

{xtypo_quote} The Reproductive Health Bill enables the Aquino government to promote unabashed population control and put its dissenters behind bars. Its American patrons have finally found 'village idiots' to crash the privacy of the Filipino bedroom, where it has been denying religion to invade. {/xtypo_quote}

By Ado Paglinawan of Washington, DC

A quick content analysis of Walden Bello's wild imaginings cannot drag me to a comparison of the Philippine scenario to Rwanda. Being a lay missionary to Africa for the past five years and thus considerably widely educated about that continent, that is too much of a stretch of my imagination.

Rwanda is so yesterday, why did Congressman Bello take it as his *piece de resistance*?

How could the genocide of 800,000 Rwandans in a brief span of 100 days be viewed beyond what is internationally accepted as tribal or ethnic conflict between the Hutus and the Tutsis?

I could only assume that Walden must have read the book of Timothy Longman Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda.

I also got hold of the same book but I did not buy its message. Longman argued that Rwanda's churches have consistently allied themselves with the state and played ethnic politics. But I became suspicious of his thinking process despite his being a consummate Ph.D. and having his long litany of works and grants because of two things:

First, he based his prognosis on two, yes two, local Presbyterian parishes in Kibuye before the genocide to demonstrate that progressive forces were seeking to democratize the churches. Then his indictment of Christianity as a whole proceeded from his thesis that Hutu politicians used the genocide of Tutsi to assert political power and crush democratic reform, and that church leaders supported the genocide to secure their own ecclesiastical power.

Second, when Longman said in his book that church buildings became the primary killing grounds in the 1994 genocide, I stopped reading any further. What an elaborate distortion between \$59 worth of hard covers. Tell me from sheer gut, Maria, in case of mass killers coming down your way, where would most people seek sanctuary but church buildings? Obviously, it was in those church buildings where the murdering men caught up with their victims.

Did he for instance give equal weight to the blast of passion propelled by the shooting down of the plane of Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana, a Hutu, above Kigali airport on April 6, 1994 ?

This was the immediate cause that unleashed the violent passions that have been percolating for more than a century since the Belgians left.

Did he credit Mgr. Thaddée Ntihinyurwa of Cyangugu preaching against the genocide from the pulpit and trying unsuccessfully to rescue three Tutsi religious brothers from an attack. Did he mark the martyrdom of Sr. Felicitas Niyitegeka of the Auxiliaires de l'Apostolat in Gisenyi who smuggled Tutsis across the border into Zaire , until she was executed by a militant militia in retaliation. What I found closer to the truth was the book *Left to Tell: Discovering God in the Rwandan Holocaust* (2006), where Immaculee Ilibagiza, a Tutsi woman and Christian, described how she hid with seven other Tutsi women for 91 days in a bathroom in the house of a certain Pastor Murinzi. At the St Paul Pastoral Centre in Kigali

, about 2,000 people found refuge and most of them survived, due to the efforts of Fr Celestin Hakizimana. This priest intervened at every attempt by the militia to abduct or murder' the refugees in his centre.

I never picked up the Longman book again when I found out its working title while still a work in progress. That title was "Commanded by the Devil: Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda".

Only Close Similarity Between Rwanda and the Philippines

The only close similarity between Rwanda and the Philippines is its 94% Christian dominance. But its breakdown was even nowhere typical – 57% Catholic, 26% Protestant, and 11% Seventh Day Adventists. We have 86% Catholic, 6% other Christians. The parallel ends there.

But how can he explain the fact that the ethnic tensions between the Tutsis and Hutus have overflowed beyond Rwandan borders to the eastern side of Democratic Republic of Congo where another 5.4 million have also been killed only since 1996? I hope he does not say because DR Congo is 96% Christian.

The political points of departure are remote, so as to draw a pattern. In the first place, the Philippines has diverse ethnicities. More than hundred, I think and none so dominant as to have any political power implications. Even the oft-repeated “imperial Manila” is not ethnic based but geographical. In our country, where the levels of education is so high and traditional respect is still dominant, no unique tribal manifestation can be attributed to power struggle.

The closest to genocide occurring in our country were the massacres at Balangiga in Samar , and Bud Dajo and Bud Bagsak in Sulu both perpetrated by the American colonizing forces. The recent Ampatuan massacre cannot even audition for a copycat.

Instead of Rwanda, Walden should be alluding to countries affected by the recent Arab Spring, like Tunisia , then Egypt , then Libya , and now Syria. Instead of Rwanda , he should be citing the case of Norway where a gruesome massacre perpetrated by a single person recently shocked the whole world. Or the riots in England where flash mobs, mostly of the white young generation, took to the streets torching establishments along their way.

What do these two groupings have in common? The Population Issue with related complications.

In the case of the Arab Spring, a growing young population began protesting against oppressive regimes, have denied their own people of basic human services. Walden's economic bulb should have illumined us that it started from food shortages that finally blew the whistle on bad governance, underlined by incompetence, greed and corruption.

There are many credible studies not drowning in Walden's pond, that show by sheer common sense that corruption and attendant bad policies primarily ruled by patronage politics, have caused cyclical poverty in the Philippines. Gloria Arroyo's plunder and Noyonoy Aquino's runaway incompetence are the most recent illustrations.

Billions of pesos diverted from the modernization of our agricultural industry to political war chests of the Arroyo conjugal kleptocracy could have already propelled our country to self-sufficiency in our basic staples, livestock and fisheries.

And of late, could you imagine what the taxes and customs duties estimated in the billions could have done to improve our educational and health services had 1,900 container vans of imported goods were not lost in broad daylight under Aquino's very nose?

In another part of the world, a self-styled terrorist complained about the unmitigated and aggressive in-migration of Muslims in Norway edging out what he saw were resources that could have instead benefited its white population. Clearly racist, he turned his rage on the Labor Party, whom he called as white traitors to Europe

In a remote sense this resonates in Walden's citing of the myopic writings of Robert Repetto and Wilfredo Cruz. But deforestation in the Philippines is not significantly due to expansion of habitable countryside. Although it could one of the factors, it is a drop in the bucket compared to the massive exploitation of our natural resources, especially our forests, since we gave parity rights to the Americans after World War II and illegal logging recalling names like Juan Ponce Enrile in Cagayan Valley, Jose Aquino in Agusan and James Barbers in Surigao of the 1970s.

Walden's favorite collaborator when he was in Washington DC is Transparency International. Read its treatise on forest anti-corruption advocacy - <http://www.illegal-logging.info/uploads/TIAPPprogFOREST.pdf> that identifies intervention in specific geographic areas that have nothing to do with Repetto and Cruz' dicey hallucinations about population growth.

Finally, social scientists in the past few weeks have been isolating the root cause of the recent disturbances in Europe to "fatherless" generations that have slowly multiplied through the past few decades because of mindless depopulation policies. Besides having the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Western Europe, the statistics are so staggering to mention here, so let me just give you the link:

http://www.crossrhythms.co.uk/articles/life/Rioters_Are_NOT_Scum_They_Are_The_Fatherless/44210/p1/

In an article in *The Australian* last August 11, Theodore Dalrymple said the riots in Britain are a backhanded tribute to the long-term intellectual torpor, moral cowardice, incompetence and career opportunism of the British political and intellectual class. I think simply of it as the dire consequence of the demise of the English family, its citizens' addiction to entitlements and the death knell of a socialist government. Indeed, the rioters toll moral bankruptcy of a dying society that began when its government legislated the contraceptive mentality and abortion into the British way of life.

What however scandalizes me is that Walden seems to have bought the Millenium Development Goals (MDG) hook, line and sinker -- inconsistent with the anti- imperialist

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Monday, 29 August 2011 11:28 - Last Updated Monday, 29 August 2011 11:41

ideologue that I came to know him.

Congressman Walden Bello is one of the strong advocates for the Reproductive Health Bill, the collateral for an MDG grant of about \$400 million dollars to the Philippines , accompanied by a huge cache of lobby money through the Planned Parenthood office in Metro Manila available to all those who would vote for its passage.

The bill enables the Aquino government to promote unabashed population control and put its dissenters behind bars. Its American patrons have finally found “village idiots” to crash the privacy of the Filipino bedroom, where it has been denying religion to invade.

But Walden Bello is the last person I will run to when it comes to condoms. I am more comfortable in my faith and conscience heeding the warning of Pius X's Pascendi Dominici Gregis' stern warnings against modernism in the early 1900s and Paul VI's prophetic Humanae Vitae against contraceptive mentality leading to abortion.

What heretics are selling to the Filipinos had already sowed its fatal harvest of death and moral decadence in Europe . I don't want the Norwegian assassin and the British rioters to tell the

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Filipinos 20 years from now, "We told you so... and you did not listen." # # #

Rwanda in the Pacific? Population Pressure, Development, and Conflict in the Philippines

By Rep Walden Bello

<http://opinion.inquirer.net/10769/rwanda-in-the-pacific>

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[Afterthoughts](#)

Rwanda in the Pacific?

Population Pressure, Development, and Conflict in the Philippines

INQUIRER.net

Saturday, August 27, 2011

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A long with its neighbors, the Philippines was burdened with a high poverty rate and faced the same challenge of overcoming underdevelopment four decades ago. Today, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Thailand have drastically reduced poverty and possess vigorous economies. In contrast, over 26 per cent of the population of the Philippines is trapped in poverty and the economy languishes in a state of underdevelopment.

Explaining the Divergence

What accounts for the difference?

Economic policy? Hardly, since all four countries followed export-oriented economic strategies over the last four decades.

Structural adjustment? Not really, since all four economies were subjected to some variety of market-oriented reform, though it is arguable that adjustment was milder in our neighbors than in our country.

Asset and income redistribution? No, since as in the Philippines, state-promoted asset and income redistribution programs in Thailand and Indonesia were either weak or nonexistent.

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Corruption? Again, all four countries have been marked by high levels of corruption, with Indonesia being a consistent topnotcher in annual surveys.

There is, in fact, one very distinctive feature that separates the Philippines from its neighbors: unlike our country, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Thailand managed to rein in the growth of their populations through effective state-sponsored family planning programs. And while successful family planning is not the whole story, economists and demographers have a consensus that it is an essential element in the narrative of economic advance in our neighboring countries.

Failure to Launch

One might compare the Philippines to an overloaded passenger plane that is trying very hard to take off but cannot quite get more than a few feet above the ground and is fast approaching the end of the runway.

The country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by only 4.5 per cent in the last decade. With population growing at 2.2 per cent per annum, the average yearly growth rate of GDP per capita (

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GDP

divided by total population) was only 2.3 per cent. This was simply too low to make a difference in terms of containing poverty. Indeed, while

Indonesia

,

Vietnam

, and

Thailand

have reached the Millennium Development Goal (

MDG

) of halving the number of people living in poverty by 2015 ahead of schedule, the

Philippines

is definitely going to miss it. And with so much of

GDP

being devoted to consumption as opposed to investment –owing partly to the high population growth rate – neither was there much of a chance that the country would be able to attain, in this decade, the 6-8 per cent annual

GDP

growth rate that economists say is necessary to launch the country into sustained growth.

The challenge is enormous. Even if the fertility rate were to be brought down to the replacement level of 2 births per reproductively active woman in the next decade, owing to population momentum – or the tendency of a population to grow despite a rapid decline in fertility owing to a simultaneous decline in the death rate – the Philippines will probably not see its population stabilize until the latter part of this century. Had the country attained replacement level fertility in 2010 – which it did not – the population would still have continued to grow and reach 150 million in 2060, after which it would have stabilized. If the replacement level fertility is achieved in 2030 – which is more realistic, according to demographers – the population will stabilize at 200 million in 2080. Under a less optimistic scenario of replacement level fertility being attained even later, say in 2050, the population will stabilize at more than 250 million towards the last years of the century.

The numbers are worrisome since a population of 200 million or 250 million would be a tremendous burden on the country's carrying capacity, or the number of people a region can

support without suffering significant environmental degradation. When carrying capacity is outstripped by population growth, an ecological crisis develops, then erupts in many directions.

Beyond Carrying Capacity?

There is no firm measure of the country's carrying capacity. However, there are strong indications that the Philippines was either close to or pushed beyond its carrying capacity as early as the mid-eighties, when the population was around 55 million. With the countryside unable to support a rapidly expanding population, migration to urban areas, especially Metro-Manila, escalated. And with uncontrolled expansion of shantytown communities, waterways were clogged and polluted, with the Pasig River nearing biological death and Laguna Lake in irreversible ecological decline by the mid-1990's. Water became an increasingly scarce resource as ecological stress intensified, with 58 per cent of ground water contaminated by human, industrial, and toxic waste by the end of the century.

But there were two things that were new with the population shifts that began in the late seventies and early eighties. An important study by Robert Repetto and Wilfredo Cruz found that prior to that period, the direction of internal migration had been from the depressed rural areas to the cities. Since then, however, internal migration also pushed up to the upland areas, open access forests, and artisanal fisheries. Deforestation accelerated, with the country losing, by 2005, over a third of its already much reduced forest cover of about 10 million hectares in 1990. The Philippines now has the distinction of having the third highest deforestation rate in the world, after Honduras and Nigeria.

The second new feature of the population movements at the end of the seventies was the massive exodus of Filipinos to work in foreign climes that kicked off during that period. The labor export program was originally a small affair involving 50,000 workers when it was instituted in 1975. But with the push factor of unrestrained population growth, it soon ballooned to become one of the main absorbers of surplus labor, with 6.3 million Filipinos being deployed for overseas work from 1984 to 1995. By 2011, with an estimated 8 million of its labor force overseas, the Philippines had become the world's second largest labor exporting country, with remittances from abroad becoming a key source of survival for millions of families and serving as the mainstay of an economy crippled by a combination of wrongheaded economic policies, unrestrained population growth, and permanent ecological crisis.

Population Growth and Social Conflict

Population and conflict is an uncomfortable correlation that many of us try hard not to acknowledge. Yet it is a threat looming in countries that have failed to manage their population wisely, like the Philippines. Take Rwanda. The genocide that took place in that country in 1994 has been one of the most tragic events of our times. The common explanation is that it was precipitated by an ethnic conflict between Hutus and Tutsis. However, the famous environmentalist Jared Diamond's careful study of the

Rwanda

genocide in his book *Collapse* reveals that in many cases, fellow Hutus were also victims of the Hutu rampage. One of the main factors behind the genocide, he argues, was population pressure, noting how even among Rwandans, there was talk about "how a war is necessary to wipe out an excess of population and to bring numbers into line with the available land resources." Jared is not a Malthusian, but he concludes that,

[P]opulation pressure was one of the important factors behind the Rwandan genocide that Malthus' worst-case scenario may sometimes be realized, and that

Rwanda

may be a distressing model of that scenario in operation. Severe problems of overpopulation, environmental impact, and climate change cannot persist indefinitely: sooner or later they are

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likely to resolve themselves, whether in the manner of
Rwanda

or in some other manner not of our own devising, if we don't succeed in solving them by our own actions.

Rwanda may be an extreme case. But have we not had similar dynamics of conflict related to population pressure in the Philippines? Beginning in the 1950's there were state-sponsored and spontaneous migrations from overpopulated

Luzon

and Visayas to relatively underpopulated

Mindanao

– known in the 1960's as "virgin land." These intensified conflicts over land and territory, with Muslims and indigenous peoples marginalized from their lands by Christian settlers and becoming a minority in their own homeland.

A key indicator of the acuteness of the demographic crisis was the flaring up of the Moro rebellion from the 1970's on, with its understandable demand for an independent or autonomous homeland for the Bangsa Moro people to stop the massive encroachment of thousands of impoverished non-Muslim settlers into their ancestral homeland. In the decades between 1980 and 2000, the height of social conflicts in Mindanao, Southern Mindanao, Central Mindanao

, and the area now covered by the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) consistently registered much higher population growth rates than the national average. In 2000-2007, the average population growth rate for ARMM was 5.4 per cent – the highest in the country – while the national average was 2.04 per cent.

Like Diamond in the case of Rwanda, we are not claiming that population pressure was the only factor in the massive crisis in Mindanao that broke out in

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the seventies and continues until today. Undoubtedly, inequality, religion, and culture also played a role. But looking at these figures, one cannot but conclude that unrestrained population growth has been a major factor in the conflicts in the Southern Philippines

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And one cannot fail to note as well that there is another element common to both Rwanda and the Philippines

: Catholicism is the religion of the majority in both countries. This is not, however, the place for a comparative study of the relations among population growth, religion, and social conflict in Rwanda and the Philippines

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In conclusion, it has been a dozen years since the reproductive health bill was first introduced in Congress. Since it was first debated, the population of the country has grown from 75 million to 94 million. The scorched-earth rearguard action of the Catholic Church hierarchy against rationality and collective responsibility has unfortunately condemned millions of those children who joined our country in the last 12 years to grinding poverty and a precarious existence. But we now have the opportunity to break with the past and chart a different future. We really have no choice but to pass the Reproductive Health Bill now since 2011 may well be the last opportunity for our country to acquire that booster that would allow it to clear the runway and reach for the sky.

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