

**Combating Radicalism and Violent Extremism in Local  
Communities: Perspectives and Practices**

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**Abstract**

There is no doubt; contemporary society is existentially challenged by myriad of security problems, particularly the upsurge in radical movements, world over. Against this backdrop, this paper reexamines the multifaceted perspectives associated with the phenomena of radicalism and violent extremism in modern social discourse. It underscores violent extremism as an anti-social belief in the use of radical extreme means in pursuant of a given ideological, religious or political objectives. In that order, the study establishes that the problems of radicalism and extremism have their roots in man and since man is the problem, he is also the solution. Findings reveal the admixture of structural, environmental, attitudinal and doctrinal factors as constituting the push, pull and contextual attraction to radicalism and violent extreme behaviours. Consequently, owing to these complex factors as driving forces, the research posits that proportionate military violence in combating extremism is highly necessary although not adequate when it comes to deradicalization and prevention. To strengthen the military option, the paper advocates; (i) government and community partnership, (ii) and a sustained culture of participation and inclusiveness both in deed and in words. In the final analysis, the unique contribution therein orbits around using the methods of inclusion and participation as complementary to the military alternative in the quest for deradicalization and prevention of violent extreme activities in local communities.

**Keywords:** Community partnership, Inclusion, Participation, Radicalization, Violent Extremism

### **Introduction**

There is no gainsaying of the fact that modern societies sit on a dangerous precipice, orchestrated by a growing dangerous trend which is not caused by nature or some unseen forces but by the purposive actions of concrete human beings living within the human community. This dangerous trend refers to upsurge in radicalization and violent extremism all around the world, which in most instances has the youths as the albatross. It is so deep sited in the current world order to the extent that there is hardly any part of the society today where there is no one act of violent extremism or the other.

What is instructive from the foregoing paragraph is that radicalization and violent extremism are social phenomena, that is, they happen in human community. Closely related to this, is the fact that they have human causality. In other words, they are caused by man or human beings. And since man/human beings are the problem or cause, man/human beings are equally the solution. This means that to exhaustively interrogate the question of radicalization and violent extremism, it is pertinent it begins with the understanding of man/human beings. However, unlike every other question about anything, the question about who the human is, is riddled with complexities, so much so that discussing it often requires several dimensions. Put differently, man could be understood using “interdisciplinary approach”<sup>1</sup> such as: ontological, social, economical, religious and psychological.

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<sup>1</sup> Leticia Worley, *The Poiesis of ‘Human Nature’: An exploration of the concept of an ethical self*, being a Doctoral Thesis submitted to the School of Social Sciences and Psychology, Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development, (Victoria University, 2011), p.1. available@<https://vuir.vu.edu.au/id/eprint/19374>

### **Interdisciplinary Approach to Man**

The ontological understanding of man shows that at every point in time, man is always engaged in metaphysical thinking, and it is by so doing that he recreates himself and assigns meaning to existence.<sup>2</sup> A sociological perspective to man presents him as a totality of his interaction with the society. In other words, it reveals human beings as being-with the society and other human beings.<sup>3</sup> The economic aspect of man shows him as one whose whole of existence is defined by the struggle to use his labour as a means for self-sustenance. Man as a religious being, portrays him as a being that is always in search of the divine endorsement and approval. Psychologically, man is a psychic being who transforms his life and the society by always moving from the now to the not now<sup>4</sup>. Each of these perspectives defines man or human being. That is to say that, we can understand human being or man and his actions from an ontological, social, economical, religious or psychological point of view. Accordingly, the right interpretation and assessment of the action of man or human being with relation to radicalization and violent extremism, must take into cognizance each of these perspectives or else, such assessment may be haphazard. Put differently therefore, for this paper to take a wholistic assessment of the challenges of radicalization and violent extremism, it shall make attempts to show how each of these perspectives to the human question influences the perpetuation of social vices in the form of violent extremism and radicalization. To address the challenges generated therein, the paper shall adopt two approaches, viz: reconditioning of the human temperament to imbibe the culture of participation and inclusion, and neighbor to neighbor watch driven through government and community partnership.

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<sup>2</sup> Jim I. Unah, *On Being: Discourse on the Ontology of Man*. (Lagos: Fadec Publishers, 2002), p.47.

<sup>3</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, Trans. H.E. Barnes. (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1969), p.222.

<sup>4</sup> Unah, op.cit.

Before delving into the main discourse, it would be appropriate to clarify the operational concepts of this paper.

### **Radicalism**

It refers to a state or a quality of being radical and it originally comes from a Latin word *radicalis or radix* meaning *root*. It also reflects the actions or beliefs of people who canvass or advocate total political or social reform. For this reason, it is originally associated with discourses in political science. “In political science, the term radicalism is the belief that society needs to be changed, and that these changes are only possible through revolutionary means”<sup>5</sup>. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century political events in Europe and America, the term radicalism was associated with progressive political option for the state. In other words, it blossomed as a political liberation movement which offered alternative economic cum political choice in the various nations where it existed. Thus, because radicalism has its root in ideology, in some situations, those who hold this ideology go to any length to actualize its goals in a given socio-political arena outside peaceful means. In that way, we now talk of violent radicalism, pointing to the fact that radicalism can also take a non-violent approach in terms of civil disobedience. For instance, social critics and human right activists in history like: Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Fela Anikulapo Kuti, Gani Fawehinmi, and many more. In contemporary discourse, radicalism has become associated with social, political or religious rebellion. In other words, it is now being understood “as the phenomenon of people embracing heterodox ideas and resorting to violent tactics in order to reach a specific political/ideological objective”<sup>6</sup>. In essence, holding a radical position is not a problem in itself. It only becomes a huge

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<sup>5</sup> Vocabulary.com Dictionary. Available at <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/radicalism>

<sup>6</sup> Yvonnemarie Antonoglou, What is “Violent Radicalization and What can we do about it”? *Vocal Europe*. available at <https://www.vocaleurope.eu/what-is-violent-radicalization-and-what-can-we-do-about-it/> 2018

problem when violent means is adopted in actualizing such position. This leads to another phenomenon known as extremism.

### **Extremism**

Simply put, extremism means an unguarded/unguided radicalism. Extremism is a practice or an attempt to elevate one's position, belief or ideology over and above the rights of others to hold different position, belief or ideology. In other words, when the holder(s) of a position or belief begins to lay claim to universal truth/validity outside which there is no other, such situation becomes known as an extreme state of affairs or fanaticism. Extremists all over the world have the same character traits. That is, they are willing and ready to defend till death, the indubitability, irrefutability and sacrosanctity of whatever it is they are convinced of. They also lay claim to divine truth, revelation and salvation, outside which are falsehood, carnality and eternal damnation. In addition, extremists can employ all means or do anything to compel compliance and force varying positions to file in line. In that light, "extremist ideologies glorify the supremacy of a particular group, and oppose a more tolerant and inclusive society".<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, they adopt the methods of threats/intimidations, orchestrated violence, arson, terrorism and bloodshed in advancing their objectives.

### **Violent Extremism**

Anele, in a paper titled "Instinctivist Theories of Violence and Destructiveness" is of the view that act of violence by man seems to have divine ordination and backing judging from the biblical

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<sup>7</sup> UNDP, "Preventing Violent Extremism Through Promoting Inclusive Development, Tolerance And Respect For Diversity: A development response to addressing radicalization and violent extremism" Available @ <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/norway/undp-ogc/documents/Discussion%20Paper%20-%20Preventing%20Violent%20Extremism%20by%20Promoting%20Inclusive%20%20Development.pdf> 2016, p.12.

stories of the Book of Genesis. The first physical act of violence by man against any other creature, he says, was decreed by the Yaweh when he charged that between the serpent and Eve, he would “put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed, it shall bruise thy head, and thee shalt bruise his heel”.<sup>8</sup> Along this line, he further observes that “the first real act of violence in the form of murder was committed when Cain killed his brother Abel out of jealousy”.<sup>9</sup> The killing of Abel by Cain was not only a violent act but also an extreme violence.

Be that as it may, either for religious, ethical, political or ideological persuasions, the world, in recent times, seems challenged with an unprecedented rise in violent extremist activities. It is a huge threat to collective global peace and it therefore raises a global consciousness on the need to continue to engage these hydra-headed enemies of humanity with collective action and condemnation. First and foremost, in the words of Dotun Ogunkoya, “violence only exists when physical force is used to cause harm or injury to others”<sup>10</sup>. He further elucidates that whenever there is a physical application of force which ends up inflicting injury, harm on one’s body or on others, it simply means that violence has occurred. However, this definition of violence seems inadequate because it takes the presence of physical contact or bodily injury as the sufficient proof for violent act. How do I mean? I mean that there can be violent actions without bodily contact or inflicting of physical injury. In other words, unfriendly verbal altercations could be regarded as an act of violence. Again, an uncontrolled anger which results in hauling of abusive words on

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<sup>8</sup> Douglas Anele, “Instinctivist Theories of Violence and Destructiveness” in C.S. Momoh and S.A. Adetoro’s (eds.) *Nigerian Integrative Discourses Volume 2*. (Lagos: Faculty of Arts, University of Lagos, 2005), p. 68.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Dotun Ogunkoya, “A Philosophical Understanding of Violence” in C.S. Momoh’s and Awonusi, S. (eds.) *Nigerian Integrative Discourses Volume 1*. (Lagos: University of Lagos Press, 2005), p. 295.

another can be regarded as violent incidence. The underlining indicator of violence is that there is always a form of force which when uncontrolled, gravitates to fisticuffs, arson, bodily injury, terror and death as the case may be. Violence gets out of hand when it is taken to the level of extremism.

Violent Extremism begins to manifest “when you do not allow for a different point of view; when you hold your own views as being quite exclusive, when you do not allow for the possibility of difference... and when you want to impose this view on others using violence if necessary”<sup>11</sup>.

In essence, violent extremism refers to people who resort to destructive approach to actualize certain ideological, economic, political or religious objectives. The FBI defines violent extremism as the "encouraging, condoning, justifying, or supporting the commission of a violent act to achieve political, ideological, religious, social, or economic goals"<sup>12</sup>. In the same vein, USAID defines violent extremist activities as the "advocating, engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence to further social, economic or political objectives"<sup>13</sup>. Another view of violent extremism has it that, one may not necessarily have to be physically involved in violent extreme action. For in as much as one believes in the ideology and justifies the use of violent means in promoting certain course, one

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<sup>11</sup> Lynn Davies, *Education Against Extremism*, Stoke on Trent and Sterling. Trentham Books.  
<https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/cld/UserFiles/File/DAVIESeducationagainstextremism.pdf> 2008, p.1

<sup>12</sup> “Radicalization and Violent Extremism”. *E4J University Module Series: Counter-Terrorism*. Available at <file:///C:/Users/USER/Downloads/Radicalization%20and%20Violent%20Extremism.html> (July, 2018. See also USAID (2011). " The Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency: Putting Principles Into Practice." *USAID Policy*, September 2011, p.2.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

automatically becomes a violent extremist<sup>14</sup>. All of these will come into focus when discussing the roles of local communities in combating this menace later on.

In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, the world has witnessed a huge threat occasioned by extremist's activities<sup>15</sup>. In fact, extremism has taken a fiercer dimension known as global terrorism such as ISIS, Al-Qaeda, Taliban, Hezbollah and Al-Shabaab<sup>16</sup>. Just of recent, there were extremist's acts in New Zealand and Sri Lanka. Also, various local communities here in Nigeria equally have had their share of this ugly story. As it stands today, many communities in Nigeria are confronted with banditry and violent extremist's activities like the Boko Haram, violent Herdsmen, Kidnappers and other social miscreants.

### **Driving Factors to Violent Extremism**

Scholars are of the view that certain factors drive people to violent extreme acts. These factors, they say, cut across socio-economic, psychological and institutional factors. Accordingly, it is often grouped into three categories, viz: Push factors, Pull factors and Contextual factors<sup>17</sup>. In the case of Push factors, practices such as: marginalization, inequality and persecution, are often said to be the

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<sup>14</sup> Government Offices of Sweden. " Sweden Action Plan to Safeguard Democracy Against Violence Promoting Extremism." *Government Communication 2011/12:44*, 2011, Point 3.2.

<sup>15</sup> The Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Gangs/Extremist Groups". *FBI Records: The Vault* available at <https://vault.fbi.gov/gangs-extremist-groups>

<sup>16</sup> Chris Diamond, "Top 15 most dangerous Terrorists Organizations in the World". *The Clever*. Available at <https://www.theclever.com/top-15-most-dangerous-terrorist-organizations-in-the-world/> 2017.

<sup>17</sup> UNESCO, A Teacher's Guide on the Prevention of Violent Extremism. Available @ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000244676> 2016, pp.12-13.

driving force for violent extremism. That is, when there is denial of rights and privileges to certain group of people in such a way that they begin to feel excluded from the rest, the oppressed, in turn, may use violent extreme means to express their frustration and anger. Galtun, according to Ogunkoya, calls it structural violence.

He regards structural violence as the avoidable deaths caused by social structures of society. It is a kind of violence resulting from the anomalies of the social structures of society. Such anomalies are evident in the inequalities that pervade the society, in poverty manifesting its stigma on the downtrodden, in the scarcity of resources, etc.<sup>18</sup>

The Push factor is given impetus when a society or leadership fails to do that upon which it was constituted to do. In this case, the people would resort to violent means to demand for the things they deserve which they have been denied of. Remove justice, St. Augustine says, the society would be nothing but a gang of criminals and robbers in great proportion. Thus, he interrogates: remove justice, and what are kingdoms but gangs of criminals on a large scale? What are criminal gangs but petty kingdoms?<sup>19</sup>. A society where there is no justice and respect to human dignity is a fertile ground for violent extreme activities.

The second factor, known as Pull factors, has to do with some services, tempting offers and incentives often put on the table by sponsors and leaders of extreme violent groups which attract

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<sup>18</sup> Ogunkoya, op.cit., p.208.

<sup>19</sup> St. Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson. (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), p 4.5.

membership into their folds. For instance, not too long ago, a statement was credited to Kashim Shettima, a former chief security officer of a state where he said that the Boko Haram fighters are more equipped with sophisticated military armament and are paid more handsomely than the amount paid to the government security agents<sup>20</sup>. The point of emphasis here is, if the reward for engaging in extremist acts outweighs the reward for good citizenship, it logically follows that the former will thrive more. Corollary to incentives is indoctrination either religious or ideological. “Ideological and religious facts include the manipulation of ideologies and religion, the use of military extremism...the sponsorship of religion besides ultra-nationalism promote violence and terrorism”.<sup>21</sup> This is the case among Islamic Jihadists who are indoctrinated to believe that when they kill those who do not belong to their fold in the sake of Allah, even if they die in the process, they are entitled to 72 virgins in paradise. It is for this reason that we have more teenager and youths whose sexual libidos are naturally in their prime involving in suicide bombing than aged persons. The absurdity of this doctrine is, if male martyrs are to be rewarded with 72 virgins in paradise; what then will be the reward for the female martyrs who are increasingly joining the suicide bombing movement? Will the female martyrs just be onlookers in heaven? Is it not obvious that the whole narrative is charade? Still, this indoctrination serves as a pull factor for membership drive.

The third factor is Contextual and has to do with environmental or psychological givens which ignite the urge to foment violence. It is under this category that we have instinctive violent perpetrators, that is, those who kill neither for self-defense, nor that any external

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<sup>20</sup> Boko Haram ‘Stronger than the Nigerian Army’. Published, 2014.  
Retrieved from; <https://www.aljazeera.com>

<sup>21</sup> Chigbo Ekwealo, “Terrorism: A Psycho-Philosophical Root An Option for a Safe and Peaceful Civil Society” in C.S. Momoh and J.I. Unah’s (ed.s) *Nigerian Integrative Discourses Volume 3*. (Lagos: Faculty of Arts, University of Lagos, 2005), p.292.

factor or reward pushes or pulls them to do so but because they enjoy killing, human suffering and carnage. This form of extremism, in the views of Anele, is typified by cruelty and sadism. According to him, “Sadistic destructiveness is harmful both to the perpetrator and his victim because it is socially disruptive and destroys for the sake of destruction”<sup>22</sup>. One who has the characteristics for sadistic actions, he says, “manifests intense desire to control, hurt and humiliate others if he could. He enjoys killing people just to satisfy his sadistic impulses”<sup>23</sup>. Ekwealo calls it “intense feelings of dissatisfaction, hate, ignorance, fear, intolerance, greed and despair which can ignite terrorism”<sup>24</sup>. This state of affairs, Hobbes would say, is derived from human nature as it were in the natural state of existence before the emergence of the modern society. Humans, he says, have a natural impulse for war of all against all. “Following from Hobbes’s conception, ‘raw’ human nature is a notion of man as a violent, aggressive, almost non-rational animal whose innate egoistic nature needs to be curtailed for civil society to be possible”<sup>25</sup>

Besides these three factors discussed above, this research has equally added the fourth factor. This, it calls, “intolerant ontology”. Ontology is the study of Being as such, that is, what it means for anything whatsoever to be without divisibility or atomization. According to Unah, ontology “investigates being precisely as being or being in general or being itself. Its focus is on being”<sup>26</sup>. It is a way of conceiving the world whereby everything is fused into everything in a complementary manner rather than in an exclusivist standpoint. In the light of this, intolerant ontology as the fertilizer of violent extremism refers to the thinking that one’s own position,

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<sup>22</sup> Anele, op.cit., p.70.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ekwealo, op.cit., p.292.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p.71.

<sup>26</sup> Jim I. Unah, *Metaphysics*. (Lagos: University of Lagos Press, 2010), p.119..

ideology or faith is the best and all contraries must file in or be destroyed.

Conflict, primarily ensues most often because; (i) either a concerned party insists that his viewing lense in an issue is the most lucid and as such, other parties must be given this same prescription, (ii) or that another party who feels that his human essence is being forced to align with a prescribed category and as such, refuses to bow to domination<sup>27</sup>

This is exactly the idea behind most religiously driven violent extremism all around the world. Not too long ago, the Muslim American Society (MAS), posted a video on its Facebook page, of Muslim kids featured in a Philadelphia Islamic Center, threatening and chanting that they would chop off the head of anyone and even sacrifice themselves for the sake of Allah<sup>28</sup>. It was very awful seeing supposedly innocent kids been indoctrinated and prepared as ready tools for terrorism and extremism. Thus, such thinking that makes one or a group of people assume that outside what they believe or practice is a total falsehood and therefore must be eliminated is a very dangerous metaphysical framework. Such manner of thinking does not only “obscure the clemency of truth, but also institutes a regime of stereotyping or what Soyinka calls

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<sup>27</sup> Isaac C. Igwe, *A Critique of Martin Heidegger's Conception of Calculative Rationality and Meditative Thinking*, being a PhD Thesis in the Department of Philosophy, Submitted to the School of Postgraduate Studies, University of Lagos, 2018, p.115.

<sup>28</sup> American Military News, (May 6, 2019) “Video: Muslim Kids in Philly chant ‘we will chop off their heads’ for Allah”. Available at <https://americanmilitarynews.com/2019/05/video-muslim-kids-in-philly-chant-we-will-chop-off-their-heads-for-allah>

“structural ignorance” or what Unah calls *tribal mindset* which manifests intolerance and misconception”..<sup>29</sup> Such motivations and actions Ekwealo describes as the spirit of monoideism which is the characteristics of western system of thought wherein “there is the acceptance of one-single-worldview as both the principle of understanding and the way of knowing reality”<sup>30</sup>. In his view, an attempt to undermine a people’s culture and tradition by imposing alien system and values; naturally, would attract a form of resistance by both critical and conscious individuals who see themselves first and foremost as cultural human beings<sup>31</sup>.

Therefore, it needs be emphasized that it is a half-truth for one to think that outside what one believes, can see, can feel or understand, is absolute nonsense. The reason is because in the views of Unah, the world we live in is a vast expanse of unchartered territory of possibilities, to the extent that what one cannot see, feel or understand, may be seen or felt or understood by another<sup>32</sup>. This makes an absolute claim to anything an impossibility. The only legitimate knowledge we can lay claim to is knowledge by bit or perspectival knowledge, in as much as such satisfies certain expectation or answers certain question that we seek for that moment. No system; religious, metaphysical or even scientific should conceive the other as counterfeit. There are several angles of looking at reality, and as such, no one way to truth. Reality is radical and dynamic; it can manifest itself to different civilization at different time in different forms. No opinion, no solution is untouchable. A celebrated solution to a problem today is liable to constitute another problem somehow in the nearest future, to the extent that applying the same method of

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<sup>29</sup> Igwe, op.cit., p.114.

<sup>30</sup> Ekwealo, op.cit., p.292.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Jim I. Unah, *Heidegger through Kant to Fundamental ontology*. (Ibadan: Hope Publishers, 1997), p.321.

approach to its solution becomes anachronistic. That is why it is rather an aberration for one to speak in such ‘a know it all manner’.

The point to drive home from the foregoing classification is that some violent extremist actions are caused by structural and environmental circumstances, for instance, the Niger-Delta radical militancy. By structural and environmental cause, we mean socio-economic factors like unemployment or poverty push, half-hazard education, human right violation, political alienation or exclusion and the feeling of injustice. As further explained in a UNDP article earlier cited above, public perception towards a system can also trigger violent extremism. Perceptions like widespread corruption in a system or a perceived political maltreatment of certain group of people in a given political society can as well nourish violent extremism. In other words, power politics that is skewed towards horizontal injustices and inequalities can fertilize violent extremism. When that happens to be the case, political actors and leadership malfeasances become the driving force. “When all these horizontal inequalities come together for a particular group, radical movements and violence are more likely to erupt”<sup>33</sup>. This view is reinforced by Johnson when he defined terrorism “as an act of intimidation by those who feel aggrieved but are unable to challenge the perceived adversary openly”<sup>34</sup>. Paradoxically, in the views of Ekwealo, often than not, one who is a terrorist or an extremist hardly sees himself as one. Persuaded by the course he fights for, he sees himself as a hero and freedom fighter worthy of emulation.<sup>35</sup>

These problems having been identified, how then can they be addressed to make sure that the society becomes safe for human inhabitation? Answers to this question, precipitate the next section.

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<sup>33</sup> UNDP, op.cit., p.4.

<sup>34</sup> M.A. Johnson, “Anti-Terrorist Stance in the Writings of Albert Camus” in C.S. Momoh and J.I. Unah’s (eds.) *Nigerian Integrative Discourses Volume 3*. (Lagos: Faculty of Arts, University of Lagos, 2005), 98.

<sup>35</sup> Ekwealo, op.cit., p.288.

### **Combating Radicalization and Violent Extremism Through Government and Community Partnership**

Although, while violent extremism requires increased security vigilance and interventions in order to secure people's lives and properties, its prevention requires much more fundamental approach such as finding political and leadership solutions to the various factors that drive their activities as enumerated above. This will be done in partnership with community effort in form of neighbor to neighbor watch. From the perspectives of leadership, promoting rule of law by ensuring that all iron passes through the blacksmith is very vital for tackling the push factors to violent extremism as earlier characterized.

In addition to the question of rule of law is the enforcement of human right. In other words, human lives must be accorded full dignity which they truly deserve. Furthermore, there should be massive orientation programme on the dangers of radicalization and the consequences of using violence as a method of addressing grievances. Such orientation must take effect using the bottom-top approach, that is, from the primary school level to tertiary. Parents must be uncompromising in inculcating the right attitudes into the children. More importantly, there should be increase reward for responsible citizenship and high incentives for the different agencies of government saddled with the responsibility of combating violent extremism and banditry. There is no doubt that a well motivated security agent will give his/her best when duty calls. Such motivation includes having a good package or compensation for the families of security personnel in the event of casualty. Again, this motivation also includes equipping the fighters with modern military armory. There had been reports in time past of situations where government fighters cried out for not being properly equipped with the state of the art military equipment. The point to be emphasized here is that well motivated security personnel is a sign of readiness for any society combating violent extremism and radicalization.

A government must not be seen through its actions, inactions, body language and utterances to be endorsing or supporting extremism and antisocial behaviour. For instance, a government endorses or encourages radicalism and violent extreme actions if it does not obey rule of law, in which case people will resort to self help and with time it may snowball into full blown violence. The same applies when a government does not dispense justice equitably or when it treats equals unequally; when it segregates in terms of allocating government resources and dividends of good governance to the people, and if it reneges on its promises made before coming to power. All of these have the capacity to heighten tension within a society and when perpetrated for long, lead into all manners of violent activities. This view has also been reechoed by Oyeniyi. He carpeted the government for encouraging radicalization and terrorism in Nigeria its various actions.<sup>36</sup> However, in addition to the government's effort through a well motivated security agencies and right actions (as discussed above), to ensure a violence free society, there is need for citizens' participation.

As a matter of fact, the point that has been repeatedly made by security experts is that when it comes to radicalization and violent extremism, the security personnel or government alone cannot win the battle. There is need for increased community involvement. The reason is that every violent action takes place in the community. Also, every terrorist or perpetrator of violent act is first, a member of a particular community. In typical African communities, members of community know each other. A criminal is a member of a community and a community is made up

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<sup>36</sup> A. Oyeniyi, "Terrorism in Nigeria: Groups, Activities, and Politics" in *International Journal of Politics and Good Governance* Volume 1, No. 1.1 Quarter I 2010 ISSN No. 0976 – 1195, available at <http://onlineresearchjournals.com/ijopagg/art/42.pdf>

by families, neighbours, friends, brothers, sisters, cousins, and a host of other set of people. The American Ambassador to Nigeria, Stuart Symington, reiterates this point too (Symington, 2019). It is only when the community begins to appropriate the fight against violent extremism as a collective fight that there will be an appreciable success. In other words, people must be made to take ownership of securing their environment by always willing to identify a morally reprehensible actor and collectively condemn the action. It is the community that supplies the raw data with which the security personnel acts upon using their intelligence gathering apparatuses. This is why the recent consciousness and discourse about community or regional policing in Nigeria is a step in the right direction. Since every act of crime takes place in the community, it will be foolhardy to sideline community participation as complement to government efforts. Thus, this paper encourages more communities to come with their plans on how to safeguard the lives and properties of their people. But in doing that, its mode of operation and activities must be well coordinated so as not to create other future monsters.

Crucial among the community factors, according to Ezeigbo, is the family. The family must continue to live up to expectation in overseeing the activities of their wards. “The success of a nation therefore depends inevitably on the family”.<sup>37</sup> The family needs to be alive to its responsibility as the first point of call in character formation and moral reengineering. Parents must be at alert in spotting out antisocial behaviours in their children and make effort to nip them in the bud. In other words, the attitudes of abandoning the duties of proper parenting to other agents outside the family must be stopped forthwith. Closely related to this point is the need for parents to give birth to the number of children they have the

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<sup>37</sup> Akachi Ezeigbo, Leadership Crisis in the Home: Inter-And-Intra-Gender Violence in Isidore Okpewho’s *The Victims*” in C.S. Momoh and J.I. Unah’s (eds.) *Nigerian Integrative Discourses Volume 3*. (Lagos: Faculty of Arts, University of Lagos, 2005), p.69.

capacity to oversee their wellbeing. Responsible parenting is key to responsible citizenship. It is in doing this that our emphasis on community participation in combating violent extremism will be worthwhile. Sadly enough, one of the greatest setbacks towards the fight against banditry and violent extremism is that they sometimes enjoy community's shield and protection. But again, for the people to truly show commitment into the progress and wellbeing of any society, they have to be given a sense of belonging and made to have equal stake in the system. This is another way of saying that the community should be integrated to be co-partners in the fight against anti-social behaviours by making the people be the drivers of security policies of the government. It is natural that people would want to shy away from commitment (in giving our useful information which will be helpful to security personnel) in a system that tends to alienate, discriminate and victimize them.

### **Combating Radicalization and Violent Extremism Through a Sustained Culture of Participation and Inclusion**

As for contextual factors, this work recommends participatory decision making rather than policy of exclusion or winner takes all often pursued by political leaders. A leader of a heterogeneous state must take every segment of the society as his constituency, whether they are supportive of your political views or not. "Experiences in both development and peace building show that an increase in the levels of inclusion and tolerance in communities can lead to both better governance of diversity, and to societies better inoculated against violent extremism"<sup>38</sup>. Again, the capacity of the grassroots government for service and effective delivery must be reengineered. In other words, making the people to own the fight against violent extremism and all forms of social ills, creates a form of fortress in any society.

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<sup>38</sup> W.S. Symington, "The Security Forces alone cannot secure any Country". *Leadership Newspapers*, available at <https://leadership.ng/2019/05/08/security-forces-alone-cannot-secure-any-country-us-ambassador/>

This could be achieved when we collectively make effort to sustain the culture of participation and disclosure in a diverse and multicultural society like ours. That is what is called inclusivist approach to diversity.<sup>39</sup> A multifaceted society like Nigeria must increase the culture of dialogue by which every section of the state is given an opportunity to disclose how they truly feel about the system. Man is a being whose essence is actualized in communication, which is why in any society where opportunity for communication and discourse are short out always breeds terrorism and violent extremism as means of expression. To be frank, diversity in itself is not a problem per se. The problem therefore arises when it is understood in exclusivist term. When understood in exclusivist terms, diversity becomes a problem because vital aspects of reality are decreed out of recognition, support and attention, only because they fail the test of familiarity<sup>40</sup>. On the contrary, the inclusivist understanding of diversity brings everybody on board and creates room for participation and for the disclosure of what people truly think and feel. The practice of inclusion in a diverse society becomes a blessing as it then allows unfettered access of all persons and groups to discourse, to recognition, to care and attention.

The conviction being that when people or entities which manifest varying degrees of differences are given recognition and accorded respects for their varying identities, frictions and the tendencies for violent behaviour in such society become minimized, if not totally eradicated. The exclusivist view that truth and salvation must be universal values is by itself antithetical to the threshold upon which the term diversity stands. Often than not, in a situation where this obtains, such “mental rigidity would be fought by both critical and conscious human beings...”<sup>41</sup>. This has over time, lead to conflict

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<sup>39</sup> Igwe, op.cit.

<sup>40</sup> ibid

<sup>41</sup> Ekwealo, op.cit., p.292.

and violent extremist actions in the world. The Ontological solution to address violent extremism in our world is to begin to encourage varying cultures, beliefs, ideologies and life-ways towards achieving global civilization where people, races, life-ways are brought on board to express themselves the very way they truly feel in a properly guided manner. This is one of the ways to birth a new humanity and global citizenship. In other words, we can have a world order in which “certain views are shared, but within the borders of subcultures”<sup>42</sup>. It is within this culture of global consciousness as expressed synthesis of sectional consciousness that diversity would mean a blessing.

This kind of culture if entrenched in human relation and organizational operation would build and restore trust and enhance the feeling of security in the system or society. I had earlier stated the view that people often go to any length to protect and defend the interest of any system which guarantees their wellbeing and gives them advantage over others. In fact, when this kind of situation becomes a norm, the people will by themselves, form fortresses around the organization or community, knowing that its failure will lead to the downfall of all.

But when a segment begins to feel detached from the whole, the motivation for commitment to its course begins to dwindle. For people to truly express themselves the way they feel, under a well guided manner, there ought to be a continuous and unhindered access to inclusive dialogue, negotiation and compromise. The inability of institutions and leadership to create such atmosphere increases the risk of conflict and violent radicalization. “Marginalization, stereotyping, lack of understanding and discrimination promote terrorism. Further factors are the imposition of dominant cultures and asymmetrical cultural

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<sup>42</sup> V. Terblanch, *Sustainable Organizational Transformation through Inclusivity*. A Doctoral Thesis on Business Leadership, submitted to the University of South Africa, 2008, p.100.

interactions besides the unsettled historical disputes, all these are background factors”<sup>43</sup>.

Against this backdrop, an inclusive system must learn how to leverage the unique perspectives of all varying component units effectively.

Divisive tendencies and practice of exclusion heighten individuals’ feeling of dissatisfaction, decrease commitment and cohesiveness, and in the end leave every part working towards disintegration of the whole. This appears to be exactly the case in most multicultural, multiethnic and multi-religious societies of the world with African societies as case studies.

For instance, a crucial aspect of diversity when applied in human concrete social terms is ethnic diversity. Ethnic diversity is a social reality in most third world nations, particularly in Africa. The inability of leadership to effectively manage the challenge of diversity in African societies has engendered a situation where at first; people pay more allegiance to their ethnic descent before considering national interest. Thus, this inept management of diversity in this perspective has become the bane of progress, development and happiness in the African social order.

This is the reason this paper has argued that there must be a sustained culture of free participation and unhindered access to open discourse for all sheds of perspectives to make contributions towards national development and harmonious existence. As it stands at the moment, among African states, there is palpable disconnect and dissonance between component units and the centre. This widening gap must be bridged for the benefits of inclusivity, equality and diversity to be fully attained.

## **Conclusion**

Issuing from the various approaches to violent extremism as presented in the body of this essay, is the point that in combating

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. Ekwealo, op.cit., p.291.

radicalization and violent attitudes, multi-stake holder approach which includes the government, security agents, family, community involvement and mass reorientation are necessary partners to counter the push, pull and contextual factors that drive their existence. The mass reorientation entails reaffirming commitment to diversity and practice of inclusion<sup>44</sup>; be it political, religious, ideological or cultural. There must be perceived and seen commitment towards its actualization. It should not be a campaign jingle. Inclusive leadership ought not end in lip service. Diversity only becomes a blessing when it attains the level of inclusiveness. Only then it becomes a national advantage. Thus, a diverse society like Nigeria must avoid winner takes all attitude in how it pilots its affairs. Each segment of the nation must be given sense of belonging through creation of equal opportunities, distribution of resources and equitable reward system to deserving citizens.

It is pertinent to also add that violent extreme tendencies can as well be combated by mass reorientation and effective engagement of the youths, one which is targeted at sharpening the critical ability in response to received information on any issue at all, most especially religious opinions. It is critical mindset that enables one to develop resistance to violent tendencies by its capacity to make one always sift truth from falsehood which often triggers violence and counter violence. For instance, some of these false narratives which raise tension in the society include the doctrines that Islam is a violent religion with Islamizing mission or that the Christians want to convert everybody into Christianity. Thus, to have extremists and radicals' free society, such national conversation orbited around Islam versus Christian domination should always be

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<sup>44</sup> Government of Canada, "National Strategy on Countering Radicalization to Violence". *Canada Centre for Community Engagement and Prevention of Violence*, available at <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/ntnl-strtg-cntrng-rdclztn-vlnc/ntnl-strtg-cntrng-rdclztn-vlnc-en.pdf> 2018, p.25.

processed with critical minds before assimilation. The conversation that a set of religious faithful is better than the other leads into single story and does not promote mutual respect in a multi-religious society. Therefore, a multi-religious and diverse society must guide against single story narrative for it teaches hatred and domination. In its place, a diverse society should continue to promote the alternative account or point of views in every narrative as a way of enthroning the culture of tolerance and nonviolence.

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