



**University  
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination  
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

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**“Undertaking Population-centric Counterinsurgency in the Age of  
Salafi-driven Insurgencies: A Study of the Boko Haram Conflict”**

Department of Political Science

Tuesday, December 12, 2017  
9:00 A.M.  
Clearihue Building  
Room B017

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Marlea Clarke, Department of Political Science, University of Victoria (Supervisor)  
Dr. Scott Watson, Department of Political Science, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Ian Spears, College of Social and Applied Human Sciences, University of Guelph

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Dr. Martha McMahon, Department of Sociology, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

## **Abstract**

The Boko Haram conflict in northern Nigeria has generated immense scholarly interest since it began in 2010. Much of this interest has centred on advancing counterinsurgency policy prescriptions. There are two dominant approaches in the generic counterinsurgency literature: enemy-centric counterinsurgency, which involves the use of brute force to eliminate insurgents and population-centric counterinsurgency, which entails the use of persuasive means to end an insurgency. The counterinsurgency scholarship on Boko Haram is dominated by scholars that advance the latter approach. These scholars argue that the Boko Haram insurgency is a result of the socio-economic challenges that beset northern Nigeria, hence the government should adopt a policy of dialogue with the group and implement socio-economic reforms. However, there is a disjuncture between this policy prescription and Boko Haram's Salafi-driven objective of establishing an Islamic Caliphate. Thus, this thesis answers the following question: given the Salafi ideology of BH, can population-centric counterinsurgency be an effective state response? I explored this question based on the theories of Weinstein (2007) and Ugarriza & Craig (2013): the notion that the factors that influence the emergence of an insurgent group continues to shape the group's attitudes, emotions and dispositions. In answering my question, I explored the history of Islamic fundamentalism in northern Nigeria in order to ascertain the outcome of the government's accommodation of Islamist demands in the past. Using textual analysis, I also examined the speeches of Boko Haram's leader, Abubakar Shekau, in order to identify the group's specific objectives and understand its disposition to dialogue. Based on the historical exploration and analysis of Shekau's speeches, I argued that whereas the implementation of socio-economic reforms can win over potential Boko Haram recruits, neither dialogue nor socio-economic reforms can convince the existing Boko Haram members and leaders to stop fighting.