAW, 2013, p. 26). This could indicate that these statements received more acceptability between 2008 and 2013, indicating a global movement toward security. Although securitizing arguments are occasionally adjusted in Think Tank discourse, certain actors draw attention to the connections; "Poaching involves a complex network of players, including criminal and armed groups such as the Lord's Resistance Army in central Africa. Poaching, which is exacerbated by weak governance, corruption, and a lack of economic possibilities in communities, adds to social destabilization and poses major threats to biodiversity. Poaching also poses an increasing threat to international peace and security by inciting conflict" (IPI, 2013). Abundant images are included in numerous Think Tank emails, reports, and media (in this example, a short film), and they frequently facilitate to emphasize the real threat portrayal. Presenting armed fighters, such as the following screenshots, can send a strong message, even if the text takes a cautious approach to the terrorist-poacher connection:

*"When you buy something made of ivory, where does the money go? Trafficking in endangered species is the 4th largest illicit business in the world. Only drugs weapons, and human trafficking are larger. Even though you only bought a trinket, you paid for something bigger. Westgate Mall Nairobi, Kenya, Sep 21, 2013. 67 dead, 175 wounded. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the Westgate mall attack. Al-Shabaab's income from ivory is roughly U.S. \$600,000 per month. But they are not the only ones... Lord's resistance army, Janjaweed militia, Boko haram, all use money from poaching to fund terrorism. One elephant is killed every 15 minutes, 96 a day, 33,792 a year. Elephants in the wild could be extinct in 11 years. Sadly, there is no way to make extinction go backwards".*





Figure 3 Screenshots from the short film "Last days of ivory"

Source: taken from the short film "Last days of ivory" (Bigelow & Z, 2014).

The Think Tank discourse, closely followed by the U.S. discourse, is the one in which specific groups supposedly involved in poaching and IWT are most mentioned. While the Lord's Resistance Army, the Janjaweed, and Al-Shabaab are frequently named, Séleka, the FARDC, DRC Mai-Mai militias, and several more are also explicitly listed as involved in poaching and/or IWT (Vira & Ewing, 2014). The connection to Al-Shabaab exemplifies the similarities with other discourses, as the allegation written below and originated in a 2011 Elephant Action League report (Crosta &

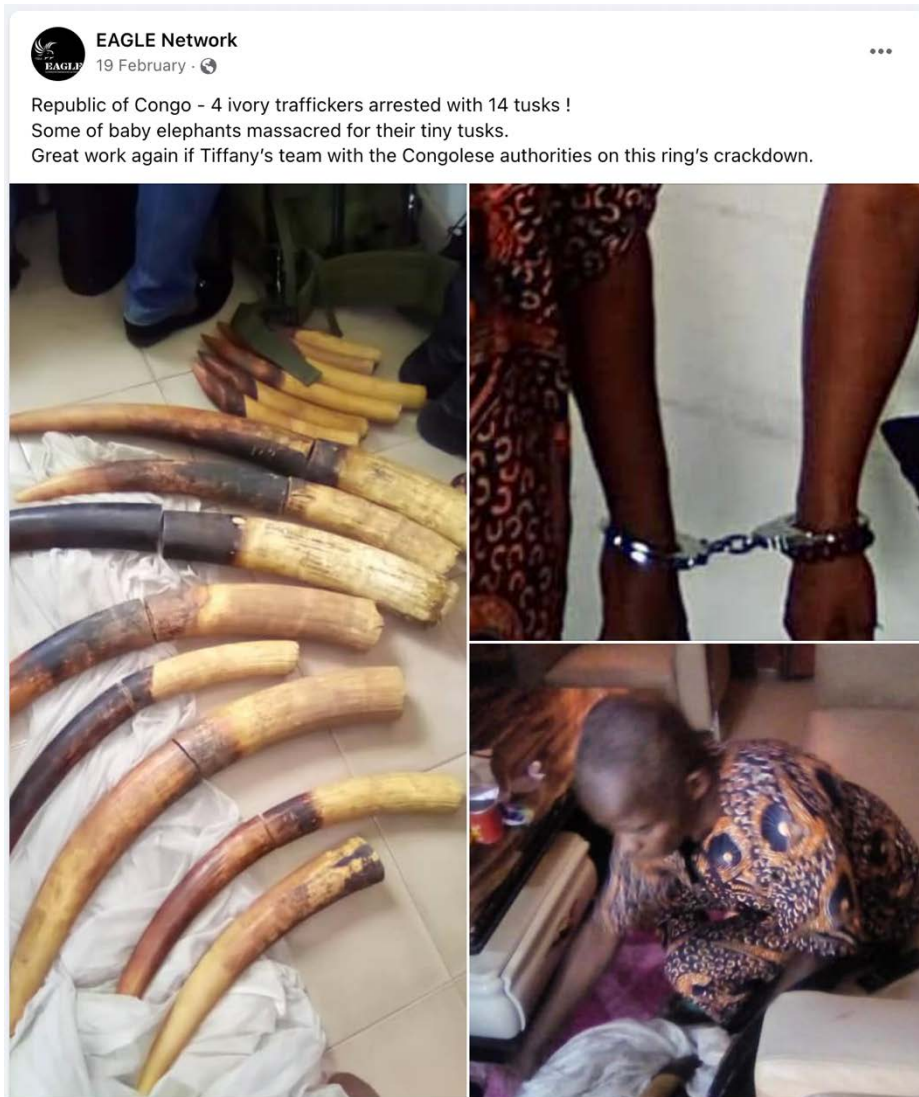


Sutherland, 2016). The report's vivid language, replete with striking imagery and a potent narrative tone, may have contributed to the widespread transmission of the Al-Shabaab connection:

*"The deadly path of conflict ivory starts with the slaughter of innocent animals and ends in the slaughter of innocent people. It is a source of funding for terrorist organizations that transcends cruelty. It is the 'white gold' for African jihad, white for its color and gold for its value. If we fail to act now, militant groups like al-Shabaab will lay down their roots deep in the African landscape, destroying its heritage for generations to come. Dangerous and unpredictable, al-Shabaab's involvement in ivory trade brings with it an alarming dimension, a dimension the world cannot afford to ignore"*

Along with the EU and U.S. discourses, the Think Tank discourse places little emphasis on human security or the repercussions of anti-poaching methods, nor does it place much emphasis on African countries' abilities to deal with the problem on their own. To some extent, a conflict narrative is prevalent, as seen by claims about the ivory trafficking being "conceived in conflict" and nature reserves being "cannibalized" (Vira & Ewing, 2014). Additionally, the Think Tank discourse is replete with statements implying that the existence of African wildlife is critical not just for the fauna or the African people, but also for a broader identity or common good: "Even if you never see an elephant in the wild, the mere fact that they exist enriches the world. I'd hate for future generations to look back and say: "You allowed these magnificent animals to become extinct" (WCS, 2010).

A notable activity from the EAGLE Network (Eco Activists for Governance and Law Enforcement) demonstrates how measures that would be rare are being utilized to the poaching and IWT cases in Africa. The EAGLE Network asserts that it fights corruption to eradicate complicity and ensure justice. According to the EAGLE website, their strategy for combating corruption and integrating conservation has been recognized internationally with seven honors. The EAGLE Network operates in nine countries in Western and Eastern Africa, enforcing national and international environmental laws through research, arrests, prosecutions, and public awareness (EAGLE Network, 2022, p. 5). The EAGLE Network conducts investigations, makes arrests, and prosecutes wildlife crime offenders, but perhaps most significantly, they consistently post photographs of wildlife crime offenders in their annual reports and on their official Facebook page:



*Figure 4 Screenshot of a post from the EAGLE Network's Facebook page*

Source: taken from EAGLE's Network Facebook page (EAGLE Network, 2022)

The photographs are not anonymous, and suspected criminals are forced to appear with the seized assets. According to the accompanying texts, it does not appear that the subjects of the photographs must be sentenced before their images are posted for public humiliation. This demonstrates how harsh measures might be justified in the face of an imminent threat. Additionally, I consider that this approach contributes to the creation of Africans' identity as "others", which are later described in detail.

While the IWT-security discourse is popular among Think Tanks, the security connection, and particularly the poacher-terrorist link, is not shared by all groups. The World Wildlife Fund occasionally makes direct references to the poacher-terrorist narrative, but their importance placed

on this alleged linkage is minimal in comparison to some of the other organizations mentioned above: "Recent evidence indicates that some networks are also linked to terrorist organizations". Finally, a set of Think Tanks focusing on environmental challenges from a human rights perspective act as criticism to the environmental Think Tank discourse's broad security framework. Survival International, for instance, describes the poacher-terrorist narrative as "an exaggeration used to justify militarizing anti-poaching squads and persecuting ethnic subsistence hunters" (WWF, 2015).

## 5.2.4 United States

The threat portrayal in the United States is heavily centered on the security implications of poaching and illegal wildlife trafficking. The duty to protect wildlife for future generations and the threat to U.S. national security are underlined. As the 2014 National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking states "wildlife is inextricably linked to the identity and prosperity of the world as we know it" and that it is important to "ensure that our children have the chance to grow up in a world with and experience the wildlife we know and love" (Obama, 2014) . Wildlife conservation is "a preservation responsibility for us and future generations", according to Hillary Clinton (Clinton, 2012). Poaching and IWT are "a threat to global security with significant effects on the national interests of the United States" and "threaten American security interests by strengthening criminal elements, subverting the rule of law, undermining economic development and fostering instability" (U.S. Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking, 2015, p. 10). The truthful narrative is key in this security connection: "Ivory, like blood diamonds, funds numerous African armed groups. Al-Shabaab in Somalia; LRA in Central Africa; and Janjaweed in Sudan and Chad are reported to be involved in elephant poaching and ivory trade" (U.S. House of Representatives, 2015, p. 3). Threat and urgency claims were also found in statements such as "Now is the moment for strong solutions to combat wildlife trafficking" (Obama, 2014, p. 2). Many similar statements are made based on Think Tank reports, demonstrating similarity in U.S. discourse.

Like in the EU discourse, many dangerous groups are listed as potential beneficiaries of poaching and IWT, and they are referred to by various names, such as "militias", "armed groups", "terrorists", "rebels", "gangs", "militants", and "illicit groups". Terrorists, such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, and others, are regularly suspected of using illicit operations to support their deadly campaigns (Luna, 2014). These groups "jeopardize national, regional, and global security interests through corruption, greater instability, reduced economic activity, and general criminality". Although less frequently stated, poaching and IWT harm "economic potential from tourism" and "economic growth opportunities", stressing that it "also harms

the tourism sector in nations like the United States that have travel businesses with major links to the African market" (Ford, 2015). Africa is portrayed as unpredictable, loosely managed, and prone to conflict and rebellion in U.S. discourse. Another example is that Africans are often not described with noticeable agency, i.e. being able to tackle the problem of poaching and IWT themselves: "those in Africa that are trying to enforce the law have very little resources (...) They are unarmed". (U.S. House of Representatives, 2015, p. 2), "Local leaders are reminding their national leaders that they can lose control of big swathes of land" (Clinton, 2012).

The discourse emphasizes the United States' role as a global leader: "We need to empower law enforcement (in Africa)" (U.S. House of Representatives, 2015). The National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking "places the United States in a position to develop leadership in order to address a pressing conservation and global security threat" (Obama, 2014, p. 2) and "reinforces the United States' leadership in countering the global security threat posed by wildlife trafficking" (U.S. House of Representatives, 2015, p. 11). This is critical since "if we do not act decisively, the region will continue to export terror and provide safe havens for terrorists from other conflicts around the world, illicit trafficking will expand, arms and weapons will dangerously proliferate, women, men, and children will be trafficked, and drugs and illicit enterprise will corrode the rule of law and globalization's gains" (Luna, 2014). Although references to terrorists, militias, and other groups are frequently presented dramatically, statements are occasionally modified with shrubbery, as in "we have reason to believe that rebel militia are players in a global ivory market" (Clinton, 2012). Nonetheless, assumptions about a link between poaching, IWT, and terrorism are prominent in U.S. discourse, e.g. "We now know that wildlife trafficking money, like drug money, gets to terrorists" (U.S. House of Representatives, 2015, p. 3). The involvement of the United States and the Western Hemisphere as importers of illicit wildlife items receives little attention. Additionally, one paper refers to demand as a "complicated and long-term issue" and demonstrates a degree of modesty not typically seen in U.S. discourse: "the variables are somewhat distinct in each of these countries".

### 5.3 IWT through the securitization spectrum

The analysis has showed that allusions to security are evident in all the significant global actors' discourses. Although the intricacies of the threat portrayal and the concept of security differ, it is evident that poaching and IWT is no longer "just" a biodiversity concern. As indicated in the theory chapter, securitization demands that a *securitizing actor* performs a *securitizing move* by framing an issue as an *existential threat* to a *referent object*. Securitization was redefined as a dynamic

depending on context, history, and power relations, as well as on the external world and the audience because of this shift in basic vocabulary. Many elements of a successful securitization may be found in African poaching and IWT.

### 5.3.1 Framing of the existential threat and referent object

It is not easy to ascertain precisely what is threatened, i.e., the referent object. Although survival of the species and biodiversity are unquestionably the primary targets of poaching and IWT, they are not the only ones. The referent object and discursive threat portrayal are critical components of securitization because they provide information about what needs protection and which interests and identities are prioritized (Trombetta, 2010). I consider that both discourses constitute a simultaneous threat, framing both nature and "international security" as gravely endangered. This designates both African wildlife and a broader "us" as referent objects. Interestingly, wildlife is portrayed as critical not only to the African identity, but also to a broader, global identity. Elephants appear to be one of the most stated species as a sort of common asset that must be safeguarded because without them, the world would be a worse place. Thus, protective acts are framed as a shared moral obligation. International security is jeopardized by a threat depiction in which poaching and IWT fuel terrorists and criminal activity and/or exacerbate conflict and conflict in already vulnerable African governments. When poaching and IWT are framed in this manner, they affect everyone, as conflict, crime, and terrorism can have global ramifications. The poacher-terrorist story is particularly pertinent in this regard, as its unpredictable nature implies that it can attack anyone, anywhere, and at any time (as least in theory). A remark from director Kathryn Bigelow exemplifies the strength of this twofold threat: "...it illustrates the diabolical nexus of two grave concerns: species extinction and global terrorism. Both involve the death of innocent people and both necessitate immediate action" (Feeney, 2014).

As indicated previously, the African discourse makes comparatively few references to security, although other discourses usually do. Those discourses that emphasize terrorism and conflict in their threat projections also portray African states as predisposed to insurrection, instability, and conflict. The worry then is that Africa's disorder and turmoil will be exported to the rest of the world. As a result, the referent object becomes the identity of all non-African countries, or maybe the West, rather than a truly global "us". A comment from the Senior Director of the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs demonstrates this point: "Unfortunately, what happens in Africa does not stay in Africa" (Luna, 2014). Williams contends that to securitize a topic, it must be framed in terms of allies and enemies. Then the mainstream narrative regarding global threats is one



of a battle between "good" and "evil". The evil actors include terrorists and criminals, as well as Africans referred to as "corrupt elites" or "rogue members of armed forces" (Williams, 2003). Poachers are rarely described as impoverished, everyday people, though they do appear on occasion in African discourse. Despite the fact that both the United States and the European Union are key markets for illicit wildlife items (Maher & Sollund, 2016), the discursive presentation is almost entirely focused on growing Chinese demand. To summarize, the IWT-security discourse is about vulnerable wildlife on a continent that is portrayed as deficient in development and sovereignty over its land. As a result, they, along with the rest of the world, are vulnerable to terrorism and violence. Notably, discourses can be productive, in the sense that they confer authority on participants to speak and act. By portraying African governments as incapable of resolving this issue on their own, the discourse empowers external actors like Western states and think tanks. However, where did this danger presentation come from? Who were the securitizing actors, and is it possible to identify a securitizing move?

### **5.3.2 About securitizing actors and moves**

Along with the discursive threat portrayal, securitization requires an understanding of the political processes that underpin the threat (Trombetta, 2010, p. 135). While this thesis regards securitization as a process rather than an event, this does not exclude identifying securitizing moves that influenced this dynamic. Additionally, identifying securitizing actors does not necessitate intended securitization: security issues might arise as a result of social interaction and diverse activities that were not initially aimed toward securitization (Balzacq, 2011). As previously stated, environmental think tanks were the first to make the connection between poaching, IWT, and security. Because the dual danger presentation of wildlife and international security arose only later in the discourses of other actors, it seems logical to believe that Think Tanks were the earliest worldwide securitizing actors. This perspective is backed by the similarities found in the IWT-security discourse, with significant threats presentations originating in Think Tank reports. According to Fairclough this can be taken as a symptom of transition, something that occurs most frequently when a discourse is fairly fresh. This is consistent with the emergence of a new discourse on IWT security (Fairclough, 1992).

Corresponding with a process-based conception of securitization, the discourse on IWT evolved in stages. Initially, the securitizing actors were environmental think tanks. Their claims were soon picked up by others in the area, which facilitated the dissemination of the poacher-terrorist narrative. Nonetheless, the most substantial effect was on U.S. threat perception, which enabled the



U.S. to engage as a global securitizing actor. This perspective is reinforced by the above-mentioned discourse analysis findings, which indicate that the U.S. discourse, along with Think Tanks, has the most outstanding threat presentations and explicit calls for immediate action. Despite the fact that it is simply one piece of the securitization equation, if any one securitizing step were to be pinpointed, the Elephant Action League report "Africa's white gold of jihad" is a good contender (EAGLE, 2017). This narrative gained widespread international attention, particularly in the United States, and hence contributed significantly to the securitization process. Interestingly, the initial individuals responsible for securitizing the system are not nations. Although environmental Think Tanks initiated the securitization process, I believe that successful securitization largely depended on a powerful state accepting the danger projection.

While security definition is highly contested, certain actors have the potential to do so due to their status as reputable representatives on security issues (Bigo, 1994). In the post-9/11 era, the United States remains unquestionably such a representative. Due to the public's limited knowledge of the status of various threats, they rely on threat presentations provided by what they perceive to be legitimate players. Official state discourse is generally regarded as trustworthy, which means that if it portrays an issue as a threat, it is regarded to have a valid justification for doing so. This indicates that public officials have an easier time implementing securitization measures because they "have significant positions in the security area as a result of their political capital and have preferential access to the mass media" (Balzacq, 2011). Following the first securitization efforts of environmental think tanks, the U.S. appears to have been the major securitizing actor. However, how about Africa? Are they merely collateral damage in the securitization process? According to Balzacq, Leonard, and Ruzika, "It is difficult to anticipate with confidence the impact of Western states' securitization efforts on non-Western countries. Occasionally, states fight or sabotage the framings that international organizations or other states create" (Balzacq, Léonard, & Ruzicka, 2016, p. 513). However, just because African states view poaching and IWT as economic, natural capital, and development issues does not mean they reject securitization. On the contrary, it could be regarded as beneficial.

Vuori classifies securitization into four distinct strands based on its role. To put an item on the agenda, seize control, or legitimate past actions, for example. The fact that securitization can serve a variety of purposes for multiple parties certainly helped the process of securitization (Vuori, 2008). In the case of Africa, benefits may include increased financing and attention, justification for state control over areas and populations, and legitimization of contested enforcement measures. Uhuru Kenyatta's New York Times column utilized the Al-Shabaab connection to gain public support: "The

Islamists who attacked my country should be pursued militarily as well as economically” (Kenyatta, 2013). According to the SADC Law Enforcement and Anti-poaching Strategy, "if wildlife crimes are viewed as security threats, this significantly contributes in accomplishing results" (SADC, 2015, p. 36). It is impossible to determine whether the purpose in this and comparable situations was real concern about poaching and IWT, resolving a related issue, or serving as a handy justification for something entirely different. Regardless, it becomes evident that African authorities supported, or at the very least did not oppose, securitization for a range of factors.

### 5.3.3 Target audience

The audience definition frequently has an impact on whether a securitization is regarded successful, although identifying an audience can be tricky. As an example, during the Iraq War, the UK Parliament and the U.S. Congress approved extraordinary actions that were actively opposed by many ordinary people worldwide. Whether or not the securitization is regarded effective at that point is highly dependent on who is defined as the supportive audience (Emmers, 2016, p. 169). Salter emphasizes how securitizing moves will always be contextually specific (Salter, 2008, p. 329). Because different audiences will perceive an argument differently, a securitizing actor seeking acceptance for a threat presentation must be able to "connect with the audience's sentiments, needs, and interests" (Balzacq, 2011, p. 9). Poaching and IWT are portrayed as a danger to international security most frequently by Think Tanks and Western actors, but less frequently in African publications. This could be because the portrayal is based on an image of Africa as unstable and conflict-ridden, which is rarely representative of African states' feelings, needs, or interests. According to Wilhelmsen, "the "audience's" discursive acceptance of the securitizing effort will be dependent on its resonance with established portrayals in the particular society" (Wilhelmsen, 2017). As described further below, this conventional portrayal of Africa is not uncommon in the West, which may have aided in the acceptance of this threat presentation among a Western audience.

Nonetheless, I consider that Western states have not been the enabling audience in the case of poaching and IWT. Croft asserts that we "need to view power as centralized not just in the hands of the government, but also in a broader elite" (Croft, 2012, p. 82). The great degree of similarities among the discourses reveals that a global elite comprised of Think Tanks, Western and African states all approved portraying poaching and IWT as a dual threat to wildlife and international security. According to Wright Mills, elites frequently share a common social and educational background, as well as an ethnic or gender identity, which results in shared interests and informal ties

(W. Mills & Wolfe, 2000). In the case of poaching and IWT, a securitization audience comprised of global elites representing a variety of actors was almost certainly a critical enabler.

### **5.3.4 Successful securitization, an intended outcome**

The discourse analysis revealed that the dominating threat narrative in the context of poaching and IWT is one of an existential threat to both wildlife and international security. According to Wilhelmsen, "Agreement on an existential threat (...) takes the form of a multi-layered and hegemonic discourse" (Wilhelmsen, 2017, p. 177). The presence of this dual threat presentation in such a wide variety of high-level publications demonstrates that the IWT-security discourse has become extremely dominant. There appears to be broad consensus that the referent objects, wildlife and international security, are gravely threatened and are worth safeguarding, even if exceptional measures are required. While the securitization appears to have begun with environmental Think Tanks, their twofold threat presentation has achieved widespread acceptability among a global elite that includes Think Tanks, Western and African state leaders. Although not extensively discussed here, the fact that the security narrative is now included in official UN papers demonstrates that the security discourse has gained widespread acceptance among member states. This strengthens the case for a successful securitization. In sum, I consider that poaching and IWT have been highly securitized and are an example of successful securitization. Despite brief efforts at desecuritization, the issue appears to be securely rooted in the sphere of security at the time of writing. Next in this chapter I examined the enabling elements that resulted in this securitization. In accordance with the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 3, characteristics of the actual threat, the context, historical circumstances, and the actors' relationships are highlighted.

## **5.4 IWT's elements of securitization**

Considering the foregoing, I suggested that Africa's poaching and IWT have become securitized. To explain why this securitization has evolved, I provide four possible explanations for why the poaching-IWT-security narrative gained root at the time and place it did. I believe that some elements have caused considerable impact on the securitization process. To begin, a growing number of African wildlife species have become endangered in recent years. In accordance with my theoretical grounds that risks are not simply what we make of them, this has almost certainly influenced our ability to view wildlife as existentially threatened. Similarly, fears about insurgency, terrorism, and armed organizations in Africa have grown, aligning with the threat presentation's

second section. Second, a security framework fit well with the U.S.'s strategic goals in Africa, as well as its post-9/11 identity. Africa's involvement in global politics, both historically and currently, facilitated the depiction of African states as weak and incapable of competent governance. This was necessary to classify poaching and IWT on the African continent as a danger to world security. Despite this conventional picture, many African state officials may nevertheless favor securitization. The role of huge environmental think tanks is a fourth enabling component. They carry significant influence over global elites by combining strategic objectives with linguistic proficiency. Finally, individuals from private security and technology organizations may have been motivated by a desire to advance a security perspective and acted as functional actors in the securitization process.

## 5.4.1 The threats linked to IWT

### 5.4.1.1 *Wildlife*

Threats, as mentioned in the theory section, are not merely social and discursive creations; they "arise also from the claim itself" (Balzacq, 2011, p. 26). There is little question that, regardless of how the threat is presented discursively, the extent and impact of poaching and IWT have increased significantly over the previous decade. According to a senior official of South African National Parks, "it took years for this to become a priority crime, and it is only now when 800 rhinos are being killed each year in Kruger that people are worrying and things are finally changing" (Rademeyer, 2016, p. 18). In the 2000s, evidence of a growing illicit ivory trafficking surfaced. After a period of relatively low poaching in the 1990s, poaching began to surge in the mid-2000s, peaking around 2009 (UNEP et al., 2013). Ian Douglas-Hamilton, the founder of Save the Elephants, expressed concern in 2009 that the recent surge in elephant deaths could represent a "turning point" for elephants (Douglas-Hamilton, 2009, p. 155). Four years later, a survey reached the same result, saying that poaching rates had tripled and that elephants in Western and Central Africa faced local extinction. Although habitat decline, land use demand, and wildlife-based conflicts all posed threats to elephant populations, the most serious concern was poaching and illicit ivory trafficking, the report said. Another report presented at Botswana's African Elephant Summit showed similar findings of a sharp increase in poaching from the mid-2000s, peaking between 2009 and 2011 and maintaining high ever since (UNEP et al., 2013).

According to data compiled by the three monitoring organizations ETIS (the Elephant Trade Information System), MIKE (Monitoring Illicit Elephant Killing), and PIKE (Percentage of Illicit Elephant Killing), large-scale ivory seizures reached record levels in 2013. Illicit elephant slaughter exceeded 50% of all elephant deaths in 2008 and stayed consistent at that level into 2010 (CITES,

2014). These are levels of poaching that exceed the rate of reproduction of elephants, implying that if current rates continue, the species will perish. In 2016, it was believed that most of the elephant ivory on the global market originated in Mozambique, Tanzania, and Central African countries (Somerville, 2017, p. 221). Chinese demand has risen in lockstep with the country's developing economy, while demand from key markets in Europe, the United States, and Japan has dropped. The increase in poaching and IWT is not limited to elephants and rhinos, but they receive considerable high-level attention and probably the most extensive data collection via monitoring programs such as MIKE, PIKE, and ETIS. However, other species such as pangolins, cheetahs, and big apes are increasingly being targeted for poaching and IWT. Fortunately, they are gradually being brought into the forefront as well (Wittemyer et al., 2014). However, it is critical to note that the picture is not entirely grim. Elephants are not threatened throughout Africa; in fact, several localities are dealing with issues connected with elephant overpopulation (Somerville, 2017). This is a feature that the IWT-security-discourse entirely overlooks. One could claim that a surge in real-world poaching and IWT helped the presentation of African fauna as desperately threatened. However, as previously stated, this is simply one aspect of a dual threat presentation. Additionally, there is a risk of poaching and IWT eroding international insecurity. To what extent was this assertion also affected by actual events?

#### 5.4.1.2 *International security*

Poaching and IWT are depicted as a threat to international security because of funding African rebels and insurgents' activities. This storyline exploits Western anxieties about terrorism and rebel organizations that originate in Africa and spread throughout the world. As mentioned in the discourse study, the groups benefiting from poaching and IWT in the global discourse include, but are not limited to, Al-Shabaab, LRA, Boko Haram, ISIS, Séleka, and Janjaweed. The United States considers only two of the organizations identified during the discourse analysis to be terrorist organizations: Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram (Bureau of Counterterrorism, n.d.). Due to the frequently imprecise language used in discourses, determining which groups are referred to when general comments to militias, armed groups, or rebels are made is challenging. The most prevalent poacher-terrorist narrative centers on Al-Shabaab financing a significant amount of its operations through illicit ivory trafficking. This allegation, which originated in the Elephant Action League study, has been widely contested. Christian Nellemann, the chief editor of the 2016 UNEP report "The Rise of Environmental Crime", described it as "complete rubbish", adding that ivory is only a minor source of revenue for this organization (McConnell, 2015). He bases his assertion on Al-Shabaab specialists and the fact

that later study by others has failed to corroborate the EAL report's allegations. For example, the number of tusks listed in the EAL report implies that practically all ivory from Eastern, Western, and Central Africa passed through Al-Shabaab's manipulation which is arguably improbable.

Nonetheless, according to UNEP (Nellemann et al., 2016), environmental crimes can sometimes act as a catalyst for conflict and provide a source of revenue for armed organizations. According to Douglas and Alie, "fauna can exert a significant influence on violent conflict and security interests" (Douglas & Alie, 2014, p. 1). Both the LRA and the Janjaweed appear to be complicit in elephant poaching (Cooke & Schlickeisen, 2015; Haenlein & Smith, 2016; Nellemann et al., 2016). Nonetheless, few believe that poaching and IWT are a significant source of revenue for these organizations. The quantity of ivory involved is minimal, and the impact of this type of poaching is primarily a local issue (Somerville, 2017, p. 199). Additionally, "although members of such gangs may act as gun slingers, they are only parts in much bigger wildlife smuggling networks that supply the demand" (Felbab-Brown, 2015). Another critical aspect is that, despite some evidence linking poaching, armed groups, and conflict, UNEP emphasizes that, unlike minerals and timber, "the value of ivory alone is insufficient to finance a war" (UNEP et al., 2013).

Despite perhaps dubious evidence, the IWT-security discourse may be justified in part by the fact that it falls within a context of topics already being explored in academic and policy circles at the time. Concerns regarding partnerships between insurgency groups in unstable regions of Africa and other armed groups posing a threat to the West, such as Al-Qaeda, were one such issue. Another factor was the increasing revenue generated by international environmental crime, which matched well with the IWT-security discourse (Haenlein & Smith, 2016). As a result, the threat presentation resonated well because it plugged into existing concerns about the rise of regional conflicts, as well as broad fears of terrorism in the West following 9/11 (Somerville, 2017, p. 244). Overall, the second segment of the discursive threat depiction appears to be associated with an underlying real-world threat to a degree. However, the discursive presentation is inflated, leaving many aspects to the reader's imagination. It is difficult to claim that this presentation would develop just because of the danger, and the following sections discuss additional potential enabling elements.

#### **5.4.2 Situating the elements in a post 9/11 agenda**

The discourse analysis also found widespread beliefs about Africa as a conflict and insurgency-prone continent in U.S. materials. Although no African discourse has been officially designated as a "hostile power" by the U.S. administration, the framing of African states as possible terror exporters and requests for U.S. leadership are similar. Due to historical (and existing)



inequalities, the discourse of an exotic but incapable Africa and the need for U.S. leadership may be partially explained. U.S. has "both a sense of hierarchy between America and Africa, as well as a sense of duty towards Africans" (Divon & Derman, 2017, p. 41). White contends that prior to 9/11 and the ensuing "war on terror", an issue-linkage with security concerns and terrorism would not have been as influential (White, 2014).

#### *5.4.2.1 Relying on a security "expert" actor*

The discourse analysis revealed the U.S. as a major worldwide actor in the securitization process. This shows the discursive threat presentation matched U.S. identity and interests. No surprise in a post-9/11 world where threats of insurrection, terrorism, and a fertile ground for armed organizations and Islamist movements coexist. A "security state" function and divergent views towards power politics in the U.S. and Europe make the U.S. security discourse appear more radical than the EU discourse (Kagan, 2007; Stritzel, 2010). The U.S. may be particularly receptive to security concerns since they identify as a military superpower eager and able to act (Stritzel, 2010). American security interests in Africa are not new, but they grew after 9/11 when Africa became a "second front" in the battle on terror. Along with growing counter-terrorism activities, security motivations for U.S. engagement in Africa grew (Carmody, 2017; Paterson, 2018). According to a 2009 U.S. Air Force assessment, environmental issues can help promote U.S. AFRICOM strategic goals (Jasparro, 2009). U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) conducts military operations to disrupt, degrade, and eliminate violent extremist organizations that pose a transnational danger (AFRICOM, n.d.). Both goals fit inside an IWT-security-discussion. The U.S. has military presence in 53 of 54 African countries and shows no signs of reducing it (Neuhaus, 2017). In fact, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis recently informed the U.S. Senate that "you'll see more action in Africa, not less (...)" (RT, 2017).

#### *5.4.2.2 Foreign assistance as a catalyst*

Ever since the conclusion of the Cold War, the United States' incentive for foreign assistance has been mainly about both commerce and economic development (Divon & Derman, 2017). The United States is currently Africa's largest supplier of aid, and USAID, the government agency responsible for development assistance, is a prominent player in wildlife conservation projects, including initiatives to battle poaching and IWT (Carmody, 2017; USAID, 2017). Since 2013, Kenya, South Africa, and Tanzania have each received at least one million dollars per year from the United States to combat illicit wildlife trading, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service gave more than 50 million dollars to 141 wildlife trafficking-related projects in 2015 (GAO, 2016; U.S. Task Force on

Wildlife Trafficking, 2015). Divon and Derman assert that the United States' development discourse is founded on a mix of idealism and self-interest. They believe that the securitization of U.S. development policy since 9/11 has placed them particularly vulnerable to security considerations. As a result, poverty, ineffective institutions, corruption, and vulnerability have become increasingly associated with terrorism and security issues (Divon & Derman, 2017). This would seem reasonable to believe, also created a receptive atmosphere when similar accusations were made in the context of poaching and illegal wildlife trafficking, which may have enabled securitization. In addition to retaining tremendous influence through USAID, the U.S. is a major funder to other conservation organizations. As a result, they possess considerable influence over policies and objectives. The Global Environmental Facility (GEF) is one such example. The GEF is a financial entity that is the world's largest single financier of conservation (Hanoi Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade, 2016). The Wildlife Conservation Society claims that the GEF "advance[s] U.S. national security objectives abroad" and that GEF money is "a cost-effective strategy to advance U.S. economic interests" (WCS, 2018).

### 5.4.2.3 *Others' interventions in Africa*

The geopolitical interests of the United States in Africa should not be overlooked as a factor influencing the securitization process and conclusion. Africa is critical strategically for the United States as well as other present and developing nations such as China and India. The fight for access to African natural resources has been dubbed the "new African rush" (Carmody, 2017; Gertz, 2016). While the United States and Europe have historically been Africa's primary commercial partners, China's economy has expanded to become the world's second largest, and the country has risen to become Africa's largest individual trading partner. While some view this relationship as progressive and beneficial for South-South cooperation, Chinese competition is likely to be one of the factors driving the U.S.'s greater participation on the African continent (Carmody, 2017; Gray, 2017). As a significant investor in a number of African countries, there is evidence that Chinese workers are involved in the ivory trafficking, as well as suggestions that recently constructed Chinese infrastructure can ease the movement of ivory from inaccessible places (IFAW, 2013). At the end of the 1990s, the Chinese also became the primary importers of African ivory (Martin & Vigne, 2011). Although the United States was and continues to be one of the main markets for illicit wildlife trading, their demand began to decline about the same time as China's demand skyrocketed. The discourse analysis revealed how China is frequently characterized in the IWT-security discourse as the "enemy". China has consistently stated that Western media are blaming China for an increase in

poaching and IWT as a result of China's expanding involvement in Africa (Somerville, 2017). One could assume that a portrayal in which unethical Chinese entities are destroying habitat and sponsoring armed groups was particularly appealing to a U.S. willing to depict itself as "the good guys" in the African continent's resource scramble. In conclusion, the IWT-security discourse's threat depiction coincided with broader U.S. interests and strategic objectives. This almost certainly contributed to the securitization process.

### 5.4.3 Africa: a host of poaching

#### 5.4.3.1 Foreign depiction of Africa

The discourse analysis reveals a lengthy history of the clichéd perception of Africa. Schneider and Ingram claim that securitizing actors "create maps of target populations based on their own stereotypes (of the referent subject) and those they assume are prevalent among the portion of the public likely to become significant to them" (A. Schneider & Ingram, 1993, p. 336). This demonstrates that the discourses' conventional image of Africa matched the pre-existing image of Africa among global elites. Africa has a long history of being portrayed by the West as savage, dangerous, and violent (Adams & McShane, 1996). As the discourse analysis demonstrates, an image of Africans as underdeveloped and in need of assistance exists today and is sometimes offered in conjunction with a more romantic vision of an "exotic" continent immersed in "wilderness". According to securitization theory, audiences' acceptance of a threat presentation is facilitated when the threat involves the survival of an "in-group or self". The IWT-security discourse constructs an African identity as "other", distinct from and even opposing to a "typical" Western in-group or Self. According to Croft and Hansen securitization is frequently predicated on these forms of self- and other-identity constructions. The most harmful manifestation of *otherness* is that of a "radical other" (Hansen, 2013). A *radical other* is completely contrary to the self-identity and "threatens the self's own survival" (Croft, 2012, p. 86). Poachers are portrayed in the IWT-security discourse as individuals motivated by a desire to murder both fauna and people in awful ways, fitting with their identity as dangerous, *radical others*. The presence of this radically distinct and frightening identity contributes to the threat's urgency and deadly nature. Another manifestation of "otherness" is also apparent in the IWT-security discourse: the "orientalized other". Said's 1978 concept of "orientalism" serves as the base for this kind of *otherness*. The term "*orientalized other*" refers to an identity that is "oriental" or "exotic" in the sense of being distinct from the West. However, rather than being a neutral distinction, this otherness is associated with immaturity and lack of growth. An identification as an *orientalized other* entails some positive romanticization of "the exotic", such as the splendor of

African fauna and landscape (Said, 1978). However, the negative political and power elements are far more prevalent: an *orientalized other* is helpless and in need of assistance; they should "be led, regulated, molded, and taught" (Croft, 2012, p. 90). The IWT-security discourse imposes this identity on ordinary Africans, and to a lesser extent, on Chinese.

These other conceptions are essential contributors to the securitization process since they change power positions amongst the players as well as determine which actions are regarded appropriate to safeguard the referent object. Wilhelmsen argues that in order to legitimate an existential threat, an Oriental Other is not necessary, and in the IWT-security- discourse this identity largely serves the aim of reinforcing the threat presentation (Wilhelmsen, 2017). However, the discursive identification as *radical others* attributed to poachers could potentially contribute to growing anxiety and foster tolerance for extreme actions towards them.

#### 5.4.3.2 African self-depiction and agency

As previously said, Africa is critical strategically for the U.S. as a "second front" in the battle on terror. Additionally, and in contrast to the notion of Africa as a victim of globalization, it has been seen a surge in interest in African commerce and investment (Carmody, 2017). Not only are many African countries endowed with wildlife, but also with natural resources such as oil, gas, and minerals, many African countries have enjoyed substantial economic growth over the previous years (World Bank, 2017). While much may be said about the negative effects of global powers' interests in Africa, African states are not passive victims; they also have agency in this example of securitization. As mentioned previously, while African states were not the initiators of securitization, the global elite that acted as an enabling audience includes several African politicians. Even though the stereotyped discursive portrayal of the continent did not correspond to Africa's interests or identity, securitization might be viewed as convenient or even desirable for African states. Somerville believes that the poacher-terrorist narrative matched well with Kenyan politics and their enemy image of Somalis in the case of the poacher-terrorist narrative. Additionally, Africans are perfectly capable of characterizing other African countries as inept and weak, while portraying their own as strong and well-governed (Somerville, 2017). According to the director of the Kenya Wildlife Service, a significant portion of their poaching problem comes from the fact that "Kenya is in the unfortunate position of sharing over 1,700 kilometers of border with three countries embroiled in civil wars plagued with firearms: Somalia, Ethiopia, and Sudan" (Shoumatoff, 2011). While some of these allegations are true, they demonstrate how African states also contribute to the continent's discursive presentation.

Moreover, many African politicians exhibit an agency that contributes to the problem of poaching and IWT, as well as a variety of other African difficulties. Botswana, one of the most successful countries in terms of poaching, is also one of the least corrupt countries in Africa. Despite several encouraging instances, such as Botswana and Rwanda, Sub-Saharan Africa was voted the world's most corrupt area in 2017 by Transparency International (Transparency International, 2018). Government personnel in several African countries are facilitating, if not directly engaging in, poaching and IWT, according to an increasing body of data (EIA, 2014; Leithead, 2018; Somerville, 2017; Vira & Ewing, 2014). Corruption is a significant and tough issue. Regrettably, it receives limited consideration in the poaching-IWT-security discourse, which may explain why many African states were quick to embrace this threat depiction. Somerville argues that a security stance, in particular for Kenya, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, may be "a very effective way of distracting attention away from the corruption, patronage networks, crime syndicates, permissive law enforcement, and insufficient judicial systems that enabled impunity for those higher up the food chain than the poor poacher in the bush" (Somerville, 2017, p. 234). This can illustrate the West did not stand alone in having potential stakes in a successful securitization.

#### **5.4.4 Thinks Tanks influence**

Environmental Think Tanks have long played a critical role in conservation, both in Africa and throughout the world. Environmental Think Tanks have been popular and influential in the securitization process, as demonstrated by the discourse analysis. The 2008 IFAW report made some of the first claims about a link between poaching, IWT, and security; a report highlighted the role of Janjaweed in elephant poaching and asserted that Boko Haram threatens Cameroon's elephants; and innumerable Think Tanks have made similar contributions that have influenced the securitization process (Crosta & Sutherland, 2016; Vira & Ewing, 2014). Given that most of these organizations have a stated objective of saving wildlife and nature, it's easy to see how they could profit from the greater focus and potential funding that securitization could bring.

##### *5.4.4.1 Building trust and reliability*

Many environmental Think Tanks employ expertise in the field of biology and conservation, and they are typically considered to be competent actors on matters related poaching and IWT. Bourdieu believes that the most effective power is the one that is allegedly neutral, generally portrayed as "science" (Bourdieu & Kritzman, 1993). An argument or securitizing motion must be presented by an actor who is regarded as respectable and knowledgeable and who is recognized as working for a shared interest if it is to succeed (Bourdieu, 1979). Many significant environmental

think tanks already have this bundle of authority, expertise, and public confidence, which I consider as a powerful combination. Thus, they are regarded as demonstrating linguistic proficiency. This means that they are recognized respectable representatives on specific problems such as wildlife conservation, and that their threat assertions are considered dependable and worthy of consideration. According to Brockington and Scholfield, conservation Think Tanks are "widely known and trusted by northern publics as supporting beneficial causes" (Dan Brockington & Scholfield, 2010, p. 2). Considered to be well-informed, legitimate actors possessing linguistic competency on the topic of poaching and IWT, they are important global actors with great effect on the securitization process.

#### 5.4.4.2 *Research informed vs. "the end justifies the means"*

Additionally, while many environmental Think Tanks do employ skilled specialists, there are evidence that their strategic function frequently takes precedence over their scientific mission. This can range from arguing for the principle in the absence of sufficient evidence to taking a "the end justifies the means" approach in which known facts are purposefully ignored. This is demonstrated by the statement from the Tsavo Conservation Group's discourse analysis, which states that a lack of evidence should not be sufficient to dismiss the problem of ivory-financed terrorism. A similar scenario is told by WildAid's CEO during a panel discussion following the screening of Bigelow's short film "Last days of ivory". When questioned about the evidence supporting the poacher-terrorist storyline, he responded, "It's not about the facts; it's about the feeling" (McConnell, 2015). Similarly, the Environmental Investigation Agency's report "Vanishing Point" was, according to a source cited in Somerville as a leading elephant scientist, "a mixture of "pure gold and a lot of dross" that was primarily concerned with campaigning and left the reader to decipher what was accurate and what was included for effect" (Somerville, 2017, p. 201). As indicated previously, the Elephant Action League report in which the Al-Shabaab connection was first made has come under fire for being exceedingly unreliable or perhaps made up. The EAL's response was to revise their earlier remarks and to argue that the situation may have evolved since their study was conducted. Even though their contentious assertions have been widely disproved, EAL remain extremely active and influential. For example, they operate "Wildleaks", an effort aimed to "facilitating the identification, arrest, and punishment of criminals, traffickers, businesses, and corrupt government officials responsible for endangered species poaching and wildlife and forest product trafficking" (WildLeaks, n.d.). In 2016, EAL released a fresh research on Chinese demand for ivory, as well as a Netflix documentary titled "The ivory game" (Richard Ladkani, 2016), both of which included EAL executive director Andrea Crosta, who co-authored the report.



There are grounds to assume that at least some environmental Think Tanks involved in the securitization process placed their position as strategists over their duty as scientists at times. According to Keith Somerville, numerous environmental think tanks have "jumped on the ivory-insurgency trend" in hopes of gaining publicity for their cause (Somerville, 2017, p. 207).

#### 5.4.4.3 *The bellwether of the IWT*

Lastly, the environmental Think Tanks' strategic function is reflected in their ability to influence policies in a diverse variety of regimes, both Western and African. They are frequently well-represented in expert groups that offer background research on poaching and illegal wildlife trafficking to legislators or share expert advice in the media, both of which can be quite influential avenues. While compiling documents for the discourse analysis, it became clear that representatives from environmental Think Tanks were involved in the production of a significant portion of the texts, acting as media experts and generating background documents that laid the groundwork for discussion and decision-making among politicians. Notably, this implies that Think Tank discourse is likely to be mainstream. However, this characteristic seems to be somewhat diminished in African writings. While collaborations between African governments and think tanks are prevalent, official African publications appeared to depend more heavily on the expertise of local experts and occasionally on field trips or other real-world experiences organized for decision-makers (East African Community, 2016). This may be acceptable given their potential familiarity with their own difficulties and may explain why the African discourse stands out in certain ways from the other participants. The constitution of the Federal Advisory Council on Wildlife Trafficking is a representation of the significant political influence of environmental Think Tanks on U.S. policy. The advisory board was established in response to President Obama's 2013 Executive Order "Combat Wildlife Trafficking" to provide recommendations to the Task Force on issues such as anti-poaching activities, law enforcement, and demand reduction. Three of the council's seven permanent members are CEOs of environmental think tanks: the Wildlife Conservation Society, the African Wildlife Foundation, and the World Wildlife Fund. Additionally, the four alternate members include TRAFFIC's senior director and WildAid's executive director. This Council has a major influence on U.S. policy regarding poaching and IWT in general, and specifically on the National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking. In conclusion, the Think Tanks' linguistic proficiency, strategic concentration, and ability to influence U.S. policy are almost certainly significant factors in the securitization process's success.

The variables stated above imply that a securitization could be beneficial for several actors. In addition to being founded in real, contemporary problems, the security framework united the interests of the U.S., many African presidents, powerful environmental Think Tanks, and private enterprises. Together, these considerations can explain why the securitization of poaching and IWT in Africa was successful.

## 5.5 IWT influencing (in)security

Securitization theory serves to highlight the political, normative choice underlying a security framing, as well as the related threats linked with it (Elbe, 2006). This chapter section addresses the potential influence of securitizing poaching and IWT. A major facet of securitization theory is that a successful securitization can contribute to official recognition of emergency measures, and the effect on anti-poaching policy and practices are explored first. Moreover, the risk of African governments outsourcing self-governance to foreign public or private partners because of the securitization were considered. The aspect of "security" as being so crucial that it can overshadow competing approaches was also examined. Finally, possible future positive aspects of a securitization were underlined, highlighting increased funding and exposure as possible positive outcomes and asking whether the securitization could mediate the introduction and cooperation of a variety of stakeholders that is necessary to deal with the poaching and IWT issue, both in terms of wildlife survival and conflict funding.

### 5.5.1 The justified use of force for anti-poaching purposes: a legitimization

Historically, "fortress conservation" meant removing or displacing populations from protected regions, often forcibly and without recompense (Daniel Brockington & Igoe, 2006). Alternative participatory approaches have been used successfully in various nations since the 1980s. However, by framing poaching and IWT as existential threats to wildlife and international security, securitization theory suggests an acceptance for emergency measures to address the problem. Wilhelmsen says this can entail beefing up existing security measures or introducing new ones. It is possible that securitization "makes brutality and conflict seem logical, acceptable, and eventually necessary" (Wilhelmsen, 2017). Concerning poaching and IWT, prospective emergency measures are based on anti-poaching procedures. Anti-poaching activities require more rangers and stronger law enforcement in Africa. Rangers' work has gone from 10% law enforcement and 90% conservation to 90% law enforcement and 10% conservation, according to Jooste, Head of South African National Parks Special Operations. Rangers are armed with advanced weapons and military surveillance

technology. According to Hübschle and Lunstrum, the increase in anti-poaching activities is a "green militarization" (Hübschle, 2017; Lunstrum, 2014). Although militarization and securitization are not synonymous, a successful securitization can potentially legitimize further militarization of anti-poaching tactics. Lunstrum claims that militarized conservation techniques are "widening and escalating". According to Humphreys and Smith the employment of warfare-like approaches is rising, say (Humphreys & Smith, 2011). British paratroopers trained Kenyan wildlife rangers, and British military advisors worked with Gabonese security and anti-poaching units (Chambers, 2014; Somerville, 2017, p. 209). The Kenya Wildlife Service has introduced additional methods to combat poaching and illegal wildlife trafficking, including sniffer dogs, greater park surveillance, information and collaboration with Interpol (East African Community, 2016, p. 11).

An example of a Tanzanian Minister supporting shoot-to-kill policy, seemingly ignoring the potential human rights breaches associated with this strategy, was included in the discourse analysis (Brownstone, 2013). Anti-poaching tactics in Botswana are controversial, with the country introducing controversial shoot-to-kill regulations in 2013. It is now permissible to murder suspected poachers on sight. "Rangers invariably claim they were shot on first, and no one living can say otherwise". As a result, this is an unusual diversion from typical judicial prosecution and trial processes (Mogomotsi & Madigele, 2017). Similar shoot-to-kill regulations are often proposed, but not enacted, in South Africa and Tanzania. It can be bad for numerous reasons if securitization increases conservation militarization. Historically, militarized approaches have come at a high cost, both financially and socially. Critics claim that despite short-term gains, these strategies may ultimately harm conservation efforts. Militarization may legitimize violent practices, undermine community initiatives and participatory conservation approaches, tighten boundaries between communities and parks, resurrect unpleasant memories of violent history in conflict zones, increase local populations' sense of insecurity, and possibly kill innocent people (Annecke & Masubelele, 2016; Lunstrum, 2014). Some argue that the security focus results in a return to fortress conservation, where top-down tactics, stricter law enforcement, and less attention on participation and sharing of benefits and liabilities diminish local communities' ownership of wildlife and its potential advantages (Annecke & Masubelele, 2016). Military conservation fails to address the underlying reasons of poaching and IWT, and undermines local community support for conservation, resulting in a "triple fail for security, people, and wildlife", according to Duffy (Duffy, 2016).

Emmers warns against legitimizing security or military personnel in civilian activities in "young or unstable democracies or countries with ambiguous civilian power" (Emmers, 2016, p. 173).

I consider this is particularly important because many of the African nations that source poaching and IWT are developing democracies or are in conflict. Emmers discovered that stricter law enforcement and military activities did not alleviate local violence in Virunga National Park, DR Congo, but rather exacerbated it (Emmers et al., 2008). Smith contends that military technology like drones, while theoretically valuable for biodiversity protection, will likely have little or no influence. Because high-tech surveillance equipment may make local residents feel like potential criminals, reinforce the idea that wildlife is valued over people, and necessitate considerable ground assistance from rangers to intervene if necessary (Smith, 2014). Conservationists like Daniel Stiles contend that militarization won't protect wildlife because poachers will take the danger nonetheless (Stiles, 2013). Research on other natural resources supports the notion that greater law enforcement operations without additional interventions may be ineffective. For example, greater law enforcement has minimal effect on preventing illegal removal of forest resources from protected areas, according to Tumusiime et al. Finally, the 2013 ICCWC study indicates that in some circumstances, military action against poachers may be required (CITES, 2013, p. 4). Using military force is an extreme step, especially when many poachers are locals. As a result, the state would use military action against its own people. This example may imply that securitization can really encourage extreme tactics, possibly resulting in a "war on poaching".

The seriousness of the danger is reflected in growing usage of aggressive language and hate speech, notably online (Büscher, 2016; Humphreys & Smith, 2011; Lunstrum, 2017). However, it was not expounded upon in the discourse analysis. Another example is a comment section on a Save the Rhino post about shoot-to-kill rules: "The poachers ought to die", "Of course it's right to shoot to kill" (Save the rhino, 2013). Despite the lengthy history of radical conservationists, it seems unlikely that securitization would foster a more productive conservation discussion. Rather, it may aggravate the current tendency and exacerbate the conservation issue. There are claims that securitization leads to "the closure of political possibilities, the monopolies of decision-making, constraints to public discussion, and the establishment of rational powers". While the real poachers are frequently poor and helpless, those who aid the process are less likely to be harmed by anti-poaching measures originating from a security strategy. Weak institutions, corruption, and benefactor relationships are some of the reasons why poaching and IWT flourish in some African regions (Somerville, 2017, p. 242). The securitization process appears to have benefited a global elite, including several African politicians. As stated above, the African elite is often corrupt and aids or participates in the IWT. Across the continent, examples abound. The chief of Malawi's National Intelligence Bureau was

cooperating with elephant poachers near Mozambique's "ivory gate" (Nyondo, 2016). There is also evidence that a UPDF chopper was used to poach elephants in DR Congo (Njoroge, 2012; Vira & Ewing, 2014). This is despite the fact that the rhino population in South Africa's Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park has declined dramatically (Leithead, 2018). Unfortunately, the IWT-security discourse typically ignores these challenges, and therefore security methods are unlikely to address them.

Furthermore, African countries may use security considerations to impose tougher laws on their own people, steal territory, or otherwise strengthen their own power. Massé and Lunstrum explain how security concerns can be utilized to relocate local residents from protected regions, a strategy they call "accumulation by securitization" (Massé & Lunstrum, 2016). According to Lunstrum and Ybarra, security concerns are frequently utilized to justify removing locals. In these cases, the IWT-security discourse's danger to national security is used to justify takeover of territory (Lunstrum & Ybarra, 2018). If this pattern continues, many weak and vulnerable groups may suffer the effects of securitization. Finally, securitization may lead to emergency measures such as militarizing anti-poaching activities or declaring a "war on poaching". These anti-poaching measures are troublesome because they may cause individuals to fear for their safety and/or livelihood. If so, these methods are unlikely to be effective. Militarization may be effective in the short term, but it may turn locals against conservation in the long run. And it doesn't do anything to stop poaching and illegal wildlife trading.

## **5.5.2 Linkages between securitizing actors**

### *5.5.2.1 Think Tanks*

Wildlife is undeniably vital to many African countries. The 2010 Kenyan constitution describes wildlife as a "national asset to be managed for the people and future generations (Constitute Project, 2022). Securitization may bring additional attention and money. As stated previously, environmental Think Tanks are widely represented in expert committees that report to Western policymakers, but Africans are not. Due to rising foreign public and private engagement, there is a possibility that securitization and related activities lead to loss of African state sovereignty. Securitization could give Western Think Tanks more power in Africa's conservation. According to former Kenya Wildlife Service chief Richard Leakey, international Think Tank money offers donors "significant influence" on policy and setting the agenda for Kenyan conservation. The Think Tanks gained a sense of ownership over Kenyan conservation, increasing Kenyans' alienation from the system (Somerville, 2017). African Parks is one such non-profit. They currently manage national parks and protected areas in Benin, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo,

Malawi, Mozambique, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Zambia (African Parks, n.d.). Despite the fact that ecotourism is encouraged and rangers and personnel are recruited locally, Somerville claims this "represents a further out-sourcing of duty for conservation" (Somerville, 2017). Taking "full responsibility" for local natural resources may be seen as condescending and potentially undermining national autonomy and integrity.

### 5.5.2.2 *State and private actors*

The seriousness of the securitization threat depiction and emergency actions may be used as a handy reason for foreign military engagement in Africa. This may be important to the U.S. Critics claim the U.S. AUMF Act (Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Terrorists) "has applied the authorization to any circumstance involving Al-Qaeda, ISIS, or Islamic terrorism" (Neuhaus, 2017). Because the poacher-terrorist narrative is crucial to the threat presentation, securitization may undermine African self-determination by legitimizing further foreign military participation on African soil. Private military companies (PMCs) are being increasingly used to combat poaching and IWT. "...in our technological age, the private sector has all the tools to lead from behind, push technology to greater limits, and offer the best strategic minds to the environmental battlefield", says Nil Kalron, a former Israeli commando and author of the controversial Elephant Action League report (Kalron, 2015). This is in accordance with U.S. and EU documents as well as broader arguments about increased efficiency due to private sector involvement (Vatn, 2018). Nonetheless, critics contend that privatization does not assist local communities living alongside wildlife (Massé & Lunstrum, 2016). A focus on security diverts attention from other areas such as local benefits and development, according to Leander (Leander, 2008). In the case of poaching and IWT, securitization has enhanced the involvement of former Iraq and Afghanistan private security and mercenary companies (Paterson, 2018). Anti-poaching activities are now commonly referred to as a retirement alternative for veterans (White, 2014). Various organizations are now offering "anti-poaching experiences" throughout Africa. There are over 311 000 results for "anti-poaching volunteer" on Google, results included "join the green army" posts, "anti-poaching and wildlife management gap year" and "14 things to know about being an anti-poaching ranger in Africa" (Gonzalez, 2022). What they all have in common is the presentation of "white saviors as manhunters on the dark continent" with a security logic (McClanahan & Wall, 2016). I think such "white savior" tales are doubtful at best, and worrisome when coupled with militarized behaviors as in this case. External parties, such as central governments, commercial enterprises, or foreign investors, frequently collect wildlife revenue. The Peace Parks Foundation, for example, has grown in influence on conservation and land-



use policies in several trans-frontier areas. According to Büscher, they "value biodiversity but are backed by global corporate elites who perceive vast tourism prospects" (Büscher, 2013). Wildlife revenues draining local communities harm both people and ecology. Living with wildlife is not always as peaceful as it appears, as local populations take the burden of living with wildlife like elephants, which often destroy food crops and even human lives. Local residents must benefit from conservation, including compensation for wildlife losses, job possibilities, and tourism or trophy hunting money.

The rising involvement of private actors has resulted in a business-like and depoliticized attitude to conservation and anti-poaching. The concern is that these actors will be less accountable to the individuals harmed by their behavior. According to Vatn, the global South faces "the kind of privatizations and marketizations that flourish on weak institutions, lack of capital, and poor people" (Vatn, 2018, p. 176). Adding private actors' risks removing authority, responsibility, and rewards from those who must coexist with wildlife. Because securitization may introduce new actors, it is critical to assess the impact on conservation policies and power relations. Local people's interests must not be sacrificed to favor private enterprises or foreign or national elites. This is crucial for long-term anti-poaching and conservation success. Local communities benefiting from conservation are likely to be more tolerant of wildlife (Vedeld, Jumane, Wapalila, & Songorwa, 2012).

### **5.5.3 Overlooked elements on the securitization process**

A security focus may become so dominant that other issues are ignored. One example is corruption, which often involves powerful actors unaffected by securitized approaches (Felbab-Brown, 2015; Somerville, 2017). Another is resource extraction, such as gold mining, which can attract a variety of criminal elements, including those involved in the IWT (Carmody, 2017). Humle et al. claim "Funding for conservation enforcement would be better spent on less glamorous but more effective methods" (Humle et al., 2014). Sadly, many of these approaches are deemed too slow or complex for the urgency of security. The security framing's most serious flaw is its neglect of poaching's root causes. Contrary to popular belief, poachers do not belong to powerful networks. It has been found that "many offenders are relatively powerless, economically vulnerable individuals, hunting and gathering forest resources out of necessity" in Uganda (Runhovde, 2018, p. 18). Poachers can be easily replaced, according to EAGLE Network's Ofir Drori. But chasing poachers in the field is easy because catching big traffickers requires dealing with corruption (Vaughan, 2016). The security framing emphasizes the level of the poacher, while ignoring more powerful actors. Similarly, Tumusiime, Vedeld, and Gombya-Ssembajjwe found in an investigation of a Ugandan protected area

that those subjected to increased law enforcement are frequently threatened and harassed by park authorities or local police (Tumusiime, Vedeld, & Gombya-Ssembajjwe, 2011). Infant mortality is the strongest indicator of high levels of elephant poaching, according to MIKE analyses (SADC, 2015, p. 8). By 2016, 45% of conservation funding went to protected area management, while 19% went to law enforcement, including intelligence-led operations and transnational coordination, 15% to sustainable use and alternative livelihoods, 8% to policy and legislation, 6% to research and assessment (Hanoi Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade, 2016). Based on these figures, it appears that initiatives to help the poor have little money left over to increase law enforcement. Finally, if security concerns dominate, many important underlying causes of poaching and IWT will likely go unaddressed. "The bush wars will be lost, no matter how heavy the rangers' equipment", writes (Felbab-Brown, 2015). As a result of securitization, it is likely that most conservation and anti-poaching funds will be spent on management and law enforcement, rather than slower but equally (or more) important issues like local participation, empowerment, and poverty reduction.

#### **5.5.4 Development and security, a two-way iterative feed**

For Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, "considering securitizing moves like "environmental security" or a "war on crime" requires weighing the disadvantages of a security mindset against the benefits of emphasis, attention, and mobilization" (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 29). Despite the potential drawbacks discussed above, it is not clear that securitization is harmful. In fact, the reverse may be true. Poaching and IWT can benefit from increased attention, focus, and funding. After all, solving a problem requires awareness, willingness, and resources. The securitization may also result in the involvement of non-conservation professionals. Poaching and IWT is a multi-faceted and highly complex problem, so coordinating rangers, cops, intelligence officers, border patrols, politicians, and biologists can be beneficial and even necessary. One of the main arguments against securitization is that the security focus is so strong that it overshadows all other approaches and forces existing practices to follow a security logic. However, Trombetta contends that this "security of security" can be altered by different contexts (Trombetta, 2010). Huysmans argues that introducing new actors and principles into the security realm can influence or even change existing security practices (Huysmans, 2002). For poaching and IWT, this could mean conservation practices influence security practices. This may mean that emerging security approaches can coexist with existing approaches focusing on local empowerment and economic development.

## 5.6 Conclusion

This thesis examined how and why *poaching and IWT influence peace and security in Africa*. To provide response to the first research question, I argue that it has demonstrated that contemporary global security discourse is defined by a dual referent object, with both biodiversity and international security portrayed as existentially threatened. Environmental think tanks were the original securitizing actors, shortly followed by the U.S., which assumed a leadership position and successfully gained support for the danger presentation from an enabling audience of global elites. This answers the research question about the *main actors*, being the *Think Tanks and the U.S.* I drew on the successful securitization by highlighting the factors that contributed to the threat presentation's acceptance as the *implication of IWT on security*.

I discussed the *main elements that links IWT with security concerns*. To begin, data suggests that the threat to species survival has increased along with Western concerns about armed organizations. As a result, the danger presentation was somewhat grounded in real-world events. Additionally, the threat presentation was consistent with the United States' strategic objectives and identity as a security state in the post-9/11 era. Africa's and African governments' role in global politics is also likely to have facilitated the threat presentation; not only as an "other" portrayed as incapable of effective governance and in need of external assistance, but also as an agent with governing elites who welcomed a security framing that could be used to advance their own interests. Additionally, as credible, and linguistically competent actors on conservation matters, environmental Think Tanks pioneered the process of securitization and continue to exercise major impact on African conservation and anti-poaching activities. Finally, the expanding number of private actors involved in security and environmental conservation had a stake in building and maintaining a successful security discourse. Overall, I believe that securitization theory has proven to be an effective method for analyzing how and why poaching and IWT have shifted to security.

According to securitization theory, a successful securitization can justify emergency actions, and the final chapter explored the securitization's potential effects. There are numerous concerns about extreme and militarized anti-poaching practices, and there are indications that security concerns could be used to justify controversial policies such as shoot-to-kill or dispossession of land and other resources on security grounds, all of which would have a negative impact on already vulnerable and marginalized groups. Particular attention should be paid to think tanks, foreign governments, and private corporations. Additionally, the claimed inherent potential of "security" to overcome other

concerns was considered, and so was the ability of security techniques to coexist with other conservation strategies. Finally, the good aspects of securitization were explored and highlighted. A complicated issue like poaching and IWT is likely to require the attention, funding, and involvement of many qualified individuals to find effective solutions. As a result, securitization may be beneficial, particularly if the security rationale coexists with, rather than eradicates, alternate approaches to poaching and IWT.

Regarding the sub research question about the *presentation of the illicit wildlife trafficking-security nexus studied and presented in the available literature*, it is easy to agree that the IWT-security discourse's danger presentation is lacking in depth and, at times, evidence. A security-focused approach risks legitimizing severe actions that might easily violate human rights and damage local livelihoods, all of which would have a negative effect on conservation efforts in the long run. Additionally, it increases the likelihood of advancing the interests of powerful parties by proposing extreme but ineffective solutions. Given the possibility that securitization could be problematic for one or more of the reasons outlined above, the implications of securitization should not be overstated. Even while the IWT-security rhetoric and accompanying threat portrayal are relatively new in African conservation, military or paramilitary techniques are not. Additionally, while poaching and IWT are serious issues, they are far from the most pressing concern for African governments. While the IWT-security narrative was widespread globally in 2015, South Africa's economic interests scarcely reflected an imminent threat. As previously stated, South African National Parks received only 5% of the Environmental Ministry's budget. Concerning the real repercussions of securitization, they remain primarily hypothetical at this point. To what extent and how securitization alters reality on the ground remains unknown but should be researched. It remains to be seen whether securitization effectively suppresses participatory approaches, how private security companies influence anti-poaching policies, and to what extent security arguments are used as an excuse by foreign states for counterinsurgency or counter-terrorism interventions, or for dispossession or other violations against indigenous peoples by African states. Future studies should seek to address these issues.

In discussions about anti-poaching tactics, it appears to be simpler to critique their unintended consequences than to propose viable alternatives. Without entirely discarding data on harmed species, it appears difficult to foresee effective alternatives to law enforcement. Anti-poaching activities will almost certainly be necessary until fundamental concerns are resolved and effective and genuine policies are developed. This is not to say that enforcement or anti-poaching measures are the only or best options but leaving endangered wildlife alone until more long-term remedies have had time to

work seems both naive and risky. While increased law enforcement appears to be necessary now, it is critical that it is not viewed as a panacea but rather as a complement to poverty-reduction measures and demand reduction activities. Rejecting the oversimplified IWT-security narrative refocuses attention on the much larger and more complex concerns of corruption, crime, and poverty. Addressing these fundamental issues will necessitate significant changes, not only in Africa, but also in global social and economic connections. If global and intra-African wealth redistribution does not occur, it appears impossible to be hopelessly optimistic about the possibilities for ending poaching and IWT.

In either case, given the IWT-security discourse's sensationalist and oversimplified storylines, it is prudent to treat it with care. Most poachers are not terrorists. According to securitization theory, the repercussions of successful securitization can be harmful, particularly because security arguments may open the way for drastic action. While there are legitimate worries about species survival and connections between poaching, threat financing, and international security, there are likely to be a variety of other underlying motivations for adopting a securitization narrative. Therefore, effort should be taken to guarantee that the resulting measures do not solely benefit the already powerful. Avoiding development that benefits a few at the expense of many is critical in the case of conservation, as wildlife and nature are closely related to human livelihoods. It is critical to prevent criminal organized networks from destroying Africa's natural resources. However, it is critical to ensure that wildlife and nature are managed for the advantage of individuals who live alongside them, rather than to profit corrupt government officials, Western states, private enterprises, or Think Tanks. Additionally, while increased law enforcement is unavoidable, it is critical that it coexists with initiatives aimed at addressing the root causes of poaching and IWT.

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