

## International Actors and Insurgency in the Niger Delta Region, 1999-2010

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This paper examines the role of international actors in the Nigeria insurgency between 1999 and 2010, focusing on the socio-economic and environmental legacies of their interventions. It aims to assess the success of international diplomatic efforts in addressing the insurgency's contextual causes, particularly environmental destruction and socio-economic disparities. **Method:** The study applies the World-Ecology framework to link global capitalist flows with local ecological and social disasters. A historical and qualitative research method is used, drawing from secondary sources such as scholarly publications, non-governmental reports, and global news agencies. **Results:** The findings reveal that multinational corporations, such as Shell, played a significant role in exacerbating environmental degradation in the Niger Delta, contributing to local resentment and insurgency. While non-governmental organizations like Amnesty International highlighted these abuses, their impact was limited due to the absence of binding legal frameworks and the political complexities involved. **Novelty:** This paper offers a unique perspective by applying the World-Ecology framework to analyze the intersection of global capitalism, environmental destruction, and socio-political unrest in the Niger Delta. It underscores the failure of international interventions to address the root causes of the insurgency and provides recommendations for improving corporate accountability and advancing peacebuilding efforts.

## INTRODUCTION

International actors denote a wide range of actors that influence the course of international relationships, which extends beyond the traditional scope of nation-states. These actors are intergovernmental organizations, multinational corporations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), transnational advocacy networks, and even individuals whose actions are echoed across borders. Their activities have become more and more core to studying diplomatic, economic, and security processes, frequently operating in context to complex interdependencies that entirely traverse the borders of states. As an example, the proliferation of non-state armed groups had far-reaching consequences on regional diplomacy and international security policies, disrupting conventional state-based approaches to international relations. Likewise, the emergence of epistemic communities has demonstrated the way groups of knowledge bearers can lead international political bargaining, including in the management of space debris via knowledge intermediaries like the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNCOPUOS). These dynamics underscore the necessity of expanding the conceptualization of international actors in order to capture the interconnectedness and complexity of contemporary global governance.

A complex and dynamic phenomenon, insurgency remains an ongoing threat to state sovereignty and international stability. Over recent years, researchers have

observed a particularly marked change by insurgent movements in terms of character and strategy. To illustrate this, Metz emphasizes that modern insurgency becomes more networked and narrative-based, making use of digital platforms and social media to widen its scope and presence forcefully [1]. This transformation underscores the necessity that states embrace changes in their counterinsurgency strategies to meet the demands of modern war. Moreover, Ucko identifies three additional strategies-localized, infiltrative, and ideational-that insurgents have adapted to surmount the hurdles of advanced state security devices. These stands highlight the adaptive and cyclical character of rebellious communities in the context of changing geopolitical environments [2].

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria has been one of the centers of international attention as a place of a complex interplay between local insurgency and international interests. In that regard, insurgency is characterized as coordinated, frequently armed opposition to the state, usually based on a sense of injustice or marginalization. Historic experiences of environmental degradation, economic exploitation, and political exclusion fuel such movements in the Niger Delta. Foreign governments, multinational corporations, and international organizations have also had significant roles in either fueling or attempting to fuel down the insurgency. Their involvement extends to economic investment, diplomatic intervention, humanitarian interventions, and environmental advocacy. Understanding the relationship between insurgency and the international players in this region is crucial in developing comprehensive strategies to resolve conflicts and enhance sustainable growth [3].

Due to factors like the rise of militant groups such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and the Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the Niger Delta experienced a surge of militant activity between 1999 and 2010. These groups undertook acts of resistance, sabotage on oil infrastructure, kidnapping of foreign oil workers, and violent conflicts with the Nigerian security forces. Underlying much of the insurgency was the impression that both the Nigerian government and the international oil companies were exploiting the oil resources of the region with little contribution to the local communities. Multinational oil companies and international actors were seen to be aware of the environmental degradation and economic inequalities that fuelled the upsurge in the insurgency. These actors have responded by increasingly facing demands to be questioned and held to account by the local communities and international watchdogs. The era also saw several international diplomatic efforts to address the underlying causes of the conflict, although their validity remains controversial.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Internationally, the Niger Delta of Nigeria has become a center of interest due to its abundance of oil reserves and nexus of local insurgent factions and transnational networks. Between 1999 and 2010, militant action in this region increased, chiefly through organizations such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF). These groups undertook acts of resistance, sabotage on oil infrastructure, kidnapping of foreign oil workers, and violent

conflicts with the Nigerian security forces. Underlying much of the insurgency was the impression that both the Nigerian government and the international oil companies were exploiting the oil resources of the region with little contribution to the local communities. The role of non-Afghan actors, such as foreign governments, multinational corporations, and international organizations, was to either exacerbate or counter the insurgency. Their intervention, whether in terms of economic investments or diplomatic interactions, humanitarian interventions or environmental activism, was extensive and manifold. Understanding the relationship between insurgency and the international players in this region is crucial in developing comprehensive strategies to resolve conflicts and enhance sustainable growth.

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The Niger-Delta experience of international and insurgent dynamics (1999-2010) throws light on the complexity of contemporary conflicts. Large flows of foreign governments and multinational enterprises have had a deeply ramifying effect on the phenomenon of insurgency, frequently augmenting existing grievances. As international actors have actively worked towards the elimination of the underlying causes of the conflict, the effectiveness of these measures remains unclear. It is against this backdrop that this study was undertaken to examine the roles and impacts of international actors in the insurgency within the Niger Delta region during this period. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine the role of international actors in either exacerbating or alleviating the insurgency in the Niger Delta region from 1999 to 2010.
2. Assess the socio-economic and environmental impacts of international involvement in the Niger Delta during the insurgency period.
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of international diplomatic interventions in addressing the root causes of the insurgency and its consequences in the Niger Delta.

### **Theoretical Underpinning**

The paper is built on the theoretical framework known as World-Ecology, which was developed by Jason W. Moore in 2015. The theory is a conglomeration of environmental history, political economy, and social theory to excavate the constitutive

alignments of nature, society and capitalism. To maintain accumulation, Moore views capitalism as historically dependent on the appropriation of cheap nature - cheap labor, cheap land, cheap resources. This view disputes the traditional environmentalist accounts of ecological devaluation as a by-product instead of a structural determinant of capitalist development. When we apply the World-Ecology theory to the Niger delta issue, we observe how global capitalism and activities of oil multinational corporations accelerated local insurgency through mobilization of both human and environmental capitals. This theoretical approach is especially relevant to analyzing the complex interdependence of transnational actors and insurgent groups in the area at the time under consideration [5].

Niger Delta insurgency is particularly relevant to the World-Ecology approach as it provides a historical materialist perspective on the socio-environmental conflicts experienced in the area. Theorizing contemporary violence as a development of earlier forms of extraction-meaning both the transatlantic slave trade and the exploitation of the oil palm-Mooreland locates the struggles of the people in the Niger Delta as part of a wider materialist history of capitalist extraction. This practice prefigures the persistence of dispossession and resistance in the long run and reveals how communities at the local level have actively fought against the expropriation of their sources by both state and non-state forces. Historical dotted lines, in the example of the Niger Delta indicate how the historical effects of colonial and post-colonial resource extraction generated the socio-political nature of the territory, and subsequently, how the emergence of insurgent formations has become a form of reaction upon further exploitation [6].

What the world-ecology perspective means in this study is that it provides a part of a holistic approach to explain the possibility of insurgency in the Niger Delta. This framework offers insights into the underlying causes of the conflict because it highlights the interrelated nature of ecological degradation, economic exploitation, and social inequality. It allows to analyze beyond simplified political or ethnic explanations and to examine the structural processes involved in violence and resistance. Additionally, the World-Ecology view emphasizes the essentiality of environmental aspects in conflict analysis, since ecological health is closely interrelated with social and economic welfare. Using this method of thought, aimed at examining the capacities of international actors in the Niger Delta insurgency, we shall see how global economic stakes and ecological policies have influenced our local conflicts and thereby better understand the forces involved at work.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The research utilized both historical and qualitative research to undertake the role of international actors in the Niger Delta insurgency of 1999-2010. The investigation included a critical reading of secondary materials such as textbooks, journal articles, newspapers, governmental publications, and international news aggregates to get a comprehensive overview of the socio-political and environmental landscape of the area [7]. The data was then subjected to content analysis, which enabled a subtle discussion of

the historical nature of the insurgency, and the actions taken by international actors. This methodological decision ensured that the research emphasizes the multi-faceted nature of the conflict and the agency of the actors.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### **Roles of international actors in either exacerbating or alleviating the insurgency in the Niger Delta region from 1999 to 2010**

International actors, primarily multinational oil companies, foreign governments, and international organizations, played a crucial role in the insurgency in the Niger Delta in 1999-2010 in Nigeria. These institutions frequently fuelled the conflict by exploitative practices that were protective of a technically unsustainable response to ecological degradation, and insufficient engagement with local communities. In response to such perceived injustices, militant organizations, like the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), have emerged in response, resorting to sabotage tactics of oil infrastructure and kidnapping foreign nationals, to create awareness of the socio-economic and environmental plight of the local population [8].

Multinational Oil Corporations and the Environment: Martha Trotsky- What role have the multinational oil corporations (especially Shell) played in the ecocide encountered by the Niger Delta, and how has this slavery-created Slave redemption contributed to the increase of insurgency in the area, 1999-2010. When it comes to the race of oil mining, these companies have found themselves responsible of large scale environmental mismanagement which has left a legacy of polluted soil and harm to the ecosystem. Specifically, Shell has a record of catastrophic oil spills, gas flaring, and soil contamination, all of which have long-term implications on the surrounding ecosystem. An example that comes to mind is the Bodo community oil spill of 2008, where Shell operations polluted farm lands and water catchments. An in-depth economic analysis of the area by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) revealed that one of the most important fields Shell has operated in, Ogoniland, was seriously polluted, with some parts potentially requiring up to 20 to 30 years to restore their health [9]. This contamination had significantly affected the livelihood of these residents, especially those who depended on farming and fishing, leaving an economic vacuum that was easily exploited by the militants. This environmental devastation also stoked socio-economic resentment that helped to fuel mounting militancy within the territory [10].

Additionally, the reaction BlackBerry has provided to the environmental harm is largely condemned as developing. Despite its admission of participation in certain spills, cleanup operations have been sparse and unsatisfactory most of the time. An example of this is that after the Bodo oil spills of 2008, considered one of the largest in the history of Nigeria, it was only in 2015 that Shell settled to pay the impacted communities a meager sum of \$55 million, which is projected to be insufficient to address the long-term environmental and health effects [11]. According to activists, compensation provided by the company does not match the lifelong harm it has caused to the environment which continues to affect the health, water, and agriculture of the communities. As Shell has

declared a move to withdraw on-shore oil in the area; some fear that the new operators will neither embrace any responsibility to the environmental legacy left by Shell. This operational redistribution has raised the alarm that, should the communities not be subjected to mechanisms of accountability, they will suffer the devastating impacts of the oil production [12].

Environmental destruction caused by Shell and other multinationals has directly been a catalyst to the Niger Delta insurgency. These corporations exploited the native resources, which resulted in the rise of militant organizations, such as runs the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). SAEI: The insurgents view multinational oil companies as exploiters, and their militancy, including sabotage of oil installations and abductions, is a way of attracting attention to the ugly socio-economic and environmental scenario proving the region. These rebel groups do not just fight over the resources of the region but for the survival and the dignity of communities that are left poor and underserved as a result of decades of environmental destruction and socioeconomic exclusion [13]. The relentless pirating of oil resources in the Niger Delta with little being done by Shell and the Nigerian government has contributed further to the insurgency. The case highlights the imperativeness of multinationals adopting more environmentally friendly policies, as well as the Nigerian government implementing stricter ecological regulations to address the factors underlying the insurgence and create a lasting peace in the country.

Foreign Governments or Strategic Interests: Foreign governments, particularly those of oil-importing countries, have been instrumental in the dynamics of insurgency in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria between 1999 and 2010. Some governments still found it necessary to offer humanitarian resumes and support peace processes; others returned to their strategic and economic needs, particularly concerning oil exploration. An example is the U.S.F. military collaborating with the Nigerian government, where equipment was provided to combat oil theft and militancy. That support, though, was often blind to the human rights violations and environmental consequences of multinationals petroleum interests in the region. The U.S. aid was very specific and focused on ensuring the stability of oil production in Nigeria, which is crucial to the energy security of the United States. However, lowland communities interpreted this as a tacit approval of the exploitation of their lands and resources, contributing to the growing resentment. Such foreign interference into the predation of Nigerian oil resources could only serve to intensify the predation of the oil resources by the Nigerian insurgent groups since these groups saw such interference as implicit support toward the status quo that was disadvantageous to other groups in the Niger Delta [14].

Beside military cooperation, the presence of external economic stakes complicated the situation. The U.S. imports were also influenced by the war with Nigeria; the disruption by the insurgency of the oil being produced led to increase in oil prices in the world market. On this backdrop, the U.S. government, along with other international participants, encouraged the idea of private-sector alliances as a method to stabilize its oil production and reduce the impact of militancy. Nevertheless, these activities mostly

focused on the economics and security of oil extraction without considering the broader socio-economic and environmental problems of local communities. To take one case, it focused more on keeping oil flow rather than addressing the systemic environmental degradation related to oil extraction. This lack of a holistic approach undermined the effective resolution of conflicts as their underlying causes—specifically environmental degradation and social inequality—remained unaddressed. In this way, Western actions to stabilize oil production actually sparked the frustrations and resentments of the locals and consequently rooted the insurgency even further [15].

The influence of foreign states, especially in their prioritization of oil security over the lives of native people, highlights the complexity between international interest and local eternity. Despite the attempts of global forces to contain militancy and other peace, what puppets often overlooked were the underlying grievances aired centuries ago by the people of the Niger Delta. Moreover, the assumption that foreign governments in collusion with multinational corporations had conspired in the exploitation of the resources of the region served to intensify local resentment and alienation. This scenario strengthens the necessity of a more balanced approach to conflict management in the region—of which addresses not only the security and the economic needs of international players, but also the environmental and socio-economic needs of local populations. This combined strategy is not only essential in enhancing long-term stability within the Niger Delta, but also a means to counter the insurgency and achieve sustainable peace [16].

International Organisations and Humanitarian Efforts; In Nigeria, the actions of international organisations such as the Niger Delta, as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), have been crucial in informing the world of the atrocious human rights and environmental abuses occurring in the region. Amnesty International has described a trail of human rights abuse, including the devastating environmental effects of oil drilling in the area. A 2018 report by Amnesty International found that more than 17 million litres of oil have been spilled in the Niger Delta, most of them the result of large multinational corporations like Shell and Eni. These releases have had significant ecological impacts, such as water earlier contamination and damage to local agricultural lands that form parts of the communities livelihoods. Friends of the Earth Europe, in collaboration with Amnesty International have been instrumental in championing environmental justice. In 2014, they indicted Shell on grounds it did not appropriately account pollution in the Niger Delta despite having earlier promised cleanup. Their report included that the company had been negligent, and that urgent measures need to be taken to prevent the impact of the oil spill [17].

Nevertheless, the rightful role of these organizations to make significant change has been undermined by a number of critical variables. The absence of effective international legal mechanisms to punish corporations that inflict environmental damage is one of the most daunting barriers. Although some NGOs, including Amnesty International and Friends of the Earth Europe succeeded in bringing awareness and mobilizing public opinion, they frequently lack the force of law to make multinational corporations take concrete action. Furthermore, Nigeria presents serious political

problems, including corruption and unreliable systems of governance. These actors have eroded environmental legal sanctity because the Nigerian government has been too much tied to oil corporations, thus giving rise to lack of political will to deal with the environmental catastrophe. There is also the worry that the duty to achieve the justice that affected communities need comes before economic growth concerns due to prioritisation. Moreover, international organisations have raised stakeholder awareness at the global level; however, this entraps the failure to produce tangible change due to systemic failures in the corporate and political fields [18].

Foreign actors have decisively influenced the Niger Delta insurgency. Some money monopolies essentialized the struggle by being exploitative, whereas others contributed to socialization and creating awareness and propelled change. The interplay that ensued between these actors and the local populations underscored the value of a long-term conflict management strategy that considers the factors underlying the insurgency, including the process of environmental degradation, poverty, and even political exclusion. International actors could have played a more structured and morally aware intervention to contain the insurgency and result in a more lasting and peaceful solution to the conflict.

### **Socio-economic and environmental impacts of international involvement in the Niger Delta during the insurgency period**

The Niger delta in Nigeria, with its deposit of oil resource, has experienced severe socio-economic and environmental issues due to international intervention, particularly during the insurgency in 1999 to 2010, particularly by multinational oil companies and foreign governments. The influence of these international actors has contributed to the economic development of the region, but has also led to severe environmental degradation and socio-economic inequalities, increasing dissatisfaction among the local population and exacerbating insurgent activity.

The oil giants, especially Shell, have been instrumental in the Niger Delta economy. Nonetheless, their activities have frequently led to environmental degradation, such as oil spills, gas flaring, and deforestation. An example is the ExxonMobil oil spill experienced in Akwa Ibom State in 2010 which led to over a million gallons of crude oil spanning in the Atlantic Ocean and severely affecting the coastal communities and their livelihoods. These disasters have not only devastated the ecosystem, but interfered with the economies of the area, particularly in the areas of fishing and agriculture, contributing to increasing poverty and unemployment rates. Furthermore, foreign investments have typically resulted in marginalization of locals, with multinational firms frequently hiring non-locals, yielding to contribute additional socio-economic disparities [19], [20].

The socio-economic and environmental situation in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria has been significantly influenced by foreign governments or, more precisely, those of the oil-importing nations, particularly throughout the insurgency era of 1999-2010. As some nations engaged in provision of humanitarian aid and support peace efforts, others pursued strategic and economic gains, frequently at the cost of local society. Another example is the case of the United States, which coordinated with the

Nigerian government through military partnership to combat oil theft and militancy. This assistance has come under criticism of geared towards securing oil reserves at the expense of human rights violations and environmental destruction. Local communities understood such actions as a silent acceptance of the voiceless exploitation of their resources, a phenomenon that resulted in the growth of resentment and backing of insurgent groups like the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) [19].

The U.S. military support to Nigeria involved supplying equipment, and training to fight against oil theft and militancy. Although these efforts aimed at stabilizing the region and securing oil resources, they tended to overshadow the real problems of ecological deterioration and socio-economic marginalization of local populations. Human rights and environmental concerns than the oil security preoccupation created a sense of foreign collaboration in exploiting the resources of the Niger Delta. This image served to fuel the anger amongst the local population, who perceived the foreign governments as accomplices in their marginalization and exploitation. Consequently, the living standards in the communities suffered as oil security gained preeminence over the welfare of the locals, a factor that has led to the continued insurgency in the area [19].

NGOs and international organisations have been involved in highlighting the situation of the people of the Niger Delta. Human rights abuses and environmental violations have been reported by organisations like Amnesty International and Friends of the Earth Europe demanding the Nigerian government and multinational corporations to hold themselves accountable. Their reports have attracted international attention to the issues in the region, compelling international players to reconsider their engagement and policies. Nonetheless, the lack of enforceable international legal frameworks, as well as the intricate Nigerian regional politics that tend to impede the adoption of proposed measures, have limited the efficacy of such efforts (Amnesty International, 2018; Friends of the Earth Europe, 2014). International intervention in the Niger Delta during the era of insurgency has had significant socio-economic and environmental consequences. External investment has added to the oil wealth that characterizes Nigeria, but has also led to significant levels of environmental degradation and socio-economic inequalities in the Niger Delta. Multinational corporations and foreign governments have placed economic and strategic interests above the welfare of local populations, negatively impacting upon the grievances and contributing to insurgent wars and movements. They require an integrated approach, ensuring that the economic growth is offset by environmental sustainability and social equity to ensure the gains of the oil resources are equally distributed to all stakeholders [21], [22], [23].

### **Effectiveness of international diplomatic interventions in addressing the root causes of the insurgency and its consequences in the Niger Delta**

Remarkably, international diplomatic initiatives within Niger Delta in the insurgency phase (1999-2010) were worried about increasing violence, environmental

destruction, and the socio-economic inequalities surrounding oil exploitation. Although they have attracted worldwide attention to the difficulties faced by the region, these interventions have proved controversial when it comes to their ability in derail the root causes of the insurgency. This Impact Assessment identifies these international diplomatic efforts, evaluating their success, constraints, and lessons to future peacebuilding approaches.

Among the most notable foreign diplomatic interventions was the establishment in 2000 of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), a federal institution aimed to stimulate the rapid and sustainable development of the region. International donors, such as the World Bank, funded the NDDC, facilitating a variety of development projects through financial aid and technical assistance. These initiatives focused on infrastructure enhancement, environmental rehabilitation, and capacity building. Nonetheless, succulence of the NDDC has been constrained by circumstances such as corruption, mismanagement, and lack of alignment with local stakeholders. With this has come projects failing their planned purposes and the underlying causes to the insurgency, such as environmental degradation and socio-economic marginalization have yet to be effectively addressed [24], [25].

Among interventions, a notable one was the amnesty initiative started by the Nigerian government in 2009, facilitated by international players. The programme proposed amnesties where militants would deliver their weapons in favor of vocational training, stipends, and reintegration support. Although the amnesty itself helped reduce the number of militant acts dramatically, opponents have argued that it provided only a somewhat temporary solution that could not mitigate the underlying challenges of resource control, environmental justice, and political exclusion. Moreover, reintegration was problematic because of the absence of support structures and unaddressed grievances of ex-militants [26], [27].

NGOs, such as Amnesty International and Friends of the Earth, have also played a crucial role in creating awareness of human rights violations and environmental offenses in the Niger Delta. What they have accomplished is to shed light upon the situation, to make the region visible to other countries and to force multinational corporations and the Nigerian government to do something. Nevertheless, the influence of these NGOs has been limited because of the lack of enforceable international legal frameworks and the complicated political situation in Nigeria. Their advocacy efforts have not translated into tangible changes within the region, nor have systemic dynamics that lead to the insurgency effectively been tackled [28].

Although the international diplomacy has shedding light on the situation in the Niger Delta, it has achieved little success in removing the underlying factors behind the insurgency. The focus on short term solutions including amnesty programmes and development projects without addressing the challenges of environmental degradation, resource control, and political marginalization have served to crippled attainment of sustainable peace in the region.

## CONCLUSION

**Fundamental Finding :** This study demonstrates that international actors, including multinational corporations (especially Shell), foreign governments, and international organizations, significantly contributed to the insurgency in the Niger Delta between 1999 and 2010 by exacerbating environmental degradation, socio-economic disparities, and political marginalization. The World-Ecology framework provided critical insights into how global capitalist dynamics, driven by resource extraction, were entangled with local struggles for environmental justice and political autonomy. **Implication :** The findings highlight the need for stronger international legal frameworks to hold multinational corporations accountable for environmental harm and to ensure that local communities benefit from resource extraction. Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of long-term peacebuilding initiatives that address both the socio-economic and political root causes of the insurgency in the Niger Delta. **Limitation :** The study relies on secondary sources, including reports from non-governmental organizations and multinational corporations, which may not fully capture the lived experiences of the local population or the depth of corporate-government relationships in the region. **Future Research :** Future studies could explore the effectiveness of local community empowerment programs and evaluate the impact of multinational corporations' compliance with international environmental regulations. Additionally, further research could investigate the role of international diplomacy in fostering sustainable governance and peacebuilding efforts, particularly in resource-rich regions with ongoing conflicts.

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