

**SOCIAL CONTROL AND THE MENACE OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN NIGERIA:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

*Nigeria, as a country is currently confronted with myriads of security challenges that have rocked its very root and questioned the capacity of government to protect lives and property of citizens. These problems are orchestrated by the activities of violent extremists, terrorists, kidnappers, armed bandits and other violent elements. These problems traverse the breath and length of the country as if government security forces have gone on vacation. These have dire consequences on our nascent democracy and sustainable development as the image of the country has been smeared globally, and Nigeria ascribed as the third most risk nation to live. It is the responsibility of government to provide security and welfare for her citizens; however, this seems to be a herculean task for government at the moment because citizens live in fear, insecurity and threats of violence daily. This paper aimed at interrogating the relationship between social control and violent extremism and the implications for sustainable development in Nigeria. This paper utilized the frustration and aggression theory as framework for the analysis of the subject matter. Relying chiefly on secondary sources of data, the paper engages archival review of existing literature on violent extremism, and government's efforts in combating the menace and probable reasons for its persistence. The paper recommends among others diverting youth's energy and talent to meaningful sporting activities and entertainment through the establishment of competitive and rewarding events, protection of security accoutrements to avoid violence proliferation by civilian populace, and criminalization of open grazing and herdsmen criminal activities.*

**Keywords: Social Control, Violence, Violent Extremism, Sustainable Development, Insecurity.**

**Introduction**

Like many other parts of the world, Africa is confronted with the problem of violent extremism which has affected many transformational efforts of government. Nigeria, being a member of the global community has had its own share of violent extremism which has threatened and continues to threaten its sustainable development goals and initiatives. At the international level, the issues of Al-Qaeda, Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) or Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP) and Boko Haram are known to be master minds of major terror attacks in Europe, United States of America, Asia and Africa (Bhulai & Fink, 2016; Chinwokwu, 2013). Domestically, Boko Haram, herdsmen terrorism, kidnapping, increased armed banditry, cattle rustling, religious radicalism, piracy, and other violent activities have put a

smack in governance and the capacity of the security forces to effectively protect citizens. Violent extremism and its variants are the most significant threats to security and nations of the world. According to Igbo cultural group, the Ohaneze there have been unabated increased state of insecurity such as killings, kidnapping and various types of banditry in the country (Oji, 2019; Makinde, 2019; Campbell, 2018), and government seems overwhelmed by the capacity of the terrorists and armed bandits across the country. The insecurity situation in the country was further stressed by the Chairman of Maradun Local Government Area, Zamfara State Mr. Ahmed Abubakar when he said:

My local government is under siege, they are attacking our communities and villages virtually every day and the military manpower cannot overpower these people. We record 4 to 5 attacks on weekly basis, people are dying, and others are being kidnapped because the security forces are not well equipped to fight these people (*Channels Television*, June 23, 2019).

Socio-economic and ethno-political dynamics coupled with weakened capacity of government to police the state have been exploited by individuals and groups to exacerbate the narrative of insecurity in the country. Repressive government policies and flamboyant lifestyles of political elites in the face of massive youth unemployment and poverty, corruption and illiteracy, marginalization and discrimination have fueled support for conditions of increased grievance and aggression to sustain violent extremism and terrorism in the country. Accordingly, Vijaya, Ramya, Cathcart, and Fiorellinin (2018) assert that unemployment and lower level of education have impact on the likelihood of support for violent extreme violence. Thus, there is great political instability and insecurity, inequality and injustice, with citizen's alienation which exposed governance weakness and people have been pushed to the jungle law of survival of the fittest. The matter on ground may remain same or worsened, unless government changes the narrative in which violent extremists and criminals are treated without ethno-religious and political sentiments. It is the responsibility of every government at all levels to protect her citizens and ensure their welfare. For example, Section 14 (1) of *The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria* (1999) as amended in 2011 states *inter alia* that "the security and welfare of the people shall be a primary purpose of government". But current situations of insecurity across the country depict failed governance and order maintenance.

In the *Institute for Economic and Peace* (2018) report, Nigeria was ranked the third most terrorized country in the world for the fourth consecutive years and also the most terrorized country in Africa. The report went on to rank Boko Haram as the second most deadly terrorist organization in the world while Fulani herdsmen remained the fourth most deadly terrorist organization in the world. The implication is that Boko Haram moved a step upward in the ranking from its third position in previous years. These reports are indictment that the Nigerian state is under the siege of violent extremists and armed bandits; and government acclaimed decimation of Boko Haram is a mere political propaganda to win citizen's loyalty. This is not good omen for Nigeria's image even as the government is struggling to gain international confidence and goodwill and wooing foreign investors into the country, citizens are also moving out of the country in droves for fear of criminal victimization. The crux is that no society thrives under anarchy and social disharmony no matter how sophisticated and developed the country maybe, because these are antithesis to economic development (Chinwokwu, 2019; Dada, 2018 Rufai, 2018). It is imperative that the narrative is changed to accommodate the desired economic growth and sustainable development. Accordingly, former President Olusagun Obasanjo observes that the pace at which we are going now is tending more and more toward disaster and instability and developmentally unsustainable (*Sahara Reporters*, 2019a). This is worsened further by the report of *Global Peace Index* (2019) which ranked Nigeria 148<sup>th</sup> out of 163 peaceful countries in the world. When the report is analyzed bottom-up Nigeria is the 16<sup>th</sup> least peaceful countries in the world (see *Table 1*). The picture of the insecurity in the country was further daunted when June 19, 2019 the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office issued a travelling warning to her citizens against going to twenty one states of Nigeria due to increasing insecurity in the country (Ebhomele, 2019). Similarly, the government suspended all mining activities by foreigners in Zamfara State and the military banning the use of commercial motor cycles in the state; an indication

that social order is in disarray. The implications have cataclysmic blow on the country and a great threat to sustainable development as a nation.

The worst is that state may even encourage, sponsor or act in a way that provides the fuel for perpetrators of violent extremism to act with impunity in order to further their personal and group interests besides involving in violent activities themselves (Sadmuyler, 2019; Chinwokwu, 2018). State terrorism enhances lawlessness and impunity which triggers anger, frustration and aggression that may persist for a very long time. The case of Mohammed Yusuf's death in the hand of government forces and the aftermath of the symphony of destructions that have pervaded the country is a typical example of state terrorism. Mohammed Yusuf was the leader of Boko Haram but was killed while in police custody in 2009. The country has been paying for the extra judicial murder executed by the state. The detention of Sheikh Ibrahim El-ZakZaky, the leader of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) (Alias Shiites), by government forces government refusal to release him on bail is a great security concern. This was after government forces had killed 248 of their members in 2015 during a rift with the military. In addition, over 100 civilians were killed in an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp in Raun, Borno State in January 2017 by Nigeria Air Force (Amnesty International, 2017). The way government forces have been dealing with them is an act of state terrorism. This may also arise when government forces turn deaf ears to the plight of victims of violent extremism while encouraging and protecting the offenders (Michael, Chinwokwu & Inyang, 2017). This is the perception of most Nigerians especially government attitude to the killings of innocent citizens by herdsmen without concrete and positive action against them in terms of arrest and prosecution or criminalization (Mahr, 2019; Amnesty International, 2018; Dada, 2018). These are indicators that sustainable development may be an uphill task to achieve under these challenges, unless drastic and concrete, workable and effective strategic security plans are put into motion.

Extant literature on violent extremism abounds (Gadzama, 2018; Rufai, 2018; Vijaya, et al., 2018; Adeoye, 2017; Bhulai & Fink, 2016; Ewetan & Urhie, 2014; David, 2008; Croissant, 2005; Keane, 2002). David (2008) looked at the nexus between gender, education, extremism and society. He argued for the use of political education to promote both national and personal security. Croissant (2005) argued that political extremism and armed conflict create fragile states and crumbling societies which constitute severe obstacle for democratization and sustainable development. Vijaya et al., (2018) linked violent extremism to social inequality and felling of being left out in the opportunities in society. The impunities of violent extremism seem to be weakening the relevance of government in securing the lives and property of their citizens and migrants. Ewetan and Urhie (2014) examined the nexus between socio-economic development and insecurity and found that socio-economic is combating violence would bring socio-economic development in Nigeria. However, none these extant literature studies has looked at the connection between social order and violent extremism and implications for sustainable development in Nigeria. More so, interrogation of the forces that encourage extreme violence in spite of government efforts is fundamental in combating violent extremism. This study will add to the existing body of knowledge and expand government focus in searching for lasting solution to the menace.

### **Conceptual Clarification of Terms**

Just like terrorism, the concept of violent extremism is problematic in that there is no generally acceptable definition of it. This implies that its definition is subjective and interpretative based on dominate but minority political elites in decision making authority. *Department for International Development* (DFID) (2013) defines violent extremism as the use of facilitation of force of violence targeted on civilians as a means of rectifying grievance, real or perceived, which form the basis of increasing group identities". *The Federal Bureau of Investigation* (2018) defines violent extremism as encouraging, condoning, justifying or supporting the commission of violent act to achieve political ideological, religious, social or economic goals. This definition is very appropriate in the issues surrounding the prevalence of violent extremism within Nigerian context. The most singular impetus which may have fueled herdsmen terrorism across Nigeria situates at the body

language of government. Government overtly or covertly condones, justifies, and encourages violent extremism by their symbolic body expression couched in ethno-religious and economic primordial interests to the extent that none of the violators has been arrested or prosecuted for the massive killings and destructions of communities countrywide. Violent extremists employ violence targeted at the very dregs of society who may not have the wherewithal to protect them in order to attract the attention of government or force government to do some illegal or legal act for their benefits. Violent extremism and terrorism are most often used interchangeably.

Violence can be referred to as behaviour that is intentional, unwanted, nonessential and harmful (Hamby, 2017). Violence is any form of behaviour by an individual or group of individuals that intentionally threatens to or does cause physical, sexual or psychological harm to others or themselves (Stanko, 2001). More importantly, violence is actions that inflict, threaten or cause injury (Jackman, 2002) or physical aggression (Felson, 2009) or use of physical force (Olweus, 1999). The instruments of violence are force, intimidation, threat or coercion resulting to harm. There is no known practitioner of violent extremism that does not use these elements to achieve a desired goal.

Social control refers to the need and capacity of a society to provide social order without an explicit or threatened reliance on force or violence and it the basic foundation of social order and social harmony (Deflem, 2015). Violent extremism is a great challenge and threat to social order especially where the instruments of formal social control strategies are incapacitated. This is worsened when government and agencies of social control metamorphosis as instruments of violent extremism through their actions and inactions which depicts weakness to enforce the law.

*International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)* defines sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. The activities of violent extremism and government handicap in dealing with the menace are pathologically harmful not only to future generation but also contemporary existence.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The rise of violent extremism in Nigeria has left the populace in a state of insecurity and made many people refugees in their own country, in spite of the fact that the country is not at any conventional war with any known enemy. There are various sociological perspectives that can be used to interpret the prevailing trends of violent extremism in Nigeria. But this paper will explore the frustration-aggression theory as expounded by John Dollard, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, Orval Mowrer, and Robert Sears in 1939. According to Dollard, Miller, Doob, Mowrer and Sears (1939), the foundation of frustration-aggression theory is on the assumption that certain frustration triggers aggression against the root cause of the frustration and also against individuals or targets who are somewhat connected to a certain extent to the source of the frustration. This is the reason behind the expression of misplaced aggression in some parlance. The theorists argued that aggression is not a natural reaction or a biological instinct but the outcome of frustration. This means that individual's expression is not inherent but a result of situations and conditions arising from their environment. Thus, individuals whose desires and opportunities are blocked or denied directly or indirectly in the society by the way society is structured or organized, may feel disappointed and frustrated; resort to violence. In other words, the existences of unequal opportunities for all in the society can led to frustration and some level of aggression turned into violent actions. In Nigeria, issues of discrimination, inequality, poverty, relative deprivation, marginalization, oppression, exploitation, disobedience to rule of law, executive lawlessness, flamboyant display of wealth by political elites in the midst of abject poverty and massive youth unemployment are rampant and capable of causing frustration and aggression leading to violent extremism. Abdulkabir (2017 p.3) has argued that “...the problem of unemployment in Nigeria is one of the major syndromes that upturned youths to become atrocious actors”. Similarly, scholars (Agbibo, 2013; Ogundiya, 2009; Danjibo, 2009) highlighted some socio-economic conditions which constitute elements that trigger frustration and aggression resulting to violent extremism as unemployment, poverty, corruption, marginalization, unequal

education and relative deprivation. Sachmuijler (2017) stressed that frustration with weak, corrupt, or illegitimate governance, marginalization, fractured relationship, lack of voice and opportunity and struggle with diversity strengthen the demand for aggressive behavior and violence. The emergence of Boko Haram, Fulani herdsmen, kidnappers and myriad of other violent actors are offshoot of the frustration-aggression experienced in the polity and government failure to address those problems (Brock, 2012, Chinwokwu, 2013). Government actions rather than cushioning the effects of frustration-aggression are exacerbating the tension in the polity thereby causing greater violence by their inactions to ensure equality and fairness in the distribution of political positions and resources. This is complicated by government body language which sometimes heat up the polity creating social disorder and discordant tunes in the nation state with spiral effects on sustainable development.

### **Methodology**

The paper is a qualitative study which relied majorly on secondary data. The study was carried through the analysis of literatures on violent extremism, government actions and policies on violent extremism and sustainable development. Secondary sources utilized include books, journals, periodical and other relevant materials to provide the insight for this paper.

### **An Overview of the Prevalence of Violent Extremism in Nigeria**

Although, government claimed victory over Boko Haram in 2015 was expected to boost the morale of the fighting soldiers and assure foreigners and business investors of their safety and protection in Nigeria, but contemporary events in North East and North West Nigeria indicate a resurgence of new branded and sophisticated Boko Haram coupled with emerging armed bandits and herdsmen terrorists that have taken over highways across the country. Ironically, since 2015 Boko Haram has been on rampage with their twin brother Islamic States of West Africa Province (ISWAP). It is on record that between June 2015 and May 2016, 575 people were killed by Fulani herdsmen attacks across the country (Adeoye & Alagbe, 2016). More so, 808 persons were killed while 1,422 houses were destroyed in Kaduna by Fulani herdsmen within the period (Adigun, 2016). According to Lenshie and Yenda (2016), Boko Haram is acclaimed to have displaced more than 3 million people across the country in the last decade and made over 300,000 people refugees in the neighbouring countries of Niger, Chad, and Cameroun. The National Population Commission revealed that the number of internally displaced persons in displaced camps in the country increased by 4.5% as at January, 2018 (Sahara Reporters, 2018). This statistics indicates the devastating havoc violent extremists have caused in the country within the last decade.

**TABLE 1: 20 LEAST PEACEFUL COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD**

S/NO.	NAME OF COUNTRY
1.	Afghanistan
2.	Syria
3.	South Sudan
4.	Yemen
5.	Iraq
6.	Somalia
7.	Central African Republic
8.	Libya
9.	Democratic Republic of Congo
10.	Russia
11.	Pakistan
12.	Turkey
13.	Sudan
14.	Ukraine
15.	North Korea
16.	Nigeria
17.	Lebanon
18.	Israel
19.	Mali
20.	Venezuela

**Source:** Global Peace Index (2019).

A glance at Table 1 indicates that Nigeria is the 16<sup>th</sup> country that is described as most security risk to live in the world. Nigeria is also categorized as the 3<sup>rd</sup> most terrorized country in the world. These kind of assessments of Nigeria speaks volumes of our insecurity situation and expected to spur government into action to ensure Nigeria is safe not only for economic investment but for people to inhabit peacefully. It is people that make economic investment for sustainable development of a country, and this cannot be done in chaotic environment. Nigeria needs peace if sustainable development is ever desired. There is overwhelming statistics to indicate that the mechanisms of social control have broken down, thereby providing a fertile ground for violent extremists to operate unchallenged (see Tables 1 & 2)..

International Crisis Group (2017) reported that Boko Haram has killed over 20,000 people since 2001 when it started terrorist attacks in Nigeria. United Nations International Children Education Fund (UNICEF, 2017) reported that over 2,300 teachers have been killed by Boko Haram while over 1,400 schools across Nigeria had been destroyed since 2009. The abduction of over 200 Chibok school girls in Borno state by Boko Haram in 2014 marked a turning point in the dimension of Boko Haram's operation and the level they can go in achieving their goal. Similarly, in 2015, over 113 Dapchi school girls were kidnapped by Boko Haram. The *modus operandi* of this action and the way 109 of the school children were returned is still and will continue to be a security debate in the country (Chinwokwu, 2018; Habila, 2017; Obasi & Obe, 2016) (see Table 2)

In Benue state, Fulani herdsmen carried out about 47 attacks since 2015 in which over 1,500 people had been killed (Iorhemen, 2018). More so, the Institute for Economics and Peace which host Global Terrorism Index reported that Fulani herdsmen killed 1,225 people in 2014, 63 people in 2013 and 100 people in May 2015 alone (David, 2016). Amnesty International reported that 549 people were killed in 2017 by Fulani herdsmen while thousands were displaced and made refugees in their country. It also reported that 1,351 people were killed by Fulani herdsmen between January and

March, 2018 (Godwin, 2018; Ndujihe, 2018). In terms of economic lost, Nigeria lost over 100 billion Naira (Iorhemen, 2018) (see Table 2).

**TABLE 2: CASUALITIES OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM FROM JUNE 2016 - MAY 2019**

S/NO.	STATE	NUMBER OF DEATH
1.	Borno	9,303
2.	Zamfara	1,963
3.	Benue	1,642
4.	Adamawa	1,529
5.	Kaduna	1,488
6.	Plateau	771
7.	Rivers	730
9.	Taraba	649
10.	Cross River	467
11.	Niger	252

**Source:** Folarin (2019).

A glance at the data in Table 2 indicates that there was increased death between June 2011 and May, 2015 than June 2015 and May 2019, however, the trend, pattern and dynamics of criminality and violent extremism experienced in the country have reached the boiling point. This is strengthened by the kind of morbid fear and polarization cum suspicion which exists now was never experienced in the history of Nigeria even during the civil war. The reason being paraded by political pundits is that government action and body language exacerbate violent extremism. Furthermore, between June 2011 and May 2015 a total of 34,884 persons were killed (i.e. 24 persons were killed daily in Nigeria within the period) while in March 2014 alone 3,456 (i.e. 111 persons were killed daily) by Boko Haram and herdsmen militia. This means that Nigerian are being killed daily like chickens as political elites share and amass the commonwealth of the people for their personal aggrandizement. According to Wale (2017) there is serious political insecurity and people's alienation. People are alienated from their source of livelihood as violent extremists occupy their homeland.

The youths of Numan community of Adamawa state protested at the National Assembly premises Abuja on May 24, 2018 due the destruction of 21 villages in their communities by Fulani herdsmen without government action (Onyiriola, 2018). Kidnappers and bandits are claimed to have taken over most highways in the country, in such a way that there is no day that passes without one gory headline story or the other. Nigeria has been described as an unfriendly nation for business investors. All these have great impact on economic growth and sustainable development. Nigeria has become so polarized on ethno-religious and political lines, that the survival of the country as a nation demands urgent re-engineering of the social structure and institutions to rebuild confidence in the Nigerian consciousness of one nation.

Aside from violent extremism initiated by criminal elements, government; overtime instead of ensuring security in the society has used state machineries to execute acts of violent extremism on the citizens. Sometime in November, 1999, the military carried out a reprisal attack against the people of Odi community in Rivers state for killing 12 policemen posted to protect oil facilities. At the end of that attack over 2,000 people were killed while communities were razed to the ground. Similar attack was also carried out in Zaki Biam, Benue state in October 12, 2001 by the Nigerian military in retaliation for the killing of 19 soldiers and in the process over 100 people were killed (Human Rights Watch, 2000, 2001). On April 18, 2018 the military also attacked Naka community in Gwer West Local Government Area, Benue state for killing a soldier and at the end one person was killed while over 200 houses were burnt down (Charles, 2018; Olorok, Akinkuotu, Adesomoju, Aluko & Charles, 2018). This means that government is culpable in promoting and encouraging violent extremism instead of maintaining peace and protecting people against criminal victimization.

### **Challenges of Violent Extremism on Social Control**

The great challenge here is government incapacity to ensure social order and control. Government constitutional responsibility is to ensure the welfare and security of all citizens and person residing within the geographical landscape of the Nigerian state. But the heat from violent extremists have challenged government ability and placed the country among comity of nations with risk factors and ungovernable space. The pattern and trends of violent extremism is disturbing with its consequence on sustainable development. Nigeria cannot but be described as a country at war with unknown actors and with herself. Government inability to tame corruption within the system and institutional agencies is a great challenge and impetus required for violent extremism to thrive at the cost of social order. The mechanisms of social control seem to have collapse giving foundation for fear of victimization and the gates of hell to be loosed on citizen's helplessness.

Government unwillingness to identify and criminalize certain group of people that have been terrorizing the country is a great challenge for social control and sustainable development as this action of government provided the required fuel for violent extremism. It is the most critical element that has sustained violent extremism of one section against others and placed government on edge in providing stable social order for all citizens. The fight against violent extremism must be decisive, total, uncompromised and unbiased. Criminal elements in the society must be fished out and punished irrespective of who they are or their ethno-political cleavage.

Government over dependence on foreign assistance in combating violent extremism is a challenge and impediment to social order and sustainable development. As the giant of Africa and the most populace black nation sub-Sahara Africa, Nigeria must rise above all odds to defend her integrity and sovereignty. Sustainable development must be based on national technological development driven by citizens with focus on humanity. Thus, we must not wait for foreigners to dictate for us how to ensure security and social order in the country. Nigeria's secular nature must be maintained at all cost to leverage any advantage violent extremist groups may have in our security system and governance.

The rule of law and the law enforcement agents must be allowed to work effectively unhindered by political, ethno-religious, group or personal interference. One of the greatest problems facing social control is the inability of the criminal justice system to operate freely without order from above. Justice is to the man who can pay the highest bid, which affect the morale of those who willingly want to enforce the law without bias.

### **Government response to violent extremism**

Government response to violent extremism and other violent crimes have been slow and more of reactive response rather than pro-active policing. One of the first actions government took was the enactment of relevant laws including checking of arms proliferation to deal with violent extremism and terrorism. The National Counter-Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) designed by the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) (2014) was organized around five work strands: forestall - to prevent people becoming terrorists; secure - to strengthen protection; identify – to pre-empt attacks; prepare – to build resilience; and implementation – to mobilize efforts to combat violent extremism. It is the responsibility of government security forces to ensure the effective enforcement and implementation of these objectives in collaboration with the civil society. Laws do not enforce themselves or become effective in themselves without humans to bring them to the realization of social control in the society. Thus, Njoku (2017) argues that the policies made by government to fight violent extremism require the efforts of all government security agencies in employing both hard and soft measures to combat terrorism.

Government has created various multi-national joint task forces at different locations across the country with the aim of combating violent extremism. Some of these joint operations include Operation Awatse in July, 2016 for South West against herdsmen militias and kidnappers; Operation Crocodile Smile between September, 2016 – October, 2017 for the Niger Delta Area against Niger



Delta militants; Operation Python Dance between November 2016 – September, 2017 for South East against kidnappers and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB); Special Operation Karamin Goro for Benue, Kogi, Nasarawa, Kaduna and Niger States against herdsmen militias, bandits and kidnappers; Operation Ayem Akpataima in March, 2018 for Taraba state against herdsmen militias; Operation Lafiya Dole in May, 2018 and Operation Last Hope also in May, 2018 for North East against Boko Haram and ISWAC; Operation Whirl Stroke in May, 2018 for Benue, Nasrawa, Taraba and Zamfara against herdsmen militias, armed bandits and kidnappers. Government also went on to establish the 8 Task Force Division in Monguno to boost the military operations in North East, Nigeria and the establishment of the 2 Battalion Forward Operation Base (FOB) IN Birni Gwari, Kaduna State. The military also established a military base and a training ground at Sambisa forest in order to have control over the area against Boko Haram. The efforts of these forces have been encouraging but allegations of sabotage, corruption and diversion of funds defects the logistics required to fight violent extremism. The implication is that many soldiers have lost their lives due partly to inefficient and outdated weapons and lack of sophisticated firearms.

In order to curb the activities of Boko Haram and armed bandits, government entered into dialogue and negotiations with Boko Haram and the armed bandits leading to the granting of amnesty of Boko Haram and de-radicalization of the group. The negotiations led to the release of about 200 Chibok school girls and 105 Dapchi school girls in exchange for the release of Boko Haram detained members (Opeyemi, 2018). On March 23, 2018 President Muhammadu Buhari granted amnesty to repentant members of Boko Haram (Adetayo, 2018a). Since the amnesty was granted to members of Boko Haram, over 500 of them have been de-radicalization and re-integrated into their communities (Bukarti, 2019; Olaifa, 2018; Vanguard, 2018). Currently, Governor Aminu Masari of Katsina State is negotiating with bandits in the North West while government also have negotiated with Miyetti Allah (the umbrella organization of herdsmen militia) in Nigeria on how to end armed banditry and herdsmen killings across the country. These negotiations have been criticized by civil society organizations. However, what is the guarantee that de-radicalized members of Boko Haram and other armed bandits will keep to their promise or even monitored by government to ensure they do not become saboteurs. Since Governor El-Rufai negotiated and gave money to herdsmen militia in Kaduna to stop killings, it has not yielded any dividend since government claimed in 2015 that Boko Haram have decimated, Boko Haram have become more vicious in their attacks.

The fight against terrorism and violent extremism is a global concern. Currently, the operations of Boko Haram, Fulani herdsmen militia and ISWAC have taking international outlook requiring international collaborations. Government has received military assistance from Britain, America, Niger, Chad and Cameroon in form of hard and software. International organizations like the World Bank. United Nations, African Union, Economic Communities of West African Countries (ECOWAS) and Red Cross have contributed also in no small measures to alleviate the plight of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in various camps in Nigeria. There is also a transnational joint military task force comprising Nigeria and Chad at the Chad Basin to combat the incursions of Boko Haram into the area. There is also an international collaboration between Nigeria and Britain and America in terms of training operations in combating terrorism in Nigeria. International collaborations have yielded positive results as Nigeria is better equipped and trained to tackle violent extremism. But the results are better seen when insecurity and threats of violent extremism become a bygone.

The implications of Boko Haram terrorism and Herdsmen militia have been massive on life and properties. Thus, to tackle the issue rehabilitation and reconstructions resulting from the devastating effects of violent extremism, government established the North East Development Commission. The idea is to rebuild or reconstruct infrastructures and return life and communities to normalcy. The Radio Fulani was also established a medium of enlightenment for the Fulani herdsmen and perhaps the bandits, thereby dissuading them from carrying out violent activities but seek ways of mitigating problems with other without force of arm. The benefits of these establishments will be better assessed in future.

### **Why Do Violent Extremism Persists Despite Government Efforts**

Violent extremism persists in a society as long as it is tolerated by those in political authority, through their actions or inactions which may tend to combat the problem or fuel the problem. Citizens expect political leaders to protect them at all times but when government display a levity of weakness, insincerity, bad governance, discrimination and sentiment in their actions and decisions, vampires of destructions will prey on those seeming weakness to cause havoc. Some of the reasons that have made government efforts in combating violent extremism are as follows:

### **Double standard in the approach to combat violent extremism**

Violent extremism has continued to persist in spite of government presumed efforts to contain it because government has more often politicized the issue of insecurity rather than solving it. The Fight against violent extremism cannot be won through ethno-religious parochial sentiment and interest. Government must call a spade a spade without primordial interests since government is formed to protect all citizens irrespective of race, ethnicity, religion or sex. Therefore, holistic approach in combating violent extremism especially through proper identification and criminalization of violent groups and individuals can go a long way in reducing or eliminating the menace. However, government approach has been double standard; insincere and discriminatory (see Table 3).

**Table 3: Identified Domestic and Transnational Terrorist Group in Nigeria**

S/ N	Terror Group/Antecedents	Objective/Aim	Flagship	International Terror Group Linkage
1.	Jama'at Ahdas-Sunnah lid Da'wah Wa'IJihad (JASDJ) (alias Boko Haram). Proscribed by Nigerian Government, ranked as the 2 <sup>nd</sup> most deadly terror organization in the world in 2018. It has killed over 30,000 people and displaced over 3 million persons since its inception in 2002	Anti-government, removal of western influence in Nigeria and establishment of Sharia in Africa and Nigeria.	Islamic Religion	Al-Qaeda, Islamic States in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).
2.	Islamic States in West African Countries (ISWAC), a splinter group from Boko Haram. Proscribed internationally, Nigerian Government is yet to proscribe the sect. It has carried out several deadly attacks on military formations in North East Nigeria (Borno and Yobe) especially the Metele Barrack attack that killed over 100 soldiers on Nov. 24 2018. It is also linked with the death of two UN humanitarian workers in 2018. It has also attacked various military formations in Borno State in 2019.	Establishment of Sharia government in West Africa and complete Islamization of Nigeria.	Islamic Religion	ISIS, Boko Haram, Al-Qaeda
3.	Ansaru Musimina Fi Biladis Sudan (Vanguard for the Protection of Muslims). Proscribed internationally particularly by United Kingdom, yet to be proscribed by Nigerian government. It has killed a number of foreigners including 2 British nationals and involved in several kidnapping including 8 Europeans.	Anti-government and Western exploitation	Islamic Religion	ISIS, Boko Haram
4.	Indigenous People of Biafra. Proscribed by Nigerian Government which the International Community have failed to recognize. There is no record of any casualty they have caused except casualties which occurred during their public protests orchestrated by government forces.	Igbo Secession	Freedom fighting, Ethnic Marginalization and Oppression.	Not Known
5.	Fulani herdsmen. Internationally classified as the 4 <sup>th</sup> most deadly terror group in the world. Yet to be proscribed by Nigerian Government. The group has killed over 4,000 people across the country, destroyed communities and farms, and rendered over 10, 000 Nigerians homeless.	Unhindered access to grazing routes and farm lands.	Ethnicity and Islamic Religion, Economic and Political domination	Boko Haram, ISIS
6.	Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) (alias Shittes). It has been having a running battle with government security forces leading to the killing of a Deputy Commissioner of Police and some others over the failure of government to release its leader. Proscribed by Nigeria Government but not recognized by the International Community.	Freedom of Worship, Justice and rule of law.	Islamic Religion	Not known.

**Source:** Author's Compilation

A glance at Table 3 is very significant and a clear indication of the direction in which the fight against violent extremism especially terrorism tilts. It also expresses the manner in which government is hard on clamping down individuals whose ideology it does not support and how it keeps silence on those who are killing citizens with impunity without any concrete stand. It is this

basis that the fight against terrorism has been a mere window dressing or window shopping. The two groups that are fighting for freedom and justice are those governments criminalized with the exception of Boko Haram but others who pose severe security threats and have actually committed national security breaches affecting several lives are not criminalized even when the international communities have done so. It is quite an irony and a smudge on government sincerity in combating violent extremism and the likes in Nigeria. At the heat of discriminatory attitude of government towards criminality, Afenifere the pan Yoruba social cultural organization notes that President Buhari led federal government has no respect to rule of law and pointed that it is not only dangerous to democracy but also to the survival of Nigeria as a nation (Ojo, 2018).. Violent extremism affects all classes of people irrespective of sex, ethnicity, religion or socio-political inclination; the fight must be total and comprehensive in line with rule of law without fear or favour.

### **Empowerment of violent extremist group through passive and tangent support**

It was first Governor Mallam El-Rufai of Kaduna State who paid killer herdsmen to persuade them from further attacks in Southern Kaduna. Now, it the Governor Masari of Katsina State who is having dialogue with bandits on September 7, 2019 to persuade them from further armed banditry in Katsina State. In both instances, the killer herdsmen and the armed bandits are well known to the government. If this is true, why are we having issues fighting them since they are known? Since the settlement of killer herdsmen by Mr. El-Rufai, has killing stopped in Kaduna State? Currently, Kaduna-Abuja road is under the control of kidnapers and armed bandits to the extent that government officials and very important persons are afraid to ploy the road for fear of victimization. It is also in the public domain how Boko Haram was paid handsomely for the release of Chibok and Dapchi girls including the release of arrested Boko Haram members by the police. This kind of politicking with the lives of citizens is very dangerous and a sign that government is deceitful in the fight against violent extremism. Since the release of Chibok and Dapchi girls the activities of Boko Haram cum ISWAC have intensified because government unbeknown provided the weapons they use through the ransom payment. Government actions are suspicious and deny them of the people's confidence as to their real intentions.

### **Politics of ethno-religious exclusiveness**

According to Kwaja (2009 p.109), "loyalty to ethnic or religious cleavages is being placed far above the state". This has been most visible, pronounced and consolidated in the President Muhammadu Buhari administration making of the constitution and its provisions a mockery. Since the inception of President Buhari most of the officials who hold very critical political and security posts in Nigeria are Muslim Fulani to the exclusion of all other ethno-religious groups in a multi-ethno-religious country like Nigeria. He has handed over the reins of power to his ethno-religious group without any qualms. Politics is played in everything in Nigeria. This does not only pose a serious security threat to national security, it also hampers national development. This deprives individuals the sense of belonging and commitment to the stability and peace of Nigeria. It could also provide the leverage for individuals and groups to sabotage government efforts in combating violent extremism and providing enabling environment for economic growth and sustainable development. When people are alienated, it could lead to frustration and aggression which may not be unconnected with government exclusive governance. This narrative is very attractively dangerous for our nascent democracy and unhealthy for peace and sustainable development.

### **Politics of game blame**

In the last four years of President Muhammadu Buhari, the weakness of the government to fight corruption and violent extremism have been put on the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). However, PDP noted that in the last four years President Buhari led government has abysmally failed and instead of accepting responsibility for the failure, he always look for scapegoat to blame (Ogundele, 2019). At the height of herdsmen attack across the country President Buhari and his aides

blamed foreign militias from Mali, Somalia and Libya instead of tackling the situation headstrong to protect citizens (Ogundipe, 2018; Adetayo, 2018). The herdsmen foreign militias remained elusive to government security forces as none of them was ever arrested by them. The impunity of the herdsmen has continued without any respite in view. Thus, Chinwokwu (2017) argues the acts of criminality by herdsmen have been glamorized by those who are placed in authority to defend the unity and security of all Nigerians and it depicts a complete failure of government in its onerous and constitutional responsibility. It is this kind of attitude to major social problem like violent extremism and terrorism that have helped in reducing efforts towards combating the menace in Nigeria.

### **Corruption and lack of Political will to combat violent extremism**

Campbell (2018) argues that kidnapping has become a lucrative business venture in Nigeria with politicians, police officers and entrepreneurs' participation for the sake of the monetary gain. On August 7, 2019 the Inspector General of Police Intelligence Response Team were killed by some Nigerian Army soldiers at a checkpoint along Ibi-Jalingo Road Taraba state while escorting arrested kidnapper kingpin to Abuja. Wadume confessed in his statement how some military officers helped him to escape arrest (Kola, 2019; Adepegba & Aluko, 2019). Some kidnapped victims who escaped or released by kidnappers after paying ransom money also talked about seeing Nigeria Air Force Plane dropping weapons for Kidnappers (herdsmen) hideouts in the bush at Enugu while others have also claim how the military and police collaborate with them in their operations especially providing with firearms and security cover (Lawal, 2019; Sahara Reporters, 2019). The Dasukigate (Agbugha, 2015), is still trending and the fight against corruption is just on the pages of the newspapers. Ironically, Boko Haram commanders under the detention of Directorate of State Services (DSS) have access to cell phones and cable television according to Omoyele Sowore (Herald, 2019). Omoyele Sowore is detained for treason after organizing a protest tagged "revolution now". How can a serious government who wants to end terrorism permit such attitude towards terrorists except for corruption? The political will to tackle corruption and combat terrorism and violent extremism is manifestly weak. It is extremely difficult to combat violent extremism while corruption eats deep within the institutions of government security forces.

### **Implications of Violent Extremism for Sustainable Development in Nigeria**

According to Popoola (2019), since 2015 President Muhammadu Buhari took over the leadership of Nigeria, over N1.87 Trillion has been withdrawn from Nigeria by foreign portfolio investors. More so, since his re-election in February 2019, over N163.77 Billion has been withdrawn from Nigerian Stock Exchange by foreign portfolio investors. The reason for these abysmal withdrawals may not be unconnected to uncertainties and challenges posed by violent extremism and lack of social control in the country. This has great implications for the economic growth and sustainable development in Nigeria. There is no nation anywhere in the world that can survive and develop under an atmosphere of extreme insecurity and armed banditry. According to Wale (2017) Nigeria adopted the United Nations 2030 Agenda for sustainable development as a vehicle for freeing humanity from poverty, securing a healthy planet for future generations and building a peaceful inclusive society as a foundation for ensuring a life of dignity for all. However, when we take into recognition the fact that the economic fortunes of the country are dwindling astronomically in a supersonic speed due to uncontrollable violent extremism and social discordant with increasing insecurity, poverty, unemployment, frustration, kidnapping, banditry, terrorism, bad governance, marginalization and suicide; it behooves on us to start changing the narrative of the possibility of attaining a sustainable development goals by year 2030.

The World Investment report shows that Nigeria lost about \$1.33 trillion in foreign direct investment due to insecurity in the country in 2012 while more investors (local and foreign) took their investment to neighbouring states of Ghana and Benin Republic (Oyedepo, 2012). The youth employment has gone down to 55.4% in 2019 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). This has

compounded the problems of fighting violent extremism as most of these youths find comfort and fulfillment in criminality as means of livelihood and sustenance.

Violent extremism has claimed thousands of lives and property in the last two decades. In addition, over three million people have been internally displaced and rendered homeless United Nations Human and Civil Rights (UNHCR), 2017) in a country that is not a war with any known country. Many women have become widows and children orphans with great implications on sustainable development.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Nigeria's challenge will continue to stare us on the face, unless we are ready to eschew ethnicity, misplaced religiosity and every manner of primordial sentiment for a common goal. The use of military action to combat violent extremism often times have aggravated tensions and triggered more support for violent groups more especially when it involves human rights abuse and indiscriminate stigmatization and criminalization of a group based on ethno-religious and political sentiment. The fight against violent extremism requires collective action of all and sundry that value life as sacred but government must show some firm commitment and sincerity that they really want the problem solved. The reason is that every person agrees that there is insecurity caused by violent extremism but it is not everyone that wants the problem solved. The level of corruption involving government officials, political elites and security agents put doubts in the minds of the common people and international communities of the willingness, commitment and sincerity of government in combating violent extremism and restoring peace and our country's image. Government decisive action to combating violent extremism and other insecurity problems is imperative for social control and sustainable development. Based on this backdrop, the paper suggests the following recommendations as some of the effective ways of combating violent extremism in Nigeria.

1. Combating violent extremism can be executed by diverting youth attention, energy and talent to sporting and entertainment activities. This could be done through the establishment of workable and functional sporting and entertainment facilities and organizing competitive and rewarding sport and entertainment events annually. This will create jobs that will empower the youths and keep them away from idleness and criminal activities. In so doing, the issue of unemployment could be reduced as youths are economically empowered through their massive and active participation in such events and centers.
2. Government forces must ensure security and military accoutrements (hard ware and uniforms) are secured and must not be sold openly in the market. There must be laws that proscribe the wearing of security and military uniforms by the civilian populace. Government security officials who are alleged to connive in defaulting the law must be charged and sentenced according to law without bias. This is based on the claims that many of these criminals appear in military and police uniforms to kidnap, kill and commit other violent crimes in the society.
3. It is imperative for a functional and operational synergy to be clearly formed between and among the government security forces in the country and civilian vigilante groups for a holistic intelligence gathering. There is no single agency in Nigeria that has the monopoly of combating the menace of insecurity in the country. Efforts must be made to amend the strain relationship which exists among security agents in Nigeria for our common good and protection of all and sundry in the country. This will improve the battered image of the country within the comity of nations.
4. The political will for government to call a spade a spade headstrong by tackling the criminal impunity of herdsmen militia through the criminalization of open grazing and massive destruction of farmlands and communities. This will combat their illegal killings, kidnappings, terrorism, rapes and other criminal activities they have been associated with in the last decade, just as IPoB and IMN have been contained.
5. Government sincerity in fighting terrorism and corruption must be comprehensive and holistic devoid of all shades of primordial manipulations and tricks. Governance must devoid itself of

exclusive governance to allow for openness, rule of law and inclusiveness in governance. This will reduce ethno-political and socio-economic tensions that have almost torn the country apart.

6. Government must show commitment in ending terrorism and violent extremism through the application of the instruments of law to tackle offenders without political interference and ethnic bias. Government sincerity, commitment and obedience to rule of law have are key ingredients to combating violent extremism in Nigeria. Political elites who are found to fan the embers of violent extremism through financial support, aiding and abetting, counseling and procurement of instruments of destruction must be allowed to face the full wrath of the law. Freedom and security cannot be gotten through government shielding of violent extremists and their sponsors overtly or covertly, instead it encourages impunity and further perpetuation of criminality. In this regard, negotiation or any kind of discussion with armed bandits and terrorists is against the game and security strategic framework in combating violent extremism.

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