

Population, Ideology and The Environmental Question in Nigeria – A Radical Analysis

MOSES EROMEDOGHENE UKPENUMEWU TEDHEKE

Department of Political Science and Defence Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Nigerian Defence Academy, P M B 2109, KADUNA, Nigeria

E-mail: tedheke@hotmail.com +2348035959311

ABSTRACT

For the past seven decades, the fear of population explosion has become a scare to many experts, policy makers and the generality of the peoples of the world. The fear has been anchored on the problem of the earth's carrying capacity. Fundamental in the foregoing regard are the seemingly limited resources of the environment to provide for the increasing needs of the ever-rising world population that has hit the seven billion mark sometime in 2010. The fear, therefore, has arisen from the perceived disequilibria between population and resources which would continue to deepen environmental crises and sustainability. The increasing inability of the Africans and indeed Nigerians to feed themselves and provide for their basic needs are seen as pointers to pressures of population on the environment. The incapacity of the environment to sustain the African and the Nigerian people have other more reasonable explanations than just population. Relegating these factors and holding on to population as the primary causal variable is the ideology in the population and environmental questions which are the focus of our study. This research has revealed that the pressure of population on the environment is not the key issue. The issue of environmental crises is a product of global capitalist exploitation being blamed on the poor countries that are just victims of imperialist global environmental degradations visited on these poor countries through the greed of advance capitalist or industrial economies. The roots of this environmental degradation must be traced to colonial and neo-colonial greed of capital. It is to rise against this threat that our survival depends nationally and globally.

Keywords: Population, ideology, exploitation, disarticulation, alienation.

Education is the progressive discovery of our ignorance – Will Durrant

INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the Second World War, the issue of population explosion has assumed the central stage of development studies. Liberal scholars have been inundating us with the dangers of overpopulation. They have attributed most of the problems of development in the Third World to rapid increases in population in relation to resources and the environment. In their view, there is a disequilibria between population on the one hand, and resources and environment on the other. Since the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, there is the general belief that the traditional forms of threat based on territorial aggression have taken the back stage (Bourtros-Ghali, 1994).

New forms of threat have been identified by the United Nations (UN) as the continued economic and social marginalisation of the poorest nations and of the poorest communities within nations (UNICEF, 1995). The Rio de Janeiro 92, UN Conference on "Environment and Development" held rapid population growth responsible for the depletion of the environment and its resources (UN Publication 1992). UN International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), Cairo 1994 recommended that:

Efforts to slow down population growth to reduce poverty, to achieve economic progress, to improve environmental protection, and to reduce unsustainable consumption and production patterns are mutually reinforcing. Slower population growth has in many countries brought more time to adjust to future population increase. This has increased those countries ability to attack poverty, protect and repair environment and build the base for future sustainable development (ICPD, 1994:20).

The position of the UN is not different from the general Euro-American philosophy on population, which puts the blame of world socio-economic and environmental crises on those countries whose population is growing between 2.5 – 3 percent annually. Capital, their home governments and their agents in the underdeveloped

countries would not tell us the causes of poverty, economic and environmental degradation of backward countries. Capital and its philosophers would, for ideological reasons, put the dominated classes and the poverty stricken peoples on the defensive. Hence the anti-natal ideological hue is being pushed down our throat as a solution to environmental and resource crises. In this respect Omafume F. Onoge said:

The degradation and depletion of the planet's resource base is blamed on an unregulated growth of world population. The "population bomb", "man the pest", "earth pest explosion" are the apocalyptic and eschatological slogans of this Malthusian manipulation of the world ecological movement (Onoge, 1983:22).

One of the greatest successes of imperialism has been to make its victims believe that their problems of development are self inflicted. Nobody is saying that their local cohorts are not equally to blame. Hence the environmental question in Nigeria is seen as the problems of overpopulation whose pressures on the environment have caused environmental degradation. In blaming environmental degradation of Nigeria and Africa on the "overbearing" population is to stand reason upside down. It is indeed the product of the poverty of empiricism seeing facts as sacred without taking a critical look at the causal relations.

We are aware that the population growth rate in the Sahel is about 2.5 percent a year which is seen as one of the highest rates of population increase in the world (Ikerionwu 1991:240). By early 1970s, the area was said to be already over populated with about 25 million people, as its carrying capacity was estimated to be 18 million (Ikerionwu 1991:242). It was also said to contain about 25 million cattles by 1971 when its capacity was supposed to be 15 million (Ikerionwu 1991). These figures of people and animal concentrations in the Sahel, which parts of Nigeria share some common features presupposes the mindlessness of Nigerians and other Africans in the zone over the carrying capacity of the area. Have we bordered to enquire about the heavy burden the Nigerian and other African soils had to bear to keep the Euro-American civilisation afloat? What has been the impact of the integration of Africa into the world capitalist system on the African soils? Is it not a fact that when we are talking of overpopulation in Nigeria and indeed Africa we should not lose sight of the impact of extra-African population on the African people and soils? Is it not also proper that we should examine the impact of extensive colonial farming on both the Savannah and the forest regions and their ecosystems? How has the overuse of the fertile lands to satisfy Euro-American industrial demands rendered those soils infertile leading to the resultant infertility? What of mining interest that have reduced available arable lands in some regions through open cast mining and pollution?

A multi-disciplinary approach in finding answers to the foregoing questions would remove the veil from our eyes and some of us who have been un-knowingly in the service of imperialism intellectually would shift ground for a better population education. Our thesis is that Nigeria's and indeed Africa's overpopulation peddled by eclectic and Western population experts is an ideological somersault. The real issues have been that with the excessive demands by Euro-American capital for African raw materials since the era of legitimate commerce and colonialism, fertile lands have been overused and compromised, marginal lands have not been spared either. With the increasing production of export crops and other raw materials, the accompanying adverse terms of trade and the consequent expansion of farmlands to marginal lands to meet the needs of capital, more land were put under the industrial demands of Europe and North America. With the mining activities of multinational companies, more wastelands were added. The indiscriminate exploitation of timber and other forest products have equally compromised the soils and their carrying capacity. In summation, we are of the view that our problem is not that of overpopulation *per se* but relative overpopulation, a product of colonial and neo-colonial exploitations of our fertile lands rendering them infertile thus reducing their carrying capacity.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Malthus posited that the disequilibria between food production which grows at arithmetical progression and population which grows at geometrical progression would make sources of subsistence scarce. In other words, man's propensity to procreate is seen by Malthus and Malthusian adherents as detrimental to his existence unless there are checks to mediate the contradictions between population and subsistence. He said that:

The power of population is definitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man. Population when unchecked increases in a geometrical ratio. Subsistence increases only in an arithmetical ratio. A slight acquaintance with numbers will show the immensity of the first power in comparison of the second. By the law of nature which makes food necessary for the life of man, the effect of these two unequal powers must be kept equal. This implies strong and constantly operating checks on population from the difficulty of subsistence (Malthus cited by Onoge, 1983:23).

Neo-Malthusian scholarship which is the main thrust of current population studies now see the propensity of humanity to breed like 'rats' as being responsible for the seeming overpopulation and the likely apocalypse to follow. In the 1960s, a United States Secretary of State posited that if science and technology fail to find solution to the population problem, the world would find itself exposed to a thermonuclear explosion (social revolution – my emphasis) Castro 1968:246). The fear of a purported overpopulated world has held many under spell. It has led to the unscientific projection of the earth's carrying capacity. Some experts put the earth's carrying capacity at 2,500 million people, while others say it could be as much as 10,000 million people and yet others say it could take much more (Lewis, 1977:308; Tofler, 1979).

The fear of the earth's carrying capacity has been reflected in the seeming overpopulation of Africa and indeed Nigeria. It is the conviction of the population 'experts' of the neo-Malthusian calling that the environmental crises in the world are a product of population pressure. Thus we have noted earlier how Ikerionwu (1991) cited various authorities including the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) to buttress the pressure of population on the Sahelian environment. This reductionism fails to take into consideration the world historical process for the past five hundred years resulting in the integration of Nigeria and indeed Africa into the World capitalist system and the impact of this integration on our environment. V.I. Lenin posited that, "The uneven and spasmodic development of individual enterprises, individual branches of industry and individual countries is inevitable under the capitalist system..." (Lenin, 1983:59). Capitalism as a result of its law of uneven development enhances the economic progress of their home countries and retards those of its periphery. This uneven development would be reflected in the environmental friendly projects in the home base of capital and in the periphery, projects that cause environmental hazards become the order of the day (Barnet and Miller; 1974).

Some of us have refused to be carried away by the neatly packaged ideological pills of the concern for the health of the mother; the spacing of and health of children; in addition to the founding principles of raising the standard of living and social welfare among others. The foregoing moralistic position of the Western World on population in the Third World is not borne out of empirical evidence in Africa pointing to devastations through multinational companies' exploitations and imperialist sponsored wars that have been more telling on women and children. These have further incapacitated the carrying capacity of the African soil and the greatest victims are women and children (Martin 2005).

We make bold to state that what is happening in Africa is not overpopulation but relative overpopulation. In capitalist societies "relative overpopulation" is occasioned by the process of capitalist accumulation in which relative surplus value may be expanded bringing about unemployment or relative overpopulation (Marx, 1974:477). In the process of the expansion of relative surplus value, that is, surplus value which is the product of technological revolution, more raw materials are then needed to advance the accumulation process of capital which has been in place since the inception of capitalism. According to Eric Williams:

The division of labour between the agricultural operations in the tropical climate and the industrial operations in the temperate climate have to survive to this day. The original reason has nothing to do with the skills of labour or the presence of natural resources. It was the result of the deliberate policy of the mother country. Thus the West Indies were refused the manufacture of sugar despite the fact that they had the know-how at the time in the slave plantations (Williams, 1975:75).

The expansion of industries through technological revolution led to increasing demands for raw materials. These demands put strains on the Third World soils as it had to carry not just its own population but that of Western Europe, North America and Japan. At one time, the African population was needed as slaves to till the lands of the new world for raw materials for the emerging European capitalism. At another time, Africa was colonised, forced to domesticate crops needed by Europe and made to abandon her needs in preference for Europe's industrial raw materials. The production of cotton, palm produce, groundnut, rubber, cocoa, timber, tin, crude oil including others, were occasioned by the need to increase relative surplus value or accumulation.

The pressures on the African soil from Europe's demand for African products led to overuse of the African fertile land leading to their infertility and consequently expansion into marginal lands which became worse off. As fertile lands in Africa contract, it became harder for the African population to irk out a living from the soil. In some cases, lands were placed under permanent tree crops like cocoa, rubber, coffee, palm trees among others. In others, open cast mining devastated the lands. And in other cases, chemicals and pollutants are discharged into the environment causing environmental degradation (Watts, 2006) adversely affecting the lands carrying capacity. The imperialist world would not want to be identified with these crimes against humanity. They would put the backward countries on the defensive, to blame themselves about their environmental

predicaments. They would hold their near zero growth in population as the mirror and they would say that accounted for their development. Behind the modernisation undertone and the pretence to help the poor countries out of 'overpopulation' is the fear of the countries of advance capital that the population increase in the backward countries is a threat to their world hegemony and the domination of world resources. They see rising population in the Third World as a threat to their standard of living which must be nipped in the bud. All ideological weapons must be hauled against this phenomenon of 'population explosion' – the 'thermonuclear explosion (Castro, 1968).

Nothing can be more appropriate that to resurrect Malthus, and as is customary with the philosophers of capital, use it to defend the interest of monopoly finance capital. While Malthus use the theory to fight war against the "dammed of the earth" of the nascent capitalist societies, the neo-Malthusian theorists use their theory of overpopulation to fight the battle for capital against the neo-colonies and their oppressed classes. It now pervades all areas of global studies from economic development, urbanisation to environmental problematic. New evidence, however, has been discovered in Nigeria that the overflogged carrying capacity could be wrong after all. The Germans that are pioneering this revolution are either consciously or unconsciously pushing another ideological colouration of the "trickle down effect" as the reason for the new carrying capacity of Uyo's environment in Akwa Ibom State (Fricke and Malchau 1976:37-4). These German modernists perhaps want to use their new found evidence to buttress the fact that contrary to the dependency approach, there is development going on in the rural areas as a result of the influence of the urban economies. We are aware of the rural/urban economic interaction but is it a one way thing? The rural areas, the real producers, have been sustaining the urban centres by the production of yams, cassava, bananas and a lot of vegetables. Ugochukwu Ezeokafor of Ekwulobia, Anambra State, in an oral interview attested to the foregoing fact of the mutually beneficial relations between the urban areas and the hinterland of Onitsha (Ezeokafor, 1997).

THE POPULATION SCAPEGOAT AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTION

The ideology of scapegoatism is the shifting of the sins of one person to the other, sins of one group to the other and sins of one global region to the other. John Tierney said "I think population growth is merely the most convenient excuse for failure – one that doesn't put the blame on socialists, capitalists, African politicians, or foreign aid donors" (Tierney, 1986:39). Population growth is now the cover under which all crimes are explained. It is this attempt at the pseudo-scientific explanations of population issues which is the hallmark of Malthusian and neo-Malthusian scholars that we see to be ideological. When we look at the failures of the wide range of our approaches to the issue of environment, we would discover the real issues in environmental degradation in Nigeria and in the Niger Delta.

The explanation of the population in relation to the environment can only be properly understood in terms of relative overpopulation. In other words, it is overpopulation caused by a defect in the development process. Relative overpopulation is the overpopulation caused by capitalist exploitation and marginalisation of a vast proportion of the people the world over moreso in the underdeveloped societies. In the advance countries, relative surplus value or accumulation process results in the reserved army of the unemployed. In the underdeveloped countries, the battle for accumulation in the metropolitan capitalist countries results in the retardation of growth through deliberate approach to stunt the peoples' capacity utilisation. In explaining the mode of penetration of capital in the pre-colonial modes of production Marx (1970:202-3) said:

Conquest may lead to either of three results. The conquering nation may impose its mode of production, upon the conquered people...or it may refrain from interfering in the old mode of production and may be content with tribute... or interaction may take place between the two giving rise to a new synthesis... In any case, it is the mode of production – whether that of the conquering nation or of the conquered or the new system brought by merging of the two – that determines the new mode of distribution.

The process of the integration of Nigeria and indeed Africa into the world capitalist system took the form of allowing the precapitalist mode of production to remain, thus imposing the regime of tributes. It imposes the regime of uneven development, the hallmark of capital, to allow for a longer period of domination and exploitation. Through exotic agricultural species needed by European industries, capital cornered the most fertile lands of Africa, invaded even the marginal lands to the detriment of the African population. The cases of outright land alienations in Southern Africa are cases in point. Other lands were subjected under the devastation of mining companies. Also other lands were polluted by modern manufacturing interests, especially, those companies that could not meet the environmental protection laws in Europe, North America and Japan (Barnet and Miller, 1974).

COLONIAL ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

In order to integrate the backward countries into the advanced economies of Europe, North America and Japan, the ideologically loaded *theory of comparative advantage* was given new lease of life by the colonising powers. African economy had to be made relevant to the needs of Europe as the exotic agricultural species from the new world had to be introduced to the economy to be really “comparative” whatever that means. Through this process of integration, the monetisation of the economy would proceed apace and instead of serving Nigerian and African interests, the economy would serve the interest of the colonising powers, in the case of Nigeria, that of Britain. In order to make effective this project, colonialism had to disarticulate the local economies by the introduction of cocoa, oil palm trees, cotton, rubber, coffee including others to buttress their *ideological theory of comparative advantage*. This was the state of the so-called legitimate commerce, the second stage of the international division of labour by Euro-American capital after that of the inhuman Trans-Atlantic chattel slavery. This stage will prove a heavy burden on the African people, in both economic crunch and environmental degradation.

The greatest problem that colonial agriculture imposed on the Nigerian people was the alienation of fertile lands for plantation agriculture. Either these fertile lands were under the control of European capitalist farmers or trading companies, or because of the monetisation of the economy, the colonised people were made to produce under semi-plantation conditions to satisfy European demands. According to Okello Oculi:

The central characteristics of plantation agriculture is that it produces certain tropical crops, notably, sugar, bananas, tea, rubber, coffee, sisal, cocoa, palm oil, and palm kernels for the primary purpose of exporting these products to the industrial economies of Europe and North America. This production is carried out by the use of large numbers of primarily unskilled labour on the farms alienated from the process of (food production – my emphasis) production for subsistence (Oculi, 1986:9-10).

The alienation of lands have been intensified since after 1945 for plantation agriculture to serve the interests of international monopoly capital rather than the interests of Nigerians and Africans (Oculi 1986:46-7). We have noted the fact that the process of the cornering of land made it impossible for fertile lands that would have carried the population to be available for their use. Nigerians were then restricted to marginal lands for subsistence which were equally turned over to colonial agriculture when demands escalated and when deteriorating terms of trade dictated expansion to marginal lands to maintain the very impoverished standard of living of the Nigerians and indeed Africans. Colonial Agriculture further alienated and constricted the marginal lands left for food production for local use. The need to increase colonial farming was emphasised by Oliver Stanley, a British official who tagged it “economic independence”. Kwame Nkrumah cited him thus:

...Britain desired ‘economic independence’ for Nigeria: the way to achieve this economic independence according to his thinking, is for Nigeria to produce more cocoa, more palm oil, more cotton, more rubber and more and more raw materials for the British manufacturers and industrialist who incidentally pay for these raw materials at their own price (Nkrumah 1977:36).

In the Sahelian region of Northern Nigeria, this form of “economic independence” led to the over cultivation of the fertile lands for cotton, groundnut and other export crops. The rise of the groundnut pyramids was the product of immense pressures of imperialist demands for Nigerian labour and fruits of the soil. Under very intensive farming for colonial produce and exports, the fertile lands became denuded of nutrients and marginal lands were equally brought under intense cultivation. The constant exposure of the top soils to intense sun heat, rains, winds and erosions have resulted in the emergence of vast waste lands thus aggravating the conditions for drought in the Sahel Savannah. According to Ikerionwu (1991:244):

Population increase in the Sahel is leading to more and more people trying to cultivate the land. An even sharper pressure was the introduction by the colonialists of cash crops to earn foreign exchange. With cotton and peanuts, people are bringing the more marginal lands into use to grow their own food crops. In many cases, these ecologically fragile zones could not take the strains of intensive agriculture. The usual process is that the fallow periods of 15 to 20 years are reduced to five or even one. Fertility declines, slowly at first and then in a vicious spiral. Poor crops leave the soil exposed to sun and wind. The rain when it falls is not absorbed but runs off in gullies.

The first part of the foregoing assertion of population increase leading to increasing cultivation of land is quite misleading. If lands that had been laid bare by colonial agriculture were to be available, the issue of overpopulation would have been non-existent. The second part, however, captures the main kernel of our postulation that colonial agriculture led to land devastations thereby aggravating the Sahelian condition. In

addition, the culture of the production of fodder, such as grasses and clovers rich in protein for livestock and the production of feed for chickens was non-existent. This absence of policy is the more glaring considering that there was already general awareness of the importance of the development of protein-rich grasses such as alfalfa and other fodder crops for the growth of the livestock industry in Europe and elsewhere (Oculi 1986:34). In a critique of the Food and Agricultural Organisations (FAO) statistics based on African export cash crops to the detriment of other crops Hugh Nicol said:

...the indispensable clovers and young grasses and other fodder crops that make it possible to produce enough protein do not get mention (cited in Oculi 1986:39).

The impact of lack of colonial approach to the development of leguminous grasses had disastrous consequences on the environment which has lasted till this day. If a deliberate policy of the development of legumes had been put in place, the so-called overgrazing on the land and consequently the destruction of the environment by hooves of cattles would have been minimised.

The colonial agricultural policy that placed much emphasis on export crops that were not needed in Nigeria and Africa, would place a great obstacle at the feet of the Africans to feed themselves. The introduction of the exotic species from tree crops, cash export crops and not providing grains to livestock took the African off guard. Despite the fact that the people adapted fast to colonial money economy, the devastating effects on their lives and lands were tremendous. Imperialists' manipulations of terms of trade which adversely affected the African led to the expansion of farmlands for colonial agriculture which was detrimental to the environment. The increasing use of chemicals as fertilizers and grass weeders reduced the nutrients of soil's fertility and its carrying capacity. This would not be mentioned but all blames are on Africans who 'breed like rats'.

In the forest zones, colonial agriculture and exploitation of forest resources led to very serious deforestations. We are aware that fertile lands were put under tree crops for export as a result, marginal lands were left for the subsistence of Nigerians. In the rubber zone of the Delta and Edo States, more than half of the available lands were put under rubber cultivation to serve the emergent automobile and aviation industries in Europe and North America. This area, in effect, partially carries on its soil the population of Europe and North America that depended on the rubber industry for the automobile revolution in the critical years of the colonial enterprise (Tedheke 1992:4-7). The cocoa and palm produce areas in the forest zone had experienced the same thing as those of the rubber producing areas. The forest areas like the Savanna, produced to service the populations of Europe and North America while it increasingly produced less to serve its people. It thus reduced the carrying capacity of these areas.

Among the Urhobos, Isokos and Kwales of the Delta State where extensive researches have been carried out on the negative impact of the rubber industry on the peasants' landlessness, their impoverishment and indeed environmental degradation facts are glaring. The people's food sources have been breached as the water sources that provided fertile alluvial beds for dry season farming have been taken over by rubber plantations. It has reduced the availability of land to the peasantry and thus the carrying capacity (Tedheke 1982). Amin (1983:47-62) has clearly stated that the so-called overpopulation in West Africa is a product of the integration of the region into the world capitalist system. As a result of the world capitalist historical process, the area and its people became marginalised in the global division of labour. Despite this glaring position on the population and the environmental question, mercenary scholarship accuses our people as the architect of their own misfortunes.

We have noted earlier in this paper that adverse terms of trade on the African reduce the earnings of the peasantry, as a result, they were always forced to increase their acreage in export cropping. Equally the policy of the marketing boards that kept sizeable chunks of proceeds from peasant producers of export crops did not help matters. It forced peasants to expand their farming into marginal lands, thus further reducing available lands for subsistence, hence, the purported population pressure on the land. In Ghana, despite the doubling of cocoa production in the early 1960s, the fall in world price of cocoa forced that country to earn less and less (Offiong 1980:243). The resultant crisis from this world market manipulations led to the overthrow of President Kwame Nkrumah in 1966.

The importance of the palm oil as a lubricant for the industrial revolution and also a product for the manufacture of detergents to clean polluted industrial Europe and North America have to be stressed in order to understand the environmental degradation in Eastern Nigeria, the centre of colonial palm oil industry. The uninformed population analysts would blame the people around Onitsha and its Ibo hinterlands for their "craze" for birth. The era of the Royal Niger Company, saw Onitsha – Asaba axis as the centre of the palm oil industry and trade. Such companies as the CFAO, John Holt, UAC (United African Company) among others were partners in the battle to control the palm oil and kernel business. For European wars of supremacy, glycerin was produced

from palm kernel which was used for the manufacture of explosives. During the great depression of late 1920s to the early 1930s, UAC unilaterally reduced the price per tin of palm oil from 14 shillings to 1 shilling 6 pence from 1927 – 1929 (Rodney 1972). It was one of the causes of the Aba women revolts of 1929, when prices of palm produce plummeted and the colonial regime still imposed repressive taxes and even extended it to women.

The process of colonial exploitation of the forest, especially, logging did a lot of damage to the top soil. It was observed that mechanical logging in Ikpoba Forest Reserve before independence left 30% of the soil bare. Mechanical logging involving the use of heavy machinery also caused soil compaction (increase bulk density) reducing forest regrowth and increasing windspeed (cited in Adegoke 1990:65). Timber and Plywood (ATP) Sapele, a branch of UAC has been one of the principal exploiters of the Nigerian rain forest timber for Euro-American markets. The impact of colonial forest economic activities on the environment was more negative than positive. Since forest regrowth was difficult, it exposed the top soil to leaching and in some cases to run off gullies.

According to a source, attention was first drawn to the problem of soil erosion in the eastern provinces by the scarred appearance of the Udi escarpment in the vicinity of Enugu about 1922 considering that the Udi forest reserve was constituted in that year for the purpose of controlling further gulling on the escarpment south of Enugu (Kalio and Ogirigiri 1978:65). Although gully erosion is said to have been occurring in the Anambra State at Agulu-Nanka area for 200 years now and there are about 550 gully erosion sites in Anambra State (Adegoke 1990:55), we have not been told of the impact of colonial forest resource and mining exploitations in the area which have had a telling negative impact, thus aggravating the adverse soil conditions.

The mining companies have had telling blows in the environment which they worked on. In most cases, such areas worked by multinational corporations are not rehabilitated. In the Plateau area, tin mining have had very serious adverse effects on the soil and the land available to support the population of the area. In the Jos area, the need to remove fifteen metres of overburden soil before reaching the tin lode have led to an annual soil loss of 6,000,000 tons (Adegoke 1990). The impact of the loss of top soil making the areas impossible to carry its population has been negative. These extra-African activities that have been compromising our soil to carry its population is blamed by mercenary scholarship on the people. The Udi erosion problem could be linked also to the general effect of coal mining and the consequent concentration of people around the coal mining area. The importance of coal to the whole colonial enterprise in Nigeria must not be lost sight of. After much pressure on the Eastern forests by the trading companies to extract forest products; the coal industry came on stream to further overburden the area.

Since crude oil was first struck at Otuekeme, Itokopiri clan in 1956 (Barrett 2008:16), the Niger Delta environment has been subjected to gas flaring. The flaring of gas in the oil fields have been observed to have increased air, soil and leaf temperatures by as much as 80°C within a distance of fifty metres from the flare stack. This phenomenon ruins vegetation, soil resources and the health of people within parts of the Niger Delta. Equally ground water and fishes are being contaminated in the coastal environment showing a sharp rise in the Maximum Permissible Concentration (MPC) of crude oil found in ground water (Watts 2006). The impact of the oil companies' activities on the carrying capacity of the oil producing areas is either not properly articulated or played down for reasons best known to the authorities. It is not uncommon that the crop yields in the oil producing areas have been drastically reduced over the years. The impacts of environmental crises resulting from chemical discharge and oil spillage have seriously affected the carrying capacity of the Niger Delta since the inception of oil prospecting in the area (Watts 2006).

NEO-COLONIAL DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISES

The pitfalls in the post-colonial developmental strategies in Nigeria and most of Africa are that they are not environmentally friendly. The basic flaws have been the basing of our developmental philosophy on such borrowed ideas of *comparative advantage*, *trickled-down-effect*, *modernisation* among others. In the process, we have only been able to grapple with the form of development rather than its content. Development strategies that ape Europe and North America only in form will exhibit their contradictions. Although Britain was the first to develop industrially, other European powers knew that what could free them from the drudgery of British domination and perverted development was the acquisition of technological know-how like their British counterparts (Chaing 2008; Reinert 2009). This became the fundamental basis for the struggle for the realisation of the *national question* all over Europe from the 18th to the early part of the 20th centuries. The ruling class of any of the emergent European powers knew that for it and the society it is representing to survive, it must put in place an independent economic base cushioned by technological revolution. Each of the emerging European powers,

later North America and Japan had to struggle out of the status of peripheral capitalist social formation to actual capitalist development.

Apart from countries that struggled through revolutionary processes to free themselves, Nigeria and most African countries have through decolonisation signed to remain under the hegemony of imperialism to be teleguided through the nose in all affairs of national life. According to Chinweizu, the colonial masters made sure they unseat the progressive African leaders and put in their places the so-called moderate Africans of their 'masters voice'. The British imperialist masters and those of France found ready lackeys through which they bribed to submission and therefore the status quo was willingly accepted (Chinweizu 1978:162). He further stressed that new legal chains were placed on the feet of the emergent dependent classes with a whole battery of international 'conventions' sanctioned by something called international law. The would-be independent countries signed to uphold all these laws before power of paper sovereignty was handed to them. They signed to protect multinational companies whether it was a stealing against the emergent nations or not and whether it was against the interest of the ex-colonies is never the matter but international laws must be upheld for Europe and North America to get more milk to fatten (Chinweizu 1978:167). Communications and telecommunications were developed to increase export of primary products to Europe. As a result of such development, the African economies became structurally more tightly integrated into European economies than before the World War II. It thus became more difficult to make the fruits of African labour flow to the stomachs of Africans instead of to the pockets of Europe (Chinweizu 1978:171).

As a result of official conspiracy, the negative impacts of primary products exports dependent economy were not highlighted. It was what united the Nigerian and indeed African ruling classes with their Euro-American counterparts. This congruence of interests would make them to present a united front for the exploitation of Nigerian and African labour. Thus the subordination of the rural producers, and indeed labour in its entirety, to the requirements of metropolitan markets and the colonial state (later neo-colonial state) which administered them through a culture to which they had no access. They depended on the realisation of the value of their labour on the exchange of commodities in markets whose terms they could not control, which enabled mercantile companies, and subsequently the state and the indigenous proto-capitalists to expropriate the surplus value of their labour (Williams 1976:21-2). This surplus value was shared between three transfer regimes which are the neo-colonial state, the local ruling classes and international financial capital represented by the foreign trading firms. These regimes of tributes whose burden the peasantry carried exerted much tole on peasant labour and soil on which he worked. As a result of capitalist relations without capitalist production, the Nigerian state shifted resources from the rural areas to the urban areas, from the producers to the non-producers, from the poor to the rich and from Nigerians to foreigners (Williams 1976:13).

The transfer regimes coupled with the deteriorating terms of trade forced the peasantry to carry more burden, overstretched the available fertile lands and spilled over to marginal lands. For example, in 1965, the total land area under rubber cultivation in Mid West (former Bendel now Edo and Delta), was 175,125 hectares out of which Urhobo/Isoko had 61,916. Within a time priod of five years the total area under rubber in the same Mid West was 218,450 hectares out of which Urhobo/Isoko accounted for 122,894 doubling the 1965 figure. The actual arable land under rubber cultivation rose from 36.0 percent in Urhobo/Isoko area to 57.5 percent (Agboola 1974:11). The same was true for the cocoa producing areas of Western Region and palm produce areas of Eastern Region. The good example of the Urhobo/Isoko areas is an eye opener for spurious, mercenary, unscientific, overpopulation experts to which most Nigerian population theorist belong. The land area under rubber is even estimated by others as around 607,000 hectares for which more than 80% is in Edo and Delta States (Anschel cited by Agboola 1974).

The period of self government to independence in 1960 and during the First Republic, agriculture, dependent on foreign demands grew by about 100%. The groundnut pyramids, the enormous cotton production in the North, the expanded cocoa production in the West and that of Palm produce in the East were responses to 'economic independence' which we said earlier, a British official, Oliver Stanley wished for Nigeria and by extension for all of Africa. It conforms to the general philosophy of imperialism's international division of labour. It had put Nigerian land under the pressure of extra-African population, especially those of Europe and North America. The intensification of dependent agricultural policy by the neo-colonial Nigeria State alienated more lands from the production for home use to production for exports (Tedheke 1992). In the process, more marginal lands were put under agriculture for the interests of the neo-colonial state, the Nigerian ruling class and their mentors, international capital. This congruence of interest would make the beneficiaries of neo-colonial political economy to hold the victims of this bastardised economy to be responsible for their predicaments blaming overpopulation as the cause and population control through the so-call family planning as the answer.

Under every little excuse, population growth is held as the victim. The failures of the neo-colonial Nigerian State and its dependent economic policy, especially in agriculture is blamed on overpopulation. The negative impact of our neo-colonial developmental strategies on the rural population and how these have forced them to migrate to the urban centres is blamed on overpopulation. The increasing reduction of land area available for subsistence agriculture by the expansion of agricultural lands to satisfy elite tastes and Euro-American industrial raw materials is blamed on population. When one passes through the lands of the states of Sokoto, Zamfara, Kebbi, Jigawa, Yobe, Borno, Kaduna including others which were areas of intense colonial and neo-colonial groundnut and cotton production, the conclusion comes to one's mind that agents of environmental degradations such as denudation of the lands and the almost complete loss of the top soil have been products of the inhuman agricultural policy.

In the rain forest areas, the increasing acreage under tree export crops continued to reduce available land for subsistence agriculture. This led to the land hunger in the rubber, palm produce and cocoa producing areas of Southern Nigeria. Where more than half of the land area as in the case of the Urhobo/Isoko people is given to export agriculture, the seeming overpopulation becomes real. The problem of land is compounded more since the inception of the oil industry a little before independence. Agricultural yields have declined by over fifty percent since the coming of the multinational oil companies to the area. The fishing industry at Uzere, a major oil producing field in Isoko has collapsed. The entire Niger Delta is experiencing the same thing (New African, January 2012). In Plateau State tin and solid mineral mining have devastated the area. Chemical discharge in the oil mining areas of the Niger Delta and oil spillage is causing a lot of pollution in the area (Watts 2006). All the foregoing have had adverse effects on the carrying capacity of most of Nigerian environment. The crisis is resulting in the rural/urban migration and unusual rapid growth of our cities.

The rapidly expanding cities of Nigeria are partly caused by the collapse of world prices of agricultural export commodities from late 1950s onwards. It was not the function of the carrying capacity problematic as is being expressed by Euro-American scholars. The German scholars that researched on the hinterlands of Uyo in Akwa Ibom State would want to make us believe that the carrying capacity of an area is dependent on its subsistence production from agriculture (Fricke and Malchau 1996:41). The Germans fail to discover that regional division of labour and specialisation also played very prominent role in the carrying capacity of any locality. This we have fully established in our research on the rubber industry and its impact on Urhobo/Isoko peasantry in the Niger Delta. The Germans would not see this regional and geographical division of labour which predated legitimate commerce (Obuke cited by Ikimi 1972). The integration of these areas into the world capitalist system shattered the emerging pre-colonial regional economies of Africa. The Germans who studied the environs of Uyo and came to the conclusion that because the hinterland of the area was dependent on supplies of some of their needs from some 200 to 300 kilometres away had said nothing.

The shortcoming in their observation was because they were imprisoned in their Euro-centric model of modernisation and its product of the "trickle-down-effect" (Fricke and Malchau 1996). The rise in the level of urbanisation has mainly resulted from the failure of the stagnant tributary economy imposed on our people by international monopoly capital. The development of synthetic products to replace the export crops and the little fall outs from the tributary economy also adversely affected the rural peasant producers. For example, of the total 1976 foreign exchange earnings of ₦5,501 million, agricultural export could only account for a mere ₦389.2 million just about 7 percent of the total exports. In the period, cocoa production dropped from 350,000 tonnes to 176,000 in 1975-76 (The Business Times, 1976). During the 1980s, non-oil exports dropped by 17 percent. Over the 1970s, export commodities have either declined – palm produce and rubber or ceased altogether, such as groundnut or have remained static (New Africa 1982:73). Another account says that cocoa declined from about 240,000 tonnes in 1974 to only 115,000 tonnes in 1983. Palm kernel purchases declined from 310,000 tonnes to about 154,000 tonnes during the same period, groundnut dropped from 114,000 tonnes to merely 2,500 tonnes in 1982, while the volume of rubber purchased remained stable since 1977 (National Concord, November 14, 1984:8).

The rapid growth in urbanisation coincided with the collapse of the imperialist imposed raw material dependent economy which Nigeria ignorantly accepted making her a tributary economy. In 1960 only 13 percent of the population lived in urban areas: the proportion increased to 16.4 percent in 1970, and 20.4 percent by 1980. This was projected to reach 26 percent in 1990 (Adepoju cited by Adegoke, 1990:82). The rapid urban population growth has been fuelled by increasing cityward migration and the high rate of pressure on marginal lands (Adegoke, 1992). It has been argued that triple the present world population could be fed (Lutz, 1994), and maintained with the world resources available. The Economist in one of its publications puts the population density of Nigeria in 1989 at 110 per sq km, that of Netherlands 345, Japan 324, South Korea 418 and Belgium

323 per sq km (Economist 1989). If these countries are not absolutely overpopulated then Nigeria cannot be said to be so. This is one of the occasions that we have come out to face this issue of overpopulation squarely. We have stated time without numbers that the issue we are to contend with is that of relative overpopulation by the few and their foreign masters who steal the surpluses of the producers, a product of the world capitalist relations. Joseph Stiglitz calls it the 1% that steals all the wealth to the neglect of the 99% (Stiglitz 2011).

CONCLUSION

From our analysis so far, the issue that came out so clear is the general degradation of world resources as occasioned by the development of capitalism and its accumulation process. In its bid for accumulation, capital revolutionises technology in order to increase relative surplus value to advance apace accumulation. In this process, raw materials are needed to maintain the momentum. The lands in the home states of capital could not provide for this. The repeal of the “Corn Law” in England in the 1830s is a case in point. As a result, international division of labour ensued making the tropics the provider of raw materials through tributary economy. The lack of dynamism in tributary economic pursuit would make increase in production in these economies possible only in the expansion of land under export crops cultivation. This process led to the reduction in land area to sustain the resident population as a result of production for extra-African population.

The process has equally impoverished fertile lands and marginal lands became targets of expansion. The terms of trade which have been progressively unfavourable to Nigerian and indeed African producers have equally made farmers to expand their production and occupy more land areas. This process has led to desertification and droughts in the Sahel. In the forest areas, it has impoverished the soil equally and reduced land areas for resident Nigerian population. On the whole it has forced people to migrate to the urban areas leading to post civil war rapid urban population growth. It has equally led to the migration of brilliant and bright Nigerians abroad to advance capitalism to create wealth in the home bases of capital. In both head and tail Nigeria and Africa are the losers. It is the neglect of the foregoing factors in the population question exonerating the culprits that we see as the ideology in the population and the environmental question.

In order to have a population-environmental equilibrium we must do away with the foreign primary export dependent economy (Chang 2008; Reinert 2009). The ruling class must be prepared to play its historic role of development. It must stop this “hide and seek” game of development. In so doing, it must free itself from “linear” thinking. Linear thinking insulates issues from one another and ignores the effects of outcomes on actors and interest outside a fairly narrow circle (Prins 1993:271). We further add that linear thoughts of profits and accumulation for capital have alienated lands both fertile and marginal from the Nigerian and African population. Since Europe, North America and Japan consume about 70% of aggregate world resources of which Africa provides 60% of world needed raw materials (Tukur, 2006:18) which tells much on Africa lands giving rise to environmental degradation, partial or linear thinking must blossom or what else can sustain this partial knowledge in the name of scholarship? That is the hallmark of Euro-American bourgeois logic which the “titans” of population and environmental studies hold as a guidepost but which some, very few of us reject.

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