

## Challenges of Deradicalisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Boko Haram Insurgents in Northeast Nigeria

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### Abstract:

#### Purpose:

For more than a decade, the Boko Haram insurgency has been an internal and external security threat to Nigeria. This study aims to identify challenges and provide policy input to ensure the success of deradicalization and reintegration programs as a pathway to peacebuilding in North Eastern Nigeria.

#### Methodology:

This research method adopts a qualitative data collection and analysis strategy, with special interviews using unstructured questionnaires with family members of victims, officials from the North East National Emergency Management Agency, security officers, academics, and officials from international donor organizations.

#### Findings:

The findings show that the main obstacles to deradicalization and rehabilitation of repentant Boko Haram members include negative perceptions of victims' families, desire for revenge, suspicion of the authenticity of repentance, accusations of espionage, corruption of public officials, and the inability to provide an environment that supports full reintegration.

#### Implication:

These findings impact the importance of practical steps to ensure that surrendering rebels can be productive. At the same time, victims and their families must be adequately compensated to prevent future tendencies toward retaliation and the resurgence of the insurgency.

## INTRODUCTION

Armed groups' activities endangering global peace and security in the 21st century. Both national and international security are threatened by fundamentalist and terror groups. These groups emerged, mainly in the second half of the 20th century, idealized their movements and justified their activities as responses to injustice, oppression and other pretexts. Currently, more than fifty (50) countries in the world face the threats of terror groups and terrorism. Extremism heralded terrorism, but fundamentalism does not operate in a vacuum. Some antecedents of the vicissitudes of the interplay of social groups, politics and economic distribution shaped the foundation for radical groups. In recent years, religion has swayed the activities and movements of these groups, and it is devastating to all armed groups' violence because it was established on the track of belief in creed, ideology and sacrifices.

In the last seventy (70) years, terror groups appeared in various parts of the world, specifically in the Muslim world. The radical or terror groups in modern times surfaced from the influence of Jacob Baradai during the French Revolution, where a reign of terror sponsored by Baradai claimed between 16,000 to 40,000 brutal ways of killing (Al Hageel, 2002). The Italian Red Brigades, Irish Republican Army (IRA), Basque Euskadi Ta Askatasuna in Spain, the Greek 17th November Revolutionary Organisation, the French Action Directe, the German Rote Armee Fraktion, Al Qaeda, Al Shabbab, Armed Street Gangs in the US, Virginia Paintball Jihad Cell, American Christian Apocalypse, Boko Haram, ISIS, AQIM, Jihadists in Mali, Mozambique, Burkina Faso and other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa are all terror groups in modern times that believed in violence to achieve

their goals (Demy, 2009; Emerson, 2009; Hoyt, 2009; Maggio, 2009; Smith, 2009; Underwood, 2009; Valla & Comcowich, 2009; Maniscalco & Rosato, 2019 and Warner et al. 2022).

Radicalization is the primary factor behind extremism and terrorism. The radical groups, in most cases, transformed into insurgents and terrorist armed groups that unleash violence on a large scale on states and innocent citizens. Radicalism emanates from several factors. Political injustice begets armed groups (Schlichte, 2009), whereas, in other circumstances, socioeconomic inequality and lack of distributive justice motivate the breeding of terror groups. Religion is considered the most essential factor in causing violence and terrorism. Al Qaeda, for example, built its ideology and movement on Jihad, but there is a clandestine factor apart from religious motives (Sule et al., 2018). Cold War ideological battle between the US and the USSR led to the US-led sponsored Al Qaeda Jihadists' recruitment (Mamdani, 2004). Ignorance, misperceptions and misinterpretations of religious texts, especially by Muslim youth, pushed them on the edge of fundamentalism that eventually metamorphosed into terror groups if left unchecked (Al Qaradawi, 1991 & Oudah 2007). Other scholars presented plausible illustrations of the beginning and expansion of radicalism that may result in terrorism.

One significant impact of radicalism, violence and terrorism is its effects on the economic, political and social segments of the affected societies. Besides, radical groups undermined national security, and once a terror group like Al Qaeda and other sister unions acquired the leverage and the effrontery to advance, they threatened global peace and security through the globalization of terror. The radical groups accepted violence as the only means of reaching their goals. Hence, in their bid to pressurize national and international governments for a concession on their demands, they resort to indiscriminate killings and destruction. In essence, they prefer to make innocent citizens their target of terror. It is the mainframe that makes studying radical movements and the process of deradicalizing them pertinent or necessary, particularly in states like Nigeria, which has various terror groups disguised under different nomenclatures but have the same motive of instilling fear and instability among innocent citizens.

To avoid radical and terror groups, states, especially those that are weak in their security architecture, understood the necessity of devising alternatives to the military approach. Groups that are brainwashed and indoctrinated with religious identity and the propaganda of Jihadism for heaven are challenging to eliminate because they are spontaneous in their actions and aggressive in their quest for even death sometimes. Other groups that are subjected to hopelessness by hunger, malnutrition, joblessness, corruption, inequality, diseases, illiteracy, and other socio-economic malaise of backwardness accelerated by misgovernance and squandering of scarce national resources are difficult to counter because the rubicon of despair has overshadowed their hope of survival or any fortune in future life. As such, the means to counter these radical groups is not only military operations, particularly since the activities of the armed groups sometimes weaken states. Deradicalization is a practical and feasible mechanism to suppress the groups. Many scholars presented various alternatives to deradicalization, as extensively discussed in this study.

Deradicalization is often accompanied by peacebuilding designed to rehabilitate and reintegrate repentant armed groups' members. However, difficulties are encountered in resettling the people displaced by the activities of terror groups. At the same time, the repentant members are difficult to handle or to be placed in society because of perception, stereotyping, stigmatization and fear of retaliation. The members of radical groups themselves are not guaranteed to stay peaceful after successful rehabilitation and reintegration. They may turn back to their radical belief and rejoin their colleagues in the heinous crime. It is obtainable, particularly in states like Nigeria, where the government is blamed for not fulfilling its part of the bargain after the amnesty with the armed groups when they surrendered.

A deradicalization program is required in Northeast Nigeria, a robust one that can successfully disarm the radicals from their extreme view. The emergence of the Boko Haram insurgency destabilized the hitherto tranquil Northeast Nigeria. Northeast Nigeria has an approximately 26 million population (12% of the total national population); the region has six (6) states and a size of 36,917 km<sup>2</sup>. The geopolitical zone neighbors three (3)

countries of Chad Republic, Cameroon and Niger Republic (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). In less than fifteen (15) years of the armed violence perpetrated by the Boko Haram sect, over 40,000 were killed, about 2.5 million displaced, primarily women and children, and around 40% of subsistent farmers were ostracised from their farmlands, leading to a food security crisis and an unprecedented humanitarian crises were created by the conflict leaving about 1.2 million children malnourished, about 1.9 million in emergency need for humanitarian intervention and other implications. All efforts to counter the insurgency failed to annihilate the group's activities. The assault by Boko Haram has, of course, subsided to the minimum level, but the destruction caused and the remnants of their operations are affecting peacebuilding in Northeast Nigeria (Sule et al., 2019a). It is the motivating factor behind this study. The military offensive did not work effectively, and the deradicalization program is not yielding the desired result. There is an urgent need to study the causal factors behind why peacebuilding, rehabilitation and reintegration are not producing the targeted result.

The chapter is a mixed-method study utilizing primary sources and documented research methods. A field exploration within three (3) years of research in the area of study on the subject matter led to an encounter with experts interviewed from many categories, including security operatives, repentant insurgent members, academics, civil societies, international donors and media reporters. The data obtained from the field and the documented materials were discussed using thematic analysis. The chapter was organized into segments, starting with an introduction and background to the study, examining issues in radicalization, perspectives on deradicalization, peacebuilding process: rehabilitation and reintegration, an overview of Boko Haram insurgency in Northeast Nigeria, challenges of deradicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration in Northeast Nigeria and practical implications of the research.

**Radicalisation: An Examination.** Understanding the processes of radicalization and extremist recruitment strategies is a multi-tasking job (Ranstorp, 2010). Radicalization germinates from the concept of 'Otherness' and the perception of other people's ideas and status as incompatible with what individuals or groups perceive either in their delusion of puritanism or mistakes of misperception or exhumation of moderation from their thoughts (Murray, 2015). Extremism or radicalization is taking an irreconcilable stand on an idea, perception or action. It can be violent and non-violent, political, economic, social and religious (Cassam, 2022). However, Cassam (2022) argues that extremism is detrimental and should be quickly countered. Extremists can adopt car bombing, crowd bombing, assassination, hostage-taking and physical violence, as in the case of ISIS and other terror groups. In other circumstances, extremists may not be violent. However, their views, ideologies, and perceptions are irritating and dangerous to other members of society because they neither compromise nor back down from their obsession, irrespective of how right or wrong they are (Cassam, 2022). Thus, Cassam (2022) identified that extremism can be a method of extremism, as well as ideological and psychological extremism.

Violent radicalism is an old phenomenon that has been linked to individuals and groups from all religions, cultures and races. However, it is palpable that Islamic radicalization is prominent globally in contemporary discourses on radicalization (El Sa'id & Barrett, 2011). El Sa'id and Barrett (2011) argue that terrorism is not an ideology but a process gingered by multi-complex interwoven encumbrances of individual, local, national and international environment and experience. El Sa'id and Barrett's (2011) view is exactly presented by Onuoha and Nwangwu (2021) in their expositions of the nature of radicalization. Radicals are those who hold extreme political and religious views on the use of violence. Radicalization is the covert operation of small groups involved in organized campaigns of violence to achieve their perceived idea or to deter a detested view (Silke, 2014). Radicalization becomes increasingly lethal when such extremists are captured and imprisoned because they have the potential to poison and recruit inmates to join them after serving their sentences (Ranstorp, 2010; Silke, 2014). Language exploitation is the early signs and platforms that extremists developed their ideas and recruited. Some extreme words and languages are often perceived as expressions of individuals with signs of radicalism, which can be easily countered using the opposite language (Walker, 2019). Ranstorp (2010) presents four (4) significant techniques that cause radicalization, including i. structural causes such as population imbalance, globalization,

modernization and deprivation; ii. Accelerating causes include mobility, technology, transport and publicity; iii. Motivational causes such as religion, economy and politics and iv. Triggering causes such as injustice and environmental changes.

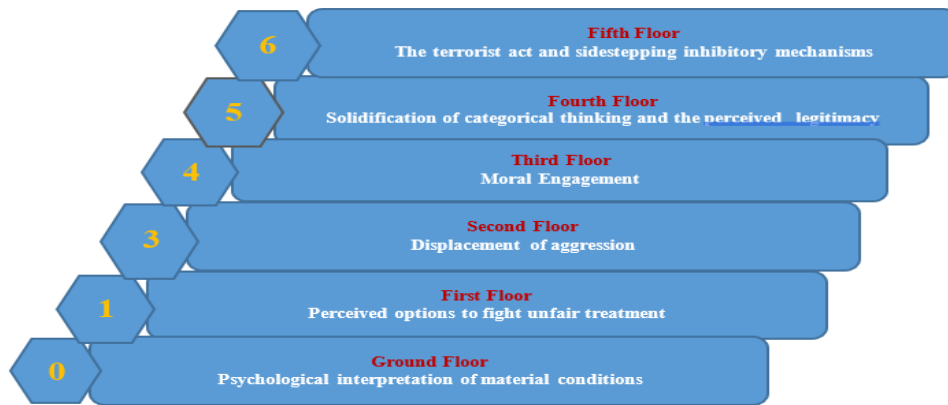
Radicalization challenges global peace and security, and countering the ideology is much more complex, particularly if it is attached to religious identity as obtained in modern times. Youth are recruited and indoctrinated with extreme ideas that result in armed violence. Radicalization flourishes in contemporary societies because prevention efforts are counterproductive (Viano, 2014). The view of radicalization as national security instead of human security made counter-radicalization less consequential (Chin, 2014). Social exclusion pushed youth to despair and inimical ideologies, subjecting them to be easy prey for recruitment into extreme groups (Dandurand, 2014 European Crime Prevention Monitor, 2019). Youth are vulnerable to the risk of recruitment into extremist groups in environments where corruption and misrule are obtained. The recruiters used the psychology of anti-corruption and reversing misgovernance as their weapons for recruitment (Shelley, 2014). Environment and reactions support radicalization in our societies. The Muslim radicals in Europe are sometimes reacting to the actions of the perceptions that they are frustrated with. For instance, Islamophobia and racism may make some Muslims react, and these are connected to the attacks in Brussels, Paris and Munich. However, others are radicals because they are obsessed with charismatic extremist individuals. For instance, the Munich shooter, Sonboly, acted based on his unquestioning loyalty to Anders Behring Breivik (Morsi, 2017 & Abbas, 2019).

The increasing migration of Muslim youth to Europe and America corresponds with the escalating radical violence of Islamic youth in Europe, which caused a severe misunderstanding of the religion. However, an important point is missed in the misperception, racism and stereotyping that the Muslim youth received in Europe, which pushed them into violence unconsciously (Robinson & Gardee, 2022). However, radicalization is not unique to Europe and America. Africa suffers more from violence motivated by radicalization than other continents. For instance, violent extremism cost Africa 33,000 lives between 2011 and 2006 (Onuoha & Nwangwu, 2021). Radicalization commences with a changing identity derived from grievances from a perceived societal injustice. Once an individual holds a grudge against the existing social order, a sense of alienation and hopelessness intrudes. Gradually, such an aggrieved person will be attracted by fellow agonized likes, and they will form a small group with the mindset of unleashing violence to promote their grievances or stop a perceived threat against their interest (Onuoha & Nwangwu, 2021). However, as observed previously (Cassam, 2022), radicalization does not entail that violence must be involved. An extreme view can be developed without leading to armed conflict (Onuoha & Nwangwu, 2021). Radicalization may not necessarily be terrorism, but it has the potential to culminate in terrorism if it is allowed continuously (Jayakumar, 2019). Extremists recruit members into radicalization by using psychological mechanisms (Trip et al. 2019). It has been the justification for religious violent groups because the psychology of the recruited is manipulated using religious tenets. This type of radicalization quickly plunges into violence and terrorism.

Radicalization has been taken beyond the threshold of physical activities to the digital space, which is more dangerous. Radicals are more easily promoting their ideas in digital space than decades ago (Kenyon et al., 2021). The Internet revolution has positively and negatively impacted individuals and states (Ranstorp, 2010). Online extremism is gradually taking over conventional terror groups (Littler & Lee, 2020). The outburst of right-wing extremist groups (non-Islamists) in digital space is pervasive and affecting the national security of the Western world. These right-wing extremists include the British Extreme Right and Web (Jackson, 2020), the Extreme Rights and Radical Islamists in the UK (Allchorn, 2020), Canadian Far-Right Extremism on Facebook (Scrivens & Amarasingam, 2020), the Extreme Memes (Lee), the Irish Republicanism and Ulster Loyalism Online (Bowman-Grieve & Herron, 2020), the Animal Rights Extremism (McAlister & Monagan, 2020) and Extreme British Anti-abortion Activism on Facebook (Littler, 2020). All these groups online have the potential for recruiting members through social media, and they tend towards violence if they are not adequately checkmated. Birdwell (2020) suggests that such groups mentioned above can be countered through comprehensive programs and intervening

approaches against individuals and groups showing signs of extremist ideologies through Countering Violence Extremism (CVE).

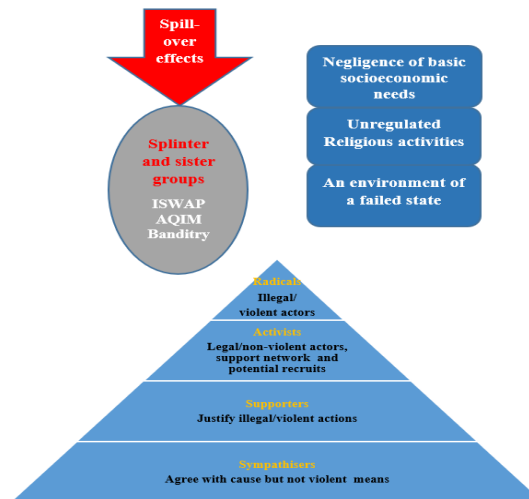
Scholars (Al Qaradawi, 1991; Moghaddam, 2005; McCauley & Moskalkenko, 2008; Muro, 2016) have presented many radicalization models. It is pertinent to study them succinctly to counter the process. Understanding the models will help immensely in preventing incidences. A study (Moghaddam, 2005) presents six (6) staircase models of radicalization, as illustrated below.



Source: Moghaddam (2005).

**Figure 1.** Moghaddam's Staircase Model of Radicalisation

Unlike Moghaddam (2005), McCauley and Moskalkenko (2008) present four stages of radicalization in a pyramidal illustration.



Source: McCauley & Moskalkenko (2008).

**Figure 2.** McCauley & Moskalkenko's Radicalisation Pyramid

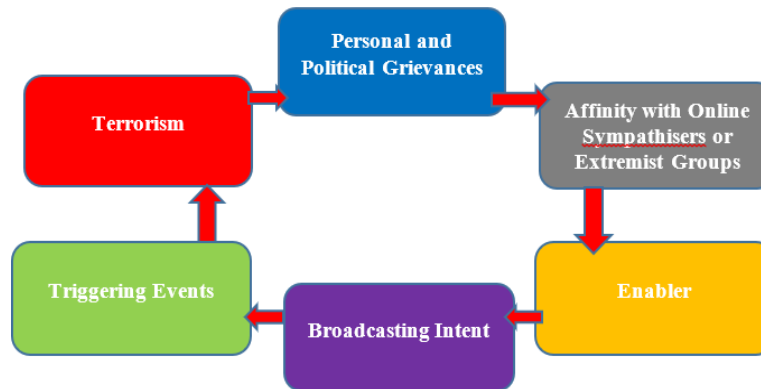
As illustrated in his model below, Muro (2016) perceives radicalization as a process from ideological leaning to the final stage of extremism.



Source: Muro (2016).

**Figure 3.** Muro’s Model of Radicalisation as a process

Similar to the above models, Hamm and Spaaij (2015) portray radicalization as the early step to terrorism. The relationship is circular, where radical views transform into terrorism. The circular relationships are illustrated in Figure 3.



Source: Hamm & Spaaij (2015).

**Figure 4.** Hamm & Spaaij Model of Radicalization to Terrorism

From the Islamic point of view, Al Qaradawi (1991) identifies six (6) stages of radicalization leading to extremism and terrorism if left unchecked.



Source: Qaradawi 1991 (Model designed by the author).

**Figure 5.** Al Qaradawi’s Assumptions on Extremism and Manifestations of Extremism from Islamic viewpoint

The study finds it expedient to settle with Al Qaradawi’s model of radicalization since the chapter examines Boko Haram, a terror group that claims Jihad from an Islamic angle, and the model presents a process of radicalization converting to extremism and violence from the Islamic perspective. Unlike most of the misperceptions that Sunni creed, Saudi Wahhabism and Salafism breed radical ideas and extremism linked to terrorism, Al Qaradawi (1991) summarily points to weak censorship, misguidance and governments’ inactions in

allowing youth to develop extremism. Additionally, many studies (Sanni, 2016); Thurston, 2016); Umar, 2018; Maihula, 2020; Sule & Sambo, 2020 and De Montclos, 2021) deconstruct and demystify the linkage between Sunni, Wahhabism and Salafism with radical ideas. The studies suggest that it is not justifiable to link extremism and terrorism with ideologies that are critical of any form of uprising or rebellion against the established order. Maihula (2020) argues that the frequent misquoting of Ibn Taymiyyah by insurgents and terror groups stems from ignorance, misperceiving Ibn Taymiyyah's ideas and a half-baked education that lacks acumen and versatility to interpret the analytically textual context of what scholars write. Thus, the models presented remain relevant to pave the way for building deradicalization models. Data obtained from fieldwork based on in-depth personal interviews with various categories revealed similar strategies above for radicalization that led to the Boko Haram insurgency. Famous among the views are those of religious clerics since the armed group emerged from religious radicalization. However, Sule et al. (2022) attribute the phenomenon to multiple front reactions involving ideological, political and socio-economic. The experts opined that ignorance, misperception, selfish interpretation, the clandestine motive of internal and external foes and ineffective state policies on religion, especially censorship, led to the total radicalization of the Boko Haram insurgents.

**Perspectives on Deradicalisation.** Deradicalization is a term that surfaced in the limelight of academic discourses a few decades ago owing to the explosion of radical armed groups and terrorism. The idea of deradicalization is to mitigate the resurgence of fresh, radical ideas and groups while suppressing the existing ones to avert security dilemmas nationally and internationally. Radicalization, mainly those influenced by religious ideology, is difficult to counter. It is because the level of indoctrination and penetration of ideas disabused the minds of the recruits to the extent that they are happy even in death. This type of extremism is not accommodated in Islam as any form of Jihad. However, the perpetrators constantly and continuously misquote Qur'anic verses, Prophetic Hadiths and other Islamic jurisprudence erroneously or deliberately to justify their evil actions, as observed by Lombardi (2015), Stuart (2015), Maihula (2020) and Sule & Sambo (2020). Since radicalization has its process and models of growth and expansion, it is vital to identify models and processes of deradicalizing, especially in Nigeria, where the military offensive for more than a decade failed to produce the desired result.

Deradicalization entails comprehensive programs designed to re-orient radicals and rehabilitate them into a normal societal lifestyle and thinking (Onuoha & Nwangwu, 2021). Deradicalization can be preventive and counteractive. Social inclusion programs for youth can prevent them from radical tendencies (Dandurand, 2014) and take adequate care of human security (De Divitiis, 2015). The existing extremism of youth can be countered through education, families and communities (Veenkamp & Zeiger, 2015). Globally, deradicalization programs appeared since the 1970s in different models and approaches (Koehler, 2015). The early approach is that of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) package with significant incentives for marriage and settling with a family. Italy emulated this model to deradicalize the Red Brigade, and Ireland used the same model against IRI and Columbia to demobilize and disengage FARC members in 1997 (Koehler, 2015). Indonesia, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia have adopted dialogue and counseling programs using a large-scale, state-funded approach. The dialogue and counseling approach model was applied by other states, including Egypt, Jordan, Algeria, Tajikistan, Malaysia, Singapore, Iraq and Thailand (Koehler, 2015). Koehler (2015) further stresses that other state-run deradicalization programs started in Denmark, the UK, the Netherlands, Norway, Germany and Sweden, focusing mainly on dismantling the radical ideology. Other European countries have recently developed deradicalization policies, such as state policies preventing radicalization and terrorism in Belgium, France and Spain (Du Bois & Bruggeman, 2019; Rosato, 2019a; Rosato, 2019b). The European Union is designing a collective approach to counter radicalism and terrorism in Europe. The efforts of the EU followed the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks and other isolated coordinated attacks in various European cities. The European Arrest Warrant, the Counter Terrorism Coordinator and the European Counter Terrorism Centre within Europol were established as EU counterterrorism policy (Musolino, 2019).

In another view, Guidi and Babetto (2020) argue that the best means of countering terrorism in Europe is reaching a consensus in understanding violent radicalization to utilize participatory approaches for prevention. Increasing professionals' knowledge and skills to deal with violent radicalization will help in preventing and countering radicalization, according to Gavrilovici and Dronic (2020). It is achievable through training, equipping and challenging fieldwork. However, Cecchini and Donati (2020) prefer involving communities and participatory meetings with stakeholders in the deradicalization process. Extremists are using the leverage of modern information and communication technology to spread their ideas, propaganda, recruit and send shock waves to their target. It necessitates effective cybersecurity as a tool for counterterrorism (Ogwueleka & Anichie, 2021). During the deradicalization process, multiple actors, such as psychologists, imams, political analysts and social assistants, are involved based on their unique roles. However, it is observed by several cases and practicals that deradicalization programs executed in prisons hardly succeed. If any, most of the cases reported in France, Belgium, and other states hardened the stance of the radicals to determine if they would remain in extremism after sentences (Conti, 2019). A study (Koehler, 2019) asserts that deradicalization programs are less successful than many governments are portraying. Based on data collected from multiple sources and several programs, Koehler (2019) suggests that the state of the art indicates that policymakers need to review the existing programs and engage research in designing workable ones. As stressed by Conti (2019), the prison approach is re-radicalizing the extremists instead of liberalizing them. Silke et al. (2021) illustrate a process that will involve disengagement, disarmament, psychological influence and reintegration of extremists after a socio-economic intervention. It is the Phoenix Model of Deradicalisation by Silke et al. (2021).

The emphasis on deradicalization through rehabilitation programs and ideological approaches is not a pointer to the failure of military counterterrorism. It is in the best interest to minimize the expansion of radicals. Military offensives may escalate suspicion, prejudice, anger, resentment, animosity, hatred, and recalcitrant minds (Gunaratna & Hussin, 2020). Many governments realized the inefficacy of the military offensive, which led to the design of the CVE policy paradigm. The new approach is reportedly part of victorious counterterrorism (Gunaratna & Hussin, 2020). In Nigeria, the area of study, counterterrorism, was approached through various military operations. However, the guerilla warfare nature of the insurgency of Boko Haram made the approach unsuccessful, and that guided a rethink in addressing the menace of tackling it through deradicalization programs (Sule et al., 2019a).

However, the current deradicalization programs are not appealing to some sections of the communities in Northeast Nigeria. For instance, religious scholars interviewed expressed their dismay with the deradicalization programs. In their view, they prefer prevention to countering. They believed that insurgents that killed, destroyed, maimed, disfigured, looted, raped and committed heinous atrocities are handled in Islam differently from what the government is doing now. They interviewed clerics who are conscious of the victims of the insurgency and their cognitive perception. They pointed out that handling radicals in special programs to integrate them into communities is sending a message to the community members that one's goal is achievable by violence, and that will cause further proliferation of radical groups in the future. According to them, it is mainly in the Nigerian context where the leaders' injustice, misgovernance and selfishness will continue to breed resentment in the system and aggressive perception against the existing social order. Instead, they settled for comprehensive religious censorship programs as obtained in Saudi, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and other Islamic states where deterrence was adopted as a response after the mayhem. Like the above, Al Qaradawi (1991) presents deradicalization or counter-measures in his stages of radicalization model. In his approach, tackling the early stages of radical formation, re-orientation, scholarship engagement, and preventing the medium of recruitment and communication of extremists are the best ways of deradicalization. In essence, radicalization should be extinguished in its infancy stage. Oudah (2007), building on that, suggests that proper scholarship and authentic Islamic knowledge inculcated in the youth and Islamic leadership is the permanent panacea. It is because, according to Oudah (2007), Islam is



entrapped between ignorant followers, incapable scholars and secularised leaders. The trio made it easy for extremism to occur in the Muslim world, and this trend can easily be dismantled through a sound scholarship.

## METHODS

**Rehabilitation and Reintegration: Peacebuilding Process.** Post-conflict building means state or interim organizations, agencies or individuals take over state duties in war-devastated areas to restore peace, administrative control, and security and reconstruct the economy and social development (Greener, 2017; Silke et al., 2021). Post-conflict peacebuilding has recently been on the agenda of the international community and development agencies. The task of peacebuilding in post-conflict is challenging due to the complex task of economic reconstruction, rebuilding institutions, democratization, transitional justice, reconciliation and resettlement (Langer et al., 2016). The massive task of rebuilding a state or areas affected by conflicts does not consist only of financial constraints but also of the obstacle of harmonizing the warring parties. One of the conflicting parties might be aggressive and have committed injurious and indelible cognitive damage to the other. Designing a permanent truce among these groups is becoming elusive to the policymakers and stakeholders (Langer et al., 2016). In order to achieve successful peacebuilding in conflict-affected areas, it is crucial to address several pressing issues. One of them is prioritizing poverty reduction and social development (Addison et al., 2016). Economic reconstruction and reforms (Del Castillo, 2016) are vital in achieving sustainable peacebuilding in post-conflict societies in the way proper institutionalization, democratization, and building of a robust civil society (Reilly, 2016; Jarstad, 2016 and Brown, 2016) are necessary for a holistic community building. Some barbiturates of conflict mobilizers should be muted, including demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (Muggah & O'Donnell, 2016).

There are no sacrosanct models of deradicalization that can be accepted universally. However, some programs display a considerable level of success if they are characterized by creating a sense of hope and purpose, building a sense of community, providing individual attention and regimented daily schedules, and ensuring sustainable, long-term commitment following completion of the program. The bottom-up approach was coined by Popp et al. (2020). The rehabilitation centers and authorities are guided to seek partnerships with host communities, NGOs, the private sector, academia and other branches of government that can provide valuable services. These stakeholders, in partnership, should design seven (7) strategies of rehabilitation that cater to social rehabilitation, psychological rehabilitation, religious rehabilitation, educational rehabilitation, vocational rehabilitation, creative art therapy rehabilitation and sports and recreational rehabilitation (Gunaratna & Hussin, 2020). Another model of rehabilitation and integration is that of Saudi Arabia. War of ideas and dialogue were adopted in a soft approach to reintegrating the extremists into society. It is sometimes called a re-education program. The model uses intensive religious dialogue and debates, psychological counseling, nurturing tolerance and inculcation of moderation in perception. The Saudi model was considered a success story until later in 2010 when the extremists exhibited a fresh, radical attitude, awakening the world that more needs to be done (Weggemans & De Graaf, 2017). The Phoenix State Model of reintegration and post-conflict peacebuilding is a good and workable model for states devastated by conflict. The Phoenix States are those shattered by the effects of war (Girod, 2015). Girod (2015) referred to Mozambique as an excellent example of how the Phoenix State responded positively to post-conflict peacebuilding. During the Mozambique war, hunger, insecurity, displacement, and destruction symbolized the shadow of the state. After the peace treaty was signed, international donors such as donors massively engaged in aggressive intervention in child immunization, building latrines, and providing modern seeds and fertilizers to the settled displaced. While doing that, they engaged in rigorous infrastructure building, such as schools, roads and health centers. Mozambique quickly extricated itself from the debris of war to a flourishing economy with a rising standard of living and a growing economy of 109% between 1992 and 2009 (Girod, 2015). One helpful innovation introduced by the United Nations in peacekeeping and post-conflict reintegration is the use of gender-based actors. Using gender actors in rehabilitation and reintegration

leads to success, but there are obstacles to success that are instigated by institutional barriers (Karim & Beardsley, 2017).

In Africa, Tom (2017) argues that a qualitative understanding of the peacebuilding process is only meaningful concerning Africa's past. In his view, Tom (2017) argues that most contemporary conflicts in Africa inherited their roots from the legacies of Western imperialism and colonialism. This is necessary, emphasizes Tom (2017), because most peacebuilders and interveners referred to the immediate roots of the conflicts, neglecting the long-term issues that tantalized the problem. Doing that will never resolve the crisis amicably. For instance, African pre-colonial societies are equal and communal regarding resource distribution and brotherhood. Colonialism introduced classes and individualism that set brothers against each other in the conflict of struggles for accessing scarce resources and power privileges. This type of conflict devastated most African states, and rebuilding peace in these states has been elusive for many decades because the root of the problem is ignored (Tom, 2017). Thus, peacebuilding in such societies is beyond the rehabilitation and reintegration of armed groups and aggrieved sects. Reforming the system to suit African culture and heritage is the plausible alternative, added Tom (2017).

The Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model is suggested for successful rehabilitation and reintegration program (Sukabdi, 2021). RNR is a practical model of correctional assessment and rehabilitative programming to liberalize extremists from their ideological and psychological mindset. In the RNR model, an active intervention model is formulated in a normative and organizational context. The RNR model is not only responsive but also preventive. Risk needs factors are studied and attended to before they influence cognitive behavior that will explode into extremism (Reiter et al., 2021).

Rehabilitation and reintegration do not wait for a political settlement. Actors and warring factions are engaged continuously while peace is being rebuilt. Some conflicts may linger for decades or even centuries, such as the Israeli-Palestine conflict. In this environment, the best approach is to bring together the actors involved in the conflict to make some concessions while the process is ongoing (Pospisil, 2019). This situation can better explain Northeast Nigeria because the Boko Haram insurgency is far from being suppressed. Minor attacks are ongoing but may not stop the peacebuilding process in the area. Reintegrating extremists requires complex social, economic, political, and moral frontiers and designing resilience for the harbingers that will disrupt the disengagement process (Marsden, 2017). Statutory agents and community-based mentors can facilitate an individual's re-entry into society when provided with the needed resources. However, several challenges affect the reintegration process of extremists. First is ecology. The environment may not embrace them, especially where the extremists inflicted injuries on members of communities and their beloved. Stigmatization will affect the cognitive set of the rehabilitated extremists, making it difficult for them to resettle in their societies.

Additionally, the fear of retaliation may keep the rehabilitated extremists watchful, and any iota of it may reactivate their violence. The fear of resurgence to extremism should not be discarded in the rehabilitation process because some of them may surrender under duress, and they may ambush the rehabilitators to secure the nod to go back to their everyday lives and deviate again. Other challenges are financial constraints, particularly in areas affected by war and economic destruction, and the efficacy of policies and the environment (Marsden, 2017).

From the Islamic viewpoint, some scholars interviewed in this study expressed their preferences for rehabilitation and reintegration. Citing Islamic jurisprudence, they agreed that there are circumstances in which extremists should be pardoned and where they should be punished. They agreed that there is no harm in amnesty and rehabilitation as suggested in the Glorious Quran:

“Indeed, the penalty for those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and spread mischief in the land is death, crucifixion, cutting off their hands and feet on opposite sides, or exile from the land. This ‘penalty’ is a disgrace for them, and they will suffer a tremendous punishment in the Hereafter. As for those who repent before you seize them, know Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful” (Quran 5:33-34).

The scholars argued that since there is a provision for repentance to those who surrender, the best strategy for rehabilitating them and reintegrating them into society is to allow sound religious scholars to engage them in dialogue and education to make them understand the proper and authentic teaching of religion before their reappearance to the members of their community. Experts from academia opined that there are provisions and models from various countries, but indigenizing the rehabilitation process is better. One vital factor they emphasized is economic reintegration through skills acquisition, training and provision of opportunities for the extremists to have a self-reliant occupation or quality advanced education. However, some members of civil societies believe that the Nigerian Government must retrace its footsteps toward just and equitable distribution of resources, provision of infrastructures and a decent means of living to the members of society to avoid grievances that will be tantamount to taking up arms against the states and innocent citizens.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Boko Haram in Northeast Nigeria: An Overview.** The Boko Haram insurgency emerged from the remnants of radical preaching initiated by Muhammad Yusuf, its founder (Kassim & Nwankpa, 2018). The sect became critical and vehement against Western education and the Western super-imposed system on Nigeria, especially Muslim-dominated Northern Nigeria. Boko Haram, according to a study (Sule et al., 2018), is not the first Islamic group to declare Jihad or armed violence against the state and its innocent citizens. In essence, Sule et al. (2018) argue that Boko Haram is the modern version of Maitatsine, a similar group in the 1980s that unleashed mayhem and terror in selected Northern states. Because they share the same ideology and methodology, only the weapons and time differ. Boko Haram appeared in 2002 in Kanamma Geidem in Yobe State of Northeast Nigeria and Panshekara in Kano State in Northwest Nigeria in 2007 by some radical youth under the leadership of Muhammad Nur. According to one of the informants, Muhammad Nur joined Muhammad Yusuf and influenced his radical approach. Officially, the sect called itself 'Jama'atu Ahlul Sunnah Lil Da'awati Wal Jihad', an Arabic statement which can be translated as 'Movement for the proselytization towards pure Islamic teachings and strive in the cause of Allah' (Thurston, 2018; Sule et al. 2019 and Ewang, 2020). The group claimed Jihad in its activities, ignorantly misleading the world to perceive their activities as influenced by Islam when Islam has nothing to do with their extremism, according to an informant.

The transformation of Boko Haram from preaching to perceived Jihad or violence began in 2009 when the Nigerian security operatives extrajudicially killed the sect leader, Muhammad, after a clash between the group and Operation Flush, a joint task force established by the Borno State Government to fight crimes. Abubakar Shekau immediately assumed the leadership mantle and declared Jihad against the Nigerian Government and any person who supported or sympathized with the establishment (Thurston, 2018; Ibrahim & Bala, 2018). From 2009, Boko Haram intensified attacks on Nigerian security operatives in military barracks, check posts, police stations, churches, mosques, markets and other crowded places. The sect used sophisticated weapons, including AK-47s, machine guns, semi-automatic guns, Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs), handmade bombs and anti-aircraft guns, using sporadic indiscriminate shootings in coordinated attacks and sometimes isolated targeted suicide bombings (Foyou et al., 2018). The group later splintered into Jama'atu Ahlul Sunnah and Ansaruddeen, with the former led by Shekau and the latter the son of the late Muhammad Yusuf, Abu Mus'ab Al Barnawi. The Ansaru later declared itself Al Qaeda in the Maghrib (AQIM) or the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) and pledged allegiance to the mother Al Qaeda and ISIS (Foyou et al., 2018). In essence, it was the reminiscence of the intense rivalry that led to the killing of the Boko Haram leader, Abubakar Shekau, by ISWAP in June 2021. However, the Nigerian troops also killed the ISWAP leader himself in September 2021 (Omirin & Isamotu, 2021).

Many factors germinate Boko Haram. The high incidence of abject penury is one of the causes of the Boko Haram insurgency (Foyou et al., 2018), perpetuated by the corruption of state officials and collapsing security architecture (Ibrahim & Bala, 2018). Poor micro and macroeconomic policies that failed to deliver quality education and generate jobs for the youth, climate change, particularly the depletion of Lake Chad in West Africa,

have also been attributed to the cause of the Boko Haram followed by population bulge, porous borders and the proliferation of SALW (International Crisis Group, 2020). Lack of religious censorship and the youths' tendency toward fundamentalism and claim of Jihad is another crucial cause of Boko Haram (Walker, 2016 & Allen, 2019) in addition to ineffective response and mishandling of the crisis by the Nigerian state (Idris, 2018 & Allen, 2019). Radicalization aided by a lack of security intelligence and expertise is another driver of the Boko Haram insurgency in Northeast Nigeria (Onuoha & Nwangwu, 2021).

It was reported that around 3 million children and women were primarily displaced (Global Conflict Tracker, 2020). Another report, the Shehu Yar'adua Foundation, revealed that between 2009 and 2018, the Boko Haram insurgents had carried out 1,639 violent attacks in Northeast Nigeria alone, 14,436 casualties were recorded, 6,051 victims were injured, 2,063 were held as hostages, and over 2 million were IDPs from the crisis (Benjamin & Aduku, 2019). Allen (2019) reported that between 2011 and 2019, the Boko Haram group conducted over 4,000 deadly attacks with about 13,000 casualties. The CNN Library (2018), in its part, identified 75 deadly attacks by Boko Haram with over 20,000 casualties and more than 6,000 injured victims. In another study, Sule & Gombe (2020) reported more than 200 deadly attacks by the Boko Haram insurgents in Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria and Niger Republic. The regional cooperation enjoyed under the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was reversed by the activities of the Boko Haram insurgents (Okolo & Aduku, 2019).

Boko Haram recruits members through proselytization, conscription and voluntary admission. The eloquent criticisms of Muhammad Yusuf, the leader of the Boko Haram sect, enshrouded in the garments of religious tenets, earned the group significant followership in Northeast Nigeria Nigerian, especially youth (Mustapha, 2014; Last, 2014; Mustapha & Bunza, 2014; Sule et al. 2019 and Sule & Gombe, 2020). Boko Haram sourced its finances from loans offered to members, membership dues and personal contributions, funding from external sources by sister organizations and sympathizers, robbing banks, kidnapping for ransom, illicit trafficking and business operation and farming (Intelligence Briefing, 2015; Hawthorn & Abbott, 2015; FATF, 2016; Rock, 2016; Nowak & Gsell, 2018 and Ibrahim, 2020). The sect acquired their weapons from the illegal market, Libyan route, local production, seizure from Nigerian security personnel during attacks in barracks and external supply from sister organizations (Intelligence Briefing, 2015; FATF, 2016; Nowak & Gsell, 2018; Ibrahim, 2020 and Sule & Gombe, 2020). The sect secured its logistics from multiple sources, including some accused politicians who sponsored them (Adebayo, 2020 & Ekhomu, 2020).

The Nigerian Government responded through various military operations in 2009. The military counter-offensives failed due to corruption, politics, low morale and motivation, lack of synergy and antiquated operations equipment (Sule et al., 2019). The Government changed its approach by declaring amnesty to those who surrendered voluntarily. Later, rehabilitation centers were established in Gombe and Borno States, respectively, and the Nigerian Government 2021 announced its intention to reintegrate the repentant Boko Haram members who relinquished their extremism willingly (Sule et al., 2022). Despite the existence of an amnesty program and rehabilitation, the Boko Haram insurgency is ongoing, and it refused to subside even though the intensity of the attacks and their activities were overcome significantly. This study found it expedient to examine these programs and why they failed to provide better options, as presented in the next section.

**Challenges of Deradicalisation, Rehabilitation, Reintegration and Resettlement of Boko Haram in Northeast Nigeria.** There are several reasons why the Nigerian deradicalization program faces obstacles. The early responses are a contributing factor. The maximum use of force during the outburst of violence in 2009 compounded the conflict. Not only escalating the conflict, but the intensive military operations also radicalized the groups, earned the sect's sympathy and activated the violent nature of the passive members. It was heightened after the extrajudicial killing of the sect leader, Muhammad Yusuf. The group declared Jihad immediately and transformed its activities from preaching to insurgency (Mohammed, 2021). The military assaults strengthened the group's ability to devise guerilla tactics and ambush attack strategies. By 2011, the sect became more robust and formidable, which compelled the Nigerian Government to declare a state of emergency on 11th December 2011

in fifteen (15) states in Borno, Yobe and Plateau States (Mohammed, 2021). The Nigerian Government consolidated the military crackdown on Boko Haram insurgents after the declaration of a state of emergency. However, the insurgency continued to escalate and worsened, extending to Adamawa, all the six Northeastern states and Kano and Abuja (Sule et al., 2019a). Several operations (Operation Restore Order I and II, Operation Boyona, Operation Zaman Lafiya, Operation Lafiya Dole and Operation Deep Punch I and II) were executed by the Nigerian military without arresting the insurgency. Instead, the insurgents changed their strategy. The Nigerian Government, according to Sule et al. (2019b), failed to recognize the Boko Haram threat as a non-traditional security threat, and that blocked the state from utilizing a non-traditional approach in the early stage of the insurgency. The military operations failed to succeed in suppressing the Boko Haram insurgency emanating from many factors, as mentioned by Sule et al. (2019a), including corruption, logistics problems, obsolete armory, politics, human rights abuse, lack of synergy among the affected Sahel states, poor intelligence and uncoordinated operation by the taskforces. The international response was secured in 2014 when the affected states of Chad Republic, Cameroon Republic, Nigeria and the Niger Republic formed the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF). This approach could not counter the Boko Haram terror in the Sahel as anticipated (Mohammed, 2021).

Having realized that the use of brutal force would never ameliorate the menace of Boko Haram, the Nigerian Government resorted to a non-military approach under the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA). The approach is tagged Countering Violent Extremism Leading to Terrorism (CVELT) (ONSA, 2017a). According to ONSA (2017b), the program targets deradicalizing and counter-deradicalizing Boko Haram detainees in prison, bridging the gap between government and communities and strategic communication. The program included amnesty for those members of Boko Haram who laid their arms and embraced peace and dialogue (ONSA, 2017c). The main issues with this program are the failure to provide a relief package or survival opportunities for the repentant and rehabilitated members, corruption allegations and discontinuity. When President Jonathan lost the Presidential Election in 2015, President Buhari won and abandoned the program (Mohammed, 2021). Legislative efforts were made to enact anti-terrorism laws. In June 2011, the Terrorism Prevention Act was signed by President Goodluck Jonathan and the act was amended in February 2013. This law enabled the Government to declare the Boko Haram group as terrorists, allowing for the full deployment of sophisticated weapons and warfare strategies with less caution (Junus et al., 2023). On 20 April 2014, President Goodluck Jonathan signed the National Counterterrorism Strategy (NACTEST). The Government of President Muhammadu Buhari in August 2017 designed a Policy Framework and National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PFNAP) as one of the approaches to deradicalization and rehabilitation (Okereke & Ibeh, 2020).

However, the Buhari Government, realizing the essence of the deradicalization program as vital in countering Boko Haram violence, re-introduced the program under Operation Safe Corridor (OSC). The OSC was aimed at rehabilitating and reintegrating repentant Boko Haram insurgents to restore them to their communities. Twelve (12) weeks of deradicalization and vocational training in centers in Malam Sidi in Gombe State and Bulunkutu in Maiduguri in Borno State. The OSC has since graduated its first batch of 95 out of 254 graduates, including 20 minors (Okereke & Ibeh, 2020 & Mohammed, 2021). In their part, Okereke & Ibeh (2020) report that 260 persons, comprising 254 ex-combatants and six suspects cleared of involvement, have successfully been deradicalized and rehabilitated. The significant challenge with OSC is the initial failure to involve community members. Many community members expressed reservation and disagreement with the government on reintegrating the repentant members back into their communities, explained an informant.

One major issue that OSC should have utilized is the role of religious scholars. Some scholars are engaged to preach and guide the insurgents, but the time offered and the nature of the engagement could be more satisfactory to the scholars interviewed in this study (Yar, 2023). They argued that a curriculum in Islamic teaching, values, etiquette, psychology and fundamental principles of Islam should be designed. Scholars should have been engaged in writing the curriculum and delivering it based on the appointed period in the rehabilitation centers.

Ghannouchi (2020) supports this view that deradicalization through religious education is the best model. Besides, the scholars disputed the period allocated for the rehabilitation as too short for dialogue engagement. They referred to places like Saudi and Pakistan, where the rehabilitation process is stretched to years before release, and the outgoing rehabilitated individuals are married to spouses to reintegrate them ultimately. They expressed fear that the insurgents might have surrendered overwhelmingly because they had been overpowered. At any given chance, they may return to their extremist activities. Additionally, the scholars expressed reservation that the members of the host communities should be engaged first from a religious perspective to understand and accept the process to avoid stigmatization and stereotyping that may inconvenience the repented militants to return to their crimes.

For instance, the role played by religious scholars in countering Boko Haram terrorism from its infancy stage was overlooked by most studies. Many scholars famous among them Sheikh Ja'afar Mahmud Adam, Sheikh Auwal Adam Albani Zaria, Sheikh Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami, Sheikh Sani Umar Rijiyah Lemo, Sheikh Jalo Jalingo, Sheikh Abubakar Muhammad Sani Birnin Kudu and Sheikh Muhammad Alhaji Abubakar engaged the sect members in Nigeria and Madina, especially, their leader, Muhammad Yusuf in dialogue. All the ideas and the issues he was disputing were thrashed out intellectually; he admitted defeat and surrendered before them for him later to re-emerge and continue his action, prompting an allegation of conspiracy, narrated by an informant. If these clerics had been supported enough by the government during their engagement with the sect leadership and members, the damage would have been controlled because they would have suggested religious solutions to the problem, which would have prevented the outbreak of violence to what it is today, mentioned an informant.

In essence, some scholars argued that the deradicalization of Islamic militants is a religious affair rather than public policy, and the best method is to use the religious approach. For instance, they argued that jurisprudential matters related to blood, injury and destruction are settled either by compensation stipulated in Islam by law or by retaliation to be executed by authorities bestowed with powers of doing so (Dananjaya et al., 2023). Then, how could a program ignore all these and go ahead to design an approach that will anger and frustrate the families of victims of Boko Haram? What has the government provided to the families of the victims? The OSC was erroneously and ignorantly designed, and that explains why some inhabitants of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe communities are not cooperating and, indeed, are not ready to accommodate the repented militants, added the interviewed scholars. We have even received a report of an impending plan of reprisal once the repentants are released, which will further create more radicals instead of deradicalization. Scholars believe that the process should emphasize religious provisions more than secular governments' public policy in the future. They suggested that the program should be redesigned. Some of the repentant militants in Saudi and other Islamic countries who received training and rehabilitation were not only integrated back into their communities but transformed into religious scholars and business moguls. At the same time, some joined the security force and have their valuable, insightful knowledge and intelligence of the terrain and the psychology as well as the methodology of the terrorists to apprehend many of them and register them into the programs. It is the best model that the Nigerian Government should have used. Finally, the clerics suggested that censorship is vital and must be adopted. "The unrestricted access of all individuals to the religious arena for preaching has been identified as the root cause of the Boko Haram insurgency. To prevent similar groups in the future, the government should establish a Shura council and implement flexible monitoring of religious activities. It will allow freedom of religious expression while restricting violent ideologies and movements." "The unrestricted access of all individuals to the religious arena for preaching has been identified as the root cause of the Boko Haram insurgency. To prevent similar groups in the future, the government should establish a Shura council and implement flexible monitoring of religious activities. It will allow freedom of religious expression while restricting violent ideologies and movements."

## CONCLUSION

The chapter concludes that the Nigerian Government underrated Boko Haram activities in its early stage, beginning from the seemingly peaceful but radical preaching that later metamorphosed into insurgency and

terrorism. Furthermore, the chapter argued that the approach adopted for counterinsurgency and counterterrorism needed to be revised and revised, and that was the factor behind the challenges of countering the sect for more than a decade. The chapter presented various models of radicalization to enable policymakers and academia to appreciate a better understanding of signs, symbols, and factors that, when they appeared, were a signal for risks and emergencies to address before the explosion into violence. The aim was to equip policymakers with various tools for perceiving future threats. The chapter presents models of deradicalization with some case studies worldwide, with some having similarities with the Nigerian context to allow for flexibility in the choice of a strategy to moderate or modify the current approach, which is failing as anticipated. Of all the models presented, the study settled for Al Qaradawi's (1991) model of radicalization because it emphasizes the process of recruitment and indoctrination of youth in Islam to join a pseudo-Jihad and the six stages presented by Al Qaradawi (1991) are easier marked and identified from their infancy. The chapter suggested that the deradicalization models presented by Al Qaradawi and Nigerian Islamic scholars that were interviewed are the best since the radicalization is Islamic. The Nigerian clerics expressed their reservations about the current approach and, instead, proffered alternatives, as discussed in the previous section. Prevention is emphasized more than curative measures. Since Boko Haram is seen as the continuation of Maitatsine through other ways, there is the possibility of another violent group surfacing in the future if preventive measures are not adequately taken.

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