
ECONOMIC GROWTH AS A MECHANISM OF PEACE PROMOTION IN THE THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES: THE NIGERIAN EXAMPLE

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Abstract

The paper examined economic growth as a mechanism of peace promotion in the third world countries using Nigeria as a case study. Apart from explanations of the concept of economic growth and peace, the paper unveiled the causes of conflict, major conflicts in Nigeria and proffered some ways forward one of which is that the rights of individual citizens should be respected. Conclusion was drawn that the government of the nation should ensure that citizens do not showcase actions inimical to peaceful co-existence in Nigeria.

The major objective of every nation is hinged on two major concepts: “Peace maintenance and the enhancement of economic growth” (Jhingan, 2010). Any country where there is no peace and economic growth would hardly be enhanced. It is when there is presence of peace in a country that the possible ways through which economic growth should be driven to be properly achieved would be introduced and sustained. In both developing and the developed countries, peace is very important. In our various families and in fact, wherever we find ourselves and whatsoever we engage in, peace must be maintained so that our various goals and objectives could be achieved.

Again, before any nation would boast of being strong, one of the stimulating key factors is her level of economic growth actualization. According to Jhingan(2009), “an economy is said to be strengthened when the level of a Nations national income continues to increase brought about by rapid and massive production of goods and services caused by technological advancement and innovations”. This could lead to

much exportation and less importation enhancing foreign exchange earnings, developing the infant industries, improving on technicalities of production, encouraging foreign economic pacts among nations and as well enhancing high standard of living among citizens.

When all these are fully articulated, they bring about peaceful co-existence in the country in all sectors of the economy which may includes; economic sector, political sector, Social sector, Cultural sector among others.

The Concept of Economic Growth and Peace

The term economic growth simply means the increase in output per worker generally brought about as a result of improvement in economic welfare and high standard of living. Economic growth requires that the productive capacity of a country must increase so that more goods and services could be produced to meet up with the aggregate demand and supply (Nwoke, 2008:11). However, innovations in technologies of capital and labour. If the Gross National Products (GNP) of a country increases and the personal consumption doubles within a given period, growth is achieved.

Economic growth when it occurs, is always significant and irrespective of large increase in population, the output per person would also increase. Therefore, economic growth means the increase in the amount of goods and services produced by an economy over time. It is conventionally measured as the percentage rate of increase in real domestic products or real GDP. In other words, economic growth is referred to as growth of the potential output; that is, production at full employment (Nwoke, 2008:12). Economic growth equally connotes the increase in the production and consumption of goods and services per head of an increasing population thus encouraging high standard of living. It is an economy that is getting bigger and not necessarily one that is getting better.

Despite the good parts of economic growth, such as; increase in the percentage rate of increase in the population, there are certain threats that are normally being posed on the environment in the process of growing the economy. For instance, in the process of growing the economy, the natural resources in the soil are exploited and thereby, shrinking the ecosystem. Again, pollution would become an inevitable by- product of economic productions.

On the other hand, peace means a state of tranquillity or quietness as a result of freedom from civil disturbances in both internal and external communities. It is also taken to mean a state of serenity, security or orderliness within a state backed up by laws and customs. It is equally, the state of being free from disquietness or oppressive thoughts or emotional imbalance which can bring about a period of mutual concord

between governments, persons and societies. Peace also means a pact or agreement to end hostilities between those who have been at war or in a state of enmity so that to encourage love and commonness with the aim of enhancing economic, socio-economic, socio-political and cultural environment.

Examples of peaceful co-existence include, people coming together to long and negotiate for quietness after many years of wars as it concerns people from both countries, people could also say prayers for peaceful co-existence in the world affairs, and or try to negotiate peace between the warring countries which would make their problems to be settled and their minds remain at peace again.

However, without the existence of peace, the possible actualization of economic growth would not be possible rather it would become a day-dream.

So, Nations should seek and pursue after peace to enable them enhance economic growth.

Conflict in Nigeria

A conflict exists when two people wish to carry out acts which are mutually inconsistent. They may both want to do the things, such as; eat the same apple, or they may want to do different things where the different things are mutually incompatible, such as, when the both want to stay together but one wants to go to the cinema and the other wants to stay at home. A conflict is resolved when some mutually compatible set of actions is worked out. The definition of conflict can be extended from individuals to groups such as: (states or nations), and more than two parties can be involved in the conflict (Nwori, 2011). In other words, conflict is a part of human life and existence. Without conflict man's existence is incomplete. Conflict can bring about peace and harmony between people, societies and states. Conflict could also enhance economic growth and political stability as well as social interactions especially, when resolved amicably.

Major Conflicts in Nigeria

The discussion of Nigerian conflicts or crisis could be traced and negotiated on the following areas which may include; Political background, Economic background, Social origin and general insecurity.

Political Conflict

Political Conflict has to do with the disagreement that could arise as a result of interest, differences in the wielding of governmental powers which may result to political instability in the state. Political Conflict may arises between the organs of government, where one organ seems to override the others while it is checked fully. This may bring about some fracas amongst them that could result to the destruction of lives and property. According to Ozoemena (2008), it may even occur between

regions in the same country or among Nations, especially, when one region or country takes herself to be more superior than others. For instance, the Nigerian civil war was as a result of regional imbalance that made one region to assume to be more important than the other that brought about wranglements and finally resulted to political crisis.

Other examples of political conflict include; Syria – America crisis over the production of nuclear weapons, America – Iraq, conflicts over quailing terrorism, the Talibans / Malian government crisis over the exercise of power e.t.c.

Social Conflict

Social conflict is a search for power in the society. Karl Marx (2008) in Jhingan (2008), saw it as a kind of conflict that occurs when two or more groups or classes come to struggle for supremacy over the use of power to control the resources in the society, opposing each other in social interactions as they compete for limited or incompatible goals. Social Conflict highlights interests as opposed to norms and values. The society is fragmented into groups and each competes for social and economic resources. According to Karl Marx, a great Philosopher, the group with the most resources utilizes power to defend and maintain their advantages in the society. This however, implies that the society is an unstable system of opposing groups and maintains a continuous state of conflict between groups and classes.

Based on this, the class or group with higher influence imposes her values and assertions on the lesser group. Hence, the dominant group uses the instrument of law and government to enforce rules imposed on the dominated in order to protect their privileges. As a result, the dominated strikes back for freedom that brings social changes in the society.

Economic Conflict

Ozoemena (2008), saw economic conflict as the struggles among persons, regions or nations to possess highest power in the acquisition of wealth and property at the expense of others. It is a conflict of the haves and have-nots in the society. The resources in the society are not equitably collated and distributed. So, one group with powerful influence emerges and dominates others, the minor groups. But when the minor groups try to strike a balance, conflict occurs between the dominating and the dominated groups or classes. Economic dominance may come in many forms and involves conflict at some point. The acquiring of power is often being justified for entering into conflict with another group or person. This power can be political and can affect social levels. It can also mean money.

However, having more than another has created serious conflict on both the individuals, corporate organizations, regions and at the states level. Economic

advantage can result to greed in the party that has it and jealousy in the party that does not. For instance, the struggles for economic gain such as oil, nuclear production e.t.c have landed so-many nations into wars, and desire and envy has been at the centre of conflict from the very beginning of human existence.

General Insecurity

The term: General insecurity may mean the state of general problems, uneasiness, uncomfotability, confusion, instability e.t.c. The issue of insecurity has been an object of great concern in Nigeria. According to Gbenga (2013), the advent of so-called Niger Delta crisis, the offshoot of that insurgency has thrown a huge cloak of insecurity not just over the entire south-south geopolitical zone, but also the south east and south-west. For instance, it is no longer news that kidnapping gangs have the two zones as their base. The wave of this crime, kidnapping spares no-one irrespective of the race, status, colour or nationality. It has also seen been to have supplanted armed robbery and other non-contact crimes (Gbenga, 2013). This does not call for a return to these crimes rather it serves as an analytical frame work to understanding of the migratory trend of crime in Nigeria, where criminals migrate to other genres of crimes that seem to offer better financial reward to the perpetrators.

The challenges this poses to the state of Nigeria is better understood against existing evidence that even government officials and traditional rulers are not spared. We have witnessed several kidnappings targetted against the legislative, the executive and the Judicial branch of the government, and their family members. At last, this evils has forced some of these victims to relocate to other geopolitical zones or outside the country. In other words, the activities of the BokoHaram sect have been a serious threat to economic, political, social and cultural lives of many Nigerians. On 30th September 2013, over 70 students of College of Agriculture were massacred by the Bokoharam members, and many more.

Reasons for Conflict

Many factors may have contributed to the emergence of conflict in Nigeria and the world which may include;

a) Poor Economy (Poverty)

Lack of economic stability could bring about conflict in the society. The economic structure of a country should be viable. The viability of any economy should be able to attract investors both local and foreign counterparts. When major investors in economy are attracted into the viability of a nations economy, they would help build the economy of such country (Ozoemena, 2008). There will be high technology and innovations in relation to production of quality and quantity of goods and services that would satisfy the demand of the citizens, export goods and earn foreign exchange. The infant industries would be improved

and economic growth and development would be enhanced. By this, the standard of living of citizens would be improved and conflict in the management of resources and their allocation to the citizens is completely eschewed. This is because employment opportunities would be created, salaries paid adequately and incentives enhanced to workers to improve their living standard.

b) Lack of Incentives

Nwori (2011), argued that conflict can occur when there is absence of stimulating factors in the country. Political instability can equally result when these factors are not there. For instance, the citizens have the right to enjoy certain social amenities such as; pipe borne water, good roads, modern hospitals with facilities, good educational system, electricity etc but when these are not available in the different geopolitical zones, the citizens can embark on demonstrations which could lead to destruction of lives and property thereby, causing political instability. Again, when individuals in the country are denied of their franchise in order to choose their leaders themselves, they could equally revolt against the government. All these can lead to political conflict in the country.

c) Rigidity to Workers: (Nature of Man)

Man is by nature too rigid and volatile. The core objective of every person is to assume superiority over others, to issue commands that the society must obey not minding the effects of such policies. Conflict can occur when workers in the country are treated inhumanly, denying them their basic rights. Ozoemena (2008), maintained that the employers in the various organizations in the country at times become too rigid to the extent that workers could not find it easy to cope with. Again, the various demands of the workers in relation to service upgradation may not be adequately heard and addressed by their employers. These may lead to serious revolts on the side of the workers.

For instance, the current long lasting strike action of the Academic Staff Union of Universities(ASUU) nationwide and the recent strike actions conducted by the National Association of Polytechnics (NAP) as well as the recent threat of strike action of the Colleges of Education Association Staff Union (COEASU) were all as a result of the rigidity of their employers. All these facts can result to conflicts between the employers and the employees.

d) Breach of Contracts

This is another factor that can bring about conflict in the society. When one party has a contract with legal binding over another party, which may be between the superior and minor in which the tenets of the contract should be well kept between the two parties; but, when one party seemingly violates the pacts,

conflict occurs (Nwori, 2011). Biblically, Leban, the uncle to Isaac, violated their agreement that his first daughter whom Isaac was in love with would be given to him (Isaac) as a wife but was cheated and the second daughter was given in place of the first one after 7 years of service to Leban. However, Nations can go into contract in which the superior nation would accept to protect the minor nation in the area of economic improvement, grants, political stability as well as cultural solidarity but the minor nation on the other hand, agrees to obey and respect and equally stick strictly to the terms of the contract. But if any of the Nations fails to perform her roles as regards the contract, conflict emanates.

e) Displacement

Displacement could equally result to unnecessary conflict. When workers or individuals are not placed adequately on the cadre they are supposed to occupy, conflict could occur. For instance, individuals and workers who should be promoted in their places of work must be done on the basis of high efficiency in performance and the meritoriousness of the workers should not be on the basis of tribalism, ethnicism and bribery. Remunerations should be made as and when due. Negligence on the side of the injured workers should be avoided. There will be also a clarion call for effective increase in the workers salaries. All these when ignored, encourage unnecessary conflict in the society.

f) The Structures of the States

The nature of the international system is another factor that could result to conflict. The international system is most of the times seen to be anarchical in nature and may not have an existing and legal based agency through which justice could be enforced, thereby making states more vulnerable to international conflict. However, the non-democratization of the international system has made the super powers to subjugate the developing countries with lots of economic degradation, political instability and environmental disturbances especially in Africa and Asia as well as Latin America. All these equally can result to conflict in the society.

g) Poor Perception of Man

Man is a limited being. This is because man cannot gather, decode and make analysis of the existence of natural phenomena. As a result of this fact, man is so limited to the occurrence of certain events of nature.

Therefore, man's inability to perceive adequately, decode appropriately and analyze critically the occurrences of natural events make him too limited and he can always involve in series of conflicts in the society. This is because of the fact that man cannot adequately receive proper information about the challenges and inimical plans of his opponents so as to be ready to combat his enemies or

opponents in all ramifications. Therefore, man's readiness at times to reject oppositions and his inability to recognize oppositions make him to encounter wars and conflicts.

h) Terrorism

Terrorism means the act of inflicting phobia or fears on a group of people which could result to casualties as its consequences. It could also be against individual persons or states. Terrorism causes terror in the hearts of people and society. It equally destroys economic, political and cultural tranquilities.

For instance, the attack on the World Trade Centre (W.T.C) on 19th September, 2001, was a good example of terrorist attack which was championed by Osama Bin Laden, the attack on Iraqi civilians as they were celebrating their World Cup victory in the Iraqi capital, Baghdad in 2007, where over 50 persons lost their lives was another example of terrorist attack etc. However, an attempt to retaliate against terrorist attacks may invariably lead to conflicts and wars in the society.

Conclusion

Government should try her possible best in co-ordinating the economic, political, social, religions and cultural activities of citizens so that their performances would be commensurate with the individuals demand and effort. Government should however embark on proper industrialization and reduce much dependence on importation of foreign materials.

Recommendations

From the above descriptions, we can infer that conflict is a normal part of life in the society. But the issue remains that adequate strategies should be adopted. This would help to avoid conflict. The author therefore, recommend that deference should be enhanced in our society in all ramifications to enable collective security.

- 1) The ability of the people to enthrone collective security would enhance normal life living and help to give way for effective economic growth and peaceful co-existence among individuals.
2. The author equally recommend that the government of the country should improve the standard of living of people in the society so as to avoid conflict and improve economic growth and collective security. This would be enhanced by allowing citizens full participation in economic activities.

3. The fundamental Rights of individuals should adequately be maintained and safeguarded so that they would not revolt against the government and cause political unrest in the country.
4. The law agents should be promptly report to, so as to enforce any contravening of the existing constitutional provisions of the land.
5. There should be a critical monitoring of the activities of both our leaders and the led with view to forestalling fragrant conflicts resulting from non compliance with the constitution of the country.

These recommendations, when adequately projected and followed, would go a long way in enhancing economic growth, projecting political stability, increasing the standard of living of the people and conflict will be avoided.

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