

# The Role of Communication in Wildlife Conservation

Case Study: Elephant Conservation and the  
Ivory Trade

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## FRAMEWORK

### I. Introduction

The elephant population is half of what it was 40 years ago ("AWF: Conserving Wildlife: Elephants," 2012). Despite attempted bans, restrictions, and conservation campaigns, the illegal trade of ivory is on the rise and conservationists and wildlife lovers fear the animal may be in trouble of extinction if more is not done to stop the illegal poaching of elephants. Governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other conservation groups are looking for new ways to revamp and continue their conservation efforts.

Our research explores these conservation efforts, specifically looking at the role of communication in the conservation of elephants. We first look to the historical context surrounding the illegal poaching of elephants and discover that in the last five years the illegal trade of ivory has increased at a record rate. We then examine the role of NGOs in the conservation of elephants, looking at three different organizations, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the Wildlife Conservation Network (WCN) and the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF). We examine and analyze the communication strategies and campaigns of these organizations and how they fit into larger networks of the conservation effort. Next, we examine the role of the U.S. government in wildlife conservation. We find that the U.S. Department of State has been developing wildlife conservation policy since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, after Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton's visit to Africa in 2012, she decided to revamp the conservation efforts and has since launched new initiatives in effort to combat illegal trafficking and generate greater awareness about the conservation of wildlife. The U.S. Department of State is

also working worldwide on educating citizens of high consuming countries about the consequences of buying illegal animal products. And finally, the U.S. Department of State is training enforcement officials within Africa and Asia to create better enforcement of laws in highly trafficked areas. Throughout our research we highlight specific policies and analyze the role the U.S. government is playing in wildlife conservation. We also analyze the role of communication in the conservation of elephants using communication theories including, Network Theory and the “CNN Effect.” We find that there are two competing networks within the ivory trade, the network of illegal suppliers and consumers and the network of conservationist. We also find that the media can and has had a large impact on the conservation efforts, by highlighting and exposing the illegal trade, especially in recent years.

By examining the aforementioned elements in greater detail we are able to recommend that NGOs, as well as government agencies must do a better job at working on the issue collaboratively instead of competing with one another. We also recommend that NGOs and governments exploit the media in efforts to bring greater awareness and education surrounding the issue, ending the demand side of the ivory trade. Finally, we recommend that conservation education and awareness efforts must be centered on areas like China and Japan where ivory consumption is highest.

## **II. The Historical Context of the Ivory Trade**

The history of the ivory trade traces back to before explorers set foot in Africa. The first explorers who did reach the continent documented the trade in their journals. Some historians believe that the trade (among other things) is what first brought these

explorers to the African continent. Tribes on the continent found the trade to be a lucrative business and took advantage of it (Beachey 1967). When Marco Polo (1968) wrote about the East African coast in his journals in the thirteenth century he wrote, “they have elephants in plenty and drive a brisk trade in tusks” (p. 276). The ivory of East Africa was very popular throughout Europe beginning in the sixteenth century. African ivory was desirable because it was softer than that of Asia, which meant it was easier to carve and it was considerably cheaper. Christians used the ivory for religious purposes and for novelties (and they continue to do so today). In the nineteenth century ivory demands grew exponentially. Ivory exports topped that of slave exports.

Throughout the nineteenth century demand from America and Europe increased and by the twentieth century, demand was so high that experts and wildlife conservationists began to worry about the possibility of extinction of the elephant due to the ivory trade. According to the WWF, the number of African elephants was between three and five million in the 1930s and 1940s. However, by the 1980s, up to 80 percent of African elephant herds were gone in certain regions of Africa. WWF estimates that in the 1980s, about 100,000 elephants were being killed per year. In Kenya, alone, the population of elephants dropped by 85 percent between 1973 and 1989 (“WWF - African elephants,” 2012). The problem was so detrimental that in 1989, conservationists and environmentalists called for an international ban on ivory.

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was established in 1975 as a result of the growing concern over endangered wildlife. CITES is an international agreement between 177 countries with a mission “to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does

not threaten their survival” (“What is CITES?,” 2012). At the 7<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (Washington) in 1989, the 117 delegations of CITES approved an international ban on the ivory trade and other elephant products to CITES affiliated countries. CITES declared that the African elephant was threatened. The ban on ivory from the Asian elephant had already taken effect in 1975 (“STOP Ivory Trade,” 2012).

The ban on African ivory had mixed reviews throughout the world. Many, including most countries belonging to CITES, saw the ban as a great success. After 1989, the price for raw ivory significantly dropped. Demand also significantly dropped because of the negative coverage by the media surrounding the consumption of ivory. Also, big ivory consumer countries (China and Japan) grew large stockpiles in anticipation of the ban so they were able to feed the need within their populations. According to most, the ban was a great success in combating the killing of elephants for their ivory. However, others argued that the success from the ban was short lived.

Ivory trade researchers, Esmond Martin and Daniel Stiles, found that by the mid-1990s, the demand for ivory was on the rise in both Africa and Asia. Martin and Stiles found the growing demand to have resulted from a combination of different factors. First, economic development started to deplete the stockpiles that the Asian markets were feeding their demand with after the ban went into effect. Second, there was a large difference between African and Asian ivory prices, which drove more poachers to Africa. Martin and Stiles concluded that the ban was actually driving the increase in the illegal market in Africa (2012).

In 1997 (and again in 2007), after lobbying by delegations from Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia and South Africa, the ivory trade was opened back up for these

countries under certain conditions. At the time, the aforementioned countries argued that there were several reasons to reopen the trade. These included (but were not limited to), a growing population of elephants, improved management systems of the sale of ivory, and a market in Japan for buying the ivory. While the delegations represented within CITES could not agree on the extent to open the trade, African elephants were placed on a different level of CITES' endangered species classification (elephants were moved to Appendix II), which allowed for these countries to sell their ivory stockpiles that they had accumulated during seizures due to illegal trade. The profits were required to go to the conservation of elephants. A similar lifting of the ban took place in 2007 (Stiles, 2012). The sale of African ivory has continued to be a hot topic for debate and today many argue that the ban itself has driven illegal activity, while others argue for a more complete ban to be enacted again.

### **III. The Current Ivory Trade**

The ivory trade has increased substantially since 2006 ("2011: "Annus horribilis" for African Elephants, says TRAFFIC", 2011). According to TRAFFIC, a wildlife trade-monitoring network, 2011 produced a record number of illegal ivory trade seizures. Tom Milliken, TRAFFIC's elephant expert stated in an article published by TRAFFIC, "In 23 years of compiling ivory seizure data for ETIS, this is the worst year ever for large ivory seizures—2011 has truly been a horrible year for elephants" ("2011: "Annus horribilis" for African Elephants, says TRAFFIC", 2011). Milliken who heads the ETIS (The Elephant Trade Information System), an illegal ivory trade monitoring system under TRAFFIC in coordination with CITES, found that elephants are poached in Africa and then the ivory is transported to Asia.

**Large-scale ivory seizures, 2001-2011**

| <b>Year</b> | <b>No. of Large-scale Seizures</b> | <b>Wt of Large-scale Ivory Seizures (kg)</b> |
|-------------|------------------------------------|--|
| 2001        | 5                                  | 7,062  |
| 2002        | 6                                  | 19,539                                       |
| 2003        | 3                                  | 4,421  |
| 2004        | 2                                  | 2,750  |
| 2005        | 2                                  | 4,742  |
| 2006        | 6                                  | 16,442                                       |
| 2007        | 2                                  | 2,152  |
| 2008        | 0                                  | -  |
| 2009        | 8                                  | 19,314                                       |
| 2010        | 6                                  | 9,798  |
| 2011        | 13                                 | 23,676*                                      |
|             |                                    | * estimated, provisional figure              |
|             | <b>TOTAL</b>                       | <b>109,898</b>                               |

("2011: "Annus horribilis" for African Elephants, says TRAFFIC", 2011)

Research done throughout 2011 and 2012 provided even more evidence of the record increase of the poaching of elephants. According to WWF, “The rise in levels of illegal killing and the dynamics surrounding it are worrying, not only for small and fragmented elephant populations that could face extirpation, but also for previously secure large populations” (“Record poaching drives African elephants into decline,” 2012). In 2012, hundreds of elephants were killed in Bouba N’Djida National Park in Cameroon. Articles on the incident reported that it is likely that at least half the population of elephants within the park was killed. This incident has sparked international attention and an international call for action, as we will explore later in our research.

The demand for the ivory trade mostly comes from Asian countries. In 2011, China overtook Japan as the largest ivory consumer country in the world, consuming more than 75 percent of the world’s ivory. Since 2006, the price for ivory in China has



tripled (\$750 a kilogram in 2011), which drives consumers to the continent of Africa to buy cheap ivory and smuggle it into the country, driving the illegal trade. Because the trade is largely illegal, it is hard to accurately estimate the extent of consumers and illegal trade in both China and Japan, however from 2009 to June 2011, China seized more than 6,500 kilograms of illegal ivory (Wexler, 2011).

Elephant poaching and the ivory trade were featured in National Geographic's October 2012 edition. The feature article, "Ivory Worship," explored the demand for ivory from religious institutions, namely the Catholic Church, who, in certain parts of the world, consider the material a sacred part of their worship ceremonies. The article cites the Philippines as a major consumer of ivory, where it is used to make statues and figurines of Christian figures and symbols. The writer, Byran Christy, finds that one can easily buy ivory in the Vatican, even having it blessed by a priest before taking it home. Because, the Vatican is not a part of CITES, it is not subject to the ban put in place on the ivory trade. However, the main consumers of ivory, both legally and illegally, are Asian countries, particularly China and Japan. While institutions such as CITES view the legal ivory trade as a combatant against smugglers and the illegal trade, Christy found that the trade in China may be driving illegal poaching and trade. According to Christy's article, poachers were able to buy ivory at very low prices in Africa; however, the Chinese government sustainably increased the price within China. This gives fuel for illegal poachers, looking to make a big profit, especially if they sell it for lower prices than that of the government (Christy, 2012). What this shows is that despite efforts by CITES' member countries to allow for a freer trade of ivory which would in theory shut down the

market for illegal poachers, giving CITES greater control over the industry, the illegal killing of elephants and the trade of ivory is continuing to increase at a record pace.

#### **IV. Conservation Efforts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.**

As the problem of the illegal ivory trade persists and the number of elephants in the world continues to decrease, conservation efforts have reached new heights. The U.S. government has launched a new wildlife conservation plan to work with other governments and nongovernment organizations in a combined effort to raise awareness and combat wildlife trafficking throughout the world. Organizations like WWF and the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), as well as many other NGOs throughout the world have launched new campaigns to focus even more so on elephant conservation and putting an end to the ivory trade. The media too have placed more focus on the ivory trade. In addition to the National Geographic featured article about the trade in the October 2012 edition, other media organizations have also joined in exposing the growth of the illegal trade.

We will explore these elements throughout our research, calling upon communication theories to help explain and make recommendations about the role of communication in wildlife conservation.

### **THE ROLE OF NGOs**

#### **I. Background**

In studying the communication strategy and approach of wildlife conservation organizations, partnerships and networks stands out as the key elements for effective

outreach and development. Each of the organizations is a network that acts as part of a larger network to accomplish wildlife conservation work. Manuel Castells (2009) defines a network “by the program that assigns the networks its goals and its rules of performance” (p. 20). Each organization is a social actor with a set of values and interests that interacts with other social actors with the same goals to assist in preserving wildlife. Internet, satellite and other technological advancements have assisted in globalizing these networks and helping to create new effective strategies for wildlife conservation. The power of globalization as “network power,” lies in their ability to mutually exchange ideas and program strategy. While networks and key partners play a part in the ultimate shared goal of conservation organizations, different organizations conduct program work differently based on the size and influence established by each organization. Castells notes that based on communication ability, networks cooperate or compete with one another (p. 20). Although as AWF notes, competition does arise between the top executive leadership of each organization who all want their particular organization to succeed above the others, on regional and local levels the strategic participation of each organization is used to effectively protect these animals and stop poaching. As WCN notes, with the rise of ivory poaching, collaboration has become even more essential to saving wild elephant and rhinoceros populations. This section of research will examine WWF, WCN and AWF, observing the scope of program development based on the strength and extent of each organization’s network. It will determine how these transnational actors use communication and program strategy to influence government and perceptions of wildlife.

## **II. NGO Case Studies**

### **A. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)**

WWF, is a global organization with more than 1300 ongoing global conservation projects. ("WWF - History, People, Operations," 2012). It is one of the largest conservation organizations with about 2500 full time employees. As part of its mission to conserve 15 of the world's most important natural places and protect nature by 2020, it works in the field and with government to protect endangered species. The organization notes that the majority of its work would not be accomplished without partnerships. WWF breaks its partnerships off into three categories: corporate, humanitarian and marketing. In working with businesses, WWF works to help companies minimize their ecological footprint and use sustainable business solutions. The organization also has smaller NGOs administer projects on-the-ground, as well as sponsors that assist in promoting and raising awareness to specific causes.

The WWF approach to elephant conservation involves reducing conflict between elephants and local communities. Elephants are often killed because they wander into the fields of the local community, killing their crops and profit. The organization assists in training local wildlife managers and communities to create a "flying squad" that propels wild elephants away from farms and back into their natural environment. ("WWF – African Elephant Programme," 2012). WWF works with wildlife managers and helps them utilize technology to protect their crops and create elephant monitoring techniques. The goal is to provide elephants with enough space for their seasonal movements while at the same time protecting the agricultural economy of the local community. Another

approach WWF uses in Kenya and Namibia, is to create a wildlife tourism sector that allows for communities and elephants to live together side-by-side.

In response to elephant poaching, WWF has partnered with the government in Mozambique to create the Quirimbas National Park. This park encompasses more than 2300 square miles of miombo woodland for elephant preservation. Park guards are trained to thwart the efforts of poachers. WWF also conducts training for staff in Lao, Cambodia and Vietnam to assist in protecting elephants. Together with Fauna and Flora International, WWF developed a national elephant action plan that was adopted by the Vietnamese government. WWF also partners with international wildlife monitoring network TRAFFIC in helping to decrease major threats from the illegal ivory trade.

**a. WWF Communication Outreach:**

Regional offices work on-the-ground to implement various training and protection projects WWF conducts. These field officers in each location are also the advocates who speak to local governments and communities. On a wider scale, WWF's large size assists in the construction of its communication strategy. Of the three organizations studied, WWF's website demonstrates the most interactive and user-friendly content and information. As such the communication focus of the main office appears to be in educating the Western public about wildlife issues and garnering Western support. Under the media relation's page on its website, WWF even has a separate press contact for emergency calls. Its media relation's page is comprised of conservation news and stories that are updated as much as twice a day. WWF's website has an active social media component including the "donate a tweet a day" feature that allows supporters to

retweet one of WWF's constructed outreach tweets. A Facebook campaign cosponsored with TRAFFIC, keeps supporters updated on all of WWF's developments.

In reaching a Western audience and gaining support, WWF wants them to make a difference by donating, volunteering and encouraging others to live green. WWF also wants people to sign petitions, pledges and send emails as a way show a surplus of support for their causes that will lead to additional pressure on government and decision makers' actions concerning wildlife.

### **B. Wildlife Conservation Network (WCN)**

Based in California, WCN is a “global network of individual conservationists who are working on the ground with species.” (Tracy Elsen, WCN Marketing & Communications Manager, personal communication, Nov. 2012) The organization acts as a venture capitalist for entrepreneurial conservationists who need donor funding. It works within its network to accomplish its goals. The group’s extensive network includes wildlife groups, corporate partners and media groups. Each partner has its own communication and marketing strategy, which WCN works to support. In working to protect elephants, Wildlife Conservation Network partners with WildAid and Save the Elephants (STE). STE is a non-profit founded by Dr. Iain Douglas-Hamilton. Dr. Hamilton is credited with producing groundbreaking research on his study of elephant behavior in Tanzania. His work in the 1960s helped to raise support for more elephant research and conservation. In his current attempts to protect wild elephant populations, Dr. Hamilton regularly speaks with the media, this year he testified in front of Congress and in partnership with WildAid, hosted Chinese former basketball star Yao Ming at his elephant camp in Kenya in 2012. . ("AP – Ex-NBA Star Yao in Kenya for Poaching

Awareness," 2012). Unlike its partner, although WCN recognizes the importance of government outreach, it focuses its communication strategy on donor outreach. The group works to support their partners with "fundraising, marketing, strategic planning, human resources." (Tracy Elsen, personal communication, Nov. 2012) In addition, WCN is working to strengthen the ties between San Francisco-based donors and conservationists. The annual Wildlife Expo, which brings together over 800 people with more than 20 speakers and exhibits, is essential to strengthening those partnerships.

Through its various partners, WCN works on the ground to combat wildlife trafficking. Local projects often incorporate "alternative income programs," that hire local residents. These programs subsequently transform the perspective of wild animals from destructive to a source of economic empowerment. In addition, programs incorporate children through educational outreach. Local communications strategies have community culture and outreach deeply embedded. Many of our programs have alternative income programs, such as ecotourism in the Himalayas program created by Snow Leopard Conservancy, or ranger programs such as those created by Niassa Lion Project that employ local people, that transform the perception of these animals from destructive to animals that create local economic opportunities. Children are also an important part of education; many of our programs include school outreach.

WCN creates local public spheres through the Snow Leopard Conservancy's PhotoVoice project. This provides adults and children with cameras to take photographs of the most important things in their life, fostering dialogue and inspiring conservation solutions. Niassa Lion Project each year hosts Lion Days, a day of fun and celebration focused around the lion. Grevy's Zebra Trust employs local Samburu warriors to monitor

the zebra herds and collect data, and other warriors become Ambassadors, providing security for the zebras. Cheetah Conservation Botswana works with local farmers on stock management techniques as well as training of livestock guarding dogs. All of this community outreach is a key part of not just the communications strategies of these partners, but their full conservation strategies, as well. WCN recognizes the importance of communicating understanding to the communities it works in. In order to assist endangered species, a two-way conversation must be established to protect animals and reduce wildlife death while still respecting and valuing local communities.

**b. WCN Communication Outreach:**

WCN focuses its communication efforts on connecting donors with entrepreneurial wildlife conservation groups that need funding. This communication outreach works to serve its main purpose as a venture capitalist or a hub that inspires innovation in protecting wildlife. Its team is much smaller than WWF and its website is much less interactive. The primary purpose of the website is to introduce WCN and highlight the wildlife conservation groups it strives to support. WCN's conservation entrepreneurs work on the ground to collaborate with local communities and target the needs in the community. They then work to balance the needs of local people with local endangered species.

**C. African Wildlife Foundation (AWF)**

AWF focuses its conservation efforts specifically in 14 African countries and has a staff of more than 120. It is a well-known and established organization in Kenya, with little name recognition elsewhere. Staff members have direct contact with wildlife park workers who frequently spot poachers attempting to steal ivory. In aligning with its goal



to empower both African people and wildlife, AWF contributes educational and development support in the countries it works in, including educating and training for future African conservationists and scientists. Similar to WWF, AWF also works with local communities in viewing elephant protection as economically beneficial rather than viewing elephants as a nuisance. Its plan includes ecotourism, agricultural production and marketing and a partnership with Starbucks that brings African coffee to the global market.

AWF assists in elephant conservation through research, including a wildlife census in the Kilimanjaro Heartland. The Zambezi Heartland, located in Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe, is home to one of the largest elephant populations in Africa. Starting with a research approach, AWF completed the first coordinated cross-country aerial survey of the area and counted all large herbivores. As a result of their efforts, governments in all three of the Zambezi heartland countries collaborated on a Regional Elephant Management Plan, which led to trans-boundary law enforcement.

Contrasting from the WCN, AWF's key partners are government organizations including USAID, the Royal Netherlands and several other European nations. In fact, the majority of AWF's funding comes from government. (Mayu Mishina, AWF Senior Writer and Publications Manager, personal communication, Nov. 2012) In addition, conservation foundations in Europe and several US zoos are also heavy supporters of AWF's work. Organizations that partner with AWF include Swedish Post Co, the Lottery Foundation, the Tiffany Foundation, the Mava Foundation and Endangered Species Chocolate.

**c. AWF Communication Outreach:**

Although AWF has no formal written communication strategy, its base in Nairobi, Kenya frames its communications outreach. (Mayu Mishina, AWF Senior Writer and Publications Manager, personal communication, Nov. 2012) Nairobi's staff is about 80 percent African, which allows for an easier communication with the local community. The goal is to demonstrate to the community that their commitment to African wildlife conservation comes from their own community, and is not solely propelled by Western faces and ideals. AWF is concentrated in Africa and so its key partnerships are with African governments, the US State Department as well as European governments and organizations. It also works with key international organizations such as the African Development Bank and the World Bank. AWF also recognizes that the demand focus is in Asia and has visited China and other countries to form partnerships there as well.

**III. The "CNN Effect" as it relates to NGOs**

One of the more dominant ways these conservation organizations influence government and popular opinion to bolster support for their goals is through media. As Elizabeth Hanson observes, media coverage often creates additional pressure on government to act on a given situation (p. 102). Recent international reporting on wildlife conservation conveys a message of severe vulnerability of elephants and rhinos worldwide due to illegal ivory trade and rhino horn market. AWF attributes the rise in foreign policy attention to large elephant deaths in Northern Cameroon. Prior to the mass

killings in Bouba N'Djida National Park, less than 600 elephants were believed to live in the park. Elephants in northern Cameroon account for 80 percent of the total savanna elephants in Central Africa. WWF and TRAFFIC believe that the poachers were Arabic speakers from Sudan aiming to transport the ivory to Asia. In response to the killings, the Cameroonian military sent 100 soldiers into the park to protect the remaining animals from poachers. A few weeks after the military action, 12 suspected poachers were arrested and 14 elephant tusks were confiscated. France News 24 reports that the WWF had warned the government of the growing concern before the attacks.

Aside from this singular tragic incident, WCN observes media attention surrounding ivory trafficking has been driven by reports in *Vanity Fair*, the *New York Times* and the *National Geographic*. These reports have added layers onto the discussion, examining ties between the ivory trade and religion or to African warlords. Articles in the *Economist* and NPR have also been noted as well as documentaries on BBC and Discovery. Coverage in local papers in Kenya, Tanzania and other countries has grown as well. Celebrity support has also helped to spur media attention. After Yao Ming visited Kenya, he blogged about his trip in Chinese, which earned one million readers on his blog in a week. His actions address the demand-side in dealing with ivory trafficking and resulted in public service announcements in China as well as a possible documentary. In the case of the elephants deaths in Cameroon, increased pressure from conservation organizations and news reports assisted in eventual government action. Although increased action has resulted in face of media reports, can be argued efforts of these transnational networks themselves pushing their agenda been driving force to government action, rather than media itself. (Livingston, 2011). Worldwide the media is still an

acquiescent power to state power. As Christy observes, ivory trafficking is a problem in countries where media is controlled by the government. As a result, reporting on illegal wildlife trafficking is left to foreign news outlets and local news sources can only refer to these stories (Bryan Christy, personal communication, Dec. 2012). In many countries where ivory trafficking is a problem (and much wildlife crime) the domestic media is government controlled. While these news organizations may be limited, even their limited attempts can have a positive impact on government policy. Christy's article in National Geographic allowed Malaysian news sources to refer to the issue which led to new legislation in Malaysia as well as the arrest of Kingpin Anson Wong and the temporary shutdown of his business. In the U.S., as wildlife conservation issues surface in the media, visible foreign policy action also ensues.

## **THE ROLE OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT**

### **I. Background**

The U.S. Department of State has been developing wildlife conservation policy since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1916, then-Secretary of State Robert Lansing signed with his British counterpart (representing Canada) a treaty to protect birds that migrate between the United States and Canada. (Hormatz, 2012) This was the first of many such treaties adopted by the United States and other nations with the understanding that there is a global responsibility and need to protect our planet's wildlife. These treaties were part of larger policy developed to combat diminishing numbers of wildlife and the escalating demand for their products. In 1974, Congress established the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs at the U.S. Department of State in

1974. This bureau works to advance U.S. foreign policy goals in areas such as climate change, renewable energy, science and technology, and oceans policy to name a few. (“OES,” n.d.) OES, in partnership with other Department bureaus, is in charge of implementing the Department’s four-part strategy –diplomatic outreach, public diplomacy, partnerships, and training and enforcement. (Department of State, 2012)

## **II. CITES Treaty and Coalitions**

The CITES treaty was the Department’s first effort in placing a greater emphasis on wildlife conservation. Although CITES intended to regulate international trade by establishing an ivory permit system for each country, the convention does not regulate domestic law and only provides a framework. As a result, permits are often falsified and countries fail to regulate their domestic trade. (Gaush, 2012)

With elephant populations decreasing despite CITES efforts, the Department of State wanted to make headway on addressing the problem, and implement a strategy that would combat the illicit trade of wildlife. This led to the development of a new coalition. (Gaush, 2012) In 2005, the U.S. Department of State created the Coalition against Wildlife Trafficking or CAWT. The coalition consists of U.S. Government agencies, other governments, and private sector partners. It aims to bring the public and private sectors together to accomplish three goals –improving wildlife enforcement; reducing consumer demand; and catalyzing high-level political will to fight illegal trade in wildlife. (CAWT. n.d.) CAWT was meant to serve as a way for NGOs and governments and less traditional stakeholders like air and cruise line companies to discuss partnerships and share information on poachers and illicit traders.

### **III. Why Wildlife Conservation?**

In August 2012, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton travelled to Africa to emphasize U.S. policy commitments to strengthen democratic institutions, spur economic growth, advance peace and security as well as promote opportunity and development for all citizens. She visited Senegal, South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, and Malawi. During her various meetings with heads of state, she consistently heard about their concerns with wildlife trafficking and the issues this crime was posing to their nations. The leaders, specifically those from Kenya, urged the Secretary to take action. Upon her return to the United States, Clinton called for a Department-wide initiative calling for action against wildlife trafficking. (Department of State, 2012)

### **IV. Policy**

#### **A. Department-wide Initiative on Combating Wildlife Trafficking**

The Department's initiative on combating wildlife trafficking is based on four pillars— diplomatic outreach, public diplomacy, training, and partnerships. The United States' efforts with foreign governments, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector seek to reduce demand and strengthen wildlife and marine conservation, as well as related enforcement and institutional capabilities. (State Department, 2012)

In regards to diplomatic outreach, the United States is amplifying existing efforts in CITES, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), as well as promoting practical application of the UN Convention against Corruption and the UN

Convention against Transnational Organized Crime to combat wildlife trafficking. They are also working with INTERPOL, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Customs Organization, and the World Bank in the fight against wildlife crime. (State Department, 2012)

In coordination with these efforts, the Department is increasing training and law enforcement initiatives. In July 2011, the White House released the President's National Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime and Converging Threats to National Security; this highlighted environmental crimes as being among the top five most lucrative criminal activities. (White House, 2011) To combat this crime, the Department of State has formed regional wildlife enforcement networks in Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Central America. And, in April, the U.S. embassies in Gabon and the Central African Republic -- in partnership with the Government of Gabon -- brought together law enforcement, government officials, and conservations to share best practices to curb illicit wildlife trafficking. (State Department, 2012)

### **B. Public Diplomacy**

Public diplomacy efforts are at the center of the Department's wildlife initiative. In his article, Public Diplomacy and Soft Power, Joseph Nye (2008) states governments must influence others through attraction rather than coercion through the power of seduction. Diplomats must employ smart power and build long term relationships with other governments, NGOs, and foreign publics. This is what the Department's wildlife campaign seeks to do.

On December 4, 2012, the Department continued to build public awareness around trafficking by marking it Wildlife Conservation Day with events at embassies and

consulates around the world. (Department of State, 2012) Secretary Clinton declared December 4 as Wildlife Conservation Day. Although not an official day, the Secretary felt it was important to have a day focused on the illicit trade of wildlife and its consequences. The Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Tara Sonenshine has led the Department's efforts in collaboration with the Bureau of International Information Programs. Through public diplomacy programming, the Department seeks to raise awareness among domestic and international publics about the ramifications of wildlife trafficking.

Global information campaigns disseminate messages far and wide and that is achieved through the production of materials targeted to different groups. With this in mind, the Department created a full spectrum of materials to address the actions of the multiple actors involved in the illicit wildlife trade. The objective of the wildlife campaign is to cut the demand of wildlife products, thus diminishing the supply side. Both sides need to fully comprehend the negative consequences of their actions. In Asia, the Department is leveraging audiences to educate them on the ills of buying illicit wildlife goods. While in Africa, audiences are being taught about the importance of preserving wildlife such as elephants, and its crucial ties to their cultural heritage.

By providing resources like informative articles, impacting images, and topline messages the Department hopes to empower U.S. missions abroad, foreign governments, and NGOs to engage in sustainable conversations with the actors driving the trade. Those on the ground understand the cultural reasons driving the trade and the points that will resonate with the primary groups involved. The goal is that these conversations will be the first step in eliminating the illicit wildlife trade.



Wildlife Conservation Day was a great starting point for discussions to take place. However, the State Department needs to ensure that anti-trafficking efforts do not die down. The campaign was created as a one-day campaign and now it needs to be expanded to a longer-term campaign. Anti-trafficking will always be a policy issue for the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, but it will not always be included in public diplomacy programming. For this reason, the campaign needs to be expanded to a year-long campaign in order to have the greatest effect possible.

In addition to engaging in conversations abroad, the Department has been leveraging the influence of celebrities such as Jeff Corwin to program domestically. Under Secretary Sonenshine hosted Jeff Corwin as a speaker at the Department of State to speak with employees and university students about wildlife conservation. In addition, Secretary Clinton recorded video remarks that were shared worldwide with more than 40,000 YouTube views (State Dept., 2012).

Senior State Department officials have also mobilized social media and online audiences on wildlife and marine conservation and the growing wildlife trafficking threat. The Department's Our Planet Facebook Page, with over two million followers, has been conducting an endangered species series highlighting various animals at the brink of extinction. ("Our Planet," 2012) Also, senior officials such as Under Secretary Hormats have written multiple blogs on wildlife trafficking and its effects on the Department's official blog, DipNote. (DipNote, 2012) These blogs have been reposted on sites like Huffington Post, allowing for further amplification of the information. Going beyond social media, in spring 2013, the State Department will host a group of African national

park and wildlife official, field agents, and NGO leaders as part of an International Visitor Leadership Program exchange that will serve as a means to share best practices and lessons learned. (State Department, 2012)

Public diplomacy efforts allow the Department to reach beyond the conservation community. By engaging with foreign publics, the Department has helped fight the serious crimes of wildlife trafficking. It has funded public service announcements and other public awareness activities to reduce demand for illegal wildlife products, such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's "Buyer Beware" exhibit at Logan International Airport. (Department of State, 2012) The Department of State and its missions abroad play a crucial role by educating publics and encouraging host governments to improve laws and institute tougher penalties.

## **V. Partnerships**

The Department combats illegal trafficking through partnerships such as regional networks and the World Bank's Global Tiger Initiative. These networks play a key role in tackling cross-border wildlife crime. Networks allow governments to coordinate responses by sharing information and best practices. Communication through networks allows the Department to reach beyond the conservation community. By working developing different partnerships, the Department is able to mobilize groups for increased conservation efforts.

On November 8, Secretary Clinton hosted a high-level event stressing the importance of stemming the booming illicit global trade in wildlife. She spoke to an audience of foreign ambassadors, government officials, conservationist, and scientists.

There were many non-governmental organizations present as well. The list included WWF, TRAFFIC, and AWF among others. At this meeting, the Secretary announced a new strategy for addressing the growing problem of wildlife trafficking. (State Department, 2012).

Secretary Clinton called for a global system of regional wildlife environment networks to improve communication and strengthen response actions. The Department is looking to establish networks in Central Africa, the Horn of Africa, and Central and West Asia. USAID has invested \$17 million since 2005 to support enforcement networks in Africa and Asia; and the United States has provided more than \$7 million since 2005 to support wildlife conservation in Central America and the Dominican Republic, including funding for the Central American Wildlife Enforcement Network (CAWEN). (State Department, 2012).

The Department also supports the expansion and strengthening of existing partnerships, such as the Coalition Against Wildlife Trafficking (CAWT), to engage governments, civil society, and the private sector to combat wildlife crime. They are also working with the transportation industry, NGO's, and relevant organizations to develop best practices to prevent illegal transport of wildlife and wildlife products. The Department also partners with the Smithsonian Institution on programs including biological research, community engagement in conservation, and endangered wildlife translocation.

Wildlife crime is a global problem, and solutions are possible only through the combined efforts of governments, NGOs, the private sector and concerned citizens. The Department of State will continue to mobilize these groups to end the trafficking. By

coordinating more partnership meetings, providing more funding and forming greater networks, the Department of State will continue to amplify their engagement and efforts against the illicit trade of wildlife trafficking.

## ASSESSMENT

### I. Analysis

The illegal ivory trade takes place on a vast global market, moving across thousands of miles and exchanging thousands of hands. It forms a global network from Central Africa to East Asia. The efforts to end the slaughter and exploitation of African elephants for ivory creates a second network that competes with the illegal ivory trade network. However, where the ivory trade is bound by strong links between the nodes within the network, the NGOs and government agencies fighting the trade find themselves competing not only against the ivory trade, but with one another.

The illicit nature of the ivory trade is underscored by the strong cultural and social bonds, which drive it. Manuel Castells (2009) describes, where cultures linked in network society are heterogenous, “the common culture of the global network society is a culture of protocols of communication enabling communication between different cultures on the basis not of shared values but of the shared value of communication” (p. 38). The demand for ivory varies from culture to culture, but the demand itself is what binds the network together. Bryan Christy’s (2012) investigative report on the ivory trade noted several expressions of the communications value in the ivory trade, including the tricks Filipino smugglers use to hide their illegal ivory and how to craft ivory to make it more easily smuggled (“Ivory”). Rather than being driven by cultural values themselves, the

ivory trade network's nodes are connected by the communication of those values, which in turn perpetuate the values themselves.

Finding a way to penetrate the ivory trade's network must begin with an examination of both relationships within the trade and current efforts to curb the trade. Amelia Arsenault (2011) puts forth a theory of network analysis, where networks are understood through the relationships between nodes of a network rather than the nodes themselves (p. 14). The structure of the network is determined by the relationships between nodes and the constraints on relationships therein. Arsenault also draws upon Arquilla and Ronfeldt's "netwars" to highlight the necessity of approaching a rival network with network-based tactics rather than a hierarchical strategy (p. 15). Based on Arsenault's posits, the NGOs and government programs fighting the ivory trade must target the lines of communication binding the nodes of the network together, namely the shared value of ivory.

## **II. Recommendations**

The NGOs described above all have the same goal: to stop the poaching of elephants and end the trade of ivory. However, the means to which these organizations reach these ends varies between them. The WWF focuses on government outreach while the WCN promotes partnerships between donors and conservationists, and the AWF obviously centers its efforts in Africa. The base values shared between them bind them as a network, but the methods in which they communicate those values keep the structure of their network weak and even puts them in competition with one another. The wide array of organizations battling elephant poaching face a network where the underlying

values and communication of values is deeply engrained. By focusing their efforts and expanding the ties of communication between one another, the NGOs will be better equipped to disrupt the ivory trade's network.

Additionally, NGOs and state governments must be willing and able to exploit the so-called "CNN Effect" (Hanson, 2008, p. 102). The media's ability to broadcast information and even help to reshape values across networks cannot be underestimated. The "CNN Effect" describes the reaction of state governments to media coverage of an event that is otherwise not addressed by the state, at least in terms of visible coverage. While Elizabeth Hanson points out that the "CNN Effect" is "too easy to knock down" (p. 108) and lacks substantive evidence to prove as a sure course of action, the most recent coverage on elephant poaching in the media, as demonstrated by articles in *National Geographic*, the *New York Times* and other mainstream media outlets, appeared not long before the U.S. State Department announced initiatives to fight the ivory trade, as cited above.

The correlation may not constitute a "CNN effect," but it does raise an interesting parallel between media coverage and policy implementation. According to Castells (2009), power and network-power especially depends on "the ability to constitute networks" and "the ability to connect and ensure the cooperation of different networks by sharing common goals and resources" (p. 45). In this case, the power to fight the proliferation of ivory and elephant poaching comes from the capability of the network of government agencies and NGOs to use the media to reshape the underlying values of the network. Governments must use the established networks of the media to augment their own in this fight.

One way in particular to exploit the media in this regard is to employ well-known media figures to fight on the behalf of the cause. Castells (2009) cites celebrities and entertainment media as a viable venue for the application of network power given the gross consumption of entertainment media by the general public (p. 328). For the anti-poaching network, one of the most high-profile figures to join their cause is Yao Ming, the Chinese basketball player. Ming traveled to Kenya as a WildAid ambassador, touring the country and blogging about the impact of wildlife poaching (<http://yaomingblog.com/>). Ming's involvement is significant because of the large role China plays in the ivory trade, currently standing as the world's foremost consumer of illegal ivory. As one of China's biggest celebrities and a global celebrity in his own right, Ming is in a unique position to influence the formation of values given his celebrity is a product of those values.

The great demand for ivory in China is a facet that may be under-appreciated by U.S. foreign policy-makers. While the State Department generates considerable amounts of media to educate against the purchase of ivory, it is limited in its scope as it tries to speak to a foreign audience, the Chinese people, whose access to global media is tightly controlled by the state government, namely the Chinese Communist Party. Additionally, as Christy (2012) found in his investigation of the ivory trade, corruption is a key contributor to the perpetuation of the network, especially in China where an investigation by the Environmental Investigation Agency found "up to 90 percent of the ivory on the Chinese market was illegal" ("Ivory"). The media control and corruption which characterize the Chinese state require more direct engagement by the U.S. government to influence institutional attitudes. Obviously, U.S.-China relations are more complicated

than the issue of wildlife poaching, but the principles of public diplomacy can still be applied to an issue of moral and ethical concern rather than national interest.

Nye (2008) states the three dimensions of public diplomacy include daily communication, strategic communication, and building long lasting relationships between key actors (pp. 101-102). The third dimension is of particular importance as it emphasizes the relationship between elites in both the US and China whereby the State Department can directly influence Chinese policy-makers to transform their attitudes regarding the ivory trade. While Nye (2008) admits this dimension of public diplomacy will not necessarily yield short-term results (p. 105), direct government engagement drives the greater campaign to influence a state's stance on policy. By penetrating the media networks with its anti-poaching message using both media networks to boost the message and direct engagement to build long-term diplomatic relationships, NGOs and state governments could experience greater, faster success in altering the communications values which drive the demand for ivory across media networks and lines of diplomacy.

The anti-poaching network might also find a strong role model in the similarly intentioned climate change movement. Castells (2009) uses the environmentalist movement as a case study for network power and its ability to reshape values in society (p. 303-304). He also cites individual campaigns such as the Earth Hour (p. 332), polls marking the rising awareness of global warming in the United States from 41% in 1982 to 91% in 2006 (p. 309), and even Al Gore's unconventional but nonetheless effective celebrity (p. 329) in propagating the environmental agenda. The plethora of organizations, campaigns and efforts to raise awareness in the public mind of the threat posed by climate change reshaped the public's attitudes towards the issue where policy-



makers would be forced to acknowledge the issue and act upon it. The anti-ivory effort must adopt this all-encompassing communications strategy in order to alter the structure and basis of the networks supporting the ivory trade. Just as Castells says, “we had to reprogram the networks of our minds by reprogramming the networks of our communications environment” (p. 339).

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