

## **Security Governance in the Pandemic Period: The Covid-19 Nigeria Example**



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**ABSTRACT:** COVID-19 sent a wave of pandomania across Nigeria, like in every other country due to health risk that it come with, which was declared pandemic. However, its impact has been felt on all aspect of human endeavour; social economic and political. In Nigeria, the pandemic has affects security governance due to pivoted role assigned security agencies in the enforcement of restriction of movement and lockdown imposed by the federal government of Nigeria. The security agencies involved has not been limited to police but it include both military and paramilitary as the case may be. In the midst of continues spread of diseases and multiplicity of security agencies, security governance became a serious issues. Through the government adopted a pragmatic approached, the result has been of mix blessing. It is in light of the above that the paper examines security, government in the COVID-19 pandemic period using Nigeria as a case study.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Covid-19 pandemic has gripped the world with challenges that overwhelm the health system of most nation of the world because it attracts international concern<sup>1</sup>. Despite this, pandemic brought in a novel direction that has affected international and global relations due to social distance and restriction of movement which was to be enforced by the law enforcement agencies. In Nigeria, because of the infections nature of the disease, made the government to put in place measures to protect her citizen as one of the fundamental principles of the government.<sup>2</sup> As a result of the vulnerable nature of most Nigerians and socio – economic being lockdown has brought about challenges in the security governance of the nation. The lockdown measured adopted in phases along with laws with the laws of wearing of face-masks, social distance, mobile court and restricting of movement from one state to another<sup>3</sup>. With the relevance of security governance inevitable Thus, with the cooperation of police personnel and awareness campaign by NCDC, people began to understand more about it spread and its effect in all segment of human activities in terms of social, political and economic well being of Nigeria and world at large.<sup>4</sup>

### **COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN NIGERIA.**

Nigeria as country and a member of global family is not out of the global terrain of COVID – 19 pandemic that shapes the world.<sup>5</sup> COVID-19 pandemic of Coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Is caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus2. (SARS-cov). In Nigeria the first confirmed case of coronavirus was in Lagos on 27<sup>th</sup> of February, 2020 as reported in by the Federal Ministry of Health since the beginning of the outbreak in China in December 2019.<sup>6</sup> However, the case involved an Italian citizen who works in Nigeria but returns from Milan Italy to Lagos, on 25<sup>th</sup> of February 2020. He was tested and confirmed positive at the Laboratory of Lagos state University Teaching Hospital, which is part of the laboratory network of Nigeria Centre for Disease Control.

Base on the above, the Nigerian government, through the Federal Ministry of Health has been strengthening measures to manage the outbreak in Nigeria in order to control and contain the spread quickly. The outbreak of the coronavirus has immediately paved the way for the Nigeria Centre For Disease Control (NCDC) to activate its national emergency operation centre which works together with Lagos State Health Authorities to respond to this case and put in necessary measure. The coronavirus preparedness group was established following its declaration as pandemic by world Health Organization (WHO). Since then, nations NGOs and UN agencies are also engaged in responding to the pandemic effect of COVID-19 containment measures<sup>7</sup>.

Since the report of first case in Nigeria, and its spread, there is increase in the number of cases. With over 50,000 confirmed and about 1000 death cases respectively. On the detection of more cases across the country, NCDC activated multi-sectorial national emergency operations centre (EOC) to oversee the national response of COVID-19. In addition, the Presidential Task Force (PTF) was also inaugurated in order to overcome and arrest the situation. The Pandemic has created room for national and international consciousness in Nigeria and the world at large. Measures were put down by the NCDC i.e. regular and thoroughly washing of hand

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with soap and water and use alcohol-based hand sanitizer, maintain at least one and a half metres (feet) distance between yourself and anyone coughing or sneezing.

### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PANDEMIC

In much of Africa, but also in the most developed parts of the world, much about the coronavirus pandemic is unclear, including the knock-on health complications it may cause, how far it has spread, and whether antibodies can deliver long-lasting immunity. This reflects insufficient or contradictory data and statistical shortcomings. However, in Nigeria government put-measure on the ground in order to bring to end the deadly coronavirus pandemic with the support of her institutions. At the early state when cases began to increase on daily basics in Nigeria was the imposition of lockdown<sup>9</sup>.

The figures cited that measure the extent of COVID-19 in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa generally indicate a low level of spread. But this is at least partly driven by low levels of testing. Nigeria, with about 200 million people, had conducted just under 12,000 tests as of April 26. Botswana, with a population around 1 percent that of Nigeria, had conducted over 5,000 tests as of April 23, and South Africa, a quarter of Nigeria's population, had conducted around 185,000 as of April 28; but both are notable exceptions.<sup>10</sup> As of April 29, Nigeria has recorded over 1,300 cases, with 40 deaths attributed to COVID-19. Coronavirus spread had initially been concentrated in Abuja, Lagos, and Ogun state, the latter virtually a suburb of Lagos. Those three areas have been under lockdown since March 30, with an announcement by President Buhari to begin easing some restrictions beginning on May 4. Kano state has since displaced Gombe and Ogun to have the third-highest number of cases in Nigeria.<sup>11</sup>

The situation in Kano provides an example of some of the challenges that might be faced elsewhere in Nigeria and the world. Kano, the country's second-largest city, registered its first case on April 11. Since then, grave diggers had reported what appeared to be an abnormally high number of deaths, which after investigation, were linked to a variety of preexisting conditions, and coronavirus seemed to have been ruled out.<sup>12</sup> President Buhari nevertheless ordered that the city be locked down for an additional two weeks. Whether or not those people died of COVID-19, the pandemic may still have led to their death. The health care system in Kano has reoriented itself to deal with the coronavirus at the expense of other essential medical services, leaving some without health care. Also, the BBC reports that "no official death records are kept," making it difficult to attribute a death to COVID-19.<sup>13</sup>

Various Nigerian leaders have been largely supportive of the lockdowns, at least initially. Both the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Nigerian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) have supported the government lockdowns. They have worked with some local and state governments to disseminate accurate information and encourage compliance. The NSCIA closed the Abuja mosques a full week before the government-imposed lockdown. Many state governors imposed their own lockdowns despite no requirement from the federal government, and on April 22, all unanimously agreed to ban interstate travel for two weeks.<sup>14</sup> That states and Nigerian leaders at the highest level are working together was commendable effort.

But the mass lockdowns weigh most heavily on the poor, who are often part of the informal economy and thus dependent on face-to-face contact. For many of them, a day without work means a day without food. Hence the resistance in Lagos that has resulted in harsh responses employed by the security services. At one point, security forces enforcing lockdown orders across Nigeria had killed more people than the coronavirus.<sup>15</sup> President Buhari has repeatedly acknowledged that the poor are most affected, and it is part of the impetus to ease lockdown restrictions. A patchwork of volunteer welfare programs and private sector-led initiatives are trying to make up for an insufficient government response. In rural Bayelsa state; there are credible anecdotes about chaotic and insufficient government relief measures, such as distribution of food to the poor.<sup>16</sup>

Sentiments are hard to capture, but in urban Nigeria, there are anecdotes about popular satisfaction that most of the deaths from the disease have so far been from the elites who contracted the disease while abroad. More anecdotes tell of popular rage at elites, who many hold responsible for introducing the disease from their travel abroad. There is also popular satisfaction that the elites are now dependent on the same inadequate medical services as the rest of the population.<sup>17</sup>

### SECURITY ROLE IN THE PANDEMIC

The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) is the principal law enforcement agency in the country with staff strength of 371,800. It has staff deployment across the 36 states of the country, including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). There have been several security challenges which cut across the nooks and crannies of the country, and the rate is so alarming. Terrorism, Kidnapping, Armed robbery, Banditry, suicide bombing, religious killings, ethnic clashes and all other forms of criminal activities have become increasingly regular occurrences that characterized life in the nation.<sup>18</sup> No doubt being the first responders of law enforcement, the Nigeria Police is left with no choice than to fight these insecurities in the most populous country in Africa which has consistently ranked low the Global Peace Index (GPI).

In the fight against COVID-19, there have been directives by the President and State Governors to restrict the movement of people as a way to curb the spread of the virus. The Police who are the first responders to enforcing these directives have been actively ensuring that residents do not violate the stay-at-home directives. More so, these stay-at-home and lockdown directives are likely to trigger significant changes in their patrol allocations as they can be called upon at any point to go to locations where their services may be needed to enforce social distancing as part of efforts to limit the spread of the disease.<sup>19</sup>

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In a statement made by the Inspector General of Police, he cautioned Police Officers not to conduct unnecessary arrests and detention of suspects as they work to enforce social distancing. He also directed that they strictly enforce all legitimate orders made to contain the spread of the virus while urging citizens to voluntarily comply.<sup>20</sup>

### CHALLENGE AND PROSPECT

Since the Nigeria Police Force is committed to providing support and aid in curbing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic during the lockdown period, we cannot overlook the challenges and the health hazards that Police officers are facing in the rapidly changing environment and systems of operation which often lead to exposure to persons with and without the virus.<sup>21</sup> Without overemphasizing the risk, their families will also face during this period as they will be away from home and may not be able to be with their families as it would be unsafe to relate with them after their interaction with the public. Sadly, a case was reported about a Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Bissong in charge of investigation and Intelligence in Edo state who died of complication from the dreaded COVID-19, he was reported to be the first documented security personnel to be infected with the virus in Nigeria.<sup>22</sup> Several measures have been put in place by the NCDC and WHO such as the washing of hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, covering of the nose and mouth properly with tissues when sneezing and/or coughing or the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers, wearing of face masks, intensified exit and entry screening and social distancing which is the avoidance of crowded places.<sup>23</sup> In order to enforce the latter, it is essential that the police who are the first responders to enforcing these directives also observe these safety measures as they are more at risk to the virus due to their interaction with the public. The government has been called upon to provide palliatives, welfare packages, hazard allowances, and testing for the Police officers in view and also that Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) needs and health kits be put in place for officers who are out enforcing the lockdown in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>24</sup> Thus, We often ask our police officers to take tremendous risks on our behalf, and the COVID-19 crisis is no exception. Police officers in Nigeria are serving on the frontline in the fight against this virus and are often the first representatives of the state that the sick can turn to for help. We owe it to them to do everything in our power to enable them to go about their duties in as safe a manner as possible in such troubled times.

Enforcement of lockdown to rural communities it was not really extended to rural community.

Poverty because of high rate of poverty people find it difficult to survive even the palliative that was provided not sufficient enough which force government to easy lockdown that may create room for further spread of various.

Awareness some people have a belief system, religious leaders the ability to curtail

Infrastructure government were unable to provide the necessary needs, some people as a result of lack of attending to them in the hospital.

Government of some states refuse to accept the idea of mass testing and not having COVID -19 in their state has resulted into conflict between the State and federal Government.

### CONCLUSION

Looking at the COVID-19 pandemic the government of Nigeria has responded to the contentment of pandemic which could not be achieved without security institutions. By mobilizing security the government can achieve a lot with the use of effective security measures in order to curtail the spread of various, compare to even developed nations. It responded immediately it also used professionalism to bring an end to it even do their pocket harassment, violation of human rights.

### RECOMMENDATION

1. The Government should recruit more security personnel and be deployed to rural areas and
2. Also police community relations should be given more attention.
3. Poverty alleviation programmes should be given more attention.
4. Government should engage more relationships with religious leaders and traditional institutions.
5. The government should provide more infrastructures; testing kits.
6. Lastly the government should work with research institutions, universities to provide vaccine to the cure.

### ENDNOTE

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