

# ENVIRONMENTAL TERRORISTS ON THE LOOSE IN NIGERIA

By

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# Abstract

*Nigeria does not have an implementable policy on population growth and there is no legislation on the number of children a couple could have as at today. The population of Nigeria that was estimated at one hundred and forty million, three thousand five hundred and forty two (140, 003,542) in 2006 has been growing at ballooning rate of 3.2 percent since then. Unfortunately the resources of Nigeria which are limited are not equitably distributed. The venal ruling class ensures that the primitive capitalist political economic system in place oppresses and exploits the majority of the population to the advantage of little greedy elitist ruling class. This has forced the oppressed and exploited to take to over exploiting the environment which is the weeping child in order to elk out a living. This paper has likened the relationship of the oppressive ruling class to the oppressed class that has forced the exploited class to ravish the environment as setting environmental terrorists on the loose in Nigeria. The paper further argues that whereas there is strength in number, the growing population of Nigeria coupled with lack of adequate plan by governments at all levels to mobilize this number productively is a critical issue in developing sustainable agricultural production systems in Nigeria.*

# Introduction

- Nigeria used to be at peace with itself. When there were few Nigerians to share the resources of the country.
- However, as the population was growing without adequate provisions for the citizens and with importation and cross fertilization of religious, political and economic ideas contending with the mind, these created a mental cramp.
- With growing population and technological development in the world, human beings began to experiment with selling their economic, socio-political or religious philosophies to other fellow beings.
- Where persuasions failed to work, force was sometimes employed (Oluwagbemi, 2015). This has resulted in widespread violence in attempts at winning converts. This unfortunate trend has led to guerilla style or full - scale wars hence the phenomenon called terrorism.

# Intro. Contd

- While these terror acts are viewed through political, social, cultural, economic, technological or religious prisms, the silent terrorism that the environment suffers is excused under some nebulous 'freedoms' that man exercises over the environment.
- The general view by many scholars is that terrorism does not yield to easy definition (Cooper (2003, Nacos, 2012).
- One fact is however clear, that a review of some definitions of terrorism by different authors shows that these definitions were based on the background of the authors.
- Interestingly, the African National Congress- the ruling party in South Africa today was tagged as a terrorist organization by the defunct Apartheid regime.

# Intro. Contd

- This paper has taken the liberty of the statutory definition of terrorism in Nigeria as contained in Section 46 of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) (Establishment) Act 2004 to interrogate some of the terror acts that Nigerians visit on the environment without any qualm.
- The statutory definition of terrorism in Nigeria is Section 46 of the EFCC (Establishment) Act 2004 which provides that:

# Intro Contd.

- any act which is a violation of the Criminal Code or the Penal Code and which may endanger the life, physical integrity or freedom of, or cause serious injury or death to, any person, any number or group of persons or causes or may cause damage to public property, **natural resources, environmental** or cultural heritage and is calculated or intended to

# Intro Contd.

- intimidate, put in fear, force, coerce, or induce any government, body, institution, the general public or any segment thereof, to do or abstain from doing any act to adopt or abandon a particular stand point, or to act according to certain principles, or
- disrupt any public service, the delivery of any essential service to the public or to create a public emergency, or
- Create general insurrection in a State.

# Intro Contd.

- Any promotion, sponsorship of, contribution to, command, aid incitement, encouragement, attempt, threat, conspiracy, organization or procurement of any person, with the intent to commit any act referred to in paragraph (a) (i), (ii), and (iii).

# Intro Cond.

- Nigeria has been fighting the menace of terrorism occasioned by Boko Haramists in the North East of the country close to seven years now for their terror acts against the State.
- Nigerians are relating with the environment in ways that are similar to what the Boko Haramists are doing to the State.
- The provision on the need to prevent damage to the environment as reflected in Section 46 of the EFCC (Establishment) Act 2004 above is in abeyance in Nigeria's quest to route out terrorism in the country.
- Till date no Nigerian has ever been prosecuted for his/her terror acts on the environment.

# Intro Contd.

- The gory sights displayed by various camps of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) would testify to the fact that future involuntary environmental terrorists are already being incubated. Sights of child-mothers carrying children most of them malnourished are what one is confronted with in most IDPs' camps in Nigeria.
- The concern of this paper is that the growing number of children being born today in Nigeria that may not be well educated and therefore will remain unskilled as a result of lack of adequate planning by governments to care for them is a recipe for setting on the loose environmental rapists.

# Exercise of freedom at raping the Environment

- Man has been under the illusion of being able to conquer the environment.
- In exercising his freedom he does not only populate the limited land space, spreads his tenets over it, he sometimes over draws from the available resources not only to meet his **need** but to satisfy his greedy **wants**.
- In doing this man exerts such pressure that pushes the environment to its ecological limits.
- This failure to respect the carrying capacity of the earth has led man to make one and half earths (1.5) demand on the planet earth (Oladipo, 2015).

# Exercise of freedom Contd.

- The population of Nigeria is a rape on the Nigerian environment. A population of over 178 million with gluttonous consumption cannot but draw heavily from a country of size 923,766 square kilometres.
- To meet the food need of this humongous population (Oluwagbemi, 2015) asserted that various efforts are put in place to extract from the soil as much as possible including the application of chemicals to achieve this.
- This way, the soil is subjected to double jeopardy- yielding at great pain and also having to cope with toxins from man's actions. The policy of four (4) children per woman of the Babangida's era was dead on arrival and as at today there is no piece of legislation regulating the number of children a couple could have in Nigeria.

# Exercise of freedom Contd.

- . Oluwagbemi (2015) had advocated that Nigeria should come up with a law limiting a couple in Nigeria to have two (2) children.
- Indeed, the 2015 World Environment Day had its theme as “Seven Billion Dreams, One Planet. Consume with Care”.
- But then higher rates of addition to this population come from the developing countries, Nigeria being a major contributor.
- The estimated population of Nigeria in 2006 was put at 140,003,542 with an annual growth of 3.2% (Iwejingi, 2011)

# Exercise of freedom Contd.

- This paper is not unmindful of the fact that certain Nigerians may raise the issue of their fundamental right of procreation and so will want as many children as possible.
- Such bigots should be reminded of how they have not been respecting Shelford's law of tolerance in their dealing with the environment.
- Climate change has no respect for religion, culture or fundamental human rights.
- Man with his intellect has been able to delay death from forcefully keeping his own number within the limit that the environment can tolerate. But the environment has its own joker to counter this success by man.

# Exercise of freedom Contd.

- . This paper contends that attempting to develop an agricultural system that will produce food on a sustainable basis for a population that is beyond the carrying capacity of the available land space in Nigeria is like journeying on a bucolic path to an unknown destination.
- It will be futile to open a bracket with sustainable agricultural production without closing the bracket with controlled population that is within the carrying capacity of the available land space in Nigeria.

# Consumption Patterns that terrorize the Environment

- Foresters are worried stiff at the unmitigated level of deforestation in Nigeria. The rate has been on the rise due to the reckless manner of timber extraction and indiscriminate fuel wood collection with the collateral negative impact on the environment.
- This impaction includes: destruction of food cover, loss of biodiversity, ecological imbalance, soil erosion, flooding, desert encroachment etc. Sourcing data from NBS (2011) and FAO (2012), the Millennium Development Goals (2013) reported the proportion of land area covered by forests in percentage to be 18.90 (2000), 14.40 (2001), 12.00 (2006), 9.90 (2011) and 9.80 (2012).

# Consumption as terror on Environ

## Contd.

- Most State Governments in Nigeria have forestry law on how their forest estates should be managed. However, there are States which have democratized environmental brigandage by bye-passing their Forestry Departments in giving contractors the management of their forest estates.
- This has led to unrestricted forest destruction all in the quest to increase internally generated revenue.
- Oluwagbemi (2015) likened this attitude on the part of governments to approving the use of Improvised Explosive Device (IED) against the forest.
- Nigerians in positions of political authority fail to realize that when we turn the terror gun against the environment, it backfires.

# Consumption as terror on Environment

## Contd.

- The processes of wood conversion in Nigeria lead to huge 'wastes' A number of factors have been identified as being responsible (Unanwanji and Egbewole, 2011).
- This is a huge drain from the environment that has conceived and produced these resources at great pain. The environment bleeds
- This is at a time when there is poor funding for management and reforestation. The current high cost of kerosene will no doubt lead to more Nigerians who can no longer afford the commodity to cook their food shift to burning fire wood.
- This will no doubt exert its own pressure on the forest. It does appear that the hardship occasioned by the high cost of kerosene has now forced some Nigerians to go back to cooking with sawdust which is usually burnt off in most sawmills in Nigeria.

# Consumption as terror on Environ.

## Contd

- The last time sawdust cook stoves were popular was during the Sani Abacha's regime when there was a nationwide job boycott leading to scarcity of petroleum products in 1994.
- Can it be said that Nigerians become more resource-use sensible during lean period than during surplus? Our consumption of pulp and paper products is also sub-optimal. This is another slap on the environment.
- There is no reason why students' projects, dissertation and theses cannot be produced on both sides of foolscap sheets in all our institutions of higher learning in Nigeria as a way of optimizing that forest resource.
- For the health of our environment, there is the need for the re definition of our culture. Most Nigerians like to dress gorgeously. Some traditional rulers get robed with clothing materials that are over-size.

# Consumption as terror on Environment

## Contd.

- Also the culture of over wearing of textile materials in form of a parachute known as babanriga or agbada draws unnecessarily from the environment. The culture of eating food and deliberately leaving leftovers constitute an abuse of the environment.
- The time has come to start surcharging adult Nigerians who fail to consume all the food that they are served as it is done in some restaurants in Europe.
- This general lack of respect for the environment raised here may be considered small and characteristically, Nigerians are not likely to take the required actions. As pointed out by Fagbemi (2003), Nigerians have this lackadaisical attitude to issues when they are still small until they fester and become big issues.

# Cost of delay on Boko Haram

- Indeed, if the challenge posed by religious fundamentalist groups in Borno and Yobe since 2003/2004 and the sect known as 'Yan Yusufiyya' under the leadership of the slain Mohammed Yusufu of Borno State in 2008/2009 was given the seriousness it deserved then, Nigeria may not be fighting a Boko Haram war today.
- For instance, the approach of Nigeria to terrorism initially will show how unserious the country can be to potential serious issue.

# Cost of delay on Boko Haram

- World's consciousness of what terrorism means and the need to confront it globally has its origin in the 9/11 attacks in the United States of America in 2001.
- These attacks shocked the world and no doubt prompted the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to pass Resolution 1373 adopted by all on 28<sup>th</sup> September, 2001.
- By this Resolution all the member States were expected to make terrorism a serious crime in domestic legislation along with terrorist funding and other auxiliary offences.
- How did the Nigerian government react to this development?
- Ambivalence was the characteristic response engendered by political bickering and parochial ethno-religious sentiments (Omolaiye-Ajileye, 2015).

# Cost of delay on Boko Haram

- Instead of enacting a new law as requested by the Resolution, the National Assembly merely inserted two sections in Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) Establishment bill that was then being worked on.
- In December 2003 and January 2004, a group that called itself “the Taliban” raided Police Stations in Borno and Yobe States of Nigeria.
- The United States Country Reports on Terrorism (2004) noted that Osama Bin Laden had reported Nigeria as “fertile land for action”.
- By this time also U.S. Country Reports on Terrorism (2005) revealed that some individuals and private groups in Nigeria had ties with terrorist sources outside Nigeria.

# Cost of delay on Boko Haram

- In 2005, the Obasanjo regime sent a draft counter-terrorism bill to the National Assembly for passage.
- However, the bill was withdrawn on the second reading in the senate chamber due to northern senators' opposition on the ground of anti-Muslim sentiment (Sampson and Onuoha, 2011).
- Differing perceptions and interpretations of lingering militancy in the Niger Delta region in the South and Islamic extremism in the North ( Sampson and Onuoha ,2011) led to the abortion of the attempt made in 2006 by Senator Ben Obi at re-introducing a private prevention of Terrorism Bill as a comprehensive national legislation on terrorism.

# Cost of delay on Boko Haram

- On December 10, 2010, an Executive Counter-terrorism Bill was sent to the National Assembly which was passed by the joint committee of the National Assembly in May 2011 and President Goodluck Jonathan signed it into law on June, 3, 2011 (Ekundayo, 2012).
- All these actions in quick succession did not just come about without an international outrage that the action of Umar Abdulmutallab drew to Nigeria on December 25, 2009.
- The young lad said to be associated with Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula had attempted to set off an explosive aboard Delta/North West Airlines Flight 253, with 274 passengers. He however failed as he was overpowered

# Cost of delay on Boko Haram

- Following the above incident, the US Transportation Security Administration (TSA) blacklisted Nigeria by classifying it “Country of Interest” on the US Terror Watch.
- This pushed the Nigerian government in no time to enter into diplomatic discussions with the U.S.A. government to avert a face-off.
- The U.S.A. government then gave Nigeria four conditions to be met before it could be delisted.
- It could therefore be said that it was in fulfillment of these conditions and intense pressures from the U.S.A. that led to the speedy enactment of the Terrorism Prevention Act 2011.

# Cost of delay on Boko Haram

- Just imagine the number of lives that have been lost and the damage the war against Boko Haram has done not only to the economy of the nation but also to the environment.
- There is this sardonic way of looking at this matter of Boko Haram.
- Could the environment have led to this mental stupor on the part of the members of the ruling class in failing to timeously address the small issue of containing the variants of Taliban and 'Yan Yusufiyya' so that it could develop to full blown war as a way to reduce the population of Nigeria?

# Actions that indirectly terrorize the Environment.

- The conversion of forested land to agricultural land in order to produce more cash/food crops is a subtle form of terrorism.
- AFF (2015) reported the apprehension of the Society for Conservation Biology (SCB) to the threat to biodiversity posed by expansion of industrial oil palm production in Africa.
- The horizontal urban growth in Nigeria is also anti biodiversity. Most of the spaces that are built up should have been left green. Why should urban centres in Nigeria wait until they are faced with land hunger before embracing vertical growth as the case is in Onitsha, Anambra State, Nigeria?

# Indirect terror on Environ Contd.

- The primitive political economy that celebrates ‘financialism/moneyism’ in Nigeria is environmental terrorism personified.
- This system concentrates the wealth of this country in the hands of a few people in Nigeria while majority are without.
- This economic disorder has forced majority of the rural dwellers to virtually live on the environment. These are the unconscious environmental terrorists that the greed of a few has set on the loose in Nigeria, who are forced to commit environmental abortion.
- The vandalism of oil pipelines by the Niger Delta Avengers to protest against socio-economic injustice is not only an act of economic terrorism but also environmental terrorism.
- It is hoped that good sense will prevail in handling this issue of Niger Delta militancy so that Nigeria does not achieve a temporary relief from Boko Haram in the North East only to have another war coming from the creeks.

# Indirect terror on Environ Contd

- The Nigerian State that fails to create a system for equity for all to access the wealth of the nation aids and abets an act of environmental terrorism.
- The end of the story is that the environment will not only prosecute the man that commits and the State that aids environmental terrorism, it will also be the judge.
- Welcome Climate Change!
- The more the number of Nigerian environmental terrorists are let on the loose the greater the punishment by the environment.

# Conclusion and Recommendation

- Researchers working on the development of agricultural systems that are resilient in Nigeria must worry about the growing population to ensure sustainability of such systems. Resilience has its own limit.
- Attempting to develop an agricultural system that will produce food on a sustainable basis for a population that is beyond the carrying capacity of the available land space in an environment that is becoming increasingly unsafe is signing a memorandum of misunderstanding with failure.
- It will be a tall order to attempt to develop a resilient agricultural production system without being mindful of the need for a controlled population that is within the carrying capacity of the available land space in Nigeria concluded the paper.

# Recommendations Contd.

- This paper recommends that Nigeria should come up with legislation limiting the number of children a couple could have to two (2) with provision for government to assist in educating the children especially the girl child.
- First time offender of the law would be any couple that has three children and above.
- The punishment for this offence will make the offending male to undergo castration while the female will be subjected to tubal ligation.
- It is further recommended that the country should evolve a new political economic order that will lead to equitable re-distribution of the wealth of the country to ensure socio-economic and environmental justice.

# Appreciation

**Thank you for listening to me.**