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# Environmental Injustice, Capitalist Exploitation, and the Crisis of Peace in Postcolonial Africa: A Study of *The Forest Must Scream*

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**Abstract:** This study explores the intersection of capitalist exploitation, international hypocrisy, and the crisis of environmental leadership in postcolonial Africa. The aim is to analyse the implications of these issues for sustainable peace as dramatized in *The Forest Must Scream* by Henri Djombo and Osée Colins Koagne. To achieve this objective, a combined eco-critical and Marxist approach is employed, including textual analysis of dramatic dialogues, symbolic elements, and socio-political contexts within the play. The findings demonstrate that capitalist greed and international environmental double standards contribute to ecological degradation, social inequality, and systemic oppression, suggesting that unsustainable global policies and local exploitation are incompatible with long-term peace. Moreover, the analysis revealed that neo-colonial conservation strategies and extractivist policies continue to marginalize African communities while industrialized nations evade accountability. These findings have significant implications for understanding the links between environmental justice, postcolonial governance, and global climate policy. In conclusion, this study presents a critique of both local and international environmental failures, highlighting the urgency of ethical leadership and equitable policy reform for ecological and social sustainability. These reforms should center African realities rather than perpetuate dependency. The study urges industries to act responsibly, educators to inspire climate awareness, and youth to engage in environmental justice. Finally, it advocates a just transition that links ecological protection with socioeconomic equity for peace and sustainable development.

**Keywords***:* postcolonial Africa, environmental injustice, capitalist exploitation, international hypocrisy, sustainable peace.

## I. Résumé

Cette étude explore l'intersection entre l'exploitation capitaliste, l'hypocrisie internationale et la crise du leadership environnemental en Afrique postcoloniale. Elle vise à analyser les implications de ces problématiques pour la paix durable, telles qu'elles sont mises en scène dans *The Forest Must Scream* de Henri Djombo et Osée Colins Koagne. Pour atteindre cet objectif, une approche à la fois éco-critique et marxiste a été adoptée, incluant une analyse textuelle des dialogues dramatiques, des éléments symboliques et des contextes socio-politiques présents dans la pièce. Les résultats démontrent que la cupidité capitaliste et les doubles standards environnementaux internationaux contribuent à la dégradation écologique, aux inégalités sociales et à l'oppression systémique, suggérant que les politiques mondiales non durables et l'exploitation locale sont incompatibles avec une paix durable. De plus, l'analyse révèle que les stratégies néocoloniales de conservation et les politiques extractivistes continuent de marginaliser les communautés africaines, tandis que les nations industrialisées échappent à leurs responsabilités. Ces constats ont des implications majeures pour la compréhension des liens entre justice environnementale, gouvernance postcoloniale et politiques climatiques mondiales. En conclusion, cette étude propose une critique des défaillances environnementales locales et internationales, tout en soulignant l'urgence d'un leadership éthique et d'une réforme équitable des politiques en faveur de la durabilité écologique et sociale. Ces réformes doivent s'ancrer dans les réalités africaines plutôt que de perpétuer la dépendance. L'étude invite les industries à agir de manière responsable, les éducateurs à promouvoir la conscience climatique et les jeunes à s'engager pour la justice environnementale. Enfin, elle plaide pour une transition juste qui relie la protection écologique à l'équité socioéconomique, condition essentielle à la paix et au développement durable.

**Mots-clés** : Afrique postcoloniale, injustice environnementale, exploitation capitaliste, hypocrisie internationale, paix durable.

## II. Introduction

In the current global context, Postcolonial Africa faces numerous challenges that continue to undermine peace and development, among which environmental degradation stands as a critical concern. The absence of a sustainable environmental vision has far-reaching implications for stability, justice, peace and progress. All too frequently, peace has been narrowly defined as the mere absence of violent conflict. However, it must also be understood as a state of justice, cooperation among individuals and nations, as well as harmonious relation between humans and nature. Galtung (1995), making the distinction between "negative peace," and "positive peace," defines "positive peace," as the presence of justice, equity, and social harmony. In short, true peace is not simply the cessation of war, but the presence of justice and harmony. From this perspective, the lack of environmental justice directly hinders the realization of genuine peace in postcolonial societies.

The environment, as the basis of human survival, provides essential resources such as land, water, forests, and biodiversity. Yet, in postcolonial Africa, it has increasingly become a site of exploitation and destruction. Colonial legacies persist through deforestation, mining, industrial pollution, and land dispossession, often driven by local elites in collusion with international capitalist interests. As a result, this ecological destruction exacerbates poverty, food insecurity, displacement, and social conflict, while marginalizing local communities from resource management.

Within this context, literature and criticism offer vital platforms for interrogating socio-political, economic, and environmental realities. Writers and critics have consistently examined the global environmental crisis and its impact on African societies. Henri Diombo and Osée Colins Koagne, in their play *The Forest Must Scream*, bring to the fore the pressing issues of capitalism, ecological exploitation, and their boomeranging effects on peace in postcolonial Africa. Through its dramatization of capitalist greed, neo-colonial policies, and corrupt leadership, the play illustrates how environmental destruction produces injustice, displacement, and conflict. These realities reveal that Africa's ecological crisis is inseparable from questions of justice, governance, and sovereignty; calling attention to the urgent need for ethical leadership and sustainable environmental practices as foundations for lasting peace.

Scholarship on environmental justice in postcolonial contexts has increasingly drawn attention to the intersections of capitalism, colonial legacies, and ecological degradation. In this perspective, Agathangelou (2024) argues that Global South populations are disproportionately blamed for climate collapse, as "the poor of the Global South are held directly culpable for climate collapse […] 'people who depend on fire-wood and charcoal for fuel [and who] cut down and degrade forests [or] people who eat bush meat for food'" (p. 726). Indeed, this framing obscures the structural role of capitalist extraction and international hypocrisy, which remains central to African ecological crises.

In literary ecocriticism, Nsah (2019) provides an insightful reading of *Le Cri de la forêt*, emphasizing its interrogation of biodiversity loss in the Congo Basin, its critique of scapegoating witchcraft, and its portrayal of "women and children as both victims and combatants of environmental collapse, stressing their important role in fighting climate change" (p. 58). However, while Nsah recognizes the play's oscillation between indigenous knowledge and capitalist pressures, he stops short of linking these tensions to the questions of global environmental governance.

Theoretical contributions such as Caminero-Santangelo and Myers (2011) strengthen this connection by framing postcolonial ecocriticism as an approach that foregrounds "historical relations of power, colonial history and its effects, and cultural difference" (p. 5). Similarly, Whyte (2017) highlights the resilience of indigenous knowledge systems, noting that they encode ecological memory and adaptation strategies, which are vital in contexts where "one-size-fits-all solutions are not tenable" (Nsah, 2019, p. 72). Yet these frameworks often remain under applied in African dramatic literature, particularly in relation to contemporary critiques of capitalist globalization.

From a structural perspective, international trade perpetuates environmental injustice. As demonstrated, "global political-economic factors, especially the structure of international trade, shape the unequal distribution of environmental harms and human development; wealthier and more powerful Global North nations have disproportionate access to both natural resources and sink capacity for waste in Global South nations" (Givens, Huang, & Jorgenson, 2019, p. 2). This aligns with Tchatchou et al. (2015), who identify deforestation drivers in the Congo Basin, including "infrastructure expansion, agriculture, and timber extraction" (p. 16), all linked to global commodity chains (Givens et al., 2019, p. 5). Nonetheless, as Gareau and Lucier (2018) caution, even global governance mechanisms may reinforce rather than resolve these inequalities.

Furthermore, ecofeminist perspective points out the political nature of scarcity. It critiques dominant scarcity narratives as "an ideological construct shaped by unequal power relations around wealth, gender, racial identities, and geopolitical contexts" (Park, 2025, p. 9). By linking capitalist overdevelopment in the Global

North to ecological exhaustion in the South, Park underlines how climate breakdown is inseparable from colonial injustice.

Viewed as a whole, these studies establish a strong foundation for understanding Africa's ecological crises within capitalist and neo-colonial structures. However, existing scholarship has not sufficiently examined how African dramatic literature dramatizes the complicity of both local elites and international actors in environmental exploitation. The present study addresses this gap by analysing *The Forest Must Scream* through a combined Marxist and eco-critical lens, thereby drawing attention to the cultural, political, and symbolic dimensions of environmental injustice. It contributes to the field by shedding light on the ways in which African drama exposes international hypocrisy and articulates pathways toward sustainable peace rooted in ethical leadership and community-based resistance.

This study investigates the intersection of capitalist exploitation, international hypocrisy, and the crisis of environmental leadership in postcolonial Africa, with a particular focus on their implications for sustainable peace as dramatized in *The Forest Must Scream* by Henri Djombo and Osée Colins Koagne. It seeks to demonstrate how the absence of a coherent environmental vision, combined with capitalist greed, undermines both ecological sustainability and the foundations of peace. At the same time, it critiques environmental politics in which the survival needs of local communities frequently clash with global conservation agendas. Pragmatically, this research contributes by demonstrating the necessity of ethical leadership and sustainable policies to connect environmental justice with lasting peace in postcolonial Africa.

Since theory provides a framework for interpreting literary texts and connecting them to contexts, this study, as said in the paragraph above, applies ecocriticism and Marxism as its main analytical tools. Emerging in the late 20th century, ecocriticism examines the relationship between literature and the physical environment, applying ecological principles to the analysis of texts. As critical stance, ecocriticism "has one foot in literature and the other on land," (Glotfelty, 1996, p. xix) negotiating between the human and the nonhuman. In this study, ecocriticism is employed to reveal how anthropocentric and exploitative attitudes toward nature generate ecological crises, environmental suffering, and, consequently, threats to peace. It also helps highlight how capitalist exploitation and international hypocrisy obstruct ecological balance and sustainable coexistence. Complementing this, Marxism, rooted in Karl Marx's critique of capitalism, emphasizes class struggle, economic disparity, and systems of domination. Here, it is used to show how peace is hindered by capitalist greed that perpetuates oppression, the exploitation of natural resources, and the marginalization of African communities. Moreover, Marxist analysis uncovers how inequalities of power and wealth, reinforced by historical injustices, continue to shape environmental policies, particularly regarding deforestation and conservation. The analysis also draws on secondary sources, including scholarly books and articles on environment, peace, and development, to situate the play in relation to prevailing academic paradigms.

## III. Discussions

### 1. Peace Degradation: Capitalism and the Failure of Environmental Leadership

To situate this study within its context, a brief overview of *The Forest Must Scream*, is necessary to illustrate how the play critically engages with and reflects the central theme of the research. In effect, in *The Forest Must Scream*, Henri Djombo and Osée Colins Koagne dramatize how corruption, ignorance, and capitalist greed drive ecological destruction and social crisis in postcolonial Africa. Under Chief Kamona's leadership, the villagers of Mbala exploit their forests for profit, disregarding warnings from both government officials and the enlightened voice of Toubouli. Consequently, their defiance results in environmental collapse, hunger, displacement, and the collapse of cultural values. The play therefore becomes a metaphor for the general failures of environmental governance, revealing how short-term exploitation, neo-colonial agendas, and international hypocrisy undermine sustainable peace. Through its depiction of deforestation and ecological destruction, the play further exposes the contradictions of global policies that proclaim environmental protection while failing to offer concrete solutions to affected communities. In this respect, the context takes as large demonstrates that environmental protection, economic disparity, political power, and historical injustices are deeply interconnected in shaping contemporary climate discourse. Thus, by linking ecological degradation to poor leadership and global injustice, the play reflects the core themes of this research.

The playwrights, Henri Djombo and Osée Colins Koagne, raise the burning issues of capitalism, lack of environmental vision, and its implication with peace in postcolonial Africa. As evidence, the portrayal of Tambou, the Chief of Mbala village, embodies a capitalist elite, hoarding communal resources for personal enrichment while relegating the working class to servitude. The depiction of his attitudes, actions, reactions, and interactions reflects and aligns with capitalism. For, he creates an economic system in which private ownership of resources and profit maximization dictate production and distribution that thrives on exploitation of both labour and the environment.

This is evident in Act 1, Scene 1 of the play, where a dialogue between Tambou and a Villager exposes the Chief's exploitation of natural resources and the community's labour. Tambou expresses frustration over

being forced to transport large amounts of wood for the Chief's profit. The Villager, in response, warns that continued deforestation will leave them with nothing to survive on:

> TAMBOU: *(He enters, followed by the villager; he draws the latter's attention, using his fingers, to the jumbled bundles of wood under the sacred tree.)* Do you see? All this wood is only for the Chief and his family. We are going to sell it, and as always, he will keep the revenue, for himself, his wife and his children. He will say: "Sell this wood for the best price and do not subtract any coin. Be careful, I will verify to the least cent possible." I asked him if there was a vehicle to transport all this wood, because I will not be able to do it with a wheelbarrow, with only my two arms. And he said to me without warning: "Are you a woman, Tambou? Have you ever seen a man with more than two arms? Is this wood really a big task for some- body like you? Come on, go and see the customers, lazy man!" He started shouting at me like a beast, and I ended up accepting to transport the wood in a wheelbarrow.
>
> THE VILLAGER: The Chief exaggerates. At this pace, he will exterminate the forest, and what will we survive on afterwards? (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p. 1-2)

The above interactions illustrate the unsustainable exploitation of nature driven by capitalism. The Chief's relentless deforestation reflects human greed and ecological destruction. The bundles of wood under the sacred tree symbolize natural wealth transformed into mere commodities, stripped of their cultural and ecological significance. The sacred tree, a symbol of balance and cultural heritage, is reduced to mere profit, hence showing a deep disconnection between humans and nature.

The Chief's meticulous concern for profit; "I will verify to the least cent possible"; reveals capitalist logic, where economic gain outweighs ethical considerations. Pointing the responsibility of capitalism in environmental destruction, it is affirmed that the "transformation of nature from a living, nurturing mother to inert, dead and manipulable matter was eminently suited to the exploitation imperative of growing capitalism" (Shiva, 1988, 16). Shiva's words reinforce the idea that capitalism excessively contributes to environmental degradation. Yet, the question is to know if capitalism is also capable of addressing the damage it causes. Together, the Chief's attitude and Shiva's insight highlight the urgent need to question how capitalism's priorities threaten both ecological balance and lasting peace.

Tambou's subjugation, indeed, forced to transport heavy wood in a wheelbarrow, reinforces the system's exploitative nature. It reduces human labour to a disposable tool in the pursuit of wealth and thereby, deprives human beings their values. Moreover, there is both external conflict between Tambou and the Chief, and internal conflict, reflected through Tambou's frustration and moral dilemma about following the Chief's orders. The Villager also struggles with fear and submission, as seen in the following dialogue:

> TAMBOU: Until when shall we continue to follow him in this obscure business like slaves? Oh, it should not continue like this! They say that in some other quarters the chiefs are generous. Kamona will push us to quit Mbala one day, then we will go and taste goodness elsewhere. I can't stop thinking about this.
>
> THE VILLAGER: It's true, but where will we go and hide without him unearthing and... us (*passes the sharp edge of his hand under his chin to better express the action of killing*)?
>
> TAMBOU: Silence, he is coming. (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p. 2)

Noticeably, the suspense and tension in the final line; "Silence, he is coming"; creates a sense of urgency and fear. It implies that the Chief's presence threatens their safety, reinforcing the atmosphere of oppression. The Chief represents the bourgeoisie, hoarding resources and profiting from the labour of the proletariat, Tambou and the Villager. This unequal distribution of wealth and power reflects capitalist oppression, where the ruling class extracts maximum labour while offering nothing in return. The deforestation symbolizes capitalist greed, prioritizing profit over communal well-being. Tambou's frustration hints at class consciousness and a potential for rebellion against exploitation, but the Villager's fear reflects how oppression maintains the status quo.

Furthermore, the interactions reveal a stark lack of environmental vision. More precisely, the Villager's warning; "at this pace, he will exterminate the forest" (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p. 2); is a dire prophecy of ecological collapse. Like short-sighted capitalist enterprises that exhaust resources without sustainability measures, the Chief's deforestation spree disregards the long-term survival of his people. The forest, a life-sustaining entity, is sacrificed for immediate financial gain, posing the rhetorical question: what will remain when all is gone? The sacred tree, once a symbol of stability, now stands as a testament to environmental degradation implying that the Chief cares only for himself, regardless the becoming of his people. Without responsible stewardship, will future generations inherit anything, if not barren land and shattered livelihoods?

Indeed, the sacred tree is symbolic. In this logic, Okoro, (2020) asserts, "Taboos are designed in such a way that people fear even to make negative comments or ridicule anything they see in the forest or anything regarded as sacred. Such social design for the protection of the environment through taboos symbolically means that the people express a critical concern for the conservation of the natural resources." (p. 252). To put it differently, in African tradition, sacred trees are not only religious reality and spiritual balance, but also the

taboos and restrictions are ways and means to preserve and protect the forest. More clearly, making a tree sacred is a strategy to protect and preserve forests, and by extension, the environment. Thus, it is obvious that environmental degradation breaks down both ecological balance and social cohesion. For, the destruction of sacred trees in Africa is not only an ecological loss but the desecration of the spiritual bond between a people and their land

This environmental exploitation provokes instability in postcolonial Africa, where resource monopolization often leads to conflict. In this context, The Chief's authoritarian rule echoes postcolonial leaders who consolidate wealth while the masses suffer. Noticeably, Tambou's indignation; "until when shall we continue to follow him in this obscure business like slaves?" (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p.2); echoes the suppressed frustrations of marginalized communities. The Villager's throat-cutting gesture symbolizes repression and highlights the brutal silencing of dissent. In such systems, where resources are controlled by a select few and where environmental degradation jeopardizes livelihoods, can peace truly be sustained? If economic justice remains elusive, will insurrections not become inevitable? Therefore, the serious, tense, and critical tone in this dialogue starkly critiques the capitalist-driven exploitation of nature, exposing its corrosive impact on equity, sustainability, and sustainable peace in postcolonial Africa.

Likewise, this tense dialogue serves as a warning. When economic systems exploit nature without restraint, both the environment and human societies suffer, leading to instability, loss of cultural identity, and deepening inequality in African communities. Park (2025) reinforces this claim by affirming that "resource scarcity is not merely relative within planetary boundaries, but fundamentally a consequence of capitalist modes of production and colonial exploitation of women, racialised populations, and the more-than-human world" (p. 1). In other words, there is interconnectedness of ecological degradation and socio-economic injustice in Africa. By linking resource scarcity to capitalist exploitation and colonial legacies, it highlights how unrestrained economic systems not only damage the environment but also deepen inequality and destroy cultural foundations in African communities like the case of Mbala Village which stands as the microcosm of the macrocosm. Consequently, this is a confirmation that environmental crises in postcolonial Africa cannot be separated from capitalism, historical and structural forms of oppression.

The love for money and greed lead to environmental destruction in postcolonial Africa and beyond. This is aesthetically proved by the playwrights in Act 1, Scene 2, through the portrayal of Kamona, the Chief, who orders Tambou to take the wood to the market and buy goods for his wife without spending his money, showing his greed and selfishness. Even in his deep sleep, Kamona mumbles about money and wood, revealing his obsession with wealth, as evidenced in the following excerpt:

> KAMONA: You will buy a few things for my wife, but do not spend my money! *(Speaking to the Villager)* And you, why are you looking at me in this manner? Is your photo pasted on my forehead? *(The Villager goes out; left alone, Kamona sits on his throne; shortly afterwards he falls deeply asleep and starts mumbling.)* Ten thousand dollars, fifteen bundles...
>
> MAMIE: *(Entering and surprised to find Kamona asleep)* - Haaaaaa, my husband, even in your sleep you talk about money and wood? (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p. 2)

The above excerpt points out greedy leadership, environmental exploitation, and the capitalist mentality that prioritizes wealth over sustainability and human well-being. Clearly, Kamona's obsession with wealth - murmuring figures even in his sleep - reveals a mind consumed by materialism, blind to the ecological devastation his actions cause. His command; "buy things for my wife, but do not spend my money!"; exemplifies a hoarder's mentality. Accumulation overrides fairness, exposing the selfish pursuit of profit. Hence, by prioritizing the extraction and sale of wood over the well-being of his people and land, Kamona epitomizes how greedy elites exploit nature without foresight. What strikes the reader is the Chief's excessive lust for money to the point that he dreams only of it even in his sleep. This reflects the extractive policies that have led to deforestation, desertification, and biodiversity loss across Africa. The question then is: can a land stripped of its forests still sustain its people?

From the above analysis, it can be contended that Kamona stands as a symbol of corrupt, capitalist, and irresponsible postcolonial leaders who, like neo-colonial profiteers, exploit both human and natural resources for personal gain. Seated on his throne, he embodies authoritarian rule, dictating commands without concern for their impact. His indifference toward Tambou's labour and his dismissive attitude toward the Villager expose the deep class divide in postcolonial societies. Leaders amass wealth while the working class toils in misery. The throne, a seat of power, ironically becomes his site of weakness, for his greed follows him even in sleep, illustrating how wealth accumulation enslaves the oppressor as much as the oppressed. But at what cost? As it is observed, "the capitalist mode of production was installed as such – after which capital began to convert society into its image and created the conditions for the ecological crisis." (Kovel , 2007, p. 53). In short, capitalism reshapes society around profit, creating deep inequality and leading to the very ecological crises that affect peace and destroy the world human depends on.

This relentless exploitation threatens sustainable peace in African communities. Environmental destruction leads to resource scarcity, which exacerbates conflict over land, water, and livelihoods. Indeed, displaced communities and economic disparities from this exploitation widen the gulf between the rich and the poor, breeding resentment and rebellion. Thus, if leaders continue to plunder without regard for sustainability, will their rule not be met with insurrection? Notably, Kamona's unchecked greed foreshadows social unrest. For when nature is stripped bare and people are deprived of natural resources and their means of livelihood, peace becomes an illusion, and revolution becomes inevitable.

Moreover, this scene epitomizes capitalist exploitation. Kamona, symbolising the ruling class, extracts maximum value from both labour (Tambou, the Villager) and nature (wood) for private accumulation. His fixation on money reveals capitalist alienation, reducing human and environmental relations to mere transactions. Mamie's shock; "even in your sleep you talk about money and wood?" (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p. 2); exposes the insatiable hunger of the capitalist mind, forever seeking profit at the expense of all else.

In postcolonial Africa, there is an implicit conflict between economic gain and environmental conservation. As illustration, Kamona, a determined leader, urges the woodcutters of Mbala to increase timber production. He emphasizes the high market demand and rising prices as justification for doubling their efforts, regardless of the consequences for the forest. His speech is forceful, even aggressive, as he calls on the workers to cut down trees indiscriminately, whether day or night. The following dialogue is more tangible:

> KAMONA: The forest will bleed this year. (*With determination*) Count on me the forest will scream from pain. You will hear the screams of the forest. Dear inhabitants of Mbala, worthy woodcutters, we must increase the production of wood this year!
>
> TAMBOU: (*With enchantment*) The charismatic!
>
> KAMONA: Given that demand and prices have significantly increased in the market, we will double the production of wood […] take your axes, your chain saws! Enter into the forest, whether by day or by night. Whatever the name, the size or the height of a tree, cut it! Here I am the chief, have confidence in me! (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p. 26-27)

This dialogue clearly highlights the conflict between economic gain and environmental preservation. It also symbolizes environmental exploitation driven by government economic policies in postcolonial Africa. Actually, Kamona's speech reflects a leadership that prioritizes profit over sustainability, much like how some African governments, under economic pressure, promote resource extraction to stimulate growth. The personification of the forest; "the forest will bleed… scream from pain"; portrays nature as a suffering victim. Meanwhile, the imperative tone; "take your axes, your chainsaws!"; reveals the aggressive push for deforestation in most African communities. The question then is: what is the real motive?

In fact, the real motive is money. Money is the root of environmental exploitation. For, Kamona's justification; "demand and prices have significantly increased" (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p.27); demonstrates how economic incentives provokes deforestation. If wood were less profitable, would people still cut down trees so recklessly? The paradox is clear, for governments could protect forests by reducing wood prices, yet they do the opposite, intensifying environmental destruction in postcolonial Africa. This echoes Marxist critique that capitalism forces governments to prioritize market expansion over ecological balance, turning workers into tools of destruction rather than guardians of nature. Obviously, the scene exposes a fundamental dichotomy, which is economic progress versus environmental survival. The forest represents nature's wealth, yet its destruction is framed as "success." The question then is: is development truly progress if it erases the very foundation of life? Besides, the symbolism of Kamona's unchecked authority; "Here I am the chief, have confidence in me!" (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p.27); represents autocratic governance that prioritizes short-term gains over long-term sustainability in post-colonial Africa.

Kamona's reckless command, "Cut it, whatever the name, size, or height," (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p.27) illustrates a lack of environmental foresight. What happens when the last tree falls? Noticeably, without forests, soil degrades, rivers dry up, and famine follows. As a result, the absence of environmental vision leads to resource-based conflicts: between loggers and conservationists, between communities over depleted lands. The question then is: can there be peace when nature itself is under siege? Nevertheless, it is recognized that "transparent, sustainable and cooperative environmental management can strengthen the capabilities dimension of peace" (Tobias 2021 p.16). It is obvious that leaders should prioritise sustainable and cooperative management of environmental resources rather that greed and profit based management that destroy the environment and affects sustainable peace.

From a Marxist view, this scene exposes how capitalism exploits both labour and nature, turning forests into commodities and workers into instruments of destruction. As Foster explains:

> The crisis of the earth is not a crisis of nature but a crisis of society. The chief causes of the environmental destruction that faces us today are not biological, or the product of individual human choice. They are social and historical, rooted in the productive relations, technological imperatives, and

> historically conditioned demographic trends that characterize the dominant social system. (Foster, 1999, p.1)

This point reinforces the idea that environmental harm stems from systemic forces, not isolated behaviours or natural causes.

Furthermore, from an eco-critical standpoint, the dialogue indirectly warns against the anthropocentric mind-set. For it is dangerous for both present and future generations in Africa to view nature as an endless resource rather than a living system that demands respect. If the forest "screams", who will listen before it's too late? The imagery of a suffering forest in the title "*The Forest Must scream*" creates a sense of urgency and foreshadows the devastating consequences of Kamona's orders; requiring therefore, a quick solution to the issue. Hence the following questions: should economic policy dictate environmental fate in Africa? Can governments balance profit and preservation? If destruction is the price of progress, what future remains?

The recklessness and negligence of postcolonial African governments in the management of the environment is revealed in the tension between authority and exploitation in rural settings. As a testament, the Functionary urges Kamona, the village chief, to set an example of responsibility. However, Kamona sarcastically celebrates his long-overdue government recognition, exposing the historical neglect and unpaid labour of village leaders. The villagers applaud, showing their shared frustration and justifying their reliance on the forest for survival:

> KAMONA: Finally you are recognising my authority and my power! The government has just done it, by finally remunerating village chiefs for the work they accomplish daily. But how much and when did they pay us? You seem to open your eyes widely as if you are not aware that, for ages, we were the only abandoned administrators. Do you now understand how we were made to work without payment? *(Villagers applaud warmly)* And you, could you work without remuneration? Can a poor person manage a kingdom with dignity?
>
> TAMBOU: *(With enchantment)* The charismatic! *(In anger)* By the way, great powers in the world, who use the poor to elevate themselves, would not reign if they ran out of wealth.
>
> KAMONA: *(Trying to relieve the tense atmosphere)* We derive our wealth from our forest. Where is the problem? *(Heavy applause)* (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p. 11-12)

The above dialogue illustrates the villagers' dependence on the forest due to lack of environmental vision and national exploitation. The government, which should ensure sustainable development, has long ignored village chiefs, leaving them unpaid and powerless. Metaphorically, the forest is their only "bank," their "village" built on survival, not prosperity. Specifically, the forest represents both wealth and survival; but also destruction; due to lack of sustainable governance. Will this wealth last forever, or is it a ticking time bomb? Visibly, Kamona's speech echoes class struggle in postcolonial African countries. The ruling class, governments, controls resources; while the lower class, villagers, labours without reward. This desperation threatens peace. For, when people feel abandoned, frustration brews, and conflict is inevitable. The question is: does a starving man preach harmony? Nevertheless, Meadows et al. (1972, p. 14) observes that "the state of global equilibrium could be designed so that the basic material needs of each person on earth are satisfied and each person has an equal opportunity to realize his individual human potential." In fact, this quote shows that when a few enjoy the forest's wealth while many struggle to survive, peace becomes fragile. Out of this, it is evident that without justice and sustainable governance, poverty and frustration make conflict inevitable in postcolonial Africa.

Besides, when Tambou angrily reveals how "great powers" thrive by exploiting the poor, he highlights the core nature of capitalism; accumulating wealth at the expense of the vulnerable. This critique aligns with Kovel's observation that "growing numbers of people are beginning to realize that capitalism is the uncontrollable force driving our ecological crisis." (2007, p.xi) Kovel's perspective reinforces the idea that the multifaceted aspects of capitalism are intrinsically linked to ecological destruction. Thus, systemic change is necessary to avert environmental catastrophe. However, in this context, the government's neglect reflects capitalism's indifference; that labour is extracted, yet fair compensation remains a distant dream. In the end, in postcolonial African countries, the system is designed so that the powerful reign and the poor remain trapped in an endless cycle of dependency; hence their reliance on natural resources like forests for survival.

**2. International hypocrisy and lack of sustainable environmental vision and its implication with peace**

The playwrights present a powerful critique of environmental politics, where local survival needs clash with global conservation goals. Their play brings to light the dangers of deforestation while exposing the hypocrisy of international policies that fail to provide real solutions for affected communities in postcolonial Africa. This is evidenced by a dramatic confrontation between Kamona, the village chief, his villagers, and a government functionary in Act One, Scene 6 of the play. In effect, Kamona insists on exploiting the forest for economic survival, despite warnings from the functionary about long-term environmental consequences, as shown in this exchange:

> KAMONA: As long as I remain the chief of this village, I have said we are going to...
>
> VILLAGERS: (In chorus) to cut!

FUNCTIONARY: You are warned. Don't try again to exploit the forests in such an anarchic manner! On the contrary, I will prove to you that, in our country, the State is not dead!

KAMONA: He thinks he is intimidating us. Mr Agent, I will tell you the truth: my thirty seasons of reign at the helm of this village have immunized me against exterior interference in the affairs of Mbala. My word will not change! (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p.14)

Moreover, the functionary stresses the importance of preserving the forest, citing potential benefits such as ecotourism and international financial compensation. However, Kamona and his people reject these promises, arguing that they need immediate economic relief rather than abstract future benefits, as shown in the dialogue:

FUNCTIONARY: *(With despair but determined)* Alright! Whoever plants deforestation harvests drought! I will not let you do it. As a State agent, I will make sure that the forestry code is respected everywhere, for the good of humanity.

KAMONA: Humanity ... humanity! Is it that your humanity that feeds our families? We are tired of words. Now is time for action. Give us money in exchange for your demands. In any case, the forest will serve our own development.

VILLAGERS: *(In anger and in chorus)* Our development! Go away!

FUNCTIONARY: *(Trying to calm the tension)* Mr Village Chief, the international community is putting in place compensation mechanisms. You will then see that owning forests offers unprecedented advantages for the future. (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p.15)

The exchange between Kamona and the functionary is rapid, confrontational, and emotionally charged, showcasing their ideological clash. Actually, the functionary, standing as a rigid bureaucratic figure representing state and international power, advocates conservation but fails to address local needs. Here, the forest represents both economic survival and environmental destruction, embodying the paradox of development versus conservation in postcolonial Africa.

Notably, the play serves as an allegory for postcolonial Africa, where local communities resist the control of the state and international organizations over their natural resources. This reflects that resource-based conflicts are widespread at both local and international levels. Such situation aligns with the opinion that "capitalist and colonial interests are consequent corporate violence that induces overdevelopment of the global north and financial and material exhaustion of the south." (Park, 2025, p. 9). In reality, this highlight a structural injustice created and maintained by the global north to dominate and exploit post-colonial African countries' labour and natural resources.

The false promise of compensation in the following dialogue mirrors neo-colonial economic exploitation, where Western interests dictate African policies under the guise of development:

KAMONA: What are these advantages?

FUNCTIONARY: These advantages are numerous: tourists will arrive here in Mbala to visit your forests. You will sell art objects to them, you will serve as guides to them, you will lodge and feed them. For all these services, you will receive a lot of money. Social actions and other advantages will add onto that to improve life for you...

KAMONA: Nonsense! Do you really believe that? It's a bluff, all of that!

FUNCTIONARY: When the time comes, you may risk regretting having destroyed your forests. Reflect a bit!

KAMONA: *(Flattered)* Reflect again on what? These famous advantages do not concern us, keep them for yourself. Every time, compensation, compensation. Who will they compensate? (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p.15-16)

This dialogue unveils the duplicity of governments and their international partners, who impose environmental restrictions on local communities while failing to offer tangible economic solutions. The functionary's insistence on state authority and conservation contrasts sharply with Kamona's demand for immediate survival, revealing a disconnection between policymakers and grassroots realities. Concretely, the functionary's rhetoric of "good for humanity" becomes a hollow moral appeal, as it ignores the villagers' daily struggles. This demonstrates how neo-colonial environmental policies often serve the interests of foreign stakeholders, rather than the local populations. In reality, in many African societies, land and natural resources are sensitive political issues. Property rights and equitable distribution remain difficult challenges, as there is constant competition between uses-exploitation and conservation, tourism and industrialization, grazing and planting, wild nature and agriculture. These dilemmas in many less organized African communities still require fair, balanced solutions for peace and sustainable development.

In the preceding dialogue, the term "compensation" in environmental protection is deep and worth analysing. In this regard, compensation refers to financial or material benefits offered to communities in exchange for conservation efforts, such as carbon credits, biodiversity funds, or ecotourism revenues. However, in practice, these mechanisms often fail to materialize or remain bureaucratically inaccessible. As a matter of fact, Kamona's skepticism, through the rhetorical question, "Who will they compensate?" (Djombo & Koagn,

2022, p.16) encapsulates the disillusionment of marginalized African communities that rarely see the promised rewards.

By extension, the dialogue symbolizes the broken promises made to African nations under the guise of development aid and environmental treaties. Concretely, the functionary's promises of economic opportunities through tourism and crafts are reminiscent of postcolonial rhetoric about progress, which often masks resource control by global powers. The phrase "compensation, compensation" (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p.16) becomes an echo of false hope, just like post-independence promises of economic self-sufficiency that never materialized. The use of vague, abstract rewards reflects once again a historical pattern of exploitation, where Africa is asked to sacrifice its resources while wealth flows elsewhere. As a validation, it has been noted that "climate breakdown, ecological hardship and colonial injustice are inextricably linked and are rooted in historical experiences and colonial legacy" (Park, 2025, p.9). In other words, there is a continuity between past colonial exploitation and current environmental crisis in postcolonial Africa. Thus, the false promise of "compensation" reflects how colonial paradigms of inequality persist though modern forms of environment and economic domination.

The absence of a clear, locally driven environmental vision lead communities in Africa to view conservation as an obstacle rather than a path to prosperity. This tension between immediate survival and long-term sustainability provokes resistance and civil unrest, impeding peace in Africa. Supporting this claim, Mastrojeni, as cited in the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Report, notes that "indirect international or indirect intra-national conflicts are commonly caused by resource depletion issues - deforestation, soil erosion, desertification, flooding and pollution." (2017, p.14). In this context, the functionary's top-down approach alienates the villagers, heightening the risk of conflict instead of promoting cooperation.

Over and beyond that, the dialogue exposes class struggle and economic exploitation disguised as environmental policy. The State, acting as an agent of global capitalism, enforces conservation laws that benefit external investors and elites, while peasants; the proletariat; bear the burden. Kamona's defiant claim, "The forest will serve our own development," (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p.15) expresses subaltern resistance to the neo-colonial appropriation of resources. The functionary's promises echo trickle-down economics, where elites promise future benefits while the poor remain impoverished.

In substance, this dialogue is a literary microcosm of Africa's environmental and economic dilemma. The State, backed by international interests, enforces conservation without addressing local needs. This leads to mistrust, social injustice, and continued exploitation. The hollow rhetoric of compensation, paired with the absence of grassroots inclusion undermines sustainability. Clearly, this play exposes the deception and contradictions in global environmental agreements. It also serves as a powerful critique of international hypocrisy, where global powers dictate environmental policies that primarily serve their economic interests, while local communities remain marginalized.

This is illustrated in the ongoing debate about carbon credits and environmental policy in the following:

> FUNCTIONARY: As you must know, these mechanisms are actually the object of negotiations between States, so that industries from the North should pay carbon credits to finance activities which enable the reduction of greenhouse gases elsewhere. It is the principle of the polluter payer, as we call it in our jargon!
>
> TEACHER: What is the use of credits that we have never seen and which we shall never see? Tell us how poor villagers will have access to the credits. FUNCTIONARY: Here, for example, in order to benefit from this funding, we must first impose a strict management of our forest resources. Moreover, we must start restoring degraded forests and planting many trees.
>
> KAMONA: *(Curious)* You talked about green...what gases? (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p.16)

Noticeably, in this dialogue the Functionary explains the concept of carbon credits and the polluter-pays principle to the villagers of Mbala. In fact, "a carbon offset broadly refers to a reduction in GHG [greenhouse gases] emissions – or an increase in carbon storage (e.g., through land restoration or the planting of trees) – that is used to compensate for emissions that occur elsewhere" (Broekhoff et al., 2019, p.6). It is also worth noting that "a carbon offset credit is a transferable instrument certified by governments or independent certification bodies to represent an emission reduction of one metric tonne of CO2, or an equivalent amount of other GHGs [greenhouse gases]" (Broekhoff et al., 2019, p.6). In other words, carbon credits are a market-based mechanism designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by allowing polluting industries to offset their emissions through financial contributions to environmental projects elsewhere.

The polluter-pays principle, in theory, ensures that those who contribute most to pollution bear the costs of mitigation. However, as seen in this context that reflects postcolonial Africa, this principle often fails in practice. As a matter of fact, the functionary speaks of carbon credits as an abstract economic tool, yet the villagers, represented by Kamona, question its tangible impact: "What is the use of credits that we have never seen and which we shall never see?" (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p.16). In short, the concept of carbon credits

symbolizes an economic neo-colonialism and a global economic trap, where the West continues polluting while forcing Africa to preserve forests without tangible benefits. This clearly exposes the hypocrisy embedded in international environmental policies.

Wealthy industrialized nations, historically, the greatest polluters, insist on restricting deforestation in Africa, not out of genuine concern for local well-being but as a means of maintaining their ecological dominance, hence the injustice for a project which does not consider local needs is likely to die. Yet, there is no peace without justice. The question remains: how long will Africa be expected to sacrifice its development for the sake of global environmental goals? Obviously, the conflict in this dialogue mirrors the postcolonial struggle where African nations are forced into environmental policies dictated by the Global North, despite contributing the least to pollution. The Mbala villagers' frustration reflects the historical exploitation of African resources under the guise of "sustainable development".

Some actions and interactions in the play symbolize the disillusionment of postcolonial African nations with global environmental agreements. They reveal the manipulation and empty promises that characterize such international engagements. The illusion of future compensation is exposed in the following excerpt:

> KAMONA: You have said that the populations would receive money from Industries? Where is the share for Mbala? Inhabitants of Mbala have you ever seen the colour of the money that they owe us?
> VILLAGERS: (*In anger*) No! Never seen its colour!
> FUNCTIONARY: These foreign industries are not yet paying the money to anybody, they will certainly do it in the future.
> KAMONA: In the future, but which future again? Are we not already in the future ever since they began talking about it? In all meetings, you talk about the future, Future, future! In conferences...
> VILLAGERS: the future!
> KAMONA: In congresses.
> VILLAGERS: ... the future!
> KAMONA: In symposia....
> VILLAGERS: ...the future!
> KAMONA: (*Taking his subjects as witnesses*) You see, there are too many futures! (*Turning towards the Functionary*) Where is the true future in all of these? (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p.18)

From the excerpt, Kamona's rhetorical question, "Where is the share for Mbala?", symbolizes the unfulfilled promises that define global climate agreements. It highlights the illusion of global climate conferences that function as a cycle of manipulation. Since the first Conference of the Parties (COP) in 1995, numerous summits have been held, all pledging solutions to climate change. However, as Kamona and the villagers sarcastically chant "the future! the future!", they expose the emptiness of these endless negotiations.

COP summits may be grand in rhetoric but often fail to deliver practical solutions for developing countries, including postcolonial African nations. In this regards, the repetition of "the future" symbolizes endless and hopeless postponement, where promises are made but never realized. This reflects the larger allusion to Africa's delayed development under global capitalism. In a similar vein, Klein emphasizes the systemic obstacles to climate progress, stating: "We have not done the things that are necessary to lower emissions because those things fundamentally conflict with deregulated capitalism, the reigning ideology for the entire period we have been struggling to find a way out of this crisis" (2024, p.10). This insight shows the clash between capitalist priorities and the need for climate justice, which consistently hinder meaningful change.

Within this context, the Functionary's vague assurances about future compensation serve as metaphors for the bureaucracy and delays inherent in these global agreements. Pragmatically, Kamona's biting question, "Are we not already in the future ever since they began talking about it?" (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p.18), captures the endless cycle of discussions with no concrete action. His skepticism mirrors the African experience where agreements are signed, commitments are made, yet funds rarely materialize. Africa is expected to act as the planet's environmental custodian, however its people always remain excluded from the economic benefits of conservation, hence the injustice and hypocrisy.

Over and beyond, there is a one-sided bargain that illustrates neo-colonialism and environmental control of African countries. This dynamic raises critical questions: Are these international agreements genuinely equitable? Or do they perpetuate a system where the Global North dictates terms that the Global South must follow, often to its detriment? These critical questions find solution in the following reaction from Teacher and Kamona:

> TEACHER: *(Coming out from his reserve)* I appreciate the attitude of the inhabitants of Mbala, especially the combative nature of their chief. Mr Agent, understand the legitimacy of their demands. Industrialised countries are asking the poor to stop cutting wood from their forests. But what will these woodcutters receive in exchange in order to survive? *(Applause)* Today, with which money can peasants be able to maintain their forests as gardens for Europe and America? Who will give them credit for that? And if there was credit, would those industries pay the debts they would have contracted tomorrow?

KAMONA: Frankly, these industries are taking us for idiots; they are mocking us! *(Heavy applause from the inhabitants who once more salute the proven intelligence and the courage of their chief)*. (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p.19)

At its core, this dialogue unveils the neo-colonial dynamics of environmental governance. The West, having industrialized through centuries of environmental exploitation, now demands that African nations preserve their natural resources under the pretext of global sustainability. But at what cost? Who compensates the African farmer forbidden from using his land? Who funds the communities deprived of economic alternatives? In this injustice, it becomes essential, therefore, to recognise that "linking local environmental harms to global forces is vital in avoiding mistakes in understanding the pathways and roadblocks to sustainability" (Givens et al., 2019, p.7). This denounces global systems that ignore Africa's lived realities while preaching sustainability from a distance.

The Teacher poignantly questions this injustice: "With which money can peasants be able to maintain their forests as gardens for Europe and America?" (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p.19). Notably, these reactions reveal the asymmetrical power relations between the Global North and the South. While Western industries continue to pollute, African nations are coerced into environmental compliance with promises of financial aid that never materialize. This is the essence of economic neo-colonialism. Control is exercised not through direct occupation, but through economic policies that perpetuate the dependency of African countries. Furthermore, the dramatic tension in Kamona's frustration; "Frankly, these industries are taking us for idiots; they are mocking us!" (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p.19) epitomizes the deep-seated disillusionment of postcolonial nations with international environmental diplomacy. Hence the question: is global environmental policy genuinely about sustainability, or is it another instrument of economic domination?

Not only do Western industries continue to pollute under promises of financial aid that never materialize, but there is also an exclusion of local voices in environmental policymaking. This is depicted in the functionary's convoluted explanation of greenhouse gases, which starkly shows a contrast and disconnection between technical discourse and the lived realities of marginalized communities.

Concretely, when Tambou introduces the topic of greenhouse gases metaphorically, Kamona, unfamiliar with the scientific terminology, asks: "Greenhouse gases! What then are these gases? All this is not clear in our eyes!" (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p.17). The functionary explains greenhouse gases in a technical manner. He describes how they trap heat and contribute to rising temperatures. He affirms: "They are gases such as carbon dioxide, methane, and others which have the property to heat when they come in contact with infrared rays from the sun. Their accumulation in the atmosphere ends up elevating ambient temperatures. It is what we observe in a closed vehicle under the sun..." (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p.17). However, Kamona remains unconvinced. He dismisses the discussion as a debate for intellectuals, asserting: "It is a debate for intellectuals. My population has nothing to do with it. Let us come back to our topic. *(Loud applause)"* (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p.17).

These interactions point out the persistent marginalization of local voices in environmental policymaking. Decisions impacting African communities are frequently made in distant, disconnected boardrooms without meaningful grassroots participation. This top-down approach is further exemplified by the functionary's reliance on highly technical language. His method alienates local populations and hinders inclusive engagement.

In contrast, Ide argues that "if these resources are managed in a cooperative, inclusive and sustainable way, tensions over them are eased, hence diminishing the prospects of further conflict" (Ide, 2021, p.11). This perspective, coupled with the analysis underscore the importance of inclusive governance in natural resource management as a pathway to environmental peace building.

Actually, the functionary's didactic tone and scientific terms, like carbon dioxide and infrared rays, exemplify the top-down nature of global environmental governance. International bodies and technocrats dictate policies with little regard for local epistemologies. This reinforces a form of epistemic violence, where indigenous knowledge systems are rendered irrelevant or inadequate in addressing ecological concerns. Thus, there is an urgent need to rethink didactic and pedagogical approaches related to environmental issues in postcolonial Africa.

In addition, Kamona's reaction is particularly significant. His rhetorical question, "Is air itself no longer a gas?" and his dismissal of the discussion as "a debate for intellectuals" (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p.17) highlight the silencing of grassroots voices in climate discourse. The phrase, "My population has nothing to do with it," (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p.17) suggests that local people are systematically excluded from conversations that directly impact them. This reinforces the marginalization of African communities in global environmental decision-making. His declaration, met with loud applause, indicates how local audiences internalize their own exclusion, celebrating their perceived irrelevance in discussions dominated by external actors. As Mandela observed, "a nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones" (1994, p.23). This directly supports that excluding grassroots communities from environmental discourse is a fundamental injustice. For true measure of justice lies in how societies treat the most marginalized.

Similarly, these interactions symbolises the historical side-lining of Africa in global governance. The functionary, representing institutional authority, embodies the legacy of colonial bureaucracy. Such bureaucracy imposed Eurocentric paradigms on indigenous societies. The chief, though a local leader, unwittingly perpetuates this exclusion by deferring to external expertise rather than asserting the validity of local knowledge. This dynamic reflects the more general silence of the marginalized in postcolonial Africa. Decision-making structures inherited from colonial rule continue to undermine local agency. Therefore, it is important to raise awareness of environmental crises by using civilizational and oral tradition methods of knowledge transmission to reach local communities in Africa.

A keen analysis shows also that, beyond Africa, the passage resonates with global environmental injustices. The most affected, like indigenous communities, small-scale farmers, and the urban poor, are systematically left out of climate negotiations dominated by powerful states and multinational corporations. Still, there is no sustainable peace in marginalization and exclusion. Most importantly, "One-size-fits-all solutions are not tenable when it comes to resolving ecological crises and climate change" (Nsah, 2019, p.72). Thus, there is a need for Africa to revisit cooperation and multilateral relations with others for peace.

The playwrights illustrate industrial pollution and global injustice, exposing how economic systems prioritize profit over environmental and social well-being. This is evidenced in Act One, Scene 6 of the play, in a dialogue depicting a confrontation between the government functionary and the inhabitants of Mbala, represented by the Teacher and villagers. The functionary urges the Teacher to help explain government policies on forest conservation, emphasizing the high cost of restoring degraded forests. However, the Teacher and villagers criticize the government's lack of financial support and its disconnection from rural struggles. They highlight delayed salaries, economic hardships, and industrial pollution, which continues unchecked due to financial incentives. The villagers condemn environmental and social injustice, expressing their frustration as clearly evidenced in the following dialogue:

> FUNCTIONARY: Is that so? Do you know, Sir, the price to pay for restoring a destroyed or degraded forest? That costs a lot and our government does not have the means. It is therefore better to prevent than to cure. Try to make them understand.
>
> TAMBOU: Mr Agent, you will not get away with this!
>
> KAMONA: Now you are seeking the understanding and complicity of a functionary like you. But, what you ignore, Sir, is that the teacher lives with us, he knows and shares in our daily sufferings.
>
> TAMBOU: When the State deprives him of his salary or transfers it late, it is the village that feeds him. He has become an inhabitant of Mbala and will not follow somebody like you, disconnected from the realities of the countryside.
>
> TEACHER: You have also said that these industries will never stop polluting the atmosphere because they would be paying money. To whom are they paying this money? So air will always be polluted; polluters will continue to heat and poison the earth at the detriment of the poor people of the world who do not know any saint to turn to. It is unjust!
>
> VILLAGERS: (*In chorus*) It is unjust! (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p.20)

In the above dialogue, the Teacher's rhetorical question, "To whom are they paying this money?" reveals the hypocrisy of allowing polluting industries to continue their destruction as long as they pay fines. This transactional approach to environmental degradation means that the rich pollute while the poor suffocate, reinforcing a system where economic power dictates ecological destruction.

More vividly, the villagers' collective outcry, "It is unjust!", not only emphasizes their shared frustration but also acts as a choral denunciation of this systemic oppression. It evokes a sense of communal resistance in developing countries. In the context of postcolonial African countries, this injustice manifests as a double burden. It reflects both the environmental consequences of industrial activities they do not control and the economic struggles imposed by neo-colonial structures. Governments, often underfunded and constrained by external debt, lack the means to implement sustainable policies. Therefore, the functionary's plea, "Our government does not have the means," (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p.20) echoes the reality of African states trapped in a vicious cycle of dependence. Environmental degradation is dictated by global economic forces rather than local agency. The question then is: how can a nation heal its forests when it cannot even feed its teachers? Such a dire situation prompts to propose that "lasting peace in Africa requires structural reform, responsible leadership, and a critical reassessment of external economic influence" (Ali & Pinidou, 2025, p.90). In short, the quote connects ecological decay to structural injustices, stressing that peace and sustainability in Africa demand just leadership and freedom from external economic control.

In like manner, on the international stage, this dialogue reflects the hypocrisy of global environmental policies. Wealthy nations and corporations continue to pollute while imposing stringent conservation measures on poorer nations. Developed countries, the historical polluters, finance climate adaptation projects in the Global South but continue to emit at unsustainable rates. This selective environmentalism, "polluters will continue to heat and poison the earth," (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p.20) exposes the lack of a truly sustainable and equitable

vision. It undermines global peace. How can justice and peace in the world prevail when the rules favour the powerful and suffocate the weak?

From a Marxist perspective, this passage symbolizes the growing consciousness of developing countries, including postcolonial African countries, regarding internal climate injustice and their determination to resist it. The villagers' defiance; "He has become an inhabitant of Mbala and will not follow somebody like you" (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p.20); reflects a shift from blind obedience to collective resistance. The Teacher, a state functionary who should align with the government, instead sides with the oppressed. He embodies the idea that class struggle extends beyond economics into environmental justice. He also stands for a role model and the few who care for the wellbeing of the masses.

Manifestly, within the capitalist system, the mechanisms of control over natural and economic resources are heavily skewed in favour of the owning class. As Armstrong notes, "ownership class dictates how everyone else can use these resources" (2020, p. 3). This dynamic enables the industrial elite to persist in their exploitation of both nature and labour. Consequently, it is the rural poor who disproportionately suffer the environmental and social consequences of this exploitation. This raises a critical question: must the oppressed always carry the weight of a world poisoned by the greed of the few? In other words, this passage is an indictment of a world where money dictates survival, a tragic theatre where the powerful write the rules, and the weak pay the price. Hence, there is lack of sustainable peace in the world and particularly in Africa.

Fortunately, there is a deep awareness among developing countries of internal climate injustice, inequality, and global hypocrisy. The progression of the dialogue in Scene Six illustrates this fact when the Teacher argues that before holding poor communities accountable for deforestation, industries must first reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and fulfil their financial obligations. The villagers express skepticism about climate funds, demanding concrete financial support as demonstrated in the following excerpt:

> TEACHER: (*to the Functionary*) Like me, you know that the money promised, which might never come, is a poisoned gift for all of humanity as long as manufacturers will not cease to be reluctant. As long as they do not engage definitively on quantifiable and verifiable objectives for the reduction of their greenhouse gases. Before asking poor woodcutters for their part of the effort, it is first important for industries to stop polluting and that they fulfil their financial obligations towards the former.
>
> TAMBOU: By the way, nobody knows anything yet about their intentions.
>
> KAMONA: Good! What can we understand from the vagueness of this situation? I repeat: Pay the money that we need in order to ameliorate our living conditions and we will spare the forest.
>
> TEACHER: Yes, Sir, the poor need this money in order to adapt to climate change and fight against greenhouse effects! (*Applause*) (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p. 21)

The above passage vividly exposes internal climate injustice, inequality, and global hypocrisy. The Teacher's assertion that "the money promised […] is a poisoned gift" reveals skepticism towards international climate funds, which often come with conditions that benefit wealthy polluters rather than the affected communities. Similarly, Kamona's demand; "Pay the money that we need in order to ameliorate our living conditions and we will spare the forest"; illustrates a fundamental truth that poverty forces environmental degradation. How can poor communities be expected to prioritize conservation when survival is at stake? Obviously, this dialogue demands accountability from global industries, highlighting how developed nations evade responsibility while shifting the burden onto the powerless.

Moreover, the passage reflects the failure of postcolonial African governments to effectively manage environmental policies and climate funds. The functionary, a symbol of state authority, has no concrete answers, reinforcing the idea that African leaders are either complicit in global environmental exploitation or lack the political will to challenge it. Indeed, Tambou's skepticism; "Nobody knows anything yet about their intentions"; suggests a history of broken promises and mismanagement.

African governments often remain trapped in neo-colonial economic systems. They are compelled to implement environmental conservation policies despite lacking the necessary institutional and financial capacities. Meanwhile, multinational corporations continue to engage in environmentally destructive practices with relative impunity. This entanglement, marked by a tacit complicity between certain African leaders and global corporate interests, leads Mbaye and Signé to argue that "while climate change is a proximate cause of violence, institutional failures and clientelism are the actual root causes". (2022, p.1).

In this complex landscape, the Teacher emerges as a symbol of knowledge and resistance. He serves as a critical intermediary between top-down governmental policies and grassroots environmental struggles. He challenges the state's narrative and shifts the conversation from simple environmental awareness to climate justice, urging that real change must begin with industrial accountability.

Notably, the Teacher's words; "Before asking poor woodcutters for their part of the effort, it is first important for industries to stop polluting" (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p. 21); emphasize the need for systemic transformation rather than superficial policies. In a world where climate change threatens peace by exacerbating poverty, displacement, and social unrest, educators must go beyond textbooks. They must equip future

generations with the critical consciousness needed to demand justice in postcolonial Africa. If knowledge is power, should teachers remain silent while their students inherit a poisoned world? It is for each and every educator in postcolonial Africa to answer.

Actually, this passage is urging developing countries and African teachers to act as agents of deeper climate awareness and action. In this regard, it is suggesting that educators should not only teach about climate change, pollution, and global warming, but also uncover the root causes like climate injustice and systemic exploitation. Raising awareness is not enough. African youth must be empowered to take concrete action for environmental justice to be achieved. The Teacher's speech exposes the structural inequalities that sustain environmental degradation, shifting the discourse from scientific facts to socio-political realities.

The questions then are: how can Africa's youth protect the environment without challenging the forces that destroy it? If teachers fail to guide them toward activism, will they not become passive victims of climate injustice? In the light of Marxist theory, this dialogue embodies resistance against global environmental injustice, portraying climate change as a class struggle where the poor suffer the consequences of capitalist excesses. The Teacher's defiance symbolizes the refusal of the oppressed to remain silent. The villagers recognize that they are not merely victims but active agents of resistance, demanding what is rightfully theirs. The industrial elite profit from environmental destruction, while the marginalized bear the brunt of the crisis. But must the oppressed always endure? Thus, this passage is more than a dialogue. It is a political statement, a call to action, and a cry for justice and peace in the world in general, and particularly in Africa. For the struggle for environmental justice is ultimately a struggle for sovereignty, dignity, and the right to a sustainable future.

Additionally, the dialogue reflects the complexity of environmental protection. Economic disparity, political power, and historical injustices shape climate discourse. Sustainable development cannot thrive in a system that excludes, oppresses, and dictates. Rather, it must engage, empower, and collaborate. True environmental justice demands inclusive policies that balance ecological preservation with social equity. Therefore, to stop this cycle of conflict and ecological harm, a holistic and inclusive approach is imperative. As a validation, it is proved that "environmental management can facilitate peace best if it promotes socio-economic inclusion. This 'is related to producing positive changes in the incomes of vulnerable populations and creating a sustainable environment, thus reducing the community's risk from illegal economies'." (Tobias 2021 p.16). To put it differently, environmental justice must be at the core of climate action. Policies must be fair, transparent, and participatory as well as taking into account the socioeconomic wellbeing of the local communities. Developed nations must not only reduce their emissions but also support sustainable alternatives for developing communities.

Furthermore, international bodies must foster genuine dialogue where the voices of marginalized populations are heard, respected, and integrated into decision-making processes. Is it not time to abandon double standards and embrace a future where sustainability is a collective commitment rather than a geopolitical tool? It is only through such an approach that the world can hope to bridge the gap between policy and practice. This is the path toward a future where peace and environmental sustainability coexist.

Over and above that, the play conveys a philosophy of environmental justice and economic transition. It advocates for a sustainable, equitable solution to deforestation, as the Teacher declares: "Finally, these industries must help woodcutters to change their profession with clean money, that is, money that is not dirty! Moreover, why should we always borrow? And our State? What is it doing in order to enable woodcutters in Mbala and elsewhere to change their activities? *(Applause)*" (Djombo & Koagn, 2022, p.22).

The Teacher's statement challenges both industrial accountability and state responsibility. It emphasizes that true environmental protection requires more than prohibitions. It demands structural change and economic alternatives. Why should woodcutters be left with no options while industries profit? In reality, by calling for industries to fund sustainable alternatives, the passage highlights the principle of a just transition. This ensures that vulnerable communities are not sacrificed in the name of environmental conservation. In postcolonial Africa, where economic dependency persists, this vision deconstructs neo-colonial economic models. Such models exploit resources while leaving local populations in poverty. If industries can exploit forests for profit, should they not also invest in restoring them?

As a matter of fact, the applause signifies collective agreement and rising consciousness in postcolonial Africa. This is a crucial step toward sustainable peace. In other words, from an ecocritical perspective, the study critiques the capitalist commodification of nature. It urges industries to take ethical responsibility rather than merely extract and exploit. The term "clean money" embodies the moral obligation to ensure economic activities do not destroy ecosystems. For true sustainability demands a holistic balance between nature, economy, and social well-being.

## IV. Conclusion

The present study critically examines how capitalist exploitation, international hypocrisy, and environmental injustice and mismanagement intersect to undermine sustainable peace in postcolonial Africa,

with specific focus on *The Forest Must Scream* by Henri Djombo and Osée Colins Koagne. To sum up, the study employs an eco-critical and Marxist theoretical framework to uncover how African literature dramatizes ecological degradation as both a political and cultural crisis. Thus, the analysis revealed that capitalist greed, combined with neo-colonial conservation strategies and international environmental double standards, has intensified ecological destruction, increased social inequality, and reinforced systemic oppression. Beyond material devastation, these dynamics expose the hypocrisy of global climate governance, wherein industrialized nations evade responsibility while African communities bear disproportionate burdens. At the same time, the study highlighted the symbolic and dialogic dimensions of the play, which expose the complicity of local elites in sustaining extractivist and exploitative models that jeopardize both ecological balance and human dignity in postcolonial Africa. In short, these insights suggest that environmental exploitation in postcolonial Africa is not merely an ecological issue but a profound political and ethical challenge that directly threatens peace, justice, and sustainability.

In terms of contribution, the study points out the originality of African playwrights in situating environmental degradation within general debates on postcolonial governance, global climate policy, and social justice. Practically and socially, the study demonstrates the urgent need for ethical leadership, the rethinking and rewriting of international environmental policies, grassroots inclusion, and equitable environmental reforms that center African realities rather than perpetuate dependency. It vividly urges industries to act responsibly, educators to inspire climate awareness, and youth to engage in environmental justice. Finally, it advocates a just transition that links ecological protection with socioeconomic equity. Future studies may investigate how community-based resistance, indigenous ecological knowledge, and alternative cultural practices contribute to reshaping environmental governance in postcolonial Africa. All things considered, this research affirms that the path toward sustainable peace in Africa cannot bypass environmental justice. Unless ecological stewardship is grounded in equity, accountability, and cultural respect, the promise of peace will remain elusive.

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