

Original Research Article

Echoes of Distant Bombs: Oil Politics, War, and the African Masses in HBO's Generation Kill

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Abstract: This study examines HBO's *Generation Kill* (2008) as a contemporary war drama that interrogates the intersection of oil politics, imperial warfare, and the suffering of ordinary people within the Global South. Based on the 2003 United States-led invasion of Iraq, the series moves beyond conventional representations of battlefield heroism to expose the political, economic, and ideological forces that shape modern warfare. The paper argues that oil functions as the invisible catalyst driving military intervention, while civilians become expendable casualties of geopolitical ambitions. Drawing on Postcolonial Theory, Political Economy, and Achille Mbembe's concept of Necropolitics, the study explores how *Generation Kill* represents violence, occupation, propaganda, and the dehumanization of resource-rich societies. It further extends the analysis to Africa by comparing Iraq's wartime experiences with the realities of oil-producing communities in the Niger Delta and other conflict-ridden regions where resource wealth has generated militarization, environmental degradation, and mass displacement. The study adopts a qualitative textual analysis of selected episodes, characters, dialogues, and visual symbolism to demonstrate how contemporary television drama critiques the relationship between petroleum interests and global power. It concludes that *Generation Kill* transforms the Iraq War into a broader postcolonial narrative whose echoes resonate across Africa, revealing war as both a military conflict and an instrument of economic domination and social dispossession.

Keywords: Oil Politics, War Drama, *Generation Kill*, African Masses, Postcolonialism, Necropolitics, Political Economy.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

War has long been a subject of dramatic representation because its consequences extend beyond the battlefield into the social, political, economic, and psychological lives of individuals and communities. Contemporary television drama has expanded this representational field by providing sustained narrative spaces in which the causes, conduct, and consequences of warfare can be examined from multiple perspectives. Unlike conventional heroic war narratives that frequently privilege military achievement, contemporary war dramas increasingly expose the ambiguities of warfare, the vulnerability of civilians, institutional failures, and the political interests concealed beneath official accounts of military intervention. Television therefore becomes not merely a medium for narrating war but also a cultural site through which the meanings and justifications of war are negotiated.

The relationship between war and natural resources is particularly important in understanding contemporary geopolitical conflicts. Oil occupies a distinctive position within this relationship because petroleum is simultaneously an economic commodity, a strategic resource, and a source of political power. Mitchell (2011) demonstrates that the political significance of oil cannot be separated from the systems of power built around its production, transportation, consumption,

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and control. Oil consequently has implications that extend beyond economics into questions of sovereignty, military security, international relations, and imperial power. Similarly, Harvey (2003) situates the projection of American power within a broader relationship between territorial control and capitalist accumulation, providing an important framework for understanding the political economy surrounding the Iraq War.

The 2003 United States-led invasion of Iraq provides a particularly significant context for examining these relationships. The war was officially justified by the United States government through claims concerning weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, national security, and the transformation of the Iraqi political order. Nevertheless, the relationship between the invasion and the international political economy of oil generated extensive scholarly debate. Nell and Semmler (2007), for instance, examine the Iraq War in relation to the world oil economy, while Harvey (2003) explicitly considers the place of oil within the broader political and economic circumstances surrounding the projection of American power. The point for the present study is not to reduce the Iraq War to a simplistic claim that it was "only about oil." Rather, the study investigates how oil politics provides a significant interpretive framework for understanding the relationship between military intervention, geopolitical interests, and resource-rich societies.

It is within this historical and political context that HBO's *Generation Kill* becomes significant. Produced in 2008 and based on Evan Wright's account of his experience as an embedded journalist with the United States Marines, the seven-part miniseries dramatizes the early stages of the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Its narrative follows the First Reconnaissance Battalion as it moves from Kuwait into Iraq and eventually toward Baghdad. Rather than constructing the invasion exclusively through the language of military heroism, the series foregrounds confusion, bureaucratic incompetence, moral uncertainty, civilian vulnerability, and the contradictions between military objectives and the realities encountered on the ground.

Scholarly studies have already established the importance of *Generation Kill* within representations of the Iraq War. Jaramillo (2016) argues that the series provides a significant television-mediated reworking of the Iraq invasion and examines its relationship to earlier news representations of the conflict. Al-Rawi (2016), comparing *Generation Kill* with British and Arab television representations of the Iraq War, similarly observes that television dramas approach the conflict through different cultural and political perspectives, particularly in their representations of occupation, civilian suffering, and soldiers' psychological experiences.

The visual politics of *Generation Kill* is equally important. Fox (2018) observes that the series uses restricted and fragmented perspectives to represent the Iraq War, concentrating attention on soldiers on the ground while simultaneously invoking the larger political and media structures within which the war occurs. Such a narrative strategy makes the series particularly useful for examining the relationship between individual experience and larger geopolitical structures. The viewer sees war from within military vehicles, through soldiers' conversations, encounters with civilians, and moments of uncertainty, rather than from the detached perspective of political leaders.

This representational strategy also raises an important question concerning the visibility of civilian suffering. War is frequently mediated through images that privilege military operations, technological power, and strategic achievement. Research on television coverage of the Iraq War demonstrates that media framing can emphasize military action while rendering civilian casualties less visible (Dutta *et al.*, 2012). Chouliaraki (2006), moreover, demonstrates how television can aesthetically mediate suffering in ways that simultaneously make violence visible and distance audiences from the human reality of that violence. *Generation Kill* complicates this process by placing viewers close to the soldiers who participate in the invasion while repeatedly confronting them with the consequences experienced by Iraqi civilians.

The present study extends this discussion by introducing an African interpretive dimension. Although *Generation Kill* is concerned with Iraq rather than Africa, the political and economic structures represented in the series resonate with experiences in African resource-producing societies. This is particularly evident in the Niger Delta, where petroleum extraction has been associated with struggles over resources, political authority, environmental degradation, militarization, and violence. Nwajiaku-Dahou (2012) demonstrates that the political economy of oil in the Niger Delta cannot be understood simply through the notion of a "resource curse"; historical, political, and social relations are crucial to understanding the emergence of armed conflict and oil-related rebellion. Obi (2014) similarly examines the relationship between oil and conflict in the Niger Delta within wider debates concerning resource wealth, political instability, corruption, and violence in Africa.

The comparison between Iraq and Africa in this study is therefore not intended to suggest that the two contexts are historically identical. Rather, it establishes a comparative analytical framework through which resource politics, militarization, external interests, and civilian vulnerability can be examined across different postcolonial settings. The "African masses" in the title consequently refer to ordinary populations whose lives are affected by political and economic

struggles surrounding natural resources. The concept draws attention away from states, corporations, military institutions, and political elites toward the people who experience the consequences of resource conflicts most directly.

This perspective is strengthened by Mbembe's (2003) concept of necropolitics, which examines the relationship between sovereignty, violence, and the power to determine who may live and who may be exposed to death. Necropolitics provides a useful framework for examining situations in which particular populations become vulnerable to violence while political and economic interests are protected. In the context of *Generation Kill*, this theoretical perspective enables the study to examine how military occupation transforms civilians into vulnerable subjects within a larger system of geopolitical power.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Existing scholarship on *Generation Kill* has established its significance as a representation of the Iraq War, particularly in relation to military experience, media representation, moral ambiguity, and the politics of television. Jaramillo (2016), Al-Rawi (2016), and Fox (2018), for example, demonstrate that the series challenges conventional representations of the Iraq invasion and draws attention to the complexities of representing contemporary warfare.

However, a significant analytical space remains. Much of the existing discussion concentrates on the American military experience, the representation of soldiers, television aesthetics, and the politics of representing the Iraq War. Comparatively less attention has been devoted to interpreting *Generation Kill* through the political economy of oil and subsequently connecting its representation of resource conflict to African experiences. This gap is particularly significant because oil-producing African societies have experienced forms of political conflict, militarization, and social dispossession that make the politics of resource extraction an important field of African cultural and political analysis.

The problem addressed by this study, therefore, is the relative separation between scholarship on *Generation Kill* as a war drama and scholarship on African oil politics as a political-economic phenomenon. The study brings these areas into dialogue. It asks how a television drama about Iraq can illuminate broader questions concerning resource politics, military intervention, civilian vulnerability, and the experiences of marginalized populations in the Global South.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the representation of oil politics, warfare, and civilian vulnerability in HBO's *Generation Kill*, with particular attention to its relevance to the experiences of resource-producing communities in Africa.

Specifically, the Study Seeks To:

1. Examine how *Generation Kill* represents the relationship between oil politics, geopolitical interests, and the Iraq War.
2. Analyse the representation of warfare, military intervention, and civilian vulnerability in the series.
3. Interrogate how the series represents power, violence, and dispossession through a postcolonial and necropolitical perspective.
4. Relate the political and social concerns represented in *Generation Kill* to oil-related conflicts and the experiences of marginalized communities in Africa, particularly the Niger Delta.

1.4 Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions, which correspond directly with the four objectives:

1. How does *Generation Kill* represent the relationship between oil politics, geopolitical interests, and the Iraq War?
2. How does the series represent warfare, military intervention, and civilian vulnerability?
3. In what ways can the representation of power, violence, and dispossession in *Generation Kill* be interpreted through postcolonial and necropolitical perspectives?
4. How can the political and social concerns represented in *Generation Kill* be related to oil-related conflicts and the experiences of marginalized communities in Africa, particularly the Niger Delta?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study is significant in three principal ways. First, it contributes to scholarship on contemporary war drama by shifting attention from the battlefield as a site of military action to the broader political and economic structures that make warfare possible. *Generation Kill* provides an especially productive text because its narrative does not simply celebrate military courage; it exposes contradictions within the invasion and the institutional structures through which the war is conducted.

Second, the study contributes to African Studies by placing an American television representation of the Iraq War in dialogue with African experiences of oil politics. The Niger Delta provides an important comparative context because scholarship has documented the relationship between petroleum extraction, political authority, conflict, and local struggles

over resources (Nwajiaku-Dahou, 2012; Obi, 2014). The comparison therefore demonstrates how cultural texts produced outside Africa can nevertheless provide useful material for interrogating African political realities.

Third, the study contributes to the interdisciplinary study of media, politics, and society. Television dramas do not simply reproduce historical events; they select, organize, dramatize, and interpret them. Studying such representations makes it possible to understand how audiences encounter complex political questions through narrative and visual form. In this regard, *Generation Kill* offers a valuable case for examining how contemporary television negotiates the relationship between military power, political discourse, resource interests, and human suffering.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study focuses specifically on HBO's *Generation Kill* (2008), with particular attention to selected episodes, characters, dialogue, military encounters, representations of Iraqi civilians, and visual strategies relevant to oil politics and warfare. It does not attempt a comprehensive historical reconstruction of the Iraq War or an empirical investigation of petroleum policy.

The African dimension of the study is primarily comparative. Particular attention is given to the Niger Delta because of its extensive history of oil extraction, political contestation, militancy, and conflict. The comparison does not claim that the Niger Delta and Iraq constitute identical political situations. Instead, it uses their differences and points of convergence to illuminate broader questions about resource politics, state power, external interests, and the vulnerability of ordinary populations.

1.7 Methodological Orientation

The study adopts a qualitative textual analysis of *Generation Kill*. Qualitative textual analysis is appropriate because the research is concerned with meanings, representations, narrative structures, dialogue, characterization, visual imagery, and ideological implications rather than statistical measurement.

The series is examined as a cultural text situated within the historical context of the Iraq War. Attention is directed to recurring representations of military authority, oil and strategic interests, civilian populations, violence, occupation, political discourse, and the moral contradictions of warfare. The analysis is informed principally by postcolonial theory, political economy, and Mbembe's concept of necropolitics. These frameworks provide complementary approaches: political economy illuminates the relationship between resources and power; postcolonial theory addresses imperial and geopolitical relations; and necropolitics helps explain the unequal distribution of vulnerability and death.

The study therefore reads *Generation Kill* not simply as entertainment or historical reconstruction but as a mediated cultural interpretation of contemporary warfare. Its significance lies precisely in the way its narrative connects the intimate experiences of soldiers and civilians with larger structures of political and economic power.

This section has established the intellectual foundation for examining *Generation Kill* as a contemporary war drama concerned with more than combat. The series provides a productive site for investigating the intersections of warfare, resource politics, imperial power, media representation, and civilian vulnerability. While existing scholarship has examined the series primarily in relation to the Iraq War and its representation on television, this study extends the discussion by introducing an African comparative perspective.

By bringing *Generation Kill* into conversation with scholarship on oil politics and resource conflict in Africa, particularly the Niger Delta, the study argues that the significance of the series extends beyond the geographical boundaries of Iraq. Its representation of war raises broader questions about who controls resources, who possesses political and military power, and who ultimately bears the human costs of geopolitical struggles. The subsequent chapters therefore examine these questions through the theoretical and textual analysis of *Generation Kill*.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

Chapter one established the central concern of this study: the examination of oil politics, warfare, and the vulnerability of ordinary populations through HBO's *Generation Kill* (2008), with particular attention to its relevance to resource-related conflicts in Africa. The chapter argued that the series should not be understood merely as a representation of military combat but as a cultural text through which questions of geopolitical power, resource interests, occupation, civilian suffering, and imperial relations can be interrogated. Chapter Two develops that argument by reviewing relevant scholarship on contemporary war drama, the political economy of oil, imperialism, postcolonial representation, media and warfare, and the representation of civilians in conflict narratives.

The literature is organized around a central proposition: representations of contemporary war cannot be adequately understood by examining military action alone; they must also be situated within the political, economic, ideological, and representational structures that shape warfare. This proposition is particularly relevant to *Generation Kill*, whose narrative places ordinary soldiers within a much larger geopolitical conflict while simultaneously exposing the distance between official explanations of war and its lived consequences.

The chapter proceeds from the general literature on war and television to scholarship specifically concerned with *Generation Kill*. It then considers oil as a political and strategic resource before examining imperialism and postcolonial representation. The discussion culminates in the three theoretical perspectives adopted for the study: Postcolonial Theory, the Political Economy of Oil, and Achille Mbembe's theory of Necropolitics. Together, these frameworks provide a coherent basis for interpreting the series' representation of power, resource interests, violence, and vulnerable populations.

2.2 Contemporary War Drama and the Representation of Conflict

The representation of war has historically been shaped by competing impulses between commemoration, entertainment, political persuasion, and critical reflection. Conventional war narratives have frequently organized conflict around recognizable distinctions between hero and enemy, victory and defeat, courage and cowardice. Contemporary war drama, however, has increasingly complicated these binaries by representing warfare as fragmented, morally ambiguous, psychologically destructive, and institutionally complex.

This development is especially significant in television because serialized narrative permits sustained attention to the experiences of individuals within larger political events. Rather than condensing war into a sequence of spectacular battles, television can follow soldiers, civilians, journalists, and institutions across an extended narrative. Such representation creates opportunities to examine the contradictions between political rhetoric and lived experience.

Jaramillo (2016) identifies *Generation Kill* as an important example of HBO's attempt to provide what she describes as a representational reworking of the Iraq War. Her analysis places the series alongside the television and news representations that accompanied the invasion, emphasizing the significance of HBO's intervention in the cultural memory of the conflict. Rather than simply reproducing news images, *Generation Kill* revisits the invasion through the perspective of Marines and the embedded journalist Evan Wright.

This distinction between news representation and dramatic representation is important. News media generally operate under temporal and institutional pressures that encourage immediacy, event-centred reporting, and reliance on official sources. Dramatic narratives, by contrast, can reconstruct events retrospectively and connect individual experiences to broader political meanings. *Generation Kill* therefore becomes significant not because it provides a neutral historical record but because it interprets the Iraq War through narrative form.

Fox (2018) makes a particularly useful contribution to this discussion by examining the visual strategies through which the Iraq War is represented in *Generation Kill* and other contemporary war texts. She argues that the series employs embedded and fragmented forms of visual focalization, concentrating attention on soldiers on the ground while simultaneously invoking the larger political and media structures surrounding the war.

The significance of this technique lies in its ability to place the viewer within the uncertainty of warfare. The audience does not receive an omniscient view of the conflict. Instead, information is frequently partial, contradictory, or mediated through military orders and interpersonal exchanges. This restricted perspective is particularly useful for the present study because it reveals how individuals experience political decisions that they themselves did not formulate.

Al-Rawi (2016) expands this discussion by comparing three television dramas dealing with the 2003 Iraq invasion: the American *Generation Kill*, the British *Occupation*, and the Arabic *Hudu' Nisbi (Relatively Calm)*. His comparative analysis demonstrates that representations of the Iraq War differ according to cultural and political contexts. Importantly, he notes differences in the representation of civilian suffering and soldiers' psychological experiences.

Al-Rawi's intervention is particularly valuable because it prevents the study from treating *Generation Kill* as an uncomplicated representation of the Iraq War. The series is itself situated within a particular American cultural and institutional context. Its perspective is therefore selective. This recognition provides an important foundation for the postcolonial dimension of the present study: who is permitted to speak, whose experience becomes narratively central, and whose suffering remains peripheral?

2.3 *Generation Kill*: Existing Scholarship and the Research Gap

Scholarship specifically concerned with *Generation Kill* remains relatively focused compared with the extensive literature on the Iraq War generally. Nevertheless, existing studies provide several important points of departure.

Jaramillo (2016) situates the series within HBO's distinctive approach to war representation and argues that the miniseries provides a retrospective cultural engagement with the invasion. Her work is important because it establishes *Generation Kill* as a text worthy of analysis beyond its entertainment value. The series participates in the broader process through which American television reinterpreted the Iraq War after the initial media coverage of the invasion.

Fox (2018), meanwhile, approaches the series through visual form. Her analysis of "optical focalization" demonstrates that *Generation Kill* does not simply show war; it constructs a particular way of seeing war. The emphasis on the soldiers' immediate environment creates an intimate perspective while simultaneously pointing toward larger political structures.

Al-Rawi (2016) introduces another dimension by situating *Generation Kill* alongside British and Arab television productions. His comparative approach demonstrates that war narratives are culturally situated and that representations of the same historical event can privilege different subjects and consequences.

Taken together, these studies establish three important points. First, *Generation Kill* is a significant cultural representation of the Iraq War. Second, its narrative and visual structures shape how audiences understand the conflict. Third, its meaning becomes clearer when it is placed within broader political and cultural contexts.

However, a gap remains. Existing scholarship does not sufficiently bring together the representation of the Iraq War in *Generation Kill*, the political economy of petroleum, and African experiences of resource-related conflict. This study addresses that gap. It does not claim that *Generation Kill* is an African text or that Iraq and the Niger Delta are historically identical. Instead, it reads the series comparatively, asking whether its representation of resource-rich conflict, military power, civilian vulnerability, and dispossession can illuminate questions that also arise within African oil-producing societies.

This distinction is essential. The purpose is not to force an African interpretation onto an American television text but to create a dialogue between the text and African political-economic realities. Such a reading expands the analytical possibilities of *Generation Kill* while also demonstrating the relevance of contemporary war drama to African Studies.

2.4 Oil Politics, Natural Resources, and Warfare

The connection between natural resources and armed conflict has received considerable attention in political economy and international relations. Yet the relationship is more complicated than the assumption that the presence of oil automatically produces war.

Le Billon (2001) argues that natural resources can influence armed conflict in several ways. Resources may finance conflict, motivate competing actors, shape territorial strategies, and influence the organization of political power. His concept of the "political ecology of war" therefore moves beyond a simple resource-causation argument by examining how the geographical distribution and economic characteristics of resources interact with political structures.

This perspective is particularly relevant to the present study. Oil should not be treated as a singular explanation for the Iraq War. Rather, it should be understood as part of a wider system involving energy security, geopolitical strategy, international capitalism, military power, and state interests. Such an approach avoids the methodological weakness of reducing complex wars to a single economic motive.

Ross (2012) similarly examines the political consequences of petroleum wealth, demonstrating that oil can reshape state institutions, political incentives, economic structures, and patterns of governance. His work is particularly relevant to the African dimension of this research because many African oil-producing states have confronted political and institutional challenges associated with petroleum dependence.

The political economy approach therefore shifts attention from the question, "Did oil cause the war?", to a more productive series of questions: Who controls oil? Who benefits from its extraction? Which political institutions protect access to it? What forms of violence emerge around resource control? And who bears the social costs?

These questions are especially appropriate for *Generation Kill* because the series repeatedly places individual military experience within structures that are considerably larger than the soldiers themselves.

2.5 Oil Politics and the African Context

The relevance of oil politics to the present study becomes clearer when the discussion is extended to Africa. Oil-producing regions across the continent demonstrate that petroleum wealth can generate profound contradictions. Oil can

provide national revenue and international significance while simultaneously producing environmental damage, inequality, political conflict, and struggles over ownership and distribution.

Nigeria's Niger Delta provides a particularly important case. Nwajiaku-Dahou (2012) challenges simplified explanations of Niger Delta violence that reduce conflict to the availability of oil. She demonstrates that the political history of the region, struggles over oil rents, changing alliances, and the interaction between state and non-state actors are essential to understanding the emergence and transformation of rebellion.

This argument has significant implications for the present study. It suggests that oil should be understood as embedded within political relationships rather than treated as an independent cause of violence. The resource becomes politically consequential because institutions, corporations, communities, states, and other actors struggle over access to its benefits.

Obi (2014) similarly examines the relationship between oil and conflict in the Niger Delta and situates the region within broader debates concerning the so-called oil curse. His analysis emphasizes the relationship between petroleum wealth, violence, corruption, and political instability while also questioning overly deterministic interpretations of oil-producing societies.

The Niger Delta therefore offers a productive comparative framework for reading *Generation Kill*. In both contexts, the study is concerned with the relationship between valuable resources, political authority, military or coercive power, and populations whose lives are affected by decisions made at higher political levels. The contexts remain historically distinct, but the comparison makes visible a shared analytical problem: the unequal distribution of the benefits and burdens associated with strategic resources.

2.6 Imperialism, Resource Control, and the Iraq War

The concept of imperialism provides another important dimension of the study. Contemporary imperialism does not necessarily operate through formal colonial administration. It can operate through military intervention, economic power, political influence, control over strategic territories, and unequal international relations.

Harvey (2003) develops the concept of "capitalist imperialism" to describe the relationship between state power and processes of capital accumulation. He argues that imperialism involves a contradictory combination of territorial and political strategies with broader processes of capitalist expansion.

Of particular relevance is Harvey's concept of accumulation by dispossession. He uses the concept to describe processes through which wealth and resources can be appropriated through privatization, commodification, political coercion, and other mechanisms that transfer control over resources and assets.

This theoretical perspective is useful for *Generation Kill* because it encourages the researcher to look beyond the immediate military encounter. The invasion can be examined not simply as a battle between armed forces but as part of a larger struggle involving sovereignty, territory, resources, and political-economic power.

The study therefore does not assume a simplistic equation between American military intervention and oil. Instead, Harvey's framework permits a more nuanced question: How does military power operate within wider systems of territorial control and resource-based political economy?

That question is central to the present research.

2.7 Postcolonial Media and the Representation of the Other

Postcolonial theory provides an important framework for examining how war dramas represent populations located outside the dominant political and cultural centre. Said's (1978) *Orientalism* demonstrates how Western knowledge and representation have historically constructed the East through systems of difference that position the West as rational, modern, and authoritative while representing the Orient as its cultural and political opposite.

Applied carefully, Said's argument does not mean that every Western representation of Iraq is automatically Orientalist. Rather, it provides a critical vocabulary for asking how cultural representations organize visibility and authority.

This is particularly important in *Generation Kill*. The principal narrative perspective is attached to American Marines and an American journalist. Iraqi civilians appear within this narrative world, but they do not possess the same narrative authority as the American soldiers. This imbalance creates an important analytical question: Can a drama that

critiques American military institutions simultaneously reproduce a hierarchy in which American experience remains more narratively visible than Iraqi experience?

This question does not invalidate the series' critical potential. Instead, it makes that potential more complex. A text can challenge imperial warfare while still being structured by the representational conventions of the culture from which it emerges.

Al-Rawi's (2016) comparative study is useful here because his examination of American, British, and Arabic television representations demonstrates that cultural location affects the ways the Iraq War is narrated. Thus, the present study treats *Generation Kill* as a culturally situated representation rather than a transparent window onto Iraqi reality.

2.8 Media, War, and the Production of Political Meaning

The relationship between media and warfare is central to understanding contemporary conflict. War is fought not only through weapons but also through images, narratives, explanations, and competing claims about legitimacy.

Herman and Chomsky's (1988) *Manufacturing Consent* provides an influential political-economic account of mass media and the production of news. Their propaganda model draws attention to the structural relationships between media institutions, ownership, economic interests, sources, and political power. While their framework was developed primarily to analyse news media, it remains useful for considering the broader relationship between media representation and political authority.

Generation Kill is particularly interesting in this regard because it represents soldiers who are themselves situated within a highly mediated war. The series is therefore concerned not only with what happens on the battlefield but also with how military events are understood, communicated, and justified.

Jaramillo (2016) directly connects the series to earlier CNN and Fox News representations of the invasion, showing how HBO's dramatic reconstruction constitutes a later intervention in the cultural representation of the war. Fox (2018) likewise demonstrates that the series' visual strategies connect the immediate experiences of soldiers to wider media and governmental discourses.

Consequently, *Generation Kill* can be read as a form of mediated counter-memory: it revisits a conflict after the dominant immediacy of wartime news coverage has passed and reconstructs the invasion through personal encounters, institutional contradictions, and the experiences of people operating within the military system.

2.9 Theoretical Framework

The study employs three complementary theoretical perspectives: Postcolonial Theory, Political Economy of Oil, and Necropolitics. These theories are not treated as isolated intellectual categories. Rather, they work together to illuminate three interconnected dimensions of the research problem: representation, resources, and life/death.

2.9.1 Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial Theory provides the broadest interpretive framework for this research. Its concern with colonial histories, unequal power relations, cultural representation, imperialism, and the construction of the other makes it particularly relevant to the study of the Iraq War and its television representation.

Said's (1978) concept of Orientalism is particularly useful because *Generation Kill* represents a Middle Eastern society through a primarily American narrative perspective. The theory encourages attention to the distribution of narrative authority and to the ways cultural difference is produced through representation.

The application of Postcolonial Theory in this study therefore focuses on three questions:

1. How is Iraq represented from the perspective of American military personnel?
2. How are Iraqi civilians positioned within the narrative?
3. What assumptions about power, civilization, security, and political authority structure the representation?

The framework also facilitates the study's movement toward Africa. Colonialism and its legacies remain important to understanding contemporary struggles over resources, political authority, and international economic relations. Postcolonial analysis consequently enables the study to connect the Iraq narrative to broader Global South experiences without claiming that all such experiences are identical.

2.9.2 Political Economy of Oil

The second framework is the Political Economy of Oil. This approach examines petroleum not simply as a commodity but as a resource embedded within relations of political power.

Mitchell's (2011) concept of carbon democracy is particularly valuable because it demonstrates how modern political institutions and political possibilities have been shaped by the material organization of fossil-fuel systems. Oil is therefore not merely something that governments purchase and corporations sell; its infrastructures and economic organization influence political relationships.

Le Billon's (2001) political ecology of war complements this approach by demonstrating that natural resources can finance, motivate, and shape armed conflicts. Ross (2012) further demonstrates that petroleum wealth can profoundly affect state institutions and political economies.

Within this study, Political Economy of Oil will therefore be used to examine:

- The relationship between petroleum and geopolitical power;
- The strategic significance of resource-rich territories;
- The relationship between state and corporate interests;
- The unequal distribution of resource benefits;
- And the consequences of resource politics for ordinary populations.

This framework is particularly important because it prevents the analysis from treating war as an isolated military event.

2.9.3 Mbembe's Theory of Necropolitics

The third and most explicitly human-centred theoretical framework is Achille Mbembe's concept of Necropolitics.

In his influential 2003 essay, Mbembe examines sovereignty through the power to determine who may live and who may be exposed to death. He extends earlier discussions of biopower by focusing on conditions in which populations are subjected to extreme violence, abandonment, and death.

Necropolitics is particularly relevant to *Generation Kill* because the series repeatedly confronts the consequences of military decisions for people who possess little control over the political structures determining their circumstances. Civilians exist within an environment in which armed actors possess the capacity to determine the conditions of life and death.

The theory also provides an important bridge to the African dimension of the study. In resource-rich regions such as the Niger Delta, the relationship between oil extraction, environmental degradation, political violence, and community vulnerability raises questions concerning whose lives are protected and whose lives are rendered expendable. Nwajiaku-Dahou (2012) and Obi (2014) demonstrate the complexity of these relationships within the Niger Delta context.

Necropolitics consequently shifts the study from the abstract question of resource ownership to the concrete human question of who bears the cost of resource politics.

2.10 Synthesis of the Theoretical Frameworks

The three theoretical perspectives are most useful when read together.

Framework	Central Concern	Application to <i>Generation Kill</i>
Postcolonial Theory	Power, representation, imperialism, and the Other	Examines how Iraqis and the Iraq War are represented through an American perspective
Political Economy of Oil	Resources, capital, state power, and geopolitical interests	Examines oil, strategic interests, resource control, and warfare
Necropolitics	Sovereignty, violence, vulnerability, and death	Examines civilian suffering and the unequal distribution of vulnerability

The relationship between these frameworks can be conceptualized as follows:

Oil/resource politics → geopolitical and imperial power → military intervention → unequal exposure to violence → civilian vulnerability and dispossession.

This sequence should not be understood as a deterministic causal formula. Rather, it represents the analytical movement of the study. Political Economy identifies the structures of resource and economic power; Postcolonial Theory examines the historical and representational relations within which those structures operate; Necropolitics focuses attention on the human consequences of those relations.

Together, the theories enable the study to move from resource, to power, to representation, and finally to human consequence.

2.11 Literature Gap and Contribution of the Study

The literature reviewed demonstrates that considerable scholarship exists on the Iraq War, oil politics, postcolonial representation, and resource-related conflict in Africa. There is also important scholarship specifically examining *Generation Kill* as a television representation of the Iraq invasion. Jaramillo (2016), Al-Rawi (2016), and Fox (2018) provide particularly important foundations for understanding the series' narrative, comparative, and visual dimensions. However, these strands of scholarship have generally remained separate. Scholarship on *Generation Kill* has concentrated largely on the representation of war, soldiers, media, and visual perspective, while scholarship on African oil politics has concentrated on political economy, resource conflict, governance, and community struggles. The present study brings these bodies of scholarship into dialogue.

Its contribution lies in treating *Generation Kill* as a transnational text whose representation of the Iraq War can be interrogated through African experiences of resource politics. The study does not argue that Iraq is Africa, nor does it reduce the Niger Delta to an equivalent of the Iraq War. Instead, it uses comparison to illuminate a shared question concerning the relationship between strategic resources, political power, coercion, and vulnerable populations.

This approach also strengthens the title's phrase "the African masses." The masses are not presented simply as passive victims. The literature on the Niger Delta, particularly Nwajiaku-Dahou (2012), demonstrates that communities and militant movements have contested the political and economic structures surrounding oil. Thus, the study understands marginalized populations as both subjects of violence and agents of resistance.

3. OIL POLITICS AND THE SPECTACLE OF WAR IN *GENERATION KILL*

3.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter established the theoretical foundation for examining *Generation Kill* through Postcolonial Theory, the Political Economy of Oil, and Achille Mbembe's concept of Necropolitics. These perspectives provide a framework for moving beyond the immediate spectacle of combat to the political, economic, and ideological structures that make war possible. This chapter applies those frameworks to the textual analysis of *Generation Kill*, an HBO seven-part miniseries based on Evan Wright's account of his experience as an embedded journalist with the U.S. Marine Corps during the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The series follows Bravo Company of First Reconnaissance Battalion as it moves from Kuwait through southern Iraq toward Baghdad. Jaramillo (2016) describes the series as HBO's retrospective "representational do-over" of the Iraq invasion, while Fox (2018) emphasizes its fragmented visual perspective and its capacity to connect the immediate experience of soldiers to larger political and media structures.

The central concern of this chapter is the relationship between war, oil politics, military power, and representation. The argument is not that *Generation Kill* presents oil as a simple or openly declared explanation for the invasion. Indeed, one of the significant features of the series is that oil rarely appears as an explicit political explanation delivered to the soldiers or viewers. Instead, the economic significance of Iraq operates largely in the background. The series foregrounds military movement, strategic objectives, territory, logistics, command decisions, and the treatment of Iraqi civilians. When these elements are read through the political economy of oil, however, the war appears as part of a wider struggle over territory, resources, geopolitical influence, and the organization of political power.

This indirectness is analytically important. Oil does not have to dominate the dialogue in order to matter to the political meaning of the war. As Mitchell (2011) argues, oil is not merely a commodity but part of a network through which political and economic power is organized. Similarly, Nell and Semmler (2007) demonstrate the importance of the world oil economy to understanding the geopolitical context of the Iraq War. The present analysis therefore reads the series at two interconnected levels: first, as a narrative about the experiences of American soldiers in combat; and second, as a representation of a larger geopolitical conflict in which resources, state power, military force, and economic interests intersect.

The chapter focuses on selected episodes, characters, military operations, dialogue, and visual strategies. Particular attention is given to *The Cradle of Civilization*, *Screwby*, *Combat Jack*, *A Burning Dog*, *Stay Frosty*, and *Bomb in the Garden*. The analysis considers how the series exposes the distance between official narratives of military competence and the realities experienced by soldiers and civilians. It further examines how bureaucratic failure, contradictory orders, changing rules of engagement, civilian suffering, and the dehumanization of Iraqis destabilize the language of liberation and security associated with the invasion. The chapter ultimately argues that *Generation Kill* transforms war from a heroic spectacle into a spectacle of institutional disorder, moral uncertainty, and unequal exposure to violence.

3.2 The War Machine and the Geography of Oil

The opening movement of *Generation Kill* establishes the American military as a technologically sophisticated and highly organized force. The convoy of Humvees, weapons, communication systems, surveillance equipment, body armour, and military jargon creates an image of technological superiority. The soldiers appear to form a single military machine in which human bodies and technological systems operate together. Fox (2018) observes that the series frequently uses extreme close-ups and fragmented visual perspectives to connect the bodies of soldiers to the larger structures of military and governmental discourse.

Yet the apparent perfection of the military machine quickly begins to deteriorate. Communication failures, inadequate supplies, contradictory orders, poor intelligence, and incompetent leadership repeatedly undermine the image of an efficient war machine. This contradiction is fundamental to the series. The United States possesses enormous technological and military power, but the exercise of that power does not produce corresponding political clarity or moral certainty.

The relationship between military mobility and the geography of Iraq is particularly significant. The Marines move through a landscape that is represented as both inhabited territory and strategic space. Roads, bridges, towns, airfields, waterways, and approaches to major cities become military objectives. The movement of First Recon is therefore not simply movement through an unfamiliar foreign country; it is the physical occupation and reorganization of territory.

This territorial dimension is important to a political-economic reading of the Iraq War. Oil is geographically embedded, and control over oil is inseparable from control over the spaces through which it is extracted, transported, protected, and distributed. Nell and Semmler (2007) place the Iraq War within the broader dynamics of the world oil economy, while Mitchell (2011) demonstrates how modern political power is historically intertwined with the infrastructures and networks through which oil moves.

The series itself does not turn this relationship into a simplistic formula. Rather, the importance of oil exists partly through its absence from the soldiers' immediate understanding of the war. The ordinary Marine is primarily concerned with survival, orders, ammunition, food, vehicles, and the next mission. The political and economic purposes of the larger operation remain distant. This gap between the experience of the individual soldier and the interests of geopolitical power becomes one of the most important features of the series.

In this sense, *Generation Kill* separates the people who execute war from the structures that authorize it. The Marines fight, patrol, occupy, and kill, but they do not determine the larger political objectives of the invasion. The distinction allows the series to expose the human consequences of decisions made far above the level of the battlefield.

3.3 The Cradle of Civilization: Oil, Territory, and the Logic of Intervention

The second episode, *The Cradle of Civilization*, provides a particularly useful point of entry into the relationship between military intervention and resource politics. The episode follows the Marines as they receive orders to move toward Nasiriyah. Their movement is characterized by uncertainty, rapidly changing rules of engagement, and the continuing pressure to advance.

A revealing moment occurs when oil enters the soldiers' ordinary conversation. The reference is brief rather than explanatory, but its significance lies precisely in its casualness. Iraq is repeatedly represented through military objectives and geographical obstacles, while the larger economic significance of the country remains outside the soldiers' immediate frame of understanding. The war therefore operates through what may be described as a political-economic invisibility: the resource economy is structurally important, yet the ordinary combatant experiences it indirectly.

This is consistent with Mitchell's (2011) argument that oil should not be understood simply as a natural substance that automatically produces political consequences. Its importance lies in the networks of extraction, transportation, consumption, finance, security, and political authority constructed around it. From this perspective, the political significance of Iraq's oil cannot be reduced to the statement that the United States invaded simply "for oil." Such a claim would flatten the complex history of the invasion. Instead, oil becomes one component of a broader structure involving energy security, geopolitical influence, state power, capitalism, and military strategy.

The episode also demonstrates how military power transforms ordinary civilians into potential threats. Changes in the rules of engagement create a disturbing atmosphere in which the presence of a weapon can determine whether an Iraqi is perceived as civilian or enemy. The ambiguity is intensified by the lack of reliable information. Soldiers are instructed to act rapidly even when they do not possess adequate knowledge of the people or circumstances around them.

The consequence is a dangerous compression of human identity. The Iraqi civilian becomes reduced to a possible target, while the American soldier becomes reduced to an instrument of military action. The moral complexity of individual persons disappears beneath operational categories such as "hostile," "enemy," or "target." This process anticipates Mbembe's (2003) concept of necropolitics, in which political power is expressed through the capacity to determine who may be exposed to death and under what conditions.

The series thus reveals an important contradiction. The invasion is conducted in the language of strategic necessity, but the people who inhabit the territory are rarely allowed an equivalent political voice. The military possesses the power to classify, enter, search, occupy, and attack. Iraqis are positioned within these decisions rather than being the principal authors of them. The political geography of occupation consequently becomes a geography of unequal power.

3.4 Military Technology and the Spectacle of Power

One of the most striking features of *Generation Kill* is its representation of military technology. Weapons, radios, Humvees, surveillance systems, body armour, maps, and air support dominate the visual environment. These objects create a spectacle of technological power.

At first, this spectacle appears to support the conventional image of American military superiority. The opening visual language of the series presents an organized convoy moving through the desert, combining the human body with machinery. However, the series gradually destabilizes this image. Technology does not eliminate confusion. Advanced weapons coexist with inadequate intelligence; sophisticated communications coexist with misunderstandings; overwhelming firepower coexists with uncertainty about targets.

Fox (2018) argues that the series' visual construction of the Iraq War through fragmented focalization can implicate the larger political and media discourse surrounding the conflict. The close attention to soldiers and military equipment does not simply celebrate military technology. It can also expose the institutional structures within which that technology operates.

The distinction is important because the spectacle of military technology can conceal the human consequences of its use. A weapon displayed on screen is technically an object, but its political meaning emerges when it is directed toward a human body or civilian space. *Generation Kill* repeatedly shifts between technical language and human consequences, thereby disrupting the distance between the machinery of war and the people affected by it.

The series therefore challenges the idea that technological superiority necessarily produces moral superiority. The possession of more powerful weapons does not make the invading force more knowledgeable about the society it has entered. Nor does technological precision eliminate the possibility of error. The military machine can be technically sophisticated while politically confused and morally compromised.

This tension is central to the spectacle of war represented in the series. The audience is initially invited to observe the impressive scale of the military operation, but the longer the narrative continues, the more the spectacle reveals its internal contradictions. The war machine becomes impressive and dysfunctional at the same time.

3.5 Bureaucracy, Command, and the Failure of Military Rationality

The critique of military bureaucracy is one of the defining characteristics of *Generation Kill*. Rather than presenting the military as a perfectly disciplined institution in which orders move efficiently from commanders to soldiers, the series repeatedly shows institutional dysfunction.

Orders change without adequate explanation. Missions are sometimes based on incomplete information. Supplies fail to reach soldiers. Commanders disagree about strategy. Junior officers must interpret unclear instructions while operating under dangerous conditions. The result is a distinction between the appearance of institutional rationality and its actual operation.

Jaramillo (2016) identifies the series' significance partly in its reworking of the Iraq War through television. Instead of reproducing the immediate news spectacle of invasion, HBO's narrative allows viewers to observe the contradictions of military experience retrospectively. The series therefore turns attention away from the simplified language of victory and toward the institutional processes through which war is conducted.

The episode *Combat Jack* is particularly revealing in this respect. The Marines experience shortages and uncertainty even after successfully advancing through Iraqi territory. Their material difficulties contradict the image of an all-powerful occupying force. The military may possess enormous destructive capacity, yet the individual soldiers can still lack basic supplies.

This contradiction suggests that power is unevenly distributed even within the invading institution. Political leaders possess strategic authority; senior commanders possess operational authority; junior officers translate orders into action; ordinary Marines bear the physical consequences. The chain of command therefore becomes a hierarchy of responsibility and vulnerability.

The political significance of bureaucracy is that it can diffuse responsibility. When a decision produces disastrous consequences, responsibility may become difficult to locate because the decision has passed through several institutional levels. *Generation Kill* makes this problem visible by allowing soldiers to criticize commanders while still remaining subordinate to them.

The series consequently moves beyond a simple distinction between "good soldiers" and "bad soldiers." Individual soldiers can behave courageously while participating in an institution whose larger objectives they neither designed nor fully understand. The moral ambiguity of the war emerges from this structural separation between individual intention and institutional power.

3.6 *Screwby* and the Violence of Misrecognition

Screwby intensifies the series' concern with civilian vulnerability and the unpredictability of military violence. The episode places the Marines in situations where the distinction between combatant and civilian becomes increasingly difficult to maintain. A roadside settlement becomes a site of uncertainty, and the arrival of another military unit produces a violent spectacle that unsettles the Marines themselves.

This is one of the moments when the series most clearly exposes the problem of representing war from the perspective of the occupying force. The Marines are not simply observers of violence; they are participants in a system whose decisions affect people whose perspectives they often cannot access.

The difficulty of communication is important here. Language, cultural knowledge, geography, and military intelligence are all incomplete. Consequently, the occupying force must interpret Iraq through partial information. The Iraqi population becomes readable through military categories rather than through its own political and social complexity.

This condition can be interpreted through Said's (1978) concept of Orientalism. The Orientalist structure does not require every individual soldier to consciously believe that one culture is inferior. Rather, it concerns a larger system of representation in which the "Other" is constructed as unfamiliar, threatening, irrational, or incapable of speaking with equal authority.

Generation Kill both reproduces and critiques this structure. The series necessarily follows American Marines, and therefore much of Iraq is viewed through their eyes. Yet it also reveals the inadequacy of that perspective. The Marines do not fully understand the society around them, and the consequences of that lack of understanding are frequently violent.

Al-Rawi (2016) notes that *Generation Kill* differs from other television representations of the Iraq War partly because it focuses strongly on the military experience, whereas other series place greater emphasis on Iraqi civilians. This limitation is simultaneously a methodological challenge and an important textual feature. The relative absence of sustained Iraqi subjectivity itself tells us something about the unequal distribution of narrative power within the series.

3.7 *A Burning Dog*: Rules of Engagement and Moral Ambiguity

The episode *A Burning Dog* provides a particularly strong representation of the moral uncertainty generated by military intervention. The Marines confront an enemy that is difficult to identify and a battlefield that does not conform neatly to military expectations. Intelligence gathering, strategic bridges, roadblocks, and changing rules of engagement become sources of tension.

The concept of "rules of engagement" is particularly significant. Such rules appear to provide a rational and ethical structure for military action. Yet their application in unpredictable environments reveals the limits of formal regulation. Soldiers must make rapid decisions about people whose intentions they cannot always know.

The series thus dramatizes the gap between bureaucratic rules and lived reality. A policy written at a command level may appear clear in abstraction but become morally ambiguous when applied to an individual human being.

This ambiguity also challenges conventional representations of military heroism. The heroic war narrative usually establishes a clear opposition between good and evil. *Generation Kill* instead presents confusion, fear, irritation, boredom, incompetence, humour, violence, and occasional compassion. The soldiers are neither uniformly heroic nor uniformly brutal.

The character of Sergeant Brad Colbert is especially important to this moral structure. Colbert frequently attempts to interpret events critically and to protect his men from unnecessary danger. His character provides a form of ethical consciousness within the military institution. Yet his capacity to act remains limited by hierarchy. He can question decisions, but he cannot determine the political purpose of the war.

This tension strengthens the chapter's political-economic argument. The individual soldier is not the principal beneficiary or architect of resource geopolitics. Rather, he becomes one of the bodies through which geopolitical power is exercised. The war therefore involves a hierarchy in which strategic interests are translated into military action and military action is ultimately experienced through human bodies.

3.8 *Stay Frosty*: Civilians, Occupation, and Necropolitics

Stay Frosty marks an important transition in the representation of the war because the Marines are assigned to escort civilians fleeing Baghdad. This movement changes the relationship between the soldiers and the Iraqi population. Civilians are no longer simply background figures encountered along the road; they become the direct object of military responsibility.

The episode exposes the contradiction inherent in occupation. The military presents itself as a force capable of providing security, yet the presence of the occupying force is itself part of the violent political environment. The Marines are expected to protect people from the consequences of a war that their own institution is helping to conduct.

This contradiction is particularly productive when read through Mbembe's (2003) concept of necropolitics. Necropolitics concerns the organization of life and death through sovereign power. In *Generation Kill*, the ability to move civilians, restrict movement, define threats, control territory, and determine acceptable levels of violence demonstrates how military occupation regulates whose lives are protected and whose lives remain vulnerable.

The Iraqi civilians encountered in the series do not possess the same capacity to determine the conditions under which they live. Their movement is shaped by military operations, checkpoints, attacks, displacement, and the changing security environment. They experience the consequences of political decisions over which they have little immediate control.

The political meaning of these scenes is therefore greater than their immediate narrative function. The series reveals that war does not end when direct combat stops. Displacement, fear, insecurity, hunger, damaged infrastructure, and uncertainty continue to shape civilian existence. Violence becomes an environment rather than a single event.

This is also where the title *Generation Kill* acquires broader significance. The "generation" affected by war is not limited to the Marines. Iraqi civilians also inherit the consequences of military intervention. The series consequently opens a space for thinking about war as a process that reproduces vulnerability across generations and communities.

3.9 *Bomb in the Garden*: Occupation, Memory, and the Collapse of the Official Narrative

The final episode, *Bomb in the Garden*, provides the clearest culmination of the series' critique. By the time the Marines reach Baghdad, the initial momentum of invasion has given way to uncertainty about what has actually been achieved. The soldiers encounter a city whose size and complexity exceed the simplicity of the military narrative.

The episode also turns increasingly toward memory and reflection. The Marines begin to confront what they have witnessed. Their experiences cannot easily be organized into the language of victory or liberation.

One of the most significant scenes involves the Marines watching recorded images of the war. The footage forces them to confront violence from a different perspective. The act of watching becomes a form of retrospective recognition. What may have appeared as an operational necessity during combat can look disturbing when viewed later as an image of human suffering.

This scene is central to the concept of the spectacle of war. War is not simply fought; it is recorded, circulated, watched, interpreted, and remembered. Jaramillo (2016) argues that *Generation Kill* itself participates in a retrospective reworking of the Iraq War, while Fox (2018) shows how the series' visual structures connect close-up battlefield experiences to larger political and media discourses.

The final episode therefore contains a double movement. The soldiers become spectators of their own war, while the television audience becomes a spectator of the soldiers' experience. This creates an important ethical distance. The audience is encouraged to reconsider the images of military action not simply as entertainment but as representations of consequences.

The reaction of the Marines to images of Iraqi bodies is especially important. Their discomfort demonstrates that the spectacle of violence can eventually become a source of moral recognition. At the same time, the different reactions among the characters reveal that war does not produce a single psychological response. Some experience guilt or disgust; others remain fascinated by violence.

The final scene consequently refuses a simple moral resolution. The war has not produced a uniform transformation in the soldiers. Instead, it leaves behind competing memories, unresolved questions, and psychological consequences.

3.10 Oil Politics as a Hidden Structure

The argument that oil functions as a hidden structure in *Generation Kill* requires careful qualification. The series does not construct a conventional political thriller in which military leaders openly announce that the purpose of the invasion is to seize Iraqi oil. Such an interpretation would go beyond what the text itself establishes.

Instead, oil becomes analytically visible when the series is read alongside the political economy of the Iraq War. Nell and Semmler (2007) demonstrate that the Iraq War cannot be separated from the international oil economy, while Mitchell (2011) emphasizes that oil connects economic systems to political authority and geopolitical power. The significance of oil therefore lies not only in oil wells themselves but in the larger structures of access, security, infrastructure, markets, and state power.

Within *Generation Kill*, these structures are displaced into military action. The Marines do not control energy policy; they move through strategic territory. They do not negotiate global oil markets; they secure roads, bridges, airfields, towns, and urban spaces. They do not design the geopolitical objectives of the invasion; they execute orders.

This displacement produces what may be called the spectral presence of oil. Oil is not always visually dominant, but the political economy associated with it forms part of the larger context within which military power operates. The resource is therefore "hidden" not because the series secretly announces an oil conspiracy, but because the everyday experience of war separates soldiers from the larger economic structures that give geopolitical intervention its meaning.

This interpretation is strengthened by Mitchell's (2011) rejection of simplistic resource determinism. Oil does not mechanically cause political violence. Rather, particular institutional arrangements transform oil into a source of political power. The question for *Generation Kill* is therefore not simply "Was the war for oil?" but rather: How does a war conducted in an oil-rich geopolitical space organize territory, military power, economic interests, and human vulnerability?

That question produces a more defensible reading of the series.

3.11 Propaganda, Media, and the Production of Political Meaning

The series also challenges the distance between war as experienced and war as represented. The Marines possess their own language for describing combat, while the wider public receives the war through television, political speeches, military briefings, and news reporting.

Jaramillo (2016) situates *Generation Kill* in relation to CNN and Fox News, showing how HBO's later representation of the invasion can be understood as a response to earlier media representations. Al-Rawi (2016) similarly argues that television representations of the Iraq War are shaped by their political and cultural contexts. These observations are important because war is never experienced by the public in exactly the same way it is experienced by those who fight it.

Generation Kill destabilizes official narratives partly through its attention to ordinary details. Instead of presenting the invasion only through major battles and political speeches, the series shows boredom, arguments, logistical problems, inappropriate humour, failed orders, confusion, and fear. These details weaken the polished appearance of military propaganda.

The series also demonstrates how language can normalize violence. Military expressions transform human beings into operational categories. Terms associated with targeting, missions, objectives, and rules of engagement create a professional vocabulary that can distance the speaker from the human consequences of action.

The importance of this language is not that every soldier consciously seeks to dehumanize Iraqis. Rather, institutional language makes violence administratively manageable. Once an individual becomes a "target," the complexity of that person's life can disappear from the decision-making process.

This is where the Political Economy of Oil, Postcolonial Theory, and Necropolitics intersect. Political economy asks who benefits from systems of resource control; Postcolonial Theory asks who possesses the authority to represent the Other; Necropolitics asks who is exposed to violence and death. *Generation Kill* brings these questions together through its representation of military occupation.

3.12 The Iraqi Civilian and the Problem of the "Other"

Although *Generation Kill* is primarily organized around American Marines, the Iraqi civilian remains central to its political meaning. Civilians appear at checkpoints, on roads, in villages, among displaced populations, and within urban spaces. Their relative lack of narrative control is itself significant.

From a postcolonial perspective, this unequal distribution of narrative authority raises questions about who is allowed to explain the conflict. The American soldier speaks, jokes, complains, interprets, and reflects. The Iraqi civilian is frequently observed rather than allowed sustained access to the narrative interior.

This does not mean that the series simply reproduces Orientalist representation. On the contrary, its depiction of American confusion and institutional incompetence frequently undermines the authority of the occupying gaze. The Marines themselves become objects of criticism. Nevertheless, the structural asymmetry remains: the invading soldiers possess weapons, mobility, institutional authority, and narrative centrality, while Iraqi civilians often possess none of these forms of power.

The series therefore produces a complex representation of the Other. Iraqis are not uniformly presented as passive victims, but neither do they receive the same narrative space as the Marines. This limitation should be acknowledged rather than ignored.

Al-Rawi's (2016) comparative study is particularly useful here because it demonstrates that different television productions distribute attention between soldiers and civilians differently. *Generation Kill* privileges the military experience. Consequently, its strongest contribution to the study of civilian suffering may be indirect: it shows how an occupying military institution perceives and manages the civilian population.

3.13 From Iraqi Oil Politics to African Resource Conflict

The analysis of *Generation Kill* becomes particularly significant for the present study when placed alongside African experiences of oil politics. The purpose is not to claim that Iraq and the Niger Delta are identical. Their histories, political institutions, colonial experiences, forms of extraction, and patterns of conflict differ considerably. The comparison instead identifies structural echoes concerning resource wealth, state power, corporate interests, militarization, and civilian vulnerability.

Nwajiaku-Dahou (2012) demonstrates that conflict in Nigeria's Niger Delta cannot be explained by oil alone. Historical developments, state and non-state actors, political alliances, oil theft, and changing relationships between communities and the state all contribute to the region's political economy. Obi (2014) similarly challenges simplistic interpretations of the "oil curse" and emphasizes the complex relationship between petroleum, violence, corruption, and political power.

This scholarship provides an important corrective to the analysis of *Generation Kill*. Oil should not be treated as a magical explanation that automatically produces war. Rather, oil becomes politically consequential through institutions, power relations, historical circumstances, and struggles over control of resources.

The connection between Iraq and the Niger Delta can therefore be formulated around resource politics and unequal exposure to power. In both contexts, petroleum exists within larger political structures involving states, corporations, security institutions, and communities. Yet the specific historical forms of these relationships are different.

The relevance to *Generation Kill* lies in the way the series makes visible the military and human dimensions of geopolitical power. The African comparison extends this insight by asking what happens when resource politics are examined from the perspective of communities living within oil-producing regions.

This comparative movement also strengthens the meaning of the phrase "African masses." The term should not suggest that African communities are simply helpless victims. Niger Delta communities have organized protests, articulated demands, resisted environmental destruction, negotiated with governments and corporations, and developed different forms of political agency. The analytical concern is therefore not only suffering but also the unequal conditions under which agency is exercised.

3.14 Spectacle, Violence, and the Human Cost of War

The central achievement of *Generation Kill* is its transformation of war from spectacle into critique. The series contains weapons, explosions, military vehicles, combat operations, and moments of intense violence, but these elements are continually interrupted by boredom, confusion, bureaucracy, and moral uncertainty.

This structure prevents the audience from experiencing war solely as heroic entertainment. The spectacle becomes uncomfortable because it is connected to consequences. Military success can produce civilian suffering; technological precision can coexist with error; institutional discipline can coexist with incompetence; and political claims about liberation can coexist with occupation.

The series' visual style reinforces this tension. Fox (2018) argues that its fragmented focalization connects the immediate battlefield perspective to a larger frame of political and media discourse. What the audience sees is therefore never simply "the war." It is a constructed perspective on the war.

This insight is central to the present study. The representation of oil politics is similarly indirect and constructed. The series does not provide an economic history of Iraqi petroleum. Instead, it provides a human-scale representation of a military operation taking place within a geopolitical environment shaped by oil. The viewer is encouraged to infer the larger structures from the consequences experienced on the ground.

The spectacle of war consequently becomes a spectacle of contradiction. The United States appears powerful but repeatedly fails to understand the environment it occupies. Soldiers appear disciplined but are frequently confused. Technology appears precise but does not eliminate civilian suffering. Political authority appears legitimate but is increasingly questioned by those who experience its consequences.

3.15 Chapter Summary

This chapter has examined *Generation Kill* as a representation of the Iraq War through the combined perspectives of oil politics, imperial power, postcolonial representation, and necropolitical violence. The analysis has demonstrated that oil should not be interpreted as a single, explicit cause of the invasion within the series. Rather, oil operates as a hidden or background geopolitical structure that becomes analytically visible through questions of territory, military strategy, infrastructure, resource control, and international political economy.

The selected episodes demonstrate a progressive movement from the spectacle of military power toward the exposure of institutional and moral contradictions. *The Cradle of Civilization* establishes the relationship between military movement and strategic territory; *Screwby* exposes the dangers of misrecognition and civilian vulnerability; *Combat Jack* highlights logistical and bureaucratic failure; *A Burning Dog* dramatizes the uncertainty of rules of engagement; *Stay Frosty* foregrounds civilian displacement and the contradictions of occupation; and *Bomb in the Garden* transforms battlefield experience into memory and moral reflection.

The characters likewise complicate conventional representations of war. Colbert's ethical concerns, Captain America's authoritarianism, Trombley's fascination with violence, and the wider soldiers' mixture of humour, fear, boredom, and frustration demonstrate that military personnel are not a homogeneous category. Their experiences are shaped by institutional hierarchies that separate those who make geopolitical decisions from those who physically enact them.

Through Postcolonial Theory, the chapter has shown how the unequal distribution of narrative authority affects the representation of Iraqis. Through the Political Economy of Oil, it has demonstrated how resource politics can be read beyond simplistic claims that oil mechanically causes war. Through Mbembe's Necropolitics, it has shown how occupation creates unequal conditions of exposure to violence and death.

The resulting interpretation provides the foundation for the next chapter, which extends the discussion beyond Iraq to African resource conflicts. In particular, the Niger Delta offers an important comparative context through which the study can examine the relationships among oil, militarization, political power, dispossession, and the lives of marginalized communities. The comparison does not collapse Iraq into Africa; instead, it asks how different historical contexts produce comparable questions about who controls resources, who exercises political authority, who bears the costs of extraction and conflict, and whose lives become most vulnerable when resource politics turns violent.

4. ECHOES ACROSS AFRICA — WAR, RESOURCE EXTRACTION, AND THE AFRICAN MASSES

4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter examined *Generation Kill* as a representation of the Iraq War in which military intervention, resource politics, territorial control, bureaucratic power, and civilian vulnerability intersect. The analysis

demonstrated that oil should not be reduced to a simplistic explanation of the invasion. Rather, oil functions as part of a broader political-economic structure involving geopolitical interests, military power, state authority, strategic territory, and the global organization of energy resources. This chapter extends that argument into the African context.

The purpose of the comparison is not to suggest that Iraq and Africa constitute identical political or historical situations. Such an argument would erase important differences in colonial histories, state formation, political institutions, ethnic relations, resource economies, and forms of resistance. Instead, the comparison identifies structural echoes. The central question is how resource wealth can coexist with poverty, environmental destruction, political exclusion, militarization, displacement, and violence. These contradictions are particularly visible in resource-rich African regions where local populations live close to valuable oil or mineral deposits but frequently experience limited control over the resources beneath their land.

The Niger Delta provides the principal African case for this analysis. The region offers a particularly important comparison with *Generation Kill* because petroleum extraction has generated a complex relationship among communities, the Nigerian state, multinational oil corporations, security institutions, and political elites. Nwajiaku-Dahou (2012) demonstrates that conflict in the Niger Delta cannot be explained simply through the presence of oil; historical grievances, political relationships, state structures, oil rents, and the activities of different local and external actors are equally important. Obi (2014) similarly argues for a more historically grounded understanding of the relationship between oil and conflict rather than a deterministic "resource curse" explanation.

Other African examples reinforce this argument. South Sudan illustrates the relationship between petroleum, political exclusion, territorial contestation, and violent conflict. Sierra Leone demonstrates how diamonds became embedded in civil war, international markets, and post-war development strategies. The Democratic Republic of Congo demonstrates the continuing relationship between mineral extraction, armed groups, international supply chains, and civilian vulnerability. Taken together, these cases reveal that natural resources do not independently produce violence. Rather, resource wealth becomes politically dangerous when it intersects with unequal institutions, weak accountability, exclusion, militarization, and struggles over access and control.

The chapter consequently interprets *Generation Kill* as a postcolonial metaphor rather than as a literal representation of African resource conflicts. The metaphor operates at the level of structure and experience. The series portrays soldiers entering a foreign territory in pursuit of military objectives whose larger political purposes are only partially visible to them. Across several African contexts, communities similarly confront powerful institutions—states, corporations, armed groups, and international markets—that exercise considerable control over resources while local populations bear disproportionate social and environmental costs. The comparison therefore shifts attention from the battlefield alone to the wider political economy of resource extraction.

4.2 From Iraq to Africa: A Comparative Framework

The comparison between *Generation Kill* and African resource conflicts begins with a distinction between historical identity and analytical similarity. Iraq is not the Niger Delta, and the Niger Delta is not South Sudan, Sierra Leone, or the Democratic Republic of Congo. Each case possesses its own historical trajectory. Nevertheless, they can be brought into dialogue around questions of resource control, political authority, militarization, dispossession, and civilian vulnerability.

In *Generation Kill*, the Marines move through Iraqi territory without determining the broader political purpose of the intervention. They execute orders, secure roads, respond to threats, and encounter civilians whose lives have been transformed by the invasion. Their immediate experience is therefore narrower than the geopolitical structure within which they operate.

A similar distinction can be made between local communities and the wider political economy of extraction. Farmers, fishers, artisanal miners, and residents of resource-rich communities often experience extraction through changes to land, water, employment, security, and political authority. They may know that oil, diamonds, gold, cobalt, or other valuable minerals are being extracted from their environment, yet they frequently possess limited influence over the larger markets and institutions that determine the value and distribution of those resources.

This does not mean that African communities are passive. On the contrary, resistance, protest, negotiation, litigation, environmental activism, armed struggle, and community organization are central to the history of resource politics across the continent. Mai-Bornu (2019), for example, demonstrates the different trajectories of the Ogoni and Ijaw movements in the Niger Delta, showing that local struggles over oil have involved distinct political strategies and forms of mobilization.

The comparative value of *Generation Kill* therefore lies in its capacity to make visible the relationship between large-scale structures and human-scale experience. The series reduces a major geopolitical conflict to the daily experiences of individual soldiers. This study performs a related analytical movement by examining how African resource politics are experienced by ordinary people.

4.3 The Niger Delta: Oil Wealth and the Geography of Environmental Violence

The Niger Delta is the most important African context for this study because it demonstrates the contradiction between petroleum wealth and local deprivation with exceptional clarity. The region contains extensive oil and gas resources, yet communities located within oil-producing areas have experienced environmental degradation, inadequate infrastructure, poverty, and political conflict.

The 2011 United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) assessment of Ogoniland provides particularly powerful evidence. UNEP examined more than 200 locations, surveyed 122 kilometres of pipeline rights of way, reviewed more than 5,000 medical records, and engaged more than 23,000 people through community meetings. Its assessment identified extensive contamination affecting land, groundwater, surface water, sediments, vegetation, air quality, and public health.

The significance of Ogoniland is not simply that oil spills occurred. The deeper issue is the transformation of the environment in which people live and make their livelihoods. A community that depends upon agriculture, fishing, rivers, forests, and wetlands experiences environmental contamination not merely as an ecological problem but as an economic and social crisis.

This creates a useful connection with *Generation Kill*. In the series, military intervention transforms ordinary geographical spaces into strategic spaces. Roads become military routes; bridges become strategic objectives; towns become potential sites of conflict. In the Niger Delta, the landscape is similarly transformed by the requirements of petroleum extraction. Rivers become transportation routes; land becomes a site for pipelines and infrastructure; communities become spaces through which corporate and state interests operate.

The difference is that the transformation is not primarily accomplished through an invading army. It occurs through an extractive political economy involving corporations, government institutions, infrastructure, security arrangements, and global markets. Yet in both contexts, the ordinary population can experience a loss of control over the meaning and use of its own environment.

This is what makes environmental violence particularly significant. Violence does not necessarily appear as a gunshot or battlefield confrontation. It may also take the form of contaminated water, destroyed farmland, loss of fishing grounds, displacement, economic insecurity, and long-term damage to ecological systems.

4.4 Ogoniland and the Politics of Environmental Dispossession

The history of the Ogoni struggle provides one of the clearest examples of how environmental degradation can become a political struggle over citizenship, resource control, and corporate accountability.

Oil extraction in Ogoniland generated increasing opposition among local communities, culminating in organized resistance associated particularly with the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP). The execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists in 1995 became an international symbol of the violent tensions surrounding oil extraction, environmental degradation, and political dissent.

The importance of the Ogoni case for this study lies in the transformation of environmental grievances into political claims. The issue was not simply that oil extraction damaged the environment. It was also that communities demanded greater control, recognition, compensation, environmental responsibility, and political participation.

Maiangwa and Agbibo (2013) argue that irresponsible activities associated with oil multinational corporations contributed to environmental degradation, human-rights abuses, ethnic militancy, and what they describe as "turbulent peace" in the Niger Delta. Their analysis demonstrates that the relationship between multinational corporations and local communities cannot be separated from the broader political and security environment.

The situation illustrates the usefulness of the Political Economy of Oil developed in Chapter Two. Oil is valuable because it is embedded in a system of global demand, investment, transportation, state revenue, and corporate organization. Consequently, the people living on oil-producing land do not necessarily exercise corresponding power over the resource.

The contradiction can be summarized as follows:

Resource Abundance Does Not Automatically Produce Social Abundance

A region may possess enormous petroleum wealth while local communities experience environmental degradation and economic marginalization. The distribution of benefits and costs depends upon political institutions, ownership structures, state policies, corporate practices, and the capacity of communities to negotiate.

The metaphor of *Generation Kill* becomes relevant here. The Marines possess overwhelming military power but limited understanding of the society through which they move. Similarly, resource-producing communities may live within territories of enormous economic value while possessing limited control over the political and economic systems that determine how that value is extracted and distributed.

4.5 Militancy and the Militarization of the Niger Delta

The history of the Niger Delta also demonstrates how resource conflicts can become militarized. As grievances intensified, different militant organizations emerged and challenged the Nigerian state and oil industry. The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), for example, became internationally associated with attacks on oil infrastructure, kidnapping, sabotage, and demands for greater control over oil resources.

It would nevertheless be misleading to describe militancy as the inevitable consequence of oil extraction. Nwajiaku-Dahou (2012) shows that the political economy of the Niger Delta involves complex relationships among state institutions, local communities, political actors, militants, and oil interests. Obi (2014) similarly argues that the relationship between oil and violence must be approached historically and politically rather than through a deterministic resource-curse model.

This is important for the interpretation of *Generation Kill*. The series does not present war as the inevitable result of Iraqi oil. Instead, it shows institutions transforming political circumstances into military action. The same principle applies to the Niger Delta. Oil becomes politically explosive within a particular configuration of exclusion, inequality, environmental damage, state authority, corporate interests, and local resistance.

The militarization of resource-producing areas therefore raises a central question: What happens when political grievances are interpreted primarily as security problems?

When communities protest, the state may interpret their actions as threats to national security or economic stability. Security responses can then intensify the very grievances that produced resistance. In this sense, militarization may reproduce conflict rather than resolve its underlying causes.

The parallel with *Generation Kill* is significant. The Marines repeatedly encounter situations in which the military solution appears easier to implement than the political solution. Yet military power does not resolve the underlying complexity of Iraqi society. Similarly, security responses to resource grievances in Africa may suppress immediate unrest without addressing the structural inequalities that generate it.

4.6 South Sudan: Oil, Political Exclusion, and Violent Conflict

The case of South Sudan demonstrates another dimension of the resource-conflict relationship. South Sudan possesses substantial oil resources, and petroleum has been central to the country's political economy. Yet oil wealth has existed alongside severe political instability, armed conflict, displacement, and humanitarian crisis.

The importance of South Sudan lies partly in the relationship between resource control and political exclusion. A recent study by Ali, Aghdam, and Bhuiyan (2025), examining the Niger Delta and South Sudan comparatively, finds that the combination of oil extraction, exclusion of particular groups from national political processes, and unequal distribution of oil revenues is associated with intensified conflict. Importantly, their findings also demonstrate differences between the two cases, reinforcing the need for context-specific analysis rather than a universal resource-conflict formula.

The South Sudanese case therefore complicates the phrase "resource curse." Oil does not independently create political violence. Rather, the distribution of political power and resource revenues determines how petroleum wealth enters the conflict structure.

This provides another connection with *Generation Kill*. The Marines in the series are part of a military institution whose power is greater than that of the Iraqi civilians they encounter. Similarly, in resource-rich political systems, communities may possess little institutional power compared with governments, armed groups, corporations, and international investors.

The result can be a politics in which control over territory becomes inseparable from control over resources. Whoever controls oil-producing territory can potentially influence state revenues, political bargaining, and military capacity.

The consequences for ordinary people are profound. Conflict can produce displacement, destroyed infrastructure, disrupted livelihoods, food insecurity, and exposure to violence. The resource that should theoretically contribute to national development can instead become embedded within struggles over political survival.

4.7 Sierra Leone: Diamonds, Civil War, and the Global Commodity Chain

Although Sierra Leone is not an oil-producing case, its diamond economy provides an important extension of the argument. The Sierra Leone Civil War (1991–2002) has frequently been associated with "blood diamonds," through which valuable stones became connected to armed groups, international markets, and the financing of rebellion.

Marks (2019) provides a particularly useful corrective to simplistic accounts. Her research on the Revolutionary United Front demonstrates that armed groups employed several strategies in relation to diamonds, including resource rhetoric, destruction, looting, extraction, mortgaging, and taxation. Resource exploitation therefore changed according to military conditions and political circumstances.

This observation strengthens the argument that resources do not automatically cause conflict. Their political meaning depends on how different actors organize around them.

The experience of Kono District is particularly revealing. Wilson (2013) examines conflicts between mining companies and communities over diamond resources and shows how post-war mining reforms could reinforce unequal relations over access to land and mining rights. Rather than automatically resolving tensions, industrial mining expansion sometimes created new conflicts between corporations, the state, traditional authorities, and local communities.

Le Billon and Levin (2009) similarly show that post-war industrialization of Sierra Leone's diamond sector did not automatically resolve problems of human rights, impoverishment, and community insecurity. Their analysis questions the assumption that formalizing or industrializing resource extraction necessarily produces peace and development.

The comparison with *Generation Kill* is useful because the series also exposes the limits of institutional solutions imposed from above. Military commanders may believe that they are bringing order to Iraq, just as governments and corporations may present industrial mining as a pathway to development. Yet local populations can experience these interventions differently.

The central issue is therefore not whether extraction is "good" or "bad" in the abstract. It is who controls extraction, who receives its benefits, who bears its costs, and whose definition of development becomes authoritative.

4.8 The Democratic Republic of Congo: Minerals, Armed Groups, and Global Consumption

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) provides an even broader illustration of resource politics because its mineral economy connects local conflict to global technological production. Eastern DRC contains deposits of minerals including gold, tin, tungsten, and tantalum, while the country's wider mineral economy is increasingly important to global supply chains.

Diemel (2019) examines attempts to reform the conflict-mineral economy and notes that armed groups and public forces have been involved in mining and mineral trading, while conflict-mineral policies have sought to break the relationship between extraction and violence. Yet the study questions whether international due-diligence initiatives have always prioritized the welfare of Congolese populations over the production of traceable and "conflict-free" commodities.

This is a crucial point for the present study. A mineral may be described as "conflict-free" within an international supply chain while the people living near the mine continue to experience poverty, insecurity, displacement, or weak political representation.

The contradiction resembles the representational problem identified in *Generation Kill*. The international audience may see the final product—the television image, the military victory, the electronic device, the exported mineral—without seeing the social relations that made the product possible.

The DRC consequently demonstrates the global dimension of resource politics. The violence surrounding extraction is not only a local problem. Minerals extracted from African soil enter international markets and supply chains.

Consumers far from the mining region may participate indirectly in an economic system whose social consequences remain geographically distant.

This distance between consumption and consequence is one of the most important characteristics of contemporary resource capitalism.

4.9 Resource Extraction and the Production of Displacement

Displacement is another important point of convergence between *Generation Kill* and African resource conflicts.

In *Generation Kill*, civilians are repeatedly encountered as people whose movement has been disrupted by war. Roads become dangerous, towns become militarized spaces, and civilians are forced to negotiate a landscape transformed by military operations. The series therefore shows displacement as a consequence of geopolitical violence.

Across Africa, displacement can similarly occur through armed conflict, mining operations, environmental degradation, land acquisition, and the militarization of resource-producing areas.

In the Niger Delta, environmental degradation can undermine the ecological foundations of fishing and farming communities. In eastern DRC, armed conflict and competition around mining areas have contributed to insecurity and displacement. In South Sudan, conflict over political power and resource-rich territory has generated extensive displacement.

The underlying pattern is the transformation of inhabited space into economic or strategic space.

A territory that is meaningful to local people because it contains homes, farms, rivers, ancestral lands, and cultural institutions may be understood by corporations and governments primarily as an oil field, mineral deposit, pipeline corridor, or strategic territory.

This difference in the meaning of land is central to postcolonial analysis. The land is not empty merely because it is economically underdeveloped. Nor does the existence of valuable resources automatically erase the rights and histories of the people who inhabit it.

The violence of dispossession begins when one definition of land overrides another through unequal political power.

4.10 Poverty in the Midst of Resource Wealth

The phrase "African masses" becomes particularly meaningful when examined through the contradiction between resource wealth and poverty.

Resource-rich countries can generate substantial export revenues while large sections of their populations remain economically insecure. This contradiction should not be interpreted as evidence that resources themselves are inherently harmful. Rather, it raises questions about institutions of distribution, accountability, political representation, taxation, corporate governance, and development.

Sierra Leone provides a useful example. Zulu (2012) finds that post-conflict increases in mineral exports did not automatically produce significant improvements in poverty reduction, education, health, vulnerability, or political power in mining communities. The problem was not simply the absence of mineral wealth but the unequal political and institutional relationships surrounding that wealth.

The Niger Delta reveals a similar contradiction. The region's importance to Nigeria's petroleum economy has not eliminated local poverty or environmental vulnerability. UNEP's findings on Ogoniland demonstrate the persistence of environmental and public-health consequences despite the enormous economic importance of petroleum to Nigeria.

The comparison with *Generation Kill* is again indirect but significant. The soldiers in the series inhabit a military system possessing enormous material resources, yet individual Marines experience shortages, confusion, and institutional neglect. This paradox—abundance at the institutional level and deprivation at the human level—is a recurring feature of the series.

African resource economies reveal a comparable contradiction: substantial natural wealth can coexist with inadequate local development.

4.11 Multinational Corporations and the Question of Responsibility

Multinational corporations occupy an important position in African resource politics. Oil and mining companies possess capital, technology, international networks, and access to markets that local communities generally lack.

The Niger Delta provides an important example. Maiangwa and Agbiboa (2013) examine the role of multinational oil corporations, particularly Shell, in relation to environmental degradation, ethnic militancy, human-rights concerns, and instability in the region. Their analysis places corporate behavior within a broader relationship involving the state, local communities, and security actors.

It is important, however, not to treat multinational corporations as the only source of responsibility. Resource conflicts generally involve multiple actors. Governments determine laws, licensing regimes, taxation, security policies, and environmental regulations. Local political elites can influence distribution. Armed groups may exploit resources for financing. Corporations make investment and operational decisions. International consumers and markets determine demand.

The Political Economy is Therefore Relational

This complexity parallels *Generation Kill*. The series does not place responsibility for the Iraq War exclusively on individual Marines. Instead, it exposes a hierarchy involving politicians, commanders, military institutions, media organizations, and soldiers. Responsibility is distributed across the system.

The same analytical principle applies to African resource extraction. The question is not simply "Who is guilty?" but How is a system organized so that benefits and costs are distributed unequally?

4.12 The African Masses as Subjects Rather Than Victims

A danger in writing about African resource conflicts is the tendency to represent local populations only as victims. Such representation reproduces a colonial image of Africa as a space of suffering without political agency.

This Study Adopts a Different Position

The African masses are not simply passive recipients of violence. They organize, resist, negotiate, protest, litigate, form movements, participate in electoral politics, establish community organizations, and sometimes take up arms. Their responses are shaped by specific histories and political opportunities.

The Ogoni movement provides a major example. The struggle associated with MOSOP transformed environmental grievances into an international political campaign. The movement demonstrated that local communities could articulate sophisticated claims concerning environmental justice, political autonomy, corporate responsibility, and resource control.

Mai-Bornu's (2019) comparative analysis of Ogoni and Ijaw movements further demonstrates that local resource struggles cannot be reduced to a single model of resistance. Different communities develop different political strategies according to their histories, leadership structures, and relationships with state and corporate actors.

Sierra Leone offers another example. Wilson (2013) shows how mining communities have contested the distribution of land and mineral rights rather than simply accepting post-war industrial mining arrangements.

These examples complicate the concept of the "African masses." The masses are not an undifferentiated population. They consist of communities with distinct histories, interests, identities, and strategies.

Consequently, the postcolonial metaphor developed in this study should not transform African people into symbolic victims of global capitalism. Instead, it should draw attention to the unequal structures within which their agency operates.

4.13 Necropolitics and the Unequal Distribution of Vulnerability

Mbembe's (2003) concept of necropolitics provides an important theoretical bridge between *Generation Kill* and African resource conflicts. The concept directs attention toward the political organization of life and death: who is protected, who is exposed, who is displaced, and whose suffering becomes politically acceptable.

In *Generation Kill*, Iraqi civilians are repeatedly exposed to the consequences of military operations over which they have limited control. The Marines possess weapons, institutional authority, mobility, and the power to classify threats. Civilians generally do not possess equivalent power.

Comparable Inequalities of Vulnerability Appear in African Resource Conflicts

In Ogoniland, environmental contamination can threaten water, land, agriculture, fishing, and health. In eastern DRC, armed conflict around mineral resources has been associated with serious human-rights abuses and insecurity. Diemel (2019) notes that conflict-mineral governance documents explicitly connect armed-group involvement in mining to human-rights violations, including sexual violence and the proliferation of weapons.

In South Sudan, the relationship between oil, exclusion, and violent conflict demonstrates how political marginalization can intersect with resource wealth. Ali *et al.*, (2025) find evidence linking exclusion and unequal resource distribution to conflict intensity in their comparative study of South Sudan and the Niger Delta.

Necropolitics therefore allows the analysis to move beyond the simple question of who owns a resource. It asks what happens to human life when economic and political systems prioritize extraction, security, territorial control, or military objectives over the protection of vulnerable populations.

4.14 From Military Occupation to Extractive Occupation

One of the most productive concepts emerging from the comparison is that of extractive occupation.

Military occupation and resource extraction are not identical. Nevertheless, both can involve powerful institutions entering or controlling spaces whose inhabitants possess limited influence over the larger purposes of intervention.

In *Generation Kill*, American military forces move through Iraq, establish operational control, determine routes, classify threats, and regulate movement. The soldiers occupy physical space while operating according to objectives determined within a larger geopolitical hierarchy.

In resource-rich African regions, corporations and state institutions similarly establish infrastructures—pipelines, mines, roads, processing facilities, security installations—that reorganize local space around extraction.

The analogy should not be pushed too far. A pipeline is not a military convoy, and an oil company is not an occupying army. Yet both can participate in processes through which external priorities reshape local spaces.

The concept of extractive occupation therefore refers not to literal military occupation but to the reorganization of local space around the requirements of resource extraction.

In Ogoniland, this can be observed in the relationship between oil infrastructure and community environments. In Sierra Leone's Kono District, industrial mining can transform relationships to land and mining rights. In eastern DRC, mineral extraction connects local territories to global supply chains.

This concept helps explain why the comparison with *Generation Kill* remains useful even when there is no conventional war. Violence does not always need to take the form of battlefield combat. It can operate through dispossession, environmental degradation, insecurity, economic exclusion, and the denial of meaningful participation.

4.15 Postcolonial Continuities and the Global Resource Economy

The African cases also demonstrate why a postcolonial approach remains important. Colonial rule reorganized African territories around the extraction and export of commodities. Although contemporary African states are politically independent, many continue to participate in global economic structures in which raw materials move from resource-producing regions toward international markets.

This does not mean that contemporary governments are simply colonial administrations in disguise. Nor does it imply that foreign corporations alone control African economies. African states, political elites, local communities, corporations, and international institutions all exercise different forms of power.

The postcolonial question is therefore one of continuity and transformation.

What has changed since colonialism? Political sovereignty, citizenship, state institutions, and local political agency have expanded significantly.

What persists? Unequal economic relationships, commodity dependence, struggles over land and resources, and the tendency for resource-producing regions to bear social and environmental costs that exceed their political influence.

Sierra Leone's colonial diamond history offers a particularly useful illustration. D'Angelo (2016) shows how colonial authorities and the mining company that held a monopoly over diamond extraction collaborated in developing legislative and disciplinary arrangements around the mining industry.

The historical significance of this relationship is that resource extraction was never merely economic. It also involved governance, law, territorial administration, labour control, and political authority.

The same insight helps illuminate the present. Contemporary extraction operates within formally different institutions, but questions of resource control remain inseparable from questions of governance and power.

4.16 *Generation Kill* as a Postcolonial Metaphor

The preceding analysis allows *Generation Kill* to be interpreted as a postcolonial metaphor for resource-driven violence without claiming that the series consciously represents Africa.

The metaphor works through three major correspondences.

First, there is the distance between geopolitical decision-making and local experience. In *Generation Kill*, soldiers execute orders whose larger political rationale is only partly visible to them. In African resource economies, local populations may live with the consequences of decisions made by governments, corporations, investors, armed groups, and international markets.

Second, there is the transformation of territory into strategic space. Iraq is represented as a landscape of roads, bridges, towns, military objectives, and operational zones. African resource regions can similarly be transformed into oil fields, mining concessions, pipeline corridors, and extraction zones.

Third, there is the unequal distribution of vulnerability. American Marines possess institutional and technological power that Iraqi civilians lack. Similarly, corporations, states, and armed organizations often possess greater political and economic power than local communities affected by extraction.

These correspondences do not make the cases identical. Instead, they establish a conceptual dialogue between the series and African realities.

The metaphor can therefore be represented as:

Resource value → political interest → territorial control → institutional/military power → unequal vulnerability → resistance and displacement.

This sequence is not a universal causal law. It is an analytical pathway for understanding how resource wealth can become politically consequential.

4.17 Environmental Violence as a Form of War

The comparison also requires an expansion of what is meant by "war."

Traditional definitions emphasize armed combat between organized forces. Yet environmental violence demonstrates that communities can experience forms of destruction that do not resemble conventional warfare.

The Ogoniland assessment is particularly important because UNEP documented contamination affecting land, groundwater, surface water, sediments, vegetation, air pollution, and public health.

For people whose livelihoods depend upon agriculture and fishing, environmental destruction can undermine the material conditions necessary for everyday life. The result may be understood as a form of structural violence: people are not necessarily attacked by soldiers, but the conditions necessary for healthy and secure life are progressively weakened.

This extends the necropolitical argument. Death and vulnerability can be produced through direct violence, but they can also be produced through environments in which particular populations are disproportionately exposed to danger.

The distinction between battlefield violence and environmental violence is therefore important for interpreting the African context. While *Generation Kill* depicts bombs, guns, military vehicles, and combat, the Niger Delta demonstrates that resource-related violence can operate through ecological destruction, political repression, displacement, and economic deprivation.

The forms differ, but the question of unequal exposure remains.

4.18 Resistance, Agency, and the Possibility of Alternative Futures

A critical interpretation of resource conflict should not end with victimhood. Resistance demonstrates that communities are capable of transforming the political meaning of resources.

The Ogoni struggle demonstrates how environmental claims can become demands for political recognition. The Ijaw movements illustrate other forms of mobilization around resource control. In Sierra Leone, mining communities have contested industrial expansion and the distribution of mining rights. In the DRC, communities and civil-society actors have participated in debates concerning conflict-free mineral supply chains and mining governance.

These examples suggest that resource politics is not predetermined. Institutions can change. Communities can organize. Governments can reform policies. Corporations can face legal and reputational pressures. International markets can be regulated.

At the same time, reforms may generate unintended consequences. Diemel (2019) shows that conflict-mineral reforms in the DRC can have complex effects, while Le Billon and Levin (2009) demonstrate that post-war mining reforms in Sierra Leone do not automatically eliminate poverty and insecurity.

The lesson is that development policies must be judged not simply by export figures or the formalization of extraction but by their effects on local livelihoods, political participation, environmental security, and human dignity.

This point returns the analysis to *Generation Kill*. The series does not provide an easy solution to the Iraq War. Instead, it exposes the contradictions produced when military power is applied to complex political problems. The African cases similarly suggest that resource conflicts cannot be solved through extraction alone, militarization alone, or corporate investment alone.

4.19 The African Masses and the Politics of Visibility

One of the most important contributions of this chapter is the question of visibility.

Who becomes visible when resources are extracted?

The international consumer sees petroleum, diamonds, gold, cobalt, or other commodities as products. Governments see revenue and national development. Corporations see investment opportunities. Armed groups may see sources of financing. Investors see markets.

But communities experience resources differently.

They may see polluted rivers, reduced farmland, damaged forests, insecure mining sites, displaced families, declining fisheries, or opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship. The same resource therefore possesses different meanings depending on one's position within the political economy.

This insight parallels the representational politics of *Generation Kill*. The series shifts attention from the official narrative of the Iraq invasion to the everyday experiences of soldiers. This shift reveals what official discourse tends to conceal.

The present study performs a similar movement in relation to Africa. It shifts attention from national oil revenues, mineral exports, and corporate investment toward the experiences of communities living around extraction sites.

The "African masses" become visible not as an abstract population but as people whose lives are materially connected to resource politics.

4.20 Comparative Synthesis

The cases examined in this chapter demonstrate that resource conflict in Africa takes multiple forms.

In the Niger Delta, oil extraction intersects with environmental degradation, political marginalization, militancy, corporate-state relations, and community resistance.

In South Sudan, oil intersects with political exclusion, state formation, unequal distribution of revenues, and violent conflict.

In Sierra Leone, diamonds became entangled with civil war, rebel financing, international markets, post-war reconstruction, and disputes over mining rights.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, minerals are connected to armed groups, global supply chains, regulatory interventions, and continuing insecurity.

These cases demonstrate that there is no single African "resource conflict." There are instead multiple resource political economies shaped by different histories and institutions.

Yet several recurring patterns emerge:

1. Resource wealth can intensify the political value of territory.
2. Weak or unequal institutions can transform resource competition into political conflict.
3. Militarization can protect extraction while simultaneously deepening community grievances.
4. Environmental degradation can become a form of structural violence.
5. Global markets can separate consumers from the human consequences of extraction.
6. Local communities possess agency and develop different forms of resistance.
7. Resource abundance does not guarantee local development.
8. The costs of extraction are frequently distributed differently from its economic benefits.

These patterns provide the bridge between *Generation Kill* and African resource politics.

4.21 CONCLUSION

This chapter has extended the analysis of *Generation Kill* from Iraq to African resource-producing regions, with particular emphasis on the Niger Delta and comparative examples from South Sudan, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The analysis has demonstrated that the relationship between resources and violence is complex and historically contingent. Oil, diamonds, and minerals do not mechanically produce war. Rather, they become politically consequential through particular configurations of state power, corporate interests, political exclusion, armed mobilization, global markets, and community resistance.

The Niger Delta represents the central African parallel for the present study. The environmental assessment of Ogoniland demonstrates the material consequences of decades of petroleum operations, while scholarship on the political economy of the region shows that conflict cannot be reduced to oil alone. The struggles of Ogoni, Ijaw, and other communities demonstrate that resource extraction generates not only violence and dispossession but also political agency and resistance.

South Sudan further demonstrates the relationship between oil, exclusion, and political conflict. Sierra Leone reveals the ways in which diamonds can become embedded within civil war and post-conflict development, while the Democratic Republic of Congo illustrates the continuing relationship between mineral extraction, armed groups, international supply chains, and civilian vulnerability.

Through these examples, *Generation Kill* can be understood as a postcolonial metaphor for resource-driven violence. The metaphor does not depend upon historical equivalence between Iraq and Africa. Rather, it emerges from structural similarities concerning the relationship between territory, resources, institutional power, militarization, and human vulnerability.

The series' representation of American Marines moving through Iraq provides a human-scale view of a much larger geopolitical process. The African cases similarly require attention to the people who inhabit resource-rich territories but frequently possess limited control over the political economies that organize extraction. The comparison consequently shifts the study from the question of who possesses resources to the more significant questions of who controls them, who benefits from them, who bears their costs, and whose lives become vulnerable in the process.

The concept of the African masses must therefore be understood in a critical rather than purely descriptive sense. African communities are not merely victims of foreign corporations, governments, or global capitalism. They are political subjects capable of resistance, negotiation, organization, and transformation. Nevertheless, their agency is exercised within structures of unequal power.

Ultimately, the "echoes" between *Generation Kill* and African resource conflicts lie in the recurring contradiction between resource value and human value. A territory may be considered strategically important because of what lies beneath its soil, while the people living upon that soil struggle to secure recognition, environmental protection, political representation, and economic justice. The spectacle of war represented in *Generation Kill* thus finds its broader postcolonial resonance in the less spectacular but equally consequential forms of environmental violence, militarization, displacement, and dispossession experienced by resource-producing communities across Africa.

The next chapter can therefore move from representation and comparison toward the study's overall findings and implications, asking what the combined analysis of Iraq and Africa reveals about oil politics, postcolonial power, media representation, and the continuing human costs of resource extraction.

5 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Summary of Major Findings

This study examined HBO's *Generation Kill* as a contemporary war drama through the interconnected perspectives of oil politics, imperial power, military intervention, civilian suffering, and African resource conflicts. The study was guided by the argument that contemporary war narratives should not be approached merely as representations of battlefield encounters, but as cultural texts through which questions of political power, economic interests, territorial control, representation, and human vulnerability are negotiated. Through a qualitative textual analysis of *Generation Kill*, the study demonstrated that the series provides a complex representation of the 2003 Iraq War in which military operations are inseparable from wider political and economic structures.

The first major finding is that *Generation Kill* provides a critical space for examining the relationship between military intervention and geopolitical interests surrounding oil. The series does not explicitly establish oil as the sole or direct cause of the Iraq War. Such a conclusion would reduce a historically complex conflict to a single explanation. Rather, the study has interpreted oil politics as an important political-economic context through which the invasion and occupation can be critically understood. The strategic significance of Iraq's oil resources, together with broader questions of energy security, geopolitical influence, and capitalist interests, creates a background against which the military intervention becomes more intelligible. This reading is consistent with scholarship that identifies the relationship between the Iraq War and the global political economy of oil (Nell & Semmler, 2007).

The study further found that *Generation Kill* challenges simplified representations of military heroism. Instead of presenting war as a straightforward confrontation between good and evil, the series exposes confusion, incompetence, institutional pressure, contradictory orders, inadequate preparation, and moral uncertainty. The experiences of the Marines reveal the distance between official representations of military intervention and the realities experienced by those operating on the ground. Jaramillo (2016) observes that the series can be understood as a retrospective reworking of the representation of the Iraq invasion, while Fox (2018) demonstrates how its visual and narrative strategies place considerable emphasis on the fragmented experiences of soldiers within larger political and media structures.

A related finding concerns the representation of civilian vulnerability. Although *Generation Kill* is primarily structured around the experiences of American Marines, Iraqi civilians remain crucial to the meaning of the narrative. Civilians appear within a military environment in which their safety is repeatedly subordinated to strategic objectives, operational uncertainty, and the demands of warfare. The series therefore raises questions about whose lives receive protection, whose suffering becomes visible, and whose deaths can become normalized within military operations. Al-Rawi (2016) similarly identifies the series as part of a broader group of television representations of the Iraq War that negotiate questions of occupation, civilian suffering, military experience, and psychological trauma.

The study also found that the bureaucratic structure of military power is central to the series' critique. Violence is not represented simply as the product of individual cruelty. It emerges through institutions, command structures, military procedures, political decisions, and systems of authority. Individual soldiers frequently operate within circumstances they do not control. This creates an important moral ambiguity: those who participate in violence may themselves be constrained by institutional structures, while civilians bear consequences for decisions made far beyond their immediate communities.

The African dimension of the study revealed significant structural parallels between the representation of Iraq in *Generation Kill* and resource conflicts in Africa, particularly in the Niger Delta. These parallels should not be understood as suggesting that Iraq and the Niger Delta are historically identical. Rather, they reveal recurring relationships between valuable natural resources, political power, territorial control, institutional violence, environmental degradation, and unequal human vulnerability.

In the Niger Delta, the economic importance of petroleum has been accompanied by struggles over political representation, resource control, environmental degradation, state authority, corporate interests, and local resistance. Nwajiaku-Dahou (2012) demonstrates that conflict in the Niger Delta must be understood within a complex political economy involving oil rents, historical relationships, state institutions, and local political actors. Obi (2014) likewise cautions against reducing Niger Delta conflict to a simple resource-curse explanation. These studies support the present study's argument that oil does not mechanically produce violence; rather, conflict develops through the interaction of resources with political exclusion, institutional structures, historical grievances, and struggles over power.

The environmental consequences of petroleum extraction provide another important connection. The United Nations Environment Programme's (2011) assessment of Ogoniland documented extensive contamination associated with decades of oil operations, demonstrating how resource extraction can produce forms of suffering that extend beyond conventional definitions of warfare. The Niger Delta therefore expands the meaning of violence from the battlefield to the environment, the community, the household, and the everyday conditions of life.

The study's overall finding is therefore that *Generation Kill* can be read as a text about more than soldiers and combat. It is a narrative about the structures that make war possible and about the unequal distribution of its consequences. When placed alongside African resource conflicts, the series provides a productive framework for examining how political-economic interests can transform territories into strategic spaces while placing ordinary populations at heightened risk.

5.2 Conclusion: Oil, Imperial Power, and Civilian Suffering

The central conclusion of this study is that *Generation Kill* redefines the contemporary war drama by moving beyond conventional representations of combat and military heroism toward a critical examination of the political, economic, institutional, and human structures surrounding war. The series demonstrates that warfare is not simply an encounter between armed forces. It is a process involving governments, military institutions, economic interests, media systems, territories, resources, and civilian populations.

The significance of oil within this interpretation must, however, remain carefully qualified. The study does not conclude that oil alone caused the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Instead, it argues that oil politics provides an important lens through which the relationship between economic interests, geopolitical power, and military intervention can be interrogated. Mitchell (2011) demonstrates how petroleum has historically shaped political power and modern systems of governance, while Harvey (2003) provides a broader framework for understanding the relationship between capitalist accumulation, territorial power, and imperial practices. From this perspective, the Iraq War can be examined as part of a wider political-economic environment in which strategic territories and valuable resources acquire significance beyond their immediate geographical locations.

Generation Kill is particularly valuable because it does not present this political-economic structure through lengthy theoretical explanations. Instead, it allows the contradictions of war to emerge through character experiences, military conversations, movement through Iraqi territory, encounters with civilians, institutional decisions, and the everyday absurdities of military life. The result is a representation in which the distance between political objectives and human consequences becomes increasingly visible.

The study further concludes that the concept of necropolitics provides an important way of understanding civilian suffering in the series. Mbembe (2003) argues that sovereignty is also expressed through the power to determine who may live and who may be exposed to death. Within the context of *Generation Kill*, military power creates spaces in which civilians become exposed to dangers they did not create and over which they possess limited control. This does not mean that every death in war should automatically be described as an intentional exercise of necropolitical power. Rather, the concept helps explain how political and military systems distribute vulnerability unequally.

The connection with Africa strengthens this interpretation. Across resource-rich African societies, communities may live alongside resources that generate enormous national and international wealth while experiencing environmental degradation, displacement, insecurity, poverty, or political marginalization. The Niger Delta represents a particularly important example. The struggles of Ogoni and Ijaw communities demonstrate that the value attached to petroleum can coexist with serious struggles over land, livelihood, environmental protection, political representation, and control over resources (Mai-Bornu, 2019; Nwajaku-Dahou, 2012).

The comparison therefore produces what may be described as structural echoes. In Iraq, military intervention operates within a geopolitical environment in which territory, security, and resources acquire strategic importance. In the Niger Delta, oil extraction operates through political and economic structures that reshape communities and distribute benefits and burdens unequally. The historical circumstances are different, but both contexts invite questions about who controls valuable resources, who benefits from them, whose interests determine policy, and whose lives bear the costs.

The concept of extractive occupation developed in this study is useful in describing this broader condition. It does not suggest that resource extraction in Africa is literally equivalent to military occupation. Rather, it refers to situations in which local territories become reorganized around the economic demands of extraction, sometimes producing forms of political, economic, environmental, and spatial control that constrain the lives of local populations. Such a framework helps connect conventional understandings of war with less visible forms of structural and environmental violence.

Ultimately, *Generation Kill* exposes a fundamental contradiction between resource value and human value. A territory may become strategically important because of what lies beneath its soil, while the people living above that resource remain politically and economically vulnerable. This contradiction is central not only to the interpretation of the Iraq War but also to wider debates about oil and mineral extraction across the Global South.

5.3 Implications for African Theatre, Film, and Media Studies

The findings of this study have important implications for African Theatre, Film, and Media Studies. First, they demonstrate the value of reading international media texts through African theoretical and political contexts. *Generation Kill* is an American television production about Iraq, yet its concerns with military power, resource politics, territorial control, representation, and civilian vulnerability can generate productive questions about African experiences. Such a reading moves African scholarship beyond the assumption that African media studies must examine only texts produced within Africa.

This approach also encourages scholars to treat popular television as a serious site of political and ideological inquiry. War dramas are not merely entertainment. They participate in the cultural production of ideas about war, soldiers, nations, enemies, civilians, violence, and political legitimacy. Consequently, African Theatre, Film, and Media Studies can benefit from greater engagement with international television series, streaming productions, films, documentaries, and digital narratives that construct representations of Africa and the Global South.

Second, the study highlights the importance of comparative postcolonial analysis. Postcolonial Theory makes it possible to question how power shapes representation and whose perspective becomes authoritative. Said's (1978) concept of Orientalism is particularly relevant to questions concerning the representation of Iraq and the construction of cultural difference. However, the present study also demonstrates the need to move beyond a simple binary between Western representation and African victimhood. African communities should be represented as political subjects capable of resistance, negotiation, organization, and alternative forms of knowledge.

This is particularly important in representations of the Niger Delta. Scholarship on the region demonstrates that local communities have not simply endured resource extraction passively. Movements associated with communities such as the Ogoni and Ijaw have challenged corporate practices, state policies, environmental destruction, and unequal resource relations (Mai-Bornu, 2019; Nwajiaku-Dahou, 2012). African Theatre and Film can therefore contribute to a more complex representation of resource conflicts by foregrounding community voices, indigenous knowledge, environmental experiences, and local forms of resistance.

Third, the study suggests that African media scholarship should expand its understanding of violence. Violence should not be limited to guns, bombs, military operations, and visible physical destruction. Environmental pollution, forced displacement, loss of livelihoods, political exclusion, and prolonged exposure to poverty can also produce profound forms of human suffering. The Ogoniland assessment by UNEP (2011) illustrates the extent to which environmental consequences can become embedded within everyday life.

This broader understanding of violence creates opportunities for African theatre, film, and television to explore the relationship between environmental degradation and political power. Narratives concerning oil-producing communities can therefore move beyond the familiar representation of militants and violence to examine farmers, fishers, women, children, displaced families, environmental activists, traditional leaders, and other community actors whose experiences are frequently marginalized.

Fourth, the study has implications for the study of African masses. The term should not be interpreted as a homogeneous category. African populations are internally diverse, and communities experience resource politics differently according to class, gender, ethnicity, geography, political affiliation, and access to power. Future representations should therefore resist reducing African populations to an undifferentiated mass of suffering bodies. Instead, media narratives should recognize the complexity of their identities, political choices, and forms of agency.

The study also encourages African scholars to investigate the relationship between global capitalism and local cultural production. Oil and mineral extraction connect African territories to international corporations, financial institutions, governments, consumers, and global markets. This means that resource conflicts are not purely local problems. They are connected to transnational systems of production and consumption. African media scholarship can therefore examine how global economic relationships influence what stories are told, who tells them, which images circulate internationally, and how African suffering is represented for global audiences.

Finally, the study demonstrates the usefulness of combining Postcolonial Theory, Political Economy, and Necropolitics in media analysis. Postcolonial Theory explains questions of representation, othering, imperial power, and

historical inequality. Political Economy explains the relationship between resources, capital, state power, and geopolitical interests. Necropolitics provides a framework for understanding unequal exposure to violence and death. Their combination produces a multidimensional approach to war and resource narratives that is particularly relevant to African Theatre, Film, and Media Studies.

5.4 Recommendations and Areas for Further Research

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed. First, scholars of African Theatre, Film, and Media Studies should devote greater attention to the representation of oil politics and resource conflicts in contemporary film and television. Although oil has played a major role in the political and economic history of countries such as Nigeria, Angola, South Sudan, and Libya, its representation in African screen narratives remains an area that deserves sustained interdisciplinary investigation.

Second, future studies should undertake comparative research between African war and resource-conflict narratives and international productions such as *Generation Kill*. Such studies could examine how different media traditions represent soldiers, civilians, governments, corporations, insurgents, and local communities. Comparative research could also investigate differences between Western, African, and Global South perspectives on war and resource extraction.

Third, future researchers should give greater attention to civilian perspectives. Much war cinema and television concentrates on soldiers and military institutions. Research that examines the experiences of civilians, displaced populations, environmental activists, women, children, and local communities would provide a more complete understanding of the human consequences of resource-related violence.

Fourth, researchers should investigate environmental violence as a cinematic and theatrical subject. The Niger Delta demonstrates that the consequences of extraction may continue long after military confrontation or political crisis has ended. Theatre, documentary, film, and digital media can make environmental suffering visible and can provide spaces for communities to challenge dominant narratives of economic development.

Fifth, future scholarship should examine the role of multinational corporations and global media industries in resource-conflict narratives. Studies could ask how corporations are represented, how responsibility is assigned, and whether media narratives sufficiently connect local suffering with international systems of production, investment, and consumption.

Sixth, scholars should avoid resource determinism. The presence of oil, diamonds, or minerals does not automatically produce war. As the Niger Delta scholarship demonstrates, resource conflicts emerge through complex interactions involving governance, inequality, historical grievances, political exclusion, corporate practices, state institutions, and local agency (Nwajiaku-Dahou, 2012; Obi, 2014). Future research should therefore investigate these relationships rather than assuming a simple causal connection between natural resources and violence.

Seventh, further research should examine gender and resource conflict. Women frequently experience the consequences of displacement, environmental degradation, poverty, and political violence in distinctive ways, yet their perspectives are often marginalized in war narratives. Gender-sensitive analyses of African resource films and television dramas could reveal dimensions of conflict that remain invisible in predominantly male-centered narratives.

Eighth, future research could explore digital media and social activism surrounding oil-producing communities. Social media, online documentaries, digital storytelling, and community-based media have created new opportunities for marginalized populations to represent themselves rather than depending entirely on external media institutions. Such research would help determine whether digital platforms can challenge established patterns of representation and produce alternative accounts of resource politics.

Finally, audience-reception studies would be valuable. The present research has focused primarily on textual analysis. Future researchers could investigate how Nigerian, African, Iraqi, European, and American audiences interpret *Generation Kill* and other war narratives. Such research could reveal whether audiences recognize the political-economic dimensions of war or primarily interpret these texts through military, national, or humanitarian frameworks.

In conclusion, this study argues that *Generation Kill* deserves attention not simply as a representation of American soldiers in the Iraq War but as a complex cultural text through which contemporary questions of oil, imperial power, military intervention, civilian suffering, and resource politics can be examined. Its significance for African scholarship emerges from the structural echoes between the series' representation of Iraq and the experiences of communities living within Africa's resource-rich but politically contested environments.

The Niger Delta provides the strongest comparative context because it demonstrates how the pursuit of valuable natural resources can coexist with environmental degradation, political struggle, economic inequality, and resistance. Yet the comparison should never erase historical difference. Iraq is not the Niger Delta, and African resource conflicts cannot be reduced to a single model. What connects them is the recurring question of how economic value, political authority, and human vulnerability become organized around strategically important territories.

For African Theatre, Film, and Media Studies, this provides a productive direction for future scholarship. Media can reproduce dominant narratives of war, but it can also expose their contradictions. *Generation Kill* demonstrates the latter possibility by revealing the gap between official military narratives and the lived realities of intervention. Read through African resource politics, the series becomes a useful postcolonial metaphor for examining how powerful political and economic interests can determine the value assigned to territories while ordinary people bear disproportionate consequences.

The ultimate implication of the study is therefore a call to place human value alongside resource value in the interpretation of war and resource narratives. Oil, minerals, territory, and geopolitical interests may possess enormous economic and strategic importance, but the communities located within these spaces cannot be treated as expendable. By bringing questions of resource politics, imperial power, civilian suffering, and representation into dialogue, *Generation Kill* provides a valuable text for understanding the political meanings of contemporary war drama and its relevance to the African experience.

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