Book Review

Duffy, Rosaleen. 2022. *Security and Conservation: The Politics of the Illegal Wildlife Trade*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

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Rosaleen Duffy became a prominent student and critic of international wildlife conservation when she published *Killing for Conservation* (Duffy 2000), a wonderfully detailed study of wildlife policy in Zimbabwe. It is a work that still ranks—along with *Politicians and Poachers* (Gibson 1999), which also dealt with Zambia and Kenya—as a landmark contribution to our understanding of how national interests in African wildlife become entangled with and are reshaped by, and to some extent in turn reshape, the interests of a wide range of other actors who claim a legitimate interest in the fate of African wildlife. These actors include notably, but not exclusively, international conservation nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

The key analytical assumption both Duffy and Gibson made in those early books was that the fate of African wildlife did, and should, depend first and foremost on the domestic politics of the African countries responsible after independence for managing the wildlife populations living within their borders. They employed different theoretical lenses—political ecology for Duffy and political economy for Gibson—but the results in both cases gave insights into the dynamics of wildlife policies in Africa that are unequaled in the last two decades in the richness and depth of their political analysis. *Wildlife between Empire and Nation in Twentieth-Century Africa* (Schauer 2019), though, has made a further notable addition to the literature by exploiting archival rather than field research and by adding Tanzania, Uganda, and Malawi to the mix of covered countries.

So, what happened over the last twenty years or so to the assumption that domestic politics matter for the fate of African wildlife, which has over that same span of time become a prominent and sustained focus of both scholarly and public interest in global environmental politics? This is an important question, because, in *Security and Conservation*, Duffy's most recent book, African politicians and political institutions appear, at best, as bit players in the stories she tells about evolving efforts to contain and constrain the illegal wildlife trade, efforts that have equivalents in other parts of the world.

The obvious answer to this question is that conservation has changed. Indeed, in the very first sentence of her newest book, Duffy asserts that the political

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ecology of conservation is again undergoing profound change as the illegal wildlife trade comes to be understood and pursued as a security problem, and in ways that do not augur well for either the people or the wildlife of Africa.

This is a theme Duffy has rehearsed before, both with colleagues and on her own (Brockington et al. 2008; Duffy 2010). Indeed, few scholars are better placed than Duffy to explain how the contemporary politics of the illegal wildlife trade have brought into play ideas and actors with a limited presence in the earlier history of conservation. For example, active and retired military people helped enforce fortress conservation, the focus has shifted to community-based resource management, and conservation has begun to reflect neoliberal impulses to make wildlife conservation pay its way.

The most recent turn to framing wildlife conservation and protected areas management as a set of policies important not just for conserving wildlife but also for addressing urgent questions of state security and stability means that modern military and paramilitary organizations, intelligence gatherers and analysts, and security technologists, among others, are now in the foreground of the picture. They have ostensibly been added to the mix because of a suspicion, which Duffy does not reject outright but finds unsupported by the evidence in the public domain, that the money made from the illegal wildlife trade is a significant source of threat finance for global terrorist networks.

Duffy repeatedly makes it clear that she does not view this latest reconfiguration of the political ecology of conservation with equanimity. But by and large, and on the basis of the evidence she presents in *Security and Conservation*, the actual and principal participants in the political ecology of conservation appear to have no quarrel with the security turn. Duffy's dogged insistence on raising questions about it has given her a certain awkward notoriety in the conservation community. And when she follows the money—an awful lot of which has been made available since the middle of the last decade—we begin to get a sense of why almost everyone in the political ecosystem she is studying is happy with the way things have evolved.

Large sums have passed into and through the hands of African governments, without any apparent need for a fundamental rethink of the conservation policies they co-opted at independence and to which they have largely adhered ever since. The project budgets of regional and international NGOs have been substantially augmented. And the people and organizations giving the money have found a new sense of purpose in doing their bit both for conservation and for the war on terror, albeit with some misgivings about the human impacts of militarization, which have in some instances been brutal.

The dynamics of conservation as security, then, have become "very valuable indeed" (70) in economic terms for some of the elite actors in the political ecology of conservation. So, if they are happy with the way things have been trending and with the additional income this has yielded for them, and for their clients, where's the rub?

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The rub is that the security turn is taking wildlife conservation down an undesirable path from which it will be difficult to return, because spending conservation money to enhance state security, combat organized crime, and deter global terrorism distracts attention and diverts resources from tackling the root causes of wildlife losses, which Duffy insists are found in a highly unequal global system:

> If we start from the idea that illegal wildlife trade is driven by unsustainable demand because of growing [global] wealth and inequality … then of course effective interventions might revolve around tackling inequality and persuading consumers to switch away from using wildlife products. … [But] policy responses that focus on treating the symptoms (poaching and trafficking) rather than the underlying drivers, will only ever have limited success. … [They] will not change the overall pattern of global species declines. (196)

Will something else work better? Duffy does not presume to offer a detailed blueprint for a better way forward for conservation, but she outlines three themes she thinks will be important, once it becomes clear that the turn to security is ineffective, even counterproductive, for wildlife conservation. One theme is that the time has come to "support the voices of those who have historically been pushed out and marginalized by conservation" (200).

At this point, discerning readers of her own previous work, as well as that by Gibson and Schauer, are bound to wonder why, if the security turn is such a disaster, it has not been more assertively politicized by Africans, at least some of whom have taken note of what has been happening (Ramutsindela et al. 2022). All through colonial times, during the struggle for independence, and in subsequent decades, the politics of wildlife conservation in Africa south of the Sahara have been a major preoccupation of politicians, political parties, and local and national institutions. If the implication of Duffy's newest work is that these actors have been eclipsed effectively from the political ecology of conservation, we must hope that her next book will explain exactly how, why, and when that happened.

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