



**Utrecht
University**

The Justification of Anti-Poaching Military

Conservation Efforts in South Africa: An In-Depth

Analysis of How Militarization Occurred within Kruger

National Park from 2008 to 2018 Through the Lens of Green

Militarization

Student Name: Farah Michelle Tanooja Moreel

Student Number: 6665098

Supervisor: Dr Joep Schenk

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Abstract

After 2008, Kruger National Park in South Africa underwent a poaching crisis where rhinos and other wildlife were being targeted from poachers abroad. One way of dealing with this crisis was through the means of militarized conservation, a term dubbed 'green militarization'. By looking through the lens of security, it can be seen how different narratives are at play when both local state and non-state actors try to justify these military measures to the local community. Understanding where these narratives stem from is essential to gaining a deeper focus on how exactly militarization becomes interlinked with wildlife conservation. This study investigates the different narratives at play when trying to understand militarization in the name of conservation. It also explores if there are any potential, less militarized methods to go about wildlife conservation.

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List of Abbreviations

AWF: African Wildlife Foundation

DFFE: Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment

GLC: Greater Lebombo Conservancy

IAP: Inclusive Anti-Poaching

KNP: Kruger National Park

MCSP: Mangalane Community Scout Programme

NISCWT: National Integrated Strategy to Combat Wildlife Trafficking

SANParks: South African National Parks

SGP: Sabie Game Park

Introduction

Background

As described by the Deputy Minister of Tourism in 2016 in South Africa, “that lives continue to be lost in this senseless and grim war is a stark reminder of the severity of the threat posed by the illegal trade in wildlife.”¹ This is how the majority of state and non-state actors in South Africa viewed the poaching crisis. The poaching crisis started in 2008 in Kruger National Park (KNP), where the vast area of Kruger was so big that wildlife monitoring was difficult. In addition to that, the geographical location of KNP makes it very easy for poachers to access, especially from neighboring countries like Mozambique.² From 2007 to 2014, Kruger experienced the most poaching in their history with a growth of more than 9,000%.³ In order to deal with these threats, local actors in South Africa have adopted a form of conservation called green militarization. Green militarization or green violence is the use of violence and military tactics in the name of protecting the environment and nature in order to save wildlife and natural resources in certain areas of the world. This is when physical violence has been justified to the public by advocating the use of extensive violent military tactics against the perpetrators of poaching.⁴ This is a phenomenon that has been coined as political violence in the name of the environment. As Robert Fletcher describes it, the violence that has been “performed by humans on behalf of certain non-human species”.⁵ It has been argued that the justification of green violence is linked to biopower as it usually is described in such terms; it is a response to a significant threat. As Fletcher describes it, “the ending

¹ “Speech delivered by the Deputy Minister of Tourism, Ms. Tokozile Xasa on behalf of Minister Edna Molewa at the 5th Annual Rhino Conservation Awards”, Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and Environment, 11 Jul. 2016, <https://www.dffe.gov.za/speech/annualrhinoconservationawards>

² “A New Poaching Problem in South Africa.” *International Rhino Foundation*, 27 Feb. 2023, rhinos.org/blog/a-new-poaching-problem-in-south-africa/#:~:text=Currently%2C%20%2C056%20black%20rhinos%20and,killed%20in%20Kruger%20National%20Park.

³ “Poaching Statistics” *Save The Rhino*, <https://www.savetherhino.org/rhino-info/poaching-stats/#:~:text=From%202007%2D2014%20the%20country,poaching%20crisis%20began%20in%202008.>

⁴ Robert Fletcher, “License to Kill: Contesting the Legitimacy of Green Violence.” *Conservation and Society* 16, no. 2 (2018): 147–56. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26393325>, 147.

⁵ Fletcher, “License to Kill”, 147.

of some life is justified by the threat this life poses to other forms of life singled out for protection”.⁶

When looking at anti-poaching methods in the context of conservation, it becomes evident how militarization techniques have evolved within Kruger. From 2008 onwards, when the crisis accelerated significantly, a form of dual militarization manifested itself. Both from poachers and from South Africa’s military response. Poachers became more aware of military techniques and thus adopted paramilitary-style methods.⁷ In response to this, rangers started to change their motives. Instead of patrolling the park to ensure optimal ecological health, they started to focus on specifically targeting commercial poaching. SANParks started working closely with various military firms and private military organizations to gain the best possible technologies and techniques to protect the parks.⁸ An important addition to the protection of wildlife in South Africa was the re-implementation of SANDF in 2011. They work just like rangers and in collaboration with rangers to aid in patrols of the park. Because of the history it has had previously, the biggest challenge was to prove its legitimacy. In order to do so, SANDF became dedicated to protecting South Africa’s natural heritage through the conservation of its wildlife.⁹ When both militarized anti-poaching efforts and poaching forces come together, it creates an arms race induced by conservation efforts. SANParks have not made any efforts to disguise the increasing amounts of deaths from shoot-on-site incidents of poachers as this acts as a warning to other poachers.¹⁰ One lesson that can be drawn from South Africa’s long, complex history is that the past has offered significant enabling factors that allow for militarization to occur within Kruger. This not only puts forward the political history of South Africa but it also highlights how Kruger National Park remains a symbol of conflict and military violence.¹¹ Because of South Africa’s history of militarization, it had become easier for the government to respond to the poaching crisis with military means. This meant that the ranger force that was implemented within Kruger had remained

⁶ Fletcher, “License to Kill”, 148.

⁷ Elizabeth Lunstrum, “Conservation Meets Militarisation in Kruger National Park: Historical Encounters and Complex Legacies.” *Conservation and Society*, vol. 13, no. 4, 2015, pp. 356–69. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26393216>. , 364.

⁸ Lunstrum, “Conservation Meets Militarisation”, 364.

⁹ Lunstrum, “Conservation Meets Militarisation”, 364.

¹⁰ Lunstrum, “Conservation Meets Militarisation”, 364-365.

¹¹ Lunstrum, “Conservation Meets Militarisation”, 365.

a paramilitary force from previous years, just with different intentions and goals. From the 1980s onward, rangers would be trained in a paramilitary fashion in order to best tackle commercial poaching. However, this has forced the poachers to reevaluate and adjust their tactics to more military-based tactics to best combat the rangers.¹²

This thesis will delve deeper into the field of green militarization and explore what this means for conservation. By doing so, this thesis will analyze how and why certain measures are allowed to be taken in the name of conservation. Therefore, the overarching research question for this thesis will be:

How has the militarization of anti-poaching in the name of conservation within Kruger National Park been justified and sustained by local actors in South Africa from 2008 to 2018?

By looking at the term ‘militarization’, this thesis will aim to show how certain military practices have been utilized for conservation. By using the term ‘conservation’, this thesis will explore how exactly anti-poaching efforts have manifested into wildlife protection efforts. By analyzing the terms ‘justified’ and ‘sustained’ this thesis will delve deeper into the actual securitization processes and look at how exactly the use of military means has been explained to the local communities. By looking at the timeframe of 2008 to 2018, it gives me enough room to research both primary data as well as secondary literature and gain a better understanding of the processes that have taken place in regard to anti-poaching. Choosing to start my research in 2008 is an obvious choice because this is when the poaching crisis had fully developed into a crisis. Choosing to stop at 2018 will allow my research to be more focused on the actual time frame that these military efforts have taken place. 2015 was the peak of rhino poaching numbers and since then, the numbers started to decrease.¹³ Thus, by looking at 2008-2018, it will give me enough data to analyze to see the process of militarization. In addition to this research question, various subquestions will be used per chapter in order to help answer the overarching research question of this thesis.

¹² Lunstrum, “Conservation Meets Militarisation”, 365.

¹³ “Poaching Statistics”, *Save the Rhino*, <https://www.savetherhino.org/rhino-info/poaching-stats/#:~:text=The%20current%20rhino%20poaching%20crisis,more%20that%20we%20must%20do>.

Historiography

This thesis will build on the multiple works by Elizabeth Lunstrum regarding green militarization and how local actors in South Africa have used this as a means to instill militarized conservation practices. In her article, “Conservation Meets Militarisation in Kruger National Park: Historical Encounters and Complex Legacies”, she discusses how exactly conservation has become militarized. This article offers a good explanation of the historical context of KNP and how this has been utilized in military/conservation discourse. Lunstrum discusses how exactly poaching became an issue, from around 2004 onwards, and gives a detailed history regarding conservation legacies in South Africa.¹⁴ She also touches upon the colonial apartheid era of South Africa and what this meant for KNP and conservation in general. She argues that KNP was the symbol of social segregation through the use of conservation as a political vehicle for exclusion.¹⁵ This article is in a chronological order that eventually concludes that KNP has always been a means of conservation but conservation motivations have significantly changed.¹⁶

In her other article, “Green Militarization: Anti-Poaching Efforts and the Spatial Contours of Kruger National Park”, she discusses a more theoretical rhetoric of green militarization of KNP. She focuses on the use of ‘spatial contours’ and how this can represent a variety of things regarding discourse. This article also gives a good basis for the definition of green militarization as well it showcases a clear history of using military means to combat poaching, starting with the hiring of General Johan Jooste.¹⁷ Lunstrum also discusses the importance of the natural heritage narrative and how this acts as an enabling feature of militarization.¹⁸

Rosaleen Duffy discusses the critical side of green militarization in her articles, “Why We Must Question the Militarisation of Conservation” and “Waging a War to Save Biodiversity: The Rise

¹⁴ Lunstrum, “Conservation Meets Militarisation”, 364-365.

¹⁵ Lunstrum, “Conservation Meets Militarisation”, 360.

¹⁶ Lunstrum, “Conservation Meets Militarisation”, 364-65.

¹⁷ Lunstrum, “Green Militarization”, 816-818.

¹⁸ Lunstrum, “Green Militarization”, 820-822.

of Militarized Conservation”. Rosaleen Duffy argues that since the 2000s, there has been an increased interest in using fortress conservation models in order to protect natural resources and wildlife, which can also include military means.¹⁹ The biggest takeaway from both articles is that green militarization will never be a successful means of conservation because fighting force with force will only result in a continued cycle of violence.²⁰

Francis Massé’s article “Community Participation Is Needed for More Effective Anti-Poaching” offers significant insight into the role of community participation. He discusses and analyzes how this could offer an alternative to militarized anti-poaching methods. His main argumentation is that inclusivity allows people to have a say in what goes on, which gives them a degree of power and a sense that what they say matters.²¹ Massé did research in South Africa and Mozambique and concluded that people are more likely to get involved in anti-poaching efforts if they gain financial compensation.²²

One of the more well-known theories this thesis will use is securitization theory. While securitization is not going to be the sole method of analysis in this thesis, it is nevertheless a helpful framework used to help decipher certain narratives and discourses surrounding green militarization and conservation in the literature and primary sources analyzed. Therefore, it remains important to touch upon how exactly this thesis will make use of this framework. Securitization theory was initially developed by scholars involved in the Copenhagen School. Securitization would be an analytical framework to help understand the processes in which something becomes a security issue and is acted upon. This means that a threat is becoming something that is put on the political agenda and thus involves a process by which an issue leaves the ‘normal’ sphere of the political debate and is seen as an emergency. This then allows for urgent political action to take place.²³ By applying this to something like green militarization, it allows further and more analytical exploration into how an issue, such as the poaching crisis, is put on the political agenda as an emergency.

¹⁹ Duffy, “Waging a War to Save Biodiversity”, 819.

²⁰ Duffy, “Waging a War to Save Biodiversity”, 822.

²¹ Massé, “Community Participation”.

²² Massé, “Community Participation”.

²³ Columba Peoples and Nick Vaughan-Williams, “Chapter 5” in *Critical Security Studies: An Introduction*, London, New York: Routledge, 2010, 35-36.

A significant amount of literature surrounds the issue of the impacts and consequences of green militarization in South Africa as well as this regarding Kruger National Park. While there has been a lot of research about what green militarization is and the impacts it has had, not much research has been done about the actual justification and securitization of this type of militarization. By positioning my thesis in the historiography and academic debate discussed above, it will aim to show how different major themes have been identified when it comes to looking at how exactly militarization has been justified as well as the discourse surrounding the acceptance by local communities. Conservation is a very well-known topic and thus plenty of literature has been written about it. While this thesis will delve into the world of conservation, it will aim to utilize the readily available knowledge about the topic and apply this to identify the major themes when looking through the lens of green militarization and conservation wars. By analyzing the discourse of green militarization in Kruger National Park, this thesis will explore something new by looking at certain common characteristics that have come up in both secondary literature and primary sources. By positioning this thesis in the historiography and academic debate of green militarization and conservation, I will aim to show how certain local actors within South Africa have appealed to the public by specifically focusing on and emphasizing two different overarching themes; that of certain socio-economic benefits and appealing to the symbolism of identity. Additionally, this thesis will make use of well-known theories that have been applied to a range of case studies but have not been thoroughly applied to KNP in this context. Using these theories as guidance with the help of primary sources and already existing literature, this thesis will include an analysis that will give a unique take on conservation and militarization.

Methodology

In order to answer the overarching research question, exploration into both primary data and secondary literature will be done. As mentioned earlier, securitization theory will be the main analytical toolkit that will be used to analyze primary sources in order to help understand what processes took place to turn green militarization into a security issue. Therefore, discourse analysis will be the primary method of analysis. In order to successfully apply discourse analysis, primary sources will be used as they will show how certain local actors such as the SANPark

representatives, military generals, ministers, etc. have securitized the issue of poaching and illegal wildlife trade. Secondary sources will be used for the historical context and overall context of poaching in Africa. In terms of the methodology for this thesis, the discourse analysis aspect of securitization theory will be utilized throughout. In order to do so, the use of primary sources will be vital. By looking at how and what certain political actors have said about the topic of illegal poaching and wildlife trade, we can gain a better understanding on how exactly international actors have securitized this topic.

The main sources that will be used for this analysis will come from the Kruger National Park archives, the SANParks archives, the DFFE archives, as well as news articles and online publications. From these databases, press releases, speeches, reports, etc. will be used. By looking at these documents, it becomes clear that a sense of emergency was being portrayed. By looking at specifically South African documents, it will give a different and more well-rounded perspective on illegal wildlife trade and poaching and how national parks in Africa have dealt with it. Especially by looking at sources that specifically discuss the controversy of the militarization of wildlife and the environment, it can give a better perspective on the problems that the local communities face when foreign international actors place their military presence.

Structure

This thesis will be divided into different chapters that will address the different aspects of militarization and conservation. Chapter one will focus specifically on the impact of poaching on security and how green militarization has come about. This chapter will also look at this through the lens of conservation wars. The aim of this chapter would be to explore how conservation has become militarized and how it managed to get on the security agenda. It will also lay the foundation for how the different narratives will be analyzed. Chapter two will go into depth about the first discursive narrative of socio-economic benefits and will further look into the role of community and tourism. Chapter three looks at the second narrative of the symbolic nature of identity when it comes to justifying and sustaining green militarization. This chapter will go into depth about the role of history as well as natural heritage in sustaining militarization. Chapter three will offer insights into the shortcomings of green militarization and why it has been so heavily criticized as

a means of conservation. It will also look at alternative anti-poaching methods and explore the success of this by analyzing the case study of the Black Mambas. Finally, the conclusion will offer a summary and answer the overarching research question, followed by suggestions for further exploration.

Chapter 1: A “War To Save the Rhino”

This first chapter will act as a way to introduce the key lenses that will be touched upon in the coming chapters. Green militarization is the phenomenon of using military methods in the name of conservation. This means that conservation is inherently militarized by nature. By explaining what green militarization is and how it has been justified allows for a better understanding of how this can be maintained. But what does ‘militarization’ mean in the context of poaching and conservation in Kruger National Park? In this thesis, conservation wars are going to be the overarching lens that green militarization falls under and so a brief introduction to what conservation wars actually mean will ensure a better understanding of how green militarization fits into the scope of conservation.

1.1 Poaching and Poaching Motivation

Kruger National Park is the largest national park in South Africa. It covers around 20,000 square kilometers and is roughly the size of Wales. Kruger has now become part of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park and in total, covers around 35,000 square kilometers.²⁴ According to the Kruger Park website, “The creation of the Transfrontier Park is a milestone in terms of conservation, and cooperation between countries.”²⁵ When Kruger National Park joined together with Limpopo National Park, they became the symbol of security and peace. Once the poaching crisis had kickstarted, all of these symbols were threatened. By threatening stability, security, and peace of the people within and around Kruger, it caused a mesh of unpleasant consequences of poverty and a militarized response. The use of military tactics to deal with the poaching problem allowed for a militarized presence in Kruger. This kind of response generated consequences for the local communities where access to natural resources became limited and resulted in an increase in

²⁴ “Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park”, Kruger Park. <https://www.krugerpark.co.za/great-limpopo-transfrontier-park-south-africa.html>

²⁵ “Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park”, Kruger Park. <https://www.krugerpark.co.za/great-limpopo-transfrontier-park-south-africa.html>

poverty.²⁶ One of the biggest motivations behind rhino poaching in South Africa is that the rhino horn holds such high economic value that it is estimated that it will be worth up to \$20,000 per kilogram by 2022.²⁷ The biggest market for rhino horn is predominately in Asia where the consumers buy for value, cultural norms, and for status symbol. In addition to this, corruption also plays a large role in poaching where government officials, rangers, and police have been seen to allow poaching.²⁸ Regarding anti-poaching strategies, the government has implemented para-military enforcement. These strategies have become extremely militarized where a high budget is being spent on military-grade anti-poaching equipment as well as partnerships and collaborations with military and private military companies.²⁹ The biggest evidence that proves militarization in the name of conservation lies in the ‘shoot-to-kill’ policy that has been adopted within Kruger confirms that the war against poaching has become a ‘war’.³⁰ In this context, looking at the narrative of this in some documents from SANParks is very interesting. From a media release in 2013, it can be clearly seen how this militarized discourse is utilized, “Our intensified efforts, together with our partners, are starting to bear fruit. The poachers and their bosses will not get away with these crimes. They must know they cannot hide, and we will hunt them down wherever they are.”³¹ By using words such as “hunt” and “crimes”, the narrative automatically becomes very war-like and paints an image of this clearly being a war against poachers.

Within this line of argumentation, the more advanced military equipment meant the more effectively people could deal with this war on poaching. This led to an intensification of military training, military weapons, and tactics in order to ensure that this conflict would be resolved. The discourses used when it comes to this militarization regarding conservation are extremely essential in order to give off the feeling that this truly is a ‘war’ and thus ‘war-like tactics’ must be used.³² As argued by Witter and Satterfield, “In these other ways, racialized discourses about poverty and

²⁶ R Witter and T. Scatterfield, “Rhino Poaching and the ‘Slow Violence’ of Conservation-Related Resettlement in Mozambique’s Limpopo National Park.” *Geoforum* 101 (2019): 275–84. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2018.06.003>, 275.

²⁷ “Rhino Horn Price - How Much Is A Rhino Horn Worth?”, Rhino Rest. <https://www.rhinorest.com/rhino-horn-price/#:~:text=Rhino%20horn%20trading%20is%20quite.kg%20for%20African%20rhino%20horns>

²⁸ Witter, “Rhino Poaching and the ‘Slow Violence’”, 276.

²⁹ Witter, “Rhino Poaching and the ‘Slow Violence’”, 276.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ “Media Release: Eight suspected poachers arrested”, SANParks 02 May 2013. <https://www.sanparks.org/about/news/?id=55516>

³² Witter, “Rhino Poaching and the ‘Slow Violence’”, 277.

poaching have long been influential and extremely consequential in this region. Past and present, they legitimize illicit violence against suspected poachers...”³³ Going off another example from a SANParks news release is how the language of military means is being used, “On Wednesday, 24 July, SANParks Rangers based in the Houtboschrand section of the KNP , made contact with a group of three poachers, a shootout ensued and one poacher was wounded and arrested at the scene, unfortunately the other two managed to escape back into Mozambique. A .458 hunting rifle, ammunition and poaching equipment were recovered.”³⁴ This shows that violence has been used but it also shows that this is an arms race, something that will be discussed further on. From the same news release, the justification of such violence is illustrated by Johan Jooste, “SANParks Special Operations Head, Major General Johan Jooste (RET) congratulated his members and reminded them that this is a battle we cannot afford to lose.”³⁵ Again, this narrative shows the use of violence but it also frames this conservation effort as a “battle” that South Africa cannot afford to “lose”. This kind of terminology shows that this is being framed as a militarized conservation effort. This example also clearly shows how Jooste is confirming and thus justifying that this kind of action is necessary for South Africa.

1.2 Conservation Wars

The idea of conservation wars is quite a military-based perspective. In order to explain what the intricacies of conservation wars mean, it is helpful to analyze different sides of the academic debate. Authors Kristian Gustafson et al., argue that the only way to truly combat poaching is to treat it as a security issue. They argue that “nothing will work to preserve the rhino from extinction other than to treat the poaching of the rhino (and, also, elephant) as effectively a security issue.”³⁶ This line of debate is centered around the idea that security measures will be the only way to go about this threat. In theory, by using advanced tactics and skills as well as intelligence, anti-poachers will likely be more successful in attempting to combat poaching. This is a more

³³ Witter, “Rhino Poaching and the ‘Slow Violence’”, 278.

³⁴ “Media Release: Kruger National Park rangers successfully arrest four poachers”, SANParks 26 Jul. 2013. <https://www.sanparks.org/about/news/?id=55623>

³⁵ Media Release: Kruger National Park rangers successfully arrest four poachers”, SANParks 26 Jul. 2013. <https://www.sanparks.org/about/news/?id=55623>

³⁶ Kristian Gustafson et al., “The Bush War to Save the Rhino: Improving Counter-poaching Through Intelligence”, *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 29:2 (2018): 269-290, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2018.1435220>, 270.

securitized approach because it places poaching on the national security agenda with a sense of emergency which will allow for actions to be taken and justified. Thus, these advanced tactics will be allowed to happen. In this light, Gustafson et al. mention, “it is possible to wage a war on poaching: the poacher is a known, armed individual who is not easily replaced.”³⁷ They argue that it becomes relatively easy to securitize this issue by treating this problem as something that is in our hands, it becomes our responsibility to protect the ‘good’ from the ‘bad’. By simplifying good from bad, we can recognize that the poacher is the true and only cause of illegal wildlife trade, and hence, we are able to offer security for the animals in danger.³⁸ This line of reasoning is not as simple as Gustafson et al. points out. There are many different aspects that one must factor in when it comes to combating poaching and often, it becomes very difficult to securitize this matter to such an extent that poachers are being *solely* targeted as an act of war with direct violence. However, Gustafson et al. argue that framing poaching as an organized crime will allow for certain security measures to be taken against the poachers. By arguing that poaching is a criminal act, this would mean that there is a certain label to it and thus certain action must be taken to prevent this crime from happening.³⁹ Instead, they argue that certain intelligence tactics must be used in order to gain a better understanding of the poaching networks. They argue that the bush war tactics should be adopted where aggressive counter-poacher approaches are being used. They conclude that this is the only successful way to effectively protect the animals at risk.⁴⁰

When understanding the lens of conservation wars or, as coined by Jasper Humphreys and L.R. Smith, ‘rhino wars’, it is essential to realize that this is a type of tactic that uses military strategies to get to their goal. By specifically using the term ‘war’ in their rhetoric, it automatically becomes about what war entails.⁴¹ Humphreys and Smith argue that South Africa uses such tactics because of their long and complex history of dealing with threats through methods of confrontation. They argue that because in the past South Africa, especially during the apartheid era, had promoted a strong sense of patriotism, the state is doing something similar regarding the rhetoric of ‘rhino

³⁷ Gustafson, “The Bush War”, 270.

³⁸ Gustafson, “The Bush War”, 271.

³⁹ Gustafson, “The Bush War”, 271.

⁴⁰ Gustafson, “The Bush War”, 284.

⁴¹ Jasper Humphreys and M.L.R. Smith, “The ‘rhinofication’ of South African Security”, *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 90 no. 4 (2014): 795-818. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24538198>. , 795.

wars'.⁴² When Major General Johan Jooste was appointed as the leading person for the counter-poaching campaign in South Africa, it can easily be seen that he used a very military-infused narrative regarding the poaching issue and how they were going to tackle it. Jooste was a key figure in this campaign and made it very clear to the public that this was a threat to national security.⁴³ When looking at how this issue was securitized to the public, it is important to note the intense and extremely graphic imagery and narrative that was used to describe the brutality of rhino poaching. Figure 1 shows exactly what kind of images can affect the narrative surrounding the brutality of the poaching crisis.



Figure 1. An image made by Brent Stirton from the National History Museum won an award for ‘The Wildlife Photographer of the Year’ in 2017. It shows the brutality of the rhino poaching crisis in South Africa. Picture, “Wildlife Photographer of the Year: The brutal reality of rhino poaching.” National History Museum, 2017. <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/the-brutal-reality-of-rhino-poaching.html>

This thus places a sense of urgency and emergency to deal with the issue that was being shaped as a threat. That being said, it is also important to note that this type of narrative only appeals to a

⁴² Humphreys, “The ‘rhinofication’ of South African Security”, 795.

⁴³ Ibid.

fraction of the population in South Africa. When looking at this through a strictly historical lens, the black population and their relationship to wildlife/wildlife conservation is lacking. This is because, during the apartheid era, the rhetoric of conservation was utilized as a method of discrimination and racism. It was also a way of implementing the ‘exceptionalism’ of the white population in South Africa.⁴⁴ What Humphreys and Smith coined as ‘rhinofication’ can be explained as the process of turning rhino poaching into a national security threat, thus placing it within the security narrative. By doing so, the South African state is justifying its counter-poaching tactics as a means to protect South Africa from external and internal threats.⁴⁵

1.3 Green Militarization

When it comes to explaining green militarization and the impact this has on conservation, it is important to firstly look at the debate surrounding the justification behind it. A key turning point regarding the militarization of the KNP was the appointment of Major-General Johan Jooste. He became the head of Operation Rhino in 2012 and thus became a symbol of the increasingly intense military strategy used to combat the poaching crisis. He also led Operation Corona which focused on securing borders surrounding the park as a means to slow down the flux of poachers entering from neighboring countries. Not only did these operations follow military strategy but there were also soldiers deployed in Kruger as well as rangers being trained through military methods.⁴⁶ The South African state managed to justify the intensification of military means by arguing that the poachers were representing organized crime and this should be dealt with.⁴⁷ As Jooste argues in “An Appraisal of Green Militarization to Protect Rhinoceroses in Kruger National Park” together with Ferreira, we can clearly see Jooste’s way of thinking behind the policies of military intervention in the name of conservation within KNP. Jooste and Ferreira argue that the trafficking of wildlife in certain countries has extremely negative consequences for species in the world. This type of trafficking is usually motivated by economic factors such as high demand from foreign markets, the potential for gaining a lot of profit from sales, or even governments that do not take this threat seriously. It can induce a cycle of violence between poachers and rangers in certain

⁴⁴ Humphreys, “The ‘rhinofication’ of South African Security”, 796.

⁴⁵ Humphreys, “The ‘rhinofication’ of South African Security”, 800.

⁴⁶ Rosaleen Duffy, “Waging a War to Save Biodiversity: The Rise of Militarized Conservation.” *International Affairs (royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 90, no. 4 (2014), 823.

⁴⁷ Duffy, “Waging a War to Save Biodiversity”, 823.

wildlife parks in Africa. There is thus a strong correlation between an increase in poaching and an increase in economic growth in the countries where the poachers sell their game.⁴⁸ When it comes to a response to tackle the poaching of rhino horns, South Africa responded with a mix of interventions that target the issue on a national and international level.⁴⁹ The more traditional methods of regulation of poaching include perimeter and area protection through technology and intelligence approaches led by the South African government with help from private military companies and rangers.⁵⁰ The act of militarization occurs within the Kruger National Park as a form of active and organized law enforcement. This form of militarization includes the collective act of forming a military organization with well-trained people, having equipment and resources, funding, scoping out the best approaches for the potential threat of war as well as having appropriate techniques to tackle issues that fall under the environmental-security nexus.⁵¹ When it comes to the environment and security, more specifically the military aspect of security, green militarization is a term often used to describe military action that specifically centers around environmental emergencies.⁵² Within South Africa and within the national parks, wildlife rangers are tasked to protect areas that are dense in animals. They are there to maintain the territorial integrity of these parks and ensure that the wildlife is protected at all costs. Law enforcement plays a significant role in the tasks of rangers.⁵³ Falling under South African law, rangers now have access to weapons that are better suited for combat as well as new and improved technology to ensure proper adaptation to the techniques of the poachers.⁵⁴ In this sense, green militarization becomes a method to ensure that national security threats are being dealt with. It becomes a formal requirement of the state to protect from any form of threat and once the wildlife has been placed on the security agenda, the government is responsible for seeing through with measures that will ensure such security.

The war against rhino poaching and the need for conservation becomes part of a larger security narrative that impacts the way states go about national security and thus justifies the means

⁴⁸ Johan Jooste and Sam M. Ferreira, "An Appraisal of Green Militarization to Protect Rhinoceroses in Kruger National Park," *African studies quarterly* 18, no. 1 (2018): 49.

⁴⁹ Johan, "An Appraisal of Green Militarization", 49.

⁵⁰ Johan, "An Appraisal of Green Militarization", 49.

⁵¹ Johan, "An Appraisal of Green Militarization", 50.

⁵² Johan, "An Appraisal of Green Militarization", 50.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Johan, "An Appraisal of Green Militarization", 51.

necessary to achieve this.⁵⁵ It can thus be argued that counter-poaching strategies have become part of the national security strategy that the South African state implements.⁵⁶ The implementation of Johan Jooste to tackle the poaching security issue in South Africa has been analyzed as a way to provide the public with discourse to confirm that there is enough being done to ‘save the rhino’ as well as to show the public that South Africa is taking this threat seriously.⁵⁷ There could also be an argument in the fact that because South Africa’s military history has been so intense, it becomes easy to fall into ‘old habits’. In this sense, it can be a natural response for the state to deal with threats in a confrontational manner, and in this context, South Africa has dealt with poaching in a ‘hard power’ manner. Thus, using force to deal with the threat rather than using ‘soft power’ such as negotiation.⁵⁸ Militarized anti-poaching methods are used more regularly and are more accepted as a legitimate way to combat poaching.⁵⁹ Duffy argues that certain imagery is used in the discourse surrounding conservation where the sole purpose is for this to encourage the public to support conservation efforts. In most cases against poachers, for example, intervention is a common means of conservation. Military language used by some actors will then draw upon the responsibility to protect.⁶⁰ Duffy says that “This principle centres on an international security and human rights norm to address the international community’s failure to prevent and stop genocides, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.”⁶¹ When applying this logic to cases of poaching, we as humans have a responsibility to protect wildlife and our natural environment. The impact of this is the normalization and institutionalization of militarized approaches. Duffy et al., argue that the reason for such a high demand in green militarization is the pressure to act ‘urgently’ in order to protect the natural environment and biodiversity. Duffy et al., state that, “One of the strongest arguments in favour of militarised conservation is that it is the best (or only) workable option in areas of intense armed conflict.”⁶²

⁵⁵ Mark Shaw and Julian Rademeyer, “A Flawed War: Rethinking ‘Green Militarisation’ in the Kruger National Park.” *Politikon* 43, no. 2 (2016): 173–92. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02589346.2016.1201379>. , 180.

⁵⁶ Shaw, “A Flawed War”, 180.

⁵⁷ Shaw, “A Flawed War”, 181.

⁵⁸ Shaw, “A Flawed War”, 182.

⁵⁹ Duffy, “Waging a War to Save Biodiversity”, 819.

⁶⁰ Duffy, “Waging a War to Save Biodiversity”, 821.

⁶¹ Duffy, “Waging a War to Save Biodiversity”, 821.

⁶² Rosaleen Duffy, Francis Massé, Emile Smidt, Esther Marijnen, Bram Büscher, Judith Verweijen, Maano Ramutsindela, Trishant Simlai, Laure Joanny, and Elizabeth Lunstrum. “Why We Must Question the Militarisation of Conservation.” *Biological Conservation* 232 (2019): 66–73. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2019.01.013>. , 67-69.

This can be seen when it comes to how South Africa has contextualized this issue. In a speech given by Minister Edna Molewa in 2012, we can see the extent of the issue, “The Kruger National Park continues to bear the brunt of these losses, with the rhinos poached in the park having reached a staggering total of 95. This is no longer an environmental management problem ONLY, but it has become a matter in which we have involved all law enforcement agencies.”⁶³ In this quote, it can be seen how the narrative includes references to law enforcement agencies and how this has changed from being solely an environmental issue but now it has become a securitized issue where special measures are being used to address it. In order to consolidate such a change, rangers are being praised for their anti-poaching efforts. In a speech by Minister Creecy, rangers are being applauded for what they are doing in the name of conservation, “And so it is an important honour to be with the men and women who work on the frontline of conservation and fight against poaching in protected areas across the country.”⁶⁴ Here, the narrative includes stating that anti-poaching is a “fight” and that rangers are on “the frontline”. The rhetoric of war is being used to further insinuate that this is a war they are fighting against poachers. Creecy goes on to say, “As we focus on the war against rhino poaching, we remember that our field rangers are in the midst of a battle for all our plant and animals species”.⁶⁵ Again, this quotation really illustrates a clear narrative of military use and war. In the same speech, Creecy commemorates a ranger who had passed, “We will pick up your son’s fallen spear. We will continue his fight. He shall not have passed in vain.”⁶⁶ This kind of narrative holds emotion and justifies to the public that the rangers are sacrificing their lives for this fight against poachers. In a similar speech given in 2016 by Tokozile Xasa, the same narratives are being used, “I would like to begin my address by asking you to join me in observing a moment of silence to honour those who have died in the cause of protecting our natural heritage.”⁶⁷ Here, the links are clearly being made between sacrifices rangers

⁶³ “Minister Edna Molewa addresses rhino poaching media engagement at Kruger National Park”, Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and Environment, 04 April 2012.

https://www.dffe.gov.za/speech/molewa_rhinopoaching_briefingat_krugerpark

⁶⁴ “Minister Creecy honours rangers on World Ranger Day 2019 at Kruger National Park”, Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and Environment, 31 Jul. 2019,

https://www.dffe.gov.za/speech/creecyhonoursrangers_worldrangerday2019

⁶⁵ “Minister Creecy honours rangers on World Ranger Day 2019 at Kruger National Park”, Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and Environment, 31 Jul. 2019,

https://www.dffe.gov.za/speech/creecyhonoursrangers_worldrangerday2019

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ “Speech delivered by the Deputy Minister of Tourism, Ms. Tokozile Xasa on behalf of Minister Edna Molewa at the 5th Annual Rhino Conservation Awards”, Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and Environment, 11 Jul. 2016,

<https://www.dffe.gov.za/speech/annualrhinoconservationawards>

make in the name of conservation. Xasa continues on to say, “Poaching has changed the face of conservation, and it is a war that cannot be won alone. We can only succeed if we work together.”⁶⁸ Lastly, an example that shows the priorities of these militarized efforts is shown in a media release by SANParks in 2010, “The Chief Executive Officer of SANParks, Dr David Mabunda, said that it was unfortunate that there has been a loss of a life. However, it was important not to detract from the real issue here the fact that our national heritage is under serious attack.”⁶⁹ By using the phrase “detract from the real issue”, it shows that the priorities for South Africa remain to continue the fight against poachers, even if it means that poachers have to die. In a similar tone, “We want to send a stern warning to would be poachers that we are as organised as they are and we will fight fire with fire all in an effort of protecting our natural resources”.⁷⁰ This quote shows the same militarized narrative again; by stating that they will “fight fire with fire” in order to “protect our natural resources”, it clearly insinuates that conservation has become a fully militarized issue.

These quotes illustrate how militarization is being securitized in the name of conservation. It is a clear display of green militarization where rangers are being commemorated for their hard work and efforts (which can include dying for the cause) and the link is continuously being made to the importance of conservation.

1.4 Discussion

As discussed in the above sections, green militarization is a phenomenon where military means for conservation have been securitized. Military-based conservation becomes a means to tackle the poaching crisis that is very prevalent within Kruger. By securitizing the issue, it is being made out to seem very urgent. By doing so, the issue has already been securitized to the public. But how exactly do these actors maintain this action? How do these actors appeal to the public to keep their conservation efforts going? By looking at literature and primary sources, two common themes come to light. The following chapters will go into depth regarding these characteristics and analyze

⁶⁸ “Speech delivered by the Deputy Minister of Tourism, Ms. Tokozile Xasa on behalf of Minister Edna Molewa at the 5th Annual Rhino Conservation Awards”, Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and Environment, 11 Jul. 2016, <https://www.dffe.gov.za/speech/annualrhinoconservationawards>

⁶⁹ “Media Release: Suspected poacher shot dead in KNP”, SANParks, 14 Oct. 2010, <https://www.sanparks.org/about/news/?id=1547>

⁷⁰ Media Release: Suspected poacher shot dead in KNP”, SANParks, 14 Oct. 2010, <https://www.sanparks.org/about/news/?id=1547>

how these two themes have appealed to the public. When analyzing ‘green militarization’ through the lens of ‘conservation wars’, two different analytical discursive themes occur. The following chapters will look into environmental socio-economic benefits that include the role of the community as well as the role of tourism. After that, the symbolic nature of identity will be analyzed and topics such as environmental patriotism and belonging will be looked at as well as the role of natural heritage and history. Whilst all of these themes are interlinked and remain intrinsically connected, the following chapters will go into depth about the different discursive characteristics that have been identified when looking at the militarization of anti-poaching efforts and how this type of military action is justified within Kruger National Park. By looking at this, it becomes easier to grasp an understanding of how militarization has been securitized and maintained. Looking at the justification of militarized conservation, the narrative essentially relies on the connection between the rhinos and a significant rise in poaching. By claiming that the rise in poaching becomes a security threat, it is automatically being placed on the security agenda.

Chapter 2: Socio-Economic Benefits

When it comes to understanding how the securitization of military means as an anti-poaching method has been justified, it is important to look at how certain actors have appealed to the public. By using certain narratives, militarized conservation efforts are being embedded into the local population. This chapter will explore the socio-economic benefits that are being expressed to the public regarding conservation. To what extent does the community play a role in environmentalism when it comes to conservation efforts? And how exactly have economic benefits been used as a form of motivation for conservation? By exploring these questions, the following chapter will aim to show that certain narratives and incentives play a significant role in swaying public opinion and ensuring that local communities participate in wildlife conservation.

2.1 The Role of Community and Environmental Responsibility

Poaching as a form of illegal wildlife crime negatively impacts endangered species but it also threatens the security of the region, tourism, poverty as well as social stability within local communities.⁷¹ This is a reason why conservation efforts are encouraged and in this sense, green militarization is a way to reduce these negative impacts of poaching. When trying to understand the justifications of conservation militarization, it should be noted that the discourse around it promotes stability in local communities as well as the local economy. “An in-depth understanding of the social and psychological fabric influencing people’s views on conservation, poaching and illicit trading of wildlife is crucial in order to understand the motivational factors behind their acceptance or rejection of wildlife crime.”⁷² One of the main factors regarding the acceptance of conservation is related to the values that local communities have. This can influence how easily green militarization becomes appreciated by the public. Authors Louiza Duncker and Duarte Goncalves argue that the attitudes towards such conservation methods are influenced by their social and economic interests. This comes down to shared experiences and shared values. By following the discourse that wildlife is a symbol of certain values that people share, it can become easier for the justification of extensive conservation methods to be accepted.⁷³ Duncker and

⁷¹ Louiza C. Dunker and D. Gonçalves, “Community perceptions and attitudes regarding wildlife crime in South Africa”, (2017), <http://hdl.handle.net/10204/9384>, 191.

⁷² Dunker, “Community perceptions”, 191.

⁷³ Dunker, “Community perceptions”, 192.

Goncalves discuss how local communities and their attitudes are heavily influenced if they are part of the decision-making and conservation efforts. Going back to the role of tourism, people will respond more positively when they reap the economic benefits of conservation.⁷⁴ Based on a research investigation that they did, they concluded that most members of local areas surrounding national parks were more in favor of conservation if they gained some form of benefit from it. The majority of the people said that they believed conservation was a good thing because it allowed for an increase in the influx of tourism and job opportunities.⁷⁵

In the same light, the people who said that conservation was not good were people who happened to not have jobs within the parks which meant that this type of economic benefit did not apply to them. Additionally, this also meant that their accessibility to the parks was limited.⁷⁶ When looking at how to incorporate communities into wildlife the Community-based Wildlife Management/Community Parks Management (CWM/CPM) theory came about. This theory argues that the communities that have previously struggled with the exclusion of being part of conservation practices should now have a bigger say in conservation practices and deserve to reap the benefits of this. This approach would essentially be a bottom-up approach that would allow for communities that have previously been marginalized to have more of a say regarding a sustainable, long-term solution to wildlife conservation. In theory, this approach would have allowed for more people to be more involved in conservation efforts but in reality, studies have shown that people were not as receptive or interested.⁷⁷ However, the fact still remains that people will be more willing to accept certain conservation efforts if they gain benefits from it, and where local people do not play a role in this and thus do not gain anything from it, they will be less likely to support conservation efforts.⁷⁸ As argued accurately by Duncker and Goncalves, “Changing an individual’s environment may not change his behavior if his perceptions do not change accordingly”.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Dunker, “Community perceptions”, 192.

⁷⁵ Dunker, “Community perceptions”, 193.

⁷⁶ Dunker, “Community perceptions”, 193.

⁷⁷ Dunker, “Community perceptions”, 194.

⁷⁸ Dunker, “Community perceptions”, 195.

⁷⁹ Dunker, “Community perceptions”, 195.

Mamba et al., argues that “the commitment and participation of local people in conservation activities, however, are crucial for conservation success”.⁸⁰ The same logic can be applied to Kruger National Park because, as discussed above, the local community becomes an essential aspect to allow conservation practices to continue, especially that of military nature such as green militarization. In the past, many conservation strategies would exclude the local community and overlook the importance and value that their participation can bring to how successful a conservation effort is.⁸¹ As argued by Mamba et al., “the perceptions and values held by local people towards conservation areas determine the way the communities interact with these areas, which in turn, has a bearing on the effectiveness of conservation efforts”. When looking at the case of KNP in South Africa, we can see that this sense of community narrative is continuously applied. From the official SANParks website under the section of ‘People and Conservation’, we can see how this narrative is used: “By promoting conservation, improving park access, assisting with environmental initiatives and inviting local people to discuss and cooperate in future policies – the parks are taking up a responsible role in society. Thanks to this people are starting to see their SANParks neighbour as a benefit – and not a burden.”⁸² This quotation is an example of how people are utilizing their environmental responsibility - their responsibility to protect the natural environment. By framing it like this, specifically by using words such as ‘benefit’ and ‘burden’, it represents a responsibility to protect the environment.

Similarly, when looking at the role of community and environmental responsibility, a strategic project report by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment indicates this narrative. This source looks at Transfrontier Conservation Areas which essentially means the areas where wildlife conservation is being focused on. It focuses on areas such as national parks, private game reserves, hunting grounds, etc. “Community involvement is key to the success of the TFCA programme. With their involvement the TFCAs are bestowed with the legitimacy that they deserve”, This quotation shows how cooperation and community involvement are essential aspects of gaining legitimacy. This source goes on to argue that “regional peace, co-operation and socio-

⁸⁰ Hlelwenkhosi Mamba, Timothy Randhir, Todd Fuller, “Community Attitudes and Perceptions Concerning Rhinoceros Poaching and Conservation: A Case Study in Eswatini”, *South African Journal of Wildlife Research* 50, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.3957/056.050.0001>, 1.

⁸¹ Mamba, “Community Attitudes”, 1.

⁸² “People and Conservation”, SANParks, <https://www.sanparks.org/conservation/people/>

economic development” all go hand-in-hand.⁸³ Closely linked to the narrative of community is the role of tourism in conservation efforts. In order for the community to become involved, financial benefits are often seen as a motivation to participate in such efforts. The following section will highlight the significance of tourism and the role this plays in the discourse of conservation.

2.2 Tourism and the Impact of Commodification

Poaching is seen to be one of the biggest threats to wildlife and the natural environment. Poaching not only deliberately causes harm to animals but is also a leading factor in animal extinction. As a way to deal with this issue, conservation efforts have led to a concept called ‘ecotourism’ as a means to help protect wildlife through the use of tourism.⁸⁴ Ecotourism is then a way to gain a source of income by protecting wildlife from poachers. An example of what ecotourism can mean is by sustaining the local economy by allowing travelers to see and learn about local wildlife. This can be moderated and is a sustainable way of appreciating local people and wildlife needs.⁸⁵ There have been ecotourism projects across the world that focus on tourism as a means of conservation. How this works in some cases is that instead of locals poaching for income, the notion of tourism is used as an incentive for job opportunities. It then becomes a way of community management and marketing where local people are being encouraged to take up jobs in the tourist industry instead of relying on poaching and hunting for their income.⁸⁶ Therefore, ecotourism becomes a way for local communities to replace poaching as the means for their income and follow a more sustainable route where conservation is achieved by hosting tourists from across the world.

Wildlife-dense areas have always attracted a certain level of tourism, especially in countries that are not as readily accessible. This is because “protected natural areas are attractive to visitors because the protected status ensures their naturalness”.⁸⁷ When looking at Kruger National Park, the amount of tourists has significantly risen. Since 2012, Kruger has had over 1.4 million tourists

⁸³ “Transfrontier Conservation Areas”, Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, https://www.dffe.gov.za/projectsprogrammes/transfrontier_conservation_areas

⁸⁴ Ecotourism World. “Wildlife Conservation through Ecotourism.” *Ecotourism World*, 15 Apr. 2021, www.ecotourism-world.com/wildlife-conservation-through-ecotourism/.

⁸⁵ “Wildlife Conservation through Ecotourism”

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Sanette Ferreira and Alet Harmse, “Kruger National Park: Tourism Development and Issues Around the Management of Large Numbers of Tourists”, *Journal of Ecotourism* 13 no. 1 (2014): 16-34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14724049.2014.925907>. , 16.

per year and this can be classified as mass tourism. SANParks, including Kruger, reap the benefits of such mass tourism. However, it can also have some significant consequences for conservation itself. As discussed above, it is no surprise that tourism feeds into the conservation efforts of national parks. But what has not been discussed yet are the downfalls to mass visitors.⁸⁸ This requires intense and well-thought-out management plans to allow tourists to get an enjoyable experience out of visiting Kruger. The biggest goal that Kruger has in terms of this is to allow for tourism to have positive impacts on the natural environment, successful conservation, and inclusive community efforts.⁸⁹ Rhinos and other animals in South Africa are being commodified because they are of high value and status. Because there is such a high demand for these products, the rhino, and other animals become extremely sought after. However, this also increases the value of *protecting* these species. Not only does this impact the economic aspect of the commodification of rhinos but it also impacts the way this can be utilized for tourism. South Africa's economy is thus extremely dependent on this as a way to ensure economic success.⁹⁰

According to the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), tourism is an extremely effective way to allow African economies to flourish. Because Africa is home to wildlife, many people from around the world travel to Africa to see these sights. It becomes essential to take care of and protect these animals because the role of tourism is necessary for the country's economic status.⁹¹ Thus, protecting animals such as elephants and rhinos from poachers has become a priority for some governments in Africa who rely on the revenue from tourism. Additionally, it has become part of the agenda to include the local communities in these efforts. The African Wildlife Foundation creates employment opportunities for local people living close to certain national parks so that they can also reap the benefits of tourism in their area. This is something called sustainable tourism where local people are purposefully included so that they will also gain economic benefits from the areas that they call home.⁹² According to AWF, it becomes essential for this reason to educate local communities in order to raise awareness around the fact that conserving wildlife comes with benefits. In the past, people often killed local wildlife in order to protect their land and use their

⁸⁸ Ferreira, "Kruger National Park: Tourism", 16.

⁸⁹ Ferreira, "Kruger National Park: Tourism", 18-19.

⁹⁰ Humphreys, "The 'rhinofication' of South African Security", 801.

⁹¹ "Sustainable Tourism." *African Wildlife Foundation*, www.awf.org/community/sustainable-tourism. Accessed 25 Aug. 2023.

⁹² "Sustainable Tourism".

meat for income. AWF thus promotes a more sustainable way of using wildlife to earn an income. Their website indicates that they aim to improve “economic returns from ecolodges on communal land” where they will help cash-poor communities in developing economically sustainable wildlife initiatives such as ecolodges.⁹³ By doing this, local communities are allowing their land to fall under land that is being monitored for the conservation of wildlife. By doing so, they are gaining financial compensation in addition to helping expand the areas that are allowed to be protected. Additionally, AWF aims to “bring revenue and social services to communities’ “. By doing so, tourists will be asked to pay certain fees to help endangered species. By doing this, certain sustainable initiatives generate funding for the community which is used for social services, infrastructure, and education.⁹⁴

Similarly, Rhino Africa argues that they are “dedicated to unifying our industry so that we can reap the rewards for years to come rather than decimate our natural resources and habitats for short-term gain.”⁹⁵ The idea of sustainable tourism in South Africa is centered around community benefit and protecting the wildlife that makes South Africa so special. Ideally, tourism will offer employment to local communities that have previously used hunting and poaching as a means to sustain themselves.⁹⁶ By allowing for better tourist conditions, this will hopefully also offer better economic conditions for the local community. By doing this, tourism can actually work as a means of conservation. These organizations really focus on sustainable tourism where tourism is centered around protecting the environment as well as the natural heritage of certain countries. As mentioned earlier, sustainable tourism really focuses on the role of the local community and giving them a source of income. When looking at direct sources from actors in South Africa, it can be seen that tourism is something that is really emphasized. According to a statement by the DFFE in 2015, “The President pointed out that rhino, as key members of the Big Five, contribute to job creation in rural communities, particularly those adjacent to conservation areas. They contribute to local economic growth through eco-tourism and the local and foreign visitors to the reserves in

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ “Sustainable Tourism in Africa.” *Rhino Africa*, <https://www.rhinoafrica.com/en/about-us/sustainable-tourism/80816>

⁹⁶ “Sustainable Tourism in Africa”.

communities every year”.⁹⁷ The statement goes on by saying that President Zuma said that, “Saving the rhino may ultimately save all our communities from poverty, increased crime and suffering”.⁹⁸ This clearly illustrates the link between the importance of tourism in ‘saving’ the communities from poverty by ‘saving’ the rhino. The discourse here indicates a clear connection between conservation efforts and an increase in financial stability. Another prime example of this is seen in a speech given by Minister Marthinus Van Schalkwyk in 2008 that emphasizes the role of tourism, “not only does it provide material benefits by alleviating poverty but it also instils and grows cultural and national pride. It creates a greater awareness of the natural environment and its economic value and most importantly creates a heightened sense of ownership.”⁹⁹ He goes on to say that because, “tourism is vital to the economy, we have to do the following to ensure its sustainability: protect the environment and heritage...”¹⁰⁰ Similarly, in another speech by Schalkwyk, he argues that tourism is essential for bringing revenue to the country but he also mentions the value in conservation. “The real value of tourism goes well beyond concepts like revenue, turnover, and occupancy rates. The greatest value of tourism lies in its power to bring people together, to help conserve the environment and to uplift communities.”¹⁰¹ By looking at keywords and phrases such as “vital” to the economy, “protect the environment”, “conserve the environment” and “uplift communities”, the narrative used by these actors can clearly be seen. They are consolidating the link between conservation and tourism which means the link between tourism and financial stability.

⁹⁷ “President Jacob Zuma leads Anti-Rhino Poaching Awareness Day in the Kruger National Park” *Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment*. 01 Nov. 2015,

https://www.dffe.gov.za/mediarelease/president_zuma_antirhinopoaching_awarenessday2015

⁹⁸ “President Jacob Zuma leads Anti-Rhino Poaching Awareness Day in the Kruger National Park”

⁹⁹ “Minister Marthinus Van Schalkwyk’s speech at the Africa Investor Tourism Awards”, *Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment*, 25 Feb. 2008,

https://www.dffe.gov.za/speech/vanschalkwyks_africainvestor_tourismawards

¹⁰⁰ “Minister Marthinus Van Schalkwyk’s speech at the Africa Investor Tourism Awards”

¹⁰¹ “Minister Marthinus Van Schalkwyk’s tables Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism 2008/09 Budget Vote at National Assembly (NA)” *Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment*, 20 May 2008, https://www.dffe.gov.za/speech/vanschalkwyk_200809budgetvote

2.3 Discussion

When looking at the narratives of socioeconomic benefits of conservation efforts, it was interesting to see how the role of community and tourism played a role. The analysis of primary sources clearly indicated how local actors within South Africa really tried to consolidate the feeling of responsibility from the community in order to protect South Africa's natural environment. The discursive phrases used showed how actors appealed to the public by stating the *importance* of community efforts to help conservation. In addition to this, actors also appealed to the economic aspect of community efforts, mainly through the narrative of tourism. Tourism was continuously linked by actors to the success of the economy. By framing conservation as a means to ensure a stable economy, actors have justified all means of conservation efforts to the public. By appealing to the communities to not only support but also become active in conservation, these actors are solidifying their grounds to continue their efforts.

Thus, it can be concluded that by allowing local communities to participate in conservation approaches, they are more willing to accept different kinds of conservation methods, such as the militarization of conservation. In addition to this, tourism as a means of conservation incentive has proven to be a successful narrative surrounding the justification of conservation methods. This is because communities are more willing to work together to combat poaching if there are economic incentives involved. By using the narrative of protecting South Africa's economic income, which means better economic distribution to local communities, green militarization can be justified and sustained because it is securitized to 'protect' wildlife and wildlife becomes a means for income. The following chapter will analyze another overarching narrative found in the discourse of conservation efforts. It will touch upon how the symbolism of identity, sense of belonging, natural heritage, and history all play a role in sustaining conservation efforts.

Chapter 3: The Symbolism of Identity

This chapter is going to explore another overarching narrative that has been influential in allowing conservation efforts like green militarization to be sustained in the eyes of the public. The following sections will analyze how identity plays a role in securitizing an issue to the public. Within the case of Kruger, two discursive trends have been identified in literature and sources. This chapter will aim to show how local people have feelings of belonging and thus are more inclined to accept conservation methods. Additionally, discourse also touches upon the concept of natural heritage within Kruger, and the history of the national park in the context of South Africa will also play a role in how conservation is perceived. This chapter will aim to answer the question of: What role does South Africa's history and political context play in the need for extensive military action when it comes to anti-poaching?

3.1 The Impact of History On Conservation

The term Green Militarization is used to emphasize the links and connected processes that involve the military and conservation in light of protecting the environment. However, drastic consequences result in this as most times, military presence entails evicting populations in order to try and expand protected areas.¹⁰² From the 1980s onwards, conservation with military influence has heavily increased and focused specifically on rhino and elephant poachers. Africa saw this poaching as a big security threat and thus implemented policies that included military action and lethal weapons to try and target rangers.¹⁰³ This has created a certain discourse on conservation rhetoric where wildlife started to become part of a 'moral community' and poachers were described as ruthless or 'morally lacking'. This discourse impacts the way policies and such have been created in order to normalize military action in the name of conservation.¹⁰⁴ In the early twentieth century, Kruger National Park was a way for British and Afrikaner factions to come together and build a unified white nation-state. As Elizabeth Lunstrum argues, this resulted in African inhabitants being removed with force in order to create an area of spectacle where Kruger was set

¹⁰² Elizabeth Lunstrum, "Green Militarization: Anti-Poaching Efforts and the Spatial Contours of Kruger National Park." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 104, no. 4 (2014): 816–32. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24537596>, 819.

¹⁰³ Lunstrum, "Green Militarization", 819.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

to be seen as a national belonging for the white settler nation.¹⁰⁵ However given South Africa's colonial history, the park has been working on reinventing the values of Kruger, for all South Africans where wildlife becomes the embodiment of national heritage.¹⁰⁶

When it comes to the role of history, the narrative usually surrounds careful descriptions of past grievances. "Much as the countries of Southern Africa cannot be separated from a shared history and struggle for freedom, so too can we not be detached from our shared history of conservation and development. Many of the national parks that exist in the region today were once areas of conflict and war. Today that war has taken on a different guise. It is a war against the wildlife of the region which is a source of tourism and income for our countries, and an important source of job creation and poverty alleviation."¹⁰⁷ This quote is a really good example of how history is utilized in the discourse surrounding the need for poaching. This quote shows that history is needed in the narrative that shows the importance of combating people who wage a war against wildlife. By comparing this kind of 'war' to the war that these areas have experienced in the past, it creates a sentiment of necessity because the discourse plays on people's perception of war. By depicting poaching as an issue to go to war over, it brings a certain level of importance and urgency.

Comparing this to a more recent perspective, extreme security measures have been taken in order to decrease and put a stop to the poaching crisis in Kruger National Park. These security measures are not just limited to Kruger but it also deals with the areas surrounding the park. Mozambique borders KNP and the majority of the poachers that enter the park come from Mozambique. This then becomes an issue that involves other actors. The South African and Mozambican governments have worked together in order to reel in the poaching crisis and focus on security improvement. This then aims to create a unified conservation effort in order to protect wildlife.¹⁰⁸ When it comes to strategies to mitigate poaching, South Africa and

¹⁰⁵ Lunstrum, "Green Militarization", 820.

¹⁰⁶ Lunstrum, "Green Militarization", 820.

¹⁰⁷ "Minister Edna Molewa's speech on the occasion of the signing of a MoU between the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the Republic of Mozambique", *Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment*, 17 April 2014, https://www.dffe.gov.za/speech/molewa_signingmou_mozambique

¹⁰⁸ Francis Massé and Elizabeth Lunstrum, "Accumulation by Securitization: Commercial Poaching, Neoliberal Conservation, and the Creation of New Wildlife Frontiers." *Geoforum* 69 (2016): 227–37. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2015.03.005>, 227.

Mozambique agreed on creating a space between the borders to monitor conservation. An example of this is the Greater Lebombo Conservancy. Within this area, poaching is regulated and monitored by it being completely enclosed and consolidated. Masse and Lunstrum argue that this is an example of how the securitization of poaching has been acted upon. Masse and Lunstrum argue that this is a form of neoliberal conservation as a way of “accumulation by dispossession or green grabbing”. However, they also argue that this is not a form of typical dispossession or green grabbing that is usually based on capital accumulation but rather it is based on securitization. As goes with typical examples of securitization, capital accumulation is justified by a certain narrative of security that allows for such dispossession or green grabbing.¹⁰⁹ Within the context of Kruger, security narratives helped allow for land to be freed for tourism and thus meant the accumulation of capital. In order to allow for this to happen, the border fences surrounding Kruger were dropped to allow easier access to wildlife, which then allowed for a greater market for tourism. Within this, the security narratives were motivated by local actors in South Africa and even actors from Mozambique who wanted to protect the wildlife in Kruger. The Greater Lebombo Conservancy then becomes a real-life manifestation of how security narratives helped justify land to be used in the name of wildlife conservation but it also taps into the role of how history can influence such levels of commodification.¹¹⁰

3.2 Natural Heritage

Kruger is blessed with megafauna like rhinos and elephants that attract attention to South Africa and add to the natural culture of the country.¹¹¹ Given the importance of the role of animals in Africa, Kruger has become one of the most important and culturally significant sites of rhino conservation.¹¹² The militarization that consumes Kruger on multiple dimensions includes a military presence on the ground but also in the skies and is controlled by various military actors such as rangers, and soldiers, as well as private and public military organizations, and services.¹¹³ Elizabeth Lunstrum argues that spatial characteristics of protected areas such as Kruger, matter a

¹⁰⁹ Massé, “Accumulation by Securitization”, 227-228.

¹¹⁰ Massé, “Accumulation by Securitization”, 228.

¹¹¹ Lunstrum, “Green Militarization”, 820.

¹¹² Lunstrum, “Green Militarization”, 820.

¹¹³ Lunstrum, “Green Militarization”, 817.

great deal when it comes to looking at conservation and militarization. Lunstrum argues that these spatial characteristics can lead to militarization when they are connected to certain political-ecological values such as state sovereignty and cultural heritage. In the case of Kruger and the greater context of South Africa, rhinos are seen as a very significant aspect of the nation's heritage and thus, poachers are seen as a threat.¹¹⁴ When poachers attack a historical symbol like the rhino, it essentially attacks the natural heritage of South Africa. This is then seen as a direct attack on the values South Africa has, by using this kind of narrative it becomes easier to convince the public to take drastic measures to ensure that this does not happen.

Loosely defined, heritage means how current generations wish to keep certain aspects of history for future generations. The importance of heritage can mean different things for different people but it remains a fact that heritage is an essential part of feeling attached to a certain place or object. It has to do with people's values and identities and how this influences the importance of safeguarding these places and objects.¹¹⁵ South Africa has always had a very vast natural and cultural heritage and it can have a variety of importance to certain communities.¹¹⁶ SANParks CEO David Mabunda has actively spoken about how the loss of the country's rhinos is a devastating sign of a strike against SA's culture and heritage. He has previously said that hiring private military companies will help against the poachers in order to restore their natural heritage.¹¹⁷ Various other actors have also commended soldiers and rangers for their work in defending rhinos which, in turn, means defending the nation's heritage. This essentially means that the rhino is invited into the concept of national community. This national community has been nurtured and protected by the national park and not only does this protection mean the protection of the ecological wildlife but also the nation's heritage.¹¹⁸ This allows for legitimate use of violence within the area and so militarization becomes effortlessly authorized as a means of conservation and protection against poaching because the rhinos, through this discourse, are

¹¹⁴ Lunstrum, "Green Militarization", 818.

¹¹⁵ M Cocks, S Vetter, and K. F Wiersum. "From Universal to Local: Perspectives on Cultural Landscape Heritage in South Africa." *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 24, no. 1 (2018): 35–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2017.1362573>, 35.

¹¹⁶ Cocks, "From Universal to Local", 36.

¹¹⁷ Lunstrum, "Green Militarization", 826.

¹¹⁸ Lunstrum, "Green Militarization", 826.

seen as an integral part of the national community.¹¹⁹ There are many aspects of this topic that allow for a justification of military presence within Kruger and one of them can be South Africa's natural resources.¹²⁰ The discourse that surrounds conservation against rhino poaching in South Africa typically frames rhinos not only as an aspect of wildlife but more so as a symbolic embodiment of SA's natural heritage. The rhino is one of Africa's "Big Five" and thus plays a significant role in the perception of Africa's culture and heritage.¹²¹ This framing essentially authorizes the state's militarized response because it also shapes the official discourse and allows for a justification for an armed response under the light of conserving South Africa's natural heritage.

As seen in sources from SANParks and DFFE, this narrative is used in order to touch upon people's sense of identity in South Africa. Based on a media release statement in 2018 by SANParks, we can see how the heritage discourse is being used. "We need to step up the campaign against this onslaught on our natural heritage by criminal syndicates just as we saw in this weeks."¹²² Following this, "society cannot stand by and watch helplessly as criminals declare war on our natural heritage, We all need to defend our heritage with everything we have and stand together to stop these killings."¹²³ These two quotes from the media release clearly show that heritage is something very meaningful to the identities of South Africans, and by having poachers kill these identity symbols, it becomes a very emotional topic. Similarly, in a speech by Molewa, anti-poaching is depicted as a way to save South Africa's natural heritage, "Together with the SANParks Honorary Rangers the organisation has pledged to continue to empower the dedicated field rangers in South Africa's national parks in the protection of rhino – a part of the country's national heritage."¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² "Media Release: Let Us Join Hands to Defeat Poaching of Rhino" *SANParks*, 25 Sep. 2018. <https://www.sanparks.org/about/news/?id=57609>

¹²³ "Media Release: Let Us Join Hands to Defeat Poaching of Rhino" *SANParks*, 25 Sep. 2018. <https://www.sanparks.org/about/news/?id=57609>

¹²⁴ "Minister Edna Molewa welcomes youth commitment to the fight against rhino poaching", *Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment*, 21 Sept. 2013. https://www.dffe.gov.za/mediarelease/molewa_welcomes_youthcommitment

3.3 Discussion

This section has looked at the important role that history and heritage have when it comes to the discourses and narratives regarding the justification of green militarization. These two aspects of the bigger lens of identity show that actors in South Africa can utilize feelings of belonging and identity by making use of the historical background as well as how important heritage is on a bigger scale. This exploration showed that poaching can affect a country's national pride and that has an emotional appeal to local communities. When it comes to heritage, this can mean something for a person's feelings of identity but it also means something on a more global scale. Heritage and the fact that the rhino is a big symbol of this allows for tourism to flourish in South Africa, which means that it is beneficial for the local economy. If poachers are targeting a national symbol of heritage, then it can cause a range of consequences.

Chapter 4: Alternatives to Green Militarization

This chapter will delve deeper into the impacts of green militarization and will try to show what the downfalls of militarized conservation are. By doing so, this chapter will argue that for conservation efforts to be long-term and successful, different aspects such as the local community must be extensively considered. The following section of this chapter is going to analyze the alternatives to green militarization and go into depth about the potential that inclusivity has as a method of anti-poaching. To substantiate this argument, the Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit will be discussed to look at how successful inclusive anti-poaching is and what the potential could be. Is there an alternative to green militarization? And how has this manifested in real life within Kruger National Park? To fully help answer the overarching research question, this final chapter aims to answer these questions by looking at the counter-argumentation surrounding green militarization and generally questioning how successful this form of conservation truly is. By looking at the downfalls and understanding the alternatives, it helps give a greater perspective on conservation as a whole.

4.1 The Shortcomings of Green Militarization

One of the most influential actors regarding the new ‘war’ on rhino poaching is SANDF (the South African National Defence Force) which has been formed in order to tackle the pressing security issues that come with poaching in the national parks in South Africa. SANDF specializes in counter-insurgency warfare tactics in order to counter the poaching problems within the national parks. The people employed are now using this as a business opportunity to make money as well as put their military skills to use. As well as this, the majority of the operations are led by ex-army generals and personnel, which gives it a highly militarized dynamic.¹²⁵ There has always been a military-based approach present when dealing with poaching. It should be noted that past responses have included that of ranger, paramilitary, and military efforts in which the army had participated. Thus, the concepts of ‘war’ and ‘conservation’ have often been interlinked. It has thus become a symbol for wildlife protection and has set the tone for how the state practices and

¹²⁵ Shaw, “A Flawed War”, 173.

deals with conservation.¹²⁶ It becomes clear that the language of ‘war’ has been often used in the discourses surrounding conservation. Because of war and the military coming up in dialogue relating to wildlife, it can be argued that the use of violence is part of the state's policy in order to deal with these threats. It has been argued by Mark Shaw and Julian Rademeyer that by using terms such as green militarization and green violence, we are able to see how violence and oppression are linked to the establishment of conservation areas.¹²⁷ Especially in South Africa and the vast historical context of certain national parks, many people have been forcibly displaced in order to make room for conservation efforts. This then ties into human rights abuses and how certain government policies aggravate a cycle of violence. When looking at national government policy, conservation wars and the violence that comes with them are often justified by stating that this is done for national security.¹²⁸ As Shaw and Rademeyer have argued, it essentially creates a war dynamic between the state and local communities. Especially given the socio-economic history, it can lead to feelings of oppression.¹²⁹

One of the biggest arguments against green militarization centers around the fact that it enables a cycle of violence within local communities and is even responsible for some human rights abuses in these areas. One of the biggest drawbacks of such approaches is the force and violence that comes with it. Because of the famous shoot-on-site policies green militarization enables, many national parks have killed a range of suspected poachers. In addition to direct violence, it also allows dispossession and forced displacement of local communities which can further fuel already existing grievances.¹³⁰ Inclusive anti-poaching is a way to promote less violent anti-poaching approaches. This method focuses on winning the support of local communities by making sure that they are aware of the benefits of conservation and also making sure they are actively involved in these efforts. This will be discussed in the following sections and will use a case study to show how this has become an example within Kruger National Park.

¹²⁶ Shaw, “A Flawed War”, 174.

¹²⁷ Shaw, “A Flawed War”, 175.

¹²⁸ Shaw, “A Flawed War”, 175-76.

¹²⁹ Shaw, “A Flawed War”, 175.

¹³⁰ Ezekiel Dobelsky, Christianne Zakour, Ellery Saluck, Navashna Gajathar, “The Problem with Green Militarization: The Need to Explore Peaceful Alternative Approaches To Wildlife Conservation”, *Ecosystems for Peace*, 31 Jan. 2022, www.ecosystemforpeace.org/compendium/the-problem-with-green-militarization-the-need-to-explore-peaceful-alternative-approaches-to-wildlife-conservation.

4.2 Inclusive Anti-Poaching

Green militarization is heavily criticized for the approach being heavily based on military methods which can often lead to human rights violations and deepen already existing grievances within communities, some have opted to look more into alternative forms of conservation. An example of this is something called ‘inclusive anti-poaching’ where this form of conservation goes beyond the use of force and militarization. Here, the strong focus lies with the community and local populations. With this method, local people are recognized and are not marginalized, as they would be in more conventional methods of conservation.¹³¹ “The solution to wildlife trafficking does not lie in doling out more severe punishments but in rewarding positive behaviours”, Inclusive anti-poaching becomes a way to promote less violent anti-poaching approaches. This method focuses on winning the support of local communities by making sure that they are aware of the benefits of conservation but also making sure they are actively involved in these efforts.¹³² By looking at inclusivity, it allows for people to have a say and discuss their own ideas. However, just like any type of conservation when local people are involved, incentive becomes a significant aspect of gaining support. Many local communities are more willing to participate in conservation efforts if they receive benefits, either direct or indirect material gains. Especially in poverty-ridden communities, dependence on financial means is essential.¹³³ Thus, if a certain form of conservation offers financial conservation, local people are more willing to be influenced. Based on research that Massé did in South Africa and Mozambique, it can be said that in order for local people to become more involved in these strategies is to ensure that the local communities are getting financial rewards and compensation for their efforts.¹³⁴

As mentioned above, an alternative to the heavy militarism in green militarization conservation is inclusive anti-poaching. An example of such an effort could be the Mangalane Community Scout Programme (MCSP). This is an example in Mozambique but it is worth looking into because it

¹³¹ Francis Massé, “Community Participation is Needed For More Effective Anti-Poaching”, *The Conversation*, 13 Sept. 2022, theconversation.com/community-participation-is-needed-for-more-effective-anti-poaching-82596.

¹³² Ezekiel Dobelsky, Christianne Zakour, Ellery Saluck, Navashna Gajathar, “The Problem with Green Militarization: The Need to Explore Peaceful Alternative Approaches To Wildlife Conservation”, *Ecosystems for Peace*, 31 Jan. 2022, www.ecosystemforpeace.org/compendium/the-problem-with-green-militarization-the-need-to-explore-peaceful-alternative-approaches-to-wildlife-conservation.

¹³³ Massé, “Community Participation”.

¹³⁴ Massé, “Community Participation”.

offers some key insights into the benefits of inclusivity that could be applied to South Africa. Gardiner et al., argue that this can help address the poaching crisis in a more sustainable manner where these anti-poaching initiatives can benefit local people in surrounding areas.¹³⁵ This scout initiative is based in the Sabie Game Park where people would be employed as local scouts to perform patrol duties as well as monitor the reserve. The main motivation for people to join this initiative was the salary aspect of it as well as gaining experience in terms of doing a job that is very similar to border policing.¹³⁶ Gardiner et al., argue that “bringing local people into anti-poaching efforts serves to increase the credibility and legitimacy of the SGP’s anti-poaching and conservation efforts in adjacent communities”.¹³⁷ This would then be a way to try and move past the divide between conservationists and local populations. It would show a way to be productive in terms of collaboration. And while the majority of the people apply for jobs like this because of the economic benefits, Gardiner et al., believe that this will raise awareness and educate people on the importance of conservation. As stated by them, “The salary itself cannot compete with the money from rhino poaching, but it does offer an income in an area where the economy is largely subsistence oriented, and based on migrant labour to South Africa or rhino poaching.” This quote shows that money is still the prime motivation but efforts like this could lead to better job opportunities.¹³⁸ By discouraging people from entering the field of poaching and illegal wildlife trade but offering them job opportunities, people become better educated and aware of how vital conservation is and what protecting the local wildlife means for the economy. This shows the potential of inclusivity when it comes to anti-poaching efforts but it also shows that this approach is not without flaws. Despite there being a lack of motivation from local populations to join such efforts when there are no material benefits to them, it still allows for the dialogue to happen and allows an opportunity for raising awareness.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Alan Gardiner, Lubilo Rodgers, Themba Ntlhalele Martha, Francis Massé, “Inclusive Anti-Poaching? Exploring the Potential and Challenges of Community-Based Anti-Poaching”, *Sa Crime Quarterly* 2017, no. 60 (2017): 20. <https://doi.org/10.17159/2413-3108/2017/v0n60a1732>.

¹³⁶ Gardiner et al., “Inclusive Anti-Poaching?”, 22.

¹³⁷ Gardiner et al., “Inclusive Anti-Poaching?”, 23.

¹³⁸ Gardiner et al., “Inclusive Anti-Poaching?”, 23.

¹³⁹ Gardiner et al., “Inclusive Anti-Poaching?”, 26.

4.3 The Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit

The Black Mambas were founded in 2013 and patrol over 96 square miles of nature reserves connecting to KNP. The Mambas are notorious for their unarmed ideology where they believe that reducing anti-poaching will not be achieved through violence and military means. Since 2013, it is estimated that they have helped reduce wildlife poaching by 62 percent.¹⁴⁰ The duties of the Black Mambas include patrolling areas of the park, monitoring who is around the park, and setting up road blockades.¹⁴¹ In an interview with National Geographic, the Black Mambas state that they are proud that they are rangers that do not make use of weapons, “Poachers are even more dangerous, because they carry weapons, and we don’t. During our training, we learnt how to hide and escape danger.”¹⁴² They also pride themselves in their program to help educate communities to become more pro-conservation. They aim to do this by forming a bond with people and interacting with neighboring communities as this could induce social change.¹⁴³ They believe that community awareness programs will be beneficial because they encourage people to support peaceful forms of conservation where both the rhino's lives and the poacher's lives are being protected.¹⁴⁴ In the same interview, one of the Mambas mentioned that doing this job as a woman is very empowering but they also bring a lot to the world of conservation, “Women are primary caregivers who are good at building relationships and keeping secrets. Gathering intelligence is an important part of our work. I think women have more self-control.”¹⁴⁵ They also set up a primary school education program called the Bush Babies Environmental Education Program, which provides schools with education surrounding the benefits of habitat and species conservation.¹⁴⁶ A study conducted by James Danoff-Burg and Alejandrina Ocasas aimed to investigate how likely

¹⁴⁰ James A. Danoff-Burg and Alejandrina R. Ocañas, “Individual and Community-Level Impacts of the Armed All-Women Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit”, *Zoo Biology* 41, no. 5 (2022): 479-90. <https://doi.org/10.1002/zoo.21705>, 479-480.

¹⁴¹ Rachel Hierholzer, “Rhino Poaching: Green Militarization in South Africa”, *MIR*, 20 Aug. 2021, www.mironline.ca/rhino-poaching-green-militarization-in-south-africa/.

¹⁴² Emma Gregg, “Meet the Black Mambas, South Africa’s all-female anti-poaching unit”, 22 March, 2021. <https://www.nationalgeographic.co.uk/travel/2021/03/meet-the-black-mambas-south-africas-all-female-anti-poaching-unit>

¹⁴³ Danoff-Burg, “Individual and Community-Level Impacts”, 480.

¹⁴⁴ Hietholzer, “Rhino Poaching”.

¹⁴⁵ Emma Gregg, “Meet the Black Mambas, South Africa’s all-female anti-poaching unit”, 22 March, 2021. <https://www.nationalgeographic.co.uk/travel/2021/03/meet-the-black-mambas-south-africas-all-female-anti-poaching-unit>

¹⁴⁶ Danoff-Burg, “Individual and Community-Level Impacts”, 480.

the Black Mambas would be able to change community perceptions to become more perceptive to pro-conservation efforts. Their conclusions were that many people wanted wildlife to be preserved, especially for future generations. In one of the communities that they studied, they reported that the education program for primary schools had a big impact because it educated the younger generation about wildlife and biodiversity. Based on this study, the authors argue that using a combination of child-focused conservation educational techniques in addition to financial benefits, has the potential to create a more community-based form of conservation.¹⁴⁷

The act of securitization, otherwise stated as ‘spectacles’ by Koot and Veenenbos, are key ways to educate the general public on conservation issues. In South Africa, these spectacles are often related to the narratives surrounding green militarization where military-based tactics are being integrated into conservation efforts.¹⁴⁸ More recently, there has been a shift away from these tactics of anti-poaching but rather more has been invested into less violent methods such as the inclusion of the community. As mentioned above, this framework has strong potential to be successful if we take into account what motivates the local community. Root and Veenenbos discuss this further in their article regarding female-inclusive anti-poaching efforts in South Africa. They investigate the role of the Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit. They argue that in order for this to be recognized and accepted by the public, the use of ‘spectacles’ is necessary.¹⁴⁹ Framing becomes an essential aspect of this because it convinces the audience of a certain narrative.¹⁵⁰ In these inclusive anti-poaching approaches, the role of females is looked at. It has been argued that having women in the role of anti-poaching allows for success. This is because there is a sentiment that women are good at forming community relations and also that women are perceived as more ‘caring’. This might build up a feeling of trust, which is essential to communities because, “caring is predominantly articulated as nurturing”.¹⁵¹ In this light, it can be argued that women can have more of an impact because of this. When comparing this to the violence that occurs through green militarization, which is a predominantly male occupation, women are often perceived as more dedicated to protecting the environment, “implies that men (especially male rangers) are less capable of doing

¹⁴⁷ Danoff-Burg, “Individual and Community-Level Impacts”, 487-488.

¹⁴⁸ Sasja Koot and Frederiek Veenenbos, “The Spectacle of Inclusive Female Anti-Poaching: Heroines, Green Militarization and Invisible Violence”, *Geoforum* 144 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2023.103806>, 1.

¹⁴⁹ Koot and Veenenbos, “The Spectacle of Inclusive”, 1.

¹⁵⁰ Koot and Veenenbos, “The Spectacle of Inclusive”, 2.

¹⁵¹ Koot and Veenenbos, “The Spectacle of Inclusive”, 5.

community work and that they do not care, revealing symbolic violence”.¹⁵² Because of the success that the Black Mambas have had, they have gained international recognition. They have even been rewarded with certain awards and receive funding from international organizations. This can result in the commodification of anti-poaching incentives by touching upon neoliberal conservationist methods. The Black Mambas, for example, offer different ways for people to fund them by portraying themselves as representations of less violent ways of anti-poaching.¹⁵³

Recognized both internationally and locally, the Black Mambas remained to be an example of how community effort and inclusivity can be successful. In a speech delivered by Minister Edna Molewa the Black Mambas have been praised for their efforts, “The Black Mambas are a shining example of the promise of government, the private sector and communities to eradicating rhino poaching in South Africa. I, and all South Africans, salute these young women who all come from communities close to the Balule Game Reserve and the Kruger National Park who have shown dedication and commitment to the conservation of our natural world.”¹⁵⁴ In another speech also given by Molewa in 2018, the Black Mambas are praised again as rangers who combat poaching but also educate the local communities, “The work of the Black Mambas doesn’t just focus on conducting anti-poaching operations in the Balule Nature Reserve in Limpopo; they also spend a great deal of time educating communities in the area on the benefits of conservation and rhino protection.”¹⁵⁵ These examples illustrate the importance of community efforts when it comes to inclusive anti-poaching methods and it also indicates that there is hope for less violent means of conservation.

4.4 Discussion

This chapter has shown that green militarization is a concept that is not without flaws. There are many shortcomings to the use of military means in the name of conservation and it comes with a lot of debate and criticism. While green militarization may be useful to gain direct outcomes of combating poachers, it can also fuel more violence. Given the military nature of this form of

¹⁵² Koot and Veenbos, “The Spectacle of Inclusive”, 5.

¹⁵³ Koot and Veenbos, “The Spectacle of Inclusive”, 7.

¹⁵⁴ “Minister Edna Molewa congratulates Black Mambas”, *Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment*, 7 Sept. 2015. https://www.dffe.gov.za/mediarelease/molewa_blackmamaba_rhinopoaching

¹⁵⁵ “Minister Edna Molewa’s address on occasion of World Ranger Day celebration”, *Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment*, 01 Aug. 2015, https://www.dffe.gov.za/speech/molewa_2015worldrangerday

conservation, local communities disapprove of such means of 'hard power'. This chapter also offered a discussion of alternatives to green militarization which included the concept of inclusive anti-poaching. While in theory, this alternative would be successful, the incentive to join such initiatives comes down to financial compensation. Lastly, this chapter looked at a case study of IAP within Kruger National Park where the Black Mambas offer non-violent anti-poaching services. Many people have praised the Mambas for their efforts and their success is well-known. A significant aspect of their ideology lies within the community and education. By raising awareness, they hope to show that conservation can be an extremely beneficial part of maintaining South Africa's natural environment and biodiversity. Again, not all IAP methods will always be successful because most of the communities seek financial motivation but it still remains a good start to keep these initiatives going and by raising awareness, hopefully more people will be inclined to support non-violent conservation.

Conclusion

Poaching in Kruger National Park has become a worldwide issue and the actors in South Africa have been tackling this issue ever since the poaching crisis had properly taken effect in 2008. Many different solutions to the problem were suggested but one managed to take form. Green militarization is the use of military action in the name of conservation. This phenomenon has been managed to be securitized within South Africa and it is extremely interesting how this has happened. Despite green militarization being a popular counter-poaching method, it has received a lot of criticism regarding the violent nature of the strategy. Green militarization makes use of military means such as military training, military personnel, equipment, and technology. This makes it inherently militarized and can cause violence to be used and justified under the narrative of conservation. Green militarization is an aspect of conservation wars where the war narrative has been used to emphasize that this is an urgent issue. Securitization theory is an interesting framework for analysis regarding the processes of how this issue has been made urgent to the public and has been acted upon.

When analyzing the different discourses and narratives in the literature and primary sources, two interesting common themes came up. Within these themes were various aspects that had been used to not only justify but also sustain such conservation methods. This thesis explored the two overarching themes of socio-economic benefits and the symbolic identity of the local communities. Within these two themes were different narratives that had stood out during research. By viewing these narratives through the lens of green militarization, it can be seen exactly how actors have managed to maintain their militarized efforts. By appealing to the public through socio-economic benefits, the community automatically becomes involved. The research done has shown that when there is an economic incentive, local communities are more willing to listen to conservation appeals. By looking at the role of tourism we can clearly see that people are more willing to be receptive to conservation dialogue and discussion when they will reap the benefits. In this light, anti-poaching efforts under the name of conservation, including militarized conservation, will be accepted by the community if they gain financial compensation. When looking at the symbolic nature of identity, we can clearly see how discourse and narratives can appeal to local communities. By appealing to natural heritage and the history of South Africa, actors are justifying

their militarized conservation efforts by stating that they are protecting the value of the country. Because rhinos hold such symbolic value even on a global level, it becomes easy to argue that rangers are fighting a war against poachers because these poachers are a threat to what South Africa holds as its identity.

In the last section of this thesis, the impacts of green militarization were critically assessed and it was argued why it is not a sustainable method of conservation. Furthermore, different alternative approaches were looked at to see how effective they were as anti-poaching methods. IAP is a way to include the community in these efforts without the use of violence. This thesis also explored a case study in Kruger National Park regarding IAP. The Black Mambas are an anti-poaching unit that prides itself on the use of non-violent methods and raising awareness in the local communities. While it was concluded that local communities are less willing to join such initiatives without financial compensation, educating people still remains a very promising framework that can be built on for future non-violent conservation initiatives.

In conclusion, making use of securitization as an analytical framework is an interesting way of seeing how certain processes have emerged and are placed on the security agenda. The poaching crisis was something that was dealt with such a sense of urgency. Looking at how green militarization has managed to ensue is an interesting exploration into how certain actors have used discourse to appeal to the public in order to maintain this sense of urgency and need to keep using military means for conservation. Even though different anti-poaching methods have been explored and seem promising, they are similar to green militarization methods in the sense that communities will always disagree with certain methods and approaches used. This is because the interests of some people will vary and will never follow one set of universal ways of thinking.¹⁵⁶ In addition to what has been analyzed and looked at in this thesis, it is suggested that there should be further exploration done into the impacts of inclusive anti-poaching. For further study, this thesis suggests looking at a comparison of the success rates of IAP compared to green militarization. Investigating this further will show how this could be securitized to the point where certain rules, regulations, and legally binding policies can ensure community-based anti-poaching methods can be successful.

¹⁵⁶ Koot and Veenbos, “The Spectacle of Inclusive”, 9.

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