



The Ecopolitics Podcast – Episode 2.4: Eco-Colonialism and Environmental Justice in the Global South (TRANSCRIPT)

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INTRO: In this episode, we explore the theme of wildlife conservation and the tensions that exist between how people in the global north tend to view these issues versus how they are perceived and experienced by the rural people who live alongside wild animals in countries like Botswana in southern Africa. To discuss these themes, we speak with Joseph E. Mbaiwa, Professor of Tourism Studies at University of Botswana, and Chris Brown, Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at Carleton University about Botswana's 2014 hunting ban on African elephants. Through this example, we explore the political and eco-colonial contexts that influenced both the institution of the ban, as well as the ban's impact on communities within Botswana.

[00:00:00] **Joseph E. Mbaiwa:** Even when they're hunting in Botswana photographic and then suffer hunting complement each other, the animal rights group don't understand all this to them this hunting should be stopped. To them is they care the citizens of Botswana, the government of Botswana, the researchers of Botswana don't understand conservation and the global North, the animal rights group should come and see this is how we do it.

[00:00:29] **Peter Andrée:** Welcome to ecopolitics podcast. My name is Peter Andrée from the department of political science at Carleton University. My co-host for this series is Ryan Katz-Rosene from the University of Ottawa, though Ryan isn't joining me for this particular episode. In this, our second series, we're addressing major themes in global ecopolitics. In today's podcast, the theme is wildlife conservation. In this case, the conservation of African elephants and the tensions that exist between how people in the global North tend to view these issues versus how they are perceived and experienced by the rural people who live alongside wild animals in countries like Botswana in Southern Africa.

[00:01:10] We'll explore this issue by looking at the question of elephant hunting in Botswana. In 2014, then President Ian Khama issued a decree instituting a ban on the hunting development of elephants within Botswana. This was widely lauded by animal welfare, animal rights and conservation groups in the global North, but had questionable results in Botswana as we'll discuss.

[00:01:33] Most controversially, the hunting ban was associated with a shoot-to-kill policy for poachers and arming anti-poaching units with high powered military style weapons. In 2019, following an election victory that rested in part on his position on the hunting ban, Khama's successor, and current President Mokgweetsi Masisi tasked a committee of stakeholders with re-evaluating the ban.

[00:01:58] After public consultations, this committee recommended removing the hunting ban and allowing selective culling of elephants in Botswana, where they pose a growing threat to people in certain circumstances. This was undertaken in 2019 to considerable criticism from these same international groups who believed this is another step in the decline of elephant populations in Africa.

[00:02:20] Botswana also argued at the meeting of the convention on the international trade in endangered species or sites for reinstating the international trade of ivory for countries such as Botswana. Masisi was not successful with this request blocked by these same international conservation groups who are also supported by countries like Kenya, who wish to keep the ivory trade banned.

[00:02:43] Today, we're going to talk about all of this. Why was Botswana's hunting ban put in in the first place? Why was it revoked? What does all of this tell us about conservation efforts in Africa? What does it tell us about the relationship between conservation efforts, local people and democracy? What does it tell us about North South relations?

[00:03:03] What role does racism and what has been termed eco-colonialism play in how this issue has played out internationally? To help us unpack the story we have two guests with us today who know a great deal about these issues. Dr. Joseph Mbaiwa is the director of the Okavango Research Institute at the University of Botswana.

[00:03:24] He is also a professor of tourism studies. He is widely published in areas of tourism developments, community-based natural resource management, rural livelihoods and biodiversity conservation. Second Dr. Chris Brown is a colleague of mine in political science at Carleton. He teaches comparative politics with a specialization in the politics of Southern Africa.

[00:03:45] Last year, Chris gave a seminar in the Institute of African studies at Carleton on the politics of Botswana's hunting ban, which sparked the idea of having him here today, alongside Dr. Mbaiwa as guests on ecopolitics podcasts. So I'm very happy they're both able to join us today. Chris, I'd like to start with you to give us a bit of the international background for this story.

[00:04:07] Can you tell us briefly, just a bit more about the state of African elephants and how Botswana fits into this picture?

[00:04:14] **Chris Brown:** Sure and thank you for having me on this podcast, Peter. It should be clear of course I am a political scientist, not an ecologist. But I have been looking into this issue and if we look at the status of Africa, of elephants around the world, best estimate, there might be half a million elephants in the world today of which about 90% are in Africa, the rest in Asia. We have a fairly good count of the elephants in Africa that was conducted in 2014, 2015. so-called great elephant census which did, which is the largest wildlife survey that's ever been conducted and surveyed 18 countries in Africa where there's elephant range. And it's thought that that survey covered about 90% of the total African, elephants in Africa.

[00:04:58] It found that there were about 415,000 elephants in the survey area and the headline coming out of that was that this represents a serious decline over the last couple of decades. We don't have exact numbers, but it's possible that there were as many as a million elephants 20 years ago at the turn of the millennium.

[00:05:15] So certainly elephant populations in Africa are under serious threat and are in decline. Something else that came out of the survey though, was that the tremendous regional variation in Africa in terms both of numbers and the stress upon elephant populations. So of those elephants that exist in Africa, a mere 3%, for instance, are in West Africa, where populations were described as being small, fragmented and isolated.

[00:05:44] 70% of African elephants are in Southern Africa, where it was argued in the survey that there remained large virtually undisturbed tracks of elephant range, so great regional variation. Regional variation too in poaching pressures, poaching pressures have, in recent decades, very high in Eastern Africa and in central Africa. Tanzania, in the 10 years before the survey saw a 60% decline in its populations.

[00:06:12] Other countries in central Africa, like Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, and others have all seen a serious decline as a result of poaching pressures as well. Poaching pressures have not historically been as strong in Southern Africa where the majority of African elephants are. Botswana in a certain sense is a elephant superpower, if I could put it that way. The estimate is that there are currently about 130,000 elephants in Africa, which means that they're more elephants in Botswana than any other country in the world. And unlike many other countries in Africa, the elephant population of Africa has actually been growing or at least until recently. Estimates perhaps not quite as firm historically, but best estimates available are that at the time of independence in the 1960s, there were perhaps 10,000 elephants in Botswana.

[00:07:04] Then in the mid 1980s, there were perhaps 50,000 elephants in Botswana and that by about 2004, 2005, 15 years ago the population had reached its current number of 130,000 and it's been stable ever since. Botswana also has the highest density of elephants of any country in Africa, so in many respects it's been regarded as a refuge for elephants which is part of the reason why the story about hunting and poaching in Botswana attracted such attention.

[00:07:34] Final point I'd make is that when I'm speaking about national elephant populations, so many elephants in Botswana, so many elephants in Tanzania, whatever, that actually does not make ecological sense. Elephants are very large animals that cover a lot of territory. And they don't know when they don't respect national boundaries.

[00:07:54] So if we look at the elephant population in Botswana, which is concentrated in the northern part of the country, it's actually part of a larger elephant range which includes parts of Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Zambia, the so-called Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area, and this larger area it's estimated there are about 225,000 elephants, which are half the elephants in Africa in that one area.

[00:08:20] And certainly ecologically, you need to look at that group of elephants as a whole and not just pull out, you know, elephants in Botswana by itself.

[00:08:29] **Peter André:** Thank you, Chris, for kind of giving that bigger picture, which you know, to sum it up is elephant populations across Africa and globally are in decline, potentially serious decline and yet Botswana stands out as, as quite different. Joe, I'd like to turn to you now. If you want to add any nuance to what Chris just elaborated about the elephant populations and then I wonder if you can turn specifically to Botswana's 2014 hunting ban. What was the rationale behind the ban as you understand it and what were its effects?

[00:09:03] **Joseph E. Mbaiwa:** Okay. Thank you, Peter and thanks, Chris, for the good diagram that you gave. It is true that the population of elephants in Botswana has been on the increase at least for the last 20 years, also from a mere 10,000, that you mentioned to almost 150,000, right now. But the 150,000 figure somehow is conservative in the sense that you, we have the Department of Wildlife in National Parks that also did their survey and they came up with almost 250,000 elephants. And then we have this figure by Elephants Without Borders of 130,000 elephants. Again, we have been having the migration of elephants from neighboring countries of Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Namibia coming into Botswana ever since the hunting ban in 2014.

[00:10:00] So in reality the numbers might be higher than we thought. Having said that we had the hunting ban in 2014, as you rightly put it. The former President, President Khama is the one we came up with this hunting ban, and then in 2019, President Mokgweetsi Masisi actually reintroduced the hunting, we could have had hunting last year, but because of the COVID-19 pandemic hunting was not conducted.

[00:10:34] The main reason why there was a hunting ban in 2014, or what you were told or what Elephants Without Borders came up with from their study was that there was a lot of poaching going on. The Elephants Without Borders study does not mention that the elephants are on decline, but the majority of the species were on decline.

[00:10:55] So because of that, the government took that decision to, to actually ban hunting for all these species, including elephants. So the hunting ban was informed by this study, which was carried out by Elephants Without Borders that is Dr. Mike Chase's organization. But again, when you look at the political situation in Botswana by then President Khama, and his brother, Tshekedi Khama, these are people who are involved in the tourism industry in Botswana.

[00:11:28] They are actually pattern passing of the photographic tourism in the country, President Khama is a shareholder in Great Plains, which is one of the major photo tourism companies in the country. There has been a bit of a, some differences between the photo tourism industry in Botswana and the safari hunting industry in the country.

[00:11:51] So one would see in 2014 the photo industry won in the sense that they ended up seeing hunting should be banned. So you look at the political idealists in the country in 2014,

you look at their business interests and look at who are their partners in the tourism industry, then you would see.

[00:12:11] Partly the hunting ban was informed by the photo tourism industry, not interested in hunting. Why are they not interested in hunting? Simply because the market, the photo tourist market is mostly in North America, mostly in the US, Canada, the UK, Germany. There are some photo tourists who are completely against the hunting and because of that, you'll find that together with the animal rescue group, animal activists in North America in the global North, they are actually informed, or they influenced the hunting ban. So it's a mixture of reasons, but I would say the mere participation of the political leaders, by then President Khama, his brothers and into the tourism industry, the photo tourism industry won, and hence we ended up with a hunting ban.

[00:13:12] So the elephants really they were not on decline back then. Elephant numbers have been on the increase for the past 50 years or so. So there was no reason why this hunting ban was just inclusive of all the animals. Yes, there are other animal species like their rhinos, the number of them, which are in decline.

[00:13:34] I would agree that in addition to those species, hunting should not be banned, but for elephants I strongly argue that we need to go ahead and hand you the spaces. I hope Peter I have partly answered your question on why the hunting ban of 2014 in the country.

[00:13:53] **Peter André:** Yes. Thank you very much and as a political scientist, that's a fascinating answer because what I'm hearing from you is it, it had maybe something to do with elephant numbers, at least as they were perceived, but it was also about the politics of tourism and different types of tourism vying for those international dollars. I wonder if I can ask you, because you didn't tell us much about the effects of the ban and specifically you know, I'm curious about effects both on elephant populations, but also on people. You know, one of the most controversial things about the ban was the shoot-to-kill policy regarding poaching, which is a rather a draconian, if you will, or, you know, it's a very harsh way of dealing with people outside the law. What were the effects of these policies from your perspective?

[00:14:46] **Joseph E. Mbaiwa:** Okay, let me start with the shoot-to-kill policy. I wouldn't say this was a policy per se, because when you talk with your policy, policy should go through parliament, discussed in parliament, and then all the parliamentarians agree on it, I rather say, maybe this was a directive kind of from the office of the President, where there was a defense force, the anti-poaching unit he had given those orders to shoot and kill when there is a poacher, because right now, you can hunt all over in government offices and you'll never get that directive, or you will never get a document to say, we have this shoot-to-kill policy. However, up to today, the police is still being used and we have had so many incidents where people were killed, especially those coming from most of the poachers coming from neighboring countries of Namibia, Zambia. So that's where you have all these game organized international illegal treatment of elephants and rhinos. So we have a heard a number of people being killed, recently, I think a month ago or so, there was almost a diplomatic route between Botswana and Namibia because we had about four Namibians

who were killed on the Chobe River. So it's a policy which really is not supported but at least in Botswana, Botswanans are quiet about it. But the international community, they are taking that policy to say it is not okay, you cannot shoot and kill, instead you must arrest and take a person to court.

[00:16:27] On the other hand, the Botswana government has come to say, or the Botswana defense force has come to say, these guys are armed, they are armed with the arms of war. And you cannot arrest somebody who is switching you with an arms of war. So there's a bit of control, they say that it is true that some of these guys have been arrested with very dangerous arms of war and it's a controversy there. But coming to the hunting ban, its effects really had a serious effect when the livelihoods of the people of Botswana, especially those who are involved those who are involved in the tourism industry, safari hunting industry. In northern Botswana, we have this community based organizations.

[00:17:10] Actually in northern Botswana, the majority of the organizations are in northern Botswana, we have some in eastern Botswana. So you will realize that these are communities or these are villages they've been involved in hunting since maybe 1991 when they formed their organizations. But when this hunting ban came, what it means is that there was no longer revenue coming from safari hunting into these communities. Almost over 80% of the revenue which communities derived from the tourism industry was coming from hunting. So when that stopped in 2014 some of the communities simply collapsed. So this was one of the effects of the hunting ban. When people don't get the benefits from wildlife and wildlife happens to be in their local environment, they start developing negative attitude towards the wildlife.

[00:18:08] So this actually started happening from 2014 and the increase in poaching is partly blamed on the hunting ban because people are saying, because this former community rangers or community hunters were no longer hunting. Now, they were able to hate the gangs which come from across the border to hunt in the country.

[00:18:30] They started giving them a refuge in their areas. Hence, poaching went up. That is one of the stories we share which needs to be researched. The other thing, the fact is that when you stopped hunting in 2014, it is like Botswana now became a safe place for the elephants, we started having all these elephants coming from Namibia, from Zimbabwe, from Zambia.

[00:18:57] And when they started migrating into Botswana, yes, there might be other factors why maybe they started migrating into the country, but we started having a lot of these animals in northern Botswana, and they started actually moving to other areas of the country where I think for the past hundred years we have had no elephants there.

[00:19:20] The Nebula area there was even an elephant waterhole. Today, they killed an elephant in Palapye, this is almost the Eastern Botswana Mahalapye area. Right now as we speak the Central Kalahari Game Reserve has got about 1,500 elephants, which were not there for the past hundred years. So, we started having these animals moving into all these areas and in the process, what happened was that they started destroying crops and they, you know, the conflicts with farmers started escalating, going up. They were not only

destroying crops, they were also destroying property in terms of the livestock. Yeah, property was destroyed by these elephants, they started killing people. We had a lot of deaths between 2014 and the last year.

[00:20:09] So people, you know, these elephants were moving into these areas, you know, killing people, destroying property, destroying crops. So human wildlife conflict, in other words, started to increase in the area. So there were a lot of effects due to the hunting ban.

[00:20:24] **Peter Andréé:** You've painted quite a picture of how unique in many ways the situation in Botswana is.

[00:20:30] I think that's a central part of this story is that Botswana was dealing with unique dynamics when it came to the elephant population and took a variety of policy measures to deal with that. And I think you've explained well the difference, for example, between the interests of photographic tourism and, say the interests of local populations that were involved in wildlife hunting as part of community-based resource management.

[00:20:57] So I do want to come back to that question of community-based resource management as an alternative approach in a second, but I want to turn to Chris first because you know this question of the unique circumstances of Botswana and the political processes for managing wildlife populations in that context has been something that you've been thinking about in your work.

[00:21:20] And you have argued that the cancellation of the hunting ban relates to the reinstatement of democratic norms in Botswana. What do you mean by that?

[00:21:29] **Chris Brown:** To be clear Botswana is a democratic country. You know, if you look at these kinds of rankings, for instance, at Freedom House or other organizations put out evaluating the state of democracy, human rights, etcetera, in various countries around the world, Botswana is always quite near the top in the African rankings.

[00:21:47] But Joe has alluded to the rule of former President Khama and many observers, myself included, argue that during his time in office, which was from 2008 to 2018, you did see some disturbing trends of increased authoritarianism. As Joe alluded to, you saw a tendency for him to rule through executive decree rather than go through parliament.

[00:22:10] He was quite contemptuous of the press. In 2017, he went as far as charging a couple of journalists with sedition though those charges were later withdrawn. He had a very oppositional relationship with the unions in Botswana and perhaps more seriously, there were allegations and they never were proven, but there are certainly allegations in Botswana that there were a series of dirty tricks and even a handful of deaths that were unexplained of opponents of his and that there was, as a result of all of this, what people have described as a climate of fear that began to increase in Botswana.

[00:22:46] I don't want overstate it, Khama did win two democratic elections, but compared to how it had been there was a sense of a more authoritarian handed and increasingly a climate of fear. And that was reflected, for instance, in a Afrobarometer survey in 2018, we saw an increase in the percentage of the population who were concerned about the state of

democracy in Botswana, were concerned about these alleged dirty tricks, etcetera. As you mentioned, Khama left office in 2018, his successor, President Masisi who won the 2019 elections, he presented himself as trying to reestablish democratic norms in Botswana, if you will. He kind of did, you know, all the things that Khama hadn't been doing, he worked through parliament, he opened up to the press again, he opened up to the unions again, he launched a corruption probes, etcetera. And his victory, I certainly interpret his victory in the 2019 election, and by the way, in that election former President Khama left the ruling party that he and Masisi had both been part of and created his own new splinter party to campaign against President Masisi's party to this one democratic party and he was soundly defeated at the polls. So I certainly interpret the 2019 election as an endorsement of President Masisi and an endorsement of his drive to reestablish or reaffirm democratic norms in Botswana, this ties into the elephant controversy because the 2014 hunting ban was one of the signature policies of President Khama.

[00:24:15] He had a very high profile internationally as a conservationist. He did a number of different things, but the hunting ban was certainly his signature policy in this respect. And we can contrast how he brought in the ban versus how Masisi got rid of it. When he brought it in, as Joe said, he did it through executive decree it was not based on good science. Joe alluded to this, but the 2010 wildlife report that he based it on showed elephant numbers in fact were stable and that wildlife populations, different species were up or down in different parts of the country. But that overall, they were generally strong.

[00:24:52] And that if there were issues, it was primarily the result of at that time, ongoing drought, not any particular poaching pressures. So there was nothing in the science that really justified the ban. So that's how Khama brought in the ban in 2014. In 2019, when Masisi got rid of the ban or re-instated hunting, he was very scrupulous about doing it the exact opposite way.

[00:25:17] And as I say, I think this is just part of his broader effort to reestablish democratic norms in Botswana, but as you've already alluded, to he instituted debate in parliament, there was a debate about this, the issue of hunting. Coming out of that debate there was a parliamentary committee that was established, did a six month consultation campaign around the country, met with all actors and stakeholders, got their points of view, reported back to parliament that there is overwhelming, popular support in Botswana for a reinstatement, reinstating hunting for the reasons that Joe has described. And then he instituted hunting and reinstating of it was again, based on what I would describe as a Ferber scientific foundation.

[00:25:59] The fact that elephant populations were stable and that most of the populations by the wildlife species also remained stable. So certainly this issue of elephants and hunting is important in itself, but I do contextualize it within a broader debate in Botswana about the nature of democracy and reestablishing.

[00:26:20] The establishment of democratic norms by the current President Masisi following the term of his predecessor President, Khama.

[00:26:28] **Peter Andrée:** Joe, Chris and I were talking about your country and about the politics, the internal politics. And I wonder if you have anything you want to add on what Chris has just been talking about this question of how democracy and policies and approaches to hunting relate to one another in Botswana.

[00:26:49] **Joseph E. Mbaiwa:** I think I like what, I like Chris, his analysis is very good and to the point, so what really I can add is that it is true during President Khama's time there were a number of directives and there was that element of fear. Even though such as in academia, some of them were just afraid of writing what the results of their research is telling them because we also had people who were like kicked out of the country if they were not citizens of the country. Because of that, yes, there were those killings, we don't know who killed them because it has never been confirmed.

[00:27:32] So there was that element of fear, but with the introduction of the new government and the President Masisi, we have things way through parliament. And the first thing that happened was that the hunting ban was discussed in parliament and a motion was passed in parliament that we should reintroduce hunting.

[00:27:53] And then after that, there was this consultation where the members of parliament cabinet ministers went out there, there was a sub-committee of cabinet. They went out there to discuss with the affected communities whether we should reintroduce hunting or not. And the majority of the people, they supported the idea of hunting, that hunting should be reintroduced.

[00:28:19] So we have a situation whereby, at the moment, hunting was legally and formally introduced in the country through parliament. So that's what I would add. Democracy has increased in the country and we are actually happy that that's how things should maybe go. But again, I think we should also not downplay the role played by the animal rights group, especially in North America and how the organizations out there in North America are funding some of the anti-hunting sentiments in the country. So that one really played a very significant role in ensuring that you don't have hunting in the country, hunting was banned in 2014. Up to today, we still have the animal rights group really complaining and, you know, telling us that we should stop hunting, which to me really is not based on science like what Chris said, that is just emotions and the like.

[00:29:33] **Peter Andrée:** Thank you very much, Joe and I do in our final questions want to come back to this question of the North South relations. But before we do that, I want to ask you one more question, Joe. You introduced this idea of community-based resource management and as you know, my initial look at it is you're talking about a way that is about conserving animals while allowing some harvesting of them that works and that provides local populations with an incentive and a revenue stream for being part of that. Can you explain a little bit more about how that approach works, how you've seen it work and where, and how it contrasts with this more, this approach of a bank?

[00:30:15] **Joseph E. Mbaiwa:** When you look at the community-based nature of our service management approach, it is actually focusing on two fronts, that is improve the rural

livelihoods, especially where we have these communities and wildlife areas. Secondly, the approach is promoting the conservation of natural resources, especially wildlife.

[00:30:39] The whole argument behind this approach is that communities will never support conservation if they're not benefiting from the resources. For them to support conservation, they must benefit from the resources, they must benefit from the wildlife in the environment. The benefits from wildlife should actually exceed the costs.

[00:31:06] But if the benefits are low, they will never, never support and support conservation. This actually almost happened in 2014 during the hunting ban because some people no longer went hunting. When hunting stopped, when 80% of their revenue was no longer there, when some of the community projects, community activities were no longer being carried out because of the hunting and the hunting ban.

[00:31:36] Some of those guys simply went out there to start poaching, poaching escalated. So the whole idea of community-based resource management is that communities should benefit from the wildlife resources in that environment for them to conserve those resources and this has been found to be true especially in southern Africa, scholars like Amanda.

[00:32:01] Amanda was my supervisor at Texas A&M. She did much of her work in South America. So if a community has benefited, they benefit from natural resources, they will support conservation. I think finding a power also did some studies in Nepal, in Asia, out there. So this community approach really has been found to be working.

[00:32:28] And that's what I've been advocating for here in the country to see if we are to conserve not only elephants, the rhinos as well, other species as well, we need to ensure that communities in wildlife areas, they benefit from these resources either through photographic tourism, or even through hunting, because hunting in Botswana is selective.

[00:32:52] You cannot just go out there as an individual and you start hunting. The wildlife quotas are given, allocated to communities and that is manned by the Department of Wildlife and National Parks after some wildlife surveys or some form of survey has been done. So the community-based resource management approach to me is one of the approaches that we can actually use to promote conservation of natural resources as well as to promote, improve the rural levels in our countries.

[00:33:25] **Peter André:** Thank you very much. We only have a few minutes left. I would like to turn to this question of the North South relations. Chris, your analysis of the international reaction to the removal of the hunting ban in Botswana is that it reveals an ongoing racism towards Africa and what you call an eco-colonial approach.

[00:33:45] Can you clarify what you mean by that term? Eco-colonialism and racism playing out in this story.

[00:33:51] **Chris Brown:** You know, my interest in this, I'm not an ecologist, I'm a political scientist and I came to this issue when I was in Botswana on sabbatical in 2019, because I was struck by how different the response to this whole controversy was in North America

and amongst the people I knew in North America as compared to how it was being treated in Botswana. People in North America fed very much by what I would regard as quite sensationalistic press coverage, and also as Joe has alluded to, certainly driven by a lot of the animal rights movements around the world, tended to argue that, you know, we had to have this hunting ban because it was the only way to preserve elephants from going extinct and there tends to be this kind of conflation of hunting and poaching as if stopping hunting would prevent poaching.

[00:34:42] Whereas in fact, as Joe has just explained a lot of his research and the research of others is that stopping hunting actually may have led to an increase ironically in poaching. So, you know, that was kind of the assumption in the North that, you know, we had to have a hunting ban, we had to have this very militarized approach to conservation inside Botswana.

[00:35:05] As you've heard, there was a much widespread, popular support for hunting. There was support for this idea of community-based natural resource management and the idea that the way you preserve animals is through property regulated and controlled conservation measures, including both photographic tourism and properly controlled hunting.

[00:35:24] And it's this contrast, between how we understood it in North America and how they understood it in Botswana that led me to this idea of eco-colonialism. We could define it as the imposition of European conservation paradigms and power structures on indigenous peoples. And I argue that the way it is operating in this current controversy might involve perhaps five different elements.

[00:35:49] What element I think I described as nostalgia. I think in the West, there's still a very widespread notion of Africa as untamed, pristine wilderness. A wilderness, by the way, in which no people, no black people are present, and that's an image that we all want to hold. Something that I regard is very significant.

[00:36:12] What is the single greatest source of information that people in the West have about the Botswana? Well, it's not anything that any political scientist or anybody else put out, it's a movie put up by national geographic called The Last Lions, which has been viewed by perhaps half a billion, that's with a 'b', people, which describes in this very andromorphic ways the life story of a given lion. There are no people in that movie and this is the greatest single source of information that people outside Botswana have about that country. So there's this continual image of Africa as a place without cities, without people, without black people.

[00:36:53] The second thing I want to talk about is paternalism, the idea that the West and Western experts are the ones whose expertise must be looked to, and that people in Africa don't have expertise to be paid attention to. And in this whole controversy, experts in the animal rights movement in the North and certain white experts, some of them in Kenya and South Africa, they were the ones who were reported on in international media.

[00:37:19] People inside Botswana, people like Joe and others who had a different line tended not to be heard from, and that I found very concerning. The third element that I think is involved here is what I call the imposition of universal values as a way of enforcing Western values and shutting out African ones.

[00:37:38] The claim that there is a common shared heritage in wildlife, which gives people outside Botswana the right to intervene and to try to influence Botswana's decisions about how to deal with these issues. Something I found very striking was that as part of this whole controversy, one of the leading animal rights movements in the world, Humane Society International, based in the United States, did a survey, commissioned a survey, paid tens of thousands of dollars for this survey.

[00:38:07] They surveyed over a thousand people for their opinions about whether or not hunting should be allowed to resume and the answer was overwhelmingly no, hunting should not be allowed to resume. But who did they survey? They surveyed only American citizens and so think of what's being said here, that the voice of American citizens should be heard.

[00:38:26] They didn't serve me a single person in Botswana. So they were assuming that it wasn't important or necessary to hear about what people in Botswana might have to say about this. The fourth thing, I think Joe's alluded to this, I certainly see very unequal power relationships here. Something that was just beneath the surface in this whole controversy was a threat, and that threat was that if Botswana did not ban hunting or it did not do what the animal rights movements internationally wanted it to do, then those groups would institute a boycott of Botswana's very profitable tourism industry. Tourism is the second largest sector of the economy and so certainly a widespread boycott of the tourism industry would be very, very harmful and all the international groups, there was always that veiled or not so veiled threat behind everything they said: if you don't, then we will, if you don't ban hunting, then we will boycott your industry. And then of course finally I think there's a great deal of hypocrisy here.

[00:39:31] Africans were being asked to ban hunting and were being pressured to ban hunting. And I point out that, of course, here in Canada, hunting is a perfectly legal activity, it's regulated and controlled in precisely the same way that it's regulated and controlled in Botswana. So it does come across as hypocritical for people in Canada and other Western countries where hunting is legal.

[00:39:56] For them to be advocating so strongly for a hunting ban in a country like Botswana, all of it to me points to yes, a fundamentally racist attitude here in which people in the global North presume to be able to speak for, speak to Africans about how Africans should deal with conservation challenges.

[00:40:18] And I find it very problematic.

[00:40:20] **Peter André:** Joe I'd like to turn to you here and I welcome your reflections on anything Chris has just been talking about. I also understand that you've also been thinking about how racism and the tourism sector in Botswana play out.

[00:40:35] **Joseph E. Mbaiwa:** Yes. I'm trying to, Chris did a very good analysis of what his opinion of the global North and global South, the racism in the tourism industry in Botswana, that was a good analysis. You look at racism in the tourism industry, both safari and photographic tourism, it has got a long history in Botswana. It dates back long, long pre-during the British commoners who were the hunters coming into the country.

[00:41:03] He talked about these people who were coming to this bush were the animals and the human beings. So there was a lot of hunting back then, and then it went on up to the seventies and then that's when we started having the photographic tourism. And the photographic tourism again, who was in there most of the managers in the tourism lodges and camps were coming from South Africa and they just like coming to this country to help people who know nothing about tourism.

[00:41:35] And by then, yes, there were few educated people in the country with degrees and then came independence in 1966. I think they were less than 50 people with bachelor's degrees in the country. So I think that was perpetuated up to today and then we started even seeing the animal rights group in the global North. You talk of all the protocols, you talk of scientists, you talk of what most of these protocols, most of these policies on hunting, on tourism they're coming from the global North and the global South, they should adopt, they should agree and not oppose, including in the world of experts who is there. Most of the researchers who have been doing research in the country, a few of them are from Botswana. The majority have been coming from the global North, some from South Africa, and when I say South Africa, white South Africa. So you have all this racism and if I write something as a citizen of Botswana and somebody writes it coming from the US and they are white, they are likely to take his recommendations as compared to mine. So this has been at play in the country for a very long time, and this has actually influenced the tourism industry, influence the safari hunting industry in the country. Again, when you look at what is happening right now when it comes to hunting, to me photographic tourism and safari hunting, they're not antagonistic to each other they complement each other. In Botswana, photographic tourism is actually being undertaken in core areas, in prime areas. Whereas safari hunting is in peripheral areas where people live because the core areas, most of them are protected areas, national parks, game reserves. We don't hunt in national parks and game reserves, but you hunt outside the national parks and game reserves, and when you hunt outside, that's where the people live. I looked at what the Humane International of the US did, the study that they conducted, to me you look at it you laugh at it, you look at the method they use to really practice in society. But people tend to believe that I'm saying that was not a society in quotation marks. To me it was not scientific enough, but they were doing that, they didn't even interview anybody in Botswana, you interview people in Botswana at the moment, they will tell you that we want hunting and animals are killing us, we don't want animals in our villages. So you end up with a situation whereby people of Botswana, there's that perception to say animals perceive animals better than people. To them, an animal is more important than human life, which is not supposed to be the case. The truth about it is that the people in Botswana want conservation. We promote conservation, but we are looking at a situation whereby there's this concept of a social ecological framework where we are seeing human wellbeing and ecology.

[00:44:54] We need to look at them. There has to be a balance. We shouldn't actually focus on ecology alone and leave the human wellbeing outside. There should be a balance between the two. We should look at them and then we will achieve conservation.

[00:45:08] **Peter Andrée:** Thank you, Joe and Chris, and I would love to keep asking questions, but our time is coming to an end.

[00:45:16] And so, just by way of wrapping up, I've found this a fascinating conversation today. We began by talking about elephant populations and whether they are on decline or are on the rise. And very quickly went to a conversation on the politics of the domestic tourism sector, and from there, how that engages with the global North and with questions of ongoing colonial attitudes from the North and racism from the North. And I want to thank both of you for being here because I feel like by talking to an African scholar from Botswana who has clearly studied these issues and has a very grounded perspective from which to talk about it. And then someone like yourself, Chris, who is from my university looking from here, but with a very different perspective than a lot of the northern animal rights and welfare groups that we've just been talking about. The two of you have brought a lot of clarity for me and I think for the students who are listening to this podcast. Thank you both for joining us on the ecopolitics podcast today. For anyone listening to this program, we welcome your feedback via email.

[00:46:25] You can download the podcasts on any of the apps where you get your podcasts, which is iTunes so on, and we look forward to speaking to you in our next episode.