



An assessment of the role of executive and the legislature in the management of covid-19 in Nigeria

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Abstract

The values of democracy which are relatively fair and the capacity to be tyrannical in the face of the minority. Virtually absolute authority in the hands of the higher number under a democracy, a groups worth is based on the result of political and economic competition. The democratic system of governance is based on representing as many interests are found in society. The act art of sidelining or mainstreaming representatives makes or mar societies the fight against COVID-19 requires cooperation of both legislature and the executive. The research used both primary and secondary sources, the data were analyze using the qualitative method of analysis. The Marxist theory was adopted. Karl Marx made tremendous contribution to the theory of democracy. The researcher content that legislature and the executive should cooperate and increase budgetary allocation to health sectors and improve the welfare and insurance of medical personnel who are in the front-line duties.

Keywords: Democracy, Governance, legislature, executive and Covid-19

1.0 Introduction

Democracy is described as majority rule over the minority. The values of democracy which are relatively fair also have the capacity to be tyrannical in the face of the minority. With virtually absolute authority in the hands of the higher number under a democracy, a groups worth is based on the result of political and economic competition (Lewis, 2008)

There is an awfully close relationship between the concepts of democracy and Governance. The democratic system of governance is based on representatives as many interests as are found in society to an exceptionally large extent has been a major source of positive transformation and negative fracture of many developing

'societies. The act and art of sidelining or mainstreaming representatives make or mar societies. The human needs theory clearly explains the impact of; inclusion, survival, participation, recognition and autonomy in society.

The general idea that democratic states do not fight interstate wars against each other is one of the most influential ideas to appear in the academic subfield of peace studies in recent years. This research intent to assess democratic governance and the role played by both executive and legislature in the fight against COVID-19 in Nigeria. To also examine how legislature helps the executive in the areas of making, to strengthen the ministry of health, budget approval, insurance for health workers and to analyze



effort of the executive in the distribution of palliatives to ease the suffering of poor Nigerians.

Methodology

The research used both primary source in obtaining information for the research. Thus, daily briefing by the Presidential Task Force on Covid-19 (PTF) on media houses, which include NTA, AIT and Channels Television, as events unfold, which formed the major part of this discussion. The data analysis was basically qualitative in nature, recording the daily activities of the Task Force as they unfold.

Conceptualizing Democracy

Since roman times, the meaning of democracy has continually shifted, producing many variants. Democracy is now a relative concept. It does not always mean the same thing to all peoples and cultures? The ancient Romans took a practical approach including the principles of democracy. The social condition and division that existence within their community determine the political institution the Roman adopted and therefore, they did not concern themselves with the construction of an ideal government but instead fashion political institution in response to problems as they arose.

Thus, the democracy of the Romans republic defers from that of the empire with the role of senator in government constantly changing from one era to another. In England, the principle and practice of democracy also took on a different form likewise in United states of America.

The word *democracy* was derived from the Greek words *demos* which means "the people", and *kratia* which means "to rule". This in theory means a governance system by the people for the people, as opposed to autocracy

which is 'the rule by one person, or oligarchy which the rule by a few. According to Appadorai (1968), democracy is a system of government under which the people exercise the governing power either directly or through representatives periodically elected by themselves. Fundamentally, democracy means a system of government that offered the citizens freedom to decide their desires.

Democracy is described as majority rule over the minority. There is an awfully close relationship between the concepts of democracy and representation. The democratic system of governance is based on representing as many interests as are found in society. Democracy, therefore, is the government of the majority with the right of minority protected. United States of America is a model of democracy being practice in Africa and part of the world. Which is widely agree as the best form of government.

Role of Executive on Covid-19

President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria warned Nigerians about the danger posed by the Covid-19 pandemic during a nationwide address on April 13, 2020. In his words, "This is not a joke; it is a matter of life and death." To underline the seriousness of the situation, he announced the extension of regional lockdown measures by an additional 14 days within the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja (FCT), Lagos, and Ogun States in a bid to contain the spread of the new coronavirus. In December 2019, China identified and notified the global public health community about the emergence of a novel coronavirus among patients at health centers in the Hubei province of the country. (WHO 2020). This novel coronavirus was identified as the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 and its attendant illness as coronavirus



disease 2019 (Covid-19). Within weeks, the virus had spread rapidly across Wuhan, the Chinese city where it was initially identified, and to other parts of Asia, Europe, and the United States in epidemic proportions. The World Health Organization (WHO) later declared this pandemic on March 11, 2020 as the new coronavirus continued to spread across the globe with devastating outcomes for lives, livelihoods, and economies. (Riou & Althau, 2020)

As of April 20, 2020, over 2.4 million people have been infected globally and 168,500 have died from Covid-19. Although the worst affected countries remain outside the African continent, both in terms of infections and fatalities, the number of infections and deaths continue to rise in Africa. The likelihood of health systems on the continent becoming overwhelmed as the virus spreads is high, given the weak and fragile state of public health systems in most African countries. The most recent Covid-19 statistics provided by the Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) indicate that out of the 55 African countries, 52 have reported coronavirus infections amounting to 22,513 cases and 1,126 deaths, with the Union of the Comoros, Lesotho, and Western Sahara as the only African countries that have not reported Covid-19 cases. Though the number has increase as of June 10, 2020 to over 178 thousand, so also the number of dead NCDC JUNE, 2020.

Given the challenges that many African countries face with weak health systems, shortage of personnel, in adequate funding, bad governance the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic on public health, peace, and security on the continent are dire. The linkages between public health, societal

wellbeing, politics, and the performance of the national health systems are well documented in Africa particularly in post-conflict countries as well as those experiencing protracted conflicts. African center for Disease Control June, 2020 While the United Nations (UN) Security Council has not yet formally determined the Covid-19 pandemic a threat to international peace and security, as it did in the case of the 2014 Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) epidemic in West Africa, the African Union (AU) has expressed concerns about the likelihood of the Covid-19 pandemic impacting negatively on the continent's stability. At its 910th meeting held on February 13, 2020, the African Union's Peace and Security Council noted that the Covid-19 outbreak is a public health emergency that "could constitute a threat to peace and security on the Continent. African center for disease control. June 2020

Public health responses to the Covid-19 pandemic in Africa have varied from one country to another but reflect a general trend towards declaring states of emergency followed by restrictions of movement (mostly lockdown and shelter-in-place restrictive measures), except in instances where access to essential supplies such as food or medicine are required. In addition, most of African countries have adopted other WHO recommended strategies including quarantine, social distancing, self-isolation, wearing of face mask and improved water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) practices. Others include mass coronavirus testing and contact-tracing at the community level. Although these strategies for mitigating the spread of Covid-19 have proven effective in "flattening the curve" in China and South Korea, they have been accompanied by



limited or no measures to address the unintended consequences of the mitigation strategies given the realities of unacceptably high unemployment, inequality, and economic informality in most African countries. It is not surprising that concerns have been raised by the AU and various UN agencies about the implications of the Covid-19 response strategies on peace, security, and public health in African countries. The implementation of mitigation and containment strategies have resulted not only to the perpetuation of existing poverty and inequalities, but also heightened security-related problem.

Across Africa, incidences of violence perpetrated by security forces deployed to enforce curfews and confinement measures are being reported. Deaths and injuries resulting directly from actions by State security personnel have been reported in a number of African countries including Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Kenya, and South Africa. Africa center for disease control The UN has also reported that violence against women – domestic violence – has intensified in countries where lockdown or stay-at-home orders have been implemented. This notwithstanding, evidence from the 2014 Ebola Disease outbreak Disease EVD. In West Africa indicates that public health emergencies can exacerbate the multiple forms of violence that women and girls already face.

Lessons from the West African EVD response also indicate that the outbreak contributes to the loss in traction for immunization programs against tuberculosis, measles, and yellow fever. While data is currently limited on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on maternal and child-health service provision, the WHO and UNICEF have raised

concerns about the suspension of immunization interventions as several countries including Nigeria have halted vaccination programs, which will certainly have an impact on the prevention of outbreaks of common childhood diseases such as polio, measles, rubella, and acute respiratory illnesses with implications for public health, peace, and security. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) stands out as a country that is on the precipice of disaster. It has been battling three epidemics; EVD, measles, and cholera, and is now faced with the additional challenge of dealing with Covid-19 with a fragile health system due to ongoing armed-conflicts in parts of the country.

Consequently conflict-affected or post-conflict African countries, including Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, Libya, Somalia, and South Sudan, have all reported cases of Covid-19. Should these governments redeploy their troops to deal with public health crises because of the coronavirus, disruptions are likely to occur with respect to counterterrorism activities and contribution of troops to peacekeeping missions. Another concern is the possibility of troop deployment becoming another channel for transmitting Covid-19 within countries and across borders. This factor lends itself to the need for a regional African approach to address the pandemic according A.U parliament 2020. The Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) is well positioned to provide technical tools and measures that can be adapted to ensure that the contextual dynamics in individual African countries are considered in all Covid-19 mitigation responses to address its adverse effects on populations already facing severe socio-



economic inequalities. It is also important that measures for ending the Covid-19 pandemic in Africa include measures that ensure equitable and sustainable access to good quality healthcare facilities and treatment CDC 2020. Finally, Covid-19 response measures must also incorporate social policies that transform the socio-economic conditions of the people considering the precarious peace and security situation in Africa.

Brief History of Coronavirus disease COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). It was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan China, and has since spread globally, resulting in an ongoing pandemic. As of 13 May 2020, more than 4.27 million cases have been reported across 187 countries and territories including Nigeria, resulting in more than 292,000 deaths. More than 1.5 million people have recovered according World Health Organization.

Common symptoms include fever, cough, fatigue, shortness of breath, and loss of smell and taste. While the majority of cases result in mild symptoms, some progress to acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), multi-organ failure, septic shock, and blood clots. The time from exposure to onset of symptoms is typically around five days but may range from two to fourteen days. (Cui& Shi, 2019)

Recommended measures to prevent infection include frequent hand washing, maintaining physical distance from others (especially from those with symptoms), quarantine (especially for those with symptoms), covering coughs, and keeping unwashed hands away from the face. In addition, the use of a face covering is recommended for those who suspect they have the virus and their caregivers.

Recommendations for face covering use by the public vary, with some authorities recommending for them, some recommending against them, and others requiring their use. There is limited evidence for or against the use of masks (medical or other) in healthy individuals in the wider community. (Lai, Tang and Shish 2020)

According to the World Health Organization, there are no available vaccines nor specific antiviral treatments for COVID-19. On 1 May 2020, the United States gave Emergency Use Authorization to the antiviral remdesivir for people hospitalized with severe COVID-19. Management involves the treatment of symptoms, supportive care, isolation, and experimental measures. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on 30 January 2020 and a pandemic on 11 March 2020. Local transmission of the disease has occurred in most countries across all six WHO regions. Nigeria recorded its first index case on 27thFeb 2020 from Italian businessman. (Daily briefing by Presidential Taskforce on COVID-19 Chairman, Boss Mustapha on 12May,2020, now, more vaccines have been produced to includes Jonson Johnson, AstraZeneca which the vaccination is ongoing in Nigeria presently.

Health Security has since been relegated to the background in Nigeria over the past four decades with lowest budgetary allocation every year. In 2020 budget, Federal government only allocates 3.9% for health at the same time allocated large percentage of budget to Military security to fight Boko haram terrorist since 2019 with little achievement. Research has showed that trillion of naira has been expended on



military security twice that of education and Health put together. There by neglecting Health environment, education and other sector which deserve equal attention? On May 13, 2020, the federal government of Nigeria according to the Boss Mustapha, Secretary to the Government of the Federation and the Chairman Presidential Task Force on Covid-19, said that Nigeria is struggling to battle COVID-19 with poor medical facilities and few medical personnel due to long time neglect of health sectors. Laboratories for test is a major challenge as the whole country with 36 states can only boast of 7 testing centres and 31 laboratories in all, for about 200 million people. The testing capacity per day is now 3500 with the target to test two million people between May and July 2020, so far the Center for Disease Control (NCDC) has tested 37,000 people with 4,787 confirmed cases as of 12 may 2020 which is 0.1 percent of the population, with 158 people dead which is about 3percent .Sadly over 500 medical personnel in front line have been infected with COVID-19 with 25 dead this is attributed to inadequate training and lack of sufficient personal protective Equipment (PPE).Currently 34 states including FCT Abuja have recorded Multiples cases with Lagos and Kano states with highest confirmed cases, except Kogi and Cross Rivers state that are yet to record a single case though no test has been conducted as of 13th May 2020.

Impacts of Covid-19 on Nigeria Economy

The COVID-19 has impacted negatively on every sectors of the economy globally and Nigeria is not in exception. First the COVID-19 has affected the prices of crude oil globally as the price of crude oil per barrel between 28, and 18 dollars. This has affected Nigeria national budget which was based on 57 dollar per barrel and 2.5 million

barrel per day, thereby forcing the government to reduce the budget to between 30 and 20 dollar per barrel. This has automatically affected the programs and policy of government especially as regard to road, Health, Education, electricity, job creation and other infrastructure.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has also affected educational development especially in Nigeria with poor infrastructures to embark on online learning especially public Schools Students at all levels of academic institutions have been at home since march ,2020 with no specific date for resumption. Business activities have been crippled as all shops except pharmaceuticals and food stores are shot down, companies shot down, aviation industries are not left out, thereby leading to unemployment, poverty and hunger in the land. Federal Government provided palliative to 3.6 million poorest and most vulnerable Nigerian to alleviate the suffering of Nigeria posed by the COVID-19 Pandemic (*Interviewed with Dr. Aliyu Sani, The Coordinator PTF on Covid19, on 21 May' 2020, on channel Television*).Unfortunately the palliative did not really get to the targeted people as many observers cried foul of the manner of the implementation due to lack of transparency, bias and corruption on the part of those saddled with the responsibility of distributing the palliatives. This inadequacy forces the Federal government to ease restriction initially introduced in FCT, Lagos and Ogun states after five weeks of lockdown.

The COVID-19 has settled the debate between the military and health security which one should be given more attention, it is clear now that even the military security need health security at this time as military personnel are not spare by the pandemic, the



government is talking less of military security but health security because they have come to realised that health security has been neglected for long in Nigeria going by the statement made by the secretary to the Government of the Federation and the chairman of presidential Task force on COVID-19, Boss Mustapha , in march 2020, that ‘‘He doesn’t know that the health sectors have decayed to that extent.’’ Billions of Naira have been given to Federal Government as donations from private individuals, corporate organisations and international organisation like European Unions, United Nations, USA etc. to help fight the pandemic.

The Role of Legislature and Executive in the Fight against Covid-19

The legislature is the arm of government saddles with the responsibility of law making. In Nigeria, there are two houses, the upper house also called the red chamber which is the Senate comprises 109 members which represent the state, three members from each state, representing senatorial district, based on equality. The Lower house which is also known as the green chamber comprises 360 members representing constituencies the primary functions of the legislature is to make laws, approval of budget, rectification of treaties, approval of appointment such as Ambassadors, High commissioners, Ministers etc.

The executive is the arm of government that implement the law, The president as chief executive officer presiding over the affairs of the state including initiating foreign policy direction and Objectives , He appoint Ambassadors, High commissioners ,Ministers, Preparation of budget .The Nigerian legislature is dominated by All progressive Congress (APC) both the senate and House of Representatives which is the ruling party under the leadership of

president Muhammadu Buhari as chief executive .Both the executive and the legislature has important role to play in the fight against COVID-19.The legislature gives approval to proposal and policies initiated by the executive. For example, the executive submitted proposal for the review of 2020 budget from 57dollar per barrel to now 25dollar per barrel and reduce production of crude from 2.5million barrel to 1.9 million barrels per day and 360 naira per dollar.

The legislature unanimously approved on the 12May 2020 without party difference. The legislature approved the sum of 850b to fund 2020 budget in respond to COVID-19 pandemic and has also approved loan request of 5.5 billion dollars for executive to improve Health care delivery. The legislature through the speaker and other members are sponsoring a bill to amend Quarantine act of 1962 to empower the Director General of Center for Disease Control (CDC) to function more effective and efficiently and to the minister of health to act. Though the debate is still ongoing with lot of criticism from many quarters particularly civil society and some lawyers. The bill aims at ensuring effective ways to fight COVID-19 by medical personnel

The executive in the other hand approved package for health insurance for the front-line workers on COVID -19 duties. It has also approved and distributed palliative to 3.6 million less privileged Nigeria in form of grain and money to cushion the effect of lockdown experienced for over five weeks particularly in FCT, Lagos and Ogun States. Other states later joined. The executive through Central Bank approved the release of five billion naira to support small and medium scale industries cushion the effect of pandemic, also a hundred billion naira was approved to support pharmaceuticals



industries for research and production of drugs for the treatment of COVID-19. As of 10 June 2020, the national Assembly approved revised budget of 10.8trillion as against 10.9 as initially approved earlier before the event of COVID-19. According to Budget office, June 2020.

Democracy and the Media

The media today plays the role of acting as a bridge between the government and the people, the media report the activities of Presidential Task Force (PTF) on COVID-19 to Nigerian, and the media also report confirmed cases as well as dead on daily bases. As the government decided that the price of petrol and diesel was reduced, that decision needs to be conveyed to the audience. The issue of lockdown and easing the lockdown, are part of preventive measure against spread of COVID-19 and other related issues as reported by the media. This is done through radio, newspaper and the television not only inform the people about it, but also explain the effect of that decision taken by the government on the people. Institutions like the legislature, executive and judiciary run the government of the country for the welfare and development of all the people. The distribution of palliative was assisted by the media as watch dog. They give adequate coverage and help identifying the needy and most vulnerable.

The main role of the mass media is to act as a bridge between the people and the government and to also hold these institutions and government accountable where they fail to deliver. The media also links the government and the masses for people through programs that educates the public on the performance of the government, such programmes are "Political platform from" and "Democracy today", which the people contribute through asking

of questions and answers to the presenter and the quest of the programme.

Recommendation

As the economic structure of society is alterable, political domination is also alterable.

With the early-stage experience of COVID-19 in Nigeria and the move into more advanced stages, protecting health care workers should take on even greater importance in order not to jeopardize them.

Government should increase funding of health sectors by increasing their budgetary allocation so as improve service delivery.

There should be synergy between the legislature and the executive so as promote good governance.

Maintaining the shutdown of physical contact and economic interaction while meeting the basic needs of those sheltering in place becomes of paramount importance in the phases of covid-19. This is where the government of Nigeria. Will aid through managing logistics for food, medical services, and water access as palliative to cushion the effect of temporarily out of job.

There should be advocacy for infection prevention and control practices, especially in healthcare facilities across the country.

Governance is crucial to public health. Governments from the local to the national should work together to address the growing COVID-19 threat. Countries should activate National Response Management protocols across its components. This will ensure rapid preparedness, response, and recovery.

The need for research and development cannot be overemphasized. Nigerian Governments should crate the political will and substantial funding commitments to research that can detect impending outbreak of viral disease necessary exercise to contain epidemics.



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