
Covid-19 and Nigeria: Rethinking the Architecture of National Security

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Abstract

This paper explores the disputed concept of security. It is a modest attempt at investigating the perceived repercussions of the outbreak of Covid 19 on Nigeria's National Security. In this regard, the paper deployed the qualitative approach of research, such that historical research method is applied via secondary sources of data, including textbooks, official documents, and internet sources, among others. The paper is nested around the changing notion of security, highlighting non-military threats repercussions of Covid 19 on Nigeria's National Security. A key finding of the paper underscores that there exists a strong fact that threat to contemporary Nigeria's National Security now includes non- military issues.

Keywords: Covid-19, National Security, Lockdown, Pandemic, Traditional Security, Human Security

Introduction

In Nigeria as noted by (Imhonopi & Urim, 2012) insecurity has led to scores of deaths of innocent civilians, foreigners, some members of the nation's security personnel, elected officials and many government workers. Nigeria's security outlook remains precarious. The country has continued to face an oil-fueled militancy in her Niger Delta, waves of reprisal violence between Christian farmers and Muslim pastoralists in the Middle Belt, separatist protest movement by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the South

East while Boko Haram has continued to wage a bloody insurgency in the Northeast.

Basic causes of the aforementioned insecurity challenges in Nigeria are varied and include but not limited to internal security disorder as observed by (Okereke, 2012 & Iygeal, 2012), poor system of governance and the concentration of political power at the center as posited by (Nwagboso, 2012), weak judicial system, injustice, nepotism and the culture of impunity which enables some people commit all manner of crimes and get away with it scot-free (Fukuyama, 2004). While, (Nnoli, 1980; Eskor, 1999 & Mazuri, 1982) all explicated how ethnicity gives nested power to ethnic identities and national identity conundrum in Nigeria.

In spite of all these foregoing explanations with regard to causes of insecurity in Nigeria, a thread that runs through all of these studies and more is their shortcomings. One major shortcoming is the issue of preference given to traditional causes. Writers fail to underscore the role of non-traditional sources to insecurity in Nigeria. In this direction, this paper therefore, explores repercussions of COVID-19, an infectious disease and non-traditional cause of insecurity on Nigeria's National Security.

Conceptualising National Security

National Security as a concept has different definition. Romm (1993:52–54) observes that the concept of national security remains ambiguous, having evolved from simpler definitions which emphasized freedom from military threat and from political coercion to nonmilitary issues.

It is observable that national defense considerations dominate the definition of traditional national security concept. Dominant definitions (Buzan, 1991a; Romm, 1993; Egwu, 2001 & Paleri, 2008:52–54) corroborate with the stance of (Walt, 1991:212)

which asserts that security is the study of threat, use and control of the military force. These dominant approaches to traditional perception of security is deeply rooted in Lipmann's contemplation that security is about the possession by a state of a level of military capability sufficient enough to avert 'the danger of having to sacrifice core values, if it wishes to avoid war and is able, if challenged, to maintain victory in such a war' (Lipmann, 1943).

Lipmann's contemplation, indeed raises a fundamental question as regards the meaning of 'core values question' as a vital state. It becomes more interesting as (Tibergen & Fischer, 1987) deconstructs Lipmann's postulation and believes that the core values to which Lippmann referred are those elements which assure the smooth 'functioning of a state'. However, Miller (2008) attempted a classification, clarification and explanation of this ambiguity. He identified two different approaches to the study of security. These he opines are the differences that exist between the traditional concept of Security and security after the cold war. According to him, original threats in traditional conception of security are a nation's neighbours or great powers rivals while in Post-Cold War conception of security it is none state: domestic/trans-border issues.

With regards to the nature of threats faced by states in traditional concept of security, he posits that military capability is at the core while none military: economic, domestic; political, transnational/global (immigrations, drugs, diseases, environment, and proliferation of weapons, crime, and terrorism) are the concern of post-cold war considerations.

This paper therefore takes a point of departure from the explication of Miller with regards to the nature of threats faced by states in post-cold war considerations. Thus, this paper attempts to unravel and underscore the repercussions of the Covid-19 global pandemic on Nigeria's National Security.

Rethinking the Perception of Security in Nigeria

Insecurity experienced by Nigeria has led to colossal loss of lives and property. This grave aforementioned by-product of insecurity and its attendant effect on the nation's development therefore, makes it imperative to foster a new security strategy.

Perhaps, one could infer that the foregoing found expression in the core national interest of Nigeria's National Security Strategy. A (Centre for Security Studies, working paper, 2018) enunciated security and welfare of its people; sovereignty and defense of its territorial integrity; peace; democracy; economic growth; and social justice, sub-regional security and economic cooperation as classified strategic interests of Nigeria. While promotion of peace, security, development, democracy and international cooperation in Africa and the world are peripheral to Nigeria national interests.

Further to the above, is the obvious fact that potent threats adjudged as potential sources of disaffection, discontent and instability that could adversely affect the Nigeria's quest for national security, unity and development unarguably includes but not limited to global challenges; terrorism; transnational organized crimes; crude oil theft or illegal bunkering; Nigeria's borders; climate change; communal and ethno-religious conflicts; pastoralists and farmers conflicts; politics and federalism in Nigeria; governance; poverty; kidnaping, proliferations of small arms and light weapons; proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; illegal migration; economic challenges; financial crimes; information technology and cyber security etc. The above listed are most potent and have continued to threaten the very fabric of national integration, creating the ecology of fear, disquiet and anxiety; it has also meted a deadly blow to Nigeria's development trajectory.

It is the position of this paper that seeming daily occurrences of unexpected developments and many uncertainties that prevail in every region of the world are as pervasive as to cast doubt on the viability of a long established ways in which Nigeria and international affairs at large have been conducted and global security maintained.

It then follows that the concept of security has long been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory from external. It has been related more to nation-states than to people. It is now the fact that developing nations such a Nigeria are now sensitive to any real or imagined threats to their fragile national identities in a way that the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who seek security in their daily lives cannot be overlooked. This is because for them, security symbolizes protection from the threat of disease and hunger, unemployment, crime, social conflict, political repression and environmental hazards. The foregoing draws huge attention to the human dimension of security in such a way that rethinking security to involve human security cannot be over emphasized. Thus, Human security is not a concern with weapons but with human life and dignity.

The Evolution and Spread of Covid-19

Covid-19 is known as an infectious disease; it is a cluster of pneumonia cases, discovered in December 2019 who were later proven to be caused by a novel coronavirus (named as “2019-nCoV”). It emerged in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. By January 30, 2020, 9692 confirmed cases and 15,238 suspected cases have been reported around 31 provinces and cities in China. Among the confirmed cases, 1527 were severe cases, 171 had recovered and been discharged at home, and 213 died. (National Health Commission of People’s Republic of China, 2020).

The National Health Commission of People's Republic of China alluded in her preliminary report for the diagnosis and treatment of pneumonia caused by novel coronavirus that asymptomatic cases play a critical role in the transmission process and that respiratory droplets and contact with index cases are the main transmission routes. Thus, Close contact with symptomatic and asymptomatic cases with this silent infection are the main transmission routes of COVID 19) infection. The report maintained that people of all ages are susceptible to COVID 19, noting that the elderly and those with underlying chronic diseases are more likely to become severe cases. (National Health Commission of People's Republic of China report on diagnosis and treatment of pneumonia caused by novel coronavirus, trial version 4).

However, on January 30, 2020, World Health Organistaion (WHO) Emergency Committee declared the current novel (COVID-19) epidemic a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. (WHO, 2020) As of February 11, 2020, the epidemic registered 42 708 cases in China and spread to 25 countries that reported a total of 395 cases. Limited local transmission outside China was reported in Germany, France, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Thailand, Vietnam, the United Arab Emirates, the UK, and the USA. All continents reported confirmed cases of COVID-19. Africa confirmed its first case in Egypt on February 14, 2020. China is Africa's leading commercial partner; thus, there are large travel volumes through which severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus could reach the continent. Covid -19 has spread around the planet, sending billions of people into lockdown as health services struggle to cope.

As per the latest update of WHO as of 14th June, 2020, the number of COVID-19 confirmed cases was 7,690,780 cases globally. Fatalities have reached 427,630 (WHO, situation report, 2020). In

Nigeria, confirmed cases have increased to 16085 with 420 fatalities at the time of writing. Cases have been registered in twenty states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), with Lagos and the FCT reporting the highest number of cases. (NCDC 107; situation report, 2020). These numbers are changing rapidly. The detailed up-to-date information about COVID- 19 is available in the WHO website at <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>.

On the one hand the very high transmissibility of the virus is responsible for its worldwide spread, the improvement and accessibility of international travel and tourism could be a reason for its further worldwide spread. Every year, different parts of the world organize various religious, socio-cultural, scientific, sport, and political mass gathering festivals. These types of mass gatherings are likely to exaggerate many of the risk factors of COVID-19, and have historically been associated with outbreaks of disease both in local and international levels.

Covid-19 and National Security Threat in Nigeria: An Assessment

A cursory view of COVID-19 and National security nexus may look awkward but intellectually it is profound and thought-provoking. History has proven that the threat posed by diseases to security as a whole is comparable to the effects of war. For instance, the Spanish Flu in 1918-1919 killed between 40 and 50 million people globally compared to approximately 15million people killed during the Second World War (Kassalow, 2001:6). He further notes that throughout the world, infectious diseases kill more people than all other causes combined. This subsection examines the nexus between Covid-19 and Nigeria's National Security.

Falk (1991), a scholar and like a social prophet, he envisaged the present global realities and Nigeria's National Security when he argued that global political changes of the post-Cold war security scenario has revealed the weakness of traditional concept of security (Falk, 1991). His security thesis is a significant departure from the traditional conception of security which as discussed previously dwells on military power. Falk's postulations in this direction is anchored on the belief that, 'security encompasses basic needs of all peoples to have food, shelter, health facilities, education, meaningful work, human rights'. Hence, it is within this prism that we consider the expansion of the notion of security to go beyond the traditional emphasis on defending a state against external aggression to rethink the repercussions of COVID-19 as an infectious disease on Nigeria's National Security.

Economic Security

Tedheke (1998) provided insights on how the economy is essentially linked to security. According to him, "any country that seeks to achieve adequate military security against the background of (weak economy) acute food shortages, population explosion, and low level of productivity, fragile infrastructural base for technological development, inadequate and inefficient public utilities and chronic problem of unemployment has false sense of security".

COVID19 as a pandemic did not only lead to loss of lives but also caused definite irretrievable damage to Nigeria. COVID-19 severely disarticulated Nigeria's economy. In order to restrict further transmission of the disease in the community, many of the affected countries, Nigeria not left out, got completely locked down. Major international flights and also all types of business transports have been deferred amid different countries. Due to lockdown all domestic flights, railway service, bus, truck, and vehicles transports

are suspended with special exemption to those associated with essential commodities. In Nigeria, likewise other countries, entire educational, commercial, sports and spiritual institutions are closed. Industries are suffering a lot as many of these excepting those related to essential amenities, are closed for a long time in many countries.

It is instructive at this point to note that Nigeria's revenue is 80 percent oil receipts. The 2020 budget was benchmarked on the crude oil price of \$57 per barrel. The disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has plunged crude oil prices to below \$29 per barrel. Brent crude prices has fallen below \$22 per barrel – the lowest since 2003 – due to the escalating global economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Noting that Nigeria's 2020 budget was pegged on the presumption of oil selling at \$57 per barrel, this plunge drags the 2020 budget into a large deficit.

If the COVID-19 pandemic is not contained, and oil price continues to plunge, the Nigerian economy may contract into a negative. Given overwhelming dependency on oil receipts, negative economic growths of more than two months will plunge the economy into a recession.

In Nigeria, where economic crisis is more acute, and the state risks failure of its institutions of governance, urban crime will take secondary stage in relation to the emergence of other violent anti-state groups that seek to supplant the state in obtaining loyalty from the people. The ensuing competition, which often is violent and bloody, provides the most ample evidence of how economy and (in) security can complement each other in COVID 19 and Nigeria's National Security conversation.

Demographic Security

Demographic security focuses on the dynamism of population growth, its content and pattern.

(Tilly, 1975) posits that it is men and women in a population that fight wars to achieve or maintain state security by defending national frontiers against foreign intruders. They also invest technologies, machines and assume industrial, economic and other task which ensure the survival of their collective socio-political entity. Thus, the growth in the population of one state usually meant an increase in the number of people available for agriculture and animal husbandry, which also translates into food security assurance. Accordingly, (Jackson and Howe 2008:1) further posits that demographic security “... is not only to assess the direct impact of demographic trends on population numbers, economic size, and defense capabilities, but also to consider how these trends may indirectly affect capabilities by altering economic performance, social temperament, and national goals”

As at 14th June 15, 2020, the number of COVID-19 confirmed cases was 7,690,780 cases globally. Fatalities have reached 427,630 (WHO, situation report, 2020). In Nigeria, confirmed cases have increased to 16085 with 420 fatalities at the time of writing. Cases have been registered in twenty states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), with Lagos and the FCT reporting the highest number of cases. (NCDC situation report, 107, 2020). NCDC’s COVID-19 situation report as of May 17, 2020, had shown that more cases have been confirmed in males than females—all within the youth population of the country. According to the data, males between 11 to 20 years account for nearly 400 cases, those within 21 to 30 years and 41 to 50 years account for 800 cases, while 31 to 40 years make 1, 000 cases. But 200 cases have been confirmed in females between 11 to 20 years. While female patients between the of 41 to 50 account for slight over 200 cases, those between 21 to 30 years and 31 to 40 years make up 400 cases of Nigeria’s total confirmed cases which now stands at over 6, 000.

This may engender some concerns about what impact, it would have on the economy as the virus continues to sicken Nigeria's working demography from early working age (15 -24) to mature working age (55-64).

In another direction, World Health Organization (WHO) in 2017, declared violence against women as a major public health problem and a violation of women's right. Global estimates published by WHO indicates that about, 1 in 3 (35%) women and girls worldwide; experience physical or sexual gender-based violence by their partner or perpetrators in their lifetime. It is however, unarguable that violence against women/girls tends to increase during every type of emergency, including epidemic. In this direction, Lagos State Domestic Sexual and Violence Response Team (DSVRT), reports that domestic violence has tripled since March 2020 (during the lockdown period) compared to the reports they had in pre -lockdown period. The DSVRT stated that they now receive an average of 8 calls and 7 cases on their social media platforms daily. (Sahara Reporters, 2020). The police being the primary law enforcement agency with the responsibility of protecting lives and properties of all citizens are presently tasked with the ensuring that citizens comply with the lockdown directives of the Federal and States government which is one of the national strategies to contain the spread of the COVID19 virus in the country. To this end as it relates to response to sexual gender-based violence, it means that perpetrators may not be arrested and/or charged to court.

Also, a UNDP preliminary report suggest that estimates by the World Food Programme indicates that a COVID-19 outbreak in the BAY states would impact the economic livelihoods of 7 million people resulting in an increase in the number of food insecure individuals by 3.4 million. This brief on Covid-19 highlighted the

potential impact of the pandemic in Nigeria on the north-east could be catastrophic. The report succinctly states thus:

As Nigeria braces to be part of what is most likely a third wave of the COVID-19 outbreak - where the virus will interact with a low healthcare infrastructure and multiple preexisting fragilities – it is of outmost importance that all actors double efforts to safeguard the most vulnerable region of the country. Implications of an outbreak in the country’s protracted conflict and security zones of the North-East could be particularly catastrophic. (UNDP Brief 2, 2020).

The UNDP assertion is unarguable rooted on probable impact of an outbreak of COVID-19 on the food security and nutrition situation in the North-East. In case of an enforced lockdown in cities and towns, it can be expected that due to the precarious nature of many livelihoods, up to two thirds of the population would only have a few days until their food stocks would be exhausted and severe coping mechanisms would become widespread, further undermining lockdown measures and public order.

Conclusion

This paper has examined and underscored the dynamics of National Security as it is affected by the Covid-19 threat in Nigeria. These threats as discussed in this paper revolved around Nigeria’s economy and demography. This way, this paper demonstrated that there is a strong need to rethink Nigerian’s National Security to such dimensions that issues of National Security are copiously expanded

to include nonmilitary issues such as economic and demographic security.

In foregoing paragraphs, it is observed and presented in discussion that the traditional perception of security as noted earlier is deeply rooted in Lipmann's contemplation that 'security is about the possession by a state of a level of military capability sufficient enough to avert 'the danger of having to sacrifice core values, if it wishes to avoid war and is able, if challenged, to maintain victory in such a war'. However, taken a point of departure with a school of thought as regards security revisionism, it is the thrust of this paper that there is perceived gap in such consideration.

This paper therefore took turn to add to literature as it re-establishes the position that other threats to security of states are non-traditional issues or better referred to as non-military threats. It is within this sphere that this paper takes a point of departure and considered Covid 19 as a non-military threat to Nigeria's National Security. In conclusion therefore, it is opined that National security is synonymous with national development, and treating them as separate subjects is not only counter-productive, but is fraught with danger.

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