Political ecologies of connecting conservation with global security

@biosec_erc  r.v.duffy@sheffield.ac.uk

BIOSEC  BIODIVERSITY AND SECURITY
biosecproject.org

ERC funded 2014-2020

• Dickinson - geopolitical ecologies/caviar trade in EU
• Joanny – tech in conservation/Indonesia
• Lappe Osthege - songbird trade/Balkans
• Iordachescu - timber trade/Romania
• Massé, law enforcement poaching economy/ Mozambique

@biosec_erc

• Margulies – cacti & succulent trade/ Americas
• Vu – demand reduction/Vietnam
• Duffy- PI, political ecology, NGOs, donors
• Project Managers Wilson & Dunning
• Several fellows (Asiyanbi, Marijnen, Hsaio, Verweijen)
Illegal wildlife trade

- Range of estimates of value of IWT: between US$7-23 billion annually
- Difficult to value - legal and illegal trades intertwined, difficult to get reliable figures on illicit trades
Rises in poaching

Rises in elephant and rhino poaching in Africa 2008 - 2012

CITES MIKE database: rates of illegal killing of elephants across Africa rose from 0.6 - 2.1% of the total population in 2005, to 3.5 -11.7% in 2011 at its high point, May 2019 it had fallen to 4% 2011

Scanlon: World rediscovered CITES via lens of security

UK FCO official commented there was a need to *look for evidence* of wildlife trafficking as a security threat
Political ecology

• Focus on conflict eg Ojeda, Le Billon, Marijnissen, Rai, Büscher, Ramutsindela, Martinex Zlier, Ybarra, Asiyani

• Less discussion about what a political ecology approach to security might be (Kosek on honeybees, Biggar and Neimark on US Navy – also Dalby on critical geopolitics, O’Lear on environmental geopolitics)
Political Ecology approach to security

• Draw on & blend elements of critical security studies, green criminology and political ecology
• Attendant to ways dynamics of race, class and gender intersect
• Investigates the intersections between capitalism, security and nature
• Ethically engaged positionality to cast light on how and why benefits and harms are unevenly distributed
Security framings

- Conservation as a crisis discipline
- Processes of criminalising, then ‘securitising’
- Key moment 2013 – Elephant Action League report crystallised/mobilised the idea of IWT as a global security threat
Framings

- US based conservationist
- ‘the conservation community has not really expressed a whole lot of scepticism because it is driving money their way. This is a political economy of conservation. Bad news drives donations so there is some manipulation of the truth there too.’
US Govt attention

‘The State Department under Obama was really dedicated to cracking down on the illegal ivory trade. One of the Under Secretaries of State made it her personal mission’

‘in the past 5 years, doubly since 2013, with the Executive Order from Obama we saw this huge upswing in interest. Here having a Presidential Executive Order gave everyone license to bring it up at a high level. If you are in an Embassy you can say, look this is what our President said, this is important. It came up at the G20’
Trump administration

US End Wildlife Trafficking Act/Trump Executive Order

“the nice thing about this is, and its rare in the US, wildlife trafficking is not a partisan issue so we actually have, ... after Trump was elected, [...] and I were calling a bunch of supporters ... Every single law maker we talked to, Republican and Democrat reconfirmed their belief in the importance of The END Wildlife Trafficking Act. So at least it is still is on their radar”.
Role of Donors

GEF review: US$1.3 billion committed by 24 international donors between 2010 and June 2016
UK Govt, committed £5 million, raised to £20 million, key policy area

Shift in USFWS support to enforcement
Practices

• Emergency is used to justify series of exceptional measures- inc deadly force
• Militarisation of conservation
Two way exchange

‘The guys are constantly learning from the rangers what plants are edible and what things you can supplement your rations with ... the rangers are expert in finding water after all, certainly the older guys, and so our guys are learning from them how to find water in a dry environment, certainly during the dry season. ‘
Mirrors changes in security sector

- Ex military and intelligence set up new companies and NGOs to offer their skills and knowledge to conservation organisations
- Eg Maisha Consulting, IAPF, Veterans4Wildlife, VETPAW
Effects for conservation staff

• Workplace stress, PTSD
• Changing nature of recruits
• 2016, WWF launched the *Ranger Perceptions Survey: Asia* and *Ranger Perceptions Survey: Africa*, which revealed ranger concerns about low pay, job insecurity, and poor equipment.
Communities

Community experiences – may welcome enforcement as a means of gaining security
But also alienation, conservation agencies as another actor in armed conflicts
militarisation of conservation could have long term negative effects, because the “bill will come due later and we are definitely not prepared to deal with it ... The short-term solution is militarisation but it is going to spawn, it will perpetuate a lot of inequalities.”
Human rights

‘in many cases this can turn to further disenfranchisement of local communities and human rights abuses if there is an overly militarised approach.’

RFUK, Survival International, Buzzfeed News – drawn attention to human rights abuses by WWF funded eco guards/rangers

Independent UNDP report conformed the abuses in Salonga
Conclusion

• Security turn is changing what conservation is and what it can be in the future
• Not tackling the underlying structural drivers of species losses
• Political Ecology approach helps develop our understandings of integrating conservation and security