

Legacies of Intervention: The Historical Role of the Apartheid Regime in Shaping the Ivory and Rhino Horn Trafficking Networks of Southern Africa

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Abstract

This thesis examines the links between the poaching and trafficking of ivory and rhino horn that the Apartheid regime was both directly and indirectly involved in from the period of 1965-1994, and the resurgence in poaching that has occurred in southern Africa since 2003. This research focuses on southern Africa and southeast Asia, and how the two subcontinents have a parasitic relationship due to the black-market demand for ivory and rhino horn in southeast Asia, whose supplies comes primarily from southern Africa. The main argument that this thesis presents is that the poaching experienced in southern Africa today is an indirect consequence of the Apartheid regimes trafficking of animal products during the late 20th century. The history of the trafficking of animal products through South African channels will be studied to lay the groundwork for the rest of the thesis. The methods of smuggling in both the present and past will be explored, alongside the poaching techniques employed to create a detailed view of poaching in southern Africa over the last half a century. The impact of the Apartheid regimes trafficking on animal populations is studied in this thesis to create a better perception of the long-lasting impact on the ecosystem of the subcontinent. By comparing the past and present, a clearer link between the activities of the Apartheid regime and the current poaching crisis in southern Africa can be established.

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List of Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CSI	Chief of Staff (Intelligence)
FRELIMO	<i>Frente de Libertação de Moçambique</i>
KNP	Kruger National Park
MI	Military Intelligence
MID	Military Intelligence Division
MPLA	<i>Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola</i>
NP	National Party
RENAMO	<i>Resistência Nacional Moçambicana</i>
SAA	South African Airways
SADF	South African Defence Force
SANDF	South African National Defence Force
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organisation
TRAFFIC	Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce
UNITA	<i>União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola</i>
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

This thesis examines the relationship between the poaching of elephants and rhinoceroses that was facilitated by South Africa's Apartheid regime, and the modern poaching epidemic and black market for ivory and rhino horn. The thesis focuses on two distinct places and time periods. The first place it covers is southern Africa and focuses on the following countries: South Africa, Namibia, Angola, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. southern Africa was affected, both directly and indirectly, by the Apartheid regime's military intervention from 1965 to 1990. During this time span the Apartheid regime was involved in the smuggling of resources out of the aforementioned nations using both SADF personnel and military contacts. This study focuses specifically on the ivory and rhino horn trade. During the Apartheid regime's military operations in southern Africa ivory and rhino horn were extracted from South Africa's neighbours and exported in large quantities. The second region that is examined in this thesis is southeast Asia, with a particular focus on Vietnam and China. Southeast Asia is the largest importer of ivory and rhino horn in the present day. The growth in the market demand for these products occurred throughout the 1970s and 1980s, concurrently with the increase in the exportation of these products by the Apartheid regime. The two periods of time that shall be examined are the period from 1975 to 1994 (with some attention paid to the previous decade of 1965 to 1975), and the period of 2003 to present. The former era spans the timeframe when South Africa was most heavily involved in military intervention in its neighbouring states. The latter period begins with the resurgence in poaching in southern Africa and continues until the present day. The aim of this thesis is to provide a clearer link between the exportation of animal products during the late Cold War period and the resurgence of poaching in southern Africa in the modern period.

Research Problem

Poaching is currently a problem not only in South Africa, but also in many nations across southern Africa. South Africa, Angola, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique are all facing challenges in animal conservation due to the ever-present threat that poaching and smuggling syndicates pose to local fauna.¹ The modern poaching resurgence began in 2003.

¹ Anthony Minnaar, and Friedo Herbig. "The impact of conservation crime on the South African rural economy: A case study of rhino poaching." *Acta Criminologica: African Journal of Criminology & Victimology* 31, no. 4 (2018): 150.

From 2003 to 2007 there was a steady rise in poaching incidents in South Africa.² In 2007 the problem intensified, with a larger increase in yearly rhino poaching cases until the number of incidents stabilised in 2015.³ The lack of increases in poaching incidents in South Africa from 2015 to present could be explained by the increase in poaching incidents in surrounding countries at the same time, which showed that the issue was becoming pervasive. In 2015 Namibia saw a rhino poaching resurgence following a period of few recorded poaching crimes since independence.⁴ Since 2015 Namibia has seen more cases which threaten the livelihood of both the animal populations as well as local communities who depend on the tourism industry to support themselves.⁵ From 2005 to 2015 the Angolan government prohibited the studying of the country's elephant populations. When studies were allowed to resume in 2015, it was observed by Schlossberg et al that poaching had contributed to a 21% reduction in the elephant population during the years that the megafauna had gone unmonitored.⁶ It is likely that poaching became an issue during or after 2007 when poaching levels increased in South Africa. In 2013 Zimbabwe saw over 100 cases of elephants being poisoned in Hwange National Park.⁷ Elephant corpses were found to have their tusks removed, indicating that this was a targeted attack by poaching syndicates to extract ivory.⁸ In Mozambique, between 2007 to 2011 almost 2000 elephants were poached from the Niassa Reserve in order to procure ivory.⁹ By

Scott Schlossberg, Michael J. Chase, and Curtice R. Griffin. "Poaching and human encroachment reverse recovery of African savannah elephants in south-east Angola despite 14 years of peace." *PLoS One* 13, no. 3 (2018): 10.

Jessica S. Kahler, and Meredith L. Gore. "Local perceptions of risk associated with poaching of wildlife implicated in human-wildlife conflicts in Namibia." *Biological Conservation* 189 (2015): 56.

Interviewee 1 (Conservationist), Interviewed by Gareth Kirby, via Zoom: 08:28.

Patmore Ngorima, Kudzai Shaun Mpakairi, Blessing Kavhu, Tawanda Winmore Gara, Henry Ndaimani, and Jeremiah Chakuya. "Trends in elephant poaching in the Mid-Zambezi Valley, Zimbabwe: Lessons learnt and future outlook." *African Journal of Ecology* 60, no. 4 (2022): 1.

K. Fenio, "Poaching rhino horn in South Africa and Mozambique." *Washington DC: US Department of State* (2014): 28.

² 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): 821.

³ Moses Montesh, "Rhino poaching: A new form of organised crime." *Rhino Resource Center* 27 (2013): 5.

Sam M. Ferreira, Cathy Greaver, Zoliswa Nhleko, and Chenay Simms. "Realization of poaching effects on rhinoceroses in Kruger National Park, South Africa." *African Journal of Wildlife Research* 48, no. 1 (2018): 3.

⁴ Interviewee 2 (Conservationist), Interviewed by Gareth Kirby, via Zoom: 11:20.

⁵ *Ibid*: 02:25.

⁶ Scott Schlossberg, Michael J. Chase, and Curtice R. Griffin. "Poaching and human encroachment reverse recovery of African savannah elephants in south-east Angola despite 14 years of peace." *PLoS One* 13, no. 3 (2018): 1.

⁷ Richard Hoare, Chris Foggin, Steve Alexander, and Divine Chakombera. "Combating the use of cyanide poison in ivory poaching." *African Journal of Wildlife Research* 52, no. 1 (2022): 91.

⁸ N. Muboko, V. Muposhi, T. Tarakini, E. Gandiwa, S. Vengesayi, and E. Makuwe. "Cyanide poisoning and African elephant mortality in Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe: a preliminary assessment." *Pachyderm* 55 (2014): 92.

⁹ Vernon R. Booth, and Kevin M. Dunham. "Elephant poaching in Niassa Reserve, Mozambique: population impact revealed by combined survey trends for live elephants and carcasses." *Oryx* 50, no. 1 (2016): 94.

shifting their focus to South Africa's neighbours, poaching and smuggling syndicates were able to expand their operations even as South Africa tightened its security in private and public game reserves.

When poaching became more prevalent in 2003, it was identified by South African law enforcement that much of the rhino horn being smuggled out of the country was headed for Vietnam.¹⁰ Syndicates based out of Vietnam were both hiring local poachers in South Africa, as well as using Vietnamese nationals to circumvent trophy hunting laws in South Africa, after which the deceased rhino horns were smuggled to Vietnam.¹¹ The activities of these syndicates brought attention to the issue of Vietnam as a primary consumer of ivory and rhino horns.¹² The operations of these poaching syndicates have created an issue for conservationists in southern Africa, as syndicates appear to develop countermeasures for any new innovations made in the field of environmental protection.

The increase in poaching is tied to a resurgence in the demand for ivory and rhino horn in southeast Asia. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, nations in southeast Asia were beginning to see their economies grow. In China, economic reforms and industrialisation led to the growth of a middle class.¹³ In Vietnam, the conclusion of the Vietnam War in 1975 and the repulsion of China's invading force in 1979 afforded the nation a new era of peace from foreign aggression. This chapter saw the emergence of a middle class after numerous economic reforms.¹⁴ In both nations the new middle class now had the opportunity to purchase luxury goods. Ivory and rhino horn are seen as prized possessions in southeast Asia, both for their supposed healing properties and as status symbols. A growing middle-class meant that more consumers could afford these products, which increased their overall demand. The emergence of the middle class in China and Vietnam coincided with the SADF's involvement in South Africa's neighbouring states, particularly with the direct intervention in South West Africa and Angola. Animal populations in both countries were diminished during the period of SADF presence.¹⁵ In 1996, a commission ordered in 1994 by President Nelson Mandela into the

¹⁰ Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 103.

¹¹ *Ibid*: 100-101.

¹² *Ibid*: 273.

¹³ Loren Brandt, Debin Ma and Thomas G. Rawski, "Industrialisation in China", in *The Spread of Modern Industry to the Periphery Since 1871*, ed. Kevin Hjortshøj O'Rourke and Jeffrey Gale Williamson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 197, 201.

¹⁴ David HD Truong, and Carolyn L. Gates, "Vietnam's Gradualist Economic Reforms." in *Liberalization in the Developing World*, ed. Alex E. Fernández Jilberto and André Mommen (London: Routledge, 2012), 74-75.

¹⁵ Ros Reeve, and Stephen Ellis. "An insider's account of the South African security forces' role in the ivory trade." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 13, no. 2 (1995): 232.

allegations of poaching and smuggling by members of the SADF published its findings.¹⁶ Named “The Kumleben Commission” after Judge Mark Kumleben, the sole member of the commission, it found that South Africa had been exporting more ivory than that which could have been found in the national stockpiles, and that the excess ivory, as well as rhino horn, had been smuggled out of Angola and South West Africa.¹⁷ This confirmed that the Apartheid regime was capitalising on the growing demand for these materials to clandestinely accrue funds during a period of international isolation.

While the hunting of elephants and rhinos for the commercial use of their ivory and horns has been occurring for millennia in both Africa and Asia, the 1970s saw a significant decline in the populations of these creatures. Prior to the 1970s the population of African elephants was stable and large at an estimated 1.2 million individuals.¹⁸ Presently, the population stands at little over 400,000.¹⁹ Elephant and rhino populations are present across Asia, but their numbers are too low to supply the market demand for ivory and rhino horn in southeast Asia.²⁰ The timeline of trafficking by the Apartheid regime and the resurgence in the popularity of ivory and rhino horn in southeast Asia indicates that the South African government was partially responsible for increasing the market demand that emerged during the late 20th century. The demand for ivory and rhino horn has remained in southeast Asia despite the dissolution of the Apartheid regime and its smuggling operations. The present-day market demand in southeast Asia is the cause behind the poaching crisis faced in South Africa and its neighbouring states. During the 20th century there were few poaching incidents within South African borders, as the ivory smuggled from Angola and South West Africa was sufficient to supply the market at the time. Following the destruction that occurred across southern Africa in the 20th century, South Africa’s largely untouched population of elephants and rhinos became a target for poaching syndicates.

This thesis argues that the smuggling by the Apartheid regime has indirectly contributed to the present-day poaching crisis in southern Africa, which is negatively affecting South Africa. The

¹⁶ Republic of South Africa & State President, *Commission of Inquiry into the Alleged Smuggling of and Illegal Trade in Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn in South Africa*, Judge M. E. Kumleben. Durban: 1996: 1.

¹⁷ *Ibid*: 204-205.

¹⁸ “Distribution and Status”, Elephant Crisis Fund, accessed February 8, 2025.

[https://elephantcrisisfund.org/distribution-](https://elephantcrisisfund.org/distribution-status/#:~:text=African%20elephant%20numbers%20have%20plummeted,of%20Endangered%20Species%20as%20Vulnerable)

[status/#:~:text=African%20elephant%20numbers%20have%20plummeted,of%20Endangered%20Species%20as%20Vulnerable](https://elephantcrisisfund.org/distribution-status/#:~:text=African%20elephant%20numbers%20have%20plummeted,of%20Endangered%20Species%20as%20Vulnerable).

¹⁹ “The status of African elephants”, WWF, 2018. <https://www.worldwildlife.org/magazine/issues/winter-2018/articles/the-status-of-african-elephants>.

²⁰ “The status of Asian Elephants”, WWF, accessed July 15, 2025,

<https://www.worldwildlife.org/magazine/issues/winter-2018/articles/the-status-of-asian-elephants>

academic discourse around poaching in southern Africa views the trafficking during the Apartheid era and the present era as two distinct epochs, without examining the connections between these two periods. Literature relating to the trafficking of animal products by the Apartheid regime does not examine the period following the end of Apartheid. The primary reason for this omission relates to the timeframe in which most literature detailing the trafficking operations of the Apartheid regime was written. Following the immediate aftermath of Apartheid there was an initiative to learn about the regime's secrets. This movement included academics, who examined the newly declassified information previously withheld by the National Party government. Since the 2000s the focus of literature relating to poaching has shifted to the current period due to a resurgence in poaching incidents. Literature relating to poaching in the modern period makes mention of poaching that occurred in the past during the Apartheid regime but does not provide a connection between these two eras. This thesis will compare the events of the period of 1965 – 1987 to the ivory and rhino horn smuggling from 2003 to the present day. These comparisons will provide a sustained narrative that properly ties the smuggling committed by the Apartheid regime to contemporary poaching issues.

Methodology

This thesis uses a qualitative approach to achieve its research aims. Academic literature is the primary method utilised to construct the narrative. The investigative journalism of Julian Rademeyer is crucially used throughout this thesis to place the topics of discussion in a broader, more coherent narrative. Archival documents and a limited number of interviews are used to add more detail and accuracy to the historical narrative. By combining these diverse elements, a more complete version of the historical periods can be examined.

Historical analysis is employed to understand the period of rhino and elephant poaching from 1965 – 1988. Academic literature allows for the era of the Apartheid regime's involvement in trafficking animal materials to be studied and scrutinised. Cross-referencing academic literature that details poaching and smuggling methods employed by members of the National Party, the SADF and their associates, allows for a better understanding of the timeline and scale of these operations. Archival documents, namely the 1996 Kumleben Commission and documents included within it, add more detail to the study. Documents pertaining to the volume of ivory exported give a quantitative number to the qualitative anecdotes, which helps to place the poaching and smuggling incidents into a broader narrative. Comparative analysis is the main tool used in this thesis. The periods of 1975 – 1994 and 2003 – present will be compared

to establish connections between the animal product trafficking that occurred in the past and the illicit activity that is currently taking place in southern Africa. These periods are compared to determine how the ivory and rhino horn trafficking of the past has impacted and influenced trafficking in the present. Academic literature provides examples of the trafficking that occurred during the Apartheid regime, including the perpetrators and their methods of poaching and transporting animal products. Academic literature and investigative journalism focused on the present-day details currently identified operations of ivory and rhino horn smuggling. The limited use of interviews provides updates on the poaching methods mentioned in the academic literature, much of which was recorded during the period of 2008 – 2012. The examples of the past can be compared to modern poaching and smuggling incidents to find commonalities as well as evolutions in the methods of animal material trafficking.

Literature Review

This research draws from a variety of sources. The academic literature used for this paper is primarily from the field of criminal history. Pivotal to the study is the work of Ellis (1994) and Ellis and Reeve. These papers helped provide a valuable framework for studying the period from 1965 – 1994. Both papers examine the role of the Apartheid regime in the procurement and trafficking of animal products.²¹ The detail provided in these studies is used in this thesis both to create a foundation for understanding animal product trafficking, and to compare poaching in the past to poaching in the modern day. The information provided by the sources is limited due to the time period in which they were written. These papers, due to being published in 1994 and 1995 respectively, are unable to provide insight into how these poaching operations have affected South Africa in the present day. As they were published around the advent of democracy in South Africa, the authors did not have access to much of the information provided by declassified documents that were still being released during this timeframe. Additionally, they did not have access to the data produced by investigations into the activities of the Apartheid regime that were ordered by the newly elected ANC government. Most notably, Ellis and Reeve were not able to compare their evidence to the Kumleben Commission which would release its findings in 1996.

²¹ Ros Reeve, and Stephen Ellis. "An insider's account of the South African security forces' role in the ivory trade." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 13, no. 2 (1995): 227.
Stephen Ellis, "Of elephants and men: politics and nature conservation in South Africa." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20, no. 1 (1994): 55.

This thesis uses Montesh to create a framework of how modern animal poaching in South Africa operates. The paper examines modern instances of rhino poaching and links the individual poachers to a grander set of criminal networks, who drive the poaching epidemic in South Africa. This paper provides details on the structure and workings of these primarily Vietnamese-based syndicates in South Africa, as well as the evolving methods of hunting that poachers are employing in southern Africa.²² The modern poaching methods mentioned in this article will be compared to the methods detailed in Ellis and Reeve's works. By comparing the poaching outlined in both eras, a chronology can be established as to how poaching and poaching syndicates have changed over time.

Milliken and Shaw provide another key piece of academic literature.²³ This paper focuses on the links between criminal syndicates in South Africa and Vietnam, and how the market demand in Vietnam is influencing a poaching epidemic in South Africa. This study offers a detailed view of the way syndicates operate in both Vietnam and South Africa and gives insight into the issues faced by law enforcement in their attempts to protect South African wildlife. While the paper details the modern activities of poaching syndicates, it lacks the historical context of poaching in the decades leading up to the modern crisis. This thesis uses the literature on the Apartheid regime's smuggling activities to better understand the historical causes of the data presented. Both Montesh's and Milliken and Shaw's papers were published in a similar timeframe, i.e. 2013 and 2012 respectively. While the information remains relevant, their literature is over a decade old and more recent developments have not been factored in. The use of interviews (detailed further within this chapter) will add to the body of knowledge and help to create an updated narrative of poaching in southern Africa.

Huang et al uses data provided by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) to create a map of ivory smuggling routes across the globe from 1975 to 2017.²⁴ This map is divided into three eras to denote the changing trends in the locations of both importers and exporters.²⁵ The three eras align with the three periods outlined in the fourth chapter of this thesis. The data collected confirms that following the end of Apartheid, large quantities of ivory were being shipped from South Africa to southeast Asia

²² Moses Montesh, "Rhino poaching: A new form of organised crime." *Rhino Resource Center* 27 (2013): 6.

²³ Tom Milliken, Jo Shaw, Richard H. Emslie, Russell D. Taylor, and Chris Turton. "The South Africa–Viet Nam Rhino Horn Trade Nexus." *Traffic* (2012): 76, 124.

²⁴ Wenyang Huang, Huiwen Wang, and Yigang Wei. "Mapping the Illegal International Ivory Trading Network to Identify Key Hubs and Smuggling Routes: Illegal International Ivory Trading Network from 1975 to 2017." *EcoHealth* 17 (2020): 525.

²⁵ *Ibid*: 531.

during the period of 1994 to 2003. This indicates that the smuggling routes that were either established or co-opted by the Apartheid regime remain active to this day. The data provided in this paper is crucial to linking the smuggling of the Apartheid era to ivory and rhino horn trafficking in South Africa in the present day. Huang et al fails to mention South Africa's impact on the volumes of ivory being exported across the globe, however the routes outlined confirm that much of the illicit traffic was originating from South Africa. It also demonstrates that, following the banning of ivory and rhino horn for international trade and the collapse of the Apartheid regime, trade routes originating from South Africa remained in use.

Rademeyer provides a chronology of rhino poaching in southern Africa, including the complicity of the Apartheid regime and individual South Africans in helping to supply animal products to southeast Asia.²⁶ The framework provided by this book is used to help contextualise the poaching in southern Africa from 1965 until the present day. The book also details the processes describing how rhino horn is sold and consumed in Vietnam. Additionally, it provides insight into the operations of Vietnamese-based syndicates once ivory and rhino horn has reached Vietnam and other southeast Asian nations.²⁷ The book examines both South Africa and Vietnam but does not establish definitive links between the past and present. This paper helps to connect these two eras by linking more data from pre-2003 to the present issues outlined by Rademeyer.

The Kumleben Commission is the main archival document utilised by this thesis. The commission proves the allegations that members of the SADF were involved in the smuggling of animal products during the SADF's involvement in Angola and South West Africa. The published report includes testimonies from key witnesses, as well as government documentation that would otherwise be inaccessible to the public. These documents contradict previous government statements as to whether or not ivory and rhino horn was being exported from Angola and South West Africa, as well as the quantities of these materials that were being exported overseas through South African trade channels. The report details internal failings by the South African police in investigating the trafficking of ivory and rhino horn in South Africa, partially because any attempt to curtail smuggling was being impeded by the National Party (NP).

²⁶ Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 55.

²⁷ *Ibid*: 256.

One document that the commission makes public is the record of the quantities and destinations of ivory that was being exported by South Africa.²⁸ Analysing this document alongside records of ivory harvested from elephants that had died of natural causes in South Africa's wildlife parks (which was legally allowed to be sold by the South African government) shows that more ivory was being exported than could have been harvested in South Africa, proving that external supplies of ivory were being illegally shipped through South African channels.²⁹ Being an archival document, the information provided by the Kumleben Commission does not extend beyond 1996.

The timing of the commission should also be noted. The commission was ordered directly by the newly elected President Nelson Mandela in 1994. Its findings would later be published in January of 1996. The Mandela presidency oversaw the conducting of government investigations into the Apartheid regime. The Kumleben Commission would have been one of the many projects undertaken in order to firstly understand the full extent of the National Party's crimes and subsequently attempt to bring about justice for said crimes. By extension it would have also served the purpose of delegitimizing the Apartheid regime while simultaneously legitimizing the newly elected ANC government. The information provided in the commission includes many witness testimonies against the Apartheid regime in its smuggling operations but presents very few defence witnesses. The anecdotal examples used by the commission are also carefully selected. In particular, the case study of police investigations into the Pong family serves to highlight the mistreatment of non-white racial minorities in South Africa, something less known internationally in comparison to the infamous oppression of black people by the Apartheid regime. These factors indicate the possibility of biased findings within the commission.

The thesis cross-references the records of ivory exportation provided by the Kumleben commission with modern data that tracks ivory smuggling routes to help assess how the NP's activities have influenced the ivory and rhino horn trafficking networks in the present day.

Issues and Limitations While Conducting this Research

While collecting information for this area of study, a point of concern has been the lack of primary sources for the period of 1965-1994. During the period of 1990 to 1994 in the build up to the first democratic election, the NP destroyed many of their records and documents. This

²⁸ Republic of South Africa & State President, *Commission of Inquiry into the Alleged Smuggling of and Illegal Trade in Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn in South Africa*, Judge M. E. Kumleben. Durban: 1996: 223-226.

²⁹ *Ibid*: 223-226.

was in order to prevent the criminal prosecution of members of the regime in the likely event of a loss to the ANC. The result of this is that many records of transportation were lost, preventing a closer examination of the supply routes that were used to smuggle ivory and rhino horn through SADF channels. The few documents that remained were used by Judge Kumleben to investigate the National Party's complicity in the ivory and horn trade. The records of ivory exportation by South Africa only exist from 1979 to 1987. Much of the information on the trafficking of animal materials came from the witness testimonies of individuals who independently claimed to have witnessed instances of smuggling, only to be told to stand down by their superiors when they voiced their concerns. The use of multiple testimonies, which were recorded in the Kumleben commission and academic papers, as well as autobiographies such as those of Colonel Jan Breytenbach, offer some aid to understanding the limited information of this period. The academia relating to this period is plentiful but relies heavily on secondary sources to construct coherent narratives.

The research for this thesis has made limited use of interviews to gather supplementary information. The participants have been kept anonymous as a safety precaution. The interviewees are all involved in wildlife conservation in varying capacities. The information collected from their experiences allows for some gaps in the academic literature to be filled. Many of the defining works in this academic field conclude around 2012. Interviews with current wildlife conservationists allows access to updated information on the issues presented in pre-2013 academic papers and journalistic investigations. Anecdotal accounts also provide a better insight into the everyday challenges faced by conservationists in the ever-changing landscape of wildlife protection and anti-poaching. The information gathered is unfortunately limited as during the research phase of this study only three interviews were able to be conducted. Of these interviews, only two were able to provide substantial information on the topic of animal conservation. The information in these interviews was compared to the previously known information on poaching syndicates recorded in other sources to get the most use out of the new information available. The low number of interviews unfortunately hinders the volume of information that could be gathered on current conservation efforts, however new knowledge was able to be added to the existing body of literature through extensive comparisons. In future studies more interviews should be conducted to gain a better understanding of the current issues faced by conservationists.

Usage of the Names of Countries and Acronyms

For this thesis, acronyms, abbreviations and the names of countries correspond with their correct name at the point in history that they are being referenced. The first era that this thesis covers took place at a time when many liberation movements were fighting for independence from either European control or white minority rule. Once independence was achieved some nations changed their names to disassociate from European rule. In this thesis the different names are used to better differentiate the periods of history that are being talked about. For example, when Namibia is being referred to before its independence from South African rule in 1990, it shall be referred to as South West Africa. From 1990 to present it shall be referred to as Namibia. Zimbabwe shall be referred to as Zimbabwe from the period of 1980 to present, and when referring to the nation from 1965 to 1979 it shall be called Rhodesia.

The different names allow for an easier distinction between governments and military forces that were friendly to the Apartheid regime and those that were hostile to it. Similarly, when referring to the armed forces of South Africa it is important to note the difference between the South African Defence Force (SADF) and the South African National Defence Force (SANDF). The SADF was the armed forces of South Africa during the Apartheid regime, who were then reconstituted into the SANDF following the African National Congress (ANC) victory in the first democratic election in 1994. Individuals in the SADF were involved in the poaching and smuggling of ivory and rhino horn during the South African Border War from 1966 to 1990 and the Angolan Civil War from 1975 to 1988. The SADF was also receiving ivory and rhino horns from their military allies during the Zimbabwe War of Independence from 1964 to 1979 and the Mozambican Civil War from 1977 to 1992. Following the formation of the SANDF in 1994, which included personal from the former SADF as well as members of liberation movement armed wings such as the ANC's uMkhonto we Sizwe and the Pan Africanist Congress' Azanian People's Liberation Army. Unlike the SADF, the SANDF has not been implicated in the poaching of animals, nor in the smuggling of animal products.

Chapter Synopsis

The primary aim of this thesis is to provide a clearer link between the poaching of elephants and rhinos and the smuggling of their animal products during the Apartheid era, and the lasting impact it has had on the current poaching crisis that threatens the megafauna of southern Africa. This research project is divided into three main chapters.

Chapter 2 focuses on the period from the 1960s until 1994. This chapter argues that the trafficking of animal products by the Apartheid regime created a greater supply for these materials in southeast Asia, which in turn led to an increased demand due to the growing middle classes of southeast Asian nations becoming more exposed to these luxuries. It examines the role that the SADF and the Apartheid regime played in trafficking animal products from nations where it was conducting military activities, as well as how the government tried to hide its involvement in the illicit trade. Methods for acquiring ivory and rhino horn, as well as the means employed to smuggle these materials, are studied to provide a clearer picture of how the South African government was involved in illicit activities in order to secure funding for itself.

Chapter 3 explores the modern period of 2003 to present. The main argument of this chapter is that the poaching epidemic currently faced by South Africa resulted from the market demand for ivory and rhino horn that the Apartheid regime helped to create. This chapter examines how the sustained demand for ivory and rhino horn has caused the focus of poaching efforts to shift from Angola, Namibia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe to South Africa. The operations of poaching syndicates are studied, including what is known of their structure and how these products are sold when they reach their final destinations. Current animal populations are compared to their population estimates before the conflicts that occurred from the 1960s to 1990s.

Chapter 4 explores the links between the periods outlined in the previous two chapters. The chapter focuses on three distinct eras: the time period of 1965-1994, the connecting period of 1994 to 2003 and the period of 2003 to present. The historical reasons for the logistics behind the transportation of animal products are explored. This chapter also covers the evolution of poaching methods, including how syndicates have become more adept at poaching animals in spite of the increase in protection that private and public game parks have implemented. Lastly, this section provides explanations for the seemingly inactive period of poaching and smuggling from 1994 to 2003, when criminals were temporarily able to continue trafficking ivory and rhino horn without the immediate need to acquire new materials.

Chapter 2 - Apartheid's Contraband

Introduction

The illegal trade of animals and animal products is currently the fourth-largest black-market trade across the globe. The trafficking of furs, bones, skins and horns is a lucrative industry that generates revenue by killing animals and then selling their valuable remains. The uses of these animal materials range from ornamental to medicinal purposes. These products are exported to many nations where individuals are willing to pay for them, however this thesis focuses on poaching and trading in two specific geographic regions: southern Africa and south-east Asia. Many products that are popular in south-east Asian markets, such as ivory and rhino horns, originate in southern Africa. South Africa sits at the centre of this trade, being both a location to find the animals and a historical trading hub for animal products taken from its neighbouring countries.

Starting in the 1960s and continuing until at least the late 1980s, South Africa's Apartheid government was involved in the procurement and smuggling of animal products. This was done to secure extra funding for the regime, as the international sanctions imposed in response to Apartheid were negatively impacting the economy. The destination for much of the exported products was south-east Asia, with China having been the primary consumer during the aforementioned period. When South Africa transitioned to democracy in 1994, the government's involvement in the illegal trade ceased. Despite this, the demand for these animal products was still present in south-east Asia, and by 2007 poaching had resurged in an effort to meet that demand.

Background

The system of Apartheid was introduced in South Africa in 1948. It served to empower the white minority, granting them special rights and privileges over the black majority. Following the Second World War the age of imperialism was coming to an end. The resources of the large European empires had been exhausted from two successive global conflicts and these nations wanted to utilise their remaining resources to rebuild themselves. The security of the white minority in South Africa became jeopardised as Europe's geopolitical power dwindled. Apartheid was therefore introduced to maintain the white South African population's firm grip on power.

From its inception Apartheid was unpopular on the international stage. The regime faced opposition from member states of the United Nations, who proposed sanctions to cripple the

white minority government. South Africa's Western allies also condemned the system of racial segregation. As a result of this, South Africa found itself economically isolated. The South African government was placed in a position where it had to create new streams of revenue to maintain the regime's power. This provided a strong motivation for the Apartheid regime to be heavily invested in the smuggling of animal products and other illegal materials.³⁰ Over the course of the 1960s to the late 1980s, it is believed that the Apartheid regime had a hand in trading not just rhino horns and ivory, but also animal pelts, diamonds, hardwoods and oil. This thesis, however, focuses on the trade of ivory and rhino horns as its point of interest.

By the 1960s, the majority of nations who had historically shared friendly ties with South Africa had implemented sanctions against the Apartheid state.³¹ Transport sanctions were key as most international goods are traded by air and sea. Many African nations, having recently gained independence, refused to allow South Africa's state airline, South African Airways (SAA) from refuelling in their territories.³² This increased the cost of international flights, as fewer passengers and less goods could be transported in order to lower fuel consumption. Stopovers, which allow for greater volumes of cargo and passengers, were no longer a viable option.³³ Cargo from South Africa was boycotted, and continued trade with South Africa became increasingly stigmatised over the course of the decade.

Sea lanes were harder to curtail, as nations found the centrality of the Cape of Good Hope on the global trading stage to be crucial for both the crew's well-being and the cheap and efficient transportation of goods. South Africa could not be boycotted entirely, ensuring that even under the heaviest of embargoes South Africa had a way of connecting to the outside world. These sea lanes would be crucial in the regime's exportation of animal products.

Arms embargoes played a prominent role in the sanctions against Apartheid.³⁴ Crawford et al explains that the theory behind the sanctions was that by denying a supply of weapons, equipment and ammunition to the regime, its effectiveness would diminish. This would force

³⁰ Philippe Le Billon, "Angola's political economy of war: The role of oil and diamonds, 1975–2000." *African Affairs* 100, no. 398 (2001): 67.

³¹ Neta C. Crawford, "Trump Card or Theatre? An Introduction to Two Sanctions Debates", in *How sanctions work: lessons from South Africa*, ed. Neta Crawford and Audie Klotz (London: MacMillan Press LTD, 1999), 10.

³² Gordon H Pirie, "Aviation, Apartheid and sanctions: air transport to and from South Africa, 1945–1989." *GeoJournal* 22 (1990): 233

³³ *Ibid*: 233.

³⁴ Hennie Van Vuuren, *Apartheid guns and money: A tale of profit*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 31.

South Africa to ease its oppression of the non-white population.³⁵ By targeting the importation of weapons, these sanctions theoretically only targeted the South African government and did not impact regular civilians.³⁶ The sanctions failed in their primary goal. Not only was South Africa still able to get arms from countries (both officially and unofficially), but the sanctions only further increased the white minority government's view that they were isolated and needed to defend themselves. The South African government began to invest more into its military spending. The manpower of the SADF was grown through conscription to ensure that the white minority could defend itself. The government also produced military hardware locally to avoid needing to rely on imports. This resulted in a militarised state with a large local arms industry.³⁷ South Africa was able to arm itself adequately and to supply factions in neighbouring countries with weapons and equipment to support their war efforts.³⁸

Crawford et al argue that the embargoes did manage to achieve their secondary objectives of making military spending more expensive.³⁹ By creating state-run businesses to provide for the nation's defence needs, the government needed to put forward large sums of capital. Both government and private excess capital had to be spent to ensure that South Africa could maintain its military. The findings of Crawford et al are corroborated by the measures employed by the Apartheid regime to maintain itself in the wake of these challenges. South African corporations and secret services worked hand in hand to engage in "sanctions busting", finding ways to get imports into the country through alternative trade means that were harder to track.⁴⁰ Armscor, the state-owned defence enterprise, was forced to turn to the private sector

³⁵ Neta C. Crawford, "Trump Card or Theatre? An Introduction to Two Sanctions Debates", in *How sanctions work: lessons from South Africa*, ed. Neta Crawford and Audie Klotz (London: MacMillan Press LTD, 1999), 45.

³⁶ Arne Tostensen and Beate Bull, "Are smart sanctions feasible?." *World politics* 54, no. 3 (2002): 383.

³⁷ Neta C. Crawford, "Trump Card or Theatre? An Introduction to Two Sanctions Debates", in *How sanctions work: lessons from South Africa*, ed. Neta Crawford and Audie Klotz (London: MacMillan Press LTD, 1999): 45, 54.

Hennie Van Vuuren, *Apartheid guns and money: A tale of profit*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 32. Christian Myles Rogerson, "Defending Apartheid: Armscor and the geography of military production in South Africa." *GeoJournal* 22 (1990): 243.

³⁸ Quint Hoekstra, "The effect of foreign state support to UNITA during the Angolan War (1975–1991)." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 29, no. 5-6 (2018): 993.

Christian Myles Rogerson, "Defending Apartheid: Armscor and the geography of military production in South Africa." *GeoJournal* 22 (1990): 244.

³⁹ Neta C. Crawford, "Trump Card or Theatre? An Introduction to Two Sanctions Debates", in *How sanctions work: lessons from South Africa*, ed. Neta Crawford and Audie Klotz (London: MacMillan Press LTD, 1999): 46.

⁴⁰ William H Kaempfer, James A. Lehman, and Anton D. Lowenberg. "Divestment, investment sanctions, and disinvestment: An evaluation of anti-Apartheid policy instruments." *International Organization* 41, no. 3 (1987): 465.

for funding.⁴¹ The sanctions put Apartheid's already strained economy under increased pressure. The white minority was not large enough to supply the arms industries manpower needs, forcing them to employ more black workers.⁴² The need for these measures helped to show the National Party that their efforts were unsustainable unless alternative plans to revitalise the economy could be developed.

The Apartheid regime's concerns were not purely financial. Security was arguably the largest issue for the National Party. The geopolitical situation across the globe had changed, and the continent of Africa was being affected by the process of decolonisation and the struggle between the United States of America (USA) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) for influence on the continent.⁴³ Many nations in Africa were transitioning to majority rule, which the South African government saw as a threat to its position. To maintain internal security, the Apartheid regime sought to involve themselves in their neighbours' affairs. This was accomplished either through direct military action, indirect aid or intelligence gathering. These operations further increased the spending of the state.

The neighbouring nations to South Africa are resource-rich countries. They possess both an abundance and a diverse array of natural materials, many of which remain unexploited even in the wake of colonialism. Between the early 1960s and the late 1980s, the extraction of these resources became a pivotal piece of the Apartheid regime's operations. Resources included the focal point of this thesis, namely rhino horns and elephant ivory, however oil, teak, and diamonds were also plentiful.⁴⁴ By controlling these resources, the government could help to keep the South African economy functioning. Many of these materials could be traded on the black market, an informal and loosely connected network of illegal merchants and buyers that spans the globe. Buyers for the aforementioned animal products were usually found in Asia, where traditional medicine is commonly practiced for many ailments ranging from cancer to

⁴¹ Neta C. Crawford, "Trump Card or Theatre? An Introduction to Two Sanctions Debates", in *How sanctions work: lessons from South Africa*, ed. Neta Crawford and Audie Klotz (London: MacMillan Press LTD, 1999), 54.

⁴² *Ibid*, 59.

⁴³ Ismay Milford, Gerard McCann, Emma Hunter, and Daniel Branch. "Another world? East Africa, decolonisation, and the global history of the mid-twentieth century." *The Journal of African History* 62, no. 3 (2021): 394.

Edward Aspinall, and Mark T. Berger. "The break-up of Indonesia? Nationalisms after decolonisation and the limits of the nation-state in post-cold war Southeast Asia." *Third world quarterly* 22, no. 6 (2001): 1005.

⁴⁴ Ros Reeve, and Stephen Ellis. "An insider's account of the South African security forces' role in the ivory trade." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 13, no. 2 (1995): 231.

erectile dysfunction. The symbiotic relationship between markets in South Africa and south-east Asia are central to the current problem of rhino poaching that South Africa faces.

The majority of Apartheid's foreign intervention was focused on maintaining the buffer state of South West Africa and aiding the *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA) in their insurgency against the *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (MPLA) government of Angola. These two factions had been engaged in a civil war following Angola's independence from Portugal in 1975. The South African government's intervention involved the full mobilisation of the South African Defence Force (SADF), both to occupy South West Africa and to invade Angola to assist the UNITA insurgents. Up until 1980 the South African government was also aiding the white minority regime in Rhodesia, albeit far less directly, and post 1980 spies were monitoring the newly independent Zimbabwe. Supplies and military advisors were sent to Mozambique to aid *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (RENAMO) during the ongoing Mozambican Civil War, and Botswana was also kept under a close watchful eye. These operations were incredibly costly, and the regime could not afford to invest in all of these fronts indefinitely.

Beginnings of Illegal Trading

A partial solution for the regime was to engage in the illegal trade of materials.⁴⁵ The country had already been blacklisted by most of the international community, making legal commerce a less feasible option for the nation. By the early 1970s, the Pretoria government began its plans to ensure that goods were flowing in and out of the country.⁴⁶ An issue with the literature detailing the early smuggling operations of the Apartheid regime is that there is no definitive evidence as to exactly when said operations began. Ellis states that initially South Africa only acted as a facilitator for their neighbouring allies, encouraging Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe) as well as the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique, to export ivory and rhino horn through South African channels.⁴⁷ South Africa's allies in these regions would collect any loose ivory and rhino horns that their troops encountered. The materials would be transported to South Africa via its military supply routes where it could then be sold to other nations in order to keep the economy afloat.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Ros Reeve, and Stephen Ellis. "An insider's account of the South African security forces' role in the ivory trade." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 13, no. 2 (1995): 228.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*: 227.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*: 55-56, 58.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*: 55-56, 58.

An important point to note is the legal status of ivory and rhino horns around this time period. Prior to 1989, there was no international ban on the trade of ivory.⁴⁹ While acquiring ivory through active means such as hunting was illegal, the trading of ivory that had been collected from animals who had died of natural causes remained legal. Stockpiles of ivory were collected from South African national game reserves every year and then exported internationally allowing the South African government accrue capital.⁵⁰ The legal export of ivory from South Africa allowed the Apartheid regime to export without suspicion. This avenue of trade was used for the laundering of ivory. Using this legitimate front of ivory stockpiles, the South African government could export ivory that had been collected from sources outside of South Africa, namely the ivory that was being imported from Angola, Namibia and Mozambique. For much of the Apartheid era, the illegality of the ivory trade did not derive from the material itself. It was the quantities of the material that were being exported, as well as their method of acquisition, which was illegal.⁵¹ Similarly, the trade of rhino horns was only internationally banned in 1977 when the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES) put forward a motion that was then signed by 181 states.⁵² Internally, rhino horn sales were still legal in South Africa up until 2009. The change occurred due to a new surge in poaching. This decision was later overturned by South Africa's constitutional court in 2017, allowing internal trade to resume.⁵³

During the Apartheid era, in South Africa and South West Africa (present-day Namibia) there was a clear legal outline detailing how a person could obtain and trade ivory. This is outlined in the Kumleben Commission. During the Bantustan period (which lasted until 1980) the permits issued for legal possession of ivory were: import permits, veterinary permits and possession permits.⁵⁴ Import permits authorised the importation of ivory and rhino horns from areas outside of South Africa/South West Africa. This included importing ivory from the

⁴⁹ Marc Kaufman, "Increased Demand for Ivory Threatens Elephant Survival." *The Washington Post*, February 27, 2007. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/26/AR2007022600932.html>.

⁵⁰ Republic of South Africa & State President, *Commission of Inquiry into the Alleged Smuggling of and Illegal Trade in Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn in South Africa*, Judge M. E. Kumleben. Durban: 1996: 30.

⁵¹ *Ibid*: 12.

⁵² Jane Wiltshire, "The Global Ban on the Trade in Rhino Horn Does Not, and Will Not, Work." *The Daily Maverick*, May 2, 2023. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2023-05-02-the-global-ban-on-the-trade-in-rhino-horn-does-not-and-will-not-work/>.

⁵³ Agence France-Presse, "South Africa Lifts Ban on Domestic Rhino Horn Sales." *The Guardian*, June 4, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/apr/06/south-africa-lifts-ban-on-domestic-rhino-horn-sales>.

⁵⁴ Bantustans were areas designated as homelands for the black populations of South Africa during the Apartheid era. This ensured that the black and white populations were living in completely different regions. Republic of South Africa & State President, *Commission of Inquiry into the Alleged Smuggling of and Illegal Trade in Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn in South Africa*, Judge M. E. Kumleben. Durban: 1996: 81-82.

Bantustans into South West Africa proper.⁵⁵ These permits had to be granted by the central government in Pretoria, which made the application a lengthy process for those in South West Africa. However, the process could be expedited by obtaining permission via a phone call.⁵⁶ Veterinary permits were issued to ensure that there were no diseases to be found in the materials being transported.⁵⁷ Finally, the possession permits allowed for the legal carrying and ownership of ivory. Possession permits could only be acquired if one had previously acquired an import permit and a veterinary permit.⁵⁸ In theory, these heavy restrictions ensured that a limited number of people could get involved in the ivory horn trade. This would discourage more involvement in the trade and prevent further growth. The exclusivity could also be construed by South African authorities to indicate that the animal populations were being protected by the government. This would have allowed the National Party to deflect suspicion.

Post 1980 the Bantustans were incorporated in South West Africa and no longer seen as separate entities.⁵⁹ After this period there was an introduction of additional permits to further regulate the ivory trade. These new permits were the export permit and the foreign import permit.⁶⁰ Export permits were required to ship ivory and rhino horns (prior to rhino horns international ban in 1977) from Namibia. Foreign import permits were the permits required by a person in the receiving country.⁶¹ In the case of South Africa, permits were obtained at a provincial level, whereas in South West Africa foreign import permits were obtained at a national level.⁶²

South West Africa's veterinary permit register indicates that the majority of vet permits in 1979 were issued to SADF personnel. This register was examined by Ian Parker, an expert on the international ivory trade who is highly regarded by academics.⁶³ According to Parker, the register stated that in all cases of issuing veterinary permits (save for one registration) the

⁵⁵ *Ibid*: 81.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*: 81-82.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*: 82.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*: 82.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*: 83.

Chris Saunders, "Decolonization in southern Africa: reflections on the Namibian and South African cases", *Journal for Contemporary History* 42, no.1 (2017): 109.

⁶⁰ Republic of South Africa & State President, *Commission of Inquiry into the Alleged Smuggling of and Illegal Trade in Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn in South Africa*, Judge M. E. Kumleben. Durban: 1996: 84.

⁶¹ *Ibid*: 84.

⁶² *Ibid*: 84.

⁶³ Bill Adams, "What I Tell You Three Times is True: Conservation, Ivory, History and Politics" by Ian Parker (2004)." *Oryx* 39, no. 1 (2005): 99-100.

quantities of material being registered were in multiples of 5.⁶⁴ This creates the possibility that the outlier permit was simply for the leftover materials that did not fit into the round quantities. Kumleben stated that this evidence “irrefutably indicates that those permits were not issued to individual servicemen or refugees for tusks or rhino horn they may have acquired in their private capacity in some or other manner”.⁶⁵ The conclusion that Kumleben drew from this information was that ivory was being commercially exported, with the legal system having been used as a cover for grand-scale smuggling operations.⁶⁶ The large-scale issuing of permits combined with the neat numbering of the ordered permits supports the idea that said permits were not being awarded to individuals. The Apartheid regime claimed that loose ivory had been sporadically acquired by servicemen and refugees, which then required licensing.⁶⁷ In theory these individuals would be requiring permits at infrequent intervals. The issuing of permits would therefore be done on an individual basis and not in large quantities at multiple of 5.

The 1979 veterinary permit register is currently unavailable, and due to the aforementioned document purges by the Apartheid regime, it is likely that the document was destroyed. At the end of the Kumleben Commission report, however, the records of both ivory imports from South Africa and ivory production in the Kruger National Park (KNP) are attached. Both lists cover the rough period of 1979-1988.⁶⁸ Using these sources, it can be seen that the amount of ivory being harvested in the KNP was too low to meet the amount that was being exported at the coinciding period. For example, around 1981 there was a grand total of 3708,8 kilograms of ivory collected from elephants in the national park.⁶⁹ From that same period the amount of ivory exported to Germany alone amounted to 6400 kilograms, with a grand total of 31443 kilograms having been exported worldwide.⁷⁰ The numbers clearly showed that there was more ivory passing through South African channels than what had been accounted for.

The list of destinations found in the Kumleben Commission is likely also incomplete. Kumleben failed to mention the possibility of destinations for ivory and rhino outside of those recorded in the documents throughout his investigation. As shown later in this thesis, the

⁶⁴ Republic of South Africa & State President, *Commission of Inquiry into the Alleged Smuggling of and Illegal Trade in Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn in South Africa*, Judge M. E. Kumleben. Durban: 1996: 126.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*: 126.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*: 127.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*: 101.

⁶⁸ Both sources use a different start and end date. The export log documents from 1979-1987, while the harvesting log documents from 1980-1988. For this reason, when discussing shipments in 1981 for example, it will be using data from 1980 in the export log.

⁶⁹ Republic of South Africa & State President, *Commission of Inquiry into the Alleged Smuggling of and Illegal Trade in Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn in South Africa*, Judge M. E. Kumleben. Durban: 1996: 224.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*: 223.

market for ivory and rhino horn was steadily growing in both China and Vietnam at this period in history. It is possible that rhino horn and ivory was reaching these nations through channels from Hong Kong and Japan, two of the largest importers of animal products from South Africa.⁷¹ The possibility also exists that China and Vietnam were receiving undocumented shipments through the black market. Both nations were part of the Eastern Bloc during the Cold War and would not have openly traded with South Africa. Despite no official trading channels, what is known is that these nations had consumer markets for these products during the height of South Africa's involvement in illicit trading.

Rhodesia and the Beginnings of the Ivory Trade

The primary area that animal products were being smuggled from was Angola and South West Africa. The period of 1979-1987 coincided with the mass destruction of wildlife herds in Angola and South West Africa. A key witness to this devastation was Jan Breytenbach, a former Colonel of the SADF who headed the special forces and worked closely with UNITA. Initially sent to support the Portuguese colonial forces in 1970, he reported a fully thriving ecosystem still in place in Northern Namibia and Southern Angola. In his autobiography, Breytenbach spoke of a wild paradise that was biodiverse both in flora and fauna.⁷² Entire pages were dedicated to describing the abundance of wilderness that he and his men encountered while operating in the region.⁷³ When he returned to the region in 1975, and was taken aback by how much of the population had been culled in the few years he had been absent.⁷⁴

Despite later large-scale smuggling, the initial collection of ivory was not planned. It was rather the result of finding animal carcasses while soldiers patrolled the wilderness. Valuable materials that were still intact on the dead animals was harvested for later.⁷⁵ In Rhodesia, the Zimbabwe War of Independence had ironically made it safer for the general wildlife population.⁷⁶ The low-intensity guerrilla tactics of insurgency and counterinsurgency meant that the wildlife had not been greatly affected by the conflict.⁷⁷ This was in contrast to Angola where artillery, tanks

⁷¹ *Ibid*: 223.

⁷² Jan Breytenbach, *Eden's exiles: One soldier's fight for paradise*. (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 1997), 15-16, 68.

⁷³ *Ibid*: 22, 30-31.

⁷⁴ Ros Reeve, and Stephen Ellis. "An insider's account of the South African security forces' role in the ivory trade." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 13, no. 2 (1995): 230, 237.

⁷⁵ Stephen Ellis, "Of elephants and men: politics and nature conservation in South Africa." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20, no. 1 (1994): 55.

⁷⁶ Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 19.

⁷⁷ Leopold Scholtz, "Lessons from the Southern African wars: a counterinsurgency analysis." *Journal for Contemporary History* 36, no. 2 (2011): 200.

and other forms of heavy ordinance had caused large-scale destruction.⁷⁸ The nature of guerrilla warfare would also have made large-scale hunting a poor tactical choice as the focus of the Rhodesian military doctrine was on counterinsurgency and their ability to remain largely unseen.⁷⁹ Poachers were also hesitant to kill animals within Rhodesia, as the liberation forces and the security forces were scattered across the country. Any unknown armed presence would have been seen as an enemy combatant and likely killed on sight.

Animal carcasses found in Rhodesia would typically have been accidents or natural deaths. A common occurrence according to an anonymous soldier was for animals to step into minefields, resulting in its harvesting when the corpse was found by patrolling soldiers.⁸⁰ Many members of the Rhodesian Security Forces were adept in animal tracking. This was due to the practice of recruiting former game wardens and others who were familiar with the bush for specialist roles.⁸¹ Special forces units, who had close connections to South African Military Intelligence (MI), had higher concentrations of specialists. These soldiers would have been proficient in tracking animal movements and therefore would have been better at finding animal carcasses. This led to a small but reliable source of ivory for South Africa. It is alleged that as the Bush War raged on, the quantities of ivory and other materials that could be secured and delivered to South African MI networks would have partially influenced the continued support from South Africa.⁸²

Despite the incentive for valuable materials, it must not be assumed that ivory and other resources were the primary factor in the decision by the South African government to support the Rhodesian regime. Both nations were ruled by white-minority governments who sought to preserve the status-quo, and so formed an alliance in spite of the hostile English-Afrikaner sentiments.⁸³ By the mid-1960's both nations were involved in low-intensity conflicts that would escalate by the late 1970's.⁸⁴ During this time, MI wanted to gather information on how

⁷⁸ Roland De Vries, "The influence of the Ratel infantry fighting vehicle on mobile warfare in southern Africa." *Scientia Militaria: South African Journal of Military Studies* 43, no. 2 (2015): 177, 180, 182.

⁷⁹ Jakkie K Cilliers, *Counter-insurgency in Rhodesia*. (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 60.

⁸⁰ Stephen Ellis, "Of elephants and men: politics and nature conservation in South Africa." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20, no. 1 (1994): 55.

⁸¹ *Ibid*: 55.

⁸² *Ibid*: 56.

⁸³ Paul L Moorcraft, and Peter McLaughlin. *The Rhodesian war: A military history*. (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2010), 15.

Lester Kurtz, "The anti-Apartheid struggle in South Africa (1912-1992)." *International Center on Nonviolent Conflict* (2010): 1.

⁸⁴ André Wessels, "Half a century of South African "Border War" literature: A historiographical exploration." *Southern Journal for Contemporary History* 42, no. 2 (2017): 25.

to successfully conduct a counter-insurgency campaign as tensions in South West Africa continued to grow. The tactics of units such as the Selous Scouts and Rhodesian Special Air Service had proved to be highly effective, and MID wanted to access to their knowledge.⁸⁵ According to Ellis, the main currency that the Rhodesian government was providing South Africa was information. After operations, MI would be privy to sensitive information that special forces units had learned in the field. This was then used in order to better help the SADF for their own conflicts.⁸⁶

It is possible that this early, small-time ivory trade laid the foundations for what would become the large-scale smuggling operations during the Border War and Angolan Civil War.⁸⁷ Whether or not the trade in ivory was a factor in Pretoria's decision to become heavily involved in Angola is unclear. The possibility does remain, as anonymous reports of officials allegedly attempting to involve others in the ivory trade date back to at least 1974, a full year before direct intervention in Angola.⁸⁸ While smaller sources such as Rhodesia were used to acquire ivory, the primary area of animal poaching was always Angola and South West Africa.

Throughout all of the SADF's involvement in material trafficking operations, the Military Intelligence Division (MID) had been the driving force. MID had arranged the smuggling operations within the SADF. MID had full knowledge of all of the SADF's operations and could tailor their smuggling activities to fit into the military operations that were underway. MID still answered to the National Party, meaning they were not at the top of the conspiracy. As they were the intelligence branch of the SADF, MID was shrouded in secrecy. It is unknown exactly who was involved in the operations or who the highest-ranking MID agent involved was. MID were in charge of logistics meaning that they were in the perfect position to hide a smuggling operation in the middle of SADF-controlled territory. They had control over the documentation needed to move the animal materials through South African channels and were able to alter documents to both make transporting goods easier and to cover their tracks. Other units in the SADF would not be fully aware of their operations. While individuals from other

Michael Eric Hagemann, "Shadows, faces and echoes of an African war: The Rhodesian bush war through the eyes of Chas Lotter—soldier poet." (PhD Thesis, University of Cape Town, 2016): 94, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/84690612.pdf>.

Willem Steenkamp, *South Africa's Border War, 1966-1989*. (Cape Town: NB Publishers, 2016), 22.

⁸⁵ Stephen Ellis, "Of elephants and men: politics and nature conservation in South Africa." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20, no. 1 (1994): 55.

⁸⁶ Tim Stapleton, "'Tracking, tracking and more tracking was their motto': bush tracking and warfare in late twentieth-century Southern Africa." *War & Society* 34, no. 4 (2015): 315.

⁸⁷ Ellis, Stephen. "Of elephants and men: politics and nature conservation in South Africa." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20, no. 1 (1994): 56.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*: 56.

units were certainly involved, it was not normal for a serviceman to be a part of the conspiracy within the defence force.

Methods of Material Acquisition

Due to the illegality of the ivory trade that the Apartheid regime had slowly embedded itself into, varied tactics were required to ensure that a steady stream of ivory and other materials could be collected while also maintaining plausible deniability. Multiple sources of acquisition had to be used. If all of the material had come through a single supply network, then the operation would have been easier to trace.

The first method of ivory acquisition was the use of individual poachers. Poachers were hired as independent criminals for the purpose of killing animals and harvesting their valuable materials.⁸⁹ This method of outsourcing poaching had the benefit of minimising the risk to the core members of the trafficking operation, both physically and legally. Physically, the person at risk of death or injury is an expendable outsider, and legally it is harder to connect said individual to the larger operation. This was best seen in the case study of poaching in the Zambezi valley between 1983 and 1993.

Rademeyer outlines this deadly period in the history of Zimbabwe's nature conservation, which resulted in the deaths of at least 174 people.⁹⁰ The 1980s saw a surge in rhino deaths following the conclusion of the Zimbabwe War of Liberation that raged from 1964-1979. In the aftermath of the war, Zimbabwe was now considered a stable country by poaching syndicates. Poachers and syndicates believed that the abundance of game could now be exploited without the fear of being ambushed by guerilla fighters.⁹¹ In order to procure ivory, criminal organisations hired Zambians to cross the Zambezi River and hunt rhinos.⁹² They would then deliver the horns to their employers once they had returned to Zambia and were safe from Zimbabwean legal jurisdiction. Zambia was experiencing economic problems since the 1980s, and so the majority of citizens were impoverished. This made them exploitable by criminal syndicates operating in the region.⁹³ Poaching in Zimbabwe proved to be dangerous. The majority of the park rangers in Zimbabwe were veterans of the recent war and were familiar with the terrain.⁹⁴ A good

⁸⁹ Moses Montesh, "Rhino poaching: A new form of organised crime." *Rhino Resource Center* 27 (2013): 6.

⁹⁰ Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 21.

⁹¹ *Ibid*: 19.

⁹² *Ibid*: 19.

⁹³ *Ibid*: 20.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*: 20.

portion of the special forces units in Rhodesia had hired bush rangers specifically for the task of counterinsurgency in the wilderness, and after the war many had returned to that role.⁹⁵ The result was a game protection force that was highly skilled and experienced. The poachers typically had no combat experience and did not have the same knowledge of the land that the rangers they were trying to outmaneuver possessed. The result was a bloody war for the protection of the rhino population of Zimbabwe.

This example highlights the disparity in the power dynamic between the leaders of syndicates and the common “foot soldiers” who were committing the crime. Throughout the period of 1983-1993 there was very little being done to curtail the influential criminals who were organising the rhino poacher excursions. The focus of anti-poaching operations remained solely on the low-ranking poachers. Robert Mugabe, the leader of Zimbabwe at the time, issued a “shoot to kill” policy, giving the park rangers free reign to gun down anyone caught poaching. Despite the high mortality rate for Zimbabwean poachers in Zimbabwean parks, the number of people willing to risk their lives to poach never diminished. Indeed, it was noted that the poaching ended not because the potential poachers had become deterred, but rather because the population of rhinos in the region had become extinct and poaching was no longer a viable operation.⁹⁶

Rademeyer states in his writing that independent poachers are the preferred type of criminal for larger organisations to employ, primarily due to their expendability. This idea was corroborated in an interview with an Eastern Cape-based nature conservator, who confirmed that in the modern age the strategy of employing unaffiliated criminals to carry out the poaching is still in use. The poachers work as temporary contractors and ties can easily be cut with them when the situation requires it. They are often highly expendable, as most are impoverished locals simply doing the bidding of a far greater power. Within the modern context of southern Africa, this refers to criminal syndicates whose core members are never directly involved in the process of the poaching but take most of the profits while avoiding most of the risks.

Another advantage that individual poachers possess is the ability to remain hidden in plain sight. The majority of the South African population is black, with black Africans constituting

Rosaleen Duffy, "The role and limitations of state coercion: Anti-poaching policies in Zimbabwe." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 17, no. 1 (1999): 104.

⁹⁵ Tim Stapleton, "Gamekeepers and Counter-Insurgency in Kenya and Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), 1952-1980." *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 49, no. 2 (2016): 217, 221.

⁹⁶ Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 21.

81,4% of the total population.⁹⁷ According to Statistics South Africa, around 49,2% of the adult population of South Africa lives below the poverty line.⁹⁸ Poaching syndicates specifically hire impoverished black people as poachers and couriers due to these individuals being part of a large demographic in South Africa.⁹⁹ The largest minority populations in South Africa are coloureds, whites and Asians who constitute 8,2%, 7,3% and 2,7% respectively.¹⁰⁰ Using minorities would attract more attention to poaching operations as these individuals are more visible. One individual involved in anti-poaching stated that the depressing economic realities of Africa make it easy for black people to be exploited as the “foot soldiers” of these poaching operations.¹⁰¹ While poachers may appear out of place and easily spotted in the protected wildlife regions, once they return to public places they become invisible again. Concealability allows for couriers to move across the subcontinent with little risk of being stopped and searched.

During South Africa’s direct involvement in the Angolan Civil War (1975-1988) people fitting this description could have easily blended into the groups of refugees who were crossing the Angolan border into South West Africa in search of safety. Due to the laws being relaxed around ivory possession during this period, it was possible for smugglers working for the Apartheid regime to have posed as regular civilians until they could deliver their contraband to the SADF officials who had been in charge of the stockpile. One poacher who was caught in the Botswana Okavango delta in 1984 was a local Khoisan man whose hunting rifle was found to have been supplied by officers within the SADF.¹⁰² He was caught by Des Burman, an officer in the SADF who had previously encountered the smuggling operation taking place at Rundu base. Burman was later told to release the man.¹⁰³ Ironically, members of the SADF that were involved in anti-poaching efforts believed that the poachers were working with groups like the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) and MPLA due to the information they had received from local informants.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁷ “People of South Africa,” South African Government, accessed January 21, 2025, <https://www.gov.za/about-sa/south-africas-people>.

⁹⁸ “Five facts about poverty in South Africa,” stats sa, April 4, 2019, accessed January 21, 2025, <https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=12075>.

⁹⁹ Interviewee 1 (Conservationist), Interviewed by Gareth Kirby, via Zoom: 46:31, 47:15.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*: 46:31, 47:15.

¹⁰¹ “Grunt” refers to a person low in an organisations hierarchy who does jobs that typically require a low skill threshold and are expendable.

¹⁰² Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 48-49.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*: 48-49.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*: 48.

There were allegations from the local population in South West Africa that restricted operational areas had animal culling operations conducted inside them.¹⁰⁵ It was normal practice for Namibians to hunt for meat, as the Bantustans were more open and relaxed in South West Africa than in South Africa. During SADF operations South West African were not allowed to use their typical hunting spots. After areas had been deemed accessible again, they would find that the animal populations had declined. Servicemen implicated in ivory and rhino horn smuggling had apparently been on hunting trips in the Caprivi strip in the north-west of SWA and south-eastern Angola since 1975 and would return with tusks. In an interview with a Namibian conservationist who had lived through this period, it was stated that these operational areas included territory where the population (and the SADF) were fully aware that SWAPO was not present.¹⁰⁶

UNITA

The majority of the suppliers of ivory and rhino horns during the Angolan Civil War were not independent poachers. According to Colonel Breytenbach, UNITA troops were known to have sold ivory and rhino horns directly to their contacts in the SADF supply channels.¹⁰⁷ Taylor, who's paper deals with the evolution of the international ivory trade, outlines the basic structure of how UNITA would actively cull the animal population to harvest their resources.¹⁰⁸ Rhinoceros horns and elephant tusks were the primary commodity, both due to their prominence as well as the comparatively low-level of skill needed to bring these animal products in intact.¹⁰⁹ Items such as pelts were traded also, however getting a pelt that had not been significantly damaged already was a rarity.¹¹⁰ Killing megafauna also had the advantage of supplying the insurgent force with a supply of meat, as guerilla armies are often forced to forage for food instead of having access to a stable supply line. Reeve and Ellis in an interview with Colonel Breytenbach placed a focus on UNITA's poaching activities.¹¹¹ Many UNITA troops had minimal training and their marksmanship was poor.¹¹² Breytenbach noted that he had personally witnessed UNITA troops shooting at animals.¹¹³ Rather than killing their prey

¹⁰⁵ Interviewee 2 (Conservationist), Interviewed by Gareth Kirby, via Zoom: 22:27, 33:59.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*: 22:19.

¹⁰⁷ Ros Reeve, and Stephen Ellis. "An insider's account of the South African security forces' role in the ivory trade." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 13, no. 2 (1995): 236.

¹⁰⁸ R. Thomas Naylor, "The underworld of ivory." *Crime, law and social change* (2004) 42 (2005): 280.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*: 280.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*: 280.

¹¹¹ Ros Reeve, and Stephen Ellis. "An insider's account of the South African security forces' role in the ivory trade." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 13, no. 2 (1995): 228.

¹¹² *Ibid*: 237.

¹¹³ *Ibid*: 237.

with precise shots, they would have their assault rifles set to the fully automatic firing mode and would bring the creature down with many inaccurate shots. Rifles designed exclusively for warfare make poor hunting weapons due to their smaller calibres and lower quality control.¹¹⁴

These resources gathered by the insurgent forces would be traded to the SADF, where they would be shipped through official supply channels from Angola, through South West Africa and ultimately into South Africa for export. For UNITA, bringing in a stable cashflow was a priority. According to the Roos Inquiry, the SADF's internal investigation into allegations of ivory and rhino horn smuggling, any ivory recovered from poachers that UNITA stumbled upon would be given to contacts in the SADF to be transported out of the country.¹¹⁵ The Roos Inquiry, which was held in 1988, was conducted behind closed doors and very few findings were made public.¹¹⁶ It did not quell rumours of SADF involvement and was viewed by the new, democratic government as a shallow attempt by the Apartheid regime to exonerate themselves of any wrongdoing relating to smuggling. From what was revealed to the public, the inquiry tried to downplay any transportation of ivory and denied that smuggling took place.

The Roos Inquiry went on to state that this practice of transporting ivory and rhino horns only occurred for a period of 18 months from 1978 to 1979 before the Apartheid government shut down these operations.¹¹⁷ This correlates with the timeline of the anecdote where Lieutenant Burman found a cache of ivory inside weapons crates. It appears as though this was admitted to simply because the evidence was too overwhelming to ignore. This does not explain the large ecological collapse that occurred following 1979, with the amount of ivory exported from South Africa continuing to remain higher than what was believed possible. In the Roos Inquiry it was claimed that 1700kg of ivory was legally exported and that no foul play had been involved.¹¹⁸ The Kumleben commission proved that the amount of ivory exported was higher.¹¹⁹

In the context of Angola and Namibia in the late Cold War period, this position of facilitating poaching was primarily the domain of the Apartheid regime. The SADF had stable control over

¹¹⁴Weapons produced for warfare are typically done in bulk quantities, meaning that individual quality is sacrificed for quicker production. These make the weapons less accurate than hunting rifles which are more meticulously crafted.

¹¹⁵ Jacklyn Cock, "Introduction", in *From Defence to Development: Redirecting Military Resources in South Africa*, ed. Jacklyn Cock and Penny McKenzie (Cape Town: David Philips Publishers (Pty) Ltd), 6.

¹¹⁶ Republic of South Africa & State President, *Commission of Inquiry into the Alleged Smuggling of and Illegal Trade in Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn in South Africa*, Judge M. E. Kumleben. Durban: 1996: 75.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*: 102.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*: 86-87.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*: 223.

of the border territory, and their presence typically deterred external poaching threats much in the same way that conflict had protected the wildlife of Zimbabwe. This was possibly the only similarity between the two conflicts. In Angola and South West Africa, the intensity of the conflict was much greater. Instead of a low-intensity guerrilla war, there was a high intensity warzone with large cohorts of troops and armoured and air support being frequently present.¹²⁰ The high-intensity nature of the conflict created a destructive environment that was dangerous for the wildlife regardless of the presence of poachers. Additionally, secret elements of the SADF had been facilitating poaching themselves, which allowed criminals to permeate the warzone and kill animals with minimal resistance.

Angola is a land rich in untapped material resources, and there is a clear historical reason for their abundance.¹²¹ Unlike nations such as South Africa or Zimbabwe, which had been industrialised and had developed advanced infrastructure for the purpose of maintaining the economy, Angola never advanced much from an Agrarian state. Portugal intended to heavily exploit the labour of the indigenous black population without investing capital into industrialisation. This managed to save the Portuguese empire capital in the short term, but meant that by the 20th century the resource extraction capabilities of the Portuguese colonists was still minimal due to a lack of technological involvement.¹²² Farms and mines relied on physical labour as opposed to machine tools, and great tracts of land remained unsettled by the European colonists.¹²³ This lack of infrastructure meant that groups such as the MPLA and UNITA did not have a reliable economy in their zones of control. As the controlled territory was not able to sustain their war efforts, they had to turn to raw resource exploitation in order to fund themselves. The factions would use their labour pool to mine, hunt and strip the natural landscape in order to produce capital to justify their position as a high priority ally of the Eastern and Western blocs.

For UNITA, the exportation of resources succeeded in securing international support. Jonas Savimbi's forces received a large amount of aid from South Africa, with the general estimate

¹²⁰ Leo Barnard, "The role of the South African Air Force (SAAF) during the SADF's cross-border operations in Angola, 1978-1981: a historical exploration." *Journal for Contemporary History* 31, no. 3 (2006): 268.

Roland De Vries, "The influence of the Ratel infantry fighting vehicle on mobile warfare in southern Africa." *Scientia Militaria: South African Journal of Military Studies* 43, no. 2 (2015): 175.

¹²¹ Kenneth L Adelman, "Report from Angola." *Foreign Affairs* 53, no. 3 (1975): 558.

¹²² Jeremy Ball, "The history of Angola." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*. 2017: 10.

¹²³ William G. Clarence-Smith, "The myth of uneconomic imperialism: The Portuguese in Angola, 1836-1926." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 5, no. 2 (1979): 169.

being around R400 million in the financial year of 1986/1987 alone.¹²⁴ UNITA received continuous direct and material support from South Africa from 1975-1988, as well as material support and intelligence from the US for that same duration. Savimbi went on record saying that diamonds, ivory and timber were instrumental in winning and maintaining SADF support throughout his insurgency campaign against the MPLA government.¹²⁵

The official story of UNITA's level of involvement in the trade of ivory shifted throughout the years in relation to how much information had come to light. General Gerhadrus Philippus Ortlepp du Preez was in charge of military intelligence in the South West Africa/Angola border region, with his primary task being to supply UNITA with information about their enemy, MPLA.¹²⁶ He was a key witness in testifying before the Roos Inquiry due to his pivotal role in the region and therefore presumed knowledge of the situation.¹²⁷ For the Roos Inquiry, he claimed that ivory was not part of any deals with UNITA initially. He then claimed that any ivory that was found coming through the border had been collected from refugees fleeing Angola, with the SADF receiving ivory as a form of payment for added assistance.¹²⁸ When evidence of UNITA's possession of ivory was presented at the Kumleben Commission during du Preez's subsequent questioning eight years later, he claimed that loose ivory collected by UNITA troops had been handed over to the SADF as a way of showing mutual support between the insurgent faction and South Africa.¹²⁹ It is noted in the Kumleben commission that this was directly sanctioned by General Magnus Malan in 1978, who at the time was the Commander-in-Chief of the SADF and would two years later go on to hold the position of Minister of Defence for the Apartheid regime. He would maintain this position for over a decade until 1991.¹³⁰

It is from this period that the evidence presented in defence of the SADF begins to crumble, and coincidences start to become more noticeable. The first large piece of evidence to suggest that the SADF was involved in the illegal trade of animal products was discovered in early

¹²⁴ Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 53.

¹²⁵ Jacklyn Cock, "Introduction", in *From Defence to Development: Redirecting Military Resources in South Africa*, ed. Jacklyn Cock and Penny McKenzie (Cape Town: David Philips Publishers (Pty) Ltd), 6.

¹²⁶ Republic of South Africa & State President, *Commission of Inquiry into the Alleged Smuggling of and Illegal Trade in Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn in South Africa*, Judge M. E. Kumleben. Durban: 1996: 100.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*: 103.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*: 101.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*: 88.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*: 102.

Author, Unknown. "Magnus Malan." South African History Online. February 17, 2011. <https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/magnus-malan>.

1979.¹³¹ There are two variations to this story: one retold by Colonel Jan Breytenbach (who had been directly contacted by Burman) in his interview with Rosalind Reeve, and the other recounted by investigative journalist Julian Rademeyer in his book *Killing for Profit*, which used a variety of secondary sources.¹³² While the details differ in the two accounts, the core tale remains the same. Lieutenant Des Burman, an intelligence officer who worked directly with UNITA, was resupplying his arms and ammunition at the SADF base in Rundu, a Namibian city on the Angolan border and a key region in the allegations against the Apartheid regime.¹³³ While searching for a replacement for his rifle, he stumbled upon crates of rhino and ivory horns, as well as other animal products.¹³⁴

The major difference in the two versions begin when he attempts to report these findings to his superior officer. Breytenbach's account included Burman's superior officer, a lieutenant-colonel who remains unnamed, violently threatening him to keep quiet about what he had seen or else suffer the consequences.¹³⁵ In Rademeyer's version, it is Burman who got aggressive with his commanding officer, now named as Colonel Fred Oelschig, and demanded to know what the truth of the situation was.¹³⁶ It is possible that these were two separate but similar instances, as many officers were involved in running SADF operations, or that they were the same incident with the details being either misremembered or purposely obscured to protect the identities of those involved. Whatever the case, the result ends up being the same. Burman was reassigned to a new role away from the frontlines, with the explanation being that he was suffering from battle fatigue, a claim Burman later refuted.¹³⁷ The evidence suggests that he had been moved to prevent him from conducting any further investigations.

¹³¹ Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 45.

¹³² Ros Reeve, and Stephen Ellis. "An insider's account of the South African security forces' role in the ivory trade." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 13, no. 2 (1995): 232.

Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 47.

¹³³ *Ibid*: 45.

Ros Reeve, and Stephen Ellis. "An insider's account of the South African security forces' role in the ivory trade." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 13, no. 2 (1995): 232.

Moses Montesh, "Rhino poaching: A new form of organised crime." *Rhino Resource Center* 27 (2013): 3-4.

¹³⁴ Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 45.

Ros Reeve, and Stephen Ellis. "An insider's account of the South African security forces' role in the ivory trade." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 13, no. 2 (1995): 232.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*: 233.

¹³⁶ Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 47.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*: 47.

This piece of witness testimony was what forced the Apartheid regime to admit in its internal inquiry that there was indeed ivory being transported through official channels.¹³⁸ They claimed, however, that this was only from 1978-1979 and that by 1980 there was no more transportation of ivory. Du Preez claimed that the SADF specifically ordered UNITA to stop attempting to export ivory as it was attracting negative attention to the regime.¹³⁹ This contradicted his later testimony about forging the supply channel. He claimed that the man who instructed him to create the channel for the transportation of ivory was Danie Hough, who served as the Administrator-General of South West Africa.¹⁴⁰ He recalled this in detail and was adamant that Hough is the man who gave the order. Hough, however, was only appointed Administrator-General in late 1980, well after he claimed that the SADF was no longer facilitating any ivory transportation.¹⁴¹ It is apparent from the inconsistent testimonies of du Preez that information was being withheld in all of his testimonies against the Apartheid regime. He constantly changed the story that he presented, but only when irrefutable evidence of illicit dealings was placed before him. It is possible that more illegal trading was occurring than what is currently known through various testimonies and investigations, however this cannot be proven without the necessary documentation that was likely destroyed.

Frama International Trading

Frama International Trading was a front company established by SADF personnel in order to ensure a tight and controlled operation of ivory and rhino horn smuggling could occur. Frama enjoyed the benefits of SADF protection but maintained the plausible deniability of being a civilian enterprise.¹⁴² Frama was founded on 21 July 1980. Officially, its purpose was to purchase supplies for UNITA and then to transport them through SADF supply channels to Angola. Unofficially, it was the epicentre for the smuggling of contraband out of Angola and South West Africa for the benefit of the Apartheid regime. Two Portuguese men who were serving within the SADF, Jose Lopes Francisco and Arlindo Maia, were officially the legal owners of the company.¹⁴³ Maia ran operations in Johannesburg, handling the procurement of

¹³⁸ Republic of South Africa & State President, *Commission of Inquiry into the Alleged Smuggling of and Illegal Trade in Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn in South Africa*, Judge M. E. Kumleben. Durban: 1996: 19.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*: 88.

Ros Reeve, and Stephen Ellis. "An insider's account of the South African security forces' role in the ivory trade." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 13, no. 2 (1995): 233.

¹⁴⁰ Republic of South Africa & State President, *Commission of Inquiry into the Alleged Smuggling of and Illegal Trade in Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn in South Africa*, Judge M. E. Kumleben. Durban: 1996: 105.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*: 105.

¹⁴² *Ibid*: 105, 111.

¹⁴³ Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 48.

supplies, while Lopes ran the field operations in South West Africa/Angola. This primarily meant dealing with the arrangements for moving items back into South Africa.

The true owners of Frama were the SADF. General du Preez was behind the creation of the company and facilitated its administrative work. He and other unspecified senior SADF personnel held signing power over the company's bank account. This had ensured that the SADF could supply start-up capital for vehicles and supplies and make immediate use of any profits that they had gained. They had total control over Frama when it was started.¹⁴⁴ Frama also received special treatment from officials. In 1981 Polla Swart was appointed as the new head of nature conservation in South West Africa.¹⁴⁵ He had testified before the Kumleben Commission, stating that once he had been appointed he had received explicit instructions to ensure that Frama trucks would at no point be stopped and searched.¹⁴⁶ He claimed that this deal was in effect before he arrived in office.¹⁴⁷ Swart had ratified these instructions with his superiors to ensure that what he had heard was true, and the orders were confirmed by Hough himself.¹⁴⁸ Swart mentioned that ivory was specifically mentioned in the meetings with his superiors a full year after it was claimed that ivory was no longer being facilitated through SADF channels. This conflicted with du Preez's testimony which claimed that Frama was not partial to any exemptions for searches.¹⁴⁹ This evidence was uncontested, and it had been generally accepted as fact that the SADF was still smuggling ivory well into the 1980s, with this information supporting the amount of ivory that was reported to have left South African ports.¹⁵⁰

SADF officials claimed that they had stopped using Frama's services in 1984, and that the company was sold fully to its main owners, Lopes and Maia.¹⁵¹ The Kumleben Report, however, claimed that this was another transparent attempt to hide nefarious dealings, and cited the lack of witnesses for sale as proof.¹⁵² According to the commission Frama still worked for

¹⁴⁴ Jacklyn Cock, "Introduction", in *From Defence to Development: Redirecting Military Resources in South Africa*, ed. Jacklyn Cock and Penny McKenzie (Cape Town: David Philips Publishers (Pty) Ltd), 6.

¹⁴⁵ Republic of South Africa & State President, *Commission of Inquiry into the Alleged Smuggling of and Illegal Trade in Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn in South Africa*, Judge M. E. Kumleben. Durban: 1996: 112.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*: 112-113.

Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 58.

¹⁴⁷ Republic of South Africa & State President, *Commission of Inquiry into the Alleged Smuggling of and Illegal Trade in Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn in South Africa*, Judge M. E. Kumleben. Durban: 1996: 112-113.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*: 113.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*: 88, 113.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*: 30.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*: 94.

¹⁵² *Ibid*: 1996: 94.

SADF despite supposedly having severed ties.¹⁵³ It appeared as though the SADF had tried to turn Frama into an independent contractor rather than a linked business. It was only after it was discovered that Lopes and Maia used their newfound freedom to misappropriate money that the company was fully liquidated. The company was reabsorbed by the SADF, and all of its assets were seized from Lopes and Maia. The contracts to supply UNITA were given to new, unspecified groups. Frama's name was changed to Elegant Food Distributors while it was being liquidated, likely to make the paper trail harder to follow.¹⁵⁴

Anecdotal testaments given to the commission indicated that ivory smuggling may have continued until at least 1987.¹⁵⁵ One incident involved the searching of UNITA trucks by SADF personnel only to find crates of ivory of board.¹⁵⁶ The non-commissioned officer who led the inspection was later informed by his superiors that the trucks had been cleared to proceed through into Namibia, and presumably down to South Africa.¹⁵⁷ An earlier incident in 1982 had one Robbie Hawthorne, a nature conservator working in Namibia, stopping and searching a Frama truck despite government orders to not investigate any Frama-marked trucks.¹⁵⁸ He found military containers that he unsuccessfully attempted to open before being ordered by the SADF to release the truck and its contents.¹⁵⁹ This continued to cast suspicion on the SADF and their transportation operations, as military equipment in a military vehicle is not something that they would normally have felt pressure to hide. A year prior, over 100 elephant tusks were discovered in the possession of an SADF soldier.¹⁶⁰ Despite owning contraband, he was granted full clearance of any wrongdoing and was not charged for possessing ivory despite lacking all permits necessary for the transportation of these materials.¹⁶¹ General du Preez was unable to explain why all of these transport details were allowed to proceed despite Frama supposedly not getting any special privileges.¹⁶² This seemed to indicate that UNITA was actively involved in the ivory trade both before and after 1980, despite claims to the contrary

¹⁵³ *Ibid*: 94.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*: 96.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*: 117.

¹⁵⁶ Moses Montesh, "Rhino poaching: A new form of organised crime." *Rhino Resource Center* 27 (2013): 3. Republic of South Africa & State President, *Commission of Inquiry into the Alleged Smuggling of and Illegal Trade in Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn in South Africa*, Judge M. E. Kumleben. Durban: 1996: 117.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*: 117.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*: 114.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*: 114.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*: 114-115.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*: 115.

¹⁶² *Ibid*: 115.

by people who were involved in the transportation. Judge Kumleben deduced from this evidence that Frama International Trading must have been the group transporting ivory.

There is no written documentation that indicates that after 1987 the SADF was still involved in the trafficking of animal products. Nor is there an indication that its successor, the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) had any involvement. This is not to say that the Apartheid regime was no longer involved in the trafficking of various products, however there is no proof that they were still using the defence force as a conduit for their operations. It is important to remember that the smuggling of materials through SADF channels was very much a clandestine operation, and certainly not a standard affair of the SADF as a whole. While servicemen at seemingly every level were involved in the illegal smuggling and secrecy, the majority had no inclination of trafficking operations.

In areas where trafficking was discovered there was backlash from troops who were not involved in the secret trade. Incidents such as Burman's discovery, as well as multiple anecdotes of troops discovering smuggling operations and poachers and attempting to quell these problems, indicated a complicated situation with different views on the natural landscape. This lends credence to what Breytenbach had said in his interview with Reeve about how most ordinary soldiers had much more respect for the natural landscape than the higher military officials and administrators.¹⁶³ While his view may have been greatly stereotyping the views of the ordinary troops, for many the sentiment did indeed ring true. Colonel Breytenbach had accused the Chief of Staff (Intelligence), or CSI, of being key to facilitating the removal of ivory out of Angola. As a prominent officer in South Africa's various special forces units, Breytenbach had worked directly for the CSI and was thus a liability to their illicit operations. He was frequently transferred between positions, as the Apartheid regime wanted to make use of his skills but also did not want him to be in close proximity to any smuggling operations for extended periods of time. Breytenbach was certainly correct in his assertions that the majority of those involved in the conspiracy were those in administrative positions, as evidenced by the involvement of Frama and MID.

Similarly, not all members of the National Party were not supportive of these operations. While members of the Apartheid regime were indeed involved in smuggling, this still only constituted a collection of individuals belonging to a larger organisation. The full size of the smuggling

¹⁶³ Ros Reeve, and Stephen Ellis. "An insider's account of the South African security forces' role in the ivory trade." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 13, no. 2 (1995): 234.

syndicate within the NP is impossible to know due to a lack of recorded evidence. In certain instances, National Party officials in Namibia had aided locals in conservation and sustainable development in the north of the country.¹⁶⁴ This primarily occurred towards the end of foreign rule, when the Pretoria government had to focus internally, and local administrations were given more autonomy. Like any government, disagreements permeated it at every level. While the crimes of the Apartheid government are numerous, to assume that every member had been involved in the culling of wildlife for profit would be intellectually dishonest.

Mozambique

In addition to Angola and South West Africa, Mozambique has also been implicated in the illicit trade both in the historical and modern context. During the Cold War, the Apartheid regime was supporting the separatist movement RENAMO in their insurgency against the legitimate *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (FRELIMO) government. This occurred at a similar time to the civil war in Angola, which began in 1975 after the Portuguese withdrawal from the continent had left an uncertain balance of power in the region.¹⁶⁵ The Mozambiquan Civil War followed shortly after the inception of the Angolan Civil War, beginning in 1977. RENAMO received material support and training from both South Africa and the Rhodesian government, who wished to destabilise the FRELIMO government which had been elected immediately after independence in 1975.¹⁶⁶ Despite evidence to the contrary, such as South African commandos having been killed in action during a sabotage operation against FRELIMO, the Apartheid regime denied having any involvement with RENAMO or the war in Mozambique.¹⁶⁷ A similar tactic of denial was employed for the invasion of Angola, however the direct SADF involvement made it harder to hide involvement.

The South African government at the time wanted to ensure that Mozambique could not pose a threat to their national security. FRELIMO was aligned with the ANC, as well as other liberation movements on the subcontinent such as the Zimbabwe African National Union,

¹⁶⁴ Interviewee 2 (Conservationist), Interviewed by Gareth Kirby, via Zoom: 19:58.

¹⁶⁵ Guus Meijer, and David Birmingham. "Angola from past to present." *Accord: from military peace to social justice? the Angolan peace process* (2004): 10, 13.

Stephen A. Emerson, *The Battle for Mozambique: The Frelimo-Renamo Struggle, 1977-1992*. (Warwick: Helion and Company, 2014), 25.

¹⁶⁶ David Alexander Robinson, *Curse on the land: a history of the Mozambican civil war*. (Crawley: University of Western Australia, 2006), 17.

¹⁶⁷ Stephen Ellis, "Of elephants and men: politics and nature conservation in South Africa." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20, no. 1 (1994): 59.

MPLA and SWAPO.¹⁶⁸ With every neighbouring nation transitioning to black-majority governments with Eastern Bloc alignments, the Apartheid regime feared a unified coalition along the entirety of their border.¹⁶⁹ The NP government had taken steps to ensure that they could exercise control over their neighbours and delay any emerging threats. For Angola this meant direct military intervention. Mozambique was seen as being of less immediate strategic importance, and so South Africa could afford a less direct approach. Indeed, South African support for RENAMO only began in 1979, almost two years after the conflict had started.¹⁷⁰ This was in large part due to the collapse of Ian Smith's regime in Rhodesia, who had previously been RENAMO's principal supporters.¹⁷¹ The ending of Rhodesian support left RENAMO without proper military and financial backing, forcing South Africa to begin providing aid or risk facing opposition to their regime from Mozambique.

The Apartheid regime wished to set up and get involved in subversive networks in neighbouring states for many reasons. Being able to lend clandestine support to friendly factions would allow them to put constant strain on their political opponents. For Mozambique, the longer that FRELIMO was occupied with internal affairs, the more time South Africa had to prepare any defences. An ally allowed for breathing room and for the regime to focus on more urgent matters, such as internal opposition, the war situation in Angola and monitoring the newly independent Zimbabwe for any signs of hostile activity. They also wished to gain more revenue through illegal trade. Mozambique, while not as resource rich as Angola, still held many valuables as well as being the home of very well-located ports. Indeed, its coastal position had been used previously as a way for the USSR and China to ship weapons and supplies to its allies in Rhodesia, who were using Mozambique as a staging area for attacks into enemy territory.¹⁷²

Evidence for RENAMO's involvement in trafficking animal products and other contraband is less concrete than the involvement of UNITA in Angola. The Kumleben Commission was

¹⁶⁸ Stephen A. Emerson, *The Battle for Mozambique: The Frelimo-Renamo Struggle, 1977-1992*. (Warwick: Helion and Company, 2014), 27, 80.

David Alexander Robinson, *Curse on the land: a history of the Mozambican civil war*. (Crawley: University of Western Australia, 2006), 86.

Shirli Gilbert, "Singing against Apartheid: ANC cultural groups and the international anti-Apartheid struggle." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 33, no. 2 (2007): 429.

¹⁶⁹ Stephen A. Emerson, *The Battle for Mozambique: The Frelimo-Renamo Struggle, 1977-1992*. (Warwick: Helion and Company, 2014), 97.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*: 51.

¹⁷¹ Margaret Hall, "The Mozambican National Resistance Movement (Renamo): A study in the destruction of an African country." *Africa* 60, no. 1 (1990): 40.

¹⁷² Stephen A. Emerson, *The Battle for Mozambique: The Frelimo-Renamo Struggle, 1977-1992*. (Warwick: Helion and Company, 2014), 29.

unable to undeniably prove that RENAMO was supplying these items to the SADF, however sources such as Taylor seem to indicate that these operations were occurring. Rademeyer included a document written by a member of a police unit known as Operation Lock, which was created to deal with poaching. In the document, it was made clear that this police unit was aware that RENAMO was involved with ivory and rhino horn trading but were told to ignore their involvement.¹⁷³ RENAMO had a contract of similar terms to their *de facto* allies in Angola. Much like how UNITA, RENAMO insurgents would poach animals and deliver shipments to the South African border.¹⁷⁴ It differed, however, both in terms of scale and methodology. Due to no direct South African involvement, there were no established bases that the SADF could easily use to store quantities of material. While this made it harder to receive ivory and rhino horns, it also made it harder to implicate South Africa in the trade. RENAMO agents themselves did not always know if the contacts they were meeting with were South African. Smuggling was harder to tie directly to the SADF in Mozambique as these operations were conducted far from military outposts where ordinary soldiers could stumble upon the illicit materials.

RENAMO would also smuggle ivory out of the country via aircraft transportation when it was safe. Air travel was the principal way in which the SADF would supply RENAMO with weapons and provisions, typically by parachuting caches into the jungle for the insurgents to collect. This was in large part due to the jungle landscape of Mozambique which is different to that of Angola. Members of MID who were involved with RENAMO denied any wrongdoing, citing that the situation in Mozambique was different to the one in Angola. Brigadier Cornelius van Niekerk, who was the MID liaison officer with RENAMO, claimed that the terrain would have it impossible to establish smuggling routes out of Mozambique.¹⁷⁵ Judge Kumleben agreed with this claim, as he had found not enough substantiating evidence to suggest that smuggling operations existed, at least on the scale that they did in Angola. He theorised that it was possible that smaller scale smuggling was happening but possessed no physical evidence to support his theory. Regardless of Judge Kumleben's findings, other aforementioned sources indicate that RENAMO was indeed smuggling ivory and rhino horn to South Africa.

¹⁷³ Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 84-85.

¹⁷⁴ Stephen Ellis, "Of elephants and men: politics and nature conservation in South Africa." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20, no. 1 (1994): 58.

¹⁷⁵ Republic of South Africa & State President, *Commission of Inquiry into the Alleged Smuggling of and Illegal Trade in Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn in South Africa*, Judge M. E. Kumleben. Durban: 1996: 133.

Despite the ambiguity of South Africa's involvement, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) stated that it was true that the population of elephants declined during the Mozambican Civil War.¹⁷⁶ Being a guerilla outfit, RENAMO would have primarily sustained themselves with resources that could be locally gathered, and so the killing of animals for meat would have been an expected practice for them. Ivory and rhino horn, which would have been collected in small quantities, could then be exported for extra profit. This was said to have been done via aeroplanes which would leave RENAMO controlled airfields for the RSA, where they would presumably deliver their cargo. These accusations are harder to prove. Direct evidence of South Africa receiving ivory from RENAMO is difficult to find, however it should be noted that in 1988 government forces managed to capture a base from RENAMO and found a stockpile of almost 20,000 elephant tusks.¹⁷⁷ This would suggest that they were engaged in the ivory trade, and it can be deduced that South Africa was helping to facilitate this smuggling due to RENAMO's lack of access to ports.

Internal Anti-Poaching In South Africa

Despite the clandestine involvement of members of the National Party and the SADF in smuggling and poaching, officially there were still internal attempts to prevent such occurrences. This contrast of objectives compromised the integrity of the police unit charged with preventing poaching and animal material smuggling. Poaching in South Africa proper was low during the period from 1975-1994, with poaching syndicates having viewed the security forces of the Apartheid state as a serious obstacle. Due to low security concerns, the police unit tasked with investigating the local poaching of animals such as rhinos and elephants, the Endangered Species Protection Unit (ESPU), was small, consisting of only a handful of staff members.¹⁷⁸ It was headed by one Lieutenant Colonel Pieter Lategan.

The head of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) at the time, Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, had become concerned with the deterioration of animal populations on the subcontinent. He wanted to launch a clandestine investigation in South Africa that would remain hidden until it had concluded its findings. He, along with Dr John Hanks (who headed WWF operations in Africa) had hired a private security firm known as KAS enterprises (made up of former members of the British Special Air Service) to aid the fledgling police unit in their anti-

¹⁷⁶ IUCN Species Survival Commission, *African Elephant Status Report 2002: An update from the African Elephant Database* (Gland: IUCN, 2003), 147.

¹⁷⁷ Alex Vines, *Renamo: From terrorism to democracy in Mozambique?*, Centre for Southern African Studies, University of York, 1996: 88.

¹⁷⁸ Kathleen E Du Bois, "The illegal trade in endangered species." *African Security Studies* 6, no. 1 (1997): 29.

poaching endeavours.¹⁷⁹ The operation was shrouded in much secrecy, with Bernhard and Hanks having given a high degree of autonomy to KAS in order to minimise any evidence of their existence.¹⁸⁰ Many members of KAS, being part of the tightly knit international special forces community, had friendships in the SADF and had worked with UNITA in the past.¹⁸¹ This meant that the primary investigators were less enthusiastic about investigating those they saw as friends, and instead focused on less important, independent criminals who were of less concern than the official smuggling channels.

The operation to investigate animal material smuggling in the sub-continent was named Operation Lock, headed by high-ranking KAS member Ian Crooke.¹⁸² During the late Cold War period the knowledge about South African involvement in smuggling networks was little more than rumours on the international stage. While evidence was mounting, it was far from common knowledge even amongst those in the highest levels of wildlife conservation. It is unsurprising then that, despite being privately hired by a European benefactor, KAS was effectively put under the command of the South African government. They were instructed to ignore any evidence that may implicate members of the SADF or National Party in the smuggling of ivory and rhino horns.¹⁸³ They were also instructed ignore any smuggling that could be traced back to South Africa's allies UNITA and RENAMO. This left the operation impotent, as the majority of the leads that they investigated inevitably lead back to the South African government and their allies.¹⁸⁴ Some members of Operation Lock were also members of the Military Intelligence Division, who were later found out to be the primary culprits in the Apartheid regime's involvement in ivory and rhino horn smuggling.¹⁸⁵ This conflict of interest was integral to Operation Lock's ultimate failure to quell smuggling in the subcontinent. Lock members were, according to a document written by a presumed infiltrator, fully aware that the SADF was involved in smuggling.¹⁸⁶ Instead of using their evidence to arrest traffickers within

¹⁷⁹ "KAS" is not known to have stood for anything and may have been the full name of this security firm. Republic of South Africa & State President, *Commission of Inquiry into the Alleged Smuggling of and Illegal Trade in Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn in South Africa*, Judge M. E. Kumleben. Durban: 1996: 138.

Rademeyer, Julian. *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012: 63.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*: 139.

¹⁸¹ Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 72.

¹⁸² *Ibid*: 69.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*: 84-85

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*: 84-85.

¹⁸⁵ Bram Büscher, and Maano Ramutsindela, "Green violence: Rhino poaching and the war to save Southern Africa's peace parks." *African Affairs* 115, no. 458 (2016): 5.

¹⁸⁶ Republic of South Africa & State President, *Commission of Inquiry into the Alleged Smuggling of and Illegal Trade in Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn in South Africa*, Judge M. E. Kumleben. Durban: 1996: 154.

the SADF, Lock operatives would ignore their activities. When the evidence was too substantial to ignore, members of Lock would report the incident to the police, who would contact the superior officers of any personnel involved. This delegation of the investigative process allowed for those involved to simply discard the evidence once it had been passed on from Lock.

Operation Lock was infiltrated early on by a member of MID. Ian Crooke had gotten in contact with Craig Williamson, a spy for the Apartheid regime, who then acted as the liaison for Operation Lock with MID. Crooke believed that involving Williamson in Lock's operations would create a stronger link between Lock and MID, allowing for more cooperation between the two intelligence agencies. In reality, Williamson was reporting the details of Lock's activities to MID. Williamson initially seemed to believe that the British were attempting to spy on the Apartheid regime, and used Mike Richards, a former employee of his, to infiltrate the group. This operation by MID proved to be successful. The discovery that Lock was not an anti-Apartheid project, but rather a sincere form of cooperation with the South African government, was one that the National Party would go on to exploit. Lock had also been monitoring smuggling and spy networks in the neighbouring states of South Africa. The South African government would co-opt this information to better spy on their neighbours.

Through Operation Lock, MID gained access to smuggling routes and the intelligence networks of neighbouring states that were hostile to the Apartheid regime. These connections allowed them to keep the Apartheid regime funded in spite of international sanctions. Their involvement in smuggling networks also allowed them to monitor various liberation movements, as information on members of groups such as the ANC and PAC were contained in the data leaks that the Apartheid regime was now receiving. By having infiltrated Lock and gained the trust of the group, Richards was able to influence the operation for the benefit of the South African government. South Africa had gained control of Lock, making it an unofficial branch of MID. MID used Lock to operate in areas that the Apartheid regime would have had difficulty infiltrating. With Lock's members being primarily British, they were not encumbered by the sanctions that South Africa faced.

When Lock's ties to the South African government became public knowledge, the credibility of their operation was irreparably damaged. Instead of curtailing the poaching occurring in Africa, it was found that they had been aiding in the that the Apartheid regime's smuggling activities. This proved to be a public relations disaster for the WWF, as its image as a

conservation organisation had now been tainted as a group with sympathetic views to a white supremacist regime.

As mentioned earlier, the lack of ability to investigate the Apartheid regime and its allies forced police units to investigate organisations that were deemed “safe” targets. Claims of illegal ivory smuggling that the South African police were able to investigate were less reliable than the claims against the South African government. The investigation of the Pong family, who were based in Pretoria, serves as an example.¹⁸⁷ The Pong family were involved in importing and exporting goods from South Africa to Hong Kong, including the reselling of ivory while it was still legal.¹⁸⁸ The Pong’s were routinely investigated by law enforcement due to tip-offs that they were smuggling ivory to their contacts in Hong Kong, the birthplace of the Pong’s patriarch.¹⁸⁹ All investigations, which included attempts at entrapment, failed to acquire any proof of illegal activities.¹⁹⁰ It was theorised in the Kumleben Commission that these accusations may have stemmed from other ivory traders who disliked the Pong’s due to their foreign background. The police disproportionately investigated the Pong family due to rumours, slander and hearsay, and in doing so neglected to investigate other suspects. It is possible that this overfocus allowed many other smugglers to remain unnoticed by the authorities.

The misallocation of police resources and intentional hindering of investigations into ivory and rhino horn smuggling by the Apartheid regime allowed for smuggling operations to flourish. With little interference from law enforcement, stable smuggling routes between southern Africa and southeast Asia could be created. As shown by Huang et al, these routes remain in use following the end of the Apartheid era and the international ivory ban.¹⁹¹ Their continued operation while similar routes across Africa disappeared, indicates that these trade lines are robust and effective.

Conclusion

The smuggling that began in the 1970’s and continued until the end of the Apartheid regime caused a change in both the volume of contraband and type of materials that were being exported from southern Africa. The sanctions placed on the Apartheid regime influenced the

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*: 1996: 36.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*: 37.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*: 38-39.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*: 45.

¹⁹¹ Wenyang Huang, Huiwen Wang, and Yigang Wei. "Mapping the Illegal International Ivory Trading Network to Identify Key Hubs and Smuggling Routes: Illegal International Ivory Trading Network from 1975 to 2017." *EcoHealth* 17 (2020): 531.

NP government's foreign policy, which included becoming more involved in exporting raw materials from South Africa's neighbouring states, primarily Angola and South West Africa. The Apartheid regime and the ivory and rhino horn market in southeast Asia had a symbiotic effect on one another. The number of ivory and rhino horns being supplied to southeast Asia increased due to the South African governments need for funding. This in turn created a greater demand for these products in emerging economies such as Vietnam and China. The increased market would further encourage trafficking materials from South Africa to southeast Asia, creating a cycle of growth for the black market. The South African governments involvement allowed for an increase in number of materials available for exportation than what had previously been available on the black market. Criminal elements also had more freedom to operate due to reduced intervention by law enforcement and occasional assistance by the Apartheid government. While the amount of ivory and rhino horn trafficked following the end of Apartheid decreased, the availability of these materials had already created a larger demand. By the late 2000s these animal products were once again being traded in large quantities. Apartheid. By becoming directly involved, the South African government was able to expand the reach of these materials by using state assets for subversive purposes. While nations attempted to curtail these illegal activities, many criminal elements were drawn to the abundance of valuable resources that southern Africa possessed.

Chapter 3 – The Modern Ivory and Rhino Horn Trade in Southern Africa and Southeast Asia

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the trade of ivory and rhino horn in southern Africa, particularly in South Africa, Namibia, Angola, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, during the period 2003 to present. The chapter also briefly highlights what happened during the period 1988 to 2003 in order to provide background information and context for the modern issue. This examination includes elephant and rhino poaching, the transportation of animal products and an overview of the markets in southeast Asia where the majority of the materials are sold. The current state of elephant and rhino populations across southern Africa are also compared to their populations prior to the involvement of the Apartheid regime during its cross-border conflicts. By comparing the size and growth of rhino and elephant populations during the 1970s and 1980s to their numbers in the present day, the level of devastation that the Apartheid regime directly and indirectly caused can be better understood.

Following South Africa's transition to democracy in 1994, there was a marked decline in poaching activities in the entire southern African region. As noted in chapter 2, the South African government had been exporting large quantities of rhino horns and ivory. These materials had been acquired from various sources.¹⁹² Some had been collected from refugees fleeing the conflict in Angola, while others had been collected from deceased animals in warzones.¹⁹³ The primary method of acquisition was poaching. Troops belonging to UNITA and independent poachers would hunt game and then sell any lucrative materials to the SADF, who would then transport these items into South Africa.¹⁹⁴ From there, the ivory and rhino horns would be exported overseas. Once South Africa had withdrawn its military presence from Angola in 1988 and Namibia in 1990, the unofficial facilitation of poaching by the South African government across southern Africa ceased. UNITA had lost their primary connection for exporting ivory and independent poachers no longer had a reliable purchaser. This resulted

¹⁹² Ros Reeve, and Stephen Ellis. "An insider's account of the South African security forces' role in the ivory trade." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 13, no. 2 (1995): 238.

Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 48.

¹⁹³ Stephen Ellis, "Of elephants and men: politics and nature conservation in South Africa." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20, no. 1 (1994): 55.

¹⁹⁴ Ros Reeve, and Stephen Ellis. "An insider's account of the South African security forces' role in the ivory trade." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 13, no. 2 (1995): 238.

in reduced incidences of recorded poaching until 2003, when a renewed growth in incidents was reported.¹⁹⁵

The Less-Active Poaching Period Between 1988 and 2003

The period between 1988 - 2003 demarcates the period characterised by involvement of the Apartheid regime from 1966 to 1988, and the modern period of rhino and elephant poaching from 2003 to the present day. During the 1980s when the SADF was active in Angola and South West Africa, poaching was at record high levels.¹⁹⁶ According to Berger and Cunningham and Brodie et al, the number of rhinos across Africa had decreased by up to 97% from the years 1970 to 1987, a period that overlapped with the involvement of the SADF involvement in South West Africa from 1966-1990, and in Angola from 1975 to 1988.¹⁹⁷

The span of 1988 – 2003 is less studied in academia than the periods preceding and following it. It is generally only partially referenced in relation to smuggling operations of the Apartheid regime or the resurgence in poaching that began in 2003.¹⁹⁸ The minimal references to this period make it less understood than the other two periods that this thesis outlines. The lack of information on this era presents the greatest challenge to this study. A detailed view of the timespan between the two major poaching periods would help to better link the trafficking that occurred during the Apartheid regime and the illicit trade that is occurring today. While there is no definitive narrative of the period of 1988 – 2003 in relation to the ivory and rhino horn trade in southern Africa, enough information exists to create a basic timeline of this period.

Following the withdrawal of the SADF from these regions there was a decline in poaching incidents. A conservationist working in the northern part of Namibia claimed that in 1996 there was only one case of poaching in the territory that he was aware of.¹⁹⁹ It is not mere coincidence that poaching in Namibia dropped to almost zero cases after South Africa relinquished control over the territory. Without the SADF acting as a facilitator of ivory and rhino horn for poachers, UNITA and independent poachers no longer had a means to easily export these materials for

¹⁹⁵ Tom Milliken, Jo Shaw, Richard H. Emslie, Russell D. Taylor, and Chris Turton. "The South Africa–Viet Nam Rhino Horn Trade Nexus." *Traffic* (2012): 10.

¹⁹⁶ Interviewee 2 (Conservationist), Interviewed by Gareth Kirby, via Zoom: 10:40.

¹⁹⁷ Joel Berger, and Carol Cunningham. "Active intervention and conservation: Africa's pachyderm problem." *Science* 263, no. 5151 (1994): 1241.

J. F Brodie, J. Muntifering, M. Hearn, B. Loutit, R. Loutit, B. Brell, S. Uri-Khob, N. Leader-Williams, and P. Du Preez. "Population recovery of black rhinoceros in north-west Namibia following poaching." *Animal Conservation* 14, no. 4 (2011): 355.

¹⁹⁸ Moses Montesh, "Rhino poaching: A new form of organised crime." *Rhino Resource Center* 27 (2013): 4-5.

Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 95-96.

¹⁹⁹ Interviewee 2 (Conservationist), Interviewed by Gareth Kirby, via Zoom: 10:51.

profit. The hunting of megafauna was no longer incentivised, leading to a decrease in the in poaching and a rise in elephant populations in southern Africa.²⁰⁰ Despite the lack of poaching, data collected by Huang et al confirms that the trading of animal products continued during the period of 1988 – 2003.²⁰¹ The data proving the continued trading of animal materials is based off of CITES records of ivory trading.²⁰²

The limited poaching incidents resulted in conservation groups becoming complacent, leaving them unprepared for the revival in poaching that occurred from 2003 to 2015.²⁰³ Nature conservation was not prioritised by southern African nations during the period of 1988 to 2003, as many of the countries had only recently gained black majority rule.²⁰⁴ In the early years of independence, issues related to education, health and economics were prioritised, while conservation was a peripheral concern. Much of the international conservation effort focused upon central African nations, such as Tanzania, Zambia, Kenya, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), who were still variously embroiled in civil wars and corruption.²⁰⁵ This was in contrast to the more stable south. While southern Africa benefited from a reprieve in poaching incidents, the aforementioned central African countries continued to see a decline in their megafauna populations between 1994-2007.²⁰⁶

Records of South African ivory trading no longer exist following 1988.²⁰⁷ This is because in 1989 CITES added the African elephant to its endangered species Appendix 1 roster, effectively banning the trade of ivory.²⁰⁸ For southeast Asia, the loss of South Africa as a source of ivory and rhino horns meant that their markets no longer had a reliable provider of these materials. Rademeyer mentions that Esmond Bradley Martin, an expert on the rhino horn trade, theorised that it was possible that during the period of 1988-2003 the market in south-east Asia was sustained by a surplus of animal materials that had been previously imported into the

²⁰⁰ Wenyang Huang, Huiwen Wang, and Yigang Wei. "Mapping the Illegal International Ivory Trading Network to Identify Key Hubs and Smuggling Routes: Illegal International Ivory Trading Network from 1975 to 2017." *EcoHealth* 17 (2020): 524.

²⁰¹ *Ibid*: 531.

²⁰² *Ibid*: 523.

²⁰³ Interviewee 2 (Conservationist), Interviewed by Gareth Kirby, via Zoom:: 11:45.

²⁰⁴ Interviewee 1 (Conservationist), Interviewed by Gareth Kirby, via Zoom: 3:14.

Tom Milliken, Jo Shaw, Richard H. Emslie, Russell D. Taylor, and Chris Turton. "The South Africa–Viet Nam Rhino Horn Trade Nexus." *Traffic* (2012): 68-69.

²⁰⁵ Interviewee 1 (Conservationist), Interviewed by Gareth Kirby, via Zoom: 3:40.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid*: 3:33.

²⁰⁷ Republic of South Africa & State President, *Commission of Inquiry into the Alleged Smuggling of and Illegal Trade in Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn in South Africa*, Judge M. E. Kumleben. Durban: 1996: 223-225.

²⁰⁸ Bill Padgett, "The African elephant, Africa, and CITES: the next step." *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* (1995): 529.

region.²⁰⁹ This accumulated stock may have been built up from years of trading with South Africa. This would indicate that criminal syndicates would still have had access to contraband. They could then have sold the products without the immediate need for new materials. In 1988 Chinese authorities implemented a law requiring all companies trading in rhino horn (which could still be legally traded within China's borders but were no longer allowed to be imported) to declare their stocks.²¹⁰ In 1993, China expanded the ban on rhino trading to include internal sales, ending the legal trade of rhino in the country. While a black market remained, the ban was effectively enforced.²¹¹ This temporarily quelled the interest in rhino horn in China which, alongside the loss of the SADF as a facilitator for illicit trading, aided in reducing the number of poaching incidents during this period.²¹² After the initial ban on ivory and rhino horn, Martin estimated that the stockpiles would last for roughly 15 years.²¹³ This timespan coincides with the 15-year hiatus in-between the last South African exports in 1988 and the return of large-scale poaching in 2003.

Poaching poses a serious threat to wildlife the world over. South Africa is currently home to the largest population of rhinos in Africa. There is also a sizable population of elephants in the KNP, and smaller populations in both national parks and private game farms throughout the country.²¹⁴ After the decline of elephant and rhino populations across southern Africa, poaching syndicates shifted their focus to South Africa. In the modern era, South Africa has become a primary source of ivory and rhino horns, both as a place to poach animals and as a hub to traffic animal products.²¹⁵ The market for the illegally acquired ivory and rhino horns is currently centred in southeast Asia.²¹⁶ The subcontinent serves as the final destination for many of the animal materials that have been exported from southern Africa. Since 2003, the demand for rhino horns in nations such as Vietnam and China has escalated. This increase in the demand for rhino horns and ivory occurred following the end of the Apartheid regime's involvement in the trade. It is therefore probable that the Apartheid regime's trafficking of rhino horns and

²⁰⁹ Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 270-273.

²¹⁰ *Ibid*: 272.

²¹¹ *Ibid*: 273.

²¹² *Ibid* 273.

²¹³ *Ibid*: 273.

²¹⁴ Yolanda Pretorius, Marion E. Garaï, and Lucy A. Bates. "The status of African elephant *Loxodonta africana* populations in South Africa." *Oryx* 53, no. 4 (2019): 759.

²¹⁵ Tom Milliken, Jo Shaw, Richard H. Emslie, Russell D. Taylor, and Chris Turton. "The South Africa–Viet Nam Rhino Horn Trade Nexus." *Traffic* (2012): 58-59.

Anita Gossmann, "Tusks and trinkets: an overview of illicit ivory trafficking in Africa." *African Security Review* 18, no. 4 (2009): 60, 64.

²¹⁶ *Ibid*: 52-53.

ivory spurred the demand for these products internationally, which consequently has created an increase in poaching activities in South Africa.

A General Outline of the Modern Poaching Period, 2003 to Present

While the number of rhino poaching incidents was increasing as early as 2003, the large-scale resurgence of this practice really began in 2007. This increase in poaching caught conservationists by surprise. Private game reserves took measures to prevent rhino poaching, which included (among others) dehorning the animals, increasing the presence of security guards around them, and the improvement of perimeter fencing surrounding the animals.²¹⁷ This failed to meet the anticipated results in reducing poaching. The increase in the number of rhinos killed in the years that followed showed that such responses were ineffective.²¹⁸ Syndicates felt emboldened in their efforts to secure more animal products, causing the number of rhinos being killed to rise further.²¹⁹ Shortly before 2007, southeast Asian nations saw a resurgence in the myth of the curative powers of rhino horns.²²⁰ It is possible that the renewed interest in these mythical properties was orchestrated by the international syndicates. Promotion of these myths boosted the demand for rhino horns. This would in turn secure a market for any surplus materials that were still stockpiled by the syndicates and dealers, as well as allowing for the importation of new materials.

Smuggling during the Apartheid era had greatly reduced the megafauna populations across the subcontinent. Large numbers of animals had been killed and their products exported to overseas markets. While export numbers were high and the market demand remained substantial, most of the poaching and exportation was being facilitated by the South African government.²²¹ As a result, once the Apartheid regime was no longer directly orchestrating the procurement and sale of animal products and other contraband, the market experienced an extended period of inactivity. Due to the end of direct foreign intervention in 1988 and the ousting of the National Party in 1994, there was no longer a government facilitator ensuring that ivory and rhino horns

²¹⁷ Lucy C Chimes, Piet Beytell, Jeff R. Muntifering, Birgit Kötting, and Vikki Neville. "Effects of dehorning on population productivity in four Namibia sub-populations of black rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis bicornis*)." *European Journal of Wildlife Research* 68, no. 5 (2022): 1.

Wendy Annecke, and Mmoto Masubelele. "A review of the impact of militarisation: the case of rhino poaching in Kruger National Park, South Africa." *Conservation and Society* 14, no. 3 (2016): 195.

²¹⁸ Jasper AJ Eikelboom, and Herbert HT Prins. "Poaching pressure on African rhinos is still at an all-time high." *Science Advances* 10, no. 25 (2024): 2.

²¹⁹ Tom Milliken, Jo Shaw, Richard H. Emslie, Russell D. Taylor, and Chris Turton. "The South Africa–Viet Nam Rhino Horn Trade Nexus." *Traffic* (2012): 69.

²²⁰ Interviewee 1 (Conservationist), Interviewed by Gareth Kirby, via Zoom: 10:11.

²²¹ Republic of South Africa & State President, *Commission of Inquiry into the Alleged Smuggling of and Illegal Trade in Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn in South Africa*, Judge M. E. Kumleben. Durban: 1996: 204-205.

could be safely exported from South African borders without any interference from law enforcement.²²²

The end of the Apartheid regime's involvement in the procurement and smuggling of rhino horns made the task of the smuggling agents and the buyers in foreign markets more challenging. Not only was the supply largely cut off, but South African authorities would no longer ignore suspicious shipments. This came about at the time when international pressure to prevent poaching and animal product smuggling was gaining momentum.²²³ The nations fostering major rhino horn markets in Asia had taken steps to curtail rhino smuggling in the mid-1990s. These nations included China, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan and Hong Kong.²²⁴ Their efforts were vindicated as they managed to reduce the demand for these products, as seen by the reduced consumer base for rhino horns in these countries.²²⁵ All of the aforementioned countries, excluding China (which now includes Hong Kong), have transitioned from substantial consumers of both rhino horns and ivory, to low-risk nations regarding the trafficking of these materials.²²⁶

By the late 1990s Mozambique was one of the largest hubs for ivory smuggling between southern Africa and the far east.²²⁷ Mozambique's terrain and geographical location make policing the borders a difficult task. Its landscape is covered in dense jungles with very little industrial development or urbanisation. It is also a nation with a large coastline. This leaves a large portion of the nation's border effectively unpoliced as the Mozambican Navy is small and cannot effectively patrol its territorial waters.²²⁸ The Mozambican coast has historically been a haven for piracy, as the coastline is dotted with numerous islands where smugglers could establish hidden bases of operation and avoid law enforcement. During the Mozambican Civil War, the region was unstable. Establishing a trade route through the country would have been difficult and dangerous. As mentioned in chapter 2, not even the SADF had a clear supply line

²²² *Ibid*: 207.

²²³ Tom Milliken, Jo Shaw, Richard H. Emslie, Russell D. Taylor, and Chris Turton. "The South Africa–Viet Nam Rhino Horn Trade Nexus." *Traffic* (2012): 68.

²²⁴ *Ibid*: 18.

²²⁵ *Ibid*: 104.

²²⁶ *Ibid*: 104.

Lucy Vigne. "The rhino horn and ivory trade, 1980-2020." (PhD Thesis, Oxford Brookes University, 2020), 38.

²²⁷ Daniel Stiles, and Esmond Martin. "Status and trends of the ivory trade in Africa, 1989-1999." *Pachyderm* 30 (2001): 33.

²²⁸ Louis Bergeron, "The forgotten chokepoint: The Mozambique Channel's rich past and bright but insecure future." *Strategic Insights* 54 (2014): 5.

going through Mozambique to its own border. They instead relied on airdrops and in-person meetings at the South African/Mozambican border in order to supply the RENAMO rebels.²²⁹

Once peace has been achieved in a country, the nation will still be suffering from the aftermath of the war. The region may be free from large-scale conflict, but instability shall still be present. This makes former war zones good locations for smuggling. Following a war, governments would need to rebuild their nations. Policing during this period would be challenging, as the former conflict zone would still be embroiled in the chaotic aftermath of war. Infrastructure has been damaged; people have been displaced, and many are unemployed with little or no possessions. The rampant poverty that ensues results in state or border agents becoming more susceptible to bribery to support themselves and their families.

During the Angolan Civil War, ivory and rhino horn appeared to be a factor in the alliance between the UNITA rebels and the Apartheid regime. Conversely, in Mozambique ivory was not a significant factor influencing South Africa's support for RENAMO.²³⁰ RENAMO was being used primarily for the purpose of destabilising the FRELIMO regime. Security for South Africa was the primary concern, with little economic incentive being apparent. It is estimated that from a financial perspective, the military involvement in Mozambique was a liability for South Africa. The South African government was supplying food, weapons and other military equipment at great financial cost to themselves. This support provided RENAMO with the means to poach elephants. The weapons they received were not ideal for hunting, but enough firepower by one or more riflemen could still reliably bring down an elephant. Guerilla armies are accustomed to living off the land due to the irregularity of their supply networks and lack of infrastructure. Hunting elephants for meat is a common method of sustaining the guerilla forces.²³¹ South African support ensured that RENAMO operatives could routinely cull the elephant population to provide food for themselves, while simultaneously building a stockpile of ivory that could later be traded. While not part of their understanding with South Africa, the collection of ivory provided RENAMO with an opportunity to secure extra funding. They could

²²⁹ Ford Foundation. *The Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) as Described by Ex-participants*. (Washington D.C.: Ford Foundation, 1989), 9.

²³⁰ Republic of South Africa & State President, *Commission of Inquiry into the Alleged Smuggling of and Illegal Trade in Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn in South Africa*, Judge M. E. Kumleben. Durban: 1996: 133-134.

²³¹ R. Thomas Naylor, "The underworld of ivory." *Crime, law and social change* 42 (2005): 268. Republic of South Africa & State President, *Commission of Inquiry into the Alleged Smuggling of and Illegal Trade in Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn in South Africa*, Judge M. E. Kumleben. Durban: 1996: 132.

periodically sell ivory to South African Intelligence operatives if and when the opportunity arose.²³²

South African supplies helped prolong the war in Mozambique, making the conditions for poaching ideal. Compared to Angola, the Apartheid regime's involvement in Mozambique was more indirect. Despite this the support given to RENAMO still contributed to the destruction of animal populations. Following the end of the civil war in 1992, Mozambique was still suffering from the aftermath of the conflict. The economy was in turmoil, with the majority of Mozambicans living in abject poverty.²³³ This large-scale poverty, coupled with the lack of stability following the war, inevitably meant that crime was hard to curtail. Many laws that existed on paper were in practice difficult to enforce.

Following the conclusion of the civil war, the country opened up to tourists and foreign business delegates.²³⁴ Large stockpiles of ivory still existed in Mozambique at this point. Caches of ivory that existed across the country could now be looted by members of the population. The influx of wealthy foreigners into Mozambique as either holiday makers or businesspeople meant that a new market had opened up for those in the possession of loose ivory.²³⁵ Tropical nations with poor economies are a popular destination for tourists from first-world nations, as their currencies are usually favourable compared to the local currency. Wealthy foreigners provide a new consumer base for those with access to ivory. These stockpiles may contribute to the fact that poaching in Mozambique does not appear to be a threat to the current elephant populations. The 2018 CITES elephant census indicates that the population is roughly 11,000 and had stabilised.²³⁶

In comparison to South Africa, Namibia has experienced relatively low amounts of poaching in the modern era. Whereas South Africa and other neighbouring countries have experienced increasing poaching incidents since 2007, Namibia has managed to deter the majority of

²³² Ford Foundation. *The Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) as Described by Ex-participants*. (Washington D.C.: Ford Foundation, 1989), 10-11, 16.

²³³ Ana Costa, "Mozambique: poverty in war and poverty in peace." *Poverty and Peace in the Portuguese Speaking African Countries* (2011): 115.

²³⁴ Daniel Stiles, and Esmond Martin. "Status and trends of the ivory trade in Africa, 1989-1999." *Pachyderm* 30 (2001): 33.

²³⁵ *Ibid*: 33.

²³⁶ "Number of elephants in Mozambique stabilises at 10,800", Club of Mozambique, August 20, 2019, accessed December 11, 2024, <https://clubofmozambique.com/news/number-of-elephants-in-mozambique-stabilises-at-10800-139795/>.

poachers and swiftly respond to new threats that have emerged. Community involvement appears to have had a significant impact on the conservation capabilities in the country.²³⁷

In many communities in Namibia, there is an agreement between the federal government and local municipalities whereby the profits from tourism go directly towards improving the community. This can be in the form of creating jobs within conservation, funding schools, ambulances, parks and other infrastructure projects that contribute positively to the livelihood of the local people.²³⁸ With tourism being the primary industry that generates profits, the community's well-being is directly linked to how well they protect the surrounding wildlife. This creates a sense of unity amongst communities centred around wildlife conservation. Not only has this improved the standard of living for many rural Namibians, as they are now receiving large sums of money with which they can improve towns and villages, but for ordinary citizens it creates a sense of value in the surrounding wildlife that is not present in countries where this system is not practiced. In South Africa, little effort has been made to tie the protection of wildlife to local communities. Instead, all protected animals are enclosed in either national game reserves or private game farms. While South Africa does have a robust system for wildlife conservation, community engagement is an area where preservation efforts can still be improved.²³⁹

Traditional Medicine as a Driver for Illegal Trade

The biggest driver for the high demand of ivory and rhino horn in Asia is its use as traditional medicine. The popularity of rhino horns as a traditional medicine has been traced back to at least 400 B.C., where Greek medical practitioner Ctesias of Cnidus made reference to a great "wild ass" that fitted the description of an Indian rhinoceros.²⁴⁰ Ctesias had been a healer in the court of ancient Persia and had come into contact with people from as far as the Indian subcontinent who had provided testimony of this animal. Ctesias never saw it himself, but after several people told him independently of its existence he came to view it as fact.²⁴¹ He had learned about the "medicinal properties" of the horn, namely how drinking liquid from a hollowed rhino horn could protect one from poison and other harmful substances.²⁴² Other

²³⁷ Interviewee 2 (Conservationist), Interviewed by Gareth Kirby, via Zoom: 24:00.

²³⁸ *Ibid*: 18:56, 27:44.

²³⁹ *Ibid*: 26:53.

²⁴⁰ Zara Jean Bending, "Improving conservation outcomes: understanding scientific, historical and cultural dimensions of the illicit trade in rhinoceros horn." *Environment and History* 24, no. 2 (2018): 159.

²⁴¹ *Ibid*: 159.

²⁴² Elyse Waters, 'Zoological analysis of the unicorn as described by classical authors', *Archeometrial Mühely* 10, no.3 (2013): 235.

writers from classical antiquity, notably the Greek Aristotle and the Roman Pliny the Elder, also wrote accounts of rhinoceroses, which is believed to have contributed to the myth of the unicorn.²⁴³ These legends have ultimately helped to build the romantic legend of the animal in the Western cultural view long before the age of colonisation, where Europeans would finally face and hunt these creatures in Africa and Asia, after roughly two millennia of only ever reading or hearing about these creatures from second-hand accounts.

In southeast Asia, the use of rhino materials can be traced even further into antiquity. Rhinos appear in written records dating as far back as roughly 2700 B.C.²⁴⁴ Government reports from a millennia later show that rhinos were being removed from parts of China in an attempt by the imperial government to create more safe spaces for human settlements.²⁴⁵ By the fourth century B.C., there was a general who reportedly had an army 130,000 strong, whose troops “were armed with suits of rhinoceros skin”.²⁴⁶ According to Bending this indicates that rhinoceros were plentiful during this period in order to equip such a sizable force with the necessary materials.²⁴⁷ While it is possible that this was a metaphorical statement alluding to the strength of the rhino and how much it was revered in ancient China, it is known is that materials from rhinos were certainly used for tools, weapons and armour. They would have certainly existed in numbers that greatly exceeded the population in the current time.²⁴⁸

Rhino populations in the present day are far better protected than they were in prior decades, and these days the populations in game parks and private reserves are kept to a small, sustainable, manageable amount. This prevents the protected populations from upsetting the balance of the indigenous wildlife and has the added benefit of making herds appear as less appealing targets to poachers and international syndicates. Even though rhinos are being consciously conserved, the total number of rhinos in the world remains consistently low. Due to the extremely limited supply of rhino horns available in the world at any given time, many substitutes are now being used by those who wish to profit off the demand for such products. Several other animal horns and antlers are passed off as rhino horns. They can be decorated to

²⁴³ *Ibid*: 232.

²⁴⁴ Bending, Zara Jean. "Improving conservation outcomes: understanding scientific, historical and cultural dimensions of the illicit trade in rhinoceros horn." *Environment and History* 24, no. 2 (2018): 161.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid*: 171.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid*: 171.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid*: 171.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid*: 171-172.

make them appear more ambiguously rhinoceros-like, or they can be ground up into powder, at which point the difference becomes impossible to notice.²⁴⁹

This places other animal populations in danger of being killed as cheap alternatives to supplement the rhino horn market. In southeast Asia, water buffalo horn is a common substitute for rhino horn, with shavings of buffalo horn being passed off as rhino horn or mixed in with a batch of rhino horn to artificially bolster the supply.²⁵⁰ While water buffalo are considered plentiful in Asia, with an estimated population of almost 200 million, the number of wild water buffalo in Vietnam is low. Around two thirds of Vietnam's population are rural farmers, and for these agriculturalists the domesticated water buffalo is incredibly valuable.²⁵¹ For this reason, they are not targeted for their horns to be used in traditional medicine, however wild water buffalo are not offered the same reverence. This helps explain the major disparity in population numbers, as domesticated water buffalo are considered numerous, while in the wild they have become critically endangered due to being poached for their horns.²⁵²

Vietnam as the Central Hub for Rhino Horn Smuggling

Despite the stereotype of rhinoceros horns being used in Chinese traditional medicine, the largest importer of rhino horns is Vietnam.²⁵³ In the last decade around 50% of illegal rhino horn possessions were seized in South Africa, the largest home to rhino populations on the planet.²⁵⁴ It can be assumed that the majority of these horns were *en route* to a foreign destination, with Vietnam being the most likely candidate. This does not apply to every case as wealthy individuals are known to keep horns for themselves as trophies and status symbols, however the majority are exported for medicinal consumption.

Vietnam is a nation with a violent history. For two millennia it has periodically been invaded by Chinese forces attempting (and many times succeeding before eventually being driven out)

²⁴⁹ Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 240.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid*: 286.

Interviewee 1 (Conservationist), Interviewed by Gareth Kirby, via Zoom: 21:37.

²⁵¹ Vietnam, General Statistic. "Completed Results of the 2019 Viet Nam Population and Housing Census." (2022): 9-42.

Govi Snell, South-East Asia Globe, February 28, 2022, <https://southeastasiaglobe.com/vietnam-water-buffalo/>.

²⁵² "Wild Water Buffalo", IUCN Red List, May 12, 2016, <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/3129/46364616>.

²⁵³ "The demand for horn is driving rhinos towards extinction", Save the Rhino, February 28, 2013, <https://www.savetherhino.org/thorny-issues/the-vietnam-question/#:~:text=The%20demand%20for%20horn%20driving,rhinos%20within%20the%20next%20decade>.

²⁵⁴ Doc, CoP17. "African and Asian Rhinoceroses—Status, Conservation and Trade." (2022): 21.

to subjugate the land.²⁵⁵ During the period of European colonisation, the French Empire controlled Vietnam and its neighbouring countries of Laos and Cambodia, forming the region that became known as “French Indochina”.²⁵⁶ In 1940, the French-controlled territories were invaded by the Japanese Empire. After the conclusion of the Second World War, the refusal of the French to decolonise the region resulted in the First Indochina War. This war was fought between the Vietnamese and their French oppressors and lasted from 1946-1954. French withdrawal from Vietnam resulted in a civil war between the Eastern-aligned North and the Western-aligned South. This period lasted from 1955 to 1975 and saw direct foreign intervention, in what is now known as the Vietnam War. This itself was immediately followed by the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese War. The swift repelling of the Chinese forces finally resulted in peace for Vietnam for the first time in almost a century. Following the conclusion of Vietnam’s numerous and often overlapping conflicts, the newly independent Socialist Republic of Vietnam saw its economy stagnate in the wake of many unsuccessful attempts at implementing Marxist policies.²⁵⁷ After a decade of economic experimentation, the wealth of the nation began to steadily improve when in the 1990s it saw a period of growth and an increase in the mean income of households. An increase in purchasing power allowed for the growth of middle-class interests, such as hobbies and collections, as well as practices that could not be afforded by those living in the poverty-stricken conditions that the majority of the Vietnamese population had grown up with.

By the 2000s there was a sizable middle-class in Vietnam who could afford luxurious goods and other frivolities.²⁵⁸ As mentioned previously, the mid-2000s was the period when the mythology around rhino horn and its properties began to resurface. Trade was still occurring before this, albeit at a much smaller scale than what it would soon develop into. Practitioners of traditional medicine in Vietnam (and other parts of southeast Asia) believe that rhinoceros’ horn can treat ailments that range from minor concerns, such as being a hangover cure or an

²⁵⁵ Khánh Trần, *The ethnic Chinese and economic development in Vietnam*. (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993), 14.

²⁵⁶ Charles Keith, "Religious Missionaries and the Colonial State (Indochina)." *International Encyclopaedia of the First World War*, February 2, 2015. <https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/religious-missionaries-and-the-colonial-state-indochina/>.

²⁵⁷ David HD Truong, and Carolyn L. Gates, "Vietnam’s Gradualist Economic Reforms." in *Liberalization in the Developing World*, ed. Alex E. Fernández Jilberto and André Mommen (London: Routledge, 2012), 74-75.

²⁵⁸ Jotte Ilbine Jozine Charlotte De Koning, Marcel Rudolphus Maria Crul, Renee Wever, and Johannes Cornelis Brezet. "Sustainable consumption in Vietnam: an explorative study among the urban middle class." *International journal of consumer studies* 39, no. 6 (2015): 609.

aphrodisiac, to greater concerns such as arthritic pains and cancer.²⁵⁹ Full rhino horns are a luxury that only the extremely wealthy have access to, however cheaper alternatives such as rhino horn shavings are available to most middle-class people. With rhino population numbers being significantly lower than they were in previous decades, the supply of rhino horns is limited, while the demand is continuing to rise.

Rhino horn also serves a symbol of wealth due to its rarity, monetary extravagance and perceived medicinal value. To possess a horn that could simply be displayed in one's house as an ornament without being used for financial gain or to heal an ailment, implied that the individual in possession has a considerable amount of wealth at their disposal. As Vietnam is an emerging economy, status symbols have become increasingly popular, especially in a nation where the average person remains a rural farmer.²⁶⁰ From this it can be seen that the demand for rhino horn does not only stem from medical and spiritual perceptions, but also from a desire to be seen as wealthy.²⁶¹

Current Conservation Efforts in Southern Africa

The gradual increase in the market demand for rhino horn has become more of an issue for modern conservation efforts in South Africa. Rhino populations have been considered endangered for over a century, and at times many species of rhinoceros were thought to be extinct. In 1894, a herd of roughly 50 southern white rhinos were discovered in what is now iMfolozi Game Reserve. This game reserve (the first of its kind in what was later to become South Africa) was established in 1897 in an attempt to ensure the survival of this species.²⁶² Although initially marred by environmental and human hazards, the project proved to be a success by the 1940s, with the southern white rhino population flourishing.²⁶³ Ironically, this led to the issue of a potential overpopulation inside iMfolozi which had the capability to result in ecological devastation. There were fears that the species was far too vulnerable due to the entire population being concentrated in one area. A single catastrophe, such as disease or unforeseen environmental changes, could have led to the extinction of the species.

²⁵⁹ Hoai Nam Dang Vu, and Martin Reinhardt Nielsen. "Understanding utilitarian and hedonic values determining the demand for rhino horn in Vietnam." *Human Dimensions of Wildlife* 23, no. 5 (2018): 422.

Vigne, Lucy. "The rhino horn and ivory trade, 1980-2020." (PhD Thesis, Oxford Brookes University, 2020), 45.

²⁶⁰ Vietnam, General Statistic. "Completed Results of the 2019 Viet Nam Population and Housing Census." (2022): 9-42.

²⁶¹ Tom Milliken, Jo Shaw, Richard H. Emslie, Russell D. Taylor, and Chris Turton. "The South Africa–Viet Nam Rhino Horn Trade Nexus." *Traffic* (2012): 15.

²⁶² Ian Player. "Translocation of white rhinoceros in South Africa." *Oryx* 9, no. 2 (1967): 137.

²⁶³ *Ibid*: 137.

In 1961 Operation Rhino, the brainchild of Dr Ian Player, was instituted in order to further stabilise the southern white rhino population.²⁶⁴ Groups of rhinos were transported to other game reserves within South Africa, namely the KNP, the Mkuze Game Reserve, the Ndumu Game Reserve and the Willem Pretorius Game Reserve.²⁶⁵ Rhinos were also moved to Namibia, Kenya, Uganda and Zimbabwe, where their numbers have grown over the past 60 years. This distribution allowed rhinos to repopulate South Africa, and conservation techniques employed since then have allowed the populations to flourish from a herd of roughly 50 to over 15,000. Today, roughly 23,000 rhinos live across the entirety of the African continent.²⁶⁶ Similar operations are still occurring in an attempt to reintroduce rhinoceroses to other nations in southern Africa. Tanzania, Mozambique and Malawi have all had rhinos periodically reintroduced, with Mozambique and Tanzania receiving some rhinos as recently as 2023.²⁶⁷

Modern poaching, much of which is spurred on by the high demand for rhinoceros' horn in southeast Asia, remains a major threat to the stability of these threatened populations. The official designation for the southern white rhino by the WWF is "Near Threatened."²⁶⁸ While this means they are not officially an endangered species; their continued existence is only due to over a century of extremely dedicated conservation effort. Without the direct intervention by humanity their numbers would once again dwindle, likely to the point of extinction. It is an ironic case of man against man in the fight to preserve nature, as it is only human effort that is keeping these animals alive. Modern intervention is only necessary due to the large-scale poaching and smuggling operations that deplete the animal populations, which can be traced to the operations of the Apartheid regime.

Methods of Poaching in the Modern Era

The methods of killing rhinos have evolved substantially. The classic method of poaching, namely shooting the animal in the wilderness and escaping with the harvested materials before law enforcement can intervene, has become more professional in recent years. Throughout the 1980s when the war against poachers raged in Zimbabwe, poachers were typically expendable hired guns working for larger international syndicates.²⁶⁹ They were not professional hunters

²⁶⁴ *Ibid*: 145-146.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid*: 145-147.

²⁶⁶ 'Rhino Populations', Save the Rhino, accessed December 12, 2024, <https://www.savetherhino.org/rhino-info/population-figures/>.

²⁶⁷ Interviewee 1 (Conservationist), Interviewed by Gareth Kirby, via Zoom: (06:10)

²⁶⁸ "White Rhino", WWF, accessed December 12, 2024, <https://www.worldwildlife.org/species/white-rhino>.

²⁶⁹ Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 21.

or soldiers with any formal training and consequently were killed in large numbers by game rangers who were protecting the wildlife. The method of killing rhinos was typically crude, as they would usually be armed with fully automatic rifles that would be used to messily gun down an animal with a barrage of imprecise fire.²⁷⁰ This technique indicated either minimal or no training and was also practiced by UNITA troops during the Angolan Civil War.²⁷¹

In the modern era of 2003 to present, a tier system exists within these syndicates, with the lowest tier being the poachers themselves.²⁷² These poachers do not maintain direct contact with their employers but are rather supplied and contracted through a courier. This courier occupies the second tier.²⁷³ A courier supplies information, weapons and equipment to the poachers. Once the operation is complete these couriers deliver the animal products to the centralised criminal organisation. Centralised criminal organisations constitute the third tier. They are usually located in one of the business hubs of the country, typically Johannesburg or Pretoria in South Africa, or Maputo in Mozambique.²⁷⁴ These organisations are responsible for ensuring that the products are shipped overseas and, due to being a permanent operation, are significantly more structured than the tiers that preceded them. The fourth tier is the retailer in the overseas market who receives the goods. These illegal traders then sell it to the fifth and final tier of the operation, the local buyer.

The archetypal poacher in South Africa has remained uniform for the past four decades. As mentioned in Chapter 2, poachers and couriers are selected by criminal syndicates based on their ability to remain unnoticed in public. These agents are typically South Africans who are living below the poverty line. The ideal is for poachers to be undetectable in public. Due to being local South Africans, poachers and couriers blend easily into the public environment. This makes them harder to detect unless caught directly participating in any nefarious act.²⁷⁵ For the poachers, the likeliest chance of getting caught is being discovered while in the possession of weapons either *en route* to or inside the game reserves, or in possession of animal products which have not yet been passed on to a courier.²⁷⁶ Locating poachers once they are

²⁷⁰ Tafadzwa Mushonga, "The militarisation of conservation and occupational violence in Sikumi Forest Reserve, Zimbabwe." *Conservation & Society* 19, no. 1 (2021): 8.

Moses Montesh, "Rhino poaching: A new form of organised crime." *Rhino Resource Center* 27 (2013): 6.

²⁷¹ Ros Reeve, and Stephen Ellis. "An insider's account of the South African security forces' role in the ivory trade." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 13, no. 2 (1995): 237.

²⁷² Interviewee 1 (Conservationist), Interviewed by Gareth Kirby, via Zoom: 23:03.

²⁷³ *Ibid*: 24:27.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid*: 24:01, 24:17.

²⁷⁵ Statistics South Africa, *Census 2011: Census in Brief (Pretoria, Private Bag X44, 2011)* https://www.statssa.gov.za/census/census_2011/census_products/Census_2011_Census_in_brief.pdf: 21, 56.

²⁷⁶ Interviewee 2 (Conservationist), Interviewed by Gareth Kirby, via Zoom: 14:51.

no longer armed presents a significant challenge, even if they are apprehended in the general vicinity of a crime. For couriers, it is easy not to attract attention to themselves as they go about their daily routines.

While the poachers have remained consistent, poaching methods and techniques have evolved over the same time period. More advanced technology, such as helicopters, suppressors for rifles and dart guns for immobilising animals, are now used alongside the cruder hunting methods of the past.²⁷⁷ Within the last two decades, large calibre rifles have been employed by poachers to efficiently kill rhinos with a single shot.²⁷⁸ These hunting rifles require a higher level of expertise to operate efficiently, and indicate some experience handling weapons has been acquired. This may mean that some poachers have been used for multiple operations. This would have allowed them to refine their skills and implies that there exists a subset of poachers that are more efficient than others. The use of specialised hunting rifles allows poachers to attract less attention to themselves. A single shot is harder to track than multiple bursts of automatic fire. If an animal can be brought down with one shot, then the job of a poacher becomes more efficient, as they can kill an animal and harvest its materials more quietly and effectively than before. Animals that have been wounded but not killed will flee erratically through the bush to escape their assailants, thus generating unwanted attention.²⁷⁹ A poacher who is not able to neutralise an animal with one shot will have to follow the creature while continuing to try and kill it, making themselves more visible to game rangers. The level of discreetness employed in the modern age was not generally evident in poaching incidents in the 1970s and 1980s.

While the level of skill has increased, the majority of poachers still hold very little power in the criminal enterprises that contract them. The primary recruiting pool has not changed. This is by design, as people with little bargaining power who blend into the landscape of South Africa make for ideal contractors. People contracted to poach for syndicates are supplied with the weapons by said syndicates for use during their contract. Low-skilled poachers can be armed with cheap and plentiful Kalashnikov rifles, while more experienced poachers generally use the aforementioned specialised hunting rifles.

²⁷⁷ Moses Montesh, "Rhino poaching: A new form of organised crime." *Rhino Resource Center* 27 (2013): 2.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*: 6.

²⁷⁹ SAPA, "Rhino poacher filmed in action." *TimesLIVE*, November 9, 2012.

In addition to improved material support, poachers in the modern era are also working with better information than that with which their predecessors had been supplied.²⁸⁰ In Zimbabwe during the 1980's poachers were simply sent across the border from Zambia and were instructed to return once rhinoceros' horns had been acquired. Their payment depended upon the weight of the horns that they could harvest.²⁸¹ Game parks also had comparatively less security for their herds of game roaming the wilderness. In the present day these animals are more tightly controlled and monitored. Endangered animals are under constant surveillance and less plentiful than they once were. Currently, poachers work alongside a network of informants who ensure that the poaching operation is quick, efficient and attracts as little attention as possible. Animals are identified beforehand, with their whereabouts being tracked and monitored to identify their likely position at all times.²⁸² Park rangers are monitored to ensure that they are avoided, and bribery can be employed to ensure that no response will occur. Poachers are in constant communication with their couriers and the tracking networks, allowing for all parties to be aware of their accomplices' movements.²⁸³ This ensures quick killing of animals and a swift transfer of materials from poacher to courier. Despite the increased competency in low-level poachers, their expendability remains ever-present. Should a poacher be caught by the authorities, syndicates will typically send hitmen to eliminate compromised agents before they can disclose any incriminating information.²⁸⁴ Generally, both the poacher and courier are eliminated to prevent any connection to the syndicates from being identified.²⁸⁵ The volume of people willing to take up poaching to feed themselves and their families means that a lack of manpower never presents an issue for these syndicates, no matter how harsh the working conditions may be.

In addition to the poaching methods mentioned above, some short-lived trends in poaching have occasionally appeared. The mid-2000s saw a brief spike in white, middle-class involvement in the trafficking of animal products.²⁸⁶ This primarily took two forms: highly militarised poachers and corrupt game farmers. For the former, it seemed to be the case of a small number of South African ex-combatants, typically former SADF personnel, engaging in rhino poaching on a large scale. Helicopters and specialised equipment such as tranquiliser

²⁸⁰ Interviewee 1 (Conservationist), Interviewed by Gareth Kirby, via Zoom: 25:00.

²⁸¹ Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 20.

²⁸² Interviewee 3 (Game Farmer), Interviewed by Gareth Kirby via Zoom:6:10.

²⁸³ Interviewee 1 (Conservationist), Interviewed by Gareth Kirby, via Zoom: 32:08.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid*: 25:07.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid*: 25:10.

²⁸⁶ Moses Montesh, "Rhino poaching: A new form of organised crime." *Rhino Resource Center* 27 (2013): 7.

weapons would be used. An issue with this style of operation is that these types of poachers were highly visible in comparison to the typical poacher. This “militarised” poacher was typically easier to track and identify.²⁸⁷ The latter was comprised of wealthy game farmers who also attempted to benefit from smuggling animal products. They would use their businesses to act as legal fences for illicit operations. Being both wealthier than most citizens and a minority, they were far more visible to authorities attempting to identify them based on their demographic profiles.²⁸⁸ These attempts at entering the illegal trade failed after roughly a year, in part due to their extreme visibility.²⁸⁹

While the use of more militarised poaching tactics ultimately failed, helicopters have remained as a tool of both rhino poaching and anti-poaching.²⁹⁰ Their mobility resulted in helicopters being employed by many game parks, which could survey large tracts of land, move rangers to areas quickly and allow for animals to be tranquilised safely from the air. Unfortunately, the very reasons that make helicopters ideal for wildlife protection equally makes them perfect for poaching when used by skilled criminals.²⁹¹ They can move poachers into and out of parks quickly to avoid detection by game wardens. A skilled marksman can also kill an animal from a helicopter, removing the danger of having to be on the ground with wild animals.²⁹² Poachers have begun making use of night vision and thermal imaging scopes for their rifles, allowing them to operate at night in a far more effective capacity than that which was previously possible.

The Exploitation of Trophy Hunting in South Africa by Criminal Syndicates

In order to circumvent the protection placed around rhinos, the criminal syndicates began to employ more creative methods of material acquisition. A notable new method was to use legal trophy hunts, known disparagingly as “canned” hunts to acquire rhino horns. Canned hunting is where an animal, typically a big game creature, is selected to be hunted by a wealthy tourist in a situation where the hunt is rigged in favour of the hunter.²⁹³ These hunts are designed for it to be impossible not to successfully kill the animal. Rademeyer gave an example of a Vietnamese hunter participating in a trophy hunt. The woman hunting was guided completely

²⁸⁷ *Ibid*: 7.

²⁸⁸ Fiona MacLeod, “Quenching a thirst for lion bones”, *Mail & Guardian*, April 20, 2012.

²⁸⁹ Interviewee 1 (Conservationist), Interviewed by Gareth Kirby, via Zoom: 47:36.

²⁹⁰ Moses Montesh, “Rhino poaching: A new form of organised crime.” *Rhino Resource Center* 27 (2013): 6.

²⁹¹ *Ibid*: 2.

²⁹² *Ibid*: 6.

²⁹³ Patrick Barkham, “‘Canned Hunting’: the lions bred for slaughter”, *The Guardian*, June 3, 2013.

by game rangers, with them even assisting in her aiming.²⁹⁴ Rademeyer notes that at every phase of the hunt the woman's mannerisms appeared "unnatural", as if she had no idea what she was supposed to be doing.²⁹⁵ The practice of canned hunting is highly controversial on the international stage as it is perceived as being a cruel and inhumane way to treat wild animals. Organisations such as Four Paws have campaigned to raise awareness regarding this practice.²⁹⁶ Popular opposition to canned hunting is found both within South Africa and across the globe. A common factor with opposition to the practice is that those opposed are typically people detached from the local ecology and economy. To them, the practice holds no meaning other than perceived animal cruelty.²⁹⁷ Opponents take umbrage with this practice and businesses centred around the killing of animals and argue that these creatures are solely bred quickly and unethically to be hunted. Their concern is that this standard of living is a cause of distress for the animals and lowers genetic diversity. There are merits to these arguments, as some game farms have been found to breed animals with little regard to the health of the animals and gene pool for the sake of creating a supply to meet a demand.²⁹⁸

Game farmers argue that the opposite is also true, with many game ranches letting their animals live a natural life on a large tract of land that is almost indistinguishable from their natural habitats.²⁹⁹ The argument that the animals are not "free range" has been used to discredit canned hunting, however in many cases the only animal who is not living a free range lifestyle the one who has been identified as the target of the next hunt.³⁰⁰ Canned hunts are typically set up by conservation organisations who work with private game reserves with the purpose of funding further conservation efforts.³⁰¹ An animal selected for a canned hunt is generally an older male, one who has previously been used for breeding purposes. At a late stage in life, animals often

²⁹⁴ Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 100.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid*: 100.

²⁹⁶ "THE CANNED HUNTING SCAM", Four Paws, accessed February 11, 2025, <https://www.four-paws.org.za/campaigns-topics/campaigns/big-cat-scam/the-canned-hunting-scam>.

²⁹⁷ "New IPSOS survey reveals the majority (68%) of South Africans oppose trophy hunting: Two-thirds also oppose canned lion hunting and the hunting of specific species", Humane Society International: Africa, August 25, 2022, <https://www.hsi.org/news-resources/new-ipsos-survey-reveals-the-majority-68-of-south-africans-oppose-trophy-hunting-2/>.

Interviewee 2 (Conservationist), Interviewed by Gareth Kirby, via Zoom: 28:40.

²⁹⁸ Richard A. Schroeder, "Moving targets: the 'canned' hunting of captive-bred lions in South Africa." *African Studies Review* 61, no. 1 (2018): 14.

²⁹⁹ Yann Prisner-Levyne, "Trophy Hunting, Canned Hunting, Tiger Farming, and the Questionable Relevance of the Conservation Narrative Grounding International Wildlife Law." *Journal of International Wildlife Law & Policy* 23, no. 4 (2020): 246.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid*: 255.

³⁰¹ Richard A. Schroeder, "Moving targets: the 'canned' hunting of captive-bred lions in South Africa." *African Studies Review* 61, no. 1 (2018): 15.

become a problem for the herd, as older males are known to prevent younger males from breeding. These animals usually prevent other males from helping to propagate the species through aggressive and controlling behaviour.³⁰² From a conservation and animal welfare perspective, this allows the animals to live their natural lives as well as ensuring that genetic diversity is not compromised. From an economic point of view, it also creates a short supply of available game. This raises the price of the hunt, allowing for a larger influx of cash that can generate a greater profit for game farmers. The money then gets invested in animal welfare and expanding the business, ultimately allowing for the growth of populations of endangered species. A hunted animal is carefully selected to maximise the herds continuous growth, and then is prepped for the hunt.³⁰³ It is taken to an isolated area of the park where it will be the only big game animal present, then the “hunter” is assisted by the game staff to ensure that the animal is killed.³⁰⁴ The tourist pays an exorbitant amount for the privilege of participating in this hunt and getting to bring home a trophy made up of whatever animal parts they want.³⁰⁵ The income is then used to further fund the protection of the rest of the herd and ensure that they are able to thrive and grow.³⁰⁶

This practice is considered a success for conservation efforts, as species used in trophy hunts have seen their populations greatly increase over the years. This has been attributed to the monetary incentive to keep the populations of animals alive. Prior to this, the 1977 ban on rhino horn trading failed to help further increase their numbers. Game farmers have used this angle as an argument of those in favour of trophy hunting.³⁰⁷ The animals are now considered more valuable in a living state, as value is placed on more than just the products for which it can be poached. Animal populations suggest that this practice works, with the southern white rhino population growing from less than 50 to roughly 11,000 in Africa in a little over a century, thanks both to state protection and thriving private game reserves.³⁰⁸

³⁰² Interviewee 2 (Conservationist), Interviewed by Gareth Kirby, via Zoom: 29:11.

³⁰³ *Ibid*: 30:10.

³⁰⁴ Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 100.

³⁰⁵ Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 102.

³⁰⁶ Michael 't Sas-Rolfes, Richard Emslie, Keryn Adcock, and Michael Knight. "Legal hunting for conservation of highly threatened species: The case of African rhinos." *Conservation Letters* 15, no. 3 (2022): 3.

³⁰⁷ Nigel Leader-Williams, S. Milledge, K. Adcock, M. Brooks, A. Conway, Mainka Knight, S. Mainka, Elaine B. Martin, and T. Teferi. "Trophy hunting of black rhino *Diceros bicornis*: proposals to ensure its future sustainability." *Journal of International Wildlife Law and Policy* 8, no. 1 (2005): 3.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid*: 3.

Initially there were no limitations on the number of animals which could be hunted in this manner. The high price was the only factor that prevented people from frequently partake in trophy hunting. This prevented the decimation of the animal populations. The exclusivity also helps to spread interest among multiple parties and further drive up the price. This allows for even more funds for conservation and ensures that there is a sustained list of people who wish to participate. Syndicates (primarily based in Asia) would use their funds to send people to participate in rhino hunting to collect trophies, as they could still make a profit on the horns collected despite the extreme cost.³⁰⁹ This exploitation of a legal loophole allowed syndicates to have a steady supply of rhino horn. When this plan was uncovered, South African law enforcement placed a limitation on how many times a single person can participate in a trophy hunt, with the limit being placed at one hunt per individual per year. The idea is not without its issues as criminal enterprises found ways to circumvent the law. Syndicates increased the number of people being used as proxies to gather animal products for themselves.³¹⁰ While this issue was eventually curtailed with tighter and more accurately aimed restrictions, the period from 2006-2012 remains an infamous chapter in rhino conservation history.³¹¹ Vietnamese-based syndicates served as a prime example of this tactic being used.

During the period from 2009-2012, where canned hunting was at its peak, Vietnamese nationals made up roughly half the number of people participating in trophy hunts, with many of the horns being exported without proper documentation.³¹² It has been noted by game farm staff that these Vietnamese nationals looked out of place alongside the professional hunters and wealthy tourists that they were accompanying. Many did not seem to fully understand what was going on around them and were said to just look around awkwardly while the hunt was performed for them. When tracing the origins of Vietnamese nationals who participated in trophy hunts, a clear pattern emerged regarding residence, with the majority of “hunters” being from the same apartment complexes in poverty-stricken areas.³¹³ It is likely that these complexes are close to where syndicates are headquartered.

³⁰⁹ “Vietnamese Citizen Jailed For possession of Rhino Horn”, Siyabona Africa, accessed January 1, 2024. <https://www.krugerpark.co.za/krugerpark-times-e-6-vietnamese-citizen-jailed-25238.html>.

³¹⁰ Yann Prisner-Levyne, "Trophy Hunting, Canned Hunting, Tiger Farming, and the Questionable Relevance of the Conservation Narrative Grounding International Wildlife Law." *Journal of International Wildlife Law & Policy* 23, no. 4 (2020): 246.

³¹¹ Michael 't Sas-Rolfes, Richard Emslie, Keryn Adcock, and Michael Knight. "Legal hunting for conservation of highly threatened species: The case of African rhinos." *Conservation Letters* 15, no. 3 (2022): 2.

³¹² Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 101, 103.

³¹³ *Ibid*: 101.

Some game farmers would collaborate with the criminal syndicates to ensure that operations progressed smoothly. While game farming is indeed a lucrative business, it is also heavily regulated. Game farming tends to attract a workforce of people who want to improve conservation efforts, however this does not apply to everyone involved. By aligning with criminal syndicates, game farmers can skirt around regulations and generate larger amounts of short-term revenue. In the past decade one of the most effective ways to catch higher-ranking criminals involved in smuggling networks, such as corrupt game farmers and retailers belonging to the third tier of smuggling networks, has been lifestyle audits.³¹⁴ Due to the aforementioned tier structure of the criminal syndicates who operate both in South Africa and abroad, it is harder to identify those higher up in these organisations who are actually responsible for planning poaching jobs and supplying foot soldiers. A lifestyle audit allows for law enforcement to catch someone with incriminating evidence in their own home, which is usually one of the clearest definitive links between an individual and any criminal activity that they may be involved in.³¹⁵

For canned hunting, law enforcement in South Africa was able to curtail the issue of hunting quota exploitation once the problem was identified. The conspicuous nature and appearance of these “hunters” had made them easy to identify and to deal with, and over the past decade this issue has been considered resolved as a whole. For a brief period, however, it was a serious hole in the security of South Africa’s wildlife. Despite this loophole being sealed, the problem of rhino horn trafficking remains an issue in Vietnam.

As well as rhino horn, ivory is a major component of animal product smuggling in Asia. While Vietnam is currently leading in the trade, for the past two decades it has been China who was the most influential participant in the illegal trade. In 2017, China banned the sale of ivory outright, thereby limiting what could be done with the stockpiles that had been accumulated over the years.³¹⁶ The ban in China caused those who still possessed ivory to shift focus to Vietnam’s black market. Traders would export their products to Vietnam in order to try and recuperate some of the capital that had been invested acquiring them. Much of the ivory traded in Vietnam in the present day appears to be the result of acquiring the stockpiles that had been built up in China. The majority of the ivory likely originated from Angola, Namibia and

³¹⁴ Interviewee 1 (Conservationist), Interviewed by Gareth Kirby, via Zoom: 26:45.

³¹⁵ *Ibid*: 26:45.

³¹⁶ Xuehong Zhou, Qiang Wang, Wei Zhang, Yu Jin, Zhen Wang, Zheng Chai, Zhiqiang Zhou, Xiaofeng Cui, and Douglas C. MacMillan. "Elephant poaching and the ivory trade: The impact of demand reduction and enforcement efforts by China from 2005–2017." *Global ecology and conservation* 16 (2018): 2.

Mozambique, the only nations who could realistically supply these large quantities of ivory and rhino horn.³¹⁷ In addition, it has been reported that ivory is still being smuggled directly from South Africa as well as Mozambique.³¹⁸

Vietnam's capital Hanoi has in the last two decades become the central hub of ivory and rhino horn trade, with stockpiles located all over the city. These stockpiles are often barely hidden due to law enforcement being stretched to its limit. Houses, small businesses and other ordinary buildings are used for smuggling, and in the community, it is often an open secret. In order to keep the prices for these products high, many suppliers are only willing to sell a small number of horns and tusks to ensure that they maximise the profit on every item. In Vietnam, the case of rhino horn kingpin Ah Nam garnered significant attention from the local authorities and non-government organisations due to having his own stockpile of 76 horns. This figure was unheard of for local dealers within Vietnam. His public flaunting of the illegal assets he possessed allowed for a detailed look into how an ivory or rhino horn dealer operates when product reaches its final seller. It was his case that allowed for much of the information on the working methods of these syndicates to be known. As well as being the final destination for many animal products, Vietnam has grown in its own right into the central hub for exporting these materials into other neighbouring states. Ironically, this also includes selling ivory and rhino horn products back to Chinese consumers who cannot obtain the items in their home countries.³¹⁹

The high demand for rhino horn, helped by the Apartheid regimes large-scale smuggling, created an appetite that cannot be fully sated with the resources currently available. Neighbouring ecosystems are also affected by the demand for horns in Vietnam. Countries that share a border with Vietnam, and even nations who have a buffer state between themselves and Vietnam, have seen an increase in the poaching of wild water buffalo. Over the past two decades the number of water buffalo in Thailand has dropped to roughly a third of their previous population size.³²⁰ The prices of water buffalo products in Thailand are very low compared to neighbouring economies, meaning that the majority are killed exclusively for exportation purposes.³²¹

³¹⁷ Inda Mustika Permata, and Elsi Wahyuni. "Behind the Ivory Trade Shutdown in China." *Journal of International Wildlife Law & Policy* 23, no. 3 (2020): 157.

³¹⁸ *Ibid*: 158.

³¹⁹ Nhuan Van Nguyen, and Madelon Willemsen. "Assessment of the availability of ivory in the Vietnamese market." *TRAFFIC Bulletin* 27, no. 2 (2015): 59.

³²⁰ Suthipong Uriyapongson, "Buffalo and buffalo meat in Thailand." *Buffalo Bulletin* 32, no. sp. 1 (2013):329, 332.

³²¹ *Ibid*: 330.

Animal Populations After the End of the Apartheid Regime's Involvement in Smuggling

The lasting effects of the Apartheid regime's smuggling can be seen in the current animal populations of southern Africa. The present number of elephants and rhinos that populate nations such as Angola, Namibia and Mozambique are significantly lower than half a century ago. From the period 1975-1989, it was estimated that the elephant population in Angola had dropped from between 70,000-100,000 to 18,000.³²² The estimate of 100,000 was considered generous and one that was contested by the Apartheid regime as hyperbole.³²³ The Kumleben Commission states that in the Roos Inquiry, two established South African conservationists, Dr John Ledger and Clive Walker, were called upon to review this claim. They concluded that the number was likely an exaggeration but also stated that "if elephants were also poached in Zambia and Zaire and channelled through Angola, the figures could quite conceivably be true".³²⁴ It should be noted neither Ledger nor Walker refuted the claim that there had been a large-scale destruction of megafauna in Angola. There is also no record of them stating just how much of the 100,000 figure is an exaggeration. Even if the larger estimate is an exaggeration, this leaves a minimum of 50,000 elephants slaughtered in a period of less than 15 years. While there are no official records of the elephant population during the aforementioned period, anecdotal evidence points to a mass decrease in the local wildlife populations of both Angola and Namibia.

The Angolan Civil War continued without foreign involvement after the conclusion of the Cold War in 1991, with the conflict only ending in 2002 when UNITA's leader, Jonas Savimbi, was killed in action by Angolan government troops.³²⁵ Immediately following this period there was a resurgence in elephant numbers, growing from less than 400 in 2004 to almost 5 times that number the following year.³²⁶ The current estimate of the Angolan elephant population ranges from 3000-6000. While this an improvement, it is still far lower than the pre-war estimates.³²⁷

³²² Michael J Chase, and Curtice R. Griffin. "Elephants of south-east Angola in war and peace: their decline, re-colonization and recent status." *African Journal of Ecology* 49, no. 3 (2011): 354.

³²³ Republic of South Africa & State President, *Commission of Inquiry into the Alleged Smuggling of and Illegal Trade in Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn in South Africa*, Judge M. E. Kumleben. Durban: 1996: 25.

³²⁴ *Ibid*: 25.

³²⁵ Michael J. Chase, and Curtice R. Griffin. "Elephants of south-east Angola in war and peace: their decline, re-colonization and recent status." *African Journal of Ecology* 49, no. 3 (2011): 358.

³²⁶ *Ibid*: 353.

³²⁷ Scott Schlossberg, Michael J. Chase, and Curtice R. Griffin. "Poaching and human encroachment reverse recovery of African savannah elephants in south-east Angola despite 14 years of peace." *PLoS One* 13, no. 3 (2018): e0193469: 12.

"Angola Hit with Trade Sanctions over Failure to Tackle Elephant Poaching and Ivory Trafficking - EIA." 2024. Eia-International.org. February 15, 2024. <https://eia-international.org/news/angola-hit-with-trade-sanctions-over-failure-to-tackle-elephant-poaching-and-ivory-trafficking/#:~:text=Angola%20is%20home%20to%20a>.

The amount of ivory that was smuggled out of Mozambique for use by the Apartheid regime was a less transparent issue than the situation in Angola and Namibia. Due to the aforementioned struggles with the transportation of supply routes, there was less tangible evidence as to how much ivory was actually exported during the Mozambican Civil War. During the period of the 1980s where the civil war was at its most intense, the wildlife populations of the country saw a large decline. Megafauna were particularly targeted for their meat and materials. The uncertainty of food supplies for RENAMO resulted in them targeting elephants for their meat as well as their ivory.³²⁸ This contributed to the decline of the elephant population in Mozambique. It was estimated that prior to the 1980s, the elephant population in the country was between 40,000 to 65,000.³²⁹ Following the intense civil war, the number of elephants dropped to around 7000.

Conclusion

The trading of contraband from South Africa to Asia has evolved substantially throughout the last few decades. The absence of the Apartheid regime has forced syndicates to become more creative in their efforts to secure ivory and rhino horn, as shown by the evolving methods of poaching and smuggling employed during the modern period. During the 20th century the majority of rhino horn and ivory came from Angola, Mozambique and Namibia. In the present, the diminished populations of animals in the aforementioned nations combined with the large animal populations in South Africa, has caused an increase in poaching to occur inside South Africa's borders. This increased demand for these materials has also contributed to the poaching crisis. Poaching continues to be an issue for South Africa and its neighbours, and the loss of animals to poachers has hindered the growth and recovery of their populations. The coinciding of the increased demand for animal products in southeast Asia at the same time that South Africa was exporting large quantities of these materials, suggests that the Apartheid regime helped contribute to their renewed popularity. The availability of these materials aided in repopularising the myths regarding their medicinal properties. It appears that the smuggling of the Apartheid era has directly contributed to the poaching issues experienced by South Africa today.

³²⁸ Nick Cater, "Preserving the Pachyderms." *Africa report* 34, no. 6 (1989): 45.

³²⁹ Cornelio Pedro Ntumi, Sam M. Ferreira, and Rudi J. Van Aarde. "A review of historical trends in the distribution and abundance of elephants *Loxodonta africana* in Mozambique." *Oryx* 43, no. 4 (2009): 571.

Chapter 4 – Connections Between the Period of 1975 – 1994 and the Period of 2003 – Present

Introduction

Chapter 2 focused on the trafficking of ivory and rhino horn by the Apartheid regime from the late 1960's to early 1994, whilst chapter 3 examined the smuggling of animal products from South Africa to southeast Asia during the period from 2003 to the present day. This chapter analyses the evidence presented in the earlier chapters to create a clearer, logical link between the illegal trading that occurred prior to 1994, and the trafficking that has been taking place since 2003. These periods are differentiated by two primary factors: The first being the change in the volume of ivory and rhino horn being exported from South Africa, as recorded by CITES. The second factor is the change in the primary export locations. This chapter focuses on both periods mentioned in the previous two chapters, while also detailing the connecting period between the two. The earlier era started to form in 1965 and began properly in 1975; it then subsided with the ousting of the National Party and the transition to democratic rule in 1994. The interim period of 1994 to 2003 represents a second distinct era that serves as a bridge between the first and last eras. The latter era commenced around 2003 when poaching in South Africa became more common. This final period continues into the present day.

The transition to democracy in 1994 brought an end to the Apartheid regime's involvement in smuggling operations. The official withdrawal of South African forces from Angola and Namibia in 1988 and 1990 respectively, effectively ended the large-scale extraction of ivory and rhino horn from these two nations.³³⁰ These materials could therefore no longer be exported from South Africa to the same degree that that had previously been possible. Huang et al notes a significant decline in the amount of ivory reaching Asian markets in 1991.³³¹ This abrupt drop in ivory quantities being imported into southeast Asia perfectly coincides with the withdrawal of the SADF from Angola and Namibia. As mentioned in chapter 2, the ivory and rhino horn smuggling operations were being secretly facilitated by the NP and was not an official or widely known policy. When the party was removed from power it was likely that members of the NP involved in the trafficking would have quietly disbanded their operations

³³⁰ Willem Steenkamp, *South Africa's Border War, 1966-1989*. (Cape Town: NB Publishers, 2016), 328.

³³¹ Wenyang Huang, Huiwen Wang, and Yigang Wei. "Mapping the Illegal International Ivory Trading Network to Identify Key Hubs and Smuggling Routes: Illegal International Ivory Trading Network from 1975 to 2017." *EcoHealth* 17 (2020): 524.

as they no longer had the resources nor the political power to continue their involvement. The diminished number of animal products arriving in Asia, coupled with the bans on ivory importations implemented by various Asian nations, forced traders to rely on stockpiles of animal products that were already in their possession.³³²

The period between 1994 and 2003 served as an interim between the first and last eras. This time span was notable due to the reduced amount of ivory and rhino horn that was being exported from South Africa compared to the eras both before and after it. The 1989 CITES ban on ivory trading shifted the primary destination for ivory exports from Hong Kong initially to Japan, and subsequently to China.³³³ The later period of increased animal product exportations from South Africa began with the involvement of crime syndicates in obtaining rhino horns through poaching and trophy hunting in 2003, and the resurgence of increased poaching incidents in South Africa in 2007.³³⁴ The number of poaching cases in South Africa was low prior to 2008, with an average of 13 rhinos being poached per year between 2000 and 2007.³³⁵ From 2008 onwards, there has been a growth in the number of poaching cases. Between 2008 and 2014 there was an average of 422 annual poaching incidents.³³⁶ This renewed period of ivory and rhino horn trading out of South Africa appears to be the consequence of the poaching and trafficking of animal materials by the Apartheid government from the period of 1975 to 1988. The Apartheid regimes involvement in smuggling these materials made the products more available in southeast Asia. This accessibility allowed these products to reach a wider consumer-base, which in-turn would increase the demand.

South Africa was the only nation that could supply the amount of ivory and rhino horn needed to satisfy the demands in southeast Asia. The populations of elephants and rhinos in South Africa and its neighbouring countries are the largest concentrations of these animals in the world.³³⁷ Rhinos that were native to China and Vietnam both became extinct during the 20th century, and rhinos and elephants found in other parts of Asia lack the numbers to supply China and Vietnam's demand. According to the WWF, the Indian elephant only numbers

³³² *Ibid*: 324.

³³³ *Ibid*: 531.

³³⁴ Moses Montesh. "Rhino poaching: A new form of organised crime." *Rhino Resource Center* 27 (2013): 9.

³³⁵ Addlight Mukwazvure, and T. B. Magadza. "A survey on anti-poaching strategies." *International Journal of Science and Research* 3, no. 6 (2014): 1064.

³³⁶ *Ibid*: 1064.

³³⁷ Mqondisi Dube, "Southern Africa Elephant Population Increases Amid Concerns Over Mortality Rate" *VOA News Africa*, Accessed July 10, 2024. <https://www.voanews.com/a/southern-africa-elephant-population-increases-amid-concerns-over-mortality-rate/7251632.html>.

approximately 20,000.³³⁸ The Indian rhinoceros is rarer, with an estimated number of 4000.³³⁹ The Javan rhino is the rarest of all, with 74 living members of the species on record. In order for the illegal markets in Vietnam and China to be sustained, suppliers from outside of Asia needed to be found. This is one of the reasons why Asian-based syndicates looked to Africa to sustain their business model.

During the period from 1970 to 1990 the only region comparable to South Africa and its neighbouring states regarding elephant and rhino population was Kenya. Vigne states that on average 1,226 kg's of rhino horn was exported per year from the horn of Africa from 1980 to 1984.³⁴⁰ While this region was able to provide much ivory and rhino horn for Asia, southern Africa remained the primary source for these materials. Animal products from Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique were being trafficked through South African channels.³⁴¹ This allowed for the majority of ivory and rhino horn to be transported from a single source. It should also be noted that according to the data provided by Huang et al, there is a significant decline in the exportation of ivory from Kenya following the international ivory ban.³⁴² By comparing the data provided in these two sources, it can be inferred that the robust networks facilitated by the Apartheid regime made South Africa the more appealing choice for animal material traffickers when compared to other regions with a similar abundance of resources.

The Connection between South Africa and Vietnam.

Vietnam is currently one of the primary consumers of rhino horn.³⁴³ It is also a popular destination for ivory.³⁴⁴ As noted in Chapters 2 and 3, one of the main uses for rhino horn in traditional medicine is the belief that it can help cure cancer patients. Cancer is prevalent in Vietnam, particularly for older generations who were exposed to Agent Orange during the US

³³⁸ "Indian Elephant", WWF, Accessed July 10, 2024. <https://www.worldwildlife.org/species/indian-elephant>

³³⁹ "India", International Rhino Foundation, Accessed July 10, 2024. <https://rhinos.org/our-work/where-we-work/india/>.

³⁴⁰ Lucy Vigne. "The rhino horn and ivory trade, 1980-2020." (PhD Thesis, Oxford Brookes University, 2020), 28.

³⁴¹ Republic of South Africa & State President, *Commission of Inquiry into the Alleged Smuggling of and Illegal Trade in Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn in South Africa*, Judge M. E. Kumleben. Durban: 1996: 204-205.

³⁴² Wenyang Huang, Huiwen Wang, and Yigang Wei. "Mapping the Illegal International Ivory Trading Network to Identify Key Hubs and Smuggling Routes: Illegal International Ivory Trading Network from 1975 to 2017." *EcoHealth* 17 (2020): 531.

³⁴³ V. Dao Truong, Nam VH Dang, and C. Michael Hall. "The marketplace management of illegal elixirs: illicit consumption of rhino horn." *Consumption Markets & Culture* 19, no. 4 (2016): 3.

³⁴⁴ "Trade in Rhino Horn: Where We Stand on Legalising the Trade", TRAFFIC, Accessed August 16, 2024. <https://www.traffic.org/what-we-do/perspectives/trade-in-rhino-horn/#:~:text=Consumer%20demand%20for%20rhino%20horn,the%20top%20two%20consumer%20markets.>

involvement in the Vietnam War.³⁴⁵ During the 1980's when the Vietnamese economy began to grow, the availability of rhino horn that was being exported from South Africa attracted the attention of the Vietnamese populace.³⁴⁶ The bombings of North Vietnam and the chemical warfare campaign that was conducted in South Vietnam by the US caused many Vietnamese soldiers and civilians to develop chemical-related health issues.³⁴⁷ These illnesses became apparent after the conclusion of the war and are still prevalent in the population today.³⁴⁸ The belief that rhino horn holds healing properties boosted interest in the material in Vietnam. Vietnam had little access to rhino horn at this point in history, due to the near extinction of the Javan rhino. The Vietnam War saw a reduction in the nation's biodiversity due to the large-scale destruction of the nation's forests and mangroves.³⁴⁹ During the war, it was believed that the Javan rhino had become locally extinct due to the devastation of the natural landscape. Prior to the war, the Javan rhino had been hunted close to extinction across mainland Asia. In 1988, over a decade after the Vietnam War had concluded with the Fall of Saigon in 1975, a herd of 10-15 Javan rhinos were discovered in the Vietnamese jungle.³⁵⁰ These rhinos and their descendants were hunted to extinction, with the last recorded Javan rhino found deceased in 2010.³⁵¹

The low number of rhinos in Vietnam over the last 50 years confirmed that the supply of rhino horn cannot have come from the local rhino population. During the 1980's the only logical places that could supply the horns were South Africa and Kenya, and as mentioned prior the infrastructure for smuggling was more refined in South Africa. The monopoly on rhino horns that South Africa had from 1975-1988, as well as the nation's relative stability in comparison to many of its neighbours, made it one of the few nations in southern Africa that rhino horns could be safely sourced from. The wars in Mozambique, Angola, South West Africa and Rhodesia made exporting from these nations directly a difficult task. With South Africa extracting rhino horns from Angola and South West Africa, and with shipments of rhino horn

³⁴⁵ Quy-Toan Do. "Agent orange and the prevalence of cancer among the Vietnamese population 30 years after the end of the Vietnam war." *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper* 5041 (2009): 16.

³⁴⁶ Paul Glewwe, "An overview of economic growth and household welfare in Vietnam in the 1990s." *Economic growth, poverty, and household welfare in Vietnam* 1 (2004): 1.

³⁴⁷ Duong Trung Le, Thanh Minh Pham, and Solomon Polachek. "The long-term health impact of Agent Orange: Evidence from the Vietnam War." *World Development* 155 (2022): 3.

³⁴⁸ Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 276.

³⁴⁹ Thor Hanson. "Biodiversity conservation and armed conflict: a warfare ecology perspective." *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1429, no. 1 (2018): 53, 55.

³⁵⁰ Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 276.

³⁵¹ *Ibid*: 275.

arriving from Rhodesia and Mozambique, South Africa held the majority of the animal materials available for export during the late Cold War period.³⁵² According to Milliken and Shaw, a 2004 study confirmed that almost all rhino horn in Vietnam originated in Africa.³⁵³ An informant for the Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce (TRAFFIC) within the rhino horn market claimed that the figure for African-originating horns may be as high as 98% of all horns in Vietnam.³⁵⁴ This is corroborated by the fact that megafauna populations in southeast Asia are much smaller than those of their African counterparts.

Records of rhino horn exportation by South Africa do not officially exist due to the CITES ban in 1977. Unlike ivory, which could be made to appear legitimate by claiming that materials came from national stockpiles, the trade in rhino horn was banned in all capacities across the globe. Despite the illegality of the trade, it is known that rhino horn was among the materials trafficked by the Apartheid regime as many horns had been discovered by SADF soldiers when these products were being transported.³⁵⁵ As the consumption of rhino horn increased in Vietnam and China during the period when South Africa was exporting ivory, and because rhino horn was frequently found to be stored alongside the ivory that was discovered in SADF storehouses, it is likely that rhino horn was being shipped to the same destinations that ivory was being transported to. In spite of the international ban, rhino horn could be traded within South Africa and its occupied territories using special permits.³⁵⁶ The system of these permits is covered in chapter 2. In the Kumleben Commission it was concluded that, despite no official records of rhino horn exports from South Africa existing, there were too many incidents of rhino horn being transported alongside illegal ivory for it to be a coincidence.³⁵⁷ Furthermore, the quantities of rhino horn appeared to exceed what the obtained permits by SADF servicemen allowed.³⁵⁸

The imports from South Africa sustained the market throughout the remainder of the 20th century. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, ivory and rhino horn that had been transported

³⁵² Republic of South Africa & State President, *Commission of Inquiry into the Alleged Smuggling of and Illegal Trade in Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn in South Africa*, Judge M. E. Kumleben. Durban: 1996: 206.

Stephen Ellis. "Of elephants and men: politics and nature conservation in South Africa." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20, no. 1 (1994): 55.

³⁵³ Tom Milliken, Jo Shaw, Richard H. Emslie, Russell D. Taylor, and Chris Turton. "The South Africa-Viet Nam Rhino Horn Trade Nexus." *Traffic* (2012): 124.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid*: 124.

³⁵⁵ Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 45.

³⁵⁶ Republic of South Africa & State President, *Commission of Inquiry into the Alleged Smuggling of and Illegal Trade in Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn in South Africa*, Judge M. E. Kumleben. Durban: 1996: 83-84.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid*: 130-131.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid*: 128.

from South Africa to southeast Asia was held in stockpiles to control the price of these commodities.³⁵⁹ When the exportation of these materials ceased in 1994, there was still a sufficient supply to maintain the market demand at the time. It is unknown when these stockpiles were depleted, but by 2003 clear attempts to inject new product into the Vietnamese rhino horn trade had begun.³⁶⁰ From 2003 to 2012, Vietnamese nationals were implicated in rhino horn smuggling scandals in South Africa. These individuals ranged from individuals being used by Asian-based syndicates for trophy hunting to members of the Vietnamese government who worked at the embassy in South Africa.³⁶¹ According to TRAFFIC, members of the Vietnamese embassy have been involved in the illicit trade. As Vietnamese citizens working for a foreign dignitary, it was impossible for South Africa to prosecute any of the embassy staff who were caught trying to smuggle rhino horn out of South Africa.³⁶² This legal protection is known as “diplomatic immunity”. The responsibility of prosecution was handed over to the Vietnamese government, however no formal records exist that show whether or not any action was taken. Despite the Vietnamese government claiming to have “recalled and disciplined” their staff who were caught committing crimes, TRAFFIC notes that no one is sure of what became of them.³⁶³ One cannot assume that because a number of members of the Vietnamese embassy were involved in smuggling, that it was a sanctioned action by the government. Similar to members of the National Party who were involved in illegal smuggling through South African channels, the Vietnamese embassy workers appear to be part of a well-hidden group within their government as well.

The Timeline of Rhino Horn and Ivory Trends From 1975 to Present

The exportation of ivory by South Africa during the Cold War was the largest recorded amount since the Second World War. Prior to the Second World War, ivory was being exported from Africa by the colonial powers.³⁶⁴ According to Taylor, ivory was a highly prioritized resource for trade by the Europeans. European control of most of the African continent gave the colonial empires access to elephants and, consequently, ivory.³⁶⁵ Elephant poaching was also common

³⁵⁹ Wildlife Justice Commission, creator, “Getting Close to Ah Nam” Wildlife Kingpin: The Rise and Fall of Ah Nam (podcast), October 12, 2022, accessed October 19, 2024, <https://wildlifejustice.org/podcast-wildlife-kingpin-the-rise-and-fall-of-ah-nam/>.

³⁶⁰ Moses Montesh. "Rhino poaching: A new form of organised crime." *Rhino Resource Center* 27 (2013): 9.

³⁶¹ Tom Milliken, Jo Shaw, Richard H. Emslie, Russell D. Taylor, and Chris Turton. "The South Africa–Viet Nam Rhino Horn Trade Nexus." *Traffic* (2012): 17.

³⁶² *Ibid*: 82.

³⁶³ *Ibid*: 82.

³⁶⁴ Harvey M. Feinberg, and Marion Johnson. "The West African ivory trade during the eighteenth century: The "... and ivory" complex." *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 15, no. 3 (1982): 439.

³⁶⁵ R. Thomas Naylor. "The underworld of ivory." *Crime, law and social change* 42 (2005): 272.

during the early 20th century, ensuring that ivory was reaching markets through both legitimate and illegitimate channels.³⁶⁶ After the Second World War ended in 1945, the European powers no longer had the resources or military strength to maintain their colonies across the globe and began the process of decolonisation.³⁶⁷ The relinquishment of territory in Africa resulted in the former colonial powers no longer having access to sources of ivory and rhino horn. This, coupled with the post-war economic depression that made luxury goods harder to access, shrunk the market for ivory in the global north.³⁶⁸ With the exportation of ivory and rhino horn by the Apartheid regime, a new source for these products was introduced.

The global economy recovered following the end of the Second World War, stimulating a resurgence in the luxury goods market. Western Europe was rebuilt following the destruction of the war using economic aid from the United States.³⁶⁹ Although the weakened European empires were forced to relinquish their colonies due to their lack of ability to maintain control over them, Europe itself saw great recovery and its citizenry began to enjoy a high standard of living.³⁷⁰ The United States, whose mainland territory had not suffered attacks and who had profited from the global war economy, saw the standard of living for its citizens rise. Southeast Asia also began to see steady development. Japan was given financial aid by the United States, helping it to form a strong economy. South Korea, Hong Kong and China successfully pursued industrialisation. They were then able to progress from agrarian-focused states to economies based on the trade of industrial goods. This gave their citizens access to a first-world standard of living.³⁷¹ The increase in economic standards across the globe allowed for the ivory and rhino horn black markets to find more consumers. After the war had ended, the demand for luxury consumer products, including ivory and rhino horn, grew. In the West, rhino horns were an ornamental luxury, and ivory was used as a crafting material for various goods such as billiard balls and piano keys. In southeast Asia, these materials were primarily valued for their supposed medicinal properties.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid*: 272-274.

³⁶⁷ Kenneth O. Morgan, "The Twentieth Century (1914-1991)," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Britain*, ed. by Kenneth O. Morgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 573.

³⁶⁸ Nicholas Crafts, and Gianni Toniolo. "Postwar growth: an overview." *Economic growth in Europe since 1945*: 3.

³⁶⁹ J. Bradford DeLong, and Barry Eichengreen. *The Marshall Plan: History's most successful structural adjustment program* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1991): 2.

³⁷⁰ Rodney Maddock, "The long boom 1940-1970", in *The Australian economy in the long run*, ed. Rodney Maddock and Ian W. McLean (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 80.

³⁷¹ *Ibid*: 80.

Hisao Kanamori, "Economic Growth and the Balance of Payments", in *Postwar economic growth in Japan*, ed. by Ryutaro Komiya. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966): 79-80.

The period of heightened economic prosperity in the northern hemisphere coincided with South Africa's descent into international isolation. Beginning in the 1960s, the Apartheid regime monitored its neighbouring regimes in Portuguese Angola and Mozambique, Rhodesia and Botswana.³⁷² Due to the decolonisation occurring across the African continent, the South African government feared that their neighbouring states, who were ruled by friendly white-minority governments, would be replaced by hostile black-majority regimes. When the Zimbabwe War of Liberation began in 1965, South Africa helped secure the southern regions of Rhodesia and established connections with the Rhodesian military intelligence. The SADF increased its presence in South West Africa due to escalating activity by SWAPO. Military intervention in South West Africa and network connections with Rhodesian military intelligence meant that ivory and rhino horn could have been arriving in South Africa as early as 1966.³⁷³ This supply of animal materials grew in 1975 after South Africa invaded newly independent Angola following the withdrawal of all Portuguese forces.³⁷⁴ The SADF presence in Angola and South West Africa allowed South Africa to receive a continuous supply of ivory and rhino horn. South Africa withdrew from Angola in 1988 and granted independence to Namibia in 1990, ending most of the trafficking operations in South Africa.

In the 1990s many countries in southeast Asia implemented laws to prevent the illegal use of ivory and rhino horns.³⁷⁵ These nations include Taiwan, China, Japan, South Korea and Hong Kong. Of the nation's imposing a ban on rhino horn trading, China stands out as being one of the few Asian nations that was not aligned to the West. The existing records of ivory exports by the Apartheid regime show that most shipments were being made to nations in western Europe as well as Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and Hong Kong.³⁷⁶ South Africa was officially only exporting materials to nations that were friendly with western powers. The legal responses against ivory and rhino horn trading in China in the 1990's indicate that the presence of these materials was a problem large enough to attract the attention of the authorities. Such a response, despite there being no official exports to China, suggests that South Africa was exporting to non-western aligned nations in secret. According to CITES data ivory was being shipped to

³⁷² Willem Steenkamp, *South Africa's Border War, 1966-1989*. (Cape Town: NB Publishers, 2016), 31.

³⁷³ Stephen Ellis. "Of elephants and men: politics and nature conservation in South Africa." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20, no. 1 (1994): 55.

³⁷⁴ Willem Steenkamp, *South Africa's Border War, 1966-1989*. (Cape Town: NB Publishers, 2016), 54.

³⁷⁵ Tom Milliken, Jo Shaw, Richard H. Emslie, Russell D. Taylor, and Chris Turton. "The South Africa-Viet Nam Rhino Horn Trade Nexus." *Traffic* (2012): 18.

³⁷⁶ Republic of South Africa & State President, *Commission of Inquiry into the Alleged Smuggling of and Illegal Trade in Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn in South Africa*, Judge M. E. Kumleben. Durban: 1996: 223.

mainland China from South Africa.³⁷⁷ The majority of ivory was being imported by Hong Kong before the international ban was implemented.³⁷⁸ After the ban ivory shipments to Hong Kong shrunk while recorded smuggling incidents to China grew. It is likely that while ivory was able to be legally traded China would import its ivory via Hong Kong. When international ivory trading was banned, Hong Kong adhered to the new international regulations and ceased importing the material. The demand in China meant that a market was still present to be exploited, but supply could no longer be obtained via Hong Kong. This gap in the market could be filled by traffickers who had been smuggling animal products out of South Africa. Based on the CITES data it appears that traffickers would sell directly to mainland China, rather than attempt to reach China through Hong Kong.

Shipments of ivory and rhino horn were kept in stockpiles by traders upon reaching Asia.³⁷⁹ These materials would be sold in small quantities in an effort to control the price of the items, as rarity increases the price of products. By artificially increasing the price of materials, traders were able to rely less upon the consistency of suppliers in Africa to keep their business alive. This practice allowed them to sustain their business model throughout the 1990's and into the early 2000's, a period where poaching was less frequent in southern Africa. Distributing in smaller quantities allows animal material dealers to avoid detection. If high quantities of illegal products are being found in an area, there is an increased likelihood that an ivory or rhino horn dealer is located in the region. This reasoning is partially why sellers do not sell in large quantities. Dealers who sell too much risk exposure to the authorities, as evidenced by the arrest of rhino horn trafficker Ah Nam in Vietnam in 2019.³⁸⁰

In 2003 poaching began to increase in South Africa following a period of inactivity.³⁸¹ From 2003 to 2012, Vietnamese nationals were used by Vietnamese-based syndicates to participate in trophy hunting in South Africa.³⁸² The Vietnamese-based syndicates would hire individuals

³⁷⁷ Wenyang Huang, Huiwen Wang, and Yigang Wei. "Mapping the Illegal International Ivory Trading Network to Identify Key Hubs and Smuggling Routes: Illegal International Ivory Trading Network from 1975 to 2017." *EcoHealth* 17 (2020): 531.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid*: 531.

³⁷⁹ Wildlife Justice Commission, creator, "Getting Close to Ah Nam" Wildlife Kingpin: The Rise and Fall of Ah Nam (podcast), October 12, 2022, accessed October 19, 2024, <https://wildlifejustice.org/podcast-wildlife-kingpin-the-rise-and-fall-of-ah-nam/>.

³⁸⁰ David Klein. "The Demise of a Vietnamese Wildlife Kingpin", *Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project*. Accessed July 10, 2024. <https://www.occrp.org/en/blog/16814-the-demise-of-a-vietnamese-wildlife-kingpin>.

³⁸¹ Simon Milledge. "Illegal killing of African rhinos and horn trade, 2000–2005: the era of resurgent markets and emerging organized crime." *Pachyderm* 43 (2007): 101.

³⁸² Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 100-101.

from low-income areas in Vietnam and pay for their flight tickets and accommodation. Hired individuals did not require hunting skills or experience, all that was required of them was that they were a distinct individual. This was done to circumvent the “one person, one hunt” limit for rhino hunting imposed by the South African government.³⁸³ By late 2012 this pattern of using impoverished people for trophy hunting had been fully identified and South African law enforcement was able to put an end to this practice.³⁸⁴ The number of poaching incidents in South Africa stabilised around 2014 and then declined until 2020 as responses to the poaching epidemic became more effective. To this day, the level of poaching in South Africa remains similar to the 2020 period.³⁸⁵

Examining The Flow of Materials Out of South Africa in the Period Pre-1994

The policy of Apartheid made it controversial for nations to engage in diplomatic relations with South Africa. The governments of many western nations, such as the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada, faced internal opposition from their citizens for their continued dealings with South Africa. This opposition manifested in the form of protests and the boycotting of South African goods.³⁸⁶ Despite the international pushback, South Africa maintained strong trading partnerships throughout the Apartheid regime. This was in part due to the location of the Cape of Good Hope in seaborne trade routes. South Africa is also home to diverse and plentiful resources, such as coal, gold and iron, which made South Africa a strong trading partner.³⁸⁷

Although trade was still occurring with South Africa, it was mostly done unofficially to avoid international condemnation. As mentioned in chapter 2, “sanctions busting” was employed to ensure that South Africa was still receiving the flow of essential goods and materials, for example, oil, weapons and ammunition.³⁸⁸ According to Eeben Barlow, who worked as an operative of the Civil Cooperation Bureau during the Apartheid regime, the process of

³⁸³ Governmental Affairs Offices, *New Rules for Hunting in South Africa*, Accessed October 17, 2024. https://www.shingelani.co.za/downloads/SA_Government_TOPS_Regulations_Revised_July_10.pdf.

³⁸⁴ Interviewee 1 (Conservationist), Interviewed by Gareth Kirby, via Zoom: 40:26.

³⁸⁵ Save the Rhino, Accessed 19 October, 2024. <https://www.savetherhino.org/rhino-info/poaching-stats/>.

³⁸⁶ Forward to Freedom: The History of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement 1959-1994. “The Anti-Apartheid Movement in the 1980’s”. Accessed June 10, 2024. <https://www.aamarchives.org/history/1980s.html#:~:text=In%20the%201980s%20the%20Anti,the%20release%20of%20Nelson%20Mandela.>

³⁸⁷ Melvin J Littig, and U.S. Army War College. “South Africa: Minerals, Sanctions and Foreign Policy”, *US Army War College* (Carlisle Barracks: Pennsylvania, 1990): 5.

Anton D Lowenberg. "Why South Africa's Apartheid economy failed." *Contemporary Economic Policy* 15, no. 3 (1997): 64, 68, 70.

³⁸⁸ E Barlow, *Executive Outcomes: Against All Odds*. (Pinetown: 30° South Publishers. 2018), 98.

acquiring foreign goods was complicated. In order to trade internationally, South African agents forged United Nations documents, bribed shipping officials and arranged for shipments to be moved from approved vessels to South African vessels.³⁸⁹ What Barlow's experience revealed is that the Apartheid regime was adept at bypassing international trade regulations.

The exported ivory and rhino horn was most likely leaving South Africa via its harbours. In 1993 the American Newspaper the *Los Angeles Times*, reported that a large amount of ivory had been seized at the Port of Durban.³⁹⁰ The shipment was bound for Taiwan. This indicated that the Apartheid regime was still smuggling their remaining stockpiles of materials even after the official withdrawal from Angola in 1988 and Namibia in 1990. This is the only recorded incident of ivory leaving South Africa illegally during the Apartheid period, however it is highly likely that this incident is a fair indicator as to how illicit materials may have left South Africa. As mentioned in chapter 2, shipping cargo via the ocean is the easiest way to smuggle items when compared to land and air travel. Aircraft cargo is heavily monitored, and land cargo can be stopped and searched at any point on its travel route. Ships can only be stopped and searched thoroughly while they are docked. In these cases, searching every container on a ship can slow down the flow of trade, and by extension the economy. The large size of commercial ships allows for contraband to be stored in less obvious places, such as supply closets, life rafts and crawl spaces.³⁹¹

The sanctions against Apartheid contributed to making air transportation unviable. Sanctions against SAA (mentioned in chapter 2) meant that stopovers in African nations were often no longer possible.³⁹² The lengthier trips resulted in higher fuel consumption, and in order to conserve fuel, less cargo could be carried on South African aircraft.³⁹³ According to Elias, prior to the 11th of September attack on the World Trade Centre in New York City, airports were only able to screen a maximum of 4% of all air cargo.³⁹⁴ This figure has improved in modern times, but remained low during the era that the Apartheid regime was exporting ivory and rhino horn. The lower volume of cargo on South African aircraft made it easier to search for

³⁸⁹ *Ibid*: 98.

³⁹⁰ Reuters, "S. Africa Police Seize Illegal Ivory Shipment", *Los Angeles Times*, October 27, 1993. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1993-10-27-mn-50224-story.html>.

³⁹¹ Sean M Harney. "By land, sea, or air? A comparative analysis of cartel smuggling strategies." (PhD Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2017), 12.

³⁹² Gordon H Pirie. "Aviation, Apartheid and sanctions: Air transport to and from South Africa, 1945–1989." *GeoJournal* 22 (1990): 233.

³⁹³ *Ibid*: 233.

³⁹⁴ Bart Elias. "Aviation Security: Background and policy options for screening and securing Air Cargo." *Congressional Research Service*, Library of Congress, 2008: 3.

contraband by the authorities. High volumes of cargo are only partially searched by airport security, as searching every container is a laborious and time-consuming practice, and extensive searches can delay trade flights and damage the international economy.³⁹⁵ While the Apartheid regime was able to falsify shipping documents, the more blatant nature of this form of smuggling required higher levels of bribery.³⁹⁶ Not only do the officials at airports need to be bribed, but potentially baggage handlers and other staff as well. This causes the smuggling operation to be less profitable than had it been transported via the ocean, where clandestine operations are less visible.

The Flow of Materials Out of South Africa Post-1994

Methods for exporting ivory and rhino horn out of South Africa after the advent of democracy are more complex than compared to the previous era. Following the ousting of the National Party from power in the 1994 elections, the illegal exportation of ivory and rhino horn by members of the South African government ceased. The lack of government facilitation for the trafficking of animal materials disrupted the greater trade network. Syndicates who had been receiving regular shipments of ivory and rhino horn no longer had access to a continuous source for these materials. In order to reestablish a flow of materials, syndicates needed to modify their tactics for acquiring animal products. This included becoming more directly involved with the procurement of ivory and rhino horn.

In chapter 3, these new methods of were discussed in detail. While methods such as using fraudulent trophy hunters have been stopped, other methods remain such as conventional poaching and theft from South African national stockpiles.³⁹⁷ As discussed in chapter 3, a tiered system of poaching appears to be a reliable method of acquiring animal materials. This system has persisted since roughly 2003. Its origins can be traced back to the poaching crisis in Zimbabwe that took place from 1983 to 1993.³⁹⁸ The system of using impoverished people as expendable poachers for a secretive organisation was refined during the Zimbabwean poaching epidemic, where Zambians living along the Zimbabwe – Zambia border were hired to cross into Zimbabwe via the Zambezi River, kill rhinos and collect their horns.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁵ *Ibid*: 3.

³⁹⁶ E Barlow, *Executive Outcomes: Against All Odds*. (Pinetown: 30° South Publishers. 2018), 98.

³⁹⁷ Interviewee 1 (Conservationist), Interviewed by Gareth Kirby, via Zoom: 40:26.

³⁹⁸ Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 19, 21.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid*: 19.

In the years between 1993 and 2003, the system of distancing the trafficking syndicates from the individual poachers was further refined. The previous system employed in Zambia involved the expendable hirelings acting as both poachers and couriers for the illicit materials. According to members of the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority, poachers then delivered these materials to a “middleman” who ensured that the syndicate received them.⁴⁰⁰ This information was received from an informant within one of the poaching syndicates.⁴⁰¹ These syndicates went on to sell the animal products overseas. Little is known about the way that the syndicates operated during this period. The rhino horn that was poached could only be traced as far as the Zimbabwe-Zambia border. From what is written by Rademeyer, there is no evidence of any middlemen being identified or caught. Whether the middlemen were separate entities working with the syndicate, or were actually a part of it, is not known. It is also unclear what the final destination of these products was. Based on CITES data, it is probable that these products were sold to buyers in Asia, however a definitive link cannot be established.⁴⁰² The materials may also have remained in Africa to be sold to wealthy tourists, similar to that which occurred in Mozambique following the conclusion of its civil war.⁴⁰³

The newer system of poaching hierarchies is better understood by conservationists and law enforcement. According to a wildlife conversationist who has worked closely with law enforcement, there is now a clear distinction between the poacher and the courier.⁴⁰⁴ The “middlemen” in the modern period are known to be based in business hubs such as Johannesburg and Pretoria.⁴⁰⁵ Outside of South Africa, Maputo and Mombasa are known by conservationists to be hubs for ivory and rhino horn trafficking.⁴⁰⁶ The Asian-based syndicates that these middlemen work with are entirely separate criminal entities.⁴⁰⁷ These criminal organisations are also willing and able to assassinate their contractors who are apprehended by law enforcement.⁴⁰⁸ Informants within conservation circles, who are bribed by poaching syndicates, are also used to acquire detailed information about the animals that are being

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid*: 20.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid*: 20.

⁴⁰² Wenyang Huang, Huiwen Wang, and Yigang Wei. "Mapping the Illegal International Ivory Trading Network to Identify Key Hubs and Smuggling Routes: Illegal International Ivory Trading Network from 1975 to 2017." *EcoHealth* 17 (2020): 531.

⁴⁰³ Daniel Stiles, and Esmond Martin. "Status and trends of the ivory trade in Africa, 1989-1999." *Pachyderm* 30 (2001): 33.

⁴⁰⁴ Interviewee 1 (Conservationist), Interviewed by Gareth Kirby, via Zoom: 24:22.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid*: 22:59.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid*: 23:49.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid*: 23:05.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid*: 23:42.

targeted. Syndicates make use of mobile phones to help poachers coordinate their movements and strategies.⁴⁰⁹ This information points to a more sophisticated operation than had previously been encountered during the 1980's.

Ivory and rhino horn collected from poaching is no longer exported solely by using seaports, but now also by aircraft.⁴¹⁰ With sanctions no longer affecting flight travel, the weight constraints of the Apartheid era are no longer an issue. Due to higher volumes of cargo being transported on aircraft, it is easier to store illicit materials without detection. New transportation options have led to the creation of new techniques to circumvent security at transport hubs. Legally, rhino horn that is collected as a hunting trophy is supposed to be microchipped.⁴¹¹ Criminals seeking to export the rhino horns for profit avoid having their horns microchipped, making tracking and detection at an airport more difficult. During one instance of rhino horn seizure at OR Tambo airport in 2008, a horn was discovered to be wrapped in newspaper.⁴¹² This technique makes their detection using x-ray machines more difficult. A further method of concealing rhino horn at airports is to cut the horn into smaller pieces and to hide these pieces in personal luggage.⁴¹³ While an intact rhino horn is valuable, both for its supposed medicinal properties and as a symbol of wealth, the main value of rhino horn is in its net weight. Rhino horn is typically ground into powder form and mixed with a liquid substance in order to be consumed. The horn does not need to be delivered to its final destination intact, as long as the entire weight of the horn reaches the buyer.

Despite the added option of air transport, seaborne routes remain the most popular method of exportation. In the modern age shipping continues to be the method least burdened by security. The Apartheid era demonstrated to criminal syndicates that seaborne routes from South Africa were a viable way to move shipments of animal materials from Africa to Asia. Huang et al produced a map of ivory trade routes from 1975 to 2017 using data collected from CITES.⁴¹⁴ The data obtained includes all recorded instances of ivory trading (both legally and illegally),

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid*: 27:40.

⁴¹⁰ Tom Milliken, Jo Shaw, Richard H. Emslie, Russell D. Taylor, and Chris Turton. "The South Africa–Viet Nam Rhino Horn Trade Nexus." *Traffic* (2012): 84.

⁴¹¹ Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 125.

⁴¹² Tom Milliken, Jo Shaw, Richard H. Emslie, Russell D. Taylor, and Chris Turton. "The South Africa–Viet Nam Rhino Horn Trade Nexus." *Traffic* (2012): 84.

⁴¹³ *Ibid*: 84.

⁴¹⁴ Wenyang Huang, Huiwen Wang, and Yigang Wei. "Mapping the Illegal International Ivory Trading Network to Identify Key Hubs and Smuggling Routes: Illegal International Ivory Trading Network from 1975 to 2017." *EcoHealth* 17 (2020): 525.

across the globe between the aforementioned dates.⁴¹⁵ Figure 4 in Huang et al details the routes through which ivory was transported across the globe and breaks the data into three periods. These periods coincide with the timespans outlined at the beginning of this chapter. The first period of 1975-1989 shows ivory being exported from across the entire African continent. This same era overlaps with the SADF's presence in Angola where ivory and rhino horns were channelled down to South Africa through SADF supply routes. The first map in figure 4 shows that the majority of ivory was received by Hong Kong, with smaller shipments reaching other destinations in southeast Asia.⁴¹⁶ The second period of 1990-2008 begins with the CITES ban on ivory trading but also aligns with the withdrawal of South African forces from Angola and Namibia. Following the ban, there was a noticeable decline in the exportation of ivory from all African nations except those in southern Africa.⁴¹⁷ The data on figure 4 indicates that despite the primary destination changing from Hong Kong to China, the same smuggling routes employed by the Apartheid regime from 1975-1989 are still being used. This evidence suggests that the channels set up by the Apartheid regime are still active long after the regime itself has disappeared.⁴¹⁸ The efficiency with which illegal materials leave South African borders implies that the system is a refined one.

Ivory and Rhino Horn Trading Between Asian Countries

While both China and Vietnam are final destinations for ivory and rhino horn, they are also used as intermediaries to smuggle these goods into other nations.⁴¹⁹ As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the ivory and rhino horn that is smuggled from Africa to Asia is usually sold in small quantities to maintain the high price of the materials. The remaining goods are stored across the region in various stockpiles and are then redistributed both locally and internationally based upon demand.⁴²⁰ Ivory and rhino horn from China has been known to have surfaced in Vietnam, and conversely contraband from Vietnam has been reported in China.⁴²¹

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid*: 525.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid*: 531.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid*: 531.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid*: 531.

⁴¹⁹ Chris R Shepherd, Thomas NE Gray, and Vincent Nijman. "Rhinoceros horns in trade on the Myanmar–China border." *Oryx* 52, no. 2 (2018): 394.

⁴²⁰ Wildlife Justice Commission, creator, "Getting Close to Ah Nam" Wildlife Kingpin: The Rise and Fall of Ah Nam (podcast), October 12, 2022, accessed October 19, 2024, <https://wildlifejustice.org/podcast-wildlife-kingpin-the-rise-and-fall-of-ah-nam/>.

⁴²¹ Milliken, Tom, Jo Shaw, Richard H. Emslie, Russell D. Taylor, and Chris Turton. "The South Africa–Viet Nam Rhino Horn Trade Nexus." *Traffic* (2012): 17.

From the 1980's to the mid-1990's it appeared that China was the largest consumer of ivory and rhino horn. Multiple sources have found that ivory and rhino horn that is consumed in southeast Asia is not always directly imported from South Africa but rather has been laundered through neighbouring countries. Rademeyer mentions that Laos is used as a central smuggling point between its neighbours Cambodia, Vietnam, China and Thailand.⁴²² This claim is backed up by Milliken and Shaw, who claim that trade routes in Laos are being used to import rhino horn from Thailand to Vietnam.⁴²³ This is likely to make the animal products more difficult to trace, as they now appear to be originating from multiple sources instead of only South Africa. This tactic is used to confuse and overextend law enforcement in southeast Asia by shifting their focus to neighbouring countries, drawing attention away from South Africa while it remains as the primary exporter of these materials.

South African – Asian Connection

Due to the illicit nature of the trade, much of the ivory and rhino horn that was exported by the Apartheid regime went undocumented. In Asia, both China and Vietnam (who currently constitute the largest consumers of rhino horn and ivory) are not listed in the official export records for ivory between 1979-1987 (found in Annexure B of the Kumleben Commission).⁴²⁴ The lack of official records for these exports and imports makes tracking the true quantity of materials an impossible task. The figures that appear in Annexure B are the materials that were claimed by the Apartheid regime as legal exports. The destinations listed in Annexure B are first world nations. These countries have lower corruption levels according to the Global Corruption Index and therefore have more reliable records of imports and exports.⁴²⁵ Exporting ivory to these nations served to legitimise the trade in the perspective of the international community. This diverted attention away from any undocumented materials that were being shipped to east Asia.

The 1980's saw a rise in the demand and consumption for ivory and rhino horn in southeast Asia. According to Vigne, over 80% of ivory officially exported during the period of 1976-

⁴²² Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 291.

⁴²³ Tom Milliken, Jo Shaw, Richard H. Emslie, Russell D. Taylor, and Chris Turton. "The South Africa–Viet Nam Rhino Horn Trade Nexus." *Traffic* (2012): 17.

⁴²⁴ Republic of South Africa & State President, *Commission of Inquiry into the Alleged Smuggling of and Illegal Trade in Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn in South Africa*, Judge M. E. Kumleben. Durban: 1996: 223.

Hubert Cheung, Lorraine Mazerolle, Hugh P. Possingham, and Duan Biggs. "Rhino horn use by consumers of traditional Chinese medicine in China." *Conservation Science and Practice* 3, no. 5 (2021): 2.

⁴²⁵ "Global Corruption Index 2023", *Global Risk Profile: True Diligence*, Global Risk Profile, accessed April 10, 2024, <https://risk-indexes.com/global-corruption-index/>.

1980 was shipped to Japan and Hong Kong.⁴²⁶ She stated that ivory exports to Hong Kong were refined from raw ivory into ivory products (such as billiard balls or piano keys) before being sold to European markets. During this timeframe Hong Kong was a dependant territory of the United Kingdom, however its geographical location allowed it to serve as a conduit for exporting materials to mainland China. It is possible that a portion of the ivory exported to Hong Kong was trafficked into China to meet their demand for ivory.

Due to the 1977 CITES ban on rhino horn, all horns exported during this period were transported covertly. The absence of records makes tracking any rhino horn sales by the Apartheid regime impossible. Despite this, it is known that rhinos were killed during South Africa's involvement in Angola and Namibia.⁴²⁷ As mentioned in chapter 2, rhino horn was found at the SADF base in Rundu.⁴²⁸ This confirms that the material was being transported from Angola to South West Africa. The value of the horns was known to the government, who sold them in order to secure more funding for their war effort. This practice of resource extraction was also used for other resources found in Angola such as oil, teak, and diamonds.⁴²⁹ It cannot be confirmed as to where the rhino horn was exported to, but it can be reasonably deduced that the exportations were following the same trade routes listed in Huang et al.⁴³⁰ It stands to reason that rhino horns were also being shipped to every destination listed in the Kumleben Commission as a recipient of ivory. How and where they were shipped to outside of the officially listed destinations cannot be confirmed, but what is known is that the rhino horn usage in southeast Asia increased at the time when South Africa was exporting this material.⁴³¹

A major indicator of South Africa's influence on the animal material markets in southeast Asia is the volume of ivory imported into southeast Asia in the late 20th century. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the banning of ivory imports by China, Taiwan, Japan and South Korea forced local ivory sellers in these nations to rely on stockpiles of previously imported animal

⁴²⁶ Lucy Vigne. "The rhino horn and ivory trade, 1980-2020." (PhD Thesis, Oxford Brookes University, 2020), 38.

⁴²⁷ Ros Reeve, and Stephen Ellis. "An insider's account of the South African security forces' role in the ivory trade." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 13, no. 2 (1995): 235.

⁴²⁸ Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 45.

⁴²⁹ Ros Reeve, and Stephen Ellis. "An insider's account of the South African security forces' role in the ivory trade." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 13, no. 2 (1995): 232.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid*: 231.

⁴³⁰ Wenyang Huang, Huiwen Wang, and Yigang Wei. "Mapping the Illegal International Ivory Trading Network to Identify Key Hubs and Smuggling Routes: Illegal International Ivory Trading Network from 1975 to 2017." *EcoHealth* 17 (2020): 531.

⁴³¹ *Ibid*: 524.

materials to maintain their businesses.⁴³² While the ban could be seen as a reason for the decrease in imports, the data regarding ivory importation provided by Huang et al shows that the large decline in imports began in 1989, roughly half a decade before any bans were implemented by southeast Asian nations.⁴³³ CITES figures on ivory trading cited later in the same paper show that while the rest of Africa was complying with the trading ban, ivory was still being exported from South Africa to southeast Asia.⁴³⁴ It appears that South Africa was ignoring the international laws on ivory, similar to how they were still trading in rhino horns long after the 1977 ban.⁴³⁵ Huang et al attributes this decline to the 1989 ivory ban, however the Apartheid regime's continued exportation shows that the illegality of the trade was not what stopped them. As mentioned earlier, 1989 saw the withdrawal of the SADF from Angola.⁴³⁶ This period also saw the beginning of the transition to an independent Namibia. With the removal of SADF presence, the stream of ivory and rhino horn that had been flowing into South Africa ceased to exist. It is more likely that decline in the volume of ivory was tied to a lack of supply rather than the Apartheid regime complying with international law.

Another sign of the Apartheid regime's involvement in trafficking is the continued stability of the smuggling routes. According to the first map of ivory trading routes created by Huang et al, throughout the period of 1975 to 1989, CITES tracked ivory exports from across much of sub-Saharan Africa. During this period ivory was being legally and illegally exported from southern, western, eastern and central Africa. The South African government's participation in the illicit trade would have allowed for easier illegal ivory exports from the country. As mentioned previously in this thesis, the NP had been using their influence to intervene in investigations relating to ivory and rhino horn smuggling. South African police units were officially ordered to ignore ivory and rhino horn that had been delivered through SADF channels from Angola, South West Africa and Mozambique. A member of Operation Lock (mentioned in chapter 2), a private organisation with the explicit goal of curtailing ivory and rhino horn trafficking, complained that his job was impossible as most investigations led back

⁴³² Tom Milliken, Jo Shaw, Richard H. Emslie, Russell D. Taylor, and Chris Turton. "The South Africa–Viet Nam Rhino Horn Trade Nexus." *Traffic* (2012): 18.

⁴³³ Wenyang Huang, Huiwen Wang, and Yigang Wei. "Mapping the Illegal International Ivory Trading Network to Identify Key Hubs and Smuggling Routes: Illegal International Ivory Trading Network from 1975 to 2017." *EcoHealth* 17 (2020): 524.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid*: 531.

⁴³⁵ Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 45.

⁴³⁶ Willem Steenkamp, *South Africa's Border War, 1966-1989*. (Cape Town: NB Publishers, 2016), 311, 321.

to either the SADF, UNITA or RENAMO.⁴³⁷ This indicated that trafficking networks that the Apartheid regime were involved with were numerous and in frequent use. Following the international banning of ivory in 1989, the majority of ivory exports came from South Africa.⁴³⁸ As stated earlier, it is likely that while other governments adhered to the ban, South Africa continued its exporting operations. The second map of global smuggling routes provided by Huang et al would exclusively contain records of illegal exports of ivory. This is due to the map covering the period of 1990-2008, after the international ivory trade ban had been implemented.⁴³⁹ This era shows that South Africa is the largest exporter of ivory since the ban was implemented. It is likely that until 1994 the Apartheid regime was still complicit in the illicit trade. Without more information on the topic, it could be assumed that the trafficking of ivory from South Africa from the 1990 to 2008 period may have only occurred while the NP was in power from 1990 to 1994. The final map, which covers the period of 2009 to 2017, shows that South Africa is still one of the largest exporters of illegal ivory shipments. This proves that the smuggling of ivory from South Africa did not end with the ousting of the NP but still continues into the present day.

While members of the NP would have no longer been involved in the trafficking of ivory, members of these trafficking syndicates who were not government employees would still be involved in the criminal underworld. Due to the trafficking of ivory, rhino horn and other valuable materials being a secret operation that the NP took part in, it is likely that government officials would primarily have been involved in the administrative aspect of smuggling, rather than the physical movement of valuable materials. Syndicates would primarily have been made up of criminals who were not part of the NP, and so the trafficking of ivory and rhino would have been their main source of income rather than a covert operation that could be abandoned. The data from Huang et al shows that the smuggling of ivory continued to occur after the Apartheid regime ended. The fact that these smuggling routes remained active makes it likely that criminals who were involved with the NP and were familiar with the smuggling routes would be the ones to continue exploiting them for profit. It is not known if these trade routes

⁴³⁷ Julian Rademeyer, *Killing for profit: Exposing the illegal rhino horn trade*. (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012), 84.

⁴³⁸ Wenyang Huang, Huiwen Wang, and Yigang Wei. "Mapping the Illegal International Ivory Trading Network to Identify Key Hubs and Smuggling Routes: Illegal International Ivory Trading Network from 1975 to 2017." *EcoHealth* 17 (2020): 531.

Daniel Stiles. "The ivory trade and elephant conservation." *Environmental Conservation* 31, no. 4 (2004): 309.

⁴³⁹ Wenyang Huang, Huiwen Wang, and Yigang Wei. "Mapping the Illegal International Ivory Trading Network to Identify Key Hubs and Smuggling Routes: Illegal International Ivory Trading Network from 1975 to 2017." *EcoHealth* 17 (2020): 531.

were created by the South African government or if they were making use of previously established smuggling routes, but due to these routes remaining active after most ivory trading was stopped in 1989, it is likely that these trade routes have been strengthened by having had the backing of government resources.

These smuggling routes are essential to modern poaching syndicates. In order for ivory and rhino horn to be sold, it has to reach its market destination. Without access to safe and reliable means to transport ivory and rhino horn from southern Africa to southeast Asia, the syndicates operating out of Vietnam and China would lose a lucrative form of revenue. The trafficking activities of the South African government from 1965 to 1994 have helped to ensure that Asian-based syndicates have a more secure way to conduct operations in South Africa. This would mean that the Apartheid regime has indirectly aided in creating the current poaching crisis in southern Africa, as they have allowed criminals to have access to established and tested trade routes with which to smuggle ivory and rhino horn that has been taken from poached animals.

Conclusion

The data provided by CITES confirms that the ivory (and by extension rhino horn) trafficking routes which were active during the Apartheid regime remain in use to the present day. This applies in particular to the trade routes that connect South Africa and southeast Asia. Furthermore, the data indicates that the reduction in ivory imports in southeast Asia was partially a result of a lack of supply from South Africa, rather than being due to importers complying with international law. Demand for animal products in southeast Asia, such as ivory and rhino horn, increased in proportion to their availability. The influx of animal materials that the South African government enabled would have contributed towards this increase in demand. While ivory and rhino horn traders were able to sustain their business models for roughly 15 years using stockpiles of previously imported animal products, these materials would eventually be depleted, forcing traders to find a new supply of stock. The current ivory and rhino horn market in Asia has a direct effect upon South Africa, due to the increased poaching that the market incentivises. The need for new products to replace the dwindling supplies means that poaching syndicates would need to become more active to keep their businesses afloat. The continued use of smuggling routes from South Africa while smuggling channels from other areas of Africa were mostly abandoned shows that the Apartheid regimes involvement in smuggling created more resilient trade routes than what was seen on the rest of the continent. In the present, these syndicates focus their efforts on South African wildlife due to high populations of elephants and rhinos present within the country. From the arguments

presented, it can be logically deduced that the smuggling operations initiated by the Apartheid regime bear a degree of responsibility for the current poaching epidemic that exists in South Africa today.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, connections have been established linking the activities of the Apartheid regime to the current poaching crisis in southern Africa. The literature that has been analysed confirms that the National Party was exploiting the resources of destabilised regions via poaching and smuggling in order to secure funding for the Apartheid regime. Members of the National Party also engaged in a lengthy effort to hide their smuggling efforts both from the public and from other government authorities. This involved the redirection of police resources, the intimidation of witnesses and falsifying reports of exports. Much of the animal materials were exported to southeast Asia, and the data examined in this thesis shows that the imports of these materials followed a pattern directly proportional to SADF involvement in Angola and South West Africa. Based on these findings it is apparent that the influx of ivory and rhino horn to southeast Asia, compounded with the growth in Asian economies, helped to create a market demand that outlasted the existence of the Apartheid regime. The evidence examined indicates that the current market demand for ivory and rhino horn is the primary driving force behind the modern poaching epidemic in southern Africa. While the Apartheid regime did not create the demand for these products in southeast Asia, the old regime aided in increasing the availability of materials that have long been viewed as having healing properties. This has contributed to the renewed interest in these materials which in turn threatens South African wildlife. The populations of elephants and rhinos in South Africa, which are some of the largest on the continent, have become a target for Asian-based syndicates in order to meet the demand for ivory and rhino horn. The animal populations that were once spared from the devastation that occurred across the rest of southern Africa are now in danger. The connections between past and present that have been examined in this thesis, indicate that the current threats to South Africa's wildlife are an indirect result of the Apartheid regime's action from 1965 to 1994.

The examination of the period of 1965 to 1994 showed that the South African government was using a variety of methods to both acquire and smuggle ivory and rhino horn. Chapter 2 demonstrates that the Apartheid regime was using its allies such as UNITA and independent poachers to acquire ivory. Ivory was also being collected from refugees fleeing active warzones. By making use of varied and decentralised sources, a continuous supply of ivory and rhino horns could be received without the fear of disruptions. Traffickers who were part of the SADF's administration could abuse their positions to ensure that any poachers who were

apprehended would be released without charge, which granted poachers a limited degree of immunity from prosecution. Infighting within the SADF as a result of the discovery of ivory and rhino horn shipments indicates that the trafficking was not a widely known phenomenon. Most members of the SADF were not involved in the smuggling operations, and many who discovered these operations attempted to stop them. Despite this, the discrepancies in the amount of ivory exported by the Apartheid regime, as outlined in the Kumleben Commission, indicates that the clandestine smuggling operations were very successful. The confusion noted by soldiers and officials who discovered these operations indicates that the trafficking was being conducted by a very small number of essential members, who were strategically selected by the National Party to make trafficking efficient.

The official documentation lists large quantities of ivory being exported by South Africa from 1979-1987. Cross-referencing this data with smuggling routes identified by Huang et al shows that ivory was reaching destinations that were not officially acknowledged by the government. This indicates that the Apartheid regime was laundering ivory through national stockpiles and was exporting to the unlisted nations alongside official trade partners to give an appearance of legitimacy to their ivory trafficking. The selling of rhino horn was internationally banned during the period where South Africa was trafficking animal products. Regardless, evidence examined in this thesis shows that rhino horn was indeed being smuggled through South African logistical channels. Rhino horn was likely being shipped alongside ivory due to both being used in traditional medicine in southeast Asia, and the discovery of rhino horn alongside ivory stockpiles in SADF supply crates. Anecdotal testimony in the Kumleben Commission supports this theory.

The withdrawal of the SADF from Angola in 1988 reduced the Apartheid regime's ability to acquire new animal materials. As mentioned in chapter 2, 1988 was also the year in which China banned the importation of ivory into the country, meaning that ivory traders would only have access to the stockpiles that had been built up from years of importing animal products. They would rely on these stockpiles to remain active in the ivory market. Rademeyer makes reference to Esmond Bradley Martin's prediction that the stockpiles would sustain the market in China for around 15 years. This prediction proved to be very accurate, as precisely 15 years later in 2003, poaching began to reemerge as a concern in southern Africa. Despite the ban in 1988, data from Huang et al shows that the trade in ivory continued at a large scale for at least three more years. This indicates that the SADF withdrawal from Namibia in 1990 was a larger influence in halting the ivory trade in China than the legal banning of the material.

This thesis has discussed in great detail the methods employed by criminal syndicates that operate primarily in South Africa and Vietnam. The varied and intricate ways that these syndicates circumvent conservation efforts reflects the large scale of the ivory and rhino horn poaching industry. As the market for ivory and rhino horn is primarily overseas, South African conservationists and law enforcement are often only able to respond to the actions of poaching syndicates locally, without being able to influence the problem at its source. As a result, conservationists are primarily only able to combat the symptoms of the problem, and not the problem itself. While conservationists are able to provide education in China and Vietnam to explain the importance of wildlife conservation and to dispel the supposed healing properties of ivory and rhino horn, their resources are limited, and they are not able to address the issue on a large scale.

Researching the methods of criminal syndicates has shown the ways in which they are able to adapt and change with time. When the ability to exploit canned hunting to procure rhino horns was removed, syndicates returned to more traditional poaching. Over the years the weaponry employed in poaching has changed to be better suited for felling animals. Military rifles were replaced with commercial hunting rifles, and poisons have been introduced to allow for more silent poaching methods. Night vision equipment is now used, allowing for poachers to operate at any time of the night and day. The information age and the advancement of technology has resulted in cell phones being used by poachers to track animals and to communicate more precisely with the syndicate that is employing them. This shows that one of the consequences of the Apartheid regime's smuggling operations is a network of criminals whose poaching methods are continuously evolving, and whose existence threatens the long-term survival of South Africa's megafauna.

This research has explained the gap in poaching and smuggling from 1994 to 2003. The aforementioned stockpiles helped to create a phase in time where criminal syndicates could meet the market demand for ivory and rhino horn without the need to poach. Huang et al notes that there was a limited amount of trading in ivory between South Africa and southeast Asia during this period. This indicates that ivory and rhino horn that had already been collected was still being exported in small quantities. The literature surrounding SADF involvement in animal product trafficking also indicates that these operations ended with the ousting of the National Party in 1994 and the reconstitution of the SADF and liberation movement's armed wings into the SANDF. Due to the secretive nature of the covert smuggling network within the South African government, and it being made up primarily of NP officials, it is likely that those

involved would have quietly disbanded their operations rather than continue without access to the resources and political power that made the smuggling operations possible. This notion unfortunately cannot be confirmed due to the limitation of the information available.

The evidence discussed in this thesis shows just one of the many ways in which the Apartheid regime is still affecting South Africa in the present day. Partial responsibility for the poaching crisis that threatens the ecology of South Africa can be traced back to the actions of the NP government. In response to the economic sanctions imposed on the regime, the South African government resorted to culling wildlife and involving itself in the black market to help maintain its economy. This study allows for a clearer understanding of how the Apartheid regime bears a degree of responsibility for the poaching crisis not only in South Africa, but also in southern Africa.

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