

The Problem of “Oil Theft” in Nigeria’s Niger Delta: A Psycho-Philosophical Analysis

Alasia Boma Ivy

Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Email: ivyalasia@gmail.com

Abstract

The non-legal appropriation of crude oil from pipelines in Nigeria’s Niger Delta has resulted in severe socioeconomic and ecological consequences. This paper examines the problem drawing from the psychoanalytical philosophy of Frantz Fanon and the ecofeminist critique of Western dualism. Using a diagnostic, conceptual, and interpretative analytic methodology, it charts why global energy politics reproduces a structure of resource colonialism wherein international and national interests form a toxic synergy. This alliance intensified by global energy demands, generates environmental racism and slow violence. Oil theft represents a counter-violent trauma response to this violence embedded within the anthropocentric logic of contemporary resource governance. Therefore is symptomatic of an ontological crisis created by the colonial imposition of a dualistic schema. Militant factions and criminalized intermediaries emerge as reactive agents within this necro-political economy, which explains the ineffectiveness of top-down measures like the militarization of the Niger Delta. This paper advocates for the decolonization of resource governance through non-anthropocentric approaches informed by indigenous African (e.g., Ijo/Ijaw) non-dual relationality that emphasize care and ecological stewardship, repositioning nature as sacred kin.

Keywords: Niger Delta; Capitalist Extractivism; Energy Politics; Environmental Injustice; Afro-Ecofeminist Ethics

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INTRODUCTION

The Niger Delta is considered one of the most resource rich regions in West Africa. With the discovery of commercial oil in Oloibiri in 1956, the region has endured continuous gas flaring, oil spills, and the massive depletion of its mangrove forests (Adesioye & Owoh, 2023; Onyena & Sam, 2020). The damage to the health and well-being of humans and non-humans in the region is enormous (Gbadamosi & Aldstadt, 2025). According to a recent geo-environmental contamination assessment:

The Niger Delta in Nigeria is a complex and heavily contaminated area with over 150,000 interconnected contaminated sites. This intricate issue is compounded by the region's strong hydrological processes and high-energy environment. (Ola et al., 2024, p. 585):

Despite the enormous wealth extracted from its land, the Niger Delta remains environmentally and economically marginalized (Numbere, 2019). Since the late 1990s, the non-legal appropriation of crude oil from pipelines, commonly called oil theft, has emerged as a contributor to the ecocide of the Niger Delta, through illegal tapping and artisanal refining (Nwozor et al., 2023; Richard et al., 2022). Most of these pipelines are owned by the multinational companies whose unethical extraction practices account for the ecocide of its environment (Ogwu et al., 2022).

On record, Nigeria is said to have the highest incidence of oil theft in the world (Naanen, 2019). Most policy research on Nigeria reveal a consistent narrative of institutional failure, arising from weak regulatory enforcement and inadequate corporate accountability (Noah et al, 2021). Still, there is dearth in literature that interrogate the ontological foundations of Nigeria's resource governance approach, especially as relates to why its policy strategies create and sustain the ecological crisis in the Niger Delta. With regards to oil theft, the dominant explanation characterize the phenomena as “criminal rent-seeking and economic sabotage” (DW, 2024; Abubabkar, 2024), as observed in this Forbes article:

Oil thieves there engage in a practice known as “bunkering,” where pipelines are tapped and crude oil or refined products siphoned off for use or sale on the black market. Money from illicit oil helps fund militant groups..., and it lines the pockets of a garden-variety crooks and corrupt public officials. (Fellows, 2017).

Although this narrative corroborates the greed hypotheses (Collier & Hoeffler, 2000) of social science research, which argues that resource conflicts in the Global South are primarily driven by the economic ambition of rebel groups or elites. It perpetuates a hegemonic narrative that ignores a century of expropriation. This paper shifts from this pathological aberration stance. It draws from Franz Fanon's counter-violence theory and an ecofeminist lens, while employing a diagnostic, conceptual, and interpretive analytic methodology.

Fanon (1963) in *The Wretched of the Earth* theorized that the colonial order is founded on the violence of expropriation and the spatial zoning of peoples. In Fanon's words:

The colonized man finds his freedom in and through violence. This rule of conduct enlightens the agent because it indicates to him the means and the end (1963, p. 86).

Decolonization for Fanon meets violence with counter-violence both as a moral equivalence and a historical necessity. This paper therefore charts how the colonial violence Fanon theorized operates through the dispossession of humans and nature for the purpose of acquiring fossil capital. It traces the genealogy of Nigeria's resource governance, showing why policies like

the 1978 Land Use Decree adopted the anthropocentric character of colonial mineral laws, which transferred ownership of natural resources to the Federal Government. Drawing from the ecofeminist scholarship position on the association between Western dualism and domination, this paper articulates why the state expropriation of natural resources delegitimized the Indigenous land rights of the Niger Delta communities. This practice imposed a hierarchical and oppositional dynamics between the state and the communities, humans and nature, as well as short-term profits over sustainability. Its dualistic schema also paved the way for extractive capitalism, as such represents an epistemic violence against the indigenous non-dual environmental ethics of the Niger Delta ethnicities.

This paper also brings Fanon's diagnosis of the postcolonial elites who take over colonial institutions, facilitating the continuous exploitation of their people, into conversation with the postcolonial concept of coloniality (Quijano, 2000). Mainly, it examines how the toxic synergy between Global North elites and Nigeria's political class creates an "import – dependency" dynamics. Using Fanon's concept of the colonial Manichaeism and alienation, this paper articulates why the dualistic logic criticized by ecofeminist theorist (Plumwood, 1993/2003), inherent in the global energy politics creates a necro-economic system. Within this framework, the rights and well-being of the humans, non-humans, and the environment of the Niger Delta are considered expendable for fossil profits.

The goal is to show why oil theft emerges as a counter-violent trauma response against extractive system of domination. It also elucidates why oil theft replicates the same anthropocentric ethics that commodifies land and nature, thereby inflicting more injury on the environment. To break this cycle of violence, this paper proposes a decolonial resource governance that is based on the reciprocal premise encoded in the Ijo/Ijaw (African) relational ontology, where nature possesses intrinsic rights, and a non-dual environmental ethics that promotes the socioeconomic and political participation of the oil-bearing communities.

Colonialism and the Violence of Resource Governance in Nigeria

Oil extraction in the Niger Delta is founded on a juridical premise aimed at facilitating colonial access to the mineral resource of the colonized. From the earliest laws such as the Mineral Regulation (Oil) Ordinance of 1907, to the Mineral Ordinance of 25th February, 1946, the communities owned the fish, periwinkles, crabs, crayfish, and vegetables, but the government owned the oil within the land and waters (Ebeku, 2002). This arrangement violated the indigenous environmental ethics and land tenure systems of the ethnicities of the Niger Delta (e.g., Ijo, Ogoni, Efik, Urhobo, Itsekiri, Ogba, Ilaje, Oron, and many others), whose non-dual relational ontology considered humans as embedded within ecological communities, ascribing agency and respect to nature and the environment. Within this moral philosophical framework, land and water were not alienable commodities but ancestral wealth held in trust by the living for the unborn.

The colonial mineral laws recalls Fanon's argument in *The Wretched of the Earth* that colonialism is violent, because it reorganizes the political and socioeconomic life around the intent of exploiting the resources of the colonized. Hence its restructuring of the social reality into rigid hierarchical pairs such as, European vs. Native, men vs. women, human vs. nature, majority tribe vs. minority tribe, among others. In this dynamics the first term in each pair is elevated to presuppose a supremacy. In Fanon's words:

The colonial world is a compartmentalized world. It is obviously as superfluous to recall the existence of “native” towns and European towns, of schools for ‘natives’ and schools for Europeans....the colonial world is a world divided into two. (1963, p. 37).

Fanon’s position echoes ecofeminist scholars (e.g., Plumwood, 1993/2003; Merchant, 1989; Shiva, 1988) argument on the intersection between Western dualism, colonialism, patriarchy, and the commodification of nature. The Australian ecofeminist philosopher Val Plumwood in her book *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993/2003), argued that the logic of colonization is premised by dualism. Plumwood describes dualism as:

....the process by which contrasting concepts (for example, masculine and feminine gender identities) are formed by domination and subordination, and constructed as oppositional and exclusive....Dualism does not just recognize difference; it inherently enforces domination. When paired, the dualistic traits of the superior side (humans) are used to justify the control and exploitation of the inferior side (nature). This shapes a utilitarian worldview where the natural world has value solely based on its usefulness to human interests (1993/2003, p. 31-32).

This dualistic thinking derived from the Aristotelian and Cartesian logic of separation and reciprocal exclusivity frames humanity as the realm of mind and reason, reducing the non-human world to physical matter (Mathews, 2017). Anthropocentrism takes this constructed separation and applies a moral hierarchy, which asserts that only rational beings possess intrinsic value (Frantz et al., 2025, p. 451).

One effect of dualism articulated by Plumwood (1993/2003, p. 41) is its ability to make domination seem natural or inevitable, to the extent that the subordinated appropriate its distorted dynamics. This recalls the Nigerian nationalist who criticized the colonial era ordinances in the struggle for independence, yet replicated its logic in the first post-independence constitution in 1963 (Ebeku, 2002, p. 206). A behaviour that echoes Fanon’s argument in the chapter “The Pitfalls of National Consciousness” (1963). Fanon observes that the postcolonial elites or national bourgeoisie as he calls them inherit the colonial institutions and become complicit in the continuous exploitation of their people.

Policies like the March 1978 Land Use Decree (LUD), which vested all lands in the country to the Federal Government, demonstrates this. The implication of the LUD was that the Niger Delta communities lost the right to veto exploration, negotiate royalties, or claim damages for spills without proving negligence, an almost impossible burden given the normalization of unethical exploration practices. The LUD survived several military takeovers until the 1999 constitutional review, when it was adopted into an Act (LUA). Primarily, the LUD/LUA created a hierarchical dynamics in which the federal government facilitated the extraction of local wealth, excluding the Niger Delta communities from the decision-making matrix (Umukoro & Okotie, 2025).

Presently, Nigeria’s federal governance model can be described as ‘a rat race’ to secure and share the ‘national cake’ from oil revenue (Orovwiroro et al., 2023). Thereby creating a patronage system where the politicians monopolize the revenue from oil, leaving the communities in the dredges of underdevelopment (Raji, 2024). This maps perfectly into ecofeminist thought (e.g., Plumwood, 1993/2003) hypothesis on the relationship between dualism and domination. The resource control agitations from ethnic-groups such as the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) and the Ijo/Ijaw National Congress (INC) underscore the rejection of the current sociopolitical framework. It also outlines the

binary organization of a colonial society where humans are forcibly aligned into opposing ethnic and socioeconomic blocks. According to Fanon:

In the colonies the economic infrastructure is also a superstructure. The cause is consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich (1963, p. 40).

This dualistic logic echoes Mills racial contract theory, a concept articulated by the Jamaican philosopher Charles W. Mills (1997/2014). Mills theorized how political systems establish structural hierarchies that privilege one group over another. The racial contract theory reenacts what Fanon called colonial Manichaeism, represented by the socioeconomic division of the colony into opposing binaries. In the Nigerian context, the Global North consumption centres, their elites, the multinational oil companies, and the Nigerian politicians who enjoy the profits and benefits of fossil capital are the ‘European/Settler zone’. While the towns, creeks, fishing villages, and populace of the Niger Delta are the ‘Native zone’ designated as sacrificial landscapes for gas flares, oil spills, deforestation, land and water pollution, and poverty.

Resource Coloniality and the Co-dependency in Global Economic Structures

The paradox of a postcolonial world that functions with the colonial logic and its power structures, has been articulated by postcolonial scholars like Aníbal Quijano (2000), Walter Dignolo (2007), Ramon Grosfoguel (2002), Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013), Achille Mbembe (2020) and several others. In the words of decolonial theorist, Ramón Grosfoguel:

One of the most powerful myths of the twentieth century was the notion that the elimination of colonial administration amounted to the decolonization of the world. This led to the myth of a postcolonial world....With judicial-political decolonialization we moved from a period of ‘global colonialization’ to the current period of ‘global coloniality’. (2007, p. 219).

Anibal Quijano (2000) who coined the term coloniality, theorized how the dualist idea of superior and inferior races created a hierarchy that justified the exploitation of the labour and resources of non-European peoples. Contemporary coloniality perpetuates a dynamics of co-dependency where the Global North relies on Africa for vital resources and economic expansion (Moyo, 2024). While Africa depends on the North for manufactured goods, financial aid, and markets (Inieke, 2021). This situation which opens African economies without protection, stifling local industries, is theorized in international economics as the dependency theory. Proponents of the dependency theory argue that developing nations are deliberately kept in a state of structural underdevelopment to serve the economic interests of the United States and Western Europe (Mora, 2025; Ahumada & Torres, 2024).

This is depicted in Nigeria’s energy policy where foreign and local interests hide under alibis such as logistics problems and security risks in the Niger Delta to promote an import - dependence dynamics. Presently, Nigeria exports over 80 per cent of its crude oil to foreign refineries, while importing 85 per cent of its domestic needs (Vanguard News, 2026 May). Besides the drain on Nigeria’s foreign reserves arising from the cost of importation, and monies spent on government subsidizing the pump price of petroleum products in order to reduce domestic cost (Omoregie, 2019). There is also the challenge of domestic product scarcity (Olaniyi-Quadri, 2026). Nonetheless, the sustenance of what this researcher hypothesizes as ‘the matrix of exploitation’, explains why domestic refineries are deemed a threat to this neocolonial economic structure, ignoring its undermining of employment, investment, and Nigerian’s energy security.

The recent pushback encountered by Dangote Refinery in Nigeria illustrates how entrenched foreign and local interests sustain the import – dependency model using under-handed means such as refusing to supply domestic crude to local refineries. In a recent interview for an episode of the *In Good Company* podcast, Aliko Dangote, the CEO Dangote Refinery and Africa’s richest man, explains how decades of Nigeria’s importing refined petroleum products despite being a major crude oil producer, created a system that enriched a few interests at the expense of the wider economy (NBIM, 2026, May). Interestingly, in its April 2026 *Nigeria Development Update*, the World Bank recommended that Nigeria retain the import regime. Its argument was that Dangote refinery resulted in higher prices (approx. N1,275/litre) compared to estimated imports (approx. N1,122/litre). Although the report was later retracted, with the World Bank acknowledging Dangote refinery’s role in domestic supply, after an outrage from the Nigerian public (Business Day, April 2026). Its inference validates this paper’s position that the global energy politics replicates a colonial power matrix that reproduces patterns of extraction aimed at concentrating benefits among Global North powers and corporations, while externalizing environmental costs onto the local communities. Within this ‘matrix of exploitation’ each node exploits the other. Global capital obtains discounted crude, multinational companies reduce cost through unethical industry practices, Nigerian politicians capture rents and royalites, while local and foreign marketer’s make huge profits. Sadly, the local youth unable to access formal employment due to the socioeconomic effects of the import – dependence paradox, nor engage in non-formal employment (i.e., farming/fishing) because of land/water pollution from oil extraction, burn crude in rudimentary drums producing a toxic sludge that pollutes the environment.

Western Dualism, Extractivism and the Cycle of Ecological Violence

Scholars of environmental philosophy have interrogated the causes of resource colonialism in Africa, evident in the continuation of colonial patterns of exploitation. In his book, *Coloniality of Power in Postcolonial Africa: Myths of Decolonization*, Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni describes what he calls the ‘postcolonial neocolonial world’, a phrase he argues:

...best captures a complex situation of truncated African liberation projects that gave birth to a problematic and fragile African nation-building process.... (2013, p.4).

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) blames the postcolonial-neocolonial world for the present state of economic co-dependency where unbalanced global trade structures, neoliberal policies, and foreign loans, continue to shape the destinies of African nations. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) attributes this situation to the failure of African states to question the fundamental logic of Euro-American modernity before adopting its hegemonic, patriarchal, fundamentalist, and capitalist meaning-making system. Unlike countries like China (Kadri, 2021) and Brazil (Sotomayor, 2019), who have broken the jinx of underdevelopment by adopting economic models that align with their sociocultural context. This recalls Walter Mignolo’s (2007) coloniality of knowledge concept, which he theorized operates through Eurocentrism, described as the universalizing of Western modes of thinking due to its supposed superiority. Whereas Euro-American modernity builds upon the separation constructed through Western dualism to infer a moral hierarchy and a sense of alienation that normalizes domination (Plumwood (1993/2003). The universalization of its dualistic schema globalized a meaning-making system that denies any independency between actors, instead encourages a narcissistic understanding of the world (Torday & Miller Jr, 2017).

Translated into the economic reality, the moral hierarchy and sense of alienation inherent in the dualist worldview normalized a model where the structural need for capital accumulation

encouraged the extraction of resources at a rate that ignores the ecological limits of the planet (San Román & Molinero-Gerbeau, 2023). Under capitalist extractivism, crude oil exists as an abstract exchange of value extracted from the land and sent through pipelines to export terminals, never touching local consumption. The large warning signposts in bold red characters at different locations in the Niger Delta saying ‘Danger – Do not Farm on this Land, Oil Pipeline Under’, daily remind the people that the government and oil companies are the ‘owners’ of their ancestral lands.

Although oil theft originated as a survival activity, where local youths distilled crude oil retrieved from the broken pipelines passing through their communities in makeshift metal ovens to produce petrol for their domestic use, due to the scarcity of the imported products (Nwozor et al., 2023; Naanen, 2019). It has become a self-destructive activity as the process of obtaining crude oil and the technology of artisanal refining is itself toxic. Presently, majority of the stolen crude is shipped unto large ocean-going vessels for export to refineries abroad. Furthermore, the theft narrative has become an alibi for the government and the oil companies to deflect responsibility from the spills caused by the multinational oil companies who operate with aging and rusted infrastructure.

This recalls Fanon’s theory of alienation, which explains how colonialism and racism fracture the psyche and social existence of the colonized. Derived from the traditional Marxist economic concept, Fanon’s psychological analysis expanded the concept beyond the exploitation of labour, by arguing that colonial systems destroy a person’s sense of self and humanity. Although air and water pollution are the most visible damage in this necro-ecosystem. There are other impacts such as the loss of sustainable food production arising from the contamination of farmlands and rivers (Richard et al., 2022), loss of biodiversity and aquatic species, as well as other long-term environmental and health problems (Eli et al., 2025; Suku et al., 2024).

In the book, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, South African professor Rob Nixon (2011) explores a subtle type of violence. In Nixon’s words:

Violence is customarily conceived as an event or action that is immediate in time, explosive and spectacular in space, and as erupting into instant sensational visibility....slow violence...occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all (2011, p. 2).

Nixon’s concept of slow violence is relevant in understanding the social, health, economic, and environmental costs of the legal and non-legal extraction of crude oil in the Niger Delta. This recalls Achille Mbembe’s concept of necro-politics, where sovereign power dictates who (or what) lives or dies. Currently, the Niger Delta represents what Mbembe (2020) terms death-worlds, described as localized spaces where a population are subjected to conditions of extreme precariousness. This makes a decolonial non-violent environmental ethics a matter of urgency.

Towards a Non-Dual and Non-Violent African Ecofeminist Ethics

The impact of oil theft exposes the limitations of counter-violence as a self-determinist strategy. Although recent research (e.g., Hart, 2024; Elisha & Golden, 2022) recommend the formal training and integration of the artisanal refinery operators into the downstream oil sector to encourage environmentally ethical practices. The fact that both legal and non-legal extraction operate with the same anthropocentric ethics that treats nature as a commodity to be

exploited, reiterates the urgency to shift from its oppressive structure. This paper's position is that the challenge in the global climate justice requires a rethinking of humanity's relationship with itself and with nature. Fanon (1963) recognized that liberation should create new sociopolitical structures that transform human relations. Else it risks reproducing the same logic of domination it opposes, as observed in the post-independence resource governance and counter-violent resistance in the Niger Delta. In consequence, Fanon's consideration of decolonization as a violent cleansing process should be juxtaposed with the sense of alienation, a psychological disorder he diagnosed in *Black Skin, White Mask* (1957/2005). This disorder arises from living in a reality where different ethnicities, nationalities, cultures, and worldviews are encouraged to degrade one another. Whereas the logic of domination has been engrained through ideological mechanisms such as religion, the media, literature, and education, liberation should be psychological, aimed at deconstructing the epistemic structures of Western dualism. Counter-violence in this sense should be more metaphysical than physical, designed to heal our collective schema from the effects of a dualistic thinking.

In ecofeminist studies, epistemic decolonization is centered on knowledge sovereignty and the recentering on indigenous epistemologies. Ecofeminist philosophers like Val Plumwood (1993/2003) and Vandana Shiva (1988), maintain that addressing the ecological crises caused by Western dualism requires the dismantling of the narrative of dominance and alienation. It also entails promoting an ethics that recognizes the interconnectedness of all beings. Although extensive research in African environmental ethics emphasize the interconnection between humans and the natural world (Behrens, 2025; Chemhuru, 2022). The holistic premise of African environmental ethics is often constrained by Western metaphysical assumptions, as both proponents and critics appear to theorize it from a dualistic lens that infers hierarchical undertones.

In contrast, the indigenous traditions of the Kalabari-Ijo and broader Ijo emphasize a non-dual framework. Within this worldview erased by patriarchal and monotheistic Christian dominance, reality is conceptualized as the fusion of *Tamuno* (feminine or immaterial) and *So* (masculine or material) principles. Everything be they humans, plants, animals, and nature possess both *Tamuno* (immaterial) and *So* (material) properties (Horton, 1963, p. 205-206). *Tamuno* also represents *Wonyigi* (the Creator Mother) in Ijo cosmology, which is the initiating and animating principle that is complimented by *So* (the immanent life-force), expressed through the human agency, nature spirits, ancestral spirits, and other cosmic forces (Wariboko, 1999, p. 89). Philosophically, the implication of the *Tamuno – So* non-dual relational model is that abstraction (e.g., the other) and concreteness (e.g., the self) can be likened to the left and right hand that should compliment each other. Thus are not in a hierarchy or opposition.

Ontologically, the *Tamuno-So* framework dissolves the problem of Western dualism, as the need's of the self is actualized by simultaneously harmonizing one's interests, with the well-being of the other. Within this framework, the other (i.e., other humans, animals, plants, rivers, mangrove, and waterways) are living participants in the communal existence. To exemplify this, the earth (*Edeyen*) is the place where the umbilical cord of children and the bodies of the ancestors are interred. Hence, polluting the rivers offends the nature-spirits and poisoning the earth contaminates the lineage. The eco-philosophical inference is that the human-person has the moral responsibility of maintaining the equilibrium of the entire ecosystem by negotiating and cooperating with the *So* (immanent life-force) in other human and non-human intelligences. This framework challenges the dualistic logic of commodification that dominates contemporary resource governance. It also corroborates non-anthropocentric environmental theories (e.g., Deep ecology and Land ethics) proposition of nature's intrinsic value.

Situating these to a decolonial resource governance, the metaphysical recognition of water and land rights vetoes the subsoil ownership clause of the Nigerian constitution's LUA. Thus justifies the proposition to restore resource sovereignty to the oil-producing communities. Likewise, the inclusive premise of the *Tamuno – So* framework reiterates a participatory governance structure. A decolonial resource governance informed by this framework where nature is considered a kin, would incorporate legal structures that promote community-led decision-making that protect both human communities and non-human ecosystems. In this way, break the matrix of exploitation inherent in contemporary resource governance.

From a therapeutic standpoint, the non-dual inferences in indigenous Ijo thought can be harnessed to moderate the sense of alienation and other psychological effects of living in a socially and politically oppressive space. Hence the Ijo non-dual framework holds positive cognitive and behavioural gains for young people in the Niger Delta. These include, inculcating the critical awareness needed to move past the self/other blaming (Kefalogianni & Fragakis, 2024; Chopra & Castle, 2024), as well as moderating the learned helplessness emanating from viewing one's reality as unchangeable. This would ultimately dissolve the sense of alienation that informs violent resistance activities, and culminate into youth-led initiatives where the youth would collectively brainstorm towards eco-friendly economic opportunities. These would serve as a non-violent resistance against the epistemic structures that threaten their collective environmental and socioeconomic future.

CONCLUSION

This paper elucidated why the dualistic logic embedded in Nigeria's resource governance fuels environmental injustice and oil theft in the Niger Delta. It argued that contemporary extractivism is a structural continuation of resource colonialism, enabled by the ambivalent relationship that exists between the political 'elites' of the Global North and South. This explains why the same actors who engineer and profit from the violence condemn the abnormality and chaos it produces. Whereas the feeling of being excluded from an arrangement that presents potential gains to the self, invokes a sense of alienation that makes the option of violence appealing, the presupposition that non-legal extraction can be 'suppressed' without acknowledging the problem of resource colonialism is unrealistic. So long as capitalist extractivism persist, self-determinist responses like oil theft are the 'karma' of its oppressive system. Given that the phenomena has become a self-wounding measure, the way forward lies in deconstructing the present anthropocentric ethics. This accentuates the urgency of recentring the indigenous ontologies and the lived experiences of resource rich communities in global debates on development and climate justice. Crucially, the Global North needs to shift from the imperialist ideology that justifies the exploitation of African peoples and their resources. Likewise, African governments and multinational companies should acknowledge the sovereignty of nature and the environment. Non-dual African (Ijo/Ijaw) indigenous epistemologies offer valuable resources for this transformation as they emphasize relationality, inclusivity, reciprocity, and care. Therefore should serve as a praxis for a decolonial reimagining of resource governance that breaks the cycle of exploitation. For the Niger Delta, the goal is to decolonize its relationship with the earth itself, by reorienting its young population that nature is a scared kin. Also that they are not just inheritors of a broken ecosystem, but historical actors who have the responsibility to restore the dignity of the environment by demanding corporate and governmental accountability. The criminalization narrative should therefore shift from oil theft to ecocide, making it a crime to inflict harm to the environment, with criminal liability for defaulters.

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