

The African 'Population Problem': Situational Versus World Historical Perspectives

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Introduction

In its *World Development report* (1984) and in *Towards Sustained Development in Sub-Saharan Africa* (1984), the World Bank expressed general disquiet about rates of growth of the Third World's population. In both the documents, the Bank also expressed anxiety about the fact that Governments and peoples in general have not readily adopted the available techniques for controlling this 'rising tide of people'. Of Africa; in particular, the Bank says:-

The population of Sub-Saharan African is growing faster than that of any other continent. Its growth has accelerated from 2.3 per cent a year in 1960 to 3.1 per cent today ... Unfortunately, few African countries have yet committed themselves to reducing population growth. some governments are pronatalist.... (World Bank, 1984:26).

The Bank also noted that of all the long term constraints on development (population, education, human resources, Health, Agricultural research and conservation), the growth of population is the single biggest long term threat to African's economic development¹. This paper sets out to challenge the World Bank arguments at two levels: the theoretical assumptions concerning the role of population growth; and the empirical historical demographic evidence concerning Africa.

The Premises of the World Bank Argument

The major assumptions of the World Bank's argument are essentially neo-Malthusian. *Briefly, the World Bank contends that birth rates in Africa have been rising while the death rates have been falling. Both trends are associated with recent improvements in health and nutrition practices, which have resulted in lowering mortality rates while fertility rates have either remained constant or grown. In explaining why Africa's population growth rate has been on the rise, the Bank, mainly employing a rational — economic calculation (cost benefit approach), lists several reasons:-

- The income cost by the mother in child care is small enough to be compensated by future child labour.
- Lack of schooling opportunities removes the constraint of paying for schools.
- High infant mortality rates encourage child 'hedging'.
- Old age security induces child-bearing for insurance.
- Cultural practices encourage early marriages.
- Lack of access to contraceptive information.
- the pleasure of having children.

Apart from the fact that the World Bank takes a narrow short term and utilitarian view of population behaviour, the basic premises of the argument are also questionable. This is particularly important in the light of the fact that inspite of the 'misery', visited upon the hordes, arising from population pressure as portrayed by the World Bank, Governments have been hesitant in adopting strict population control policies. This reluctance may arise, at least in some cases, from a conviction, on the part of the Governments, that population growth rates are not the cause of the economic problems. Alternatively, this disinclination to adopt strict population control policies may emanate from anticipated resistance on the part of the people themselves. Whatever the case may

be, the Bank begs the question in insisting that Governments should adopt these policies — only more strictly. The question why these policies have not been adopted or have not succeeded where they have been adopted, must be answered in more than circular terms. This is particularly important bearing in mind the fact that in 1980 only some 476 million Africans occupied 23 million sq. km. That is an average density of 17 people/sq. km compared with 108/sq. km. for China and 222/km. for India.

The first problem with the Neo-Malthusian view of population growth is its basic assumption that higher population growth rates retard economic development. Conversely, its implicit presumption that lower population growth rates will, *pari passu*, result in higher rates of economic development is equally flawed. In the first assumption, we could be dealing with an inversion of cause and effect. It is argued in this paper that high population growth rates could stimulate economic development. The second assumption is a syllogic fallacy. Low rates of population growth are not necessarily associated with high rates of economic growth. In fact the relationship could be quite the opposite, i.e. low rates of population growth leading to low rates of economic growth. This is the case with Africa.

Two Contending Views of the African Population Problem

The first question to pose and answer is whether Africa has a population problem at all. If one exists, of what nature is it? Answers to these questions are contentious. The World Bank and other neo-Malthusians answer the first question in the affirmative. So do their opponents. Differences arise in addressing the nature of the problem and how to solve it. For the World Bank, the answer for the second question is that 'Africa has too many people growing too fast.' The opposing side, however, while agreeing that Africa has a population problem, holds a completely opposite view on the nature of the problem. Cheikh Anta Diop (1978), for example, argues that Africa's population problem is that it has too few people growing too slowly:

Some influential American groups have recommended to their government that its foreign aid be restricted to those underdeveloped nations which agree to limit their birthrates. This is an obvious Malthusian approach. It is clear that a continent such as Black Africa, the sole victim of slavery in modern times (with 100 to 200 million people killed or carried away), can only turn a deaf ear on any such suggestion. Our continent, with its demographic emptiness, has an imperative duty to apply a systematic policy of intensive repopulation in optimum time. Black Africa contains sufficient sources of natural energy, raw materials and foodstuffs to feed and sustain such a population. It must avoid in the future becoming the receptacle for the rest of the world's human overflow.

How can we explain such diametrically opposed views on the same question? It is my contention that differences arise from the conceptual frameworks and time frames adopted; the data examined; and the interpretation brought to bear on those data. While the World Bank takes a short term, situational — where is, how is — approach, this paper takes a long term world historical demographic view to show that Africa's population growth has lagged behind other continents over the last five centuries and that its share of population has dropped drastically. Africa has a low density of population. Thus in both relative and absolute terms, this leads to the conclusion that Africa needs a higher not a lower rate of population growth.

The World Historical Demographic Context

Table 1 below presents estimates of population by continents from 1650. to 1950.

Table I: Estimates of World Population by Continental Division, 1650 — 1950.

Continent	Estimated Population (millions)				
	1650	1750	1850	1900	1950
World total	470	694	1094	1550	2454
Africa	100	100	100	120	198
America	8	11	59	144	330
Northern America(1)	(1)	(1)	(26)	(81)	(168)
Latin America(2)	(7)	10	(33)	(63)	(162)
Asia(3)	257	437	656	857	1320
Europe(4)	103	144	274	423	593
Oceania	2	2	2	6	13

1 i.e. America North of Mexico

2 i.e. America South of the United States

3 i.e. excluding the Asiatic part of the USSR

4 i.e. including the Asiatic part of the USSR

SOURCE: *Demographic Analysis: selected readings* edited by J.J. Spengler and O.D. Duncan Glencoe (Illinois), The free Press, 1965:

Table 2

Percentage Shares of World Population by Selected Regions

Year	Africa	Americas	China	Europe*	India	Total	Others
1500	18.3	9.1	28.0	15.4	12.1	82.9	17.1
1550	18.7	5.0	28.7	16.9	13.0	82.3	17.7
1600	18.5	3.0	28.8	18.3	13.9	82.5	17.5
1650	17.3	1.7	28.9	19.3	15.4	82.6	17.4
1700	14.2	1.6	33.2	18.6	16.2	83.8	16.2
1750	12.0	1.4	36.0	18.6	17.3	84.2	15.8
1800	9.7	2.1	37.5	20.4	17.0	86.7	13.3
1850	8.1	5.0	36.9	22.8	16.3	89.1	10.9
1900	7.7	9.2	27.6	25.7	18.6	88.8	11.2
1950	8.3	13.5	21.4	23.1	18.5	84.8	15.2
1982	10.8	13.8	33.2	16.2	16.3	73.7	26.3

Source:

Figures for 1500 — 1900 are compiled from Bennet (1954); figures for 1950 — 1980 and 1982 are drawn from the *UN Demographic Year book*. *The figure for Europe includes the European Soviet Union.

As can be seen from the Table 2 Diop's conclusions have a sound basis. The period between 1600 and 1900 saw a very rapid rise in the European population. It grew by approximately 340%. The growth rate was particularly high after 1650, and rose sharply after 1750. Between 1650 and 1750, Europe's population grew by 40%. In the following century however, (1760-1850), Europe's population grew by nearly 90%. Meanwhile Europe was exporting population to the so-called New World's of the United States, Australia, New Zealand etc. Most of this population invasion was done at the expense of the indigenous people most of whom were drastically reduced in numbers, and in some cases totally wiped out. According to Kuczynski (1943), between 1800 and 1930, the Caucasian population grew from 200 million to 700 million i.e. 250%. He concludes that the Caucasian population, which hovered around 15% of the world's population between 1000 and 1500, was about 22 per cent of the human species in 1800 and had reached 35% in 1930.

While European populations were growing at home and migrating to new lands abroad, the African population, in particular, was either stagnant or declining. It is es-

timated (Bennet, 1954) for example, that in 1500 Africa had more people than Europe i.e. 82 million to 69 million respectively. A century later (1600), the two continents were running neck to neck with Africa standing at 90 million and Europe at 89 million. By 1700, Europe had jumped to 115 million while Africa still stood at 90 million. Africa's population continued to stagnate at around 90 million or to decline upto 1850 when, it grew to 95 million. At that time, Europe's population stood at 266 million. In other words, while Africa's population stagnated between 1600 and 1850. Europe's population grew by nearly 200%. Further, even when Africa's population growth began to recover after the 1850s, its recovery was slow relative to Europe's growth rate of the late 19th century. From 266 million in 1850, Europe's population had jumped to 401 million, in 1900 i.e. 52%. Africa's population had only leapfrogged from 95 million to 120 i.e. 26%. It is worth noting that in the same period the population in the Americas grew by nearly 150% at an average annual growth rate of over 3%. Most of this increase was realized from European immigration and high birth rates.

Apart from Africa's stagnant absolute population from the 17th century to the beginning of this century, there is also the question of Africa's declining share of the world's population. Carr-Saunders (1936) crisply states.

The black people have suffered heavy relative losses, for they once formed about a fifth of the population of the world and now form about a fifteenth.

Table 2 based on Bennet (op. cit), shows the changes in relative shares of population in five regions from 1500 to 1982.

From the above information, the regional shares of world population have changed drastically. In 1500 China, with 125 million people i.e. 28% had the largest share of the world's population. The Americas with 41 million i.e. 9.1% had the smallest share. Africa with 82 million i.e. 18.3 had the second largest share after China. By 1800, Africa's share had dropped to 9.7% and her position to fourth. The Americas had dropped to 2.1% and their position was still last; China, on the other hand, had built up its share to 37% while Europe, now with 20.4%, had risen to second place after China, displacing Africa. From 1800 onwards, another wave of change began with China gradually losing ground and the Americas building up their share. By 1900, positions had changed again. Now China (27.6%) though having lost 10 percentage points still held first position. Europe had maintained her second position and gained nearly three percentage points. India had also maintained the third position with a minor gain of 1.6 percentage points in the century while the latter had gained nearly seven. This picture was to change radically in the following half-century.

By 1950, China (21.4%) now in the second position, had lost leadership to Europe (23.1%). Meanwhile Africa's share, now at 8.3 remained the lowest although it had shown signs of recovery of 9.6%. Americas share of population at 13.5%, had gained about 5.3 percentage points in the fifty years, India maintained the same share over the period. By 1982, China now held the first position again with 22.2%. India had gained the second position with 16.3%. The Americas held steady at around 14% while Europe had a dramatic decline from 23 to 16.2%. Europe also moved from first to third position. Africa, though still last, had gained nearly 2.5 percentage points.

A number of conclusions can be drawn from these data. One is that Africa's share in the population growth of the last three centuries has been negligible. Africa began to show a positive trend (transition) in 1950 and is continuing. The second conclusion is that Europe's share had risen disproportionately compared with other regions but began to decline in 1950s. With respect to Africa, we note further that not only has it lost its second position after China in 1500 but the absolute numbers were stagnant from 1600 to 1800.

Bearing in mind that it is during periods of relative overpopulation that major technological breakthroughs have been made, I would submit that at least some of Africa's contemporary backwardness may be explained by the absence of this population push. Africa was, among other things, de-populated over those centuries and hence the retardation of her economic growth².

This conclusion has extremely important implications for population policy in Africa. If indeed, as is now well established, Africa was losing population while the rest of the world gained, then it would be rational both economically and politically that Africa should be increasing her population if only to compensate for past losses. This point should not be clouded by the current economic crisis. Indeed in the face of this crisis, we are forced to contemplate long term causes and long term solutions. From the stand point of long term demographic development, it would seem that Africa's population problem is one of too few people in absolute terms and relative to other regions. The evidence just examined suggests that Africa's present socio-economic problems arise, at least in part, from the lack of population pressure. To elaborate this point, it is essential to examine the impact that population pressure has had on the political and economic development process in Europe.

European Population Growth Cycles

In a study of long term population growth patterns, Rondo Cameron (1973) suggested that European population growth can be conceived as having gone through several logistical cycles. He postulated four such cycles. The first upturn began in the 9th century and terminated in 1348 with the great plague which decimated nearly one half of the European population. The second logistic began with an upturn in the mid-15th century, peaking in the late 16th century and finally declining in the mid-18th century. The third upturn, began in the mid-18th century and terminated in the early 20th century. The current (fourth) logistic began in the 1950s and still continues. Cameron did not say if the logistics were successive and cumulative or if they were autonomous and repetitive. He also did not clarify the question of the driving force(s) behind these logistics. He indicated however, that there was a strong positive correlation between the accelerating period of population growth and total per capita output. This relationship was reversed in the declining phase, i.e. declining population growth rates were associated with declining output.

On examining these logistics, one finds that the growth periods in particular, are associated with significant transformations in the socio-economic system. The first phase coincided with the first agricultural revolution³. The second, of course, coincided with the Mediterranean renaissance which featured a clustering of inventions, the decline of feudalism and the rise of the modern European State system which spawned the modern world system and with it, the capitalist world economy. This period was characterised by momentous European population growth leading to export of surplus population to the 'New World'. The third logistic is associated with the industrial revolution and the rise of the bourgeoisie. Of this period, Cipolla (1978) says:

Under such a push of internal demographic pressure and with the advantage of technological superiority which in one form appeared in superior military power—the Europeans spread all over the world, peacefully and otherwise. They settled in the Americas and Australia. And they came to control Africa and Asia.

The fourth logistic is to be understood in the context of the internalization of capital. This interpretation, though would seem to suggest that increasing population was the main incentive to inventions, innovations and general social progress. To a large extent, it provided some of the spurt for the 19th century imperialist expansion. The European annual rate of migration from the mid-18th century is depicted in Table 3.

Table 3 — European Migration 1846-1929

1846-1890 —	377,000 per year
1891-1920 —	911,000 per year
1920-1929 —	366,000 per year

Source: Cipolla (1978:119)

Population and Transformation

Three contending views on population and development have persisted through time. One view sees large population as positive both politically and economically. Another view considers high rates of growth and large numbers as generally negative, again, either politically, economically or in both terms. A third view posits that the question is not simply one of numbers or rates of growth but that it is a question of which social class is increasing relative to the other classes.

In the 18th century, for example, the mercantilist view saw a large population as not only positive but as a necessary engine for the acquisition of national power and wealth, and the annexation and domination of foreign territories. A nother view, propounded by Malthus in the 19th century, contended that population growth, if left unchecked, would result in impoverishment and misery. A third position held by Marx was that there was no such thing as an absolute law of population which was valid across time, space and social formations. Marx thus formulated the 'law' of relative surplus population. He posited that this law determined not only the rate of population growth but also the relative shares of population between classes. Under capitalism, Marx observed, over population served the function of depressing wages and hence increasing the share of capitalists (profits) in the social product.

The role of population growth was raised again in the 1930s during the depression. A number of economists featured significantly in the debate. J.M. Keynes (1937) argued in general that the volume of employment of resources on the whole depended on the level of aggregate demand. He thus came to the conclusion that growth of population stimulated aggregate demand and thus reduced unemployment. The reduction of population would have the opposite effect. To provide evidence he contended that:

In the 19th century, population increase determined a large part of the demand for capital between 1860 and 1913.....about fifty per cent of investment was geared to population increases. Overbeeck (1970:275).

Hansen (1939) who largely supported this position identified three agencies of economic expansion: population growth, opening up and development of new territory and resources, and Technical innovations. Of all these factors, however, he found that population growth had the highest significance. In agreement with Keynes, he argued that in the second half of the 19th century. ".....forty per cent of the investment activity in Europe and sixty per cent in North America had been determined by population increase." Harrod (1939) made virtually the same argument; with a subtle tinge of nationalism. He lamented England's loss of population thus:

Our country will present the mournful aspect of a deserted and derelict area, its houses uninhabited and its equipment unused.

That warning is virtually identical with Diop's quoted supra.

Finally, Myrdal (1940) refuted the Malthusian claim of the scarcity and finity of resources. He made the concise argument that rather than an increasing population exerting pressure on resources, declining population, instead of bringing prosperity, might well have the opposite effect.

Most of the thinkers who opposed the pro-population growth position, in essence, reiterated the Malthusian argument. But they went even further. They challenged the proposition that large numbers increased aggregate demand, thus exerting pressure for economic expansion and therefore growth in employment. The neo-classical economists, for example, claimed that it is not so much the number of consumers that determines the size of the market as the purchasing power available per head of population. The focus on individual per capita income later on spawned the analytical concept of effective demand. It must be pointed out that the neo-classical focus on the individual as the foundation of economic activity emerged with the dominance of bourgeois utilitarianism — hedonism. This thinking is in essence Darwinian and anti-socialist.

The classical economic thinkers, e.g. Smith, Ricardo and Marx, dealt in social magnitudes (i.e. capitalists, land lords, merchants and workers) and wrestled with the questions of relative contributions to and shares in national wealth. Neo-classical thinking on the other hand, was influenced by Bentham's hedonism which was, of course, highly individualistic and utilitarian. It is this heritage which informs official World Bank thinking. This thinking is largely purveyed as dogma particularly by bourgeois ideologies. They assert that just as the working classes in the capitalist countries breed themselves into misery, so do the people of the periphery of the capitalist world economy. Both have but themselves to blame! But clearly the working classes in the capitalist countries and the people of the periphery have not found these arguments convincing. This is expressed in growing birth rates, resistance to birth control and increasing social demands for the redistribution of wealth in the capitalist countries and across the capitalist world economy.

The population debate has continued to centre around these two positions — population as society and population as individuals. The view looking at population as social phenomenon (Mercantilist and Marxists), emphasizes the socio-economic and political dimensions of population growth or decline. This view associates population pressure for example, with national power, growth of home markets, technological innovations, class struggles, revolutions, etc. The other view takes population as a phenomenon of individuals. It posits that society is, after all, the sum total of individuals. Thus it emphasizes not numbers but the quality of members of society. For this view, therefore, the level of aggregate demand, for example, is not determined by the number of people but by wealth of members of society. The first view is generally pronatalist while the second is essentially anti-natalist.

Historically the Mercantilists held a pro-natalist view — population as an engine of national power and wealth. In the West this view steadily declined with the eclipse of merchant capital. In modern times, however, the view is generally shared by later day nationalists and neo-mercantilists. The individualistic view, as pointed out earlier, was first espoused by the rising bourgeoisie in the 19th century and has now become part of the dominant liberal capitalist ideology. The Marxist view has remained very much alive particularly in confronting the bourgeois view.

To get to the gist of the salient points raised by each argument, let us re-visit the contending views of Thomas Malthus and Karl Marx on surplus population.

Surplus Population on a World Scale

The World Bank position reviewed infra is largely informed by the views of Thomas Malthus. Writing in 1798, partly in opposition to the French revolution, Thomas Malthus postulated that there was a natural tendency for population to grow at a faster rate than food production. Population growth, he posited, follows a geometric progression while food production follows an arithmetic progression*. From this premise, employing the law of diminishing returns, Malthus concluded that either concious controls

had to be applied on population growth (restraint) or natural disasters (famine) would take their toll.

A good amount of criticism was (then as now) directed at Malthusianism. The most cogent came from Marx who faulted Malthus mainly on four counts. The principal line of Marx's argument was that the theory was essentially static, and **ahistorical**. It was **not grounded in concrete social analysis**. Specifically, Marx inveighed that Malthus held the wages (returns to labour) constant while profits (returns to capitalists) were rising. Secondly, Malthus, in his misapplication of the law of diminishing returns, ignored the role of technical change in increasing food production. Thirdly, Marx argued that Malthus failed to explain the relationship between the static wage rate and surplus population. Marx proceeded to demonstrate that surplus population plays the role of 'a reserve army of labour' which is instrumental in maintaining low wages and impending collective bargaining for higher wages. Finally, Malthus, according to Marx, ignored the historical role of population growth in general. It is no accident that Malthus was writing not only at the time of acute population growth in Europe but also at a time of the French Revolution and the apogee of the industrial revolution in England. Population pressure, as we noted earlier, had played a vital role in this revolution.

The Marxist position treats population (as all other phenomena) not from a static and **ahistorical** (Universalistic) stand point, but from a concrete historical stand point. Engels described Malthus' theory as 'a vile, infamous theory; a hideous blasphemy against nature and mankind'. Marx thought the theory was **essentially reactionary and misanthropic**. Both Marx and Engels argued that contrary to Malthus' theory, changes in wages did not depend on the absolute number of the working population but on:

the varying proportions in which the working class is divided into active and reserve army, by the increase or diminution in the relative amount of the surplus population, by the extent to which it is now absorbed, now set free. (Marx, Capital Vol. 1:596).

Marx also took up the question of the misapplication of the law of diminishing returns. He observed that:

.....the fertility of the soil was constantly changing and this depended not on natural but also on socio-economic conditions, which in their turn determine the advance of science and the way in which achievements were used in agriculture i.e. in the final analysis fertility of the soil depended upon the mode of production. (Ibid).

Contemporary development in agricultural production have borne Marx out. The development of productive forces has revolutionized agricultural production, albeit unevenly. By and large, these developments have remained confined to the core (imperialist) countries while the peripheral countries still maintain backward agrarian systems. Why is this so?

In postulating a global population problem, the Neo-Malthusians have essentially extrapolated the Malthusian theory. There are basically two versions of neo-Malthusianism. One takes the 'globe' as a whole and focusses upon the 'carriage capacity of the earth' as a fundamental limit on population growth. To this version belong the 'Limits to Growth' (1972) school of the Club of Rome. The other version focusses on population pressure in particular countries, regions, races, etc. In both cases, the general argument has been that population growth is threatening to outstrip the available resources — particularly food.

The question which springs to mind is whether there is a global population problem and of what kind. Is it perhaps possible that the phenomenon of the reserve army of labour discovered by Marx in individual capitalist countries is being repeated on a world scale in the age of imperialism? Is the contemporary international division of labour such that certain whole countries and regions in the capitalist world economy may be properly described as labour reserves? Forced migration in the slave trade, for example,

resulted in the depopulation of Africa. At a later stage, Africa was effectively occupied and its people and resources made to serve European needs. I contend that in the contemporary period, Africa and other peripheral countries are becoming marginalised and their traditional production roles rendered obsolete. Surplus population viewed from this angle, is a global phenomenon in which returns to peripheral labour are conditioned by the international division of labour. In practical terms, this is reflected in the declining returns for their export commodities.

Historically, the evolution and transformation of the international division of labour has been, at least in part, caused by and accompanied by fundamental consequences for population growth and distribution between the core and the periphery in the capitalist world economy. During the colonial period for example, the Marxian phenomenon of the 'reserve army of labour' initially assumed the form of peripheral areas coercively undertaking production to supply the need of the core countries. Contemporary changes in the international division of labour, however, have undermined the importance of some of the peripheral production activities creating relative unemployment in these regions. Moreover in a number of peripheral countries, colonial policy deliberately maintained reserves for the supply of mine and plantation labour. This situation persists in most such countries.

At one level therefore, the African population 'problem' is a reflection of Africa's demographic transition which is partly compensatory for past losses. At another level, what appears as surplus population, has to do with the under utilization of labour in production. The irony of the epoch therefore is that Africa suffers from under-population while, at the same time, it experiences relative surplus population (unemployment of labour and resources). In my view, the solution for this predicament is transformation not further depopulation. This is because the kind of socio-economic transformation which can create new economic space for Africa will be induced and propelled by a high rate of population growth. Conversely, restricting the rate of population growth will set the seal on unemployment, pestilence and persistent poverty with the long term possibility of devastating demographic decline. Then Africa would face Diop's feared 'occupation by other peoples' overflows'.

Conclusion

In summary, the World Bank argument operates at a universalistic level of absolute numbers and their growth rates vis a vis available global resources. From this point of departure, it arrives at the false conclusion that rapid population growth is retarding economic development and threatening global resource availability. The Bank is so forceful about the need for population control in Africa that one suspects that the argument is pre-meditated. This is because the Bank ignores some of the basic historical demographic data and is conspicuously silent on the necessity for transformation at national and international levels to increase available resources and improve their relative distribution between countries and peoples. Rather than attacking the problem at the source, i.e. the distorted international division of labour, it seeks to blame the victims.

This is not to suggest that population policy is not a necessary component of overall economic and social policy. But it must, however, take into account Africa's demographic history, relative densities and distribution of population and, above all, it must be part of a comprehensive programme of socio-economic transformation both at the international and domestic levels. These considerations should determine the adoption of a positive or negative population policy. Population policy therefore ought to be seen as a historical phenomenon. At any rate, it should be clear that population policy is economic policy and vice versa. In the case of Africa, to echo Cheikh Anta Diop's injunction, it would seem that a high rate of population growth could very well be the engine

for future economic growth and transformation. Unfortunately, as Findlay and Findlay (1987) have pointed out in a recent book entitled *Population and Development in the Third World*

Sadly some Governments continue to publicize manifestos which suggest that population growth and economic growth are irreconcilable alternatives, whereas there is growing evidence to show that the development of population resources is a critical step towards achieving sustained economic development.⁵

Footnotes

- (1) In an earlier study, for example, Elliot Berg (1981) places greater emphasis on policy and efficiency factors. In this statement, the argument is that Africa is not only inefficient but it also has too many mouths to feed, which mouths are growing too fast.
- (1a) Some of the most influential latter-day proponents of this theory which emphasizes the negative effects of population growth on development include Coale, A.J. and E.M. Hoover, *Population Growth and Economic Development in Low Income Countries*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1958.
- (2) There is a running debate, particularly among historians, concerning the numbers removed from the African continent in the Arabic and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Estimates range from 3 million to 50 million. For a lucid discussion of this problem see Inikori (1979). Other factors include the social violence of slave raiding (Rodney, 1972); imposition of production and exploitation of coerced labour (Baregu, 1987).
- (3) Cipolla (1978: 114) observes that; "Although the demographic increase can properly be visualised as a consequence of the agricultural revolution, one should not overlook the fact that the growth of population may have, in its turn fostered the diffusion of the revolution."
- (4) A typical universalistic, and ahistorical and hysterical view reads as follows:

"While it took a hundred thousand years for the world's human population to reach 4000 millions, it will now take a mere thirty years to add another 4000 million. With the present rate of increase it can be calculated that in 600 years the number of human beings on earth will be such that there will only be one square metre for each to live on (Ibid: 126).

- (5) For a recent challenges to Neo-Malthusian views on population and development see Allan Findlay and Anne Findlay, *Population Development in the Third World*. London and New York, Methuen, 1987.

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