



Revitalising Peace: A Community-Based Approach to Countering Boko Haram's Extremism in Northeast Nigeria

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Abstract

Acts of violent extremism carried out by Boko Haram insurgents persistently disrupt the peace and impede the development of the Northeastern states of Nigeria, particularly Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states. Effectively addressing Boko Haram's violent actions requires a fresh strategy, one that departs from the current predominantly militarised approach. This strategy should encompass both robust and compassionate measures to break the cycle of youth radicalisation. On the basis of insights gained from conceptual, theoretical and historical analyses, this paper champions the adoption of a community-based approach to counter violent extremism (CVE). The main objectives of this approach are to disrupt the established processes of youth radicalisation, prevent the escalation of violence, and restore peace and normalcy to the beleaguered communities of Northeast Nigeria.

Keywords: Boko Haram, Extremism, Countering Violent Extremism, Northeast Nigeria, Community-Based Approach.

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Introduction

The epicentre of violent extremism in Nigeria is the Northeast geopolitical zone. Boko Haram, which started under the leadership of Mohammed Yusuf¹ and his deputy Abubakar Shekau,² is the vehicle and organisation under which the most wanton destruction of lives and properties is still being perpetrated 18 years after it was initiated in 2002. Yusuf and Shekau were the two principal designers and promoters of the politico-religious discourse that shaped the ideology of the Boko Haram group.³ When the former was killed in 2009, the latter succeeded him as the leader of the group. Shekau proved to be an extremely violent leader.⁴ Boko Haram targets as recruits the unemployed and less educated youth as its core foot soldiers. However, the organisation is known to have been funded by educated members of the local communities⁵ in Maiduguri, capital of Borno State. Boko Haram embraced indiscriminate violence against the state apparatus and vulnerable members of the society⁶ as a legitimate strategy for achieving its overall aim of establishing a theocratic state. Boko Haram has become synonymous with violent extremism in Nigeria. The authorities

in Nigeria have been fighting the scourge of Boko varying degrees of successes. This paper adopts a global perspective in highlighting some of the models that could be adapted at countering violent extremism (CVE) in the Northeast.

This paper outlines strategies for engaging youth as measures for attenuating their social and psychological tendencies to violence and a mindset that sees violence as a method of resolving grievances. The overall thrust of the paper is to help empower communities as key players in building resilience and providing positive pro-community influence for youth.

Violent Extremism and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)

The term *violent extremism*⁷ captures a spectrum of acts including the acts of encouraging, condoning, justifying, or supporting the commission of a violent act to achieve political,⁸

¹ Abee Olufemi Salaam, "The Psychological Make-up of Mohammed Yusuf," in *Boko Haram: Anatomy of a Crisis*, ed. Ioannis Mantzikos (Bristol, UK: E-International Relations, 2013).

² Atta Barkindo, "Abubakar Shekau: Boko Haram's Underestimated Corporatist-Strategic Leader," in *Boko Haram Beyond the Headlines: Analyses of Africa's Enduring Insurgency*, ed. Jacob Zenn (USA: Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 2018).

³ Élodie Aparé, "Les Mots De Boko Haram: Décryptages De Discours De Mohammed Yusuf Et D'abubakar Shekau [the Words of Boko Haram: Decoding Speeches by Mohammed Yusuf and Abubakar Shekau]," *Afrique Contemporaine* 3, no. 255 (2015).

⁴ Barkindo, "Abubakar Shekau: Boko Haram's Underestimated Corporatist-Strategic Leader."

⁵ Wisdom Oghosa Iyekepolo, "Political Elites and the Rise of the Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 32, no. 4 (2020).

⁶ Ishaku Hamidu, "The State and Challenges of Protecting Vulnerable People: A Study of Boko Haram," *FUDMA Journal of Politics and International Affairs* 3, no. 2 (2020).

⁷ Astrid Bötticher, "Towards Academic Consensus Definitions of Radicalism and Extremism," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 11, no. 4 (2017).

⁸ Gilbert Ramsay and Donald Holbrook, "The Representation of Violence by Insurgent Political Actors: The "Violent" Part of "Violent Extremism"?", *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* 7, no. 1 (2015).



ideological,⁹ religious,¹⁰ social¹¹ or economic¹² goals. Kruglanski and his colleagues define violent extremism as “motivated deviance from general behavioural norms and is assumed to stem from a shift from a balanced satisfaction of basic human needs afforded by moderation to a motivational imbalance wherein a given need dominates the others.”¹³ Thus, so many different acts of violence committed in the pursuit of so many different and often divergent ends constitute acts of violent extremism. These acts are perpetrated by individuals with equally widely differing socioeconomic backgrounds that cuts across society's class structure. Thus, it recruits the poor, who form a leading foot-soldier group;¹⁴ you found the middle class (who act as field masterminds); and the elite too (who act as the fountains of sponsorship and facilitation).¹⁵ Interestingly, each of these classes may continue to engage in acts of violent extremism due to very different motives. Ferguson and McAuley suggest that individuals continue to engage in violent extremism for various context-driven reasons including “identity development and identity fusion..., insulated group membership, feelings of efficacy, dehumanisation processes, community support, and beliefs in the utility of violence.”¹⁶

From the legal perspective as enshrined in Nigeria's Terrorism (Prevention) Act 2011, the definition of violent extremism (or terrorism)¹⁷ term is all-encompassing and can accommodate not only the activities of Boko Haram but also the activities of the two other officially proscribed terrorist organisations in Nigeria, namely, Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) and the Shiite organisation called Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN). Section 2 of the Act¹⁸ defines terrorism as...

an act which is deliberately done with malice, aforethought and which: (a) may seriously harm or damage a country or an international organisation; (b) is intended or can reasonably be regarded as having been intended to—(i) unduly compel a government or international organisation to perform or abstain from performing any act; (ii) seriously intimidate a population; (iii) seriously destabilise or destroy the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country or an international organisation; or (iv) otherwise influence such government or international organisation by intimidation or coercion; and (c) involves or causes, as the case may be—(i) an attack upon a person's life which may cause serious bodily harm or death; (ii) kidnapping of a person; (iii) destruction to a

Government or public facility, a transport system, an infrastructure facility, including an information system, a fixed platform located on the continental shelf, a public place or private property, likely to endanger human life or result in major economic loss; (iv) the seizure of an aircraft, ship or other means of public or goods transport and diversion or the use of such means of transportation for any of the purposes in paragraph (b)(iv) of this subsection; (v) the manufacture, possession, acquisition, transport, supply or use of weapons, explosives or of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons, as well as research into, and development of biological and chemical weapons without lawful authority; (vi) the release of dangerous substance or causing of fire, explosions or floods, the effect of which is to endanger human life; (vii) interference with or disruption of the supply of water, power or any other fundamental natural resource, the effect of which is to endanger human life; (d) an act or omission in or outside Nigeria which constitutes an office within the scope of a counter terrorism protocols and conventions duly ratified by Nigeria.

The diversity of acts that constitute violent extremism or terrorism, the broad spectrum of individuals who carry out acts of violent extremism, and the multitude of motives that sustain these individuals on the path of violent extremism, all collectively and severally inform the emergence of numerous measures which the authorities have developed over time to counter the spread of violent extremism. In the academic literature, these measures coalesced under the termed CVE. Gaffney and Lopez¹⁹ argued that CVE is a product of the United States' official counter-terrorism policy. As of 2019, the United States has suffered 3,905 fatalities in 856 terror attacks.²⁰ The Department of Homeland Security²¹ defines CVE as “proactive actions to counter efforts by extremists to radicalise, recruit, and mobilise followers to violence”. CVE is a shared responsibility between law enforcement,²² non-governmental organisations, religious leaders²³, and communities²⁴ as well as women groups.²⁵ Communities share in this responsibility which builds resiliency against the catalysts driving violent extremist activities.²⁶ Communities can grow more robust against outside influences targeting youths by sensitising them about the dangers of violent extremism. These collaborative efforts will empower the youth make informed decisions on the effect of violent extremism on their lives, families, and communities.

⁹ Temitope B. Oriola and Olabanji Akinola, "Ideational Dimensions of the Boko Haram Phenomenon," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 41, no. 8 (2018).

¹⁰ Zuleyha Keskin and Fatih Tuncer, "Causes of Radicalisation: Theological Arguments as the Ultimate Trigger," in *Contesting the Theological Foundations of Islamism and Violent Extremism*, ed. Fethi Mansouri and Zuleyha Keskin (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

¹¹ Debra Smith and Steven Talbot, "How to Make Enemies and Influence People: A Social Influence Model of Violent Extremism (Sim-Ve)," *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism* 14, no. 2 (2019).

¹² Ramya M. Vijaya, Anthony Wilent, Jessica Cathcart *et al.*, "Economic Underpinnings of Violent Extremism: A Cross Country Exploration of Repeated Survey Data," *World Development* 109 (2018).

¹³ A. W. Kruglanski, K. Jasko, M. Chernikova *et al.*, "To the Fringe and Back: Violent Extremism and the Psychology of Deviance," *American Psychologist* 72, no. 3 (2017).

¹⁴ Zacharias P. Pieri and Jacob Zenn, "Under the Black Flag in Borno: Experiences of Foot Soldiers and Civilians in Boko Haram's 'Caliphate'," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 56, no. 4 (2018).

¹⁵ Iyekekpolo, "Political Elites and the Rise of the Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria."; Freedom C. Onuoha, "The Audacity of the Boko Haram: Background, Analysis and Emerging Trend," *Security Journal* 25, no. 2 (2011).

¹⁶ N. Ferguson and J. W. McAuley, "Staying Engaged in Terrorism: Narrative Accounts of Sustaining Participation in Violent Extremism," *Frontiers in Psychology* 11 (2020): pg. 1.

¹⁷ The term *terrorism* differs from *violent extremism*. The

¹⁸ *Terrorism (Prevention) Act, 2011*, (3rd Day of June, 2011).

¹⁹ Frank J. Gaffney and Clare M. Lopez, *See No Sharia: 'Countering Violent Extremism' and the Disarming of America's First Line of Defense* (Washington, DC: Center for Security Policy Press, 2016).

²⁰ START, "American Deaths in Terrorist Attacks, 1995-2019," in *Fact Sheet*, (The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), University of Maryland, 2020).

²¹ Department of Homeland Security, "What Is CVE?," <https://www.dhs.gov/cve/what-is-cve>.

²² Lorraine Mazerolle, Elizabeth Eggins, Adrian Cherney *et al.*, "Police Programs That Seek to Increase Community Connectedness for Reducing Violent Extremism Behaviour, Attitudes and Beliefs," *Campbell Systematic Reviews* 16, no. 3 (2020).

²³ Manal Omar, "Partnering Up: How to Work with Religious Leaders to Counter Violent Extremism," *World Policy Journal* 33, no. 4 (2016).

²⁴ Caitlin Ambrozik, "Community Stakeholder Responses to Countering Violent Extremism Locally," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 42, no. 12 (2018).

²⁵ Chikodiri Nwangwu and Christian Ezeibe, "Femininity Is Not Inferiority: Women-Led Civil Society Organizations and 'Countering Violent Extremism' in Nigeria," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 21, no. 2 (2019).

²⁶ Eleni A. Christodoulou, "'Boosting Resilience' and 'Safeguarding Youngsters at Risk': Critically Examining the European Commission's Educational Responses to Radicalization and Violent Extremism," *London Review of Education* 18, no. 1 (2020).



Brief on the Boko Haram Group

The *Jamā'at Ahl al-Sunnah li-Da'awah wa al-Jihād* (Group of the People of Sunnah for Preaching and Jihad), better known by its byname "Boko Haram" (a Hausa term meaning "Western Education is Sacrilege"), is an extremist group based in Northeast Nigeria, and also active in Chad, Niger and northern Cameroon.²⁷ The charismatic Yusuf established a mosque-school centre in Maiduguri which he dubbed Ibn Taymiyyah Centre but popularly known among the locals as *Markaz*. The centre attracted low-income families and youths from across Nigeria and neighbouring countries of Chad and Niger Republics.²⁸ Yusuf's *Markaz* had the political goal of creating an Islamic State in the Caliphal fashion.²⁹ However, the territorial ambition of Boko Haram also went hand in hand with other goals, including doing *jihad* to gain paradise (thus making them see suicide bombing missions as quickest routes to paradise³⁰). *Markaz* became a recruiting ground for radicalised youths.³¹ Its initial activities of denouncing the police and state corruption and other ills of the society casts it as a puritan Islamic sect.³² The government repeatedly ignored warnings about the increasingly militant character of the organisation, a disposition that almost bordered on criminal negligence or even connivance.³³

Several factors coalesced to enable Yusuf and his lieutenants to build a sizeable following, alleged to be over 280,000.³⁴ Prominent among these factors is the support his group, then called *Yusufiyya* after him, enjoyed from the local political elite. Yusuf offered the Borno political elite (especially Governor Ali Modu Sheriff³⁵ who ruled at that period) the votes and political thuggery they need to win elections in return for government appointments (which he planned to use for his ends) and material support (e.g., motorcycles which Yusuf distributed among his followers to use as commercial transport and render returns to him). Indeed, Sheriff, shortly after being elected as Governor of Borno State, created a Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) and admitted a Yusuf's follower by the name of Alhaji Buji Foi into the State Executive Council as Commissioner of MORA.³⁶ However, Yusuf and Sheriff fell out when the latter failed to deliver on some of their tacit agreements, including the institution of the *Shariah* legal code in the state.³⁷ After that, Sheriff started using the instruments of state (including the Police) to harass Yusuf and his followers who have now become

stridently vocal and violent in their demands. The tension between Yusuf and his erstwhile partner (Governor Sheriff) came to a head when the Police attacked a funeral convoy of Yusuf's followers and killed some in the ensuing melee. Yusuf gave a public ultimatum to the government to make restitution or face war. The government did nothing. Beginning on the night of 25 July 2009 onwards, Yusuf's followers, armed with guns and bombs, attacked and burnt down several Police Stations as well as some churches across Borno, Yobe, Bauchi and Kano States.³⁸ Thus, the Borno State authorities have confronted the *Yusufiyya* adherents with what Weber and his colleagues³⁹ termed existential and epistemic threats, and the latter responded with violence.

A Joint Task Force (JTF) consisting of the Police and the Military was launched in response. By 30 July, more than 700 people lay dead, mostly Boko Haram members. Also, police stations, prisons, government offices, schools and churches had been destroyed.⁴⁰ The head of the JTF, Colonel Ben Ahanotu, arrested Yusuf in his residence (or that of his father-in-law) and handed him over to the Police. However, the Police extrajudiciously killed Yusuf while hand-cuffed and claimed they shot Yusuf while he was trying to escape.⁴¹ A national broadcast by the then ailing President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua in which he assured Nigerians that he had ordered the National Security Advisor (Retired Major General Abdullahi Sarki Mukhtar) to probe Yusuf's killing⁴² gave credence to the alleged Police collusion in the killing of Yusuf at the behest of some Borno politicians who feared a living Yusuf might reveal their roles in the crises.⁴³ Shekau, Yusuf's second-in-command, succeeded him, and Habib Yusuf widely known with the alias Abu Mus'ab al-Barnawi⁴⁴ (the eldest son of Mohammed Yusuf) became the new deputy. In March 2015, the Boko Haram group announced its allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and rebranded itself as the *Wilāyat al-Islāmiyya Gharb Afriqiyyah* (Islamic State in West Africa Province, ISWAP).⁴⁵

Soon, however, ideological schism irrupted in the group.⁴⁶ Al-Barnawi broke away with the support of ISIL leadership in Baghdad and formed the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), launching ferocious attacks in the Niger Republic. Shekau, on the other hand, denounced al-Barnawi dismissing the announcement by ISIL as a coup.⁴⁷ He led the remnants of the Boko Haram members loyal to him becoming in time the

²⁷ Olumuyiwa Temitope Faluyi, Sultan Khan, and Adeoye O. Akinola, *Boko Haram's Terrorism and the Nigerian State: Federalism, Politics and Policies* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2019).

²⁸ Hamidu, "The State and Challenges of Protecting Vulnerable People: A Study of Boko Haram."

²⁹ J. Tochukwu Omenma, Ifeanyichukwu M. Abada, and Z. Onyinyechi Omenma, "Boko Haram Insurgency: A Decade of Dynamic Evolution and Struggle for a Caliphate," *Security Journal* 33, no. 3 (2020).

³⁰ Ronald Wintrobe, *Rational States Insurgency: The Political Economy of Radicalism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

³¹ Aminu Abdullahi, Magaji Saleh, and Jamilu Ibrahim Mukhtar, "An Examination of the Factors Responsible for Youths' Radicalisation in the Northern Nigeria," in *Annual Conference of the Nigerian Anthropological and Sociological Practitioners Association (NASA)* (Kaduna State University, 8th-10th November 2016).

³² Andrew Walker, "What Is Boko Haram?," in *Special Report No. 308* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2012).

³³ Aishatu Musa, Sani Mustapha Kura, and Adda Gana Bukar, "Assessment of Activities of the Military in Curbing Insurgency in Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 8, no. 4 (2020).

³⁴ Onuoha, "The Audacity of the Boko Haram: Background, Analysis and Emerging Trend," pg. 137.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Wisdom Oghosa Iyekekpolo, "The Political Process of Boko Haram Insurgency Onset: A Political Relevance Model," *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 12, no. 4 (2019).

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Musa, Kura, and Bukar, "Assessment of Activities of the Military in Curbing Insurgency in Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria.," Freedom C. Onuoha, "The Islamist Challenge: Nigeria's Boko Haram Crisis Explained," *African Security Review* 19, no. 2 (2010).

³⁹ David Webber, Arie Kruglanski, Erica Molinaro *et al.*, "Ideologies That Justify Political Violence," *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences* 34 (2020).

⁴⁰ Musa, Kura, and Bukar, "Assessment of Activities of the Military in Curbing Insurgency in Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria."

⁴¹ Onuoha, "The Islamist Challenge: Nigeria's Boko Haram Crisis Explained."

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Gbemisola Animasawun and Luqman Saka, "Causal Analysis of Radical Islamism in Northern Nigeria's Fourth Republic," *ibid.* 22, no. 4 (2013).

⁴⁴ Omar S Mahmood. "Abu Musab Al Barnawi: Ideals Vs. Reality," In the Blog: *Maghreb and Sahel: Sand, Tea, and Guns*, 2017, April 19th, <https://maghrebandsahel.wordpress.com/2017/04/19/abu-musab-al-barnawi-ideals-vs-reality/>.

⁴⁵ Freedom C. Onuoha, "Split in Isis-Aligned Boko Haram Group," in *Aljazeera Report*, 27 October (Aljazeera Centre for Studies, 2016); J. Peter Pham, "Boko Haram: The Strategic Evolution of the Islamic State's West Africa Province," *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 7, no. 1 (2016).

⁴⁶ Omar S Mahmood and Ndubuisi Christian Ani, "Factional Dynamics within Boko Haram," in *ISS Research Report*, July (Institute for Security Studies, 2018).

⁴⁷ Jacob Zenn, "Boko Haram: Abu Musab Al-Barnawi's Leadership Coup and Offensive in Niger," *Terrorism Monitor* 14, no. 17 (2016), <https://www.refworld.org/docid/57bacd2f4.html>.



most deadly and notorious faction. Researchers have attributed the splinter to the divergent views held by the top ideologues of Boko Haram leadership on using women as suicide bombers⁴⁸ and comfort women.⁴⁹ Shekau holds that any person, man or woman, child or adult, Muslim or Christian, who does not subscribe to his ideology is a *kafir* (unbeliever) and should be killed.⁵⁰ The Shekau also carried out mass abductions including the kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls from Chibok in the night of 14-15 April 2014.⁵¹ The al-Barnawi group generally civilian targets and focused on security and government targets.⁵² Nevertheless, since its start in 2009, the insurgency has cost over 20,000 lives and displaced more than 3.3 million people from their homes. The Global Terrorism Index in its 2015 report⁵³ ranked Boko Haram the world's deadliest terror group. The group "remains the deadliest in Sub-Saharan Africa"⁵⁴ in the 2018.

It is noteworthy that corruption in the security services and human rights abuses committed by them⁵⁵ have hampered efforts to counter the unrest. However, with the swearing-in of Muhammadu Buhari as president of Nigeria in May 2016, the fight against Boko Haram has taken a new dimension with successes recorded within a short time as a result of sustained counter-insurgency operations by Nigeria security forces which led to the degradation of the Boko Haram and recapture of all the territory in their hands.⁵⁶ However, after ten years of a vicious campaign of attrition in which both Boko Haram and the Nigerian security services continue to violate fundamental rights the civilian populations including the right to life, empirical evidence supports the conclusion that the insurgency has not been defeated.⁵⁷

Forms of Violent Extremism

Bötticher⁵⁸ differentiates between violent extremism and radicalism. He averred that while both forms of violence occur at the fringes of liberal-democracies, they markedly differ in their

overall objectives and modus operandi. Specifically, Bötticher states that radical movements use violence deliberately and pragmatically aimed to achieve specific ends; extremists tend to use violence as given; radical movements desire to create a golden future while the extremists want to re-establish a golden past; and, radical movements desire a redefinition of the liberal-democratic systems extant while the violent extremists are anti-democratic. However, even radical movements never dispense with intransigent exclusivism characteristics of extremists.⁵⁹ Indeed, the Boko Haram extremists started as intransigent exclusivists with a base at a remote village called Kanamma⁶⁰ in Yobe state late in the 1990s which later become a standard practice among them.⁶¹ Such exclusivism allows the Boko Haram entrench itself in communities and to recruit youths from rural areas around cities with ease, particularly in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states. These states suffered repeated attacks by a series of violent offenders, including active shooters, terrorists, gangs and criminal enterprises.⁶²

Thus, in no time, youths are embracing many forms of violent extremism and often are at the core of terrorist initiatives, including conducting recruitment activities, supporting and participating in acts of terrorism.⁶³ Violent extremists are generally male. However, women are increasingly embracing violent radical ideologies.⁶⁴ Extremist organisations actively seek females to fill operational roles, including carrying out suicide attacks or supportive activities.⁶⁵ Indeed, the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) reported that "nearly 80 per cent of all female suicide attacks in the last five years [2013–2018] being carried out by the group [Boko Haram]."⁶⁶

The motivations behind these acts of violent extremism suggest religious ignorance as to the initial radicalisation impetus⁶⁷ which is quickly followed by financial gain, a personal or ideological grievance, or feeding on vulnerable youth.⁶⁸ As these threats evolve within the communities, a corresponding impact within the communities also evolves. It is essential to

⁴⁸ "Chronicle the Boko Haram Decade in Nigeria (2010-2020): Distinguishing Factions through Videographic Analysis," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 31, no. 6 (2020); Mahmood and Ani, "Factional Dynamics within Boko Haram."; Rachel Bryson and Audu Bulama Bukarti, "Boko Haram's Split on Women in Combat," in *Counter-Extremism Report, September 17* (Tony Blair Institute for Global Change - Co-Existence, 2018).

⁴⁹ Hilary Matfess, *Women and the War on Boko Haram: Wives, Weapons, Witnesses* (London, UK: Zed Books Ltd, 2017).

⁵⁰ Compare: Abdulbasit Kassim, "Boko Haram's Internal Civil War: Stealth Takfir and Jihad as Recipes for Schism," in *Boko Haram Beyond the Headlines: Analyses of Africa's Enduring Insurgency*, ed. Jacob Zenn (USA: Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 2018); Atta Barkindo, "Abubakar Shekau: Boko Haram's Underestimated Corporatist-Strategic Leader," *ibid.* (Combating Terrorism Center at West Point).

⁵¹ Phoebe Musandu, "The Abduction of the Chibok Girls," *Hawwa: Journal of Women of the Middle East and the Islamic World* 13, no. 2 (2015).

⁵² Mahmood. "Abu Musab Al Barnawi: Ideals Vs. Reality."

⁵³ Institute for Economics and Peace, *Global Terrorism Index 2015: Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism* (Sydney: The Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), 2015).

⁵⁴ *Global Terrorism Index 2019: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism* (Sydney: The Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), 2019), pg. 16.

⁵⁵ Musa, Kura, and Bukar, "Assessment of Activities of the Military in Curbing Insurgency in Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria."

⁵⁶ Adeniran Olabode Dairo, "Seventeen Years of Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: Will Border Security Barrier Work in Nigeria as a Counterinsurgency Strategy to Contain and Degrade Boko Haram Insurgency" (U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2019).

⁵⁷ Olumuyiwa Babatunde Amao, "A Decade of Terror: Revisiting Nigeria's Interminable Boko Haram Insurgency," *Security Journal* 33, no. 3 (2020).

⁵⁸ Bötticher, "Towards Academic Consensus Definitions of Radicalism and Extremism."

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Ishaku Hamidu, "Fallacy: A Major Cause for the Unending Boko Haram Terrorism in North-Eastern Nigeria," *Journal of Social Sciences and Public Policy* 12, no. 1 (2020).

⁶¹ Alex Thurston, "The Disease Is Unbelief: Boko Haram's Religious and Political Worldview," in *Analysis Paper, No. 22, January 2016: The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World* (2016).

⁶² John Sunday Ojo, "Governing 'Ungoverned Spaces' in the Foliage of Conspiracy: Toward (Re)Ordering Terrorism, from Boko Haram Insurgency, Fulani Militancy to Banditry in Northern Nigeria," *African Security* 13, no. 1 (2020); Ahmed Aliyu, Ravichandran Moorthy, and Nor Azizan Bin Idris, "Towards Understanding the Boko Haram Phenomenon in Nigeria," *Asian Social Science* 11, no. 10 (2015).

⁶³ Louise I. Shelley, "Corruption and Youth's Recruitment into Violent Extremism," in *Countering Radicalisation and Violent Extremism among Youth to Prevent Terrorism*, ed. Marco Lombardi, Eman Ragab, Vivienne Chin, et al. (Amsterdam, Netherlands: IOS Press, 2015).

⁶⁴ Melissa Frances Johnston, Muhammad Iqbal, and Jacqui True, "The Lure of (Violent) Extremism: Gender Constructs in Online Recruitment and Messaging in Indonesia," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* xx, no. x (2020); Macpherson U. Nnam, Mercy Chioma Arua, and Mary Sorochi Otu, "The Use of Women and Children in Suicide Bombing by the Boko Haram Terrorist Group in Nigeria," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 42 (2018).

⁶⁵ Bureu Pinar Alakoc, "Femme Fatale: The Lethality of Female Suicide Bombers," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 43, no. 9 (2020).

⁶⁶ Institute for Economics and Peace, *Global Terrorism Index 2019: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism*.

⁶⁷ Freedom C. Onuoha, "Why Do Youth Join Boko Haram?," in *Special Report No. 348* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2014).

⁶⁸ Emeka Eugene Dim, "An Integrated Theoretical Approach to the Persistence of Boko Haram Violent Extremism in Nigeria," *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 12, no. 2 (2017); Lucky E. Asuelime and Ojochenemi J. David, *Boko Haram: The Socio-Economic Drivers* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing AG, 2015).



identify the reasons driving individuals to advocate violence as a solution to a perceived grievance and facilitates alternative behaviours to guide individuals down a less destructive path.

Models for the Evaluation of Violent Extremism

Although violent extremism is not a linear progression, it is an evolving dynamic process involving numerous factors, catalysts, inhibitors, and mobilisations.⁶⁹ Individuals tend to get radicalised by a series of triggers they adjudge legitimise their engagement in acts of violence against the state and or other members of the society.⁷⁰ Behavioural experts hypothesise that the efforts of those seeking to combat violent extremism could be enriched by a consideration of other models of social behaviour and development.⁷¹ Gielen,⁷² who espoused a realist approach to the evaluation of efforts at CVE, noted that other approaches satisfy the objectives of the evaluation. These other approaches include the effect, pragmatic, theory-driven, and process evaluations.⁷³ Most of these approaches see radicalisation towards violent extremism as a process, albeit a staggered one. Thus, interventions to arrest the process of radicalisation of at-risk individuals may prove more effective if initiated and carried out in alignment with the early phases of the radicalisation process.

Several models abound in the literature that could be used as frameworks for the evaluation of violent extremism as a necessary step towards countering the menace. The multiplicity of models for understanding and correctly investigating the violent extremism reflects the complexity and near intractability of the phenomenon. The renowned resilience of the Boko Haram terrorist⁷⁴ requires that they be seen and evaluated as a complex adaptive system.⁷⁵ Thus, no one model could sufficiently explain the rise of violent extremism.⁷⁶ Collectively, the four models reviewed in this can assist in explaining how normal individuals come to believe in and carry out extreme acts of violence at targets that, logically speaking, could neither harm nor advance from their radicalised goals. Thus, policymakers should adopt an approach that integrates insights derivable from the relevant models that more closely reflects the task at hand when CVE.

The Process Model

Schmid's conceptual analysis of the literature on radicalisation points out that virtually all scholars in the field agree that the phenomenon is a *process* in its nature, emergence and continuation and that individuals are seldom radicalised overnight.⁷⁷ The point of departure among the models is on the

causal mechanisms⁷⁸ that brings about radicalisation in individuals and groups. According to Vergani and his colleagues,⁷⁹ individuals become radicalised towards committing violence in a gradual and sometimes protracted and imperceptible manner. In Figure 1, Muro⁸⁰ captures this process model of radicalisation leading violent extremism.

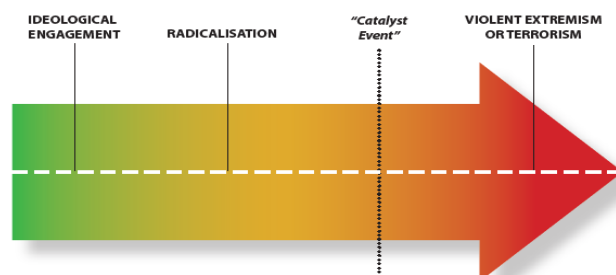


Figure 1: Process Model of Radicalisation. Source: Muro (2016, pg. 2)

The process model could explain the trajectory of Yusuf's rise. Through his association with the respected Islamic scholars in Maiduguri⁸¹ (such as the revered Late Sheikh Jaafar Mahmud Adam), Yusuf gradually amassed a large following (*ideological engagement phase*), and thereafter radicalised them by preaching an ideologically intolerant creed⁸² that prohibits Western education and democratic-liberal governance system of Nigeria (*radicalisation phase*). The response of the authorities to the security challenges Yusuf and his followers posed to the Nigerian state was both half-hearted, collusive, and highhanded at the same time which further emboldened Yusuf to rant against the state in his public preaching with unabashed impunity.⁸³ Indeed, the rift between Yusuf and Governor Sheriff, the killing of Yusuf's followers in a funeral procession, and the extrajudicial killing of Yusuf at the behest of politicians were identified as the three catalytic events that triggered the dawn of violent extremism in Borno State (*catalyst event phase*). The wanton extrajudicial killings by the Police after the Army had successfully quelled the 25-30 July 2009 uprising represents what Wiktorowicz called "cognitive closure,"⁸⁴ irrevocably removing whatever "cognitive ambiguities"⁸⁵ inhibits the Boko Haramites from embarking on collective action, thereby launching them into wholesale violence. Thus, after the JTF operation, the Boko Haram group went underground. When they resurfaced, their tactics become more sophisticated and coordinated and more violent (*violent extremism or terrorism phase*), a sad commentary that persists to date.

⁶⁹ Randy Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories," *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no. 4 (2011).

⁷⁰ F. LeRon Shults and Ross Gore, "Modeling Radicalization and Violent Extremism," in *Advances in Social Simulation: Looking in the Mirror*, ed. Harko Verhagen, Melania Borit, Giangiacomo Bravo, et al. (Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2020).

⁷¹ Randy Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism II: A Review of Conceptual Models and Empirical Research," *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no. 4 (2011).

⁷² Amy-Jane Gielen, "Countering Violent Extremism: A Realist Review for Assessing What Works, for Whom, in What Circumstances, and How?," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 31, no. 6 (2019).

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ C. Nna-Emeka Okereke, "The Resilience of Boko Haram: Myth or Reality?," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 6, no. 7 (2014).

⁷⁵ National Research Council, *Making the Nation Safer: The Role of Science and Technology in Countering Terrorism* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2002).

⁷⁶ Diego Muro, "What Does Radicalisation Look Like? Four Visualisations of Socialisation into Violent Extremism," *Notes Internationales* 162, no. November (2016).

⁷⁷ Alex P. Schmid, "Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review," in

ICCT Research Paper, March (The Hague: The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT), 2013).

⁷⁸ Daniel Rothbart and Sudha G. Rajput, "Causality and Protracted Violent Conflicts: The Case of Internally Displaced Persons," in *Questioning Causality: Scientific Explorations of Cause and Consequence across Social Contexts*, ed. Rom Harré and Fathali M. Moghaddam (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2016).

⁷⁹ Matteo Vergani, Muhammad Iqbal, Ekin Ilbahar et al., "The Three Ps of Radicalization: Push, Pull and Personal. A Systematic Scoping Review of the Scientific Evidence About Radicalization into Violent Extremism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 43, no. 10 (2020).

⁸⁰ Muro, "What Does Radicalisation Look Like? Four Visualisations of Socialisation into Violent Extremism."

⁸¹ Musa, Kura, and Bukar, "Assessment of Activities of the Military in Curbing Insurgency in Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria."

⁸² Salaam, "The Psychological Make-up of Mohammed Yusuf."

⁸³ Onuoha, "The Audacity of the Boko Haram: Background, Analysis and Emerging Trend."

⁸⁴ Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Framing Jihad: Intramovement Framing Contests and Al-Qaeda's Struggle for Sacred Authority," *International Review of Social History* 49, no. S12 (2004): pg. 163.

⁸⁵ Robert Futrell, "Framing Processes, Cognitive Liberation, and NIMBY Protest in the U.S. Chemical-Weapons Disposal Conflict," *Sociological Inquiry* 73, no. 3 (2003): pg. 359.

The Terrorist Mindset Model

While the process model described in section 5.2 deals with radicalisation as a collective, it is equally essential to understand radicalisation from the mindset of the individual as they get radicalised overtime. Mindset refers to “a relatively enduring set of attitudes, dispositions, and inclinations.”⁸⁶ Borum’s terrorist mindset model⁸⁷ provide an excellent framework for understanding what goes on in the mind of the terrorist as things unfold in the society. Borum’s model attributes the emergence of violent extremism to when an individual nurse intense grudge and moral outrage about a specific group or some institution which they hold to be responsible for their current predicament (which can be economic, social, religious or political, or even personal injustice). Muro⁸⁸ gave an illustration of the model in Figure 2.

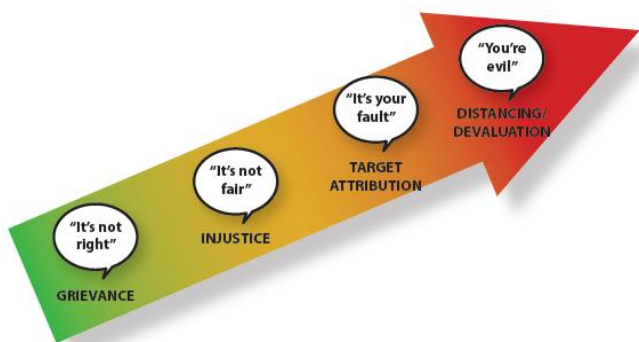


Figure 2. The Terrorist Mindset Model. Source: Muro (2016, pg. 3)

Muro’s model asserts that the road to radicalisation for an individual begins when they nurse some grievance about their current situation. This creates a feeling of righteous dissonance concerning the existing order of things in the individual’s mind. This is how Boko Haram members are reported to have felt about the manner the Nigerian polity and institutions are managed, including the religious establishment (mostly *tariqa* and Salafi).⁸⁹ The brazen corruption in all facet of Nigeria’s national life⁹⁰ become ready evidence for their moral outrage. They feel the current management of the society is simply *not right*, and the social contract simply *not fair*. They feel deprived of living according to what is right from their ideological viewpoint.⁹¹ Once this moral outrage was aroused, it has to be goal-directed, and the culprit responsible for all the injustices is the government and its operational arm. It is the *fault of the government* who refused to accept the moral guidance Yusuf has been preaching to them but who, unfortunately, as they surmised, kept a deaf ear. He had given them the chance to

⁸⁶ Randy Borum, "Psychological Vulnerabilities and Propensities for Involvement in Violent Extremism," *Behavioral Sciences and the Law* 32 (2014).
⁸⁷ "Understanding the Terrorist Mind-Set," *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* 72, no. 7 (2003).
⁸⁸ Muro, "What Does Radicalisation Look Like? Four Visualisations of Socialisation into Violent Extremism," pg. 3.
⁸⁹ Thurston, "The Disease Is Unbelief: Boko Haram's Religious and Political Worldview."
⁹⁰ Muhammad Jameel Yusha'u, *Regional Parallelism and Corruption Scandals in Nigeria: Intranational Approaches to African Media Systems* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Bala Salisu, "Self-Interest and the Institutionalisation of Corruption in Nigeria: Implications for Nation Building," *Management in Nigeria* 47, no. 1 (2011).
⁹¹ J. R. Kunst and M. Obaidi, "Understanding Violent Extremism in the 21st Century: The (Re)Emerging Role of Relative Deprivation," *Current Opinion in Psychology* 35 (2020).
⁹² Omar Mahmoud, "Local, Global, or in Between? Boko Haram's Messaging, Strategy, Membership, and Support Networks," in *Boko*

change, but they refused his overtures, or so the radicalised Boko Haram ideologue reasoned in their mind, and so are entirely liable for the consequences of their refusal. This is the *iqamat ul-hujja*⁹² (establishment of the proof of disbelief before the initiation of jihad). It is, therefore, the *government fault* to insist on following *its evil* ways and systems. Thus, the government and its supporters must be made to face the consequence of their unbelief. At this stage, the Boko Haram mindset has attained the stage of moral disengagement⁹³ and, therefore, could see no blame in executing acts of extreme violence against targets associated with their grievances.

The Staircase Model

While the terrorist mindset model suggests that violent extremism starts from the grievances an individual nurse against an adversary, the staircase model, developed by Moghaddam,⁹⁴ situates the emergence of the phenomenon from the societal condition. Moghaddam used the metaphor of the staircase to explicate the radicalisation process. This paper adopts Muro’s⁹⁵ the colour scheme in adapting Moghaddam’s⁹⁶ representation of the staircase model in Figure 3.



Figure 3. The Staircase Model

Moghaddam fleshes out his staircase to terrorism model in his 2006 book.⁹⁷ In that book, he posits that radicalisation starts from the bottom (*ground floor*) involving ordinary people musing about the collapse of moral order and the constraining of the economic spaces in society. Such a situation seldom fails to breed growing dissatisfaction among an increasing number of citizens across socioeconomic divides. Historically, it was the main *raison d’etre* (“a long train of abuses and usurpations”) for the Declaration of Independence (US, 1776). Indeed, the rampant corruption in all facets of Nigeria’s national life and the brazen display of ill-gotten wealth by the political class and their counterparts in the civil service and armed forces generated widespread disenchantment among the people and eroded people’s regard for and trust in the institutions of government.⁹⁸ The dismal conditions in which people live led many educated but marginalised Nigerians as well as the poor but awakened

Haram Beyond the Headlines: Analyses of Africa's Enduring Insurgency, ed. Jacob Zenn (USA: Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 2018), pg. 89.
⁹³ S. Ozer and P. Bertelsen, "The Moral Compass and Life Skills in Navigating Radicalization Processes: Examining the Interplay among Life Skills, Moral Disengagement, and Extremism," *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology* 61, no. 5 (2020).
⁹⁴ Fathali M. Moghaddam, "The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration," *American Psychologist* 60, no. 2 (2005).
⁹⁵ Muro, "What Does Radicalisation Look Like? Four Visualisations of Socialisation into Violent Extremism," pg. 3.
⁹⁶ Fathali M. Moghaddam, *From the Terrorists' Point of View: What They Experience and Why They Come to Destroy* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2006).
⁹⁷ Ibid.
⁹⁸ Yusha'u, *Regional Parallelism and Corruption Scandals in Nigeria: Intranational Approaches to African Media Systems*; Salisu, "Self-Interest and the Institutionalisation of Corruption in Nigeria: Implications for Nation Building."



youths to question the fairness of the situation and the legitimacy of the governance practices that created the situation in the first place. This is the *first floor*, and already people are musing about how to fight back.⁹⁹ People begin to look for ways out of their miserable material and moral conditions. Also, the ever-widening gap between the poor and the rich/political elite make the former quickly see the connection between their unfortunate situations and corrupt practices of the latter. Persons able to make this assessment have already climbed to the *second floor*. The picture at this stage mimics the famed David versus Goliath face-off. It is an uneven match. Many will resign themselves to their lot. However, a few will climb up to the *third floor* and fight an unequal struggle using whatever measure they deem effective at bringing down their adversary to its knees. To them, as it was to many socialist/Marxist revolutionaries¹⁰⁰ in the past and even liberal democrats,¹⁰¹ the end justifies the means.

To attain their objectives, the now few but cohesive and highly committed groups of individuals bifurcate the society into two groups: their group and those against them (*fourth floor*). The religious or ideological basis of their moral commitment to their perceived moral order not only serves as an inhibitory mechanism that made them impervious to the horrors their violent generally evoke in people¹⁰² but also gives them their exclusivist social identity.¹⁰³ Commitment to specific courses of action based on moral bifurcation of human society is not exclusive to violent extremists. Both socialist states (such as the former USSR and states that inherited its legacy) and liberal democracies (such as the United States) frequently climb onto the *fourth floor* in pursuit of their exclusivist interests. For example, Trotsky¹⁰⁴ masterfully defended Soviet's recourse to violence in the pursuit of their utopian state. Also, the United States invoked the polarising notion of "axis of evil" to justify its horrendous violence in Iraq and other middle-eastern countries.¹⁰⁵

The lowering of individual's inhibitory mechanisms and the categorisation of the society into us versus them (characteristic of the *fourth floor*) has set the stage for a dramatic shift moral compass of the actors on the staircase from the polarity of right versus wrong to the imperative to maintain group conformation¹⁰⁶ (achieved through propaganda and coercion). This is the final floor, the *fifth floor*. Acts of violence are portrayed as "heroic" and worthy of praise and emulation, with group pressure effectively used to blot out visages of competing

narratives.¹⁰⁷ At this stage, the extremist gladly fights to the death. For the Boko Haram, as was for other revolutionary religionists¹⁰⁸ and extreme right ideologues,¹⁰⁹ such an end is portrayed as the coveted *shahada* (martyrdom).¹¹⁰

The Pyramid Model

Similar in structure to Moghaddam's staircase model¹¹¹ but focusing on the individual, the pyramid model, developed by McCauley and Moskalkenko,¹¹² presents a snapshot of the terrorism situation in which the bottom quadrant of the pyramid is populated by people who sympathise with the extremists, with the extremist occupying the apex quadrant of the pyramid. The more committed an individual is to using violence as a tool for achieving ends, the higher up they are placed in any of the quadrants. Muro¹¹³ offers a diagrammatic illustration of the model in Figure 4.

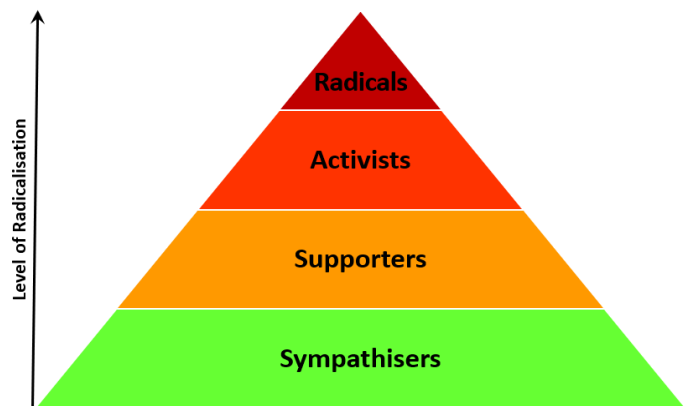


Figure 4. The Pyramid Model

The bottom of McCauley and Moskalkenko's pyramid is populated with who sympathise with the deplorable living conditions dealt out by the system but not to the idea of violence as a way to the redress of the status quo. Nevertheless, this broad-based sympathy, especially among the *tsangaya* (*madrassa*) school system,¹¹⁴ is repeatedly exploited by radical extremists to their advantage. At the apex of the pyramid stood the *radicals*, a small but cohesive corps of extremist masterminds who oversee the entire extremist agenda. In between the apex and the bottom of the pyramid are two groups,

⁹⁹ Moghaddam, *From the Terrorists' Point of View: What They Experience and Why They Come to Destroy*.

¹⁰⁰ Betsy Bowman and Bob Stone, "The End as Present in the Means in Sartre's "Morality and History": Birth and Re-Inventions of an Existential Moral Standard," *Sartre Studies International* 10, no. 2 (2004).

¹⁰¹ Joseph M. Siracusa and Laurens J. Visser, *Going to War with Iraq: A Comparative History of the Bush Presidencies* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

¹⁰² Wesam Charkawi, Kevin Dunn, and Ana-Maria Bliuc, "The Influences of Social Identity and Perceptions of Injustice on Support to Violent Extremism," *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* 00 (2020).

¹⁰³ Aryn B. Sajoo, "The Fog of Extremism: Governance, Identity, and Minstrels of Exclusion," *Social Inclusion* 4, no. 2 (2016); Charkawi, Dunn, and Bliuc, "The Influences of Social Identity and Perceptions of Injustice on Support to Violent Extremism."

¹⁰⁴ Leon Trotsky, *Their Morals and Ours: The Class Foundations of Moral Practice* (New York, NY: Pathfinder Press, 1973).

¹⁰⁵ Maria Ryan, "Inventing the 'Axis of Evil': The Myth and Reality of US Intelligence and Policy-Making after 9/11," *Intelligence and National Security* 17, no. 4 (2002); Siracusa and Visser, *Going to War with Iraq: A Comparative History of the Bush Presidencies*; T. Pyszczynski, A. Abdollahi, S. Solomon et al., "Mortality Salience, Martyrdom, and Military Might: The Great Satan Versus the Axis of Evil," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 32, no. 4 (2006).

¹⁰⁶ Moghaddam, *From the Terrorists' Point of View: What They Experience and Why They Come to Destroy*.

¹⁰⁷ Tahir Rahman, "Extreme Overvalued Beliefs: How Violent Extremist Beliefs Become "Normalized"," *Behavioral Sciences* 8, no. 1 (2018).

¹⁰⁸ W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1965).

¹⁰⁹ Daniel Koehler, "Dying for the Cause? The Logic and Function of Ideologically Motivated Suicide, Martyrdom, and Self-Sacrifice within the Contemporary Extreme Right," *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* (2020).

¹¹⁰ Kilani Abdulrazaq, "Martyrs or Terrorists: Suicide Bombing in Islamic Hermeneutics," *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* 7, no. 4 (2015); Mohamed Elewa Badar, ElSayed M. A. Amin, and Noelle Higgins, "The International Criminal Court and the Nigerian Crisis: An Inquiry into the Boko Haram Ideology and Practices from an Islamic Law Perspective," *International Human Rights Law Review* 3 (2014).

¹¹¹ Moghaddam, *From the Terrorists' Point of View: What They Experience and Why They Come to Destroy*.

¹¹² Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalkenko, "Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways toward Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20, no. 3 (2008).

¹¹³ Muro, "What Does Radicalisation Look Like? Four Visualisations of Socialisation into Violent Extremism," pg. 4.

¹¹⁴ Saba Hanif, Majid Hassan Ali, and Faiza Shaheen, "Religious Extremism, Religiosity and Sympathy toward the Taliban among Students across Madrassas and Worldly Education Schools in Pakistan," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 00, no. 0 (2019).



the *supporters* and the *activists*. The *supporters* provide moral (and even material) resources to the extremists though they may not engage in acts of extreme violence. The activists may include educated working-class individuals. In general, the "higher levels of the pyramid are associated with decreased numbers but increased radicalisation of beliefs, feelings, and behaviours."¹¹⁵

According to McCauley and Moskalenko,¹¹⁶ radicalisation could take place at three possible levels: individual, group and mass levels. Mechanisms for radicalisation at the individual level include personal victimisation, political grievance, membership of radical groups as a matter of course or out of love for the group, and like-minded individuals going to the extreme. At the group level, the radicalisation mechanisms include extreme cohesion in an exclusivist group, competition among state and non-state actors for resources and spheres of influence, and within-group polarisation. Lastly, the mass of people may get radicalised using hate (especially youths¹¹⁷), desire for martyrdom, and idealisation of in-group leaders and in-group norms arising from the threat coming from out-groups.

The Two-Pyramids Model

Drawing from the subsequent developments in, and criticisms of the radicalisation literature, McCauley and Moskalenko¹¹⁸ retuned the pyramid model into a two-pyramid model to capture the two different types to radicalisation: radicalisation of opinion and radicalisation of action. Accord-

ingly, they developed the *opinion pyramid* and *action pyramid*. The two-pyramids [Opinion and Action] are depicted in Figure 5. According to McCauley and Moskalenko,¹¹⁹ the two-pyramid model is not linear, and therefore an individual can be radical to any given level without necessarily going through the bottom-up hierarchy.

With regards to the persons at the bottom of the *Opinion Pyramid* (a), their feelings towards religious beliefs and ideologies are benign, neutral and harmless (*neutral*); the higher section of the pyramid is peopled by those who nurse strong feelings for religious beliefs but do not justify violence (*sympathisers*); atop the sympathiser segment comes the justifiers, people who hold the opinion that violence is a justifiable recourse in defence of what they believe in; finally, the apex segment is populated by a few who feel *personally and morally obligated to have recourse to violence* (P-MOV) in the course of promoting their beliefs and ideologies.¹²⁰

As their name suggests, people at the bottom of the *Action Pyramid* (b) (*inert*) are passive people who seldom do anything in defence of their religious beliefs and ideologies; then comes the next segment (*activists*) who support their beliefs in legal ways. After the activists come to the *radicals* who do things in support of their convictions utilising illegal means; finally, the apex of the action pyramid is manned by the *terrorists* who carry out extreme violence of their perceived adversaries.¹²¹

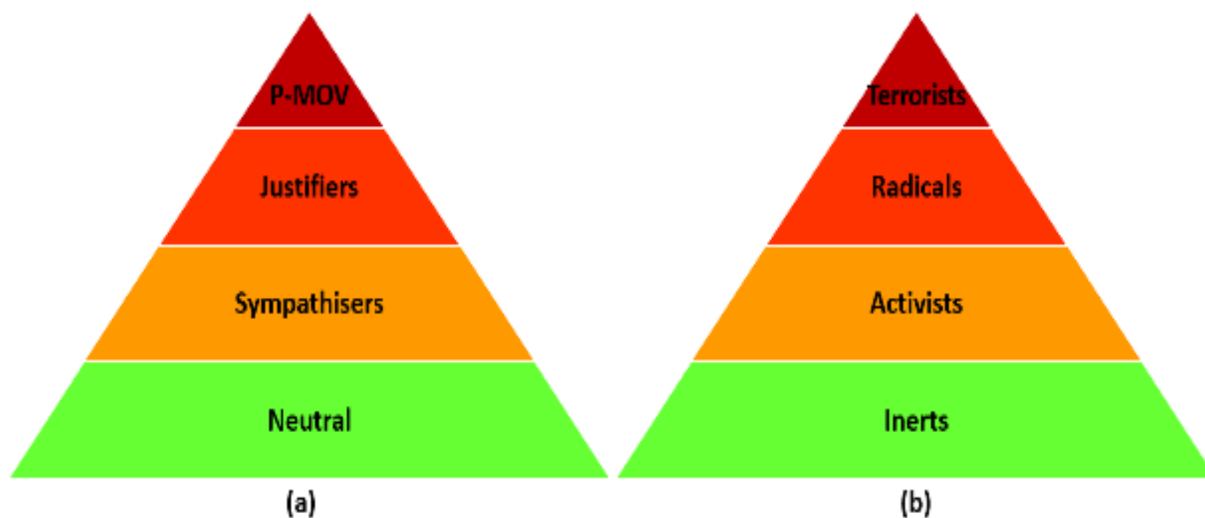


Figure 4. The Two-Pyramid Model: (a) Opinion, (b) Action
Note: P-MOV = Personal moral obligation to take up violence.

Factors Driving Violent Extremism

CVE entails understanding the underlying factors associated with a youth's behaviour and determining the form of ideologically motivated extremism the youth has embraced. Vergani and his colleagues¹²² categorised these factors into three which they dubbed 3Ps of radicalisation: *push*, *pull* and *personal* factors. These 3Ps roughly correspond to the three risk factors identified by Woodhams: individual-level factors (*personal*),

community-level factors (*push*), and social network factors (*pull*).¹²³

The Push Factors

Push factors are systemic variables that push hitherto ordinary people into committing acts of violent extremism. A nurturing environment might help the people withstand pressures towards violent extremism, while a dysfunctional environment might push them towards greater acceptance or adherence to extremist ideas. The factors likely to push people

¹¹⁵ Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, "Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways toward Terrorism," *ibid.* 20, no. 3 (2008): pg. 417.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Michael Kimmel, *Healing from Hate: How Young Men Get into—and out of—Violent Extremism* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018).

¹¹⁸ Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, "Understanding Political Radicalization: The Two-Pyramids Model," *American Psychologist* 72, no. 3 (2017).

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² Vergani *et al.*, "The Three Ps of Radicalization: Push, Pull and Personal. A Systematic Scoping Review of the Scientific Evidence About Radicalization into Violent Extremism."

¹²³ Katrina Marie Woodhams, "Connections among Communities: Preventing Radicalization and Violent Extremism through Social Network Analysis in the Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) Framework" (Naval Postgraduate School, 2016).



into extremism include: "state repression, relative deprivation, poverty, and injustice, ..., loss of legitimacy, geopolitical factors, ... inequality, intergroup contact (e.g., the presence of the different religious or ethnic group in the same space), violence (e.g., high level of violence such as a war), ..., unemployment and education."¹²⁴ Frequently, people become disillusioned by these push factors which are outside of their control, thus giving way to resentment, emptiness, loneliness, or feeling lost and abandoned. Cultural and religious differences among the people living in defined spaces could also intensify these feelings leading to isolation or alienation and ultimately intergroup conflicts. Indeed, till date, Nigerians have failed to fully "understand and appreciate their different cultural, religious and social backgrounds."¹²⁵ People assign adversarial meanings to these differences, and the attendant conflicts the differences engender, all of which serve as stimuli for radicalisation into violent extremism. Tellingly, the "brutal, merciless, and pitiless" violence with which the Nigerian security forces handled the July 2009 Boko Haram uprising constituted a significant push factor that drove "57% of former Boko Haram fighters" to join the group.¹²⁶

The Pull Factors

In contradistinction to the incitation properties of push factors, pull factors are things that entice people towards violent extremism. These factors include: "cognitive factors (e.g., consumption of propaganda, cultural congruence, perceived efficacy and morality of a group, search for adventure), social mechanisms and group processes (e.g., identity fusion and identification, group dynamics, recruitment, and leadership), and emotional and material incentives."¹²⁷ The potency of these factors to radicalise is made more effective when delivered via social media. Social media is known to be a vehicle for radicalisation.¹²⁸ The ability of extremist organisations to transcend geographical boundaries is made possible by the Internet and the use of social media. Most vulnerable to targeted extremist propaganda is the youths, of whom many are tech-savvy and often spend most of their time on social media networks. The almost addictive propensity to link-up online is driven by the need for connectivity, acceptance, or sense of belonging, all of which could easily be exploited by online terror recruitment networks.¹²⁹ Extremists troll for youth in social media or online forums, to spot, assess and recruit those who are vulnerable. Furthermore, extremist organisations are known to harness the ease of mobile communication in coordinating their activities more effectively and discretely.¹³⁰ The ease of access to violent extremist propaganda, the glorification of extremist lifestyles, the spread of hatred and intolerance, and the targeting

of youth is increasingly putting a large segment of the society "at-risk."

The Personal Factors

The third group of factors that contribute towards radicalisation into violent extremism related to the personal characteristics of the individual. Vergani and his colleagues presented these factors in three categories: psychopathological factors, personality traits and individually specific demographic characteristics.¹³¹ The psychopathologies include: "traumatic brain injury, drug dependence, schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, delusional disorder, psychotic disorder, depression, bipolar disorder, unspecified anxiety disorder, dissociative disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, unspecified sleep disorder, unspecified personality disorder, and autism spectrum disorders."¹³² These problems have been known to desensitise individuals to violence.

The classic work of Adorno and colleagues¹³³ (first published in 1950) profile traits characteristic of violent extremists. However, this paper uses the typology given in the last chapter of Gambetta and Hertog's book¹³⁴ on the personality traits of violent extremists. The authors averred that three personality traits run common among extremists of various persuasions: proneness to experience disgust; a strong need for cognitive closure; and, an urge to impose strict distinctions between in-group and out-group members. The first trait refers to extremists' abhorrence of corruption and scrupulous strive for purity. This trait, seen from a religious context, marked out the extremists as intolerant of all conceptualisation of religion but theirs as the right and pure, while all others are intolerable corruptions. The second trait, need for closure, "denotes a preference for order, structure, and certainties and intolerance of ambiguity."¹³⁵ Thus, the personality make-up of extremists tends to resonate with a hierarchical and authoritarian vision of social order, traditionalism and a yearning to restore a lost order. The third trait sketches a personality at home with the bifurcation of society into us versus them (in-group and out-group distinction), with no alternative for a third much less more perspectives. The proclivity to see the world in black and white gives the extremist a strong group identity whereby they show empathy to their own and antipathy to all others. "This breeds intolerance."

The third personal factor contributing to radicalisation is related to individual demographic characteristics. Although the extremists often use women in carrying out violent attacks such as suicide bombing,¹³⁶ most of the extremists tend to be young, male, and were born into the local communities experiencing rapid urbanisation.¹³⁷ Indeed, many of the recruits into Boko

¹²⁴ Vergani *et al.*, "The Three Ps of Radicalization: Push, Pull and Personal. A Systematic Scoping Review of the Scientific Evidence About Radicalization into Violent Extremism," pp. 3,5.

¹²⁵ Abiodun Alao, "Islamic Radicalisation and Violent Extremism in Nigeria," *Conflict, Security & Development* 13, no. 2 (2013): pg. 144.

¹²⁶ Anneli Botha and Mahdi Abdile, "Getting Behind the Profiles of Boko Haram Members and Factors Contributing to Radicalisation Versus Working Towards Peace," (Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, 2016).

¹²⁷ Vergani *et al.*, "The Three Ps of Radicalization: Push, Pull and Personal. A Systematic Scoping Review of the Scientific Evidence About Radicalization into Violent Extremism," pp. 3,5.

¹²⁸ Melissa Frances Johnston, Muhammad Iqbal, and Jacqui True, "The Lure of (Violent) Extremism: Gender Constructs in Online Recruitment and Messaging in Indonesia," *ibid.*xx, no. x; Cori E. Dauber and Kemal Ilter, "The Relationship between Social Media and Radicalization," in *Online Terrorist Propaganda, Recruitment, and Radicalization*, ed. John R. Vacca (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2020).

¹²⁹ Kurt H. Braddock, "Fighting Words: The Persuasive Effect of Online Extremist Narratives on the Radicalization Process" (The Pennsylvania State University, 2012); S. T. Hunter, N. D. Shortland, M. P. Crayne *et al.*, "Recruitment and Selection in Violent Extremist Organizations: Exploring What Industrial and Organizational

Psychology Might Contribute," *American Psychologist* 72, no. 3 (2017).

¹³⁰ Jacob N. Shapiro and David A. Siegel, "Coordination and Security: How Mobile Communications Affect Insurgency," *Journal of Peace Research* 52, no. 3 (2015).

¹³¹ Vergani *et al.*, "The Three Ps of Radicalization: Push, Pull and Personal. A Systematic Scoping Review of the Scientific Evidence About Radicalization into Violent Extremism," pp. 3,5-6.

¹³² Emily Corner and Paul Gill, "The Nascent Empirical Literature on Psychopathology and Terrorism," *World Psychiatry* 17, no. 2 (2018): pg. 47.

¹³³ Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswick, Daniel J. Levinson *et al.*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, Verso ed. (London: Verso, 2019).

¹³⁴ Diego Gambetta and Steffen Hertog, *Engineers of Jihad: The Curious Connection between Violent Extremism and Education* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2016), pp. 128-58.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 131.

¹³⁶ Alakoc, "Femme Fatale: The Lethality of Female Suicide Bombers."

¹³⁷ Roger-Mark De Souza, "Demographic Resilience: Linking Population Dynamics, the Environment, and Security," *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 35, no. 1 (2015); Pieri and Zenn, "Under the Black Flag in Borno: Experiences of Foot Soldiers and Civilians in Boko Haram's 'Caliphate'."



Haram are male youngsters from the local communities, and a sizeable percentage of these are the *almajiri* (students of traditional Islamic schools).¹³⁸ A combination of a youthful population and gender inequalities¹³⁹ as well as increasing urbanisation¹⁴⁰ provide the base material for the eruption of conflicts in society.

Countering Violent Extremism

Against a historical sketch on the emergence of the Boko Haram insurgency (so far, the deadliest terror group in the entire Sub Saharan Africa), and the explanatory mechanisms (models) put forward by scholars for explaining how individuals get radicalised into Boko Haram, and a highlight on the factors behind its emergence and sustenance, this paper discusses some potential measures that could be used to arrest and turn the tide of the ongoing insurgency. It should be recalled that the initial reaction of the Nigerian authorities when Mohammed Yusuf launched his attacks in July 2009 was to deploy the JTF, a force consisting of the various branches of the armed forces, State Security Services, and the Police, under a unified command structure. The JTF succeeded in crushing the first uprising. However, after about a one-year hiatus, the Boko Haram resurfaced and unleashed the most violent attacks on security outfits and installations as well as on civilian targets. Matters worsened around 2013–2015 when the Boko Haram seized some territories the size of Belgium in the Northeast. Thousands of communities were displaced and rendered internally displaced persons (IDPs). The worsening situation prompted local authorities and the security forces to engage the services of youth in fighting the insurgent. These youth came to be known as “*y’an gora*” [meaning “those who wield cudgels” in Hausa] (also known as Civilian JTF). [This Civilian JTF is an umbrella term used to describe the vigilante groups formed by communities and the security forces to defend communities against Boko Haram attacks, help the government forces in their field operations, and provide vital intelligence].¹⁴¹ While members of the civilian JTF have contributed a lot in securing some of the successes recorded against the insurgents, concerns have been expressed over their potential to mutate into militias or gangs.¹⁴²

Thus, while the insurgency is yet to be brought to a complete end, holistic measures must be devised and implemented that speaks to the root causes of the insurgency so that lasting peace could be restored to the beleaguered communities. This approach requires not only military action (to contain persons irredeemably radicalised) but also re-education programmes (of varying time horizon and intensity, depending on the degree to which the individual is radicalised) and broad-based entrepre-

neurship programme (of agricultural nature on supervised farms) aimed at engaging the teeming unemployed youth. The violence that accompanied the recent EndSARS demonstrations (which took place mostly in Christian-majority states of Southern Nigeria) is a pointer to the danger of having teeming youths who are not adequately engaged in beneficial callings. EndSARS was a peaceful protest against police brutality calling for the scrapping of a special police unit (Special Anti-Robbery Squad, SARS) that has gone rogue, brutalising innocent civilians. In response, the Police authorities disbanded SARS, but the protesters took the opportunity of government's listening ear and went on a rampage. Terrorist groups like the IPOB,¹⁴³ a violent secessionist Igbo organisation, called on its member to burn Nigeria. The protest ended in a tragic orgy of violence, looting, arson, rape and robberies.¹⁴⁴ [It is noteworthy that the Northern part of Nigeria remains mostly peaceful during the EndSARS violence due mainly to the relatively but swift and compelling voices of Northern community leaders. This demonstrates the centrality of community in engendering lasting peace.] bye-the-bye, the EndSARS protests show that violent extremism, as Berger¹⁴⁵ would say, “is not the province of any single race, religion, or political school.”

From the preceding discourse, it appears that addressing the underlying motives that radicalise people in the first place is fundamental to CVE. The indiscriminate and brutal use of state power (force) helped escalated the Boko Haram insurgency; Kapoor¹⁴⁶ would say the state went to the extreme. However, the use of dialogue and rapprochement in the management of the EndSARS protests triggered violent extremism on the part of government triggered the hijacking of an ostensibly peaceful protest into a violent breakdown of law and order spearheaded by terrorist groups; Southers¹⁴⁷ would say the people went to the extreme. Indeed, practitioner literature has shown that stringent security-oriented measures alone are not enough to counter violent extremism;¹⁴⁸ soft measures alone too are equally inadequate as preventive measures.¹⁴⁹ Both hard and soft measures have to be concurrently implemented to reap their synergistic properties. Additionally, some of the underlying radicalisation factors such as corruption and poor governance are systemic and must be addressed through continuous long-term public service reforms. Accordingly, a comprehensive but focused approach to CVE is needed in order to avoid the adverse unintended outcomes associated with one-sided approaches to preventing violent extremism.

In general, the scope of CVE cuts across the national, community, and individual levels. However, effective interventions at the community level are known to have positive multiplier effects on the problems of extremism at national and individual levels.¹⁵⁰ Therefore, this paper focuses on a

¹³⁸ Iro Aghedo and Surulola James Eke, "From Alms to Arms: The Almajiri Phenomenon and Internal Security in Northern Nigeria," *The Korean Journal of Policy Studies* 28, no. 3 (2013); Usman Abbo, Zawayah Mohd Zain, and Bashir A. Njidda, "The Almajiri System and Insurgency in the Northern Nigeria: A Reconstruction of the Existing Narratives for Policy Direction," *International Journal of Innovative Research and Development* 6, no. 8 (2017).

¹³⁹ De Souza, "Demographic Resilience: Linking Population Dynamics, the Environment, and Security."

¹⁴⁰ Adegbola Ojo and Oluwole Ojewale, *Urbanisation and Crime in Nigeria* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

¹⁴¹ Omar S Mahmood and Ndubuisi Christian Ani, "Responses to Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Region: Policies, Cooperation and Livelihoods," in *ISS Research Report, July* (Institute for Security Studies (ISS), 2018).

¹⁴² Idayat Hassan and Zacharias Pieri, "The Rise and Risks of Nigeria's Civilian Joint Task Force: Implications for Post-Conflict Recovery in Northeastern Nigeria," in *Boko Haram Beyond the Headlines: Analyses of Africa's Enduring Insurgency*, ed. Jacob Zenn (USA: Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point, 2018).

¹⁴³ IPOB is one of the only three officially designated terrorist groups in Nigeria, the other two being Boko Haram and the Shiite militant group

called Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN). See E. U. Ejeh, A. I. Bappah, and Y. Dankofa, "Proscription of Terrorism in Nigeria: A Comparative Legal Study," *Commonwealth Law Bulletin* 46, no. 3 (2020).

¹⁴⁴ Christiana T. Alabi and Abdulateef Aliyu, "Tragic End of EndSARS," *Daily Trust*, October 25 2020.

¹⁴⁵ J. M. Berger, *Extremism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2018).

¹⁴⁶ Nisha Kapoor, *Deport, Deprive, Extradite: 21st Century State Extremism* (London: Verso, 2018).

¹⁴⁷ Erroll Southers, *Homegrown Violent Extremism* (Oxford, UK: Anderson Publishing, 2013).

¹⁴⁸ FBI, "Preventing Violent Extremism in Schools," (Countering Violent Extremism Section (CVES), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), 2016).

¹⁴⁹ Mark Bradbury and Michael Kleinman, "Winning Hearts and Minds? Examining the Relationship between Aid and Security in Kenya," (Medford, MA: Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, 2010).

¹⁵⁰ Eric Rosand, "Communities First: A Blueprint for Organizing and Sustaining a Global Movement against Violent Extremism,"



community-based approach to preventing violent extremism using a combination of both hard and soft strategies. It is noteworthy that many of the failed CVE initiatives in Africa¹⁵¹ (and that of Britain too¹⁵²) come from the top (the governments) and have little community input or ownership. Therefore, the community-focused approach is preferred because, in the words of Spalek,¹⁵³ "it is within communities that individual and collective identities are expressed and contested. It is within communities that the legitimacy of terror and counter-terror tactics, acts and ideological and other justifications are debated, experienced and challenged."¹⁵⁴

The community is the primary structure for the management of human societies. One will be hard-pressed to appreciate even the family structure much less the individual in the absence of community structure and identity. The notion of community is based on individual and group identities which are mutually influencing and consist of "geographical, imaginative, emotional, political and other ties."¹⁵⁵ Indeed, insurgencies like Boko Haram and IPOB thrive on these very same feelings of community identity and structure. Thus, solutions to violent extremism should speak to the same roots from which the problem emanates. Accordingly, this paper adopts Romaniuk's four critical lessons for engaging communities in CVE¹⁵⁶ as a background to a series of recommendations for CVE in Northeast Nigeria. He derived these lessons from a comprehensive review of the extant strategies for CVE.¹⁵⁷ The lessons are: "know your audience; avoid stigmatising communities; send clear messages; and engage broadly and partner strategically."¹⁵⁸

The first lesson states that programmes designed to disrupt the radicalisation process (as modelled in Section 5 of this paper) and counter the emergence of violent extremism should be based on in-depth knowledge of the radicalised or potentially radicalised community members in terms of their demographics, socioeconomic, political, cultural and religious motivations and staying power. This "know your audience" lesson demands that the focal communities for any CVE programme should be appreciated and engage with "as they are" and no effort should be spared in doing so¹⁵⁹. One way of doing so is to approach the CVE programme through the target community's cultural artefacts, communal age-grade activities, traditions and worldviews (which must be divorced from government control as is the case with the Muslim Uyghurs in China¹⁶⁰). Such community-centric approaches usually create the necessary buy-in from community members and contribute towards dousing resistance that seldom fails to accompany change initiatives.

The second lesson is to avoid stigmatising the community members¹⁶¹, especially the youth, the CVE programme aims to engage with. Stigmatisation is one of the single most potent phenomena that polarise communities and pushes a segment of people (who, hitherto, were merely aggrieved with current socioeconomic, religious or political conditions) into the embrace of extremists. It only contributes towards "isolating the very communities whose engagement is sought."¹⁶² Stigmatisation breeds anew or fans the embers of exclusivism and we versus them mentality most models of radicalisation agree is the cognitive closure potential extremists needed to be fully committed to extreme ideologies¹⁶³. It is therefore suggested that instead of tagging CVE initiatives with such terms as extremism, more acceptable phraseologies that resonates with community norms and uphold better prospects of peace should be employed¹⁶⁴.

The third lesson centres around communication challenges associated with CVE. The content of the CVE intervention must be couched in clear and unambiguous terms, and this must be done taking cognisance of the perspective and worldview of the target audience. Romaniuk¹⁶⁵ points out that CVE initiatives must be communicated in terms that do not create anxiety on already traumatised communities and their members. Perception of what is offered as a way to engage youth must not be seen to be an extension of security surveillance. While the extant CVE literature is replete with various approaches to communication, Freear and Glazzard¹⁶⁶ averred that "preventive communication" best aligns with the objectives of CVE. Preventive communication entails looking at person susceptible to influences of violent extremists as not as mere subjects of the CVE programme but as "agents in their own social environments, where their ability and opportunity to communicate is significant not only to shaping the responses of others but also to developing their own perspective."¹⁶⁷ This communication strategy makes it easy for the target audience to accept and assume ownership of the message, thereby boosting its success and sustainability potentials.

The fourth of the quartet lessons for CVE implementation is to engage broadly and partner strategically.¹⁶⁸ This entails selecting partner communities and agencies with the long-term objective in mind. The Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast has witnessed the influx of foreign NGOs and the rise of several local ones, all competing fiercely for donor resources. However, the most worrisome development is that the Nigerian Army, a think tank (Centre for Africa Liberation and Socio-Economic Rights, CALSER), and a civil rights group (Coalition for Civil Rights) have accused some International NGOs (e.g., Action

(Washington, D.C.: The Prevention Project: Organizing Against Violent Extremism, 2016).

¹⁵¹ Daniel P. Aldrich and Raghunath Mahabir, "Countering Violent Extremism in Trinidad and Tobago: An Evaluation," in *Conference for the Prevention and Countering of Violent Extremism and Counter-Terrorism* (University of the Southern Caribbean, October 3, 2019); Melissa J. Salyk-Virk, "Building Community Resilience? Community Perspectives of the Countering Violent Extremism Pilot Program in Minneapolis/St. Paul," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 43, no. 11 (2020); Adrian Cherney and Jason Hartley, "Community Engagement to Tackle Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Challenges, Tensions and Pitfalls," *Policing and Society* 27, no. 7 (2015).

¹⁵² Paul Thomas, "Failed and Friendless: The UK's 'Preventing Violent Extremism' Programme," *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 12, no. 3 (2010).

¹⁵³ Basia Spalek, "Community-Based Approaches to Counter-Terrorism," in *Counter-Terrorism: Community-Based Approaches to Preventing Terror Crime*, ed. Basia Spalek (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., pg. 27.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., pg. 32.

¹⁵⁶ Peter Romaniuk, "Does CVE Work? Lessons Learned from the Global Effort to Counter Violent Extremism," (Goshen, Indiana: Global Center on Cooperative Security, 2015).

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Rachel Harris, "'A Weekly Mäshräp to Tackle Extremism': Music-Making in Uyghur Communities and Intangible Cultural Heritage in China," *Ethnomusicology* 64, no. 1 (2020).

¹⁶¹ Romaniuk, "Does CVE Work? Lessons Learned from the Global Effort to Counter Violent Extremism."

¹⁶² Ibid., pg. 18.

¹⁶³ Floris Vermeulen, "Suspect Communities—Targeting Violent Extremism at the Local Level: Policies of Engagement in Amsterdam, Berlin, and London," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26, no. 2 (2014); Sajoo, "The Fog of Extremism: Governance, Identity, and Minstrels of Exclusion."

¹⁶⁴ Romaniuk, "Does CVE Work? Lessons Learned from the Global Effort to Counter Violent Extremism."

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Matt Freear and Andrew Glazzard, "Preventive Communication: Emerging Lessons from Participative Approaches to Countering Violent Extremism in Kenya," *The RUSI Journal* 165, no. 1 (2020).

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., pg. 90.

¹⁶⁸ Romaniuk, "Does CVE Work? Lessons Learned from the Global Effort to Counter Violent Extremism."



Against Hunger, Mercy Corps) of engaging in subversive activities against the Nigerian state by providing food, logistics, funding, and intelligence to the Boko Haram fighters, thus sabotaging the efforts of the security agencies¹⁶⁹. On the other hand, local NGOs have been accused of being mere fronts for some faceless local elites who use the NGOs to misappropriate funds meant for CVE interventions. Thus, rather than rely on these subversive and profiteering NGOs, the CVE initiatives should focus directly on leadership who live their entire lives among the CVE targets. Thus, there is the need to look inward and partner directly with communities in the CVE programmes.

Using the preceding four lessons as a broad canvas, the following general measures are sketched as avenues for CVE in Nigeria. Recognise that unless issues of bad governance and systemic corruption are addressed vigorously and transparently, all other measures will be nothing but futile stop-gaps measures. Accordingly, the current governance structure should be overhauled to give community assemblies greater say in the management of public funds.

- a) Community-friendly policing must be the norm rather than as a mere public relations slogan.¹⁷⁰ As shown by police-related causes of the initial Boko Haram attacks in Maiduguri as well as the recent EndSARS protests, the unprofessional actions of police officers contribute to radicalisation of opinions and eventually actions, especially among the economically challenged youth. Comprehensive police reforms along the lines of better community-police relations must be pursued.
- b) All the 36 states of the Nigerian Federation and the Federal Capital Territory should domesticate the relevant provisions of the Terrorism (Prevention) Act 2011 as imbeds in their community-based programmes and activities that bear on the day-by-day life of community members.
- c) Community-based social entrepreneurship programmes¹⁷¹ should be established on a self-help basis to assist youth in addressing economic risk factors and overcoming socio-religious challenges. Communities should strategically partner with value-adding (preferably local) professionals as partners, including formal and traditional educational institutions to build a localised collaborative network that could help communities during a time of need.
- d) Families¹⁷² are the first line of defence in keeping youth safe from violent extremism. Also, a study¹⁷³ has shown that friends are more likely to detect early an individual's drift towards violent extremism than even family members. Communities should develop engagement programmes around the fundamental social structure of the concerned community that educate families about risk factors facing youths and how to address them early without aggravating the radicalisation process.
- e) Communities should establish youth centres based on their local cultures relating to the training of youngsters where these youths will have the benefit of socialising with their

peers in safe spaces devoid of the dangers posed by extremist recruiters. Such centres should focus on providing "pro-social and supportive environments, ... educational and skill-development opportunities and interventions that build self-esteem, increase positive life relationships and experiences, and address social determinants of health"¹⁷⁴ and related matters.

- f) Finally, and most importantly, education is indispensable to human development. Many of the radicalised youths in Maiduguri first drifted to Yusuf's *Markaz* because of the free education he provided them and the sense of belonging to a group that cares about them, but they ended up getting indoctrinated. It is therefore imperative to any sustainable CVE programme to include the provision of primary and secondary level using the Islamiyah school system (a system blends technical skills with Islamic education).¹⁷⁵ Such schools are in vogue nowadays, and the government should partner with the communities in providing such services.

Conclusion

The elimination of the dangers of violent extremism with the concomitant production of sustainable peace and development in the Northeast states of Nigeria is a task that goes beyond military operations and interventions of NGOs and donors. It is a task that requires a holistic approach involving the affected communities as the primary drivers of interventions geared towards preventing ordinary youths from getting radicalised as well as deradicalising the already radicalised ones. While this task is daunting, it is still doable, as evidenced by the successful involvement of youths in the actual fight against the ongoing Boko Haram insurgency. Communities should be stimulated to take the lead and ownership in replicating such youth involvement in the provision of education and gainful employment targeted at disrupting the known process of youth radicalisation into violent extremism.

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