



In 2016, the U.S. Department of State (DOS) in partnership with Discovery Communications, Vulcan Productions, and the film "Racing Extinction" projects images of wildlife on the DOS Washington DC façade to raise awareness of and spur action on the global threat of wildlife trafficking. (State Department)

Wildlife and Drug Trafficking, Terrorism, and Human Security

Realities, Myths, and Complexities Beyond Africa

By Vanda Felbab-Brown

The planet is experiencing alarming levels of species loss caused in large part by intensified poaching stimulated by a greatly expanding demand for animals, plants, and wildlife products. The rate of species extinction, now as much as 1,000 times the historical average and the worst since the dinosaurs died out 65 million years ago, deserves to be seen, like climate change, as a global ecological catastrophe meriting high-level policy initiatives to address its human causes. In addition to irretrievable biodiversity loss, poaching and wildlife trafficking pose serious threats to public health, with diseases such as Ebola, SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), and various influenza types linked to the illegal wildlife trade, thus potentially causing global pandemics. Wildlife trafficking can also undermine human security of forest-dependent communities and cause local, national, and global economic losses. And under some circumstances, it can even pose threats to national security.

The latter, particularly the involvement of terrorist and militant groups in poaching and wildlife trafficking, has lately received much attention from the international conservation community as well as the U.S. Congress and national governments around the world. Governments in Africa, for example, particularly like that concern as it brings them military assistance from abroad. The involvement of militants in wildlife trafficking should not generate surprise as many have extensive experience with deriving not just money, but also political capital from a wide range of illicit economies.¹

Yet analyses of the wildlife-trafficking-militancy-nexus are often shrouded in unproven assumptions and myths. Crucially, they divert attention from several uncomfortable truths with profound policy implications: First is that the nexus of militancy in wildlife trafficking constitutes only a sliver of the global wildlife trade and countering it will not resolve the global poaching crisis. Second, counterterrorism and counterinsurgency forces, even recipients of international assistance, also poach and smuggle wildlife and use anti-poaching and counterterrorism efforts as covers for displacement of local populations and land grabbing. Third, corruption among government officials, agencies, and rangers has far more profound effects on the extent of poaching and wildlife trafficking. And finally, local communities are often willing participants in the global illegal wildlife trade.

Dr. Vanda Felbab-Brown, a senior fellow at The Brookings Institution, is the author of *The Extinction Market: Wildlife Trafficking and How to Counter It* published by the Institution in 2017.

This article dissects the realities and myths of the violent-conflict /militancy nexus. It also draws analogies from and contrasts the illegal wildlife trade with the illegal drug trade. It concludes with policy recommendations.

Militants Trafficking in Wildlife—No Surprise and Nothing New

That terrorist and insurgent groups participate in illegal economies such as illicit drug production and trafficking is old news. Should it be surprising that they also poach animals and trafficking in wildlife?

For decades, numerous militant groups have tapped into the drug trade and other illicit economies. In the drug trade alone, groups as diverse as the Taliban in Afghanistan, Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) in Peru, FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) and rightist paramilitaries in Colombia, to name just a few, have participated. Groups involved in illegal logging and mining include again the Taliban and the Haqqani network in Afghanistan, FARC and other leftist guerrillas and rightist paramilitaries in Colombia, the RUF (Revolutionary United Front) in Sierra Leone, and Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, and many others.

From their sponsorship of or participation in illicit economies, militant groups derive a multitude of benefits. With profits in the order of tens of millions of dollars annually, belligerents can immensely improve the physical resources they have for fighting the state and their rivals: they can hire more combatants; pay them better salaries; and equip them with better weapons. In fact, the increase in the belligerents' physical resources is frequently immense.

Better procurement and logistics also enhance “the freedom of action” of belligerents—that is, the range of tactical options available to them and their ability to optimize both tactics and grand strategy. Prior to penetrating illicit economies, belligerents frequently have to spend much time and energy on

activities that do little to advance their cause, such as robbing banks and armories to obtain money and weapons, or extorting the local population for food supplies. Once their participation in an illicit economy solves the belligerents' logistics and procurement needs, they become free to concentrate on high-value, high-impact targets.

Violent conflict, of course, overlaps with natural environments. An estimated 80 percent of major armed conflicts have occurred within biodiversity hotspots.² Forests, being particularly dense, provide good hiding places. Nor is it surprising that militant and terrorist groups have also exploited the illegal wildlife trade to feed their soldiers and generate funding. In Africa, such actions include the LRA's (Lord's Resistance Army) poaching of elephants in Uganda, South Sudan, and the Congo, and perhaps the Janjaweed Arab militia of Sudan, who have been accused of butchering thousands of elephants in Cameroon, Chad, and the Central African Republic.³ The Muslim Seleka rebels in the Central African Republic, which include armed fighters from the Sudan, have similarly been accused of poaching in the Dzanga-Ndoki National Park. RENAMO (Resistência Nacional Moçambicana) also traded in rhino horn and ivory during Mozambique's civil war.⁴

Despite the current focus on the issue, involvement by militants in poaching and wildlife trafficking is not new either. During the 1970–80s, militant groups such as UNITA (União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola) in Angola as well as the militaries of African governments killed thousands elephants for bushmeat and generated revenues from ivory. Even today, both the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), linked to the Rwandan genocide, and the Coalition of Patriotic Resistance (PARECO), as well as the Congolese national army fight each other in Congo's national parks, where they also poach.⁵ In India, the Nationalist Socialist Council

of Nagaland in the country's northeast and militant Islamist groups in Bangladesh have traded in many poached species and genera, such as birds. In Afghanistan, the Taliban (as well as powerbrokers associated with the Afghan government) facilitate the hunting of houbara bustards, snow leopards, and saker falcons for wealthy Saudis and Emiratis.⁶ War refugees have also on occasion turned to poaching to make ends meet when humanitarian assistance is inadequate, such as in refugee camps in Tanzania since the 1990s.⁷ War may displace local populations into protected areas where their presence results in hunting, timber gathering, or cattle grazing, all of which can have detrimental environmental effects.

One of the most bizarre instances of militancy being funded by wildlife trafficking occurred in Nepal's civil war from 1996–2006. The collection and international trade in *yarchagumba*—a form of caterpillar fungus scientifically known as *Ophiocordyceps sinensis*—was a significant element of the Maoist insurgency's fundraising. Used in Traditional Chinese Medicine and viewed as a potent aphrodisiac and cure for a variety of ailments, including cancer, *yarchagumba* was (and continues to be) highly profitable. Maoist revenues from the illegal trade were so large that the Nepalese army devoted significant resources to push them out of the subalpine grasslands where the caterpillar fungus was found.⁸ Despite the fact that collection of *yarchagumba* was legalized in Nepal in 2001, the Maoists were not excluded from the trade and continued to derive significant revenues from it. Even after the legalization of the trade and the end of the civil war, *yarchagumba* prices have continued to rise, from \$400 to \$800 per kilogram in 2004 to \$4,600 to \$5,900 in 2010, an astounding order of increase reflecting growing demand and scarcity.⁹ Since the civil war ended, the *yarchagumba* trade no longer funds militancy.

Pushing militants out of sensitive ecosystems can reduce poaching. During Nepal's civil war,

for example, fifteen rhinoceros were killed in the prized Bardia National Park in one year alone.¹⁰ After the war's end, poaching declined substantially, to less than five rhinos and five tigers killed per year, and rhino populations rebounded.¹¹ Several reasons account for the poaching decline. First, the Maoists became a dominant political force and acquired access to the legal economy. Second, surplus Nepalese military troops, eventually augmented by integrated Maoist units, were sent to the national parks. Still, the military units deployed to national parks are handicapped in their anti-poaching operations by a lack of sufficient intelligence, mobility, and rapid-reaction assets. Most patrolling takes place on foot, with often only one car—for the commanding officer—available for the entire battalion deployed in a national park.¹²

But Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency Forces Are Culprits Too

Importantly, official militaries and paramilitary forces, not just anti-state militants, have been involved in wildlife poaching and smuggling. The South African apartheid state and its military and intelligence units traded in ivory and rhino horn in the 1970–80s.¹³ The militaries of Uganda, a close U.S. defense and counterterrorism partner in Africa, and of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as Congolese militias, have been accused of poaching elephants.¹⁴ Sudanese armed forces are believed to have massacred thousands of elephants in 2005 for ivory destined for China.¹⁵ The Zimbabwe military likely poached more elephants in Zimbabwe's Gonarezhou National Park than Mozambican RENAMO units.¹⁶ Myanmar's military is as much an actor in illegal logging as ethnic insurgents.¹⁷ Militaries deployed in the name of conservation have engaged in land theft from local populations, such as in Honduras.¹⁸ Conversely, members of

anti-poaching units, prized for their military skills taught by private security companies and foreign technical advisors, have at least on one occasion joined an armed anti-state rebellion and insurgency, notably in the Central African Republic.¹⁹

Sadly and paradoxically, however, peace can produce even more detrimental results for protected species and natural ecosystems than war if it enables greater access to valuable natural resources, and hence habitat destruction. Ceasefires involving ethnic insurgents in Myanmar have been bought by allowing them and other actors to engage in poaching and free-for-all resource extraction.²⁰

This “peace detriment” is only one example of the complexities of the linkages between militancy/terrorism and poaching. Combating terrorism also gets much better funding than preserving biodiversity. Exaggerated and one-sided portrayals of the nexus skew policy responses toward tough law-enforcement approaches, often at the expense of protecting the rights of local communities and compensating them for displacement and food loss. Other times, local poachers and local communities are unjustly labeled as militant sympathizers to allow for their expulsion from national parks and other protected areas and for the dispossession of their land. Yet most poachers are not terrorists, and most militants and terrorists are not poachers.

Militarization of Conservation and Human Security of the Vulnerable

Conservation scholars critical of such conflation label this “green militarization.”²² They criticize the violence exacted on local communities in the name of suppressing the alleged terrorism–poaching nexus. Some question outright whether any linkages between militancy and poaching exist. They are also wary of the use of private security companies and the deployment of drones and modern technologies to combat poaching.

At other times, the state’s exaggeration of national security threats is used to prevent environmental conservation measures, such as the demarcation of protected areas. In Laos’s borderlands, powerful businesses and state-linked industries, including the Laotian military, engage in profitable extractive industries such as logging, including the felling of rosewood, a desirable but endangered and hence prohibited species. Manufacturing security threats becomes a politically convenient way to prevent environmental protection and perpetuate profitable unrestrained legal and illegal economies.²³

Even today, violent conflict not only overlaps with poaching, but often also permeates conservation efforts. Sometimes forced displacement is masked by counterinsurgency and counterterrorism narratives. In Colombia’s Tayrona National Park from 2005–10, counterinsurgency efforts also enabled one ecotourism company to displace people in order to generate economic revenues from ecotourism. Elites and powerful businesses profiting from ecotourism have similarly sponsored the forced displacement of local communities in the name of conservation in Honduras.²⁴ There are many valid and important national security reasons to pursue militants into protected areas, but in the Tayrona case in Colombia, the counterinsurgency effort also served as cover for and an enabler dispossessing marginalized local communities of their land.²⁵

The eradication of illegal drug crops often also leads to the forced displacement of people. Sometimes this is simply the consequence of people losing their illegal livelihoods. At other times, displacement can be orchestrated by vested economic interests seeking to acquire land. As post-insurgency land in Colombia has become valuable, including for the cultivation of legal crops, such as coffee, cacao, African palm oil, or for logging or mining, the forced displacement of people is taking place well beyond Tayrona.²⁶



In July, U.S. soldier assigned to the Combined Joint Task Force–Horn of Africa provides guidance for Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority game wardens during a ground surveillance exercise in Tanzania. (U.S. Navy/ Timothy M. Ahearn)

Counterterrorism Cover for Corruption in Wildlife Enforcement

Yet it is the terrorism–poaching nexus that is frequently exaggerated by many countries that feed the supply chain of the illegal traffic in wildlife. In Kenya, for example al-Shabaab, and Somalis more broadly, are pervasively blamed by government officials and the public for poaching and all kinds of criminality.²⁷ Indeed, the narrative that Somalia’s terrorist group al-Shabaab is behind elephant poaching in Kenya received wide coverage in the press.²⁸ Yet the claim turned out to be flimsy at best, with some reports casting strong doubt on much of the evidence.²⁹

It is possible that al-Shabaab does tax ivory smuggled from Kenya into the Somali port of Kismayo. Al-Shabaab controls important parts of the surrounding Juba region, including key corridors to Kenya. Many terrorist, militant, and criminal groups tax legal goods, illegal contraband, and all kinds of economic activity within their spheres of influence. So does al-Shabaab.³⁰

Oftentimes, militants are pushed into or come to control territories with pre-existing illicit economies that are new to them. Eventually, they often come to tax the economies, and sometimes even seek to displace other traders from a particular market in order to make more money. That has been the case with many militant groups with respect to drugs as well—from Sendero Luminoso in Peru and the FARC in Colombia to the Taliban in Afghanistan and Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines.³¹ As income streams, militant groups may at times see little difference between drugs, timber, and wildlife. That does not mean, however, that such nexuses emerge every single time.

Moreover, even militants make choices of what and what not to get involved in. Sometimes they not only abstain from participating in a particular illegal economy, including the drug trade; at other times they prohibit even local populations from

participating in it.³² When Sendero Luminoso, the FARC and another leftist guerrilla group in Colombia, the ELN (Ejército de Liberación Nacional, National Liberation Army), as well as the Taliban, first encountered drugs, they tried to ban illegal drug production. However, they all learned that such a policy prevented their ability to consolidate control, and undermined their capacity to develop support and gain acceptance and legitimacy in the eyes of local populations. Thus they rescinded the prohibitions, and came to tax and trade the contraband. Many subsequent militant groups did not repeat their mistakes and embraced drugs and other illicit economies right away. Some groups, however, do not learn from the experience of other militants, and are tone-deaf to pushback from local populations who are dependent on illegal economies. Unlike the Taliban, Islamic State in Afghanistan, for example, still imposes a ban on poppy cultivation in the province of Nangarhar, and chooses to rule through brutality and not legitimacy.³³

Moreover, to the extent that ivory is exported through the port of Kismayo, the odds are that the Kenyan Defense Forces present in southern Somalia, including Kismayo, and Ahmed Madobe, president of Juba State and a former al-Shabaab commander who defected, get a substantial cut. Both allegedly tax smuggled sugar and charcoal, produced from acacia illegally logged throughout East Africa and transported to the Middle East.³⁴

Yet for many countries that are the sources of wildlife products, a preoccupation with poaching terrorists is a convenient distraction from addressing the issue of corruption among rangers and anti-poaching militias and military units, ecolodges, and high-level government officials. Without rooting out this pervasive corruption, and ending the economic dependence of local communities on participating in or tolerating poaching, many conservation efforts will fail, no matter how sophisticated the rangers’ equipment against poachers becomes.

To the extent that it exists at all, the participation of militant groups in poaching is only a fraction of the illegal trade that goes on. As discussed in *The Extinction Market: Wildlife Trafficking and How to Counter It*, this is not merely the case simply in terms of market share; they also play only a small role in global smuggling chains, particularly beyond their locus of operation.³⁵ For many reasons, including attempts to reduce militants' income sources, it makes sense to push them out of protected areas when they are involved in poaching. But as long as there is strong demand and limited enforcement capacity, someone else will take their place as poachers. With the rise of poachers' firepower, militants do not have a comparative advantage in poaching. A lot of what law enforcement does is not to determine whether an illicit economy exists or not, but rather who runs it and has access to it.

Local communities can often (though not always) choose whether to participate in poaching carried out by militants, whether to yield to it if the community is unable to mount effective resistance, or whether to mobilize against it. Neither the various ethnic militant groups in Myanmar nor the Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland in India, for example, experienced any popular pushback from their supporters or local communities against their participation in hunting and wildlife trafficking since the local population also participated in the illegal economy and hunting was a centuries-old tradition.

But while also operating in northeast India like the Naga militants, the Bodo insurgents had a very different experience with participating in poaching and wildlife trafficking. Building on a local culture of animal protection, the Bodo Security Force (BdSF), which has been seeking to liberate "Bodoland" from Assam, took it upon itself to enforce anti-poaching laws. For example, they singled out known rhinoceros poachers and told them to desist from their activities. If the poachers failed to comply, the Bodo militants killed them. The BdSF's location in the Manas National Park and the need to fund their insurgency later

encouraged the group to violate its own edicts and dabble in wildlife trafficking. But the subsequent public outcry from the local population that constituted its base was so strong that the BdSF aborted its participation in the illicit trade and went back to enforcing environmental protection.³⁶

Similarly, although the *dacoits* (robbers and bandits) in Uttar Pradesh, India, in the 1980s so undermined public safety that their

activities amounted to a de facto insurgency, the *dacoits* sought to protect the unique wildlife in their area by such acts as burying poachers alive.³⁷ In the Central African Republic, local communities that embraced conservation were so determined that in one instance they resorted to using violence against outside herders. During one altercation, they encouraged officially sanctioned anti-poaching guards to use their firearms to prevent the

... for many countries that are the sources of wildlife products, a preoccupation with poaching terrorists is a convenient distraction from addressing the issue of corruption among rangers and anti-poaching militias and military units, ecolodges, and high-level government officials.

herders from coming back, even killing their cattle. They also mobilized volunteers to help the existing anti-poaching militias take on the intruders.³⁸

The Political Capital of the Illegal Drug Trade and Illegal Wildlife Trade

Conversely, local communities often do not mobilize against poaching, illegal grazing, or logging, but rather are willing participants in them. Economies and behavior labeled as illegal by authorities are often considered legitimate by local communities. Suffering intense hardships as a result of being forced to obey the law, they rebel against it.

Under such circumstances, the sponsorship of illicit economies greatly increases not just the physical resources and freedom of operation of the sponsors, but also crucially, their political capital—that is, the extent to which the population welcomes and tolerates the presence of the sponsors.³⁹ This is true regardless of whether the sponsors are belligerents, criminal gangs, individual powerbrokers, or powerful local poachers.⁴⁰

Beyond providing marginalized populations with livelihoods, sponsors of illicit economies sometimes use the proceeds of their activities to distribute real-time economic benefits to local populations, such as otherwise absent social services. Sendero Luminoso and the FARC, for example, provided clinics, roads, sewage, trash collection, and schools.⁴¹ Sponsors of illicit economies can also provide protection and regulation services to the illicit economy itself, including protecting producers from, for instance, brutal and unreliable traffickers or military forces who want to eradicate drug crops or stop poaching by local communities.

Examples of such political capital accruing to sponsors of illicit economies also exist in wildlife trafficking. For example, in her excellent study of rhino horn trafficking, Annette Michaela Hübschle shows how local heads of poaching groups in Mozambique and South Africa, whom she refers

to as local “kingpins,” claim to fulfill important social welfare functions.⁴² Some promise to provide poachers with legal support if they are arrested or provide “life insurance” to their families if they are killed. They justify their poaching as a necessary activity forced on them by the neglect of the state and its failure to provide jobs and livelihoods. Other poachers are drawn to areas of successful poaching, sometimes even from other countries, but they usually have connections such as kinship ties with people in that area. Economic spillover from poaching revenues and activities also creates other jobs within communities, such as that of traditional healers who prepare good luck charms to enhance the success of poaching expeditions and who foretell when a poaching expedition will be successful. Many of the younger poachers are buying modern houses in their villages while others are buying them hours away on the coast of Mozambique. Others are purchasing cars, even luxury ones. Poachers from the older generation, on the other hand, continue to buy cattle, a sign of prestige and affluence. One of the local poaching kingpins Hübschle interviewed bought himself a hotel.⁴³

The local poaching kingpins thus develop recognition, prestige, and legitimacy within their communities. Poaching is portrayed not merely as a matter of economic necessity but a means of claiming reparations for the loss of land that was designated as an environmental area and which they can no longer access for economic opportunities, such as grazing, logging, hunting, and agricultural production. Hübschle describes the local kingpins as “self-styled Robin Hoods.” “We are using rhino horn to free ourselves,” they claim.⁴⁴ Similarly, abalone poaching gangs in the Western Cape province of South Africa justify their illegal wildlife trade, and gain political capital with local communities, by labeling commercial fishing quotas as unjust and unfair to struggling grassroots communities.⁴⁵ Moreover, while the



Examples of rhino horn products seized by the Hong Kong Government displayed in Hong Kong's Agriculture, Fisheries, and Conservation Department Visitor Center. (U.S. Government Work)

community knows who the poachers and perhaps the middlemen are, it is not willing to provide that information to the state.

Four factors critically influence the extent to which illicit economies bring political capital to their sponsors.⁴⁶ First, the state of the overall economy in the country/region; second, the labor-intensive character of the illicit economy; third, the presence or absence of independent traffickers; and fourth, the government's response to the illicit economy. The state of the overall economy determines the size of the local population who cannot obtain legal livelihoods. The labor-intensive character of the illicit economy determines the extent to which the illicit economy provides livelihoods to marginalized populations. The presence or absence of thuggish traffickers separate from other sponsors of the illicit economy, such as militants, determines the extent to which those sponsors can bargain on behalf of the population for better prices and otherwise protect them from the traffickers. Finally, government responses to an illicit economy determine the extent to which local populations become economically and politically impoverished

or empowered through the illicit economy and dependent on sponsors for the preservation of their illegal livelihoods. In a nutshell, if the state of the overall economy is poor, the illicit economy is labor intensive, thuggish traffickers are present, and the government tries to suppress the illicit economy without plans for alternative livelihoods or compensation, then sponsors of illicit economies obtain large amounts of political capital.

Political capital can be further augmented by other historic or normative grievances that make locals see laws as unjust, such as when poaching becomes a form of anticolonial resistance and a form of self-empowerment, or when the killing of an animal is seen as a rite of passage, taking a boy into manhood.

By and large, mitigating the threats posed by the drug trade is easier than assuring the key objective of suppressing poaching and wildlife trafficking, namely, preserving species and ecosystems. The one structural advantage that poaching and wildlife trafficking have in terms of policy mitigation is that even when poaching involves the large-scale willing participation of local

communities, it still tends to be less labor intensive than poppy or coca cultivation. The more labor intensive an illegal economy is, the more difficult it is to generate adequate alternative livelihoods and provide sufficient compensation for those severely hurt by efforts to suppress the illegal economy, and the more political capital sponsors of the illicit economy have. Nonetheless, ecotourism often fails to provide adequate alternative livelihoods and its effectiveness is highly contingent on many factors. So is the effectiveness of other community-based natural resource management efforts that seeks to transfer wildlife policy decisions to local communities and can involve hunting for commercial enterprises or trophies. Elite capture of resources and inadequate and seasonal flows of tourists, as well as the presence or absence of easily visible large iconic species, are among the factors influencing the success of such policies.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

As in the case of drug trafficking, the threats from poaching and wildlife trafficking include not only a wide range of environmental and economic threats, but also political and national security threats. Even so, much of the current policy focus of the role of terrorist and militant groups in wildlife trafficking exaggerates the extent of their involvement and runs the risk of misdirecting policy focus. Not only are counterinsurgent and counterterrorism forces, such as militias, but also national militaries, often involved, the involvement of terrorists and militants in wildlife trafficking is often not its most significant element.

Most poachers are not terrorists, and most militants and terrorists are not poachers. The intersection of militancy with wildlife trafficking is only a sliver of the global wildlife trade. To the extent that it exists at all, the participation of militant groups in poaching is only a fraction of the illegal trade that goes on. This is not merely the case in terms of

market share; the militants also play only a small role in global smuggling chains, particularly beyond their locus of operation. But as long as there is strong demand and limited enforcement capacity, someone else will take their place as poachers.

And a failure to generate political support among local communities for measures to suppress an illicit economy can be very costly politically. Widespread opposition to law enforcement and widespread rule violations severely complicate the resource demands and ethical burdens of effective law enforcement. Laws are far easier to enforce if they are internalized by most of the relevant population.

Thus, even though ecotourism schemes have often been a disappointment, making them more effective when possible or promoting other alternative livelihoods, such as off-park, off-farm income remain imperative. Trophy hunting and other sustainable commercialization of wildlife that channel money to poor marginalized indigenous communities, as well as other community-based natural resource management schemes, are a crucial part of saving wildlife and promoting social justice. However, addressing the needs of the poor and marginalized will need to get more creative if wildlife conservation is to succeed—such as direct financial transfers, strictly-monitored and enforced, to local communities not to poach or convert natural habitat to agricultural land.

Going after corruption and involvement of counterinsurgent forces, government officials, rangers, and politicians in poaching and wildlife trafficking is equally imperative. This will require that international conservation donors and international militaries providing assistance in countering the illegal wildlife trade closely vet the recipients of their assistance and be willing to suspend aid if pervasive corruption persists. But aid should also be withheld if anti-poaching units or counterterrorism forces battling the presumed wildlife-trafficking-conflict nexus engage

in systematic human rights violations. Wildlife conservation policies can only succeed and be sustainable if they are perceived as just—economically as well in terms of accountability. **PRISM**

Notes

- ¹ Vanda Felbab-Brown, *Shooting Up: Counterinsurgency and the War on Drugs* (The Brookings Institution Press, 2010).
- ² Thor Hanson et al., “Warfare in Biodiversity Hotspots,” *Conservation Biology*, 23(3), 2009: 578–87.
- ³ Brian Christy, “How Killing Elephants Finances Terror in Africa,” National Geographic, September 2015, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/tracking-ivory/article.html>; Paula Kahumbu and Andrew Halliday, “Case Proven: Ivory Trafficking Funds Terrorism,” *Guardian*, August 30, 2015; Aislinn Laing, “LRA Warlord Joseph Kony Uses Ivory Trade to Buy Arms,” *Daily Telegraph*, January 12, 2016; and Louisa Lombard, “Ivory Wars,” *New York Times*, September 20, 2012. Jeffrey Gettleman, “Africa’s Elephants Are Being Slaughtered in a Poaching Frenzy,” *New York Times*, September 3, 2012; and Michael Marshall, “Elephant Ivory Could Be Bankrolling Terrorist Groups,” *New Scientist*, October 2, 2013. Oftentimes, West Africans call Janjaweed any Muslim outsiders or any outsiders.) Natascha White, “The ‘White Gold of Jihad’: Violence, Legitimation and Contestation in Anti-Poaching Strategies,” *Journal of Political Ecology*, 21, 2014: 452–74.
- ⁴ Robin Thomas Naylor, *Patriots and Profiteers: Economic Warfare, Sanctions, Embargo Busting, and Their Human Cost* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1999) 178.
- ⁵ Sophia Benz and Judith Benz-Schwarzburg, “Great Apes and New Wars,” *Civil Wars*, 12(4), 2011: 395–430; Jasper Humphreys and M.L.R. Smith, “War and Wildlife: The Clausewitz Connection,” *International Affairs*, 87(1), 2011: 121–42; and Linda Norgrove and David Hulme, “Confronting Conservation at Mount Elgon, Uganda,” *Development and Change*, 37(5), 2006: 1093–116.
- ⁶ Author’s interviews with Afghan powerbrokers involved in smuggling during the 1990s and U.S. officials responding to the involvement of NATO soldiers in Afghanistan in wildlife smuggling from the country, Kabul, Afghanistan, fall 2009. For these and all interviews referenced in this article, human subjective protection protocols have been used in this study in accordance with the appropriate statutes and Defense Department (DOD) regulations governing those protocols. The sources’ views are solely their own and do not

represent the official policy or position of DOD or the U.S. Government.

⁷ George Jambiya et al., “Night Time Spinach: Conservation and Livelihood Implications of Wild Meat Use in Refugee Situations in North-Western Tanzania,” TRAFFIC East-Southern Africa, 2007, available at <<https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/Traf-101.pdf>>.

⁸ Nabin Baral and Joel Heinen, “The Maoists’ People’s War and Conservation in Nepal,” *Politics and the Life Sciences*, 24 (1/2), 2006: 2–11.

⁹ Daniel Winkler, “The Mushrooming Fungi Market in Tibet Exemplified by *Cordyceps sinensis* and *Tricholoma matsutake*,” *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies*, 4, 2008: 1–47.

¹⁰ Nabil Baral and Joel Heinen, “Resources Use, Conservation Attitudes, Management Intervention and Park–People Relations in the Western Terai Landscape of Nepal,” *Environmental Conservation*, 34(1), 2007: 64–72.

¹¹ “Nepal Winning Battle against One-Horned Rhino Poachers,” *New York Daily News*, May 11, 2012.

¹² Vanda Felbab-Brown, “The Impact of Organized Crime on Governance: The Case Study of Nepal,” in Camino Kavanagh (ed.), *Impact of Organized Crime on Governance*, Center for International Cooperation, New York University, 2013, http://cic.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/kavanagh_crime_developing_countries_nepal_study.pdf.

¹³ Stephen Ellis, “Of Elephants and Men: Politics and Nature Conservation in South Africa,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20(1), 1994: 53–69; and Roz Reeve and Stephen Ellis, “An Insider’s Account of the South African Security Force’s Role in the Ivory Trade,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 13(2), 1995: 222–43.

¹⁴ Kristof Titeca, “Central Africa: Ivory Beyond the LRA – Why a Broader Focus Is Needed in Studying Poaching,” *All Africa*, September 17, 2013, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201309170982.html>; and Taylor Toeka Kakala, “Soldiers Trade in Illegal Ivory,” *Inter Press Service*, July 25, 2013, available at <www.ipsnews.net/2013/07/soldiers-trade-in-illegal-ivory/>.

¹⁵ “Sudan Army Accused of Ivory Trade,” *Al Jazeera*, March 14, 2005, available at <www.aljazeera.com/archive/2005/03/200841092645497609.html>.

¹⁶ Environmental Investigative Agency (EIA), “Under Fire: Elephants in the Front Line,” January 31, 1992, available at <<https://eia-international.org/report/under-fire-elephants-in-the-front-line>>.

¹⁷ Vanda Felbab-Brown, “Enabling War and Peace: Drugs, Logs, and Wildlife in Thailand and Burma,” Brookings Institution, December 2015, available

at <www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2015/12/thailand-burma-drugs-wildlife-felbabbrown/enabling_war_and_peace_final.pdf>; and Vanda Felbab-Brown, “Myanmar Maneuvers: How to Break Political-Criminal Alliances in Contexts of Transition,” Tokyo: United Nations University, April 2017, available at <<https://www.brookings.edu/research/myanmar-maneuvers/>>.

¹⁸ See, for example, Christopher Anthony Loperena, “Conservation by Radicalized Dispossession: The Making of an Eco-Destination on Honduras’s North Coast,” *Geoforum*, 69, 2016: 184–93.

¹⁹ Louisa Lombard, “Threat Economies and Armed Conservation in Northeastern Central African Republic,” *Geoforum*, 69, 2016: 218–26.

²⁰ Felbab-Brown (December 2015).

²¹ Rosaleen Duffy, “War, By Conservation,” *Geoforum*, 69, 2016: 238–48; Megan Ybarra, “‘Blind Passes’ and the Production of Green Security through Violence on the Guatemalan Border,” *Geoforum*, 69, 2016: 194–206.

²² Elizabeth Lunstrum, “Green Militarization: Anti-Poaching Efforts and the Spatial Contours of Kruger National Park,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 104(4), 2014: 816–32; Rosaleen Duffy, “Waging A War to Save Biodiversity: The Rise of Militarized Conservation,” *International Affairs*, 90(4), 2014: 819–34; and Alice Kelly and Megan Ybarra, “Introduction to the Themed Issue: ‘Green Security in Protected Areas,’” *Geoforum*, 69, 2016: 171–75.

²³ Michael Dwyere et al., “The Security Exception: Development and Militarization in Laos’s Protected Areas,” *Geoforum*, 69, 2016: 207–17.

²⁴ Loperena, “Conservation by Radicalized Dispossession.”

²⁵ Diana Bocarejo and Diana Ojeda, “Violence and Conservation: Beyond Unintended Consequences and Unfortunate Coincidences,” *Geoforum*, 69, 2016: 176–83.

²⁶ Author’s interviews in Bogotá, Nariño, Catatumbo, and middle Magdalena Valley, fall 2008 and 2009, and spring 2015.

²⁷ Author’s interviews in Kenya, February to May 2013.

²⁸ Nir Kalron and Andrea Crosta, “Africa’s Wild Gold of Jihad: Al Shabaab and Conflict Ivory,” Elephant Action League, www.elephantleague.org/project/africas-white-gold-of-jihad-al-shabaab-and-conflict-ivory/; and Johan Bergenas et al., “Killing Lions, Buying Bombs,” *New York Times*, August 9, 2013.

²⁹ Tom Maguire and Cathy Haenlein, “An Illusion of Complicity: Terrorism and the Illegal Ivory Trade in East Africa,” Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), *Occasional Papers* No. 21, 2015, available at <https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/201509_an_illusion_of_complicity_0.pdf>.

³⁰ Vanda Felbab-Brown, “Little to Gloat About,” *Cipher Brief*, 2016, www.thecipherbrief.com/article/africa/little-gloat-about-1089.

³¹ Felbab-Brown, *Shooting Up*.

³² Ibid.

³³ Vanda Felbab-Brown, “No Easy Exit: Drugs and Counternarcotics Policies in Afghanistan,” Brookings Institution, 2015, available at <www.brookings.edu/~media/Research/Files/Papers/2015/04/global-drug-policy/FelbabBrown--Afghanistan-final.pdf?la=en>.

³⁴ Journalists for Justice, “Black and White: Kenya’s Criminal Racket in Somalia,” 2015, available at <www.jfjustice.net/userfiles/file/Research/Black%20and%20White%20Kenya's%20Criminal%20Racket%20in%20Somalia.pdf>.

³⁵ Vanda Felbab-Brown, *The Extinction Market: Wildlife Trafficking and How to Counter It* (Hurst-Oxford University Press, 2017).

³⁶ Author’s interviews with environmental groups operating in Nagaland, India (May to June 2008).

³⁷ Author’s interviews in dacoit communities in Uttar Pradesh, India, July 2007.

³⁸ Lombard, “Threat Economies.”

³⁹ Felbab-Brown, *Shooting Up*: 1–33.

⁴⁰ Vanda Felbab-Brown, “Human Security and Crime in Latin America: The Political Capital and Political Impact of Criminal Groups and Belligerents Involved in Illicit Economies,” FIU/WHEMSAC, 2011, available at <www.brookings.edu/research/articles/2011/09/latin-america-crime-felbab-brown>.

⁴¹ Cynthia McClintock, *Revolutionary Movements in Latin America: El Salvador’s FMLN and Peru’s Shining Path* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998).

⁴² Annette Michaela Hübschle, “A Game of Horns: Transnational Flows of Rhino Horn,” PhD thesis (Cologne: International Max Planck Research School, 2016): 312 and 333.

⁴³ Ibid.: 310 and 321.

⁴⁴ Ibid.: 308.

⁴⁵ Maria Hauck and Neville A. Sweijd, “A Case Study of Abalone Poaching in South Africa and Its Impact on Fisheries Management,” *ICES Journal of Marine Species: Journal du Conseil*, 56(6), 1999: 1024–32.

⁴⁶ These factors are explored in Felbab-Brown, *Shooting Up*.