COVID-19, Peace and Security in Nigeria
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Introduction/Background

The history of novel Coronavirus can be traced back to December 2019 when China notified the World Health Organization (WHO) it was dealing with some suspicious cases of pneumonia in Wuhan, Hubei. The situation was soon established to be a novel Corona virus that was then labeled “COVID-19” on the account of its uniqueness. The disease spread exponentially around the world to the extent that as at February 24 2020, there were 81,000 confirmed cases in over 28 countries. WHO had to declare the outbreak of COVID-19 as a global public health emergency requiring collective attention (Kandel et al 2020:1047). The first case of the disease in Sub Saharan Africa was confirmed in Lagos State on the 27th of February 2020. The index case was an Italian contractor in Nigeria returning to the country from Milan, Italy on the 25th of February 2020 (Maclean and Dahir 2020). He was tracked down, hospitalized and luckily recovered from the disease. Since then several other cases have been discovered around the country.

As it is the rest of the world, Nigerian leaders framed the pandemic in peace and security terms by describing it as a war. Such a sentiment is expressly or indirectly evident in the speeches delivered on the pandemic by President Muhammadu Buhari, State Governors, members of the Presidential Task Force on COVID-19 set up by the federal government and the officials of the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). All of these people regularly use the term “health security”, “war” and “defeat”, “fight”, and “battle the pandemic” in their statements. President Buhari delivered two national Speeches addressing the nation on the pandemic.

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It was packaged in peace and security terms. It is packaged as an existential problem that requires
the collaboration of the state and society to surmount. For example, in his second address to the
nation, delivered on 13 April 2020, Buhari assured Nigerians that they: “are on the right track to
win the fight against COVID-19…This is not a joke. It is a matter of life and death…As a result
of this pandemic, the world as we know it has changed. The way we interact with each other,
conduct our businesses and trade, travel, educate our children and earn our livelihoods will be
different” (Buhari 2020). Commenting on the pandemic, the immediate past President of Nigeria
Goodluck Jonathan equally said “our world faces a global crisis that threatens our peace, hope
and freedoms. Across the globe is the climate of fear, havoc, and consequences of a new enemy
called corona virus disease…Let's all brace up and work together to combat this new scourge,

Taking the foregoing into consideration, this paper discusses the multiplicity of contexts from
which COVID19 could indeed be said to be a Nigerian peace and security question or even a
war. The paper is divided into five sections. Following this general introduction is the second
section, which provides some theoretical pathways to the issues raised in the paper. In it, the
concept of health security is critically analyzed in a manner that gives a global understanding
to COVID19 as a global peace and security question. This position was further strengthened
in the third section where a number of world leaders characterized COVID19 as a “war” and
decided to approach it from that militaristic context. In the fourth section, the issues making
COVID-19 peace and security problems in Nigeria were articulated. The impact of the
pandemic is discussed in the fifth section and some recommendations made on the way
forward for Nigeria.
Theoretical Pathway

In this section, COVID19, peace and security are theoretically linked. This requires that both peace and security be defined. The most preferred definition of peace here is the one that links it with war. The most germane in this respect is the one provided by American military historians. To them, peace refers to cessation of war or violence (Chambers 2004). In other words the military fight wars to make or maintain peace; peace is not perceived in this context as a means to an end but an ultimate or ideal goal. Peace scholars, trained in multidimensional consideration of any issue, would consider this kind of definition of peace to be reductionist given the fact that peace can also be achieved by peaceful means and not through force only. On the other hand, a nation may not be witnessing war and yet it is not peaceful as the people live in fear, trauma and lack.

Galtung argues in some of his widely cited works (Galtung 1958; 1967) that any peace achieved through the use of force as evinced in the above definition is “negative peace”. It is negative because it was forced down the throat of the people and not attained through any dialogue or peaceful process. Such a situation many not last or be sustainable as the people are simply responding to pressure on them to be peaceful. This kind of peace stands in contradistinction to what Galtung calls “positive peace”. This refers to peace attained through the removal of the causes of conflict or violence. In this case, the parties are taken away from the conflict situation because they no longer have the reasons to continue the hostility as their grievances have been addressed. For helping to deepen the understanding of the points made here, the Institute for Economics and Peace, a leading global think tank linking peace to other development
Matrices present the following set of attitudes, institutions and structures as the pillars of positive peace:

1: Pillars of Positive Peace

In supportive of the concept of “positive peace” and opposed to “negative peace” Albert Einstein argues that peace “is not merely the absence of war but the presence of justice, of law, of order – in short, of government” (Vesilind 2005:43). This position rhymes with the pillars of positive peace provided above. It is also in tandem with the position of Martin Luther King, Jr., the famous American human rights activist, who said ”True peace is not merely the absence of tension: It is the presence of justice” (Kin 2008:83). Dalai Lama equally belongs to this school of thought by arguing that ”Peace, in the sense of the absence of war is of little value...peace can only last where human rights are respected, where people are fed, and where individuals and nations are free” (Abraham 1995:16).

Taking the foregoing into consideration, peace could be defined as the absence of physical, psychological and structural violence with justice presence. In other words, there is peace when nobody is being subjected to physical attacks as the advocates of negative peace claim. More importantly, peace exists when the factors making for unhealthy human existence are removed and there is presence of justice.

The second term to be defined in this publication is “security”. Like “peace”, there are several definitions of the term. The definition provided by Wolfers could be used to illustrate the points of divergence and convergence of scholars on the matter. He defined security simply as 'the absence of threats to acquired values' (Wolfers 1952: 485). For reconciling this definition and others, all that is needed is to confront it with the following questions: absence of/from what or which threats? What, which and whose values? (see Baldwin 1997:5-26). As individual scholars attempt to answer the questions, they arrive at a myriad of context-specific definitions of security. A point of convergence in the definitions however is the belief that the state is the core provider of security. This kind of thinking started to get challenged following the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Analysts started to reason that though the state remains a central provider of security, state security is not a sufficient condition for human welfare.
If the state is safe and the human beings in it are not happy there is no security. This reasoning led to the emergence of the concept of “human security” which emphasizes that people have ‘the right to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair... with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential.’ (UNGA 2012). The 1994 global Human Development Report (HDR) calls attention to two unique goals of human security: “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want”. A key aspect of the human security practice is “health security”: a concept now used in several fields, including medical sciences, foreign policy and international relations, and development studies.

What is HEALTH SECURITY? It is a matter of health for promoting security or security for ensuring health? The difficulties in answering these questions with finality explains why it is today difficult to frame a theoretical position of health security that addresses all academic, political and policy concerns. Even in development practice and medical practice, there is no consensus on what constitutes health security. Not even the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) both working for the UN - have a consensus on how health security manifests in a development process (Aldis 2008:370). To WHO, global (public) health security means “the activities required to minimize the danger and impact of acute public health events that endanger the collective impact of populations living across geographical regions and interactional boundaries” (WHO 2007). The problem is usually with the scope and contents of what should be captured in the intervention.

The issues covered by the present paper require a deeper understanding of the concept of health security. The roots of the concept can be traced back to 1946 when the preamble of the constitution of the WHO alluded to the fact that ‘the health of all peoples is fundamental to the attainment of peace and security’ and that the goal of the global body is the ‘... happiness, harmonious relations and security of all peoples’ (WHO 2005). This position was further enriched in 1994 when the UNDP published its annual Human Development Report, titled *New Dimensions of Human Security* (UNDP 1994), which identified health issues as
one of the seven categories of threats to human existence. It was at this point that the health concerns of individuals started to be linked more formally to the issues of human security. Several scholars helped to further process the concept of health security to what it is today by consistently showing that health is at the heart of the human existence (Chen et al. 2003) and that fighting health-related problems is a frontline peace and security issue.

The 2001 World Health Assembly’s Resolution 54.14 titled ‘Global health security: epidemic alert and response’ further moved the process forward by linking the health security concept to a global strategy for preventing and managing communicable diseases internationally (Aldis 2008). This popularized the concept of ‘global health security’ but with no global consensus on the application of the term. Today, the term is perceived as a weapon of oppression in the hands of the developed nations that use it as an excuse for interfering in the affairs of the less powerful countries of the world. Such interferences manifest in terms of questionable health research projects, clinical trials, sale of drugs and humanitarian missions to “save lives” in the developing world.

In other words, the main goal of many of such international interventions is to protect the national interests of those behind them rather than those of the target third world countries. During the Tsunami in South East Asian countries in 2004, for example, some of the developed countries said to be providing health security were found to be collecting military intelligence at same time thus endangering the future national security status of the affected countries (Albert 2006). The management of the Ebola pandemic in west Africa in 2014 also drew suspicions in some quarters. For example, when the US was sending help to Liberia during the pandemic, it was 100 Marines (soldiers) rather than visible civilian medics (LaGrone 2014) that landed in the country. Recently, two French doctors – Camille Lochte and Jean-Pail Mira – in a television debate advised that COVID-19 vaccine should first be tested on Africans. This met with fury in different parts of the developing world. Though the doctors have since apologized to Africa this is not strong enough to remove the bad impression already created. It merely reinforces the
existing believe that the concept of health security is a tool of unhealthy international diplomacy in the developing world. This present paper would not delve deeper into this debate but simply present health security as all efforts toward ensuring that a society gets qualitative health services. The rest of this paper identified COVID-19 as a health security problem from different contexts.

**COVID-19 and Health Security in Nigeria**

Several world leaders frame COVID-19 as a war. The first name to be mentioned in this respect is the UN Secretary General, António Guterres who described the pandemic as "the greatest test that we have faced together since the formation of the United Nations" (BBC News 2020). He framed the problem in peace and security terms when he observed further that: “The pandemic also poses a significant threat to the maintenance of international peace and security — potentially leading to an increase in social unrest and violence that would greatly undermine our ability to fight the disease” (Besheer 2020). In China, where it all started, Xi Jinping called his people out on a “people’s war” against corona virus. As the disease spread to the United State, The President Donald Trump described his response as "our war against the Chinese virus". He sought to be recognized and treated as a “wartime president”. Taking a critical look at how his country should respond to the problem, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson said "We must act like any wartime government". Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu described it as a "war against an invisible enemy" and French President Emmanuel Macron said "Nous somme en guerre. [We are at war.]" (Schwobel-Patel 2020; Serhan 2020). For defeating the pandemic, Italy’s special commissioner said his country needs a “War economy”. Several other world leaders invoke the war analogies to the pandemic as the frontline gets everywhere: hospitals, homes, shopping malls, market places, sports centers, airports – all over the world.

Framing the pandemic in military terms helps governments to communicate the gravity of the public health crisis and galvanize the people around the extra ordinary problem solving strategies chosen by them. It also enables these political leaders to present themselves (and not the medical
personnel at the frontline) as heroic commanders or heroes who should be appreciated by the people for their intervention strategies. Hence, when Trump consistently described himself as a “wartime president” he was etching into hearts and minds of Americans a key issue he would raise when seeking second term in office. Those seeking to attack him for not fulfilling all his campaign promises would be told that Corona virus pandemic was a militating factor. In the discussions that follow, specific attention is given to the Nigerian dimensions of the issues.

**Nigeria’s Second War:** Before the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in Nigeria on 27 February 2020, the country was facing different violent conflict situations. The deadliest of the conflicts include the Boko Haram crisis in the North East which according to the Global Conflict Tracker has led to more than 37,500 deaths and displacement of over 2.5 million people within Nigeria and 244,000 refugees since 2009 (CFR 2020:1). The other problems include banditry and cattle rustling in the North west, and the Niger Delta in the South South which has refused to abate despite the amnesty granted the militants in the region since 2009 (Albert 2019). All these crisis situations still take human lives and lead to human displacements, even across international borders. COVID-19 is simply a worrisome addition to all of these problems. The pandemic brought Nigeria to the stage of two kinds of unconventional warfare: the asymmetric war with Boko Haram and others and the invisible war with COVID-19. In order to defeat the two enemies, Nigeria needs to come up with its own kind of twin crises or “two-war” defense strategy. Some lessons could be taken from the US that is fighting this kind of war: aspiring to defeat China, Russia and North Korea on the one hand and also defeat Islamic terrorists and their funders in the Middle East. The US is sinking in global politics for it most especially under President Trump. Can Nigeria come out remaining a strong nation by fighting Boko Haram and COVID-19 at the same time?
This is a major peace and security question that cannot be answered here but dealt with later by students of strategic studies.

However, some signs of what could happen later could be discerned from some unfolding scenarios. As Nigeria responds to COVID-19 in an age of Boko Haram crisis, the structural weaknesses of the country come out in different forms: people’s lack of trust in their political leaders’ capacity to solve problems altruistically; intrusion of unhealthy regionalism and idle religiosity in crisis management; high chances of monies meant for dealing with problems being stolen; and leaders telling so many lies that people no longer believe them. Some Nigerians still do not believe that COVID-19 is real not necessarily because they are stubborn but do not believe in what their leaders say. Leaders that told lies in peacetime would find it difficult to be believed in war times. That is the present situation in Nigeria now. As the country contends with these deficit gaps in governance, it faces a more daring clincher: the global crash in oil price making the country’s economy needing international assistance. What kind of assistance can the country get when the so-called donor nations are equally faced by imminent global economic recession or even depression? These are the frontline peace and security issues.

**Sino/Nigeria Relations**: It is a popular knowledge that COVID-19 started in China. What is debated is the why and how. The Guardian (London) reported that China was clamping down on research projects on corona virus most likely to control the narrative surrounding the pandemic. These manifests in the form of the Chinese universities that published on the matter or that are researching into the issue, particularly on the origin of the virus, removing the pages from their online media platform (Kirchgaessner et al. 2020). There is also the policy of those seeking to publish on COVID-19 submitting their works for vetting before they are submitted for publication. Commenting on this, the Financial Times Express observed that “the ministry of education’s science and technology department had issued instructions to at least two
universities regarding the publication of research related to tracing the origins of the SARS CoV-2 virus; any such research is to be first vetted by the academic committee of the institution and then sent to the ministry of science and technology for further review before it gets the nod for publishing” (The Financial Express 2020). Is China doing this for health, economic or political reasons?

China was the first country to experience the pandemic. Even if it has nothing to do with the origin of the disease, it was thought that it had plenty of time before the others to have studied the disease and under its different aspects to be shared with the rest of the world. Hence, several other countries criticize the country. While some of its friendly countries most especially Iran questioned China’s reported infection and death statistics, Brazil suggested that the pandemic was a strategy of China for promoting its global leadership ambition, while some western countries most especially the US accuse China of strategic cover-ups and criminal silence (Wang 2020). When Australia opted to start an independent inquiry into the origin of COVID-19 China responded immediately by considering the step too “dangerous”.

It threatened immediately to stop its students and tourists from visiting Australia. This was a strong pressure tactic given the fact that earnings from foreign students are Australia’s third biggest export: worth more than $30 billion (Hanrahan 2020).

As the US and other big powers joined the developing world to taste how health related issues could be used to advance unhealthy international diplomacy, Nigeria jumped on the other side by inviting the Chinese to provide some assistance to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. The Health Minister, Dr. Osagie Ehanire, announced this to Nigerians. But not many Nigerians believe that China has anything to offer Nigeria in managing the pandemic. The country had already made a good name for herself in terms of securing recovery rate from the disease than many other nations of the world did. The few people that died in Nigeria from the pandemic were those who mismanaged the disease by either not disclosing their health status or coming up for
treatment too late. What lessons then is China coming to teach Nigeria on how to treat the pandemic? If Nigeria needs any assistance at all, it is that of being assisted to establish more testing centres and having the kits for getting increased number of Nigerians tested.

Those opposed to the visit included the Minority Caucus of the House of Representatives, the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUC) and the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA). The NMA particularly released an elaborate public statement on the matter, signed by its National President, Dr. Francis Faduyile. It claimed have received the news with great dismay and utter disappointment (see Onyeji 2020). The Association was not opposed to the Chinese donating medical equipment to Nigeria or advising through the electronic media on the ongoing efforts in Nigeria. It described the invitation of the Chinese to be ill-timed and of no overbearing significance; and an “embarrassment to the membership of the Association and other health workers who are giving their best in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic under deplorable working conditions, and a fragile health system”. Included in this opposition to the invitation of the Chinese were that (i) “the Chinese who from available accounts are not out of the wood themselves. The spike in cases and the death toll from COVID -19 in Italy coincided with the arrival of the Chinese in the guise of offering assistance” (ii) the United Nations has only just recently commended the efforts of Nigeria so far (iii) that the Government did not take into consideration the extant laws regulating the practice of medicine in Nigeria as enshrined in the Medical and Dental Council Act. This is one such circumstance where the Medical and Dental Council of Nigerian should be consulted to grant necessary approvals to foreigners to interact with Nigerian patients”.

Rather than the Chinese, the NMA felt the government ought to have invited the large pool of unemployed and underemployed Nigerian doctors to join their senior colleagues in fighting the deadly disease as done in the other parts of the world. The Association expects the government to
have provided the Nigerian doctors in the frontline with the tools needed for doing better: including Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), test kits and test centers that are in short supply across the country. The health workers handling the COVID-19 cases were said to absolutely lack any form of insurance. The Association threatened to review the participation of its members in the fight against COVID-19 should the Government go ahead with the invitation of the Chinese.

The foregoing notwithstanding, a team of Chinese medical professionals arrived Nigeria on 8 April 2020 with medical equipment said to be worth about 1.5 million US dollars. The same day Nigeria rolled out red carpet to receive the 15 Chinese “experts” in Abuja, there was a national news broadcast showing the Nigerian military receiving some armament from China for fighting Boko Haram. The war equipment included VT-4 main battle tanks, SH-5 self-propelled howitzers and a few others meant to strengthen Nigeria’s land forces in the battle against Boko Haram militants.

One of the tanks is shown below:

**Fig. 2: Taking delivery of one of the Chinese tanks**
The military equipment must have arrived Nigeria before the arrival of the Chinese medics but were kept away from the Nigerian public for strategic communication. But that the equipment “arrived” same day as the Chinese medics is not to say they were out for humanitarianism or gifts. Nigeria ordered for them from China’s Norinco since 2019 (defenceweb 2020). The order was made at a moment when the international community, led by the US, denied Nigeria access to such weapons for fighting Boko Haram. This compromises the capacity of Nigeria to perform like the Chadians in fighting Boko Haram (Albert 2017). The message that the government was trying to send to the Nigerians critical of the Chinese is that they should be considered as friends along two tracks: helping to fight COVID-19 and Boko Haram. China is celebrated in a few other parts of Africa for several other reasons (Albert 2014). One of them is that many African countries, including Nigeria, is indebted to China. Nigeria wants more loans from the Chinese and can therefore not antagonize the country as those rejecting the Chinese medics want.

**Personal Liberties, Others’ Health:** To curb the spread of coronavirus and safeguard public health, Nigeria instituted containment and other measures (“flattening the curve”) forcing the people to stay at home, maintain social and physical distancing and wear face masks. The Nigerians interviewed on the pandemic on television and radio shows remember COVID-19 more for the lockdowns than the deaths associated with it. Rather than see the lockdowns from the positive context of saving lives, they see the situation as constituting a violation of their personal liberties in a manner never experienced in their lifetime. The ravaging poverty in Nigeria before COVID-19 makes this understandable. Many Nigerians live on daily incomes. Asking them to stay at home for weeks is life threatening. In expressing their anger and

**Source:**https://www.defenceweb.co.za/featured/nigerian-military-receives-tanks-artillery-from-china/
disappointment with how the stay-at-home orders are implemented, some of these Nigerians cried, yelled and begged: asking to be allowed to go back to their businesses claiming that “hunger kills more than COVID-19”. The frustrations expressed by some of these people are tied to their hearing that the government had budgeted for and was distributing palliatives to the poorest of the poor in the society. But many of those who should be benefitting from such support services are not reached. In order words, they were prevented from going out to fend for themselves and no help came from the government.

Some of these people soon returned to the streets to fend for themselves either by practicing their trades or even going into criminal activities.

The foregoing pertains to the poor or ordinary citizens. The privileged in the society equally perceive the measures taken by the government to have undue impacts on their personal liberties. Unlike what they are familiar and comfortable with, they were requested to provide their travel history, self-isolate as recommended by the government or report themselves to the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) when tested positive for COVID-19. They refused to comply with these protocols. This happened in Ilorin, Lagos, Kano, and Ibadan. The Ibadan case traveled down from Kano, visited at least three private hospitals and two labs, and UCH where he died. He was treated for typhoid and malaria at two of the three clinics. It was at the third that a doctor recommended that he should be tested for COVID-19. He died before the result of the test came out. In the process of his movements up and down, he must have infected a number of people.

Unfortunately, the same Nigeria state governments are expected to set good examples on how to manage the COVID-19 violate some of the protocols. The worst-case scenario was probably how the case of Abba Kyari who died of COVID-19 was handled. Nigerians were never told the private hospital where he was treated and what happened to those that treated him. Against the general rule of burying the victims of the pandemic wherever they die, Kyari was brought back to Abuja in a private jet and the funeral was attended by hundreds of people who failed to observe
social and physical distancing the NCDC preached on daily basis. NCDC members were also there. Some of the undertakers that handled the funeral did not wear any mask and nobody was there to caution them. The most scandalous was the case of one of the undertakers who removed and threw his white suit used for the funeral by the roadside and drove off.

To protect President Buhari and the others living or working closely with him, the presidential aides that attended the funeral had to be barred from entering the state house immediately after the burial of Kyari. They were expected to go into self-isolation for fourteen days. Members of the NCDC that were at the occasion were equally expected to self-isolate. While the presidential aides could not but stay away from the presidency, members of the NCDC appeared in the public the next day to carry out their daily briefing of Nigerians on the pandemic. Members of the committee simply apologized to Nigerians for mismanaging the funeral.

**Killing for COVID-19**: Task Forces are posted out in different parts of Nigeria to enforce the lockdown orders. They soon come on collision paths with Nigerians that disobeyed the Government order and those who venture out of their homes to seek their daily bread. By April 16 2020, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) told the BBC News that the lockdown enforcers had killed more Nigerians than COVID-19 did. Whereas 12 people died as a result of complications associated with the disease, the number of Nigerians killed by security officials was put at 18. The Commission claimed to have received more than 100 complaints from 24 out of the 36 states in the country of the enforcers maltreating violators of the lockdown orders (BBC 2020b). The attack on Nigerians by the security agencies continued since then. On 24 April 2020, some officials of the Rivers State Taskforce shot and killed a female police officer that attempted to stop them from destroying the goods of some street traders at Eneka town in Obio-Akpo LGA in Rivers State.
The security officials involved in the COVID-related ones were simply playing out the government’s characterization of their response to the pandemic as a “war”. They carry out their duties just to impress the government instead of caring out their duty rightfully. Opposed to the kind of grim scenario, Sarah Glassford, archivist at the University of Windsor’s Leddy Library and a historian of medicine argued against the war metaphors of corona virus. She said “The context of war justifies all kinds of behaviours and interventions and loss of rights that we would not normally submit to…We would do well to think twice before we frame this entire pandemic in those terms. Are there similarities? Sure. Are they the same? No. The words we choose matter.” (Gerster 2020). Arguing similarly, Dr. Larry Brilliant, an epidemiologist who helped to eradicate smallpox said, “When in a war, you're killing people and you've got an enemy. I understand the need to make the virus into the enemy…There's a harm to it. When you are in a war, the only thing you do is the war. We have a lot of other things we do.” (Levenson 2020).

**Policy Implications and Conclusion**

One clear message from the experiences of COVID-19 is that the future of every nation of the world is in their hands. No nation could really extend helping hand to another nation. As the pandemic ravaged Italy and Spain, not even the European Union could provide any assistance. As African nations bury their dead, neither the African Union nor the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) could help as the leadership of the member countries were also managing their own internal phase of the pandemic. The world was shocked as the big global powers bury their dead in hundreds and thousands. Churches and Mosques shut down all over the world – even in Rome and Mecca respectively.

Christians celebrated their 2020 Easter at home and Muslims started their 30 day fasting in April unable to observe their congregation prayers in Mosques.

Nigerians are saddened with the lost of their loved ones to COVID-19. They are disturbing by the many lockdowns. They fear the job loss and economic crisis that could happen in the post
viruses months and years. In the course of the pandemic, they saw the weaknesses of the Nigerian state; they saw lack of leadership around them. They saw the weaknesses in the health, educational and political systems. Not even the many Colleges of Medicine in the country could provide the needed molecular laboratories for testing those suspected to be having COVID-19. Several parts of Nigeria did not have test/isolation centers. Some of the established test centers had no regular supply of test kits. Some people called the test centers but had nobody to pick their calls. Some were turned back from the test centers because they were yet to fully developed symptoms of COVID-19. Some of these people died before they could get help. As Nigeria fights COVID-19, it was difficult for the leadership to provide relevant statistics on the citizens of the country. But the country did not lack everything. It has a Nigeria’s National Action Plan for Health Security Federal Republic of Nigeria (2018-2022) which if implemented would have empowered the country to do better than it is doing in dealing with COVID-19. The focus of the action plan passed by the Federal Ministry of Health in November 2018 in response to the Ebola outbreak in 2014 is on the use of health security for a “safer and prosperous Nigeria”. Unfortunately, Nigeria’s responses to COVID-19 hardly show that the leadership of the country is aware of the document and the preventive diplomacy pledged in it to Nigerians. All these readily framed COVID-19 as a serious peace and security issue.

Addressing members of the UN Security Council in a video conference, the UN Secretary General, Guterres, observed that the pandemic “poses a significant threat to the maintenance of international peace and security -- potentially leading to an increase in social unrest and violence that would greatly undermine our ability to fight the disease” (UN 2020). He called attention to a variety of ways in which the human security issues could further escalate. First and foremost, he argued that the pandemic could erode the people’s trust in public institutions in those countries where the people could not get adequate protection and support services from their leaders. The Nigerian scenarios would fit well into this kind of argument. In the country, people were forced
to stay at home with little or nothing to eat. Billions of Naira were said to have been set aside for cushioning the effects of the lockdowns. But several of the supposed beneficiaries of the scheme got nothing. It would take a long time for Nigerians to put all these traumatic experiences associated with COVID-19 behind them. Hence, the leadership of the country should be awaiting the backlashes of some of their actions.

The point being made here is that Nigeria is entering the age in its evolution requires that the leadership gets more altruistic. The institutions of state must become more inclusive and open. The government must have deliberate policies and governance system for quickly responding to this issue of trust deficits in the society. If Nigerians were successfully deceived in the past, it might not work in the post virus era. Hence, what is needed now is for state officials to become more responsible and altruistic in addressing the needs of the people. Otherwise, the level of frustrations would increase. What happens under such situations is that people to fight one another along ethnic and religious lines as they compete for the little available social, economic, environmental and political resources in the land. There are more problems when the people unite to fight the leadership that makes life difficult for them.

Gutteres observed that the pandemic could have multiplier effects on the existing cases of violent extremism and terrorism around the world. He observed that as political leaders attend to the pandemic, terrorist groups could see "a window of opportunity to strike". He cited the Sahel as a flashpoint in this respect. He was right. As Nigeria and Chad were struggling with COVID19, Boko Haram carried out what has been variously described as its “deadliest attack on the Boma peninsula in an operation lasting for seven hours and leading to the death of 92 Chadian soldiers and 55 Nigerian soldiers in March 2020. Chadians lost 24 army vehicles and several of its arms were stolen off in speedboats. Same period Boko Haram attacked Nigerian soldiers in an ambush near Goneri village in northern Yobe state. 50 Nigerian soldiers died in the process.
The most fundamental of the observations of the UN Secretary General is that COVID19 provides violent extremists and terrorists a good lesson in bioterrorism. Hence, as the world manages the pandemic, it is necessary to start reflecting on the kind of policies that should be put in place for ensuring that criminals do not have the capacity for bioterrorism.

The economic impacts of the pandemic, which clearly results from the various form of lockdowns and inability of the government to provide the people the right kind of palliatives, are bound to become "major stressors" in a fragile society like Nigeria. The impact would most be felt by the youth (see Albert, Ike-Muonso and Ojelo 2018) and women (Albert, Omotoso and Akeredolu 2017) making up the majority of the society and incidentally the most marginalized in the society. Commenting on this kind of situation and related matters, the UN Secretary General said, "In some conflict settings, the uncertainty created by the pandemic may create incentives for some actors to promote further division and turmoil. This could lead to an escalation of violence and possibly devastating miscalculations, which could further entrench ongoing wars". In this respect, the pandemic could add to the scale of rural and urban crises in Nigeria given the existing knowledge that in hard times urban criminal and political violence increases among the youths (see Albert and Lawanson 2019a and 2019b). The other existing problems that could be boosted by the pandemic is the ongoing Boko Haram crisis in the North east; Niger Delta crisis that has failed to abate despite the amnesty programme started in 2009; and the escalating banditry in the North West that the country is already managing. There is the need for the government to invest more on non-kinetic methods for dealing with the violence in the country as the use of force by the military over the years have been counterproductive.

In concluding this paper, it is apt to say some difficult moments await Nigeria in the post COVID-19 years. The country needs to quickly put in place necessary policy frameworks for engaging with the situation. This framework should draw from the following pillars of positive peace earlier discussed in this paper: (i) functional government, (ii) equitable allocation of state resources, (iii) free flow of information in a manner that could discourage fake news and hate
media, (iv) the promotion of good relations between different Nigerian groups, (v) development of high level of human capital through sincere commitment to education development, (vi) guaranteeing different groups their social, economic and political rights, (vii) rights protection, (vii) sincere and transparent anti-graft policies, and (viii) the provision of sound business environment for all and sundry. There are several policy papers in Nigeria that could serve as the spring board of attaining these goals. The problems could also be managed as part of Nigeria’s commitment to the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
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