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De-radicalising the women of Boko-Haram

Timothy LYON

Graduate student at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala Universitet
timothy.lyon.6681@student.uu.se

Abstract
State military methods as part of counterterrorism have repeatedly shown that they are inherently flawed and continue to incite further violent extremism. Terrorist organisations are created and flourish in areas and communities that are severely socio-economically deprived and alienated from a state government. Global actors must look at reasons behind radicalisation in communities and establish general frameworks for de-radicalisation as part of peaceful counterterrorism. To improve contemporary counterterrorism, it is crucial to investigate what roles gender play in radicalisation and de-radicalisation since contemporary terrorist organisations employ men and women to carry out acts of extreme violence. Boko Haram is emblematic to contemporary terrorism and the organisation's methods and successes suggest how contemporary counterterrorism should look like to create successful frameworks of de-radicalisation.

Keywords
Counterterrorism; de-radicalisation; gender

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1. Introduction

The case of Boko Haram in Nigeria is emblematic of contemporary problems with terrorism. Nigeria's struggle with the armed group suggests how contemporary global actors and scholarship on counterterrorism should adapt to consider de-radicalisation as valid methods of counterterrorism (Bryson and Bukarti, 2019: 3). Furthermore, Nigerian governmental military counterterrorism responses to terrorist organisations continue to fail. This proves that the use of violence does not work to stop the problem of spread and support of violent and extreme ideologies on a local and global level. Therefore, alternative measures are needed. Alex P. Schmid (2016: 27), a leading scholar on counterterrorism, argues that the problem of terrorism and counterterrorism in academia needs modern revision. Schmid explains that one way of advancing contemporary scholarly work on counterterrorism is to focus on de-radicalisation programmes as part of countering local extreme radicalism. He (2016: 30) states that "This should have one of the highest priorities. Such programs have mushroomed in recent years. Yet without systematic, rigorous, and comparative evaluations of de-radicalisation programs, no real progress towards more promising practices can be made".

Contemporary extreme violent terrorist organisations such as Boko Haram have proven to be deviant from former islamist terrorist groups leading up to the 2000s in the sense of utilising women for carrying out extreme violent acts (Khelghat-Doost, 2019: 853). Furthermore, UNODC (2017: 109) states that "the specific needs of women and girls deserve special consideration; unfortunately, those needs are often neglected." when developing de-radicalisation programmes, which is also the case in Nigeria. This suggests that the focus on women in Nigerian de-radicalisation programmes must be evaluated and discussed to further contemporary academic scholarship on counterterrorism, highlighting a gap in the literature. It is hence crucial to explore the roles and stereotypes attached to women in north-eastern Nigeria where Boko Haram has its stronghold. There is also a need to compare these findings to how Nigerian de-radicalisation programmes view former female members of Boko Haram. Therefore, the dependent variable in this article makes reference to how former female members of Boko Haram are treated in Nigerian de-radicalisation programmes. The independent variable is norms and social roles are attached to women in north-eastern Nigeria (Van Evera, 1997: 28-29). The research question that this paper seeks to answer is *to what extent norms and stereotypes attached to women in north-eastern Nigeria affect the approach of Nigerian de-radicalisation programmes towards former female members of Boko Haram.*

This article seeks to evaluate how aspects of gender affects and can improve de-radicalisation to further counterterrorism. This will be done by comparing the gendered focus of Nigerian de-radicalisation programmes: Operation Safe Corridor (OSC), the Kuje Prison Project, and The Yellow Ribbon Initiative by the Neem Foundation. Firstly, the literature review discusses theories surrounding radicalisation and de-radicalisation, and what role women have in the processes. The methods chapter highlights my reasons for using semi-structured interviews, and the ethical considerations that were considered for this paper. Furthermore, this chapter establishes the paper' reasons for investigating Nigerian de-radicalisation programmes. The findings of this paper are divided into three chapters. The fourth chapter focuses on explaining the patriarchal structures of Nigeria, and its connections to how Boko Haram successfully recruits women to carry out violent extremism. The fifth chapter introduces Nigerian de-radicalisation programmes and explains the focus and methods of the programmes to de-radicalise members of Boko Haram. The final chapter of the findings focuses on comparing the programmes to already existing literature on radicalisation and de-radicalisation to establish how successful these are at de-radicalising former female members of Boko Haram. Finally, the conclusion draws on the article's discussions to offer advice to improve contemporary scholarship and policies on the problem of counterterrorism.

2. Literature Review

To understand the processes of de-radicalisation and the theories that surround them, it is important to explore the reasons why de-radicalisation is central when discussing methods to counter violent extremism. The United Nations General Assembly (2015: 1) describes violent extremism as "a diverse phenomenon, without clear definition. It is neither new nor exclusive to any region, nationality or system of belief". Schmid (2016: 26) argues that research on violent extremism is a relatively new phenomenon mainly developed by national governments because of early 21st century extreme terrorist acts such as the attacks on the World Trade Center. He (2016: 27) continues by stating that radicalisation lacks a generally agreed definition among international actors and scholars. International actors such as the European Union offer definitions that are too broad and are hence not feasible to base research on, resulting in the impossibility of cumulative research. Other than Schmidt, scholars from different academic backgrounds have sought to define violent extremism and radicalisation,

focusing mainly on politics, religion, and ideology (Midlarsky, 2011: 7; Bötticher and Mares, 2012: 54-58; Bale, 2009: 85).

The lack of a generally agreed upon definition regarding violent extremism and radicalisation has led to several different ways of handling de-radicalisation. Contemporary terrorist organisations such as Boko Haram "have shaped our image of violent extremism and the debate on how to address this threat." (United Nations General Assembly, 2015: 1). De-radicalisation methods are hence a response to counter contemporary violent extremism. Horgan and Braddock (2010: 280) describe de-radicalisation as a series of processes concerning the psychological and social aspects of an individual which leads to the reduction of the individual's involvement in, and support of a violent extremist group. Their view on de-radicalisation suggests that a holistic approach involving the family and community in which the extremist individual will reintegrate back to, is crucial in the process of de-radicalisation. Not involving the surrounding community could lead to persistent prejudice towards the de-radicalised individual, resulting in individual recidivism. Therefore, Horgan and Braddock (2010) argue that a holistic approach is the only way of successful de-radicalisation. However, while such an approach may be the ideal way of handling de-radicalisation, it would be less resource and time efficient than focusing on individual change, offering an explanation to the current state of de-radicalisation programmes.

2.1. Theories of Radicalisation

Malthaner and Waldmann (2014: 980) state that home-grown terrorism has been the main target of radicalisation and violent extremism research with the focus being on why individuals become radicalised. There is a substantial lack in scholarly work regarding the connections between a radical environment that enables individuals to radicalise, something that Malthaner and Waldmann (2014) define as a "Radical Milieu". The phenomenon of a Radical Milieu can be seen all over the world where terrorist organisations exist. It is the creation of a social environment that develops a moral support for a radical organisation because of feeling alienated or oppressed by a government. Waldmann (2008: 25-27) states that the field of research concerning the connections between social environments and terrorist groups has not been given enough attention as the focus has been solely on individual radicalisation. Furthermore, a Radical Milieu can shape how individuals radicalise in different ways. It works as a gateway for people's different personal reasons towards radicalisation (Waldmann, 2008). While the idea of enabling environments deserves more attention in

counterterrorism, one must also consider Horgan's holistic approach since cases where individuals become radicalised because of personal vulnerability exist.

Malthaner and Waldmann (2014: 984-985) continue by explaining the origins of a Radical Milieu, stating that escalating and continuing confrontations between state forces such as police or military and civil protest movements may result in social environments that allow radical movements to organise and flourish. Marc Sageman (2014: 6) offers an explanation to why research on environmental causes has been left out of scholarly work. This being the lack of primary sources offered by states regarding their struggle with homegrown terrorist organisations. For security reasons, state governments choose to withhold information that would be useful for scholars to investigate radicalisation and terrorist phenomena such as the creation of Radical Milieus. Sageman (2014) argues that the withholding of data and statistics eventually leads to a stagnation within academic research regarding terrorism. However, Schmid (2016: 27) disagrees with Sageman and states it is not governments that created a stagnation within the scholarly field of counterterrorism, but rather that the focus of academic research is at fault. While government withholding of data is negative to academia, Schmid is correct in disagreeing with Sageman since one could apply a bottom-up strategy and research individual communities without relying on state information to conduct research on radicalisation and terrorism.

Even though several internationally renowned counterterrorism scholars agree that a holistic view of researching an enabling environment or a Radical Milieu must be at the centre of radicalisation research, the focus has remained on the vulnerable individual being drawn to and manipulated into radicalisation by terrorist groups (Schmid, 2016: 26-27). Stephens, Sieckelinck, and Boutellier (2019: 3-4) argue that the main theme within the literature on countering violent extremism is to create resilient individuals. This is done in three ways: the first one being to develop cognitive resources in individuals, the second being to foster positive character traits, and the third one being to promote and strengthen democratic values. A second theme highlighted in their work is building resilient communities to counter violent extremism (Stephens, Sieckelinck and Boutellier, 2019).

Savage and Liht (2013: 47) argue that the purpose of developing cognitive resources is to steer individuals away from black and white thinking concerning politics and ideologies towards understanding and accepting pluralism in a society. Davies (2009) goes further and argues that individuals should be taught to engage with critical thinking in the society they live

in, creating an active participation in society through their citizenship. The idea of developing character traits such as empathy in individuals is based on the idea that positive psychological traits remain stronger than factors that pull people towards terrorist organisations. The idea of promoting and strengthening democratic values, it is suggested, happens through education on human rights (Feddes, Mann, and Doosje, 2015: 6). Miller (2013: 188) suggests that human rights education would have the effect of establishing a shared base of values that would deter individuals from being radicalised. While these arguments are crucial to counter radicalism, solely focusing on individual traits will not be effective if a holistic approach is not involved to counter enabling environments. If a community is not engaged, then de-radicalised individuals return to communities with the same economic and social issues that originally paved the way for radicalisation.

The idea of a resilient community is based on individuals being protected by the environment they live in against radicalisation. Stephens, Sieckelinck, and Boutellier (2019: 7) explain that "community resilience and engagement" are the main themes within the literature regarding radicalisation. Community engagement is the idea that the relationship between a population and the state needs to be strengthened to hinder radicalisation. Cherney and Hartley state that ensuring a community's lasting connection and communication with the police is a way of securing this. Briggs concurs by explaining that communities play an active present role that a national government fails to do for local individuals. The state is too distanced from individuals and a strong community is seen as more important and legitimate for the local population. The idea of a resilient community is independent of state involvement. Briggs explains that the idea is based on a community being strong enough to deal with, and prevent radicalisation on its own, without relying on state involvement. Ellis and Abdi explain that the crucial parts of maintaining a resilient community incorporate social relationships within a community, strong bonds to nearby communities, and between a community and its local governmental institutions. The theory of a resilient community supports Schmid's argument that academic scholarship regarding counterterrorism is possible from a bottom-up approach, something that this paper supports (Cherney and Hartley, 2015: 750; Briggs, 2010: 971-972; Ellis and Abdi, 2017: 290; Schmid, 2016: 27).

2.2. Theories of De-radicalisation

Luke Bertram explains that de-radicalisation lacks an underlying framework since applying de-radicalisation methods becomes difficult when there is no general definition of

radicalisation. This results in different methods to prevent it, which creates different understandings regarding how to counter violent extremism. Furthermore, it is crucial to discuss radicalisation to understand de-radicalisation. The ideas promoted by mentioned scholars regarding the issues surrounding the focus on the radicalisation of an individual is further problematized by what constitutes a de-radicalised individual. These are the crucial differences between disengagement and de-radicalisation. Ashour describes ideological de-radicalisation as a successful change of a radical individual's deeply rooted beliefs. Furthermore, that behavioural de-radicalisation is when a radical individual denounces violence. Radical ideology is hence changed through de-radicalisation and violent extreme behaviour is changed through disengagement (Bertram, 2015: 121-122; Ashour, 2007). However, it is almost impossible to determine if an individual is ideologically de-radicalised from an outside perspective, making disengagement important.

Horgan explains that disengagement is the process intended to make a radical individual stop committing extreme violence. De-radicalisation, on the other hand, indicates a complete change in the individual's ideological beliefs which results in the individual distancing itself from groups that apply and promote extreme violence. Furthermore, Horgan argues that the focus should be on de-radicalisation since making a radical individual reject the use of violence does not mean that the individual rejects its radical ideology. The disengaged individual might still propagate a radical ideology. Streigher, on the other hand, suggests that the focus of de-radicalisation of an individual should be that of disengagement. It is easier to make an individual denounce extreme violence than it is to change their ideology, and that this is the first step towards de-radicalisation. However, Islam agrees with Horgan, and states that the approach offered by Striegher is inadequate. Disengagement plays a central part of de-radicalisation but disregarding a holistic process increases the risk of recidivism towards violent extremism. Contrarily to individual approaches, Schmid argues that de-radicalisation processes should focus on collective de-radicalisation in settings such as prisons (Horgan, 2009: 152; Horgan, 2008; Striegher, 2013: 20; Islam, 2019: 7; Schmid, 2016: 31).

While Striegher's idea that disengagement is important to stop radical violence, Horgan's, and Islam's views that disengagement is inadequate remain crucial since a disengaged person could ideologically radicalise others, who may not share their rejection of extreme violence. While being less time and resource efficient to focus on ideologically de-radicalising individuals, this would lead to less risk of spreading violent extremism in communities (Horgan, 2009: 152; Striegher, 2013: 20; Islam, 2019: 7). While Schmid is correct

regarding the idea that a collective focus may make de-radicalisation more efficient, solely focusing on prisons for collective de-radicalisation is problematic. Former members of a radical group may not be sentenced to prison since they can choose to step away from a group. One cannot treat captured radicals the same way as the ones who stepped out of a violent extreme organisation since they will be at different levels in the process of de-radicalisation.

2.3. Women and De-radicalisation

It is crucial to understand that women are the vanguard for all aspects of contemporary violent extremism. Women are used by terrorist organisations to carry out attacks and contrarily, women's practitioner involvement in de-radicalisation is crucial to the success of different de-radicalisation programmes (D'Estaing, 2017: 103). Cornwall, Harrison, and Whitehead (2007) state that the research regarding women's involvement in Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) is to this day based on myths and stereotypes concerning gender. Female radicalisation in Nigeria was covered in a 2015 article published by *Foreign Policy Magazine* regarding prejudice and myths surrounding female involvement in radical groups, proving that Cornwall's, Harrison's, and Whitehead's (2007) argument remains relevant (Koppell, 2015). Brown (2013: 51) argues that women's roles in rehabilitation and reintegration work is reduced to the woman being considered having a small influence on people, no matter her previous expertise and experience. An example of this is the case of women in counterterrorism groups in Libya in 2015. While the role of women became subject to increased danger in Libya, their efforts were considered less important during de-radicalisation (UN Women, 2015: 224).

Women have recently become a central focus of PVE and CVE, but not because of their expertise. Gender myths remain prevalent since mothers and wives are judged based on if someone in their proximity is a violent extremist. D'Estaing (2017: 108) highlights a report by the Quilliam Foundation regarding widespread patriarchal arguments in places such as Nigeria that "good mothers do not produce radicals". D'Estaing (2017.) argues how this process is dangerous and unfair for women since it puts them at risk of experiencing prejudice and violence from their community. The focus on women's role must be redirected since women are powerful mediators in families that are distant from the government level. These women represent stability with the power to influence not only individuals but a community towards PVE and CVE measures. Furthermore, women's active participation in rehabilitation processes have been empirically proven to improve the rate of de-radicalisation. Another aspect of PVE

and CVE that needs consideration is that women are more frequently being utilized by terrorist organisations to carry out suicide bombings, spying, and recruiting (Ní Aoláin, 2015; Bloom and Matfess, 2016: 106).

To summarise, the gap in literature is presented by a combination of issues. Women require specific attention in de-radicalisation programmes but are left out of de-radicalisation processes in Nigeria. This accompanied by Schmid's (2016: 30) argument concerning how to improve counterterrorism studies suggests a gap in the literature. Contemporary terrorist organisations such as Boko Haram understand the social, cultural, and economic neglect of women in fundamentally patriarchal states such as Nigeria which means that the use of women to carry out extreme violence goes unchallenged by the Nigerian Government (Khelghat-Doost, 2019: 859). It is therefore crucial to explore the norms and roles attached to women in north-eastern Nigeria, where Boko Haram has its stronghold. Furthermore, to explore how these norms affect the focus on women in Nigerian de-radicalisation programmes to evaluate how effective the programmes are, as well as discover what improvements can be made. Finally, to explore what a global audience can learn from these programmes.

3. Methodology

3.1. Interviews and Limitations

The approach of this paper was qualitative and used semi-structured interviews since this method allowed me to conduct reliable interviews that followed an interview guide with open-ended questions, which enabled me to follow up with probing questions that ensured clarity and depth. Therefore, the method was both an in-depth probing research method and it provided empirical evidence since the interviews were cross-examined with each other and triangulated with already existing scholarly work and data regarding my research topic. Cross-referencing the results of my interviews ensured the validity of my research. The act of observing and triangulating my interview data allowed me to answer my hypothesis (Adams, 2015: 496; Lamont, 2015: 79-84; Goubil-Gambrell, 1992: 589).

It is important to point out that during this paper, Covid-19 prohibited me from travelling and doing field work. Therefore, I chose to conduct online semi-structured interviews. While probing questions in semi-structured interviews allowed for depth, they also posed the risk of manipulated or biassed answers given that interviewees may be put on the

spot or feel pressured to reply according to what is socially desirable. However, these issues were taken into consideration during the research process. Furthermore, the interviewees were experts on the topic and had nothing personal to gain from giving biassed responses. This paper utilised a small snowball sample size, which introduced issues of bias as well as made the results of the interviews relatively hard to replicate. Therefore, I had to be careful to not draw general assumptions from the interviews. Online interviews allowed me to overcome issues surrounding Covid-19 and the impossibility of conducting face-to-face interviews. However, this methodology did not provide as much information as a face-to-face interview would as it was difficult to pinpoint where interviewees put emphasis on topics or to read their body language and facial expressions (Harris and Brown, 2010: 2; Fontana and Frey, 2000; Bryman, 2008; Gunter et al., 2002: 236).

It was not feasible to transcribe every interview to its fullest given time constraints. However, full recordings of all interviews were filed in accordance with my alma mater, University of Aberdeen's ethical guidelines and said recordings can be provided if needed as proof of interview conduct. Albeit few, there were ethical issues that were considered during my work. I therefore adhered to the UoA ethical guidelines which assured good research ethics. Themes that were considered and evaluated for this paper are privacy, confidentiality, informed consent, and potential harm to the interviewee. Informed consent was secured before each interview and said consent was retractable at any time during the research process. Anonymity of participants was protected with passwords on my laptop and mobile phone. Furthermore, I kept in mind that participants could refuse to answer questions if the question made them uncomfortable or would prove harmful to them (Allmark et al., 2009: 49-50). As consent was given by the participants for the purpose of a dissertation, their identities will for the purpose of this publication be anonymous and referred to as 'Interviewee 1', 'Interviewee 2', and 'Interviewee 3'.

3.2. Selection of Case

Boko Haram's effects on global counterterrorism agendas and the general understanding of radicalisation towards Boko Haram presented why de-radicalisation programmes in Nigeria needed to be scrutinized. This paper hence implemented and adhered to the radicalisation, and de-radicalisation theories: vulnerable individual and Radical Milieu, and disengagement and de-radicalisation of ideology. Furthermore, the paper applied these to the Nigerian de-radicalisation programmes: The Prison Programme in Kuje Prison, The Yellow

Ribbon Initiative by the Neem Foundation, and Operation Safe Corridor. The purpose was hence to apply existing theories to Nigerian de-radicalisation programmes as a comparative analysis to determine if the approaches of the programmes are accurate. A comparative analysis allowed me to use widely renowned scholarly counterterrorism debates and theories and applied them to the case of Nigeria to provide groundwork on how de-radicalisation should be successfully executed (Halperin and Heath, 2017: 214).

4. Women and Boko Haram

4.1. Nigeria's Patriarchy as an Enabling Factor for Female Radicalisation

Nigeria is a large country that is home to numerous ethnicities and religions. Nigeria is deeply polarised, and its several states seldom face the same issues as each other. The conflict with Boko Haram is widely considered to be a northern problem, distant from the southern states. However, something that crosses state borders in Nigeria is the structure of a deeply rooted patriarchy (Anyadike, 2017; Madunago, 2008: 668). Interviewee 3 is a Programme Manager for Social Cohesion, Stabilisation, and Reintegration at a Nigerian organisation. In a phone interview for this paper, they stated that especially northern Nigeria experiences a "significant" patriarchy and that "Females are subjugated, and their voices are not heard in their community. They don't have a sense of belonging and are not allowed to offer input in society" (Interviewee 3, 20 November 2020). Although the situation is improving for Nigerian women, the Nigerian woman is seen as being reliant on her husband. The role of women is to take care of children and domestic duties. In general, women experience severe setbacks when pursuing 'male occupations' such as education. Furthermore, these roles can be traced back and explained by the way that governmental institutions are shaped (Wole-Abu, 2018).

Nigeria's patriarchal structures and social norms that are attached to women have proven to have a spill over effect onto the Boko Haram insurgency. The culture in north-eastern Nigeria is heavily connected to conservative Islam. Police forces and the military, that consist of mainly males, are reluctant to carry out physical searches of females. Groups like Boko Haram exploit religious culture and the military's refusal to physical searches of women (Khelghat-Doost, 2019: 859). 'Interviewee 1' is an expert on the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. In an interview for this paper, they stated that "between 2015- 2017 there was a high level of Boko Haram suicide bombings where women carried out the bombings" (Interviewee

1, 28 October 2020). Women are not seen as threats and Boko Haram exploits this for an element of surprise that results in several casualties. Interviewee 1 (2020) states that Boko Haram's reason for using female suicide bombers is that "Women wear the traditional Muslim dress (Burqa). It was hence easier for women to conceal weapons and IEDs (Improvised Explosive Devices)". Because of military and police reluctance to physically search women, female suicide bombers are an effective strategy for Boko Haram. (D'Estaing, 2017: 108).
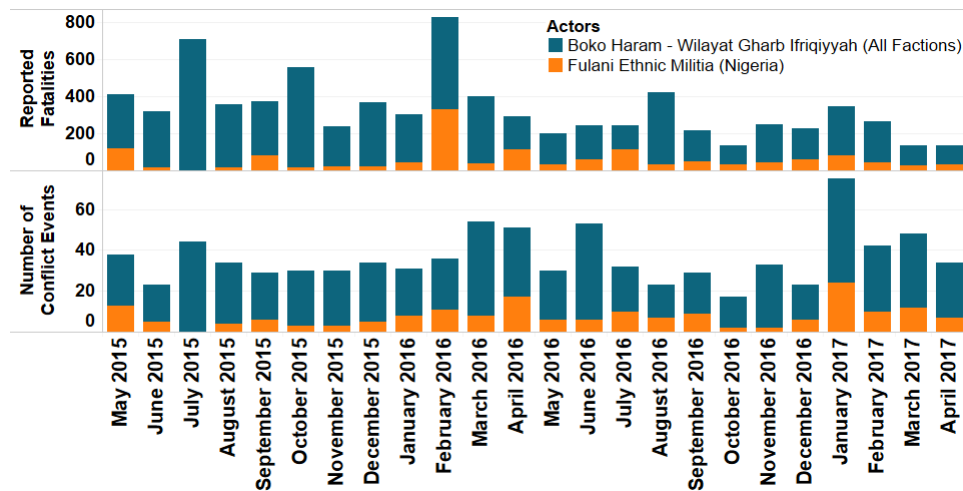

Figure 1: Boko Haram and Fulani Ethnic Militia Activity, Nigeria, May 2015-April 2017 (ACLED Data, 2017).

The period that is being highlighted in Figure 1 from ACLED Data represents the time where women were widely used to carry out suicide bombings as part of one of Boko Haram's main ways of carrying out terrorism. Therefore, the majority of the 'Number of Conflict Events' and 'Reported Fatalities' caused by Boko Haram in the graph are the results of female suicide bombers. The graph shows the efficiency of female suicide bombers, which resulted in hundreds of attacks, and thousands of casualties (ACLED Data, 2017). Interviewee 2 is an African Security Expert. In an interview for this paper, Interviewee 2 (17 November 2020) stated that "Suicide bombings are nowadays a low-level threat to the Nigerian Government if compared to other Boko Haram attacks.". Furthermore, that "Boko Haram use women and men to carry out the same roles, foot soldiers, suicide bombers, and to spy." (Interviewee 2). Bloom and Matfess (2016: 109) therefore argue that Boko Haram uses women for suicide bombings, but also for tasks such as spying since it offers the same advantage. Women are not considered perpetrators and can gain access to public places because of the police and military neglect of the female threat (Bloom and Matfess, 2016).

4.2. Women's Radicalisation to Boko Haram

As supported by Khelgat-Doost, and Bloom and Matfess, Interviewee 1 (2020) states that "Boko Haram understood the way women in Nigeria were perceived by communities and the Government and decided to use that to recruit and utilize the position of women.". The reasons why people join Boko Haram in north-east Nigeria are manyfold and can be mainly accredited to the idea of enabling environments, but the idea of vulnerable individuals is present. Furthermore, Interviewee 1 (2020) states that "Boko Haram spreads across eastern Nigerian states. Hence, people that join from state A may be because of personal reasons and people that join from state B may be because of environmental reasons, and people from state C may be because they were forced or kidnapped.". This is further supported by the fact that Boko Haram consists of people from all backgrounds, whether they are wealthy, poor, elderly, young, employed, unemployed, educated, or uneducated (Babatunde, 2018: 382). This confirms that individual vulnerability and an enabling environment both play a part in why people join Boko Haram, and it proves that Interviewee 1's argument is valid.

Boko Haram's strongest foothold in Nigeria is in the north-eastern states such as Borno. It is crucial to understand the contemporary socio-economic situation of these states to understand radicalisation in the area. In 2017, north-eastern states in Nigeria experienced up to 80% poverty rates while poverty rates in southern states remained below 30% (Lawal et al., 2017: 81). Interviewee 2 (2020) states that people become radicalised because of "A variety of factors such as deteriorating social-economic factors, especially in the north-east in Borno state.". Interviewee 3 (2020) highlights that "there are few opportunities for livelihood" in the north-east, and that there is a "lack of investment in local, border and far to reach communities", which leads to poverty. Furthermore, Boko Haram exploits the economic insecurity of communities and that "many of the members have not been able to provide for their families" (Interviewee 3, 2020) Hence, as opportunities to have a sustainable income are scarce in states like Borno, people in local communities turn to Boko Haram for a livelihood.

The extremist religious ideology that Boko Haram preaches has proved to be a central reason why both educated and uneducated people join. A report by Kaffenberger and Pritchett (2017: 3) states that the literacy rate in states like Borno is only around 19% of people who finished primary school. Furthermore, a 2013 study by Bold et al. (2017: 8-9) demonstrates that Nigerian teachers are severely undereducated, and around 30% of teachers are absent from their teaching jobs, resulting in "orphaned" classrooms. Interviewee 3 (2020) argues that this

results in students "lacking education and critical thinking, to question ideologies". Low-ranking foot soldiers in Boko Haram do not necessarily understand or care for the group's ideology but are interested in the socio-economic opportunities the organisation offers. The translation of "Boko Haram" is "Western education is forbidden" in a northern Nigerian Hausa dialect. Contrarily to uneducated people that lack the understanding of Boko Haram's ideology, educated religious members denounced their 'Western' higher education and joined Boko Haram when commanded by the group's preachers. These educated people often play important roles for Boko Haram as preachers or generals (Eveslage, 2013: 47; Babatunde, 2018: 385).

Women are not offered education to the same extent as men in north-eastern Nigeria. Interviewee 1 (2020) adds that "Women may simply become members of Boko Haram because their husbands or boyfriends are members of Boko Haram.". This results in women's entry points into Boko Haram being affected by the socio-economic situations of males in their proximity (International Crisis Group, 2016: 9). Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani is a journalist and author that investigated the kidnappings of the Chibok Girls. Nwaubani (2017) interviewed Dr. Fatima Akilu, who is the executive director of the Neem Foundation. In this interview, Akilu offered her stance and experiences regarding the lives of former female members of Boko Haram. Akilu states that "Those who were treated better were the ones who willingly married Boko Haram members or who joined the group voluntarily. Most women did not have the same treatment." (Nwaubani, 2017). Because of this, Interviewee 1 (2020) argues that "For de-radicalisation programmes to work, the process has to be able to understand the entry points of individuals and use the data or the records to design a de-radicalisation programme.".

A recurring method that Boko Haram uses is abduction of women and girls to serve as wives, slaves, and potentially soldiers. The women are forced into marriages with male members of the terror organisation to serve as "Bush-wives" (McAllister, 2015). Interviewee 3 (2020) states that through his work, they have seen that "Boko Haram radicalise women as a tool to radicalise men.", and that "These women are sexually abused, and forced into marriages". Hence, a reason for Boko Haram's recruitment of females is based on exploiting women to get men to join the organisation by promising said men marriages and sex slaves. Furthermore, the radicalisation or sympathy for Boko Haram begins mainly after the women have 'joined' the group. Interviewee 3 (2020) states that "New members are often radicalised after the point that they join the group. They go through preaching stages, or brainwashing, and

most people that have joined are radicalised based on other factors than the reasons to why they joined.".

A final example that highlights the issue of female empowerment in Boko Haram is the case of the Chibok Girls. The Chibok Girls were 276 (mostly Christian) female students that were abducted by Boko Haram in April in 2014, from the town of Chibok in Borno state. The campaign to recover the kidnapped women received the name "#BringBackOurGirls" (Oyewole, 2016: 25-27). Regarding female Boko Haram members, Akilu states that "These were women who for the most part had never worked, had no power, no voice in the communities, and all of a sudden they were in charge of between 30 to 100 women who were now completely under their control" (Nwaubani, 2017). Furthermore, some of the female students that were abducted in Chibok alongside many other 'wives' of Boko Haram had refused to return to the communities they used to live in. The reason for this was because "most of the women are returning to societies where they are not going to be able to wield that kind of power." (Nwaubani, 2017), referring to the power that the 'wives' had in Boko Haram.

In 2016, Boko Haram divided into mainly two factions. One was led by Abubakar Shekau, and his faction uses women to carry out violent extremism. The second group led by Abu Musab al-Barnawi distance itself from including women in violence. However, women also play a great role in the al-Barnawi's group as powerful wives or to help plan violent attacks. Shekau's faction has proved more deadly than al-Barnawi's, killing 78 times more people in attacks in 2017. This suggests that the strategic use of women in attacks leads to higher mortality rates (Bryson and Bukarti, 2018: 11; Agbaje, 2020: 4). In 2018, Shekau's faction released a video that showed some of the Chibok Girls abducted in 2014 saying "We are very happy here. We thank God for his mercy on us. You are saying you will come and take us. Where will you take us to? May God save us from disbelief. We are the Chibok Girls that you are crying to bring back. By God's will, we never return to you." (Bryson and Bukarti, 2018: 13-14). The kidnapped woman who made this statement may have opposing views to what she was forced to show outwards. Furthermore, she may experience Stockholm syndrome. However, it is crucial to understand that she may have converted to and now sympathises with Boko Haram's ideology.

Examples like the one mentioned in the last paragraph problematize campaigns such as "#BringBackOurGirls". Although tragic, 'our girls' may become loyal wives, soldiers, spies, or suicide bombers for Boko Haram. The idea of saving women from Boko Haram might be

justified in many cases. However, one must consider if these women have become radicalised and will hence need to be de-radicalised before returning to their communities. Although campaigns seek to bring back women from Boko Haram, female returnees often experience severe stigma from their communities. While males experience stigma as well, women's experiences are mostly concerned with if the woman returns to her former community pregnant, as a mother, or married to a Boko Haram soldier or general. The woman and potential children are considered to have "bad blood" by their communities, making reintegration almost impossible. Furthermore, the entry point of the woman to Boko Haram does not matter. She could have been kidnapped, but solely being with Boko Haram for an extended period makes the woman considered "bad blood" (International Crisis Group, 2016: 15).

5. Nigerian De-radicalisation Programmes

Women are involved in Boko Haram and assist the terrorist organisation in planning and carrying out violent extremism. It is therefore crucial to understand the Nigerian Government's view on these individuals and the methods that are used to make them step away from their radical ideologies. Interviewee 1 (2020) states that "the Nigerian Government views the militant women on the point of victims of circumstances rather than willing perpetrators". Interviewee 2 (2020) continues by saying that whatever the entry point of a woman, "Women that decided to come out of the movement may need to be de-radicalised.". Finally, Interviewee 3 (2020) states that "The Nigerian Government does not recognise militant women. And hence, they don't treat them in any way.". The views attached to radicalised women by the Nigerian Government are deeply troubling and it is hence crucial to discuss what is done to de-radicalise women in Nigeria.

5.1. Operation Safe Corridor

Operation Safe Corridor (OSC) is the largest Nigerian, and only non-prison Government run de-radicalisation project, which started in 2015. OSC focuses on rehabilitating former "low-risk" Boko Haram male militants. The program focuses on religiously re-educating defectors or 'clients', without providing much vocational training, or social help (Felbab-Brown, 2018: 74). The programme coordinator of OSC is General Bamidele Shafa (2020), and he states that OSC targets people who were forced to join Boko Haram. He explains that Boko Haram members may have been looking for a chance to remove themselves from

Boko Haram. Therefore, the Nigerian Government can help if the militants willingly lay down their arms (Shafa, 2020). The process that OSC uses consists of four stages; 1. Gathering data of 'clients' through documentation and profiling, 2. Building trust with a 'client', 3. De-radicalisation, and 4. Reintegration, which is designed to take place over 16 weeks (Bryson and Bukarti, 2019: 14-15). However, 16 weeks is a short time to change individuals' ideological beliefs and OSC does not openly share specific details and data regarding their de-radicalisation methods.

Interviewee 2 (2020) explains that OSC is a "Cooperation between civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations, and local state ministries.". In a 2016 stakeholders meeting, the issues discussed did not focus on gender. The meeting rather highlighted that north-eastern communities involved in reintegration must receive socio-economic help from the Government to repair damages caused by Boko Haram. Furthermore, the meeting called for the Government to involve communities in the de-radicalisation process to ensure clarity on the structure of OSC (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2016: 1-5). What was recommended in the 2016 stakeholders meeting did not come to fruition. As of 2018, roughly 100 men that had completed the programme had not been returned to their communities due to a fear of community retaliation. Furthermore, the Government has not clarified what consists of a "high-risk" or "low-risk" individual (Interviewee 2, 2020). Interviewee 2 (2020) describes the OSC process as "hidden from plain view", which creates "conspiracy theories about what OSC is." among communities. Keeping the process hidden results in communities refusing to take back returnees since these individuals are still considered radicals by the communities.

Interviewee 2 (2020) describes the Government's stance on women as "Unfortunately for the women, they are being rescued. Women do not voluntarily lay down their arms, they are rescued.". Therefore, militant women in Boko Haram are not considered to be a threat by the Nigerian Government, which correlates to the patriarchal structures in Nigeria that subjugate women. Since OSC targets people that lay down their arms, women are not considered for de-radicalisation because of the victimisation of women (Khelghat-Doost, 2019: 859). Hence, Interviewee 2 (2020) argues that the Nigerian Government's focus on women is to resettle the women with new husbands to take care of them. It is not a focus on empowering women to counter recidivism, but to find a new man to care for her. This effectively highlights Nigerian patriarchal structures as women in Boko Haram pose an equal threat as their male peers, but they receive less attention in de-radicalisation because of their gender.

5.2. The Neem Foundation

The Neem Foundation is an NGO, and its main goal is to work against insecurity created by the Boko Haram insurgency and other agents. The organisation consists of people that helped create and organise Operation Safe Corridor (Bryson and Bukarti, 2019: 10). Through the Yellow Ribbon Initiative that was created in 2017, the Neem Foundation (2019) seeks to de-radicalise and reintegrate women, men, and children associated with Boko Haram. By offering psychological help, and creating PVE programmes on a community level, the Neem Foundation (2019) tries to rehabilitate former members of Boko Haram. Furthermore, the organisation seeks to prevent people from joining Boko Haram by strengthening communities. The initiative's main rehabilitating method is based on psychologically improving individuals' emotional, and moral critical thinking. The Neem Foundation provides help for people who experienced trauma in the shape of sexual harassment, violence, poverty, and eventual stigma and rejection from the community that the person tried returning to (International Civil Society Action Network, 2019: 100).

Unlike the Nigerian Government, the Neem Foundation is gender-neutral and considers men and women as equals in its de-radicalisation programme. The Neem Foundation recognises the different roles women have as wives, soldiers, spies, and mothers in Boko Haram. The Yellow Ribbon Initiative is one of the only ways for former female members of Boko Haram to return to 'normal' life in their former communities. The Neem Foundation recognises the importance of looking at women's entry to Boko Haram. The organisation argues that the main reason for voluntary female engagement with Boko Haram is due to the lack of economic opportunities or social influence in their communities. The programme's main approach to de-radicalisation is hence based on assessing risks surrounding community connections, personal ideology, and psychology, as well as economic factors. Therefore, the programme focuses on personal empowerment and offering vocational training (International Civil Society Action Network, 2019: 100-101). Interviewee 3 (2020) explains that the assessments are based on profiling, and risk, vulnerability, needs assessments, to measure cognitive capabilities, remorse, opportunities, and risk of recidivism. Furthermore, Interviewee 3 (2020) is aware of the limits of these assessments and even though they may offer good indications of an individual de-radicalisation process, people can conceal their ideological beliefs.

While the gender-neutral approach of the Neem Foundation is positive, there are points that need to be considered when discussing the organisation's methods. The director of the Neem Foundation, Dr. Akilu, stated in 2015 that 20 women and girls who were members of Boko Haram had been "saved" and on their way to be rehabilitated (Bloom and Matfess, 2016: 117). This announcement may have been worded to please a larger audience. The Neem Foundation clearly recognises the importance of PVE measures in communities and considers men and women equally in their roles in Boko Haram. However, the discourse surrounding women in Boko Haram is based on them being victims in need of saving. Therefore, one can ask to what extent were the women "saved", or were they simply abducted again, but by a different actor. Akilu recalls accounts of women who seemed to be on track to a rehabilitated life with prospects. However, when the women who were "saved" have husbands, brothers, or fathers who are still with Boko Haram, the incentives to return to the group have proven crucial to the failure of rehabilitating former female Boko Haram members due to the lack of opportunities for women in north-eastern Nigeria (Nwaubani, 2017).

Interviewee 3 (2020) states that "If you send a de-radicalised person back to a community where the narrative that led them to radicalisation in the first place is still prevalent, then the person may radicalise again.". This suggests that the Neem Foundation understands that a holistic approach involving de-radicalising communities is needed to be taken to rehabilitate Boko Haram members. However, the Neem Foundation is an NGO and while their work may have a great impact on an individuals' lives, their efforts are limited if the Government refuses to recognise the role of communities in the de-radicalisation process. Had the points raised in the 2016 stakeholders meeting for OSC regarding the need for governmental funding towards communities to build social and vocational opportunities come to fruition, then de-radicalised communities would be prepared to handle issues regarding de-radicalisation in north-eastern Nigeria (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2016: 1-5). However, the absence of governmental recognition has resulted in issues of recidivism, and further radicalisation.

5.3. The Kuje Prison Project

The idea of using prisons to target several people for de-radicalisation at once have gained traction in recent years and should be further developed as presented by Schmid (2016: 31). His main argument being that rigorous evaluations of said methods need to be carried out to justify their popularity (Schmid: 30). The Nigerian Government tasked the Office of the

National Security Advisor (ONSA) with creating a CVE programme to de-radicalise former members of Boko Haram. ONSA was set to cooperate with the Nigerian Prisons Service (NPS). The result was OSC and the idea to de-radicalise Boko Haram prisoners. Hence, the Kuje Prison Project was started in 2014 as a testing ground for the process (Bryson and Bukarti, 2019: 10; Barkindo and Bryans, 2016: 1). To which facility a Boko Haram member is sent for de-radicalisation depends on whether they were arrested or gave up their arms. As Interviewee 2 (2020) states, "OSC is only for people who give up their arms. If the Government arrests you, you get sentenced.". Furthermore, it is still crucial to de-radicalise violent extremists in prisons as to prevent revolts or hinder the spread of the radical ideology once the prisoners are eventually released from prison. Therefore, members of Boko Haram were separated from other non-radical prisoners to prevent the spread of the ideology within Kuje Prison (Barkindo and Bryans, 2016: 8).

The Kuje Prison Project became the main centre of de-radicalisation for prisoners. It was thought to be best having one main prison for testing the programme as it allowed the Government to concentrate resources and professionals to maximize the results of the project. Kuje focuses on both individual disengagement from violence and ideology in their de-radicalisation programme. This is mainly done by reteaching moderate Islamic, and Christian beliefs and engaging in social events such as sports. Furthermore, Boko Haram inmates have been offered vocational training and education to reduce illiteracy. This was an attempt to increase critical thinking and cognitive capabilities among the Boko Haram prisoners to make them step away from their radical ideology (Barkindo and Bryans, 2016: 17). The methods used are based on individual de-radicalisation where risk assessments were conducted from a general framework. The focus is placed on individuals as trying to de-radicalise a certain group could result in resistance from individual prisoners that could affect the de-radicalisation process of other prisoners. The end framework used consists of building trust, risk and needs assessments, and how to meet prisoners' risks after prison and reduce their violent capabilities (Barkindo and Bryans, 2016: 6-11).

Kuje Prison is a state-run facility which means that the prison project adopted the Government's idea of who is a perpetrator. The Nigerian Government's opinion that women cannot be perpetrators means that they were instead returned to their communities and were not sentenced to prisons like Kuje. Therefore, women are left out of being rehabilitated in this format. Alternatively, Interviewee 2 (2020) suggests that since Boko Haram consists of mostly male members, more resources are invested in de-radicalising men instead of women. Kuje

was originally planned to handle both men and women, but the result was different. The reason for not incorporating women was as Interviewee 2 (2020) stated, "a lack of resources". A prison based de-radicalisation programme designed for women requires that children be cared for when the woman is going through the programme. Furthermore, that separate accommodation for women and men is provided to assure safety for women and children, and vocational training that provides the women with skills that would match women's roles outside of prison so that they are not frowned upon by their communities. Finally, the staff working with the programme would need to be equal parts women to men, to assure that the needs of women are catered for (Bryson and Bukarti, 2019: 27).

Interviewee 1 (2020) states that "there has to be a focus on capacity building for women practitioners. Especially in areas in north-eastern Nigeria where engaging with a woman requires a lot of cultural sensitivity.". The norms and roles attached to women in Nigeria have not just affected the direct rehabilitation of former female members of Boko Haram, but the religious aspect of men and the "nature of their culture means that they will not want to be engaging with women." (Interviewee 1, 2020). Unfortunately, this is an issue associated with the Kuje Prison Project and OSC, because of the Government's views on women, and the limits in funding for de-radicalising women.

6. Theoretical Debates and De-radicalisation in Nigeria

6.1. The Focus of Nigerian De-radicalisation

OSC, the Neem Foundation, and the Kuje Prison Project rarely share information with each other and outside actors. The reasons being to protect the identities of people going through de-radicalisation. Furthermore, the Nigerian Government does not want to share its ways of dealing with violent extremists (Bryson and Bukarti, 2019: 10). Regarding OSC, Interviewee 2 (2020) states that researchers and civilians do not "hear much or know details about it because it is a government project.". Furthermore, this directly correlates with Sageman's (2014: 6) argument that research surrounding terrorism becomes stagnant since governments keep results and methods of de-radicalisation classified as it is considered a state security issue. However, as Schmid (2016: 27) argues, it is possible to bypass the governmental level, and instead utilize a bottom-up approach. Interviewee 2 (2020) continues "Most of these issues are local so you can bypass state governments as long as you get a buy-in from local

traditional leaders", and that Nigerian de-radicalisation programmes "would be more successful on this level instead of hidden state methods". Contrarily to OSC, the Neem Foundation (2019) is working with a bottom-up approach and is striving towards rebuilding communities from local perspectives.

As presented, all three programmes adhere to a framework consisting of documentation, risk and needs assessments, and trust building. This framework has a strong connection to evaluating individuals' psychological mindsets (Andrews, Bonta, and Hoge, 1990: 19-21). The methods of the programmes correlate to the scholarly idea of creating resilient individuals. Through focusing on literacy training, sports, social events, and religious teaching, the Nigerian de-radicalisation programmes in this paper adhere to ideas presented by Liht and Savage (2013: 47), Davies (2009), Feddes, Mann, and Doosje (2015: 6), and Miller (2013: 188). The programmes rely on improving cognitive capabilities such as critical thinking for their 'clients'. Furthermore, to make violent extremists gain an understanding for human rights, and improve their sense of empathy, sympathy, moderate religion, and democratic values to create and accept pluralism. The programmes are hence focused on building character traits that will reduce the risk of individual recidivism towards violent extremism.

To understand whether the programmes are effective, it is crucial to apply the theories concerning vulnerable individuals versus Radical Milieus or enabling environments. Interviewee 1 (2020) argues that a holistic approach to de-radicalisation should be the focus, even though this approach is more costly and resource craving. They argue that all programmes discussed in this paper focus on individual vulnerabilities and are "based on treatment and rehabilitation and not de-radicalisation.", no matter what they express outwards (Interviewee 1, 2020). By looking at the programmes' frameworks that focus on hindering individual recidivism, Interviewee 1 is correct in saying that the focus is based on individual vulnerability. The Nigerian Government has not included communities in its de-radicalisation programmes. The Kuje Prison Project solely deals with violent extremists on an individual level, and OSC was recommended to include communities in the process but has not started doing this yet (Barkindo and Bryans, 2016: 8; Centre for Democracy and Development, 2016: 4).

In the case of the Neem Foundation, Interviewee 1's argument remains valid. While differing, the methods used by all programmes focus on individual rehabilitation. Therefore, while the Neem Foundation also works with communities, the main framework for de-

radicalisation is based on individuals' vulnerability. However, there are reasons why this is the case. Interviewee 3 (2020) and Akilu (Nwaubani, 2017) express an understanding regarding the importance of communities in the de-radicalisation process. Furthermore, the Neem Foundation (2019) states that it seeks to apply a community bottom-up approach to de-radicalisation. As Horgan and Braddock (2010: 280) argue, a holistic approach, while costly, is the most effective. Ignoring to de-radicalise a community could lead to de-radicalised individuals being alienated. Furthermore, if a de-radicalised individual returns to a community that still experiences the same issues that led to individuals' original radicalisation, issues concerning recidivism may take place for the de-radicalised individual. Interviewee 3 (2020) states that "If a de-radicalised person who expresses more positive humane thinking because of the de-radicalisation process returns to a community where this way of thinking is frowned upon, the person might feel like an outcast and experience recidivism".

Malthaner's and Waldmann's (2014: 980) concept of Radical Milieus has become reality in north-eastern Nigerian states. As presented by Lawal et al. (2017: 81), communities in north-eastern Nigeria suffer greatly due to high unemployment, and poverty rates. Schools in states like Borno lack resources and cannot offer education that leads to critical thinking. Furthermore, the statistics presented by Kaffenberger and Pritchett (2017: 3), and Bold et al. (2017: 8-9) regarding literacy rates in north-eastern Nigeria explain why people cannot critically evaluate Boko Haram's extreme ideology. Therefore, illiterate people in north-eastern Nigeria are more prone to radicalisation, as stated by Interviewee 3 (2020). This indicates a severe lack of governmental spending on schools and human development in north-eastern Nigeria, which has resulted in a direct alienation between communities in states like Borno and the Government. Therefore, suggesting that Malthaner's and Waldmann's theory of Radical Milieus has manifested in north-eastern Nigeria, and Radical Milieus act as enabling environments for Boko Haram to recruit members. Furthermore, proving that the individual de-radicalisation focus of Nigerian de-radicalisation programmes is faulty.

The Nigerian Government must therefore conduct PVE and CVE, and counter Radical Milieus by applying Stephens', Sieckelinck's, and Boutellier's (2019: 7) arguments regarding community engagement to strengthen the connections between north-eastern communities and the state. Interviewee 1 (2020) describes the Boko Haram insurgency as "asymmetric warfare", and that the Government has to apply an "intelligence led strategy" to be successful against Boko Haram. Furthermore, the "Intelligence, information, and data mainly comes from the local population." (Interviewee 1, 2020). As Cherney and Hartley (2015: 750) argue, stable

connections between communities and the state ensures a stable flow of information from communities. Therefore, proving that Nigeria needs to change its view regarding community involvement. If the Government continues to ignore the fact that their methods are alienating communities in the north-east, then communities will continue to drift away and remain Radical Milieus, furthering the Boko Haram insurgency. If Nigeria was to establish resilient communities through de-radicalisation efforts, then people would be less inclined to radicalise in the north-east, as presented by Cherney and Hartley (2015), Briggs (2010: 971-972), and Ellis and Abdi (2017: 290). Maintaining resilient communities would allow the Nigerian Government to control and use the intelligence stream that is needed to counter Boko Haram.

6.2. Disengagement and Ideological De-radicalisation

The CVE measures applied by Nigerian de-radicalisation programmes take the shape of mainly disengagement from violence and de-radicalisation of ideology. OSC mainly focuses on maintaining disengagement since its 'clients' have already laid down their arms before joining the programme. Furthermore, OSC mainly handles de-radicalisation of ideology by teaching moderate Islamic and Christian beliefs to its 'clients'. The Kuje Prison Project focuses on mainly disengagement from violence and to teach moderate religious ideas, as well as offering limited chances to vocational and social training. The Neem Foundation focuses mainly on psychological help to enforce disengagement and offer tools for ideological de-radicalisation. It is problematic that these programmes seldom share information with each other. This enforces Bertram's argument that agents who do not share definitions and frameworks surrounding radicalisation and de-radicalisation fuel the issues concerning how to run efficient de-radicalisation projects. As argued by Interviewee 3 (2020), it is crucial to understand that it is almost impossible to determine the success of de-radicalisation as people can conceal their beliefs and ideology. Therefore, a visible disengagement from violence has received great attention in Nigerian projects and overall academia (Felbab-Brown, 2018: 74; International Civil Society Action Network, 2019: 100; Barkindo and Bryans, 2016: 11; Bryson and Bukarti, 2019: 10; Bertram, 2015: 121-122).

In the case of Boko Haram, many of the organisation's foot soldiers are not ideologically radicalised. They are members of the group due to the socio-economic opportunities that were non-existent in the Radical Milieus that they came from. Therefore, the focus of Nigerian programmes remains on disengagement, which is supported by Striegher's view that visible disengagement is the central part of the de-radicalisation process. Horgan and

Islam believe that de-radicalisation of ideology should be the focus of de-radicalisation programmes. They argue that the risk of recidivism is substantial when ideology is not the main target of de-radicalisation. Although individuals may no longer apply extreme violence themselves, they may affect other people in their Radical Milieu to take up arms for Boko Haram's cause (Striegher, 2013: 20; Horgan, 2009: 152; Islam, 2019: 7). Interviewee 3 (2020) effectively explains the situation as returning a disengaged individual to a Radical Milieu may result in recidivism since the same socio-economic issues that led to the individual's radicalisation remain in the community. Therefore, highlighting two crucial things. Firstly, that without de-radicalising the Radical Milieu in a community, de-radicalisation programmes are inherently faulty. Secondly, that Nigerian de-radicalisation programmes need to focus mainly on de-radicalisation of ideology, with disengagement being an important part of the process.

6.3. Theoretical Debates and the Women of Boko Haram

This paper has shown that the focus and processes of the Nigerian de-radicalisation programmes are flawed because they target the idea of vulnerable individuals instead of Radical Milieus. Furthermore, that the prioritisation of disengagement from violence over de-radicalisation of ideology is faulty. It may seem that this paper' comparison of OSC, the Kuje Prison Project and the Neem Foundation is a futile endeavour since they do not all focus on or incorporate women in de-radicalisation. However, Schmid (2016: 30) states the importance to compare de-radicalisation programmes to advance scholarship on de-radicalisation, as the area of de-radicalisation has been neglected in academia. Furthermore, it is crucial to establish general working frameworks for de-radicalisation that incorporates everyone affected by violent extremism and recognise that every case is different and may need specific consideration (International Crisis Group, 2016: 9). The gender aspects of the OSC and the Kuje Prison Project manifest the main failures of Nigerian de-radicalisation programmes.

Executing de-radicalisation programmes should be done from a gender-neutral point of view that recognises different individuals' personal radicalisation process. Interviewee 1 (2020) argues that the Nigerian Government has an "overwhelming perspective that sees women as victims and an equally strong perspective that considers men as perpetrators". Women can be both perpetrators and victims of Boko Haram, while men may join Boko Haram because of the lack of socio-economic opportunities, making men, women and north-eastern communities victims of neglect enforced by the Nigerian Government. Furthermore, this is supported by Cornwall's, Harrison's, and Whitehead's (2007) argument that the research and

execution of PVE, CVE, and de-radicalisation programmes are based on gender myths and stereotypes. Their argument correlates to the case of Nigeria where OSC and the Kuje Prison Project solely handle men as perpetrators and neglect the position of women within Boko Haram. The Neem Foundation (2019) is the only programme in this paper that effectively employs a gender-neutral perspective in its de-radicalisation process. Therefore, the Nigerian Government opposes research and neglects the role of women in Boko Haram due to Nigeria's patriarchal structures.

As Bloom and Matfess (2016: 109) explain, women have been increasingly used by contemporary terrorist organisations. Women are used to carry out violent terrorism by Boko Haram due to the organisation's knowledge that the Nigerian Government does not consider women as perpetrators. The year 2015 represented one of the deadliest years of the Boko Haram insurgency during which women were widely used to carry out suicide bombings (ACLED Data, 2017). Contrarily, Nigeria's President, Muhammadu Buhari declared a military victory over Boko Haram in 2015, but the insurgency remains active to this day (British Broadcasting Company, 2015). The Nigerian Government's refusal of recognising female perpetrators in Boko Haram remains ignorant. The year 2015 was the first time during the Boko Haram insurgency that Nigeria increased its number of military personnel. The increase was by more than 20 percent, as shown by The World Bank.
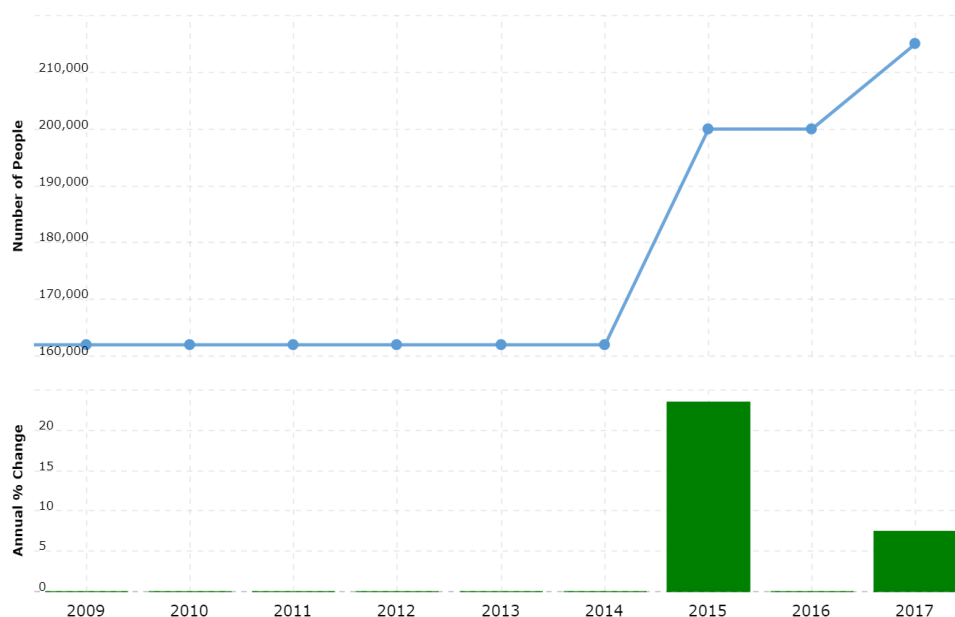

Figure 2: (The World Bank, 2020).

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This graph demonstrates the increase of Nigerian military forces 2009-2017 and combined with the data from ACLED, it shows that the Nigerian Government recognized the deadly effect of Boko Haram suicide bombings and violence. However, the Government still refused to recognise the role of women in the attacks.

While the Neem Foundation's de-radicalisation programme mainly focuses on methods based on vulnerable individuals, they do correctly have a gender-neutral approach. Men and women in Boko Haram both need to be de-radicalised. However, certain methods, and de-radicalisation practitioners need to be adjusted based on the gender of the individual going through the process of de-radicalisation. Women act as mothers and wives in Boko Haram and may experience severe sexual harassment in the group. As presented by UNODC (2017: 109), de-radicalisation programmes must recognise the specific needs and events that women have endured during their stay with groups like Boko Haram. The Neem Foundation is the sole agent that recognises this out of the three programmes discussed in this paper. Furthermore, the Neem Foundation remains the sole recogniser of the important fact that women's role as mothers and wives make them powerful mediators in Boko Haram (International Civil Society Action Network, 2019: 100). D'Estaing (2017: 108) argues that recognising the important role of women in groups like Boko Haram will assist in de-radicalising men since women carry a lot of influence over the men in their proximity. Therefore, suggesting that the Neem Foundation understands women's social importance within families.

Finally, Interviewee 1 (2020) states that in places like north-eastern Nigeria where the culture is significantly patriarchal, "engaging with a woman requires a lot of cultural sensitivity", meaning that women are needed as practitioners in de-radicalisation programmes. Therefore, Nigerian programmes need to "focus on capacity building for women practitioners" (Interviewee 1, 2020). Interviewee 1's statements are supported by Ní Aoláin (2015) and D'Estaing (2017: 108). They explain that including women as practitioners in PVE and CVE projects makes the projects more successful at de-radicalising both men and women. Furthermore, that these are more successful than projects that lack female practitioners. While NGOs such as the Neem Foundation are effective at utilising female practitioners, the Nigerian Government needs to change its patriarchal view to improve OSC and the Kuje Prison Project. Therefore, the main issue that is opposing the work of the Nigerian Government's attempts of de-radicalisation is its and the country's persistent patriarchal views and structures, and refusal to recognise women in Boko Haram as perpetrators.

7. Conclusion

By evaluating and comparing the methods and targets of Nigerian de-radicalisation programmes, this paper has managed to raise relevant issues that explain how de-radicalisation should be improved to further contemporary counterterrorism. Boko Haram is emblematic of contemporary terrorism. Highlighting how Boko Haram exploits socially, culturally, and governmentally Nigerian patriarchal views of women to use females as perpetrators of extreme violence has shown how and why Nigeria fails to counter violent extremism. While the Nigerian Government created OSC and the Kuje Prison Project as a response to the Boko Haram insurgency, it did not fund these projects enough considering the neglect of female Boko Haram members in these programmes. Despite the Kuje Prison Project being originally planned to handle women, and that the OSC was recommended by local north-eastern Nigerian actors to de-radicalise women. Furthermore, the funding instead went to militarily tackle the Boko Haram insurgency, as the Nigerian Government responded by vastly increasing the size of its military forces in 2015. However, Nigeria's military approach to the Boko Haram insurgency has failed, despite President Buhari's multiple claims that the military struggle against Boko Haram has been won in the past.

According to this paper, the first major contribution that the case of de-radicalisation programmes in Nigeria offers scholarship on counterterrorism is that one must determine the reason for people's radicalisation. The case of Nigeria highlights why the scholarly focus on recidivism and vulnerable individuals is misplaced and why theories of enabling environments such as Radical Milieus should be further researched. The theory effectively describes why socio-economically vulnerable communities in north-eastern Nigeria experience high rates of people joining terrorist organisations like Boko Haram. However, it is important for local programmes to consider individual entry points into violent radicalism to effectively de-radicalise people, but these entry points are often connected to societal and structural issues, and not solely due to individual vulnerability. The second major scholarly argument that the case of Nigeria supports is that emphasis should be put on de-radicalising ideology, while incorporating disengagement in programmes' processes to de-radicalise violent extremists. Disengagement from violence has proved important, but unless the focus of de-radicalisation is on countering radical ideologies, then the risk of recidivism towards violence is greater.

This paper has shown that the main issue that the case of de-radicalisation programmes in Nigeria offer academia surrounding contemporary counterterrorism is that de-radicalisation needs to be gender-neutral. Men and women in Boko Haram can equally be victims of circumstances if one investigates individual entry points, just as both genders can be perpetrators of violent extremism. To improve Nigerian de-radicalisation programmes, attempts must be made to change the fundamentally patriarchal structures surrounding the norms and roles attached to women in Nigeria. For counterterrorism to be successful when dealing with contemporary terrorist organisations that use women to carry out violent extremism, all aspects of why women are involved in terrorist groups must be considered. Furthermore, women's roles within and outside a terrorist organisation must be considered equally to their male counterparts. Finally, it is crucial that female practitioners are widely involved in de-radicalisation programmes to ensure that female members of organisations like Boko Haram receive equal attention to their male peers. Establishing gender-neutrality within de-radicalisation programmes is therefore the first step towards creating successful counterterrorism through the lens of de-radicalisation. As presented by Schmid (2016: 30), comparing Nigerian de-radicalisation programmes in this paper has effectively highlighted problems and offered solutions to how contemporary counterterrorism should be conducted via the lens of de-radicalisation.

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9. Appendices

9.1. List of Interviewees

Interviewee 1- Consultant for International Terrorism.

Interviewee 2- PhD. African Security Expert.

Interviewee 3- Programme manager for social cohesion, stabilisation, and reintegration at a Nigerian organisation.
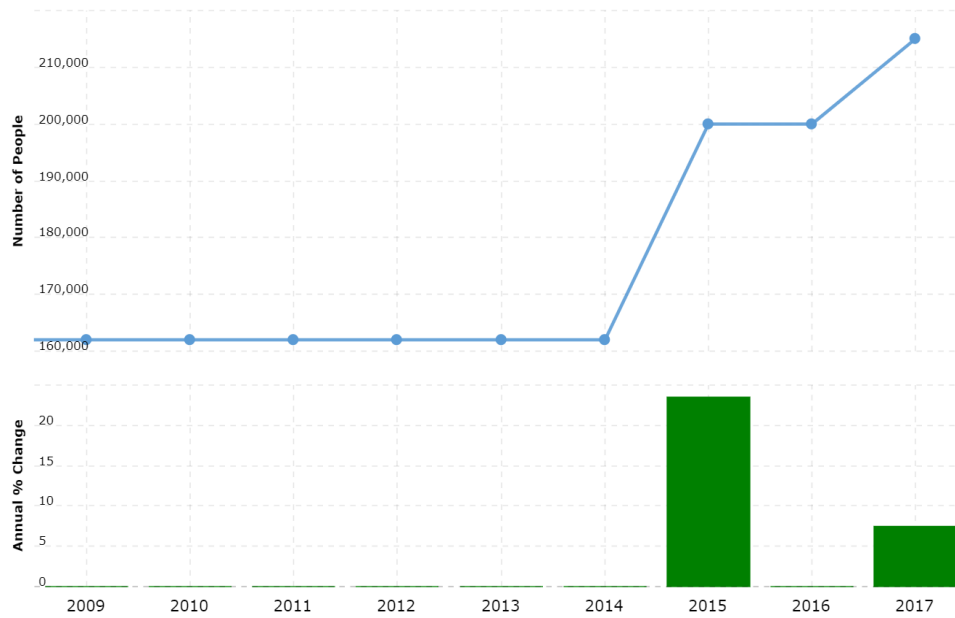
9.2. Graphs

Figure 1: Highlighting Boko Haram's attacks from May 2015-April 2017.

Figure 1: Boko Haram and Fulani Ethnic Militia Activity, Nigeria, May 2015-April 2017
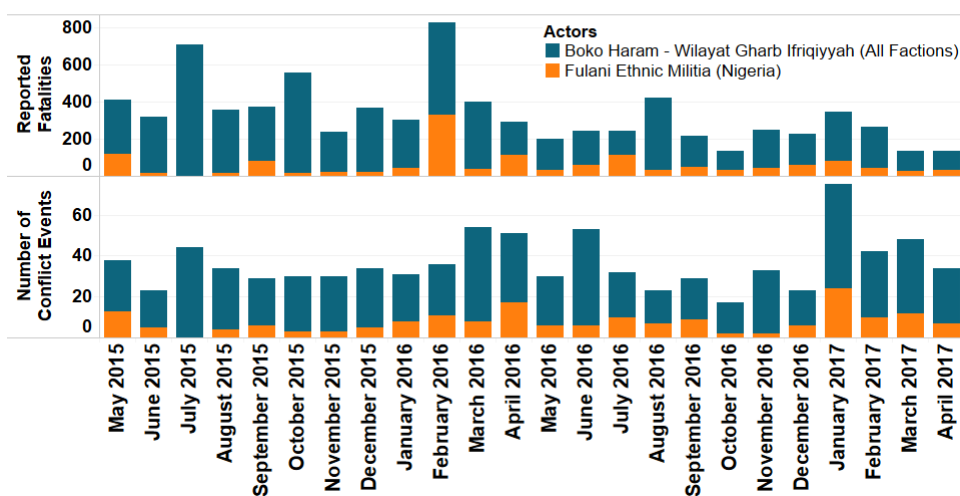
(ACLED Data, 2017).

Figure 2: Showing the increase in military personnel in Nigeria's army 2009-2017.

(The World Bank, 2020).