

Measures of the Indian Government in Combating Illegal Wildlife Trafficking: A Green Theory Approach from a Post-Positivist Perspective in International Relations Departments

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Abstract:

Purpose:

This analysis aims to provide both academic and practical benefits by offering a comprehensive evaluation of India's policies on combating illegal wildlife trafficking. By integrating sustainability principles and addressing the challenges faced in enforcement and economic growth, the study contributes valuable insights into how the country can enhance its efforts in wildlife conservation. The findings also offer broader implications for strengthening international collaborations, improving law enforcement mechanisms, and reinforcing the role of global environmental norms in shaping national policies. Ultimately, this research seeks to advance both theoretical understanding and practical applications in the field of environmental diplomacy and wildlife protection.

Methodology:

This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach and a case study method to examine India's legal framework in combating illegal wildlife trafficking.

Keyword:

Illegal Wildlife Trafficking in India, Wildlife Trafficking, Indian Ecology Policies.

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Findings:

India has adopted a norms-based approach and international cooperation in combating illegal wildlife trade but still faces challenges in implementation due to tensions between economic development and environmental sustainability, weak law enforcement, and the need for greater community involvement in conservation.

Implication:

The implications of these findings indicate that the success of India's policies in combating illegal wildlife trade hinges on balancing economic interests with a firm commitment to environmental sustainability. Moreover, strengthening law enforcement capacity and enhancing public participation is essential to ensuring that the formulated policies can be effectively implemented at both domestic and international levels. For other nations, India's approach can serve as a model for integrating environmental policies into foreign policy, particularly through international cooperation and institutional reinforcement.

INTRODUCTION

Wildlife trafficking remains a significant global threat to biodiversity, with India being one of the most affected countries. As home to approximately 6.5% of the world's wildlife species, India faces severe challenges in combating illegal wildlife trade despite its commitment to international conservation efforts. Since ratifying the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 1976, the country has actively engaged in policies to curb wildlife trafficking. However, illegal trade continues to persist, undermining conservation efforts and posing threats to public health and economic stability (Kalsi, 2022).

The illegal wildlife trade not only depletes India's rich biodiversity but also contributes to zoonotic disease transmission and disrupts ecological balance. In response, India has strengthened its domestic legal framework, notably through the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972, which serves as the cornerstone of its wildlife conservation policies. Additionally, India has sought international collaborations to enhance its enforcement mechanisms. One

of the key initiatives is its partnership with the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC), which aims to bolster law enforcement capacity, improve surveillance mechanisms, and facilitate cross-border cooperation against wildlife trafficking networks (Narendra, 2024).

In 2021, India formalized its commitment by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with ICCWC, enabling access to advanced technology, specialized training, and intelligence-sharing platforms. Despite these efforts, several challenges persist, including the increasing use of airports as transit points for illegal trade and weaknesses in domestic enforcement. The lack of resources, inadequate inter-agency coordination, and sophisticated smuggling networks continue to hinder the effective implementation of anti-trafficking measures (Annika & Stevan, 2023).

Despite the implementation of various policies, the weak enforcement of wildlife protection laws in India remains a critical impediment to combating illegal wildlife trafficking. Numerous cases indicate that environmental offenders frequently evade prosecution due to legal loopholes, insufficient investigative rigor, and pervasive corruption within law enforcement agencies. Additionally, the chronic underfunding and inadequate allocation of human resources for wildlife protection exacerbate the situation, allowing illicit wildlife trade to persist across multiple regions (Zubaidi, 2024). The continued prevalence of this illegal activity underscores the inefficacy of existing policies in effectively curbing wildlife trafficking. Therefore, a more stringent and comprehensive approach is imperative—one that not only reinforces legal frameworks but also ensures their robust implementation on the ground, transforming conservation efforts from mere regulatory provisions into actionable, enforceable measures (Mangabay, 2022).

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze India's efforts in combating illegal wildlife trade through its collaboration with the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC). This approach is selected as it enables an in-depth exploration of the concrete measures undertaken by India to address this transnational crime. The research relies on secondary data sources, including official reports from international organizations, government policies, and prior scholarly works relevant to the topic (Dharma et al., 2022). Data collection involves an extensive review of annual reports from the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) of India, publications from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), INTERPOL, and TRAFFIC, as well as ICCWC's evaluations of India's implementation of its Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit. These sources will be systematically analyzed to examine India's strategic engagement with ICCWC in enhancing law enforcement efforts against illegal wildlife trade. Lastly, this research will critically examine the challenges and constraints that hinder India's efforts in eradicating illegal wildlife trade, despite its partnership with ICCWC. Key issues such as resource limitations, the complexity of transnational trafficking networks, and corruption within enforcement agencies will be analyzed to provide a nuanced perspective on the effectiveness of international collaboration in addressing wildlife crime. By offering a holistic and evidence-based evaluation, this study contributes to the broader discourse on global wildlife conservation and transnational crime mitigation strategies (Sugiyono, 2015).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Wildlife Crime in India. India is one of the world's most biodiverse nations, harboring approximately 6.5% of global fauna species, including 7.6% of the world's mammals and 12.6% of its bird species. However, the escalating illegal demand for wildlife and their derivatives has fueled the proliferation of wildlife crimes across the country. These crimes not only pose severe threats to ecological stability but also have far-reaching implications for food security and the livelihoods of local communities, particularly in rural areas. Wildlife trafficking in India encompasses a wide range of illicit activities, including the poaching of tigers and rhinos and the trade of Indian

star tortoises. The tiger, an endangered species, is frequently targeted for its skin, bones, and other body parts, which are highly sought after in traditional medicine and ornamental markets. This illegal trade is facilitated by transnational smuggling networks operating across Nepal, China, and Myanmar, underscoring the complexity of the global demand that exploits border vulnerabilities (Ghozal & Kjosavik, 2015).

Beyond tigers, rhino poaching remains a pressing concern due to the high market value of rhino horns in illicit international trade. Poachers employ sophisticated methods, including high-caliber firearms and toxic substances, to hunt these animals. Consequently, rhino populations, once widespread, have now dwindled to approximately 2,500 individuals, predominantly confined to India and Nepal (Haris et al., 2023). The depletion of these keystone species threatens the ecological balance of their habitats and undermines conservation efforts. Addressing this crisis necessitates a multi-pronged approach, integrating stringent legal frameworks, enhanced cross-border intelligence-sharing, and advanced technological interventions to disrupt trafficking networks. India's battle against wildlife crime highlights the urgent need for sustained international collaboration to mitigate the broader environmental and socio-economic ramifications of this illicit trade (Vellow, Lawrence, 2013).

Wildlife trafficking in India has evolved into a highly sophisticated transnational crime driven by the growing demand for rare species and illicit wildlife products. As one of the world's most biodiverse nations, India faces significant challenges in combating this illegal trade, which not only threatens the survival of numerous species but also disrupts entire ecosystems. Key organizations, including the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), TRAFFIC-India, the Wildlife Crime Bureau (WCB), and the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), have played a crucial role in enhancing law enforcement, strengthening intelligence networks and fostering international cooperation to curb wildlife trafficking. These efforts encompass the deployment of advanced monitoring technologies, intensified patrolling in conservation areas, and comprehensive training programs for law enforcement personnel to detect and dismantle trafficking operations. Despite these initiatives, persistent challenges such as resource constraints, institutional fragmentation, and the high profitability of illegal wildlife trade continue to impede effective mitigation efforts. Addressing these issues requires a more robust and coordinated global response, integrating legal, technological, and policy-driven solutions to ensure the long-term protection of India's biodiversity (Morshed, Anika, 2024).

Not only large animals but smaller species, such as star tortoises and marine life, including seahorses and sea cucumbers, are also targeted by illegal trade. Star tortoises are widely traded because they are believed to bring good luck in Feng Shui. On the other hand, marine life is often exploited for culinary and medical purposes, much of which is illegally traded abroad. Although India has a Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, its implementation and enforcement still face various challenges. The crime is transnational, thus requiring a more integrated approach, including international cooperation through mechanisms such as the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC). By improving surveillance, enforcement and global collaboration, India can be more effective in protecting its rich biodiversity (UNTOC, 1972).

Table 1. The Tabel of India's Role and Actions in Combating Wildlife Trafficking

No.	Case	Performance and Action	Involved of Institutions
1.	Wildlife Trade by Organized Criminal Networks	WCS Strategy to dismantle syndicates using Intelligence, Criminology, and Cross-Continental capacity building	WCS, WWTB, NTCA, TRAFIC-INDIA
2.	Online Wildlife Trade (Cybercrime)	WCS and Traffic-India Collaborate with Internet Companies to Combat Online Wildlife Trade	TRAFIC-INDIA, WCS
3.	Tockay Gelo Smuggling	Six Individu Als were arrested in connection with tockay gecko	WCB, WCS, Meghalaya Forest Department

		smuggling in Nagaland, Assamland, and Meghalaya. Forestry officers' training improved arrest success rates.	
4.	Rino Protection in Assam	The Rhino Population Created 2650 poaching Cases declined due to enhanced patrolling and cooperation with law Enforcement.	Assam Forreest Departman WWCB
5.	Conservation Challenges in Uttarakhand	Difficult terrain complicates, but technology and training improve monitoring effectiveness.	WCB, WCS India
6.	Law Enforcement Training	21,000 Law Enforcements Officers Trained in the past three years to handle illegal Wildlife Trade.	WCB, WCS India

Source: <https://india.wcs.org/Counter-Wildlife-Trafficking-CWT>

India has adopted a multifaceted approach to combating illegal wildlife trafficking, particularly by targeting organized criminal networks operating across borders. This strategy involves leveraging intelligence, criminology, and cross-continental capacity-building to dismantle trafficking syndicates. Key institutions such as the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Wildlife Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh (WWTB), National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), and TRAFFIC-INDIA play a pivotal role in these efforts. The success of this strategy underscores the critical importance of international collaboration and multidisciplinary approaches in enhancing conservation measures and strengthening law enforcement against illicit wildlife trade (WCS, 2023).

In recent years, the proliferation of online wildlife trafficking has presented a formidable challenge. Digital platforms provide traffickers with anonymity, facilitating the sale of endangered species beyond the reach of traditional enforcement mechanisms. To address this, WCS and TRAFFIC-INDIA have partnered with technology companies to monitor and restrict illicit wildlife trade on the internet. This initiative highlights the crucial role of the private sector in bolstering enforcement efforts, particularly within the complex and evolving digital landscape (WCS, 2020).

A particularly notable case is the smuggling of Tokay geckos, which has become a major target of wildlife trafficking in regions such as Nagaland, Assam, and Meghalaya. Authorities successfully apprehended six individuals involved in the illicit trade, a testament to the effectiveness of enhanced training for forestry officers. These capacity-building programs, supported by the Wildlife Crime Bureau (WCB), WCS, and the Meghalaya Forest Department, have significantly improved law enforcement officers' ability to detect and dismantle trafficking operations (Sharma et al., 2014).

Efforts to protect endangered species, such as rhinos in Assam, have also been a major conservation priority. Strengthened patrolling measures and close collaboration with law enforcement agencies have led to a significant decline in poaching incidents. Over the past few years, the rhino population in Assam has surged to 2,650 individuals, demonstrating the tangible impact of intensified security measures. This success is largely attributed to the concerted efforts of the Assam Forest Department and WCB, which have played a crucial role in implementing robust anti-poaching strategies (limited-Carkle, 2009).

In the challenging terrain of Uttarakhand, conservation efforts face significant obstacles due to the region's rugged geography. Remote forests and mountainous landscapes pose logistical difficulties for law enforcement. However, advancements in surveillance technology, coupled with specialized training for field officers, have substantially improved monitoring capabilities. Collaborative initiatives between WCB and WCS India have

facilitated the integration of cutting-edge technology, overcoming geographical constraints and strengthening wildlife protection in hard-to-access areas (Wyatt, 2013).

Beyond direct enforcement actions, India has made substantial investments in capacity-building initiatives for law enforcement personnel. Over the past three years, more than 21,000 officers have undergone specialized training in combating illegal wildlife trade. Led by WCB and WCS India, these programs emphasize the development of technical expertise and a deep understanding of conservation law, equipping officers with the necessary skills to effectively combat wildlife crimes (Verma Singh, 2003).

India's comprehensive approach to wildlife conservation extends beyond law enforcement and field operations. It integrates technological advancements, educational initiatives, and cross-sectoral collaborations to ensure long-term sustainability in its conservation efforts. This holistic framework not only curbs illegal wildlife trade but also strengthens the foundations for a more resilient and effective conservation system (Rana, 2023).

International partnerships have been instrumental in India's success in tackling wildlife trafficking. With the involvement of WCS, TRAFFIC-INDIA, WCB, and NTCA, India has gained access to global resources, expertise, and intelligence-sharing networks. It underscores the transnational nature of wildlife crime, which cannot be addressed by a single nation alone but requires coordinated global action (WWF, 2022).

Despite significant progress, persistent challenges remain. Traffickers continuously adapt, employing sophisticated smuggling techniques, exploiting new routes, and leveraging encrypted communication channels to evade detection. To stay ahead of these evolving threats, India must remain proactive, continuously refining its strategies and policies to ensure sustained effectiveness in wildlife crime prevention (IUCN, 2021).

Overall, India's approach to combating illegal wildlife trade serves as a model for other nations grappling with similar challenges. Through a strategic combination of stringent law enforcement, international cooperation, technological innovation, and capacity-building initiatives, India has demonstrated that wildlife trafficking is not an insurmountable issue. By further strengthening its policies and refining its enforcement mechanisms, India can continue to play a pivotal role in the global fight against wildlife crime and biodiversity conservation (TRAFFIC-INDIA, 2021).

India has implemented a comprehensive framework to combat illegal wildlife trafficking, integrating robust legal mechanisms, institutional strengthening, and both national and international cooperation. The cornerstone of this legal framework is the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, which provides stringent protections for endangered flora and fauna, criminalizes poaching and illegal trade, and establishes protected areas such as national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. Additionally, the Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act of 1992 regulates the export and import of specified species, serving as a critical barrier against wildlife smuggling through formal trade channels. To enhance enforcement mechanisms, India established the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), a specialized agency mandated to monitor, investigate, and report wildlife-related offenses. The WCCB collaborates with law enforcement bodies such as customs authorities and police forces to oversee illicit trade routes across land, sea, and air. Major international airports, including those in Chennai, Mumbai, and Delhi, have been focal points for surveillance due to their strategic role in wildlife smuggling networks. In response, WCCB has partnered with global organizations, including the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and TRAFFIC, to implement initiatives like Deterring and Disrupting Wildlife Trafficking in the Air Transport Sector. This program enhances enforcement capacity through specialized training and the adoption of advanced detection technologies (Singh et al., 2019).

India's commitment to combating wildlife crime extends to its active participation in international agreements and conservation initiatives. As a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), India adheres to stringent regulations governing cross-border trade to ensure ecological sustainability. Furthermore, strategic partnerships with organizations such as WWF-India,

UNEP, and TRAFFIC bolster India's ability to counter transnational wildlife trafficking through intelligence-sharing, policy advocacy, and collaborative enforcement efforts (Sharma, T., & Thakar, M. K., 2021).

The multifaceted approach adopted by India underscores the transnational nature of wildlife crime, necessitating coordinated action at both domestic and global levels. By leveraging legal frameworks, institutional capabilities, and international collaborations, India has reinforced its position as a key player in the global fight against wildlife trafficking while simultaneously addressing conservation challenges within its borders (Kumar, V., & Kanaujia, A., 2020).

Analysis of Post-Positivist Theory and Green Theory on Indian Policy and Performance India governments. In analyzing India's policies to combat illegal wildlife trade through the lens of post-positivist theory, there is an emphasis on interpretation, normative values, and the interconnectedness between humans and nature. Unlike positivism, which prioritizes objectivity and empirical data, post-positivism acknowledges that foreign policy is a socially constructed outcome shaped by dominant values, perceptions, and norms. In the context of India's policy framework, the emphasis on biodiversity and ecosystem protection through legislative efforts, institutional strengthening, and international cooperation suggests that India perceives wildlife trafficking not merely as an ecological threat but as a global political issue affecting state legitimacy and reputation (Anwar, Tara, 2019).

Through the lens of Green Theory, this analysis extends the understanding of the relationship between ecology and politics. Green Theory critiques state-centric approaches that often prioritize economic development at the expense of environmental sustainability. In the case of India, policies such as the establishment of the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) and the implementation of legal frameworks supporting wildlife conservation, such as the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, reflect the state's attempt to integrate sustainability principles into its foreign policy agenda. However, Green Theory also highlights the potential dilemma between the need to stimulate economic growth—such as through airport infrastructure development—and the imperative of ensuring environmental sustainability (Xiong et al., 2023).

In analyzing India's policies to combat illegal wildlife trade through post-positivist and Green Theory perspectives, it becomes evident that both normative considerations and structural challenges shape the country's approach. The post-positivist lens highlights how India's policies are influenced by social constructs, values, and international legitimacy rather than purely objective and empirical factors. Meanwhile, Green Theory underscores the state's efforts to integrate sustainability into governance while revealing tensions between economic development and environmental conservation. The establishment of institutions like the WCCB and the implementation of legal frameworks such as the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 reflect India's commitment to conservation. However, the persistent challenge lies in balancing economic ambitions with ecological responsibility, necessitating continuous policy adaptation to maintain both environmental and political stability (Dauvergne, 2020).

The analysis of India's policy in combating illegal wildlife trade through the lens of post-positivist theory and Green Theory highlights how sustainability norms and ecological justice have become integral components of India's foreign policy strategy. This approach reflects India's commitment to global values in protecting biodiversity despite challenges such as economic growth pressures and the exploitation of wildlife for illegal trade. Initiatives such as international cooperation with UNEP and TRAFFIC, institutional strengthening through the WCCB, and public awareness campaigns signify a shift towards a more holistic policy framework. However, the effectiveness of these measures requires a deeper integration of sustainability norms with stricter law enforcement to ensure that India's environmental commitments are fully realized at both domestic and international levels (Green, 2025).

CONCLUSION

The analysis of India's policies and actions in combating illegal wildlife trade through post-positivist theory and Green Theory highlights the country's multidimensional approach, which integrates legislative frameworks, institutional reinforcements, and strategic environmental diplomacy rather than being solely driven by legal instruments. Sustainability norms, global ecological responsibilities, and political legitimacy shape India's foreign policy on wildlife conservation.

From a postpositivist perspective, India's approach is not merely a reaction to ecological threats but a reflection of its evolving environmental governance, shaped by international norms and domestic political agendas. The nation has engaged in multilateral cooperation with organizations such as UNEP and TRAFFIC while also strengthening domestic institutions like the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB).

Green Theory further contextualizes India's policies by examining the inherent tensions between economic development and environmental preservation. On one hand, India has enacted regulations such as the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 and intensified border surveillance to curb illegal wildlife trade. On the other hand, large-scale infrastructure projects and economic growth imperatives continue to pose risks to conservation efforts. Beyond policy measures, India has implemented concrete actions, including public awareness campaigns, enhanced law enforcement mechanisms, and regional partnerships to disrupt trafficking networks. These initiatives illustrate a transition from reactive enforcement to proactive governance. However, challenges persist in the form of weak policy implementation, corruption, and the need for stronger integration between sustainability principles and economic strategies.

For India's conservation efforts to be truly effective, a more holistic approach is required—one that strengthens legal frameworks enhances cross-border cooperation, reinforces local enforcement capabilities, and ensures that sustainability remains central to both domestic and international policies.

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