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# **BETWEEN VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN NIGERIA: A RELATIONAL ANALYSIS**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper identifies the relationship between violent extremism and trafficking. Similarities between traffickers and violent extremists are identified to determine whether there is a connection between the Transnational Organized Crimes TOC. Data collection was taken from existing literature in books, scholarly articles in journals, policy reports and observations. A qualitative research method was adopted to ascertain whether their collaborative relationship is non-existence and whether it poses significant security threat. Findings identified the tragic relationship between violent extremism and human trafficking because the extremist's groups thrive with the activities of traffickers through recruitment and funding. Recommendations for pragmatic way in countering violent extremism and curbing human trafficking was enumerated to tackle drivers of violent extremism that will reduce the carnage of human security.*

**Keywords: Extremists, Human trafficking, Modern slavery and Violent extremism.**

### **Introduction**

Some contributing factors such as socio-economic inequalities, repression, corruption, and poor governance often create an enabling environment for radicalization and violent extremism. In Nigeria intermittent eruptions of sectarian strife, corruption, mutual distrust, and social intolerance provide the backdrop to extremist ideology (Olufemi, 2014). The virulent spread of Violent Extremism (VE) has greatly troubled the international community over the last several years (UN 2016). The activities of the violent extremists' groups undermine human rights and efforts to maintain peace, security and foster sustainable development. Violent extremism according to United State Institute for Peace is a global centuries old problem that is rooted in disparate political, nationalist, or religious ideology. The relationship between violent extremism and human trafficking has been a topic of increasing security interest recently. Violent extremism refers to advocating, engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence to further social, economic and political objectives (USAID 2010). Violent extremism often manifests itself at the individual level in highly informal, diffuse networks which are often transnational in character.

Trafficking in persons on the other hand particularly women and children for forced labour, sexual exploitation, child soldiers and suicide bombers is one of the most flagrant violation of human rights (UNODC 2015). The use of modern slavery or human trafficking in armed conflicts is evident in the case of armed groups like the Boko Haram operating in the north eastern part of Nigeria. They are forcibly recruiting children and training them to be soldiers or otherwise exploiting them. Boko Haram has forcibly recruited and used child soldiers as young as 12 years old, and abducted women and girls in the northern region of Nigeria, some of whom it later subjected to domestic servitude, other forms of forced labour, and sexual servitude through forced marriages to its militants (2015 TIP Report).

The 2015 trafficking in persons' report stated thus: "Child soldiering is a manifestation of human trafficking when it involves the unlawful recruitment or use of children through force, fraud, or coercion by armed forces as combatants or for other forms of labour (TIP, 2015) Some child soldiers are also sexually exploited by armed groups. Perpetrators may be government armed forces, paramilitary organizations, or rebel groups. Many children are forcibly abducted to be used as combatants, others are made to work as porters, cooks, guards, servants, messengers, or spies (Denov, 2010). Young girls can be forced to marry or have sex with commanders and male combatants. Both male and female child soldiers are often sexually abused and are at high risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases.

Human trafficking is seen as an insult to human dignity and an assault on freedom (Kerry, 2015). Whether we are talking about the sale of women, girls and children by extremist's groups in the Middle East and Africa, the sex trafficking of girls lured from their homes, the victims of this crime each have a name and they have all been robbed of their most basic human rights and dignity (Kerry, 2015:2). The main objective is to identify the tragic relationship between violent extremism and human trafficking as is being witnessed in our country today. This paper seeks to answer the following questions What is violent extremism? What is the pathway to violent extremism? What is human trafficking? Is there a tragic relationship between violent extremism and human trafficking? What are possible solutions to combating or prohibiting violent extremism and human trafficking?

### **Conceptual Clarification**

Extremism is an awkward way to describe conflict in a country where it takes so many shapes; political, ethnic, sectarian, separatist, religious and criminal. It is one of the global threats to international peace and security in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. Violent Extremism (VE) is rarely defined and there is no agreed definition of VE by the United Nations. There are so many operational challenges due to its ambiguity, but its flexible nature has given some missions and offices room to come up with adaptive and responsive programmes to its context. USAID (United States Agency for International Development) said that VE "refers to advocating, engaging in preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence to further social, economic and political objectives that grows and turn into violence where peaceful solutions seems impossible" (USAID). The Australian National Counter-Terrorism Committee Framework defines violent extremism as: "a

willingness to use or support the use of violence to further particular beliefs, including those of a political, social or ideological nature. This may include acts of terrorism” (Streigher, 2015), It is the belief and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve ideological, political or religious goals (Living Safe Together 2015).

Violent extremism can be prompted by emotion provoking social comparison and social exclusion. Grievances and vulnerability are transferred into hatred and hatred is transformed into justification for violence (Borum, 2011). When People perceive injustice, they are aggrieved and then looking for identification they adopt extremist beliefs that justify violence. The activities of violent extremists have negatively affected developments in Africa and Nigeria. There has been a 25percent drop in tourism in Kenya due to the activities of Al Shabbab which is a sector that provides a vital source of jobs and income for the country (UNDP 2012). Similarly, following the increasing number of attacks by Boko Haram, foreign direct investment flows into Nigeria have declined by 21 percent between 2011 and 2012 leading to a high level of unemployment (2012:3). Generally, every form of violent extremism seeks change which the extremists tend to achieve through fear and intimidation rather than peaceful means.

Living Safe Together identified different types of violence manifested by extremists. They are: (a) *Ideological Violence* – They are the hate and religious groups that advocate the use of violence due to the extreme interpretation of ideologies and belief. ISIL, Boko Haram and Al Qaeda fall under this type of violent extremism. (b) *Issue –based Violence* – They are the anti-government, anti- globalization or environmental activists that advocate the use of violence. (c) *Ethno-nationalist or separatists* – They are independence struggle groups based on race, culture or ethnicity. They advocate violence in their struggle. Groups like MEND, Niger Delta Avengers fall unto this type of violent extremism. Violent extremists and armed groups often fuel conflicts that devastates communities, this conflicts then weakens social and government structures.

The United States department of state in their TIP 2015 reports observed that modern day slavery has become a tactic that armed groups uses to intimidate populations and devastate communities through violence, fear and oppression. In doing this, they target women and children by abducting them and subjecting them to several inhuman acts like sexual abuse, child soldiers, child brides and forced marriages which also amounts to human trafficking.

Preventing violent extremism is taken a centre stage recently because proactive measures need to be taken rather than reactive measures in tackling the menace. The Geneva Conference by the United Nations on preventing violent extremism was held in April 2016 and the UN Secretary General rolled out an action plan on preventing violent extremism. The United Nations Security Council in February 2016 adopted the action plan by UN Secretary General Banki Moon aimed at preventing violent extremism that had undermined human rights and poses a challenge to peace, security, and sustainable development. He calls for a comprehensive approach and systematic preventive steps that addresses the underlying conditions that drive individuals to radicalize and join extremists’ groups. He made mention of addressing the drivers of violent extremism, set out a policy framework for international communities and priority areas to act. The former

UN secretary general, Mr Banki Moon outlined seven (7) point action plan aimed at preventing violent extremism, they are, dialogue and conflict prevention, strengthening good governance, engaging communities, empowering youths and women, gender equality, education and skill development and strategic communications.

### **Push and Pull Factors of Violent Extremism**

According to the protocol on human trafficking (2000) human trafficking is a “range of cases where human beings are exploited by organized criminal groups, particularly where there is an element of duress involved and a transnational aspect, such as the movement of people across borders”. It involves three elements of acts, means, and purpose, where act includes what is done such as recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, means is how the act is done, either by force, coercion, deception, and purpose is for what reason, sexual exploitation, slavery, forced labour, child soldier, human bomb (UNODC). Victims of trafficking are mainly females especially for sexual exploitation while men are trafficked for forced labour (UNODC, 2018).

In considering factors that leads to Violent Extremism (VE), there are certain conditions that will not be overlooked. This is because different conditions give rise to violent extremist organizations or groups as their emergence is from different social, political, and economic environment. There are basically lack of references concerning these conditions because these extremists, groups through their spokesperson normally focuses on issues of identity, existential threats, perceived exclusion, and operations. Multiple drivers often work in concert in the same setting, and their significance may change over time (USAID, 2009). Also, the issues of hate speech that threatens love and peace, perceived injustice, contradictions, and gap in religion against peace, challenges of broken society, all contributes to violent extremism.

Muhsin Hassan (2012) in his article “Understanding the Drivers of Violent extremism; the case of Al shabbab and Somali Youth”, made mention of PUSH factor and PULL factors of drivers of violent extremism. The push factors are feature of one’s societal environment, the negative social, political and cultural factors that push vulnerable individual into the extremist group such as extreme poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, political or political or economic marginalization or social exclusion (Hassan, 2012). The pull factors are those characteristics or benefits being promised by the extremist group. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) enumerated the following Push and Pull factors as Drivers of Violent Extremism. (a) High levels of social marginalization and fragmentation

This push factor increases the urge to identify with violent extremist groups. Social isolation and disconnectedness from society, community, and family may trigger a personal search for identity, meaning, and purpose. When the individual did not find an alternative, membership in a cell or extremist network may help to fulfil those needs. (b) Poorly governed or ungoverned areas: Porous borders may enable violent extremists to establish sanctuaries or safe havens. Poorly governed areas may create passive or active support for such groups by communities who feel marginalized or neglected by a lack of government reach (USAID). Government absence in a community can create

opportunities for service provision by extremist groups. Second, a lack of security or rule of law can allow violent extremists to operate and possibly impose their own order and may propel individuals to join armed groups as the perceived strongest actor. This is the case in North eastern part of the country where the extremist group occupied some town and villages providing the communities with some basic needs. Recently the Boko Haram extremist sect that is ravaging the north eastern part of the country recently devised a means of recruiting members through the offer of loan disbursement to young entrepreneurs as a way of gaining their support (Channels news, 29th April 2016).

More still we have (c) Government repression and human rights violation: When lawlessness and intimidation take a centre stage in some area through Cruel, degrading treatment by police or security forces, it can be significant a risk factor. Such individual can desire for revenge. Exposure to harsh and indiscriminate government repression not only may push individuals into VE organizations (USAID). The greater the push, the more desire to embrace violent extremism. (d) Endemic corruption: The more corrupt the environment, the easier it is for violent extremists to establish themselves as a righteous alternative and lash out at "immoral" ruling elites. Corruption creates widespread anger and a profound sense of moral outrage and injustice. Endemic corruption can also provide such groups the enabling environment in which to establish geographic footholds and connections with organized crime. In Nigeria, President Mohammadu Buhari said that corruption in arms purchase stalled and extended the fight against the Boko Haram insurgent group. (e) Radicalization: Radicalization is seen as a social process and individuals looking for an identity can easily be pushed into violent groups or movement. Extremist ideologies can be exploited using religion and ethnicity because the duo has been recognized as a powerful expression of individual and group identity. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police defines radicalization as "the process by which individuals usually young people are introduced to an overtly ideological message and belief system that encourages movement from moderate, mainstream beliefs towards extreme views. The National Counter Terrorism Center NCTC posits that the grievances that fuel radicalization are diverse and vary across locations and groups. Radicalization frequently is driven by personal concerns at the local level in addition to frustration with international events.

There is a little evidence that high education as well as lack of education contributes to violent extremism. The highly educated without job can be easily radicalized through motivation and support by the extremist groups likewise those that were not educated. The Boko haram group was gaining followership at the north eastern part of Nigeria through this kind of support and motivation. In conflict situation involving extremist groups, socio-economic discrimination and marginalization enable the groups to recruit support in large numbers.

### **Issues in the Human Trafficking Process in Nigeria**

Trafficking simply means an illegal movement of humans, weapons, drugs and contra bound goods. Human trafficking on its own is often described as the process of recruitment and transportation of people through deception, coercion, abduction, fraud or force for the purpose of exploitation which include forced labour, prostitution, trading on human

organs or other involuntary activities (UNODC, 2015). Because prostitution or domestic servitude are the most common uses for trafficked persons, the victims of human trafficking are often assumed to be mainly women and children. The victims can be men, women, children, or anyone who is transported against his or her will (Howard, Traugher 2013)

Human trafficking has been identified as an effective tool that violent extremists use as it facilitates recruitment and retention of fighters and provides a reward mechanism for successful combatant (Binetti 2012). It represents the third largest source of profits for organised crimes after drugs and weapons generating billions of dollars each year. Trafficking has become a highly organized transnational crime with serious criminal, moral and social implication that recognizes neither boundaries nor borders. Trafficking in persons has grown recently in Africa especially the Sahel region because they have a lot of factors made them susceptible to organized crimes. There is a potential collaboration between traffickers and Violent extremist organizations because the extremists provide safe passage through the vast Sahel desert using arms to provide succour and protection for illicit human traffickers in exchange of first value of the trafficked good. (Kigbu and Danna 2015).

### **The Interconnectivity between Violent Extremism and Human Trafficking**

There is no verifiable evidence concerning the interconnectivity between violent extremism and human trafficking but some school of thought believes that there is a grim reality that entity that operates clandestinely is eventually bound to encounter and interact in some way with criminal networks that operates in the shadows. Globally, the interconnectivity of criminal organizations is troubling as it provides them with new networks and violent extremists with new funding sources (Howard 2013). It is a complex phenomenon which requires investing in collaborative, transdisciplinary social science, and field base methodologies in tackling (Ranstorp, 2006). The Violent extremist group and traffickers share some connections to achieve their organizational goal and objectives. They both engage in illicit activity and use violence and fear in pursuit of their objectives. Human traffickers and extremists' benefit from disruptions in an increasingly globalized world characterized by enclaves that provide space for illicit activities (Raimo 2003)

The traffickers and the extremist group thrive or flourish in an ungoverned territory, failing states and denied areas where government presence and controls are weak, an environment that lacks adequate enforcement of trafficking laws, corrupt officials, porous /unmanned borders difficult to control. Human trafficking is pervasive, and there is hardly a location in the world that is not affected, whether as an origin, transit, or destination country (UNODC 2003) As a result, the opportunity for linkages and alliances between human trafficking and terrorist groups is great and widespread. The two organizations explore the same tactics during their operation. They engage in hostage taken to enable them generate funds. Typical example is the Al Qaeda in Islamic Magreb (AQIM) that has sustained their operations since 2003 through hostage taken business. They kidnap for ransom to generate millions of dollars (Howard et al 2013).

Extremists groups like the Boko Haram in Nigeria, Al Qaeda use human trafficking network to move their foot soldiers to different cells across countries. Human traffickers and extremist groups can diversify their activities to evade law enforcements. They both use modern technology for communication, recruitment, and training. Their transnational or global network can regenerate themselves. Their networks can deal with three countries at a time from country of origin through transit country and then to the destination country. Finally, the terrorist organization has recruited members from the ranks of those trafficked (James 2010). Their tragic relationship includes: Abduction and hostage taking, Sexual Abuse, beheading and killing, The use of IEDs, Drug trafficking Weapon transfer (Small Arms and Light Weapons)

### **Issues and the Way Forward in Violent Extremism and Human Trafficking**

In seeking ways to address or counter violent extremism, focus should centre on reflective action that tends to address grievances and motivations. Countering violent extremism successfully requires a balanced approach between security-related strategies and initiatives and those that address the underlying motivations and causes for participation in, and support of a violent extremist organization (VEO). Countering violent extremism involves understanding and countering the ideas that leverage emotions, narratives, and ideologies that impel violence. Some research has shown that applying force by killing, imprisonment or otherwise is not effective in countering violent extremism as the numbers of new recruits will dwarf the numbers removed, and civilian casualties from security/military operations have similar effects on recruitment and radicalization (Condra, Felter, Iyengar, & Shapiro, 2010). It is better to eliminate or minimize those factors that lead individuals to join violent extremist organizations or to support violent extremism.

De-radicalization and de-legitimization will be an effective tool in exploring vulnerabilities and inconsistencies. Economic development strategy is also the key. This is needed to eradicate poverty, promote inclusion and social justice, and bring the marginalized into economic and global mainstream. We need determination and sincerity as companion. Love and tolerance should be embraced for violent extremism to be eliminated. We must love and tolerate each other's belief, ethnic and religious background. The religious messengers must not send hate messages as it sends wrong signals to the masses. Good governance must be embraced to avoid perceived exclusion and marginalization. Education and human right propagation

The United Nations convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC) is a major step towards fighting transnational organized crime because the convention prevents, suppress, and punishes traffickers of women and children. Efforts to combat human trafficking around the world have advanced steadily over the past 15 years, since the adoption of the Palermo Protocol and the passage of the TVPA in 2000. Scores of countries have expanded implementation of the "3P" paradigm enshrined in these instruments, as governments investigate and prosecute trafficking cases, provide protection and services to victims, and put improved measures in place to prevent the crime from happening in the first place (TIP 2015).

## Conclusion

The findings from this paper show that human trafficking is being incorporated into the operations of extremists' groups. Violent extremists' groups have turned to organized crime activities as an alternative for their source of funding. Due to global challenge posed by human trafficking and seen that human trafficking is a fundamental human rights violation the designed legislation purposely geared toward its eradication as enacted by the Palermo Convention. The UN Transnational Organized Convention UNTOC adopted a resolution 55/25 of November 2000 as an instrument to fight transnational organized crime. The measures to be adopted in fighting human trafficking should involve (a) Reducing the vulnerability of potential victims through social and economic development (b) Discouraging the demand for the services of trafficked persons (c) Public education (d) Border control (e) Preventing the corruption of public officials (f) Technical cooperation among law enforcement agencies is essential for investigating and prosecuting human traffickers. (g) Due to the complex nature of human trafficking, a multifaceted approach must be utilized to stop this criminal industry. One of the most important approaches is increasing information sharing and collaboration between law enforcement agencies.

Having seen how violent extremists group flourish through human trafficking in funding, training and recruiting their foot soldiers, patience is required to cultivate the right partners, support the building of institutional capacity and development of leaders, fund appropriate developmental programs to address local grievances, support and amplify existing programs that support moderate discourse or develop new programs to de-radicalize or disengage individuals from beliefs or attitudes.

Initiatives like building the capacities of financial, criminal justice, and rule of law institutions; developing media products and messages to challenge extremist narratives and counter their ideologies; training police and frontline officials about Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) is required in trying to combat the pull and push factors of violent extremism.

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