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## **Deradicalisation of Boko Haram Insurgents and Bandits: A Soft-power Approach in Sub-Saharan Africa**

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### **Abayomi J. ALUKO**

*Department of Public Administration  
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria  
yomi.john2@gmail.com  
08039181275, 08103109392*

### **Dr. Olubunmi D. APELOKO**

*Department of Political Science and International Relations,  
Covenant University,  
Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria  
olubunmi.apeloko@covenantuniversity.edu.ng; bhunmarped@yahoo.com  
08068233203*

### **Dr. Celestina Ekene Chukwudi**

*Department of Political Science and International Relations,  
Covenant University,  
Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria  
celestina.chukwudi@covenantuniversity.edu.ng  
ekenefinian@yahoo.com*

### **Oluwatunmise T. PAIMO**

*Department of International Relations  
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria  
paimotunmise@gmail.com  
08165948983, 08087755661*

## **Abstract**

Insecurity has made the state government unproductive, aggressive, and unable to protect its citizens and territory. Insurgency activities like Boko Haram and banditry are common in the sub-Saharan region, particularly in Nigeria, Lake Chad, Cameroon, and the Niger Republic. The perpetrators of these numerous crises have notably targeted victims and state institutions in northern Nigeria. These incessant attacks have stimulated a deradicalization response; however, despite the deradicalization measures to end the Boko Haram insurgency and banditry, the attacks still continue unabated. It raises concerns about the effectiveness of the deradicalization strategy against insurgencies. This brings to the fore the importance of soft power deradicalization strategies such as pardoning, socio-economic empowerment, and re-integration of insurgents and bandits into society. Although the soft-power deradicalization initiative often draws attention and commendation, it also raises doubts about sustainability in sub-Saharan Africa. Drawing on the theory of deradicalization and the systematic qualitative method, this article examines a soft-power deradicalization strategy against Boko Haram and banditry insurgencies in sub-Saharan Africa. The findings expand discussion on the dimensions of deradicalization strategy and its potential in promoting positive outcomes against insurgency in sub-Saharan Africa. It suggests the deployment of soft power as a deradicalization strategy to locally tackle insurgency in Sub-Saharan Africa.

**Keywords:** *Governance, Insecurity, Boko Haram Insurgency, Soft-power, deradicalization, perpetrators and victims*

## **Introduction**

In contemporary society, there is a growing recognition and emphasis on community-based initiatives that prioritize crime prevention over reactive measures. This approach is considered proactive, in contrast to the conventional method of responding to crimes post-occurrence. The aforementioned trends are evident in the changing viewpoints towards criminal offenders, aiming to reintegrate them into society, the emergence of specialized criminal law prevention measures, the diminishing emphasis on retributive aspects in punishment, and broader shifts in the understanding of the importance and implications of imposed sentences. The forthcoming focus will encompass resocialization efforts alongside the prevention of specific criminal law transgressions, among various other aspects. Moreover, the concept of

punishment has evolved from a mere act of retaliation to a form of penalty that aims to attain socially beneficial objectives, including the deterrence of criminal conduct, the rehabilitation of wrongdoers, and the compensation of victims. In prior research, it was posited that the function of punishment was solely limited to retribution (Raihani & Bshary, 2019; Bello et al., 2022).

In a related context, recidivism is associated with certain criminal behaviours (Zamble and Quinsey, 2001). This occurs at a time when the offender's personality has been significantly influenced by severe repercussions on his or her former life, severe social conditions, drugs, and abuse. Oftentimes, it occurs at a time when the offender's personality is significantly influenced by the serious consequences of the crime committed. Owing to the conditions that were maintained within the prison where the sentence was being served, alternatives to sanctions necessitate a completely new way of thinking about the problem. To begin, it allows the offender to avoid less human treatment in an institution, which is extremely important for preserving a sense of personal self-esteem and circumventing any latent undesirable consequences. When an alternative sanction is being carried out, the offender may choose to live with his or her family, engage in consistent business actions, and earn a living. Alternative sanctions make all of this possible.

Importantly, it reduces community animosity or hostility toward the offender, thereby providing a positive outcome. Offenders experience a variety of positive psychological effects as a result of alternative sanctions. Through such, honor is instilled within the community, such as the cultivation of responsible character, reintegration of the offender into society with no recourse to isolation, and absolute participation in community engagements with guaranteed financial compensation for harm suffered (Maruna, 2011; Chouhy et al., 2020).

The primary objective of alternative forms of punishment is to guarantee that safety measures within criminal law effectively minimize infringements upon human rights and an individual's sense of self-worth. This is achieved by facilitating a heightened level of restitution and the exclusion of harmful penalties that have the potential to impact both the victim and society at large. According to Olsen et al. (2010), the implementation of alternative forms of punishment has been found to effectively contribute to the process of deradicalization. The implementation of an alternative sanction can lead to success. The emphasis lies on striking a balance between the rights of the perpetrator

and the rights of the victims, while also considering the societal interests in safeguarding its members and mitigating criminal activities. According to Pitts et al. (2014), it guarantees the administration of justice. The 2018 Global Trends in Prison Conditions Report focuses on the notion that restricting freedom should be seen as a last resort or a justified response and should only be employed when a prison sentence is absolutely necessary. Contemporary perspectives on alternative sanctions posit that global penal policy is founded upon this particular perception. Therefore, it is imperative that a prison term be implemented solely in cases where it is deemed necessary, such as in instances of felonies, offenses involving minor victims, and acts of violence. Therefore, this study examines the utilization of soft power as a theoretical framework for deradicalization in the context of alternating the sentencing of extremists.

### **Theoretical Point of Departure**

It is critical to grasp the concept of deradicalization within the framework of a theoretical contextualization that considers psychological mechanisms that lead to radicalization. For instance, deradicalization occurs if both pathways into and out of violent extremism are connected. Deradicalization methods and programs can be applied in an effective way. As a result, reasons for leaving a radical movement are frequently linked to the reasons for initiation into an insurgency group (Kohler, 2014; Suefeld et al., 2020). Horgan & Braddock (2010) assert that the de-radicalization theoretical framework effort is made more efficient and long-lasting if potential entry points are identified. Regardless of whether or not former radicals are involved in prevention efforts, the "why" and "how" that lead to violence and extremist convictions must be thoroughly understood. Even though a lack of theoretical and conceptual foundations for deradicalization has been noted by experts in the field, new theoretical models have only recently been proposed (Barrelle, 2015; Horgan & Altier, 2012), thus deradicalization theory.

Literature shows the radicalization theories and models in divergence, in which several of these have been able to elucidate factors responsible for terrorism, insurgency, or violent extremism globally and locally. Having conceptualized these models and theories of radicalization of thought and discussed the consequences in different contexts, the emergence of the theory of deradicalization is portrayed as

a procedure of re-pluralization in the framework of the soft-power approach (Feddes, 2015). In this light, violent extremism or radicalization is regarded as a procedure of de-pluralization of values and political notions. In reality, the ideology of these concepts often represents the central roles played in both cases of politics and values within the context of their execution. More so, this theory posits that the plausibility of terrorists adhering to their ways of life often persists, while victims long for reintegration back into their country (Noricks, 2009).

As aforementioned, the tenets of the deradicalization theory strategy show the outcome of the basic review of all sections to mitigate terrorism, as well as ensuring strategic action towards the insurgency syndicate subsequently (Schmid, 2011). Furthermore, the theory depicts a comprehensive and well-articulated approach as approved for the framework strategically. It shows the preventive approach, that is, how to curb the increase of terrorists either through contributing support or becoming perpetrators; protection of the citizens, which strengthens the environment against attack; relentless pursuit of stopping terrorist attacks; and preparation to mitigate the effect of terrorist activities (Eji, 2016).

As a framework, the deradicalization principles and models given in this study are regarded as soft-power approaches (Rineheart, 2010). This approach is not limited in scope to examine the counter-insurgency of the terrorists in the study area, but terrorized victims are also deradicalized by reintegrating the affected back into their primary ambiance. To this end, Gunaratna (2021) asserts that the soft-power approach for deradicalization devices—religion influence, social, economic, and psychosocial approaches—and, by extension, community engagement, psychological reintegration, religious, cultural, social, and economic engagement—are implemented as extremists' and victims' capacity, reasonability, and responsiveness for peace-making and peacebuilding in the affected areas. Against this background, the study analyzes the soft-power approach for perpetrators and victims.

### **Counterterrorism and Deradicalization of Extremists in the Sub-Saharan**

Onyango (2018) and Juma (2020) identify that there is a general agreement on a few of the structural factors that contribute to the rise of jihadism in Africa. Varvelli (2016) opines that these factors include the

function dynamics of power and civil wars play in enabling jihadist national increase, the roles that former tensions and an absence of security for the local population play, and the underlying factor that jihadists often take advantage of both factors, as well as the historical occurrence of jihadists being utilized as agents for other political players. There is a generally shared understanding regarding a number of the structural factors that play a role in the rise of jihadism in Africa. These factors are as follows: For instance, there is the argument that the conditions of civil war are extremely significant for comprehending the beginnings and early accomplishments of terrorist organizations such as the Ankar Dine, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in Mali, and Shabaab. All of these organizations can be found in Mali. At other times, it may appear as though political shifts are the driving force behind an atmosphere of civil war (Moller, 2009; Chivvis and Martini, 2014; Joshua, S., Gbervbie, D., & Onor, K., 2021).

Similarly, as it was with the elimination of Blaise Compaoré in the bordering country of Burkina Faso in 2014, as emphasized by Thurston, Idrissa, and Crone, the situation was the same. It can be argued that the rise of Al Shabaab in Somalia was influenced by a transition that was analogous to this one, whereby the control of warlords in Mogadishu was replaced by the power of Sharia courts (Moller, 2009). This is something that has been argued over time. Accordingly, Schuurman and Bakker (2016) contribute that the proliferation of jihadism in the west-African setting may be attributed to the disruption and collapse of patrimonial networks, a common characteristic of environments characterized by civil war. This hypothesis has been put forth by the researchers. On the other hand, jihadism has been successful not only in Burkina Faso, Mali, and possibly Somalia; it has also been successful in the frameworks where political evolutions and civil war have not been present. In such a situation, jihadists often make an effort to either manipulate or internalize conflicts that are on a smaller scale and more personal. Jihadists attempt to "jihadize" existing ethnic strife by lending their support to specific ethnic groups to further their cause. Typically, it portrayed encounters between the Somalis and Kenyan state from the Ogadeen clan as clashes 'between Christians and Muslims,' and described the conflict between Fulanis in the Mopti region of Mali and Mali's Dogons as a clash of civilizations; both of these conflicts took place in the country of Mali (Vaughan, 2019; Solomon, 2015). However, the "jihadization" of an ethnic conflict is a complex procedure that takes

time and, in some instances, is forbidden by the ethnic groups that jihadists attempt to co-opt (Barnett et al., 2022).

Further, tensions between the center and the periphery help to foster the growth of jihadism in the northern regions of Mozambique, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, and Mali, as well as in the province of Kivu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Borno province of Nigeria. The center-periphery dimension is connected to the practices of exclusive political and economic governance that are carried out by either local or central state institutions. These practices can take place anywhere within the state (Warner et al., 2020). To be more specific, this factor is a contributing factor to the growth of Al Shabaab in Somalia. Al Shabaab was formerly a member of the Sharia Court Alliance, but over time it excluded itself from the political process in 2006, a factor contributing to its growth in the region. The significance of such examples cannot be overstated. With tensions between the center and the periphery, exclusive politics, and small-scale ethnic conflicts, it is not necessary for there to be a civil war. This occurs in countries where the vast majority of people have the impression that their nations are at peace with one another. "Ungoverned spaces" (which are extremely uncommon) and settings in which civil war occurs appear to increase the likelihoods of fast jihadist increase and regional control. However, these conditions are not a precondition for the proliferation of African armed Islamist groups. Thus, Chidozie, F. C., et al. (2015) and Shackleton et al. (2015) reveal that a lack of individual security is an additional factor that plays a role in the development of several cases in sub-Saharan Africa.

In certain instances, such as those that take place in Nigeria, Mali and Somalia jihadists offer defense to citizens who find themselves in dangerous circumstances. On the other hand, there are some situations in which the assurance of such protection is provided, but it is never actually provided. Harakat al-Ascent (Hansen, 2018) found that a lack of local security, which contributed not only to the oppression of the government but also to the rise of criminal organizations, can be partially blamed for Shabaab's success. This contributed not only to the oppression of governments but also to the rise of criminal organizations. Authors such as Habibe, Forquilha, and Pereira have made the argument that this is true for the early phase development of Ansar al-Sunnah in Mozambique, as it is for Boko Haram insurgents before 2009. This is something that has been suggested by these authors. Before 2009, moral rhetoric played a significant part in the formation of the terrorist group Boko Haram (Moller, 2009).

These organizations made several overtures to the local populace, with a promise of protection from bandits and misuse from the local business community. In such an occurrence, locals become susceptible to ensuring their protection is guaranteed. Again, extreme police brutality is a primary factor in the development of radical ideologies in certain situations, where Nigeria and Kenya are provided as examples (Hansen, 2018). Differences in the levels of jihadism in Kenya and Ethiopia can be attributed to the indiscriminate use of force exercised by the Kenyan police, whereas in such conditions, human rights organizations have on multiple occasions reported terrible repression at the hands of Ethiopian security forces (Hansen, 2022). The ascribed "success" that Ethiopia has had in reducing jihadism prior to 2019 indicates that violence on the part of the police can both function to defeat jihadism and be a reason that stimulates its growth. Harper (2019) reveals that violence on the part of the police can be a factor that stimulates the growth of jihadism. In such cases, police brutality may play a more significant role as a contributing factor to the rise of jihadism in more semi-open societies.

McCauley and Moskalenko (2016) postulate that there are multiple types of repression, and this was the basis for their hypothesis, which is that it is possible to target the highest-ranking members of jihadist organizations, the ethnic groups from which it is believed that jihadists recruit members, or the violence could be generalized by the police. All of these options are viable. Calibrated repression is a technique that has been proposed as a more effective method of repression (McCauley and Moskalenko, 2016). This strategy involves taking severe actions against the most important members of a group while showing more compassion toward the members of the group who are further removed from the core of the organization (Newman, 2006). Irrespective, security forces and police are frequently major contributors to the problem, and they are a symptom of a larger problem that is characterized by a decreased emphasis on individual safety and by the prevalence of unsafe conditions in rural areas (Moser, 2004). In addition, security forces and police are frequently major causes of the problem. Since sub-national local security donors discover themselves as guarding the state or their positions, rather than focusing on the fact that their primary responsibility is to offer services to the local population, there is a risk that this perception will lead to problems (DuBow et al., 1979). Rather than concentrating on their primary responsibility to provide services to the local population, they often see themselves as guarding the state or

their positions. Sadly, this mistake is frequently overlooked in programs that are intended to reform the security and military industries. It would appear that kinetic operations and achieving victory in open combat are given a higher priority than the protection of the local population.

There are also more direct ways that the ground can be prepared for the growth of jihadism. Abdalla (2019) and Hansen (2019) prove that in the past, African elites as well as states have viewed jihadists as a means for policy drives and have been required to encourage them, even promoting local legitimacy. This is evidenced by the fact that they have attempted to promote local legitimacy. How the government of Sudan dealt with Al Qaeda in the early 1990s provides a useful illustration of this point and can be found in the previous sentence. At that time, the government of Sudan used Al Qaeda for purposes that went beyond advancing an ideological agenda. For instance, it used Al Qaeda to support its premeditated partners in the south and even to gain loans. These are both examples of how the government used Al Qaeda. In a similar vein, the government of Mali appeared before 2012 to view AQIM as an advantageous block against the influence of both the Algerians and the Tuaregs in northern Mali. Even though this strategy could be perceived as being one from the past, there is a possibility that something analogous will take place in the future, when the focus of global attention shifts from the relationship between China and the United States to pandemics and climate change (Bergen, 2011; Atwan, 2008; Juergensmeyer, 2008).

As the preceding discussions have demonstrated, issues that are generating a comparative consensus among the community of researchers, like the function of civil wars and dynamics of power, the function of previous pressure, an absence of security for the sub-national population, and the historical occurrence of jihadists as agents for other political actors, need to be contextualized in history. These features have the potential to not only be the underlying causes for the beginning of a jihadist organization but also to have an effect on the organization's route at later stages in the organization's history, tending to begin moves of jihadist organizations. There may be different effects at various stages of a conflict and significance in certain contexts compared to others, both in terms of historical periods and contexts.

## **Causes and implications of the deradicalization of Boko Haram and Bandit**

For analysis, many factors that contribute to radicalization can be organized into three distinct categories: drive factors, pull factors, and personal factors. Each of these categories is described below. The drive factors elucidate the mechanical flaws in a society that cause individuals to be drawn into violent extremism. Some examples of the underlying factors, which are also referred to as the origin, include poverty, poor governance, unemployment, widespread illiteracy, socio-economic inequality, political exclusion, state repression, and marginalization. Other examples of root causes include poverty and unemployment (Onapajo and Ozden, 2020; de Montclos, 2018; Ugwueze et al., 2022; Olanrewaju, F. O. et al., 2020). The alluring aspects of an extremist group that inspire people to join the group are referred to as the "pull factors," or simply "pull factors," for short. Some instances of these issues include group membership, group ideology, fame and glory, group protection, and reputation. Other examples of these factors include the following: Hassan (2012); Vergani et al. (2018) When conducting an analysis of factors at the individual level, it is necessary to consider personal factors, in particular the specific characteristics that make a person susceptible to radicalization. Some examples of the factors consist of having had a challenging childhood, suffering from a mental disorder, or having been through traumatic experiences (Vergani et al. 2018).

The goal of deradicalization is to change an individual's beliefs that make them more likely to engage in acts of violence, even if the individual has not directly participated in violent acts themselves. This means that deradicalization is primarily directed at the most extreme form of radicalism because its goal is to change an individual's beliefs that make them more likely to engage in acts of violence. In Rabasa et al.'s (2010) study, the process of "deradicalization" refers to the process by which an individual's belief system is changed by declining the ideology of the extremist group and embracing the values of mainstream society. Academics who have continued to study this idea have concluded that deradicalization does not consist solely of a change in an individual's beliefs; rather, it entails precautionary procedures that can dampen an atmosphere that is helpful to radicalism as well as approaches for the reintegration and rehabilitation of individuals who have been radicalized (Ozer and Bertelsen, 2018).

Nigeria has experienced a civil war since 2009 due to a violent Islamic insurgency led by the radical group known as Boko Haram. The attacks carried out by Boko Haram in northern Nigeria have had devastating consequences. According to Onapajo and Ozden (2020), over 12,000 lives have been lost as a direct result of these attacks. Additionally, hundreds of thousands of people have been forced to leave their homes and become displaced due to the violence. According to Sam-Ateki and Obomanu (2022), the group has been subjected to a state of emergency since November 2013. This emergency was imposed as a consequence of the group being compelled to retreat to the northern Nigerian states of Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe due to armed conflict and civil resistance. The analysis reveals that Nigeria's security forces have faced significant challenges in addressing the abduction of over 200 schoolgirls in April 2014, ongoing attacks on settlements in Adamawa and Borno states, and a sustained terror campaign in major cities such as Abuja and Lagos.

These incidents indicate that the national security forces have been unsuccessful in restoring order within the country. To effectively address the insurgency, it is crucial to undertake a comprehensive and unbiased examination of the underlying causes and the subsequent developments that have shaped its trajectory. The upcoming presidential elections in Nigeria, set for 2015, require an unbiased evaluation, as stated by Allan et al. (2015). It is crucial that this evaluation remain unaffected by external factors, such as reprisals for terror or conflicting political agendas. In order to effectively engage with the current volatile and rapidly evolving situation, it is crucial to acknowledge that Boko Haram primarily poses a challenge within Nigeria. This challenge is rooted in issues such as poor governance and poverty, rather than being solely an international security threat associated with Islamic terrorism. Engaging in a constructive intervention is crucial to addressing the ongoing, volatile, and rapidly changing situation.

In light of the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria, it is crucial for policymakers to go beyond traditional western methods of combating Islamist terrorism. They should instead focus on comprehending the underlying causes of this conflict, which is fundamentally rooted in Nigeria, and developing efficient strategies to address it. It is crucial to analyze the root causes of the Nigerian conflict in order to develop successful strategies for its resolution. The primary objective of this policy brief is to analyze various factors that have been identified as contributors to the insurgency. Some of the factors

contributing to the current situation are economic marginalization, governance failures, the activities of extremist groups, and security lapses. The failure of Nigeria's governance and the prevalence of widespread poverty can be attributed to various economic factors, including national sacred divergence, political brinksmanship among religious leaders, and pervasive corruption. The failure of Nigeria's governance can be attributed to various political factors, such as the prevalence of poverty and unemployment, along with significant disparities between northern and southern Nigeria in terms of wealth distribution. The recognition of Boko Haram's evolving goals and recruitment strategies poses a challenge in devising effective policies to address their activities. The importance of this should be acknowledged (Iyеkekpolо, 2020; Meagher, 2014; Olojo, 2013; Onapajo et al., 2012).

Deradicalization can be improved if additional conditions are satisfied. At this point, there is a reasonable chance of achieving basic peace and stability (Bertelsen, 2015). Boko Haram continues to pose a threat to the public and prey on the vulnerable, no matter what the government says. According to the group's Kyari Muhammad, this will be extremely difficult if they return while being attacked. He believes that successful reintegration is impossible if there is a conflict. During this time, their chances of being pardoned by the neighborhood will improve. This, at least, makes sense to me. Even if they are no longer a threat, the government should continue to fight them. Many more lives could be lost as a result of this. Even though Boko Haram has been purportedly defeated, military efforts will need to be stepped up, and the group will be forced to relocate if their forest habitat is further restricted. On this account, a better relationship with the police in our communities is expected in the future. Thus, people who have been beaten or radicalized need soft-power deradicalization aid (Salihu, 2021; Daniya, 2021).

As an illustration, for incentive-based programs, this problem has resulted in the Bangladeshi program not offering a complete incentive package, which is a common problem. A process of trial and error by the Indonesian government eventually led to deradicalization. According to the Jordanian government, violent extremism is not the result of politics but rather of "misguided youth" with a "perverse view of Islam." Instead of relying solely on military means to address this issue, the government has adopted a two-pronged strategy of deradicalization. Based on this premise, the soft-power approach is considered an alternative counterterrorism approach (Mmakwe, 2022). However, this

study will further interrogate whether the effectiveness of the soft-power approach is the best alternative method to counterterrorism. To what extent can this be effective as a strategic anti-radicalization of extremists in sub-Saharan Africa?

### **Alternative Counterterrorism Approach: Is the Soft Power Approach the Answer?**

Buchanan (2016) proposes a soft-power counterterrorism strategy that aims to address the root causes of extremism. This strategy focuses on reintegrating victims into society by offering them a stable support network, investigating the factors that led to their radicalization, and helping them distance themselves from their extremist beliefs and social connections. It is crucial to emphasize the importance of comprehending and addressing the underlying ideology behind radicalization and violent extremism, rather than solely focusing on eliminating terrorists through force. "Soft-power" counterterrorism strategies aim to make extremist movements irrelevant by weakening the foundations on which they rely. According to Achi (2019), Tar, and Bala, the responsible use of defensive tactics and occasional offensive strikes can lead to the internal delegitimization of the movement. In order to achieve a successful generational transition, it is crucial to challenge the underlying ideology of the movement and delegitimize the associated organizations. According to Boucek (2008), proponents of a "soft-power" counterterrorism strategy argue that Islamic fundamentalists should be approached in a manner similar to how the remaining communists were no longer seen as a significant threat to democratic order or capable of extensive organization. Sub-Saharan African countries often shape their strategies by drawing from their experiences dealing with communist uprisings and repelling leftist insurgents in the Cold War era.

The most effective counter-terrorism strategy does not involve the use of military force. Based on a variety of experiences in different countries, it has been determined that the military strategy has significantly contributed to the climate of violence that results from terrorism, as well as significant human rights violations. After considering various circumstances in various countries, this conclusion was reached. The study's references to Human Rights Watch (2003), Onapajo (2017), and Almqvist (2021), which highlight how similar the experiences of these two countries are, helped the author reach this

conclusion. As a result, non-military methods are increasingly being promoted as an alternative to or in addition to traditional military methods for dealing with terrorism and insurgency. This is because non-military strategies do not employ violence. According to Onapajo and Ozden (2020) and Ike et al. (2022), disengagement, deradicalization, amnesty, political negotiations, and reintegration programs have a better chance than military strategies of addressing the root causes of terrorism and producing a sustainable pace. This claim is supported by numerous pieces of evidence that are sufficient to merit consideration (Ginty 2013; Connable 2010).

As it has become clear that ideology has played a significant role in radicalizing individuals and groups to commit acts of terrorism or violent extremism, deradicalization as a non-military strategy has become an effective counterterrorism strategy. This realization resulted in the successful development of deradicalization as a counterterrorism tactic. Deradicalization, according to Rabasa et al. (2010), has evolved into a potent anti-terrorism strategy that can be used to combat terrorism as well as to halt the spread of extremist ideologies. Because there are so many different things that can lead to violent extremism and terrorism, deradicalization is a drawn-out and challenging process that differs from society to society. Although it can be beneficial, deradicalization is a protracted and challenging process that differs depending on the environment (Bertram 2015).

Furthermore, military, political, and development-oriented approaches have all been used by Nigeria's government to combat the terrorist attacks that began in 2009 (Francis et al., 2015). To this end, amnesty and political co-optation have failed, so military operations will take precedence over non-military alternatives. After the war model failed to reduce violence but increased the number of deaths in conflict areas, some non-military strategies may have been re-evaluated (and attracted mounting criticism). Through "Operation Safe Corridor," Nigeria's counterterrorism strategy works to deradicalize, rehabilitate, and reintegrate former Boko Haram members (Felbab-Brown, 2018). Consequently, the deradicalization program is the Nigerian government's non-military approach to combating Boko Haram. Deradicalization is not a one-size-fits-all process, and each individual must be approached with an individual approach (Porges 2011). Similarly, this approach can deradicalize a group through amnesty and counseling, demobilization and disengagement, as well as reconciliation and reintegration (Schmid, 2013). Moreover, individual and religious counseling, as well as political

negotiations and co-optation, are the primary methods of deradicalization used by national governments (Schmid 2013). Those who are seen as the victims of erroneous ideologies are the most frequently targeted group in the Middle East and Southeast Asia (Rabasa et al. 2010). In a related development, counter-terrorism efforts include working with terrorists in custody and teaching them about religious teachings that place a higher value on compassion. The teachings emphasize nonviolence, tolerance, and respect for those in authority (Onapajo 2017).

The chronicles of a non-military approach to counterterrorism in Nigeria were instituted in 2013, when the northern elite increased pressure on Jonathan's administration for a political solution to the issue, citing the link between the issue and political marginalization and socioeconomic inequality. The non-military strategy for battling Boko Haram began at this time in 2013 (Felbab-Brown, 2018). This was the first recorded instance of a non-military strategy being used to combat Boko Haram (Francis et al., 2015; Onapajo, 2017). As a result, the following year, in 2013, the Presidential Committee on Dialogue and Peaceful Resolution of Security Challenges in the North was established (Bjorgo and Bjorgo, 2013; Bjorgo and Horgan, 2009). Identification of Boko Haram leaders, constructive dialogue with them, and development of a plan for amnesty and disarmament of terrorist organization members are all the responsibilities of this committee. Along with these responsibilities, the committee also has the responsibility of developing a strategy (Onapajo and Ozden, 2020).

Clubb and Tapley (2018) found that the government that was led by Jonathan established a Countering Violent Extremism agency within the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA), which was given the code name National Security Corridor. This was implemented amidst the initiative, which failed as a result of the refusal of Boko Haram leaders to accept the amnesty deal. In addition to helping rehabilitate former members of Boko Haram, the mission of this organization is to stop the recruitment and mobilization of new members into the group. For instance, the Fatima Akilu-led program categorized defectors as either high-risk, medium-risk, or low-risk, depending on their potential for future risk. The first two types of deserters were to be dealt with through methods of disengagement, rehabilitation, and reintegration, while high-risk deserters were to be prosecuted (Ashamour, 2009).

## **Conclusion**

The paper concludes that in sub-Saharan Africa, regardless of its stakeholders' involvement in alleviating pain, losses, suffering, and poverty, the study discovered that terrorists and bandits have continued to be a thorn in the flesh within the environment. It revealed that the sect is often associated with a particular religion, and this has rendered deradicalization ineffective in sub-Saharan Africa. This lingers despite its clamor for governance and academic and corporate involvement. As a consequence of the emergence of radicalism, the direction of governance has been channeled towards the achievement of a sustainable and enabling environment for the citizens, determining to a large extent the developmental goals of peacemaking and peacebuilding on the continent. The study reaffirms that the radicalism tenet is taboo and a threat to the lives and properties of internally displaced persons, ensuring scarcity of food supplies and increasing poverty, with a focus on diversifying developmental and infrastructural funds for peacemaking and peacebuilding in the sub-Saharan region. It again stressed that the radicalism tenet is a threat to economic growth and development.

Despite massive investments in deradicalization, it appears that little progress has been made. Extremists are only interested in a brainwashed philosophy of fifty virgins or money, as well as the banditry in the venture. Therefore, it is revealed that there has not been much success. Despite previous attempts at deradicalizing extremists and bandits in the region, the problem remains. Furthermore, when extremists are apprehended for deradicalization, the vast majority of the time they are subjected to rigorous treatment, which strengthens their ability to detect paramilitary situations. In a similar vein, the study reveals that immediately after extremists are released into the environment, they have a high chance of recovering.

In this light, the study was based on deradicalization theory, which posits that an alternative deradicalization approach is one of the most effective tools for realigning extremists back into the primary environment in which they were first raised. Accordingly, with this strategy implemented, the use of soft power tools such as community engagement, psychological reintegration, and religious, cultural, social, and economic engagement is intertwined to thwart the extremists' capacity for reasonability and responsiveness. Simply put, the study asserts that these tools are systemic, in which no part should be stranded

in the process of achieving the goals and objectives of reducing radicalization in extremists.

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