

High-Value Natural Resources-Smuggling-National Security Nexus: The Case of Zimbabwe in the Fourth Industrial Revolution and Beyond

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ABSTRACT

Smuggling of high-value natural resources is a high risk of Zimbabwean national security. Smugglers are devising complex and sophisticated means to evade official scrutiny in their smuggling activities. The porous nature of Zimbabwean borders is a common African problem. These borders enable the illegal transgression of international laws against the transportation of goods, substances and even people across borders. In recent years Zimbabwe has been awash with smuggling of ivory, diamonds and gold which are high-value natural resources. This has provoked this opinion research paper on smuggling of natural resources and its impact on national security. The objectives of the research were to explain the nature of smuggling of high-value natural resources and its likely impacts in Zimbabwe. Research questions formulated focused on the nature of smuggling, the role of technology to curb smuggling of high-value natural resources and threats to national security. The paper also assesses how technological improvements in the fourth industrial era can be harnessed to curb the smuggling. A study of secondary literature on smuggling, national security and natural resources was done. This has enabled this opinion paper on the role of technology in the fourth industrial age in safeguarding natural resources in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is at risk of smuggling and the threats associated due to porous borders.

Keywords: *Eastern Natural resources, national security, minerals, smuggling, Zimbabwe*

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INTRODUCTION

Smuggling of high-value natural resources is for the brave, fearless, desperate and well-connected peoples. The smuggling industry has been growing in Africa. High-value natural resources such as ivory, diamonds, gold, silver are becoming common in Africa's porous borders. Smugglers who are involved in this illegal industry are dangerous to national and regional security since other materials such as guns, drugs and biological weapons may find their way across borders rendering national and human insecurity. This paper is an attempt at diagnosing the causes, impacts and ways to compact smuggling of high-value natural resources to ensure national and regional security. This paper analyses and critiques, the likely scenarios on natural resources smuggling in the fourth industrial age and beyond. The role of artificial intelligence in detecting and minimising the smuggling of high-value natural resources is assessed.

Background

There has been awash in the Zimbabwean media for the past years of smuggling cases of natural resources ranging from diamonds, ivory and gold (Insider Zimbabwe, 24 March 2018, The Zimbabwe Mail, 24 March 2018). These resources are of high value in the sense that they fetch high prices. The smuggling of the natural resources has led to a loss of revenue for the nation. Natural resources are seen as natural capital in livelihoods studies with the potential to improve the standards of living of people if they are exploited transparently and efficiently. The high-value natural resources in Zimbabwe have seen an increase and development of sophisticated smuggling syndicates involving high ranking politically connected individuals. The growth and complex nature of the smuggling industry is a security threat since smugglers are high-risk takers who are fearless and brave in their endeavours to enrich themselves and gain livelihood security. This paper seeks to shed light and provoke further debate on the topic for further research to ensure national and regional security.

Statement of the Problem

There has been growing concern over security in general with advances in technology in the fourth industrial era and beyond. This is because criminal activities also develop sophisticated ways of securing their crimes. Smuggling of high-value natural resources is likely to become more sophisticated and dangerous to Zimbabwe, Africa and globally since proceeds can be used to

finance terrorist activities, rebels and sponsor resistance movements. The survival of democracy, regional integration, national security and peace may rest on understanding the relations and dynamics between high-value natural resources and smuggling in the wake of new technology in the fourth industrial era and beyond.

Research Objective

The main objective of this paper is to explain the nature of smuggling of high-value natural resources and its likely impacts in Zimbabwe. The paper also aims at assessing how technological improvements in the fourth industrial era can be harnessed to curb the smuggling industry and thus save or use natural resources in a sustainable manner.

This research seeks to answer the following questions:

- a) What is smuggled?
- b) How can technology revolution in the fourth industrial revolution and beyond be exploited to curb smuggling of high-value natural resources?
- c) How is the smuggling of high-value natural resources a threat to national security and regional security?

METHODOLOGY

This paper presents theoretical and opinion views on the smuggling of high-value natural resources in Zimbabwe and its impact on Zimbabwe now and in the future. This opinion paper is influenced by personal experience, national and international news and literature studies on smuggling, natural resources exploitation and national security.

Smuggling as a Business

Smuggling has been defined from various angles which all converge on the understanding that it is an illegal and dangerous venture. Smuggling is a transgressive economic practice that is embedded in the wider social, political and cultural connectivity (Husken, 2017). The Oxford dictionary has defined smuggling as a crime of taking, sending or bringing goods secretly and illegally into and out of a country (Husken, 2017). Smuggling has been described as a violent and opportunistic industry (Tinti and Reitano, 2015).

Smuggling did for livelihoods security, due to greed and desire for economic security. In countries like Zimbabwe where there has been the economic and social downturn for the majority of people, many have resorted to smuggling despite the high risks associated with the industry.

The Panel of experts in Libya wrote to the United Nations Security Council (2016) notes at length that several families run the fuel smuggling business. In the process weapons and drugs are also smuggled as sources of income (UNSC, 2016). In Libya, it has been noted that smuggling is one of the very few lucrative job opportunities, and one with relatively low barriers to entry (Tinti and Westcott, 2016). There is no doubt that smuggling is popular in the whole of southern Africa with the porous borders. That being the case a lot of revenue is lost in the process.

Who is Involved in Smuggling?

Smuggling is a business that is done by high-risk takers. Tinti and Westcott (2016) note that smuggling is sustained migrant smugglers, local institutions and state functions including government officials. Husken (2017) argues that social rebels, political resistance groups and territorial regimes benefit from smuggling.

It is clear from the arguments above that smuggling is done by any individual who is willing to take risks associated. However, it has to be argued that government officials like the police are a bit secure since they are the guides with less scrutiny in societies where the majority of citizens are also involved in smuggling in one way or the other. The psychology of deprivation and suffering has turned Zimbabwe into a nation of crooks (Godwin, 2010 quoting Chanetsa, G). Thus, smuggling syndicates in Zimbabwe should be suspected from the majority individual. The disappearance of US\$ billions worth of diamonds, death of elephants in national parks and gold loss are common stories in Zimbabwe. This has involved registered companies and high-profile individuals who cannot account for resources in their custody. Thus, smuggling in Zimbabwe and Africa is an ongoing activity which needs to be curbed before warlords are created.

What is Smuggled?

Oil, minerals and gas wealth is distinct from other types of wealth because of its large upfront, price and secrecy (Natural Resource Governance Institute, 2015). These resources are of high value and are smuggled from many

parts of the world. Husken, (2017) quotes Wikipedia which says objects, substances, information or people are all smuggled into a prison, or across an international border, in violation of applicable laws or other regulations.

Zimbabwe has suffered smuggling of diamond, gold, ivory, drugs, clothes and many other items. These have either left the country or received into the country. There are greater chances that even weapons are other harmful substances find their way into the country. If during the liberation struggle weapons were brought in quantities, there is no reason to deny that even now weapons are brought in through clandestine means.

The role of technology in curbing smuggling

Smuggling is a challenge to national governments. Smuggling is controlled by powerful syndicates determined to achieve their goals by any means necessary. Smuggling and control of natural resources often provoke and sustain internal conflicts (Natural Resources Governance Institute, 2015). Artificial intelligence can be used to curb smuggling. Drones, scanners, remote sensing technology, Global Positioning Systems and automation in mining areas are all possible solutions to smuggling and security. Drones can be used to monitor parks where animals are kept enabling swift response when cases of poaching arise. Schwab (2015) notes that governments will gain new technological powers to increase their control over populations based on pervasive surveillance systems and the ability to control digital infrastructure. However, citizens may also have powers to circumvent the supervision of officials (Schwab, 2015). Despite this, it is clear that to curb smuggling and the potential threats it poses to national security the fourth industrial era provides an opportunity in many ways explored or unexplored.

CONCLUSION

This paper concludes that Zimbabwe and other less economically developed countries are at risk of smuggling and the threats associated due to porous borders. Moreover, as long as living standards continue to bite more people will be involved in the smuggling industry. Lastly, it has been noted that all social classes are potential smugglers of high-value natural resources. Smuggling can lead to instability, insecurity and worsen in the future if measures are not put in place to curb and monitor it.

Moreover, as long as living standards continue to bite more people will be involved in the smuggling industry. All social classes are potential smugglers of high-value natural resources. Smuggling can lead to instability, insecurity and war in the future if measures are not put in place to curb and monitor it. The main recommendation is that there is a need to invest in technological innovations to keep abreast with what smuggling syndicates that are capable of doing to by-pass the officials. Furthermore, there is a need to explore the magnitude of smuggling further and assess the threats it poses to nations like Zimbabwe.

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