

## The Population Control Politics and the Development of Africa

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Since the last half of the 20th century, there has been much talk about population growth and control. Some special interest groups especially in the United States of America have campaigned vigorously for a drastic reduction in the rate of population growth of the developing countries of the world, especially in Africa. For example in Nigeria today, there is propaganda hugely financed by western agencies (through radio, television, posters and paid individuals) to limit the population of Nigeria under the guise of over population. On the contrary, it is a known fact, and America and the rest of the West know it, that population size has much to contribute to the development of any nation. Moreover, when the population density of most African countries and other less- developed countries is compared with that of most European Countries, it will be discovered that the-population of Africa is still very low. It could therefore be said that the population control politics championed by America and the West is not aimed at the well-being of Africa but to serve their imperialist agenda. What Africa needs are not programmes aimed at depopulating the continent the more, but those that will enable her harness her human resources, who will in turn take care of her abundant natural resources for sustainable development. This entails normative and organizational changes in the society, resulting in (1) The improvement and expansion of mental horizon of the population arising from functional education, and (2) The sustenance of positive and highly functional values, customs and practices relating to all aspects of life and living. This paper therefore calls on African leaders to pursue those programmes aimed at the human development of the population and invest massively in agriculture for a sustainable 'development of the continent. The analytical method has been employed in this work, using all available data. It is hoped that this paper will enable Africans understand more the real issues in the population control propaganda championed by America and Europe.*

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**Keywords:** *Population control politics; population density; imperialist agenda; human development; sustainable development).*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

It is an established fact that there is Close connection between population, development and creation of wealth. That was why in traditional African society, polygamy was preferred to monogamy as the former, it was believed, would guarantee the required workforce in the farms and other family business. In other words, large family size was preferred to small family size, for the former commanded greater influence in the society than the latter. But since the last half

of the 20th Century, this African love for large family size has come under serious attack by America and the West with serious campaigns going on to drastically reduce the population of Africa. And they do this with all amount of coerciveness, employing every strategy to get African leaders adopt the birth control policies originating from them.

This put to question the intention of the protagonists of this birth control politics. Is Africa actually over-populated or are the protagonists pursuing certain hidden agenda? Does population growth impede or advance development? These are some of the worries of this paper. We shall address the worries by first tracing the origin of the population control propaganda. Then we will examine the world's population index to see the place Africa occupies. Next we shall look at the relation of population to development and see whether large population density is good for Africa's development or not. Lastly, we shall evaluate the implication(s) of the population control politics for Africa and other less-developed countries.

### **Origin of the Birth Control Politics**

During the European and Arab Slave trade, Africans were carried to the USA and the European countries. These were quartered in suburbs where they had to intermarry and propagate their race. With time, it was feared that if left alone they might increase tremendously in their new place of domicile. To put a stop to the growth of American Negroes (blacks) Margaret Sanger (an American woman) in 1916 introduced a programme euphemistically called Birth Control.

To be able to achieve her aim, she left her husband and eloped with a wealthy man who accepted to support her programme of population control of Negro race. She wanted this to be done undercover, as she wrote to the friend, Clarence: "Let not word go out that we mean to exterminate the Negro race" (Drogin Elasa 1989). For her, the whites are pure breed, the superior race and the elite and fit members of the society, whereas the blacks are the human weed and unfit members of the society.

As Ekwebelem and Ezeani (1999) observed, the reason for this phobia is not far-fetched:

Because of the low birth rate in some of the Western countries, it is feared that if effort is not made to reduce the population in some places, time would come when the blacks and the so-called Coloured people will dominate, and take over the world including Europe and America.

So, it was not long some white 'Superiorists' like Margaret Sanger in the past, were drawn to adopt this frame of mind. For example, Theodore Roosevelt, a one-time American President advised "married middle-class white women to bear at least four children, to ensure that their race did not loose out to more prolific competitors". (Furedi Frank 1997). Also E.A Ross in his book "Western Civilization and Birth Rate" feared "that while middle-class white people practiced restraint, they would lose their power to rule other races which continued to multiply" (ibid). And there is no other way to convince people from the economically less developed countries than to tell them that they are poor because they are numerous;' your population is your problem!' Yet some western countries pay their women to get children while they pay women in Africa and other less developed countries not to have children or to abort the one's' already conceived. So in the worlds of Adekoya (1992) "population control through contraception

/sterilization /abortion and euthanasia is now an international industry being exported by the developed world to the less developed societies".

### **Africa's over-population, a farce:**

The greatest reason given by the West on why Africa needs birth control programme is that the continent is (is getting) over populated. But according to World Bank report (1994), the population of Europe was given at 790 million while Africa's population was given at 626 million. That shows that the population of Europe is higher than that of Africa. Also, considering world population densities, the same World Bank noted that Africa is sparsely populated and that even in the year, 2045, "populations in Africa will be relatively low," (The world Bank 1986: population growth and policies in sub-Saharan Africa p23). What that means is that Africa's population is small in comparison to its land and resources. For example, if we take a square kilometer of land, in England you will find an average of about 350 people, in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany, the figure is about the same. On the other hand, when we take a square kilometer of land in Africa we find figures like: Zaire 14, Tanzania 26, Central African Republic 5, Congo 6, Gabon, Mauritania, Namibia and Chad around 2-3, Cameroon 22, Angolan 7. Nigeria, Black Africa's most populous nation, has just little more than 100. So it can be seen that the European continent is much more densely populated (by a factor of about 10 to 20 times) than Africa. And much scientific literature suggests that many regions of Africa will lose population because of AIDS epidemic, not to mention wars and other disasters, which, by the way, could be controlled if these regions had more people (World Almanac 1991). So the reason for the introduction of birth control programmes in Africa must be found somewhere else.

### **The Real Issue**

In February of 1948, George Kerman, the D.S state Department strategists made the following observation:

We (the U.S) have about 50 percent of the world's wealth, but only 6.3 percent of its population. In this situation we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity without positive detriment to our national security. (See, Biakolo (1992)

Continuing, Kennan suggested:

To do so, we will have to dispense with all sentimentality and day-Dreaming.... We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford today the luxury of altruism and world-benefaction. We should cease to talk about vague and unreal objectives, Such as human right, rising of the living standards and democratization

This observation by Kennan was borne out of the U.S. fear of losing its dominant control of world politics due to steady decline in birth-rates. In the words of Biakolo (1992):

As birth-rates decline in the West, and the actual number of people in the industrialized world starts to shrink, the earth will gradually come to nations that continue to have high fertility, youthful population, and growing economies, and who hold the key to vast reserves of raw materials and other coveted resources.

In other words, the people of the United States and allied developed nations will become a much smaller proportion of the world's people and those countries that have ruled the globe for the past centuries will find themselves marginalized \_demographically economically, politically and even militarily.

It is to forestall this shift in power that America and the other industrialized nations have embarked on a massive Population Control campaign intended to keep the less developed countries perpetually under their influence.

### **Population Growth and Africa's Development.**

The propaganda peddled by the U.S. and Europe that Africa's poverty and backwardness are as a result of over population from all that has been seen above, can be seen to be false and mere deceit. To blame over population is to divert attention. According to Uzukwu (1996; 81)

"The marginalization of Africa in the world today, the poverty, wars and distress being, experienced are planned by our conquerors to keep the continent under dependence in order to maximize the exploitation of its human and natural resources". This view is corroborated by Townsend (in Bauer P.T.P 67) when he wrote:

I argue that poverty of deprived nations is comprehensible only if we attribute it substantially to the existence of a system of international social stratification, a hierarchy of societies with vastly different resources in which the wealth of some is linked historically and contemporaneously to the poverty of others.

In the same vein, Henry Geog (1979) argues that "it is only the most superficial view that can attribute want and starvation to pressure of population upon the ability of the land to produce subsistence".

America and the rest of the West know that a large nation has more influence in the world both politically and economically than a medium sized one, and a medium sized are more than a small one, that is why some western countries pay their women to have more children while they pay women in Africa and other developing countries not to have children or to abort the ones already conceived. They know that Africa can sustain a far larger population than it has, and indeed that the continent needs more people. In one of its reports, the world Bank concedes that Africa is sparsely populated and that even in the year 2045 population densities in Africa will be relatively low (Population Growth and policies in sub- Saharan Africa 1986). The same World Bank admits. that Africa 'has vast under used territories that are rich in agricultural potential ,accounting for 20 percent of the entire world's cultivable land, and only nine percent of the world's peoples (ibid). The continent also possesses abundant energy resources and is well endowed with minerals (including oil ) and so far only a fraction of this wealth has been extracted (sub- Saharan Africa; from crisis to sustainable growth 1989)

From the above citations, it could be seen that Africa's population is small in comparison to its land and resources. Again, in many African nations, almost half the population are under the age of 14 (see Biakolo 1992). This means that while a comparable small proportion of the people are in the work-force, a very significant number are youth, who will become productive workers in the future. What Africa needs are not programmes aimed at depopulating the continent but those that will enable her harness her abundant human resources, who will in turn take care of her

abundant natural resources for sustained development. More African people mean more influence for Africa, more producers for Africa, more consumers in Africa. It means self-development for Africa and vastly increased political clout in the world. What Africa needs is human development which, as I have stated elsewhere, entails normative and organizational changes in the society, resulting in: (1) The improvement and expansion of mental horizon of the population arising from functional education, and (2) The sustenance of positive and highly functional values, customs and practices relating to all aspects of life and living (see Uche 2014).

## **Conclusion**

This paper has tried to analyse the ideological stance behind the politics of population control being championed by America and her industrialized nation's allies. It has been shown that all the shouts about Africa's over-population is not only false but intended to keep Africa perpetually under the control and domination of America and Europe. The World Bank itself knows that Africa is sparsely populated and can sustain more than double her present population. But playing according to the tune of its sponsors (America and Europe) it often links population issues with other aspects of development.

America and the developed countries fully understand the relation between population size and development, economic power, and political clout. Thus, as Biakolo (1992) observed:

Trying to bring up their own birth-rates while supporting government actions in developing countries that would literally force people to use birth control, is just one way in which the U.S. and the rest of the industrialized world is attempting to solve the differential 'population growth' dilemma.

And they are ready to do anything and employ all manner of strategy (including black propaganda), and all agencies (the World Bank, USAID, IMF, UNESCO, WHO, PPF etc) to ensure that their objectives are achieved.

To surrender to this political population war will not only result to subtle but complete destruction of African culture and all those principles and beliefs which have for thousands of years formed the ethical basis of the social and familiar relationships, our common values, and our sense of collective and community responsibility; but will keep Africa perpetually under the control and manipulation of the U.S. and the industrialized nations, without any meaningful development. Every society in the world, from primitive ages, needs a certain child survival level to attain a desirable population density before such a society can technologically develop. Most African countries have not attained that population density, and that is part of the reason they are poor (Asuzu, 1992). If we plan our families as nature demands, promote morality, good government and free enterprise, invest massively in agriculture and avoid Western self-interest-motivated "expert" manipulations, we can overcome our developmental problems as we could never have imagined.

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