



The Political Economy of Terrorism: A Comparative Analysis of Boko Haram and the Islamic State

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Abstract

Contrary to studies that highlight the lethality or morality of terrorism, this paper makes the case that there is need to interrogate acts of terrorism from a political economic point of view. It was argued that this excessive focus on the violence neglected an economic understanding of modern terrorism from various groups across the globe. This paper thus situated the incidence of the Boko Haram and the Islamic State terrorist groups on a political economic framework. The study showed that terrorism was not a 'stupid thing'. The study further revealed that both terrorist groups and their sponsors were not psychopaths but rational beings who derived huge economic benefits from their violent acts. The paper concludes by arguing that until the economic reward on terrorism evaporates, such acts may never cease to occur in the regions and beyond.

Key Words: Armed Violence, Boko Haram, Islamic State, Political Economy, Terrorism

Introduction

The quest for global peace and human security has remained a major challenge to states and the international community since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States of America. Today, the Taliban and al-Qaida affiliate groups still pose grave risk not only to the Afghan, Iraqi and Pakistani governments but also to the United States of America and its allies which are known to have often responded repressively. But as these attacks and threats from terrorists continue to attract military responses from states, regional and transnational organisations, non-state terrorism has increased exponentially in different regions across the globe (Institute for Economic & Peace, 2015).

In recent years, the events of the Boko Haram (BH) in West Africa and the Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria have become a huge threat to local and international actors. This is as a result

of the groups' professional blend of religious fanaticism and military capability which have played out in their high rates of fatalities and their recorded successes in such a short period of their known existence. For instance, from 2002 to 2016 of the BH uprising the group is reported to have killed over 20,000 civilians and displaced more than 2 million persons (Tella, 2017). It even became the deadliest terrorist group in the world with recorded deaths fixed at 6,644 in 2014 alone—an estimate of 14 deaths per attack (Institute for Economic & Peace, 2015). With such brutality, domestic repressive mechanisms were deployed by the Nigerian government along with the establishment of a Multi-national military force (which comprises military personnel from Benin Republic, Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria, and Niger Republic) by the African Union, with about 7,500-strong force to fight the insurgents (Ayansina, 2015; Kindzeka, 2015).

In the same vein, the activities of IS insurgents have significantly pushed the Iraqi and Syrian states into the ranks of states most affected by terrorist attacks. In 2014 the group was responsible for 6,073 deaths in Iraq thus making it the second deadliest terrorist group after BH (Institute for Economic & Peace, 2015). This indeed triggered an assemblage of a military coalition of over forty states with the aim of mitigating the huge carnage from IS terrorism in the axis and beyond (Cockburn, 2015).

Such grotesque reports, on the human cost of terrorism have resulted in criticism not just from government officials but also from scholars owing to the fact that a significant number of the victims of terrorism are usually unarmed civilians (Boot, 2013). Correspondingly, other studies have also focused on the morality of terrorism. An attraction which stems from the ideological interpretations of 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter', has become a justification for the violent acts of both state and non-state actors in a bid to contrast one side's legitimate killing to another side's illegitimate killing (Hough, 2008; Okoro, 2014). The activities of Hamas in Israel and the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka are two obvious examples of groups viewed as terrorist organisation in the eyes of governments and a segment of societies they have attacked but at the same time are praised as freedom fighters by those whose alleged interest they claim to be defending with the violence (Post, 2007).

While terrorism researchers are preoccupied with condemning the violence by pointing out the lethality or morality of terrorism, such excessive focus on the violence undermines a political economy understanding of the violence. To unravel this political economy dimension, this study utilises the incidents from BH and IS in a comparative perspective to achieve this goal.

Conceptual and Analytical Template

Though terrorism remains one of the most gruelling forms of threat to both national and global security, yet, a commonly agreed definition remains elusive. This is because most attempts made by scholars and security agencies to conceptualise the term have often exuded the rationalisation of state violence

along with an utter condemnation of non-state violence or threats. This could be seen in the United States Department of States definition in which it describes terrorism as a "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience" (Federal Research Division & Library of Congress, 2005:12; Hough, 2008:66).

Similarly, Enders & Sandler (2012:4) also classified terrorism as "the premeditated use or threat to use violence by individuals or subnational groups to obtain a political or social objective through the intimidation of a large audience beyond that of the immediate victims". Obviously, the definitions and several others fail to capture the activities of states which have in the same way 'terrorised' a target population with the use or threat to use violence to achieve an objective which could be political, economic or otherwise. In fact, history even has it that the word terrorism "was first coined to describe the state directed violence and intimidation of French citizens by the Jacobins in the early years of the French Republic" (Hough, 2008:66). Since then similar events have been recorded as shown by the Nazi genocide and Libyan experience before the ousting of Colonel Muammar al-Qaddafi (Hough, 2008; Oakes, 2011).

The contradictions inherent in the various definitions of terrorism could be avoided, however, if such act is simply conceptualised as a strategy of warfare employed by both state and non-state actors with widely differing goals (such as political, economic, ideological, religious etc.) with the intent to achieve such through violent means (Okoro, 2014). Aside the fact that acts of terrorism could either be driven by political, economic, ideological or religious reasons among others, there are basically two major strands of terrorism; domestic and transnational types. Domestic terrorism, on the one hand connotes any incident where by the perpetrators, victims and audience are nationals of the host country and its consequences and responses are mainly domestically inclined (Enders & Sandler, 2012). On the flipside, terrorism becomes transnational when an incident in one country involves perpetrators, victims, institutions,

governments, or citizens of another country or more with consequences and responses that often reflect its transnational nature (Enders & Sandler, 2012).

Beyond these distinctions, this paper adopts the Marxian political economy approach as its analytical template. It is an approach built on the foundation of the Marxian social class theory in which the concept of class is at its core. As used by Karl Marx a class is the summation of different classes or groups of people whose class position are determined by the political economic role they play in the society. To him members of a society could be classified into the following four different classes or groups namely; (i) the bourgeoisie or the ruling class(those who own the means of production in a capitalist society), (ii) the petty bourgeoisie – the class of people who own small scale businesses but do not employ wage labour like the bourgeoisie (iii) the proletariat-the class of people which only sell their labour power for wages, and (iv) the peasantry - local farmers and crafts men (Singewood, 1977; Nwabuzor & Mueller, 1985).

To Marx, these different classes earn their identity and particular relevance in a society in part through the differential relations they have to the means of production (Rex, 1961). Marx also noted that the whole idea of class formation is by no means the automatic consequences of societal position in relation to the means of production. And though differential relationship of groups to the means of production may be necessary, it is not a sufficient criterion for class formation. Therefore, Marx argued that the final element “necessary for the emergence of a true class is its participation in a political struggle” (Rex, 1961:140). It is on this score, the Marxian political economy approach suggests that:

- i. All societies are stratified into distinct groups and classes in which power and authority are linked closely with the economic structure of society. Capitalism simplifies class relations, creating a conflict between the owners of capital (the bourgeoisie) and the working class, making the relation one of exploitation.
- ii. Society is a product of class struggle and social change is more revolutionary than evolutionary. Societies pass through

definite stages of development with each stage containing contradictions and conflicts that eventuate in social transformation.

- iii. Society is a totality, a structure of interrelated levels. The economic ‘base’ or infrastructure (mode of production) is closely bound up with the ‘superstructure’, the institutions which produce knowledge (mass media, church, education, etc.) and the relations of production (relations between classes).
- iv. Social processes are never homogenous and uniform, but contradictory and dialectical. All phenomena are interrelated generating contradictions both within and between themselves.
- v. Society and history are characterised by certain laws, but it is man who ultimately makes the world through his *praxis*
- vi. Class society is held together as much by ideology (or ‘false consciousness’) as by force. Alienation tends to obscure for man the real foundation of society as one of exploitation and inequality (Singewood, 1977:6-7).

Drawing from the above approach, certain claims could be made: First, there is a class base differential relation to the means of production and political struggle (also referred to as class struggle) among actors in a capitalist society – just like Nigeria, Iraq and Syria. Second, it is the differential relationship to the means of production in a society that engenders class struggle(s), between the ruling class – who are in the business of primitive capital accumulation – and the non ruling classes – those who are the victims of exploitation. In recent years, this idea of class struggle has manifested in two major forms. First, the non-violent form of class struggle which includes labour union strikes among others. The second category involves violent mass protest that could take the form of violent attacks against government personalities and institutions, acts of terrorism and even wars; with the primary aim of achieving either a classless society where there is an equitable wealth distribution or upper class mobility with a measure of wealth redistribution.

In addition, Marx also noted that in response to a class struggle of this nature fuelled at the instance of the unpropertied class (the non –

ruling class), the existing ruling class (property owning class) would always use state apparatus such as the bureaucracy, security outfits, and ideological agencies like the Church and Mosque as well as the media to sustain its dominance and control of the existing social life built on the economic machinery of the society (Singewood, 1977). With this, the status quo is maintained and the likelihood of a proletarian revolution is reduced.

It is also instructive to note that with the advent of globalisation, modern class struggle within the Marxian class thesis has created new and abundant opportunities (in terms of economic gains or losses) for other actors beyond the indigenous ruling and non ruling class struggle in a society. This scenario could be well established with the case of the DeBeers cartel reputed for buying “conflict diamonds” originating from rebel-held enclaves in countries such as Angola and Sierra Leone which were in turn sold at higher prices to their western consumers (Ballentine & Sherman, 2003).

From the forgoing thesis it could be argued therefore, that the Boko Haram and the Islamic State insurgencies are clear manifestations of class struggle for political economic gains in modern capitalist societies (such as Nigeria, Iraq and Syria) where the power, social and most importantly economic configuration favours mostly a few (the ruling class). And that the groups’ violent attacks are attempts to unseat the ruling class who will in turn be replaced by members of the groups who have earlier been exploited due to their non ruling class status. To achieve this goal, the leaders of the insurgents have been deploying religious rhetoric as a tool to build sympathy for their political economic course among youths (a majority of whom could be best classified as proletariat or peasants) who now serve as foot soldiers in the existing violent class struggle that has taken the form of terror campaigns in the regions.

Boko Haram and the Islamic State: A Dynamic Evolution of Terrorism

This section is concerned with comparing the evolution and character of the Boko Haram and the Islamic State terrorist groups. To set this stage, this section begins with the Boko Haram

group followed by the Islamic State insurgents and after which a comparative analysis is done.

Boko Haram (BH): Is a radical Salafist Jihadist movement that seeks to Islamize the secular Nigerian state, with strict adherence to Sharia law as its constitutional guide. It is widely known as BH (simply translated as “Western civilisation is forbidden”), a code name given to the group by locals based on BH utter rejection of Western education and culture which they claim are corrupt and therefore *haram* (forbidden). To them, an Islamic State devoid of Western tenets and structures would ostensibly be more transparent and just than the existing order (Onuoha, 2012; Okoro, 2014; Bodansky, 2015). In the past its members preferred to be officially called in Arabic “*Jama’atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’awati wal-Jihad*” which literarily denotes “People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet’s Teachings and Jihad” or simply an “Association of *Sunnas* for the Propagation of Islam and for Holy War” (Osumah, 2013:541). But with the pledge of allegiance (in Arabic *bayat*) in 2015 by the leadership of BH to the Islamic State militant group and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the group’s name was officially changed to “Wilayat West Africa” meaning the “Islamic State West Africa Province” (ISWAP) (Institute for Economic & Peace, 2015; Onapajo, 2017).

Unlike most terrorist organisations, the exact date of the group’s origin remains an issue of debate among scholars, however, history suggest that the group became known in 2002 when a Muslim cleric, *Ustaz* (Teacher) *Mohammed Yusuf*, established a religious complex with a mosque and an Islamic boarding school in Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria. Thus the foundation of the BH group was established (Adesoji, 2010; Thurston, 2016). Few years later, Mohammed Yusuf was extra-judicially executed (while in police custody) along with over 800 of his followers who violently protested against the governments’ attempt to dislodge and dismantle the group in July 2009 (Campbell, 2014; Thurston, 2016). Since then, the group which began as a non-violent domestic group swiftly transmuted into a terrorist organisation by attacking transnational identities and institutions such as the United Nations office on

August 26, 2011 in Abuja and conducting expansive military operations in neighbouring West African countries such as Cameroun, Chad, and Niger (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2011; Fessy, 2015).

Following the death of Mohammed Yusuf, Abu Bakr Shekau (a Sunni Muslim) became the new leader of the sect. He was born in Shekau village around the Nigerian/Niger border. He had a foundational Islamic education and later proceeded to the Borno State College of Legal and Islamic Studies where he took a higher degree in Islamic studies and became an expert in Islamic monotheism (Ahmed, 2014). He is a ruthless, fearless loner and he is ranked among the world's most wanted individuals with a \$7 million (£4.5million or ₦1.4 billion) bounty placed on his head by the United States (Ahmed, 2014; Sotubo, 2015). Under the leadership of Shekau, it is alleged that the group's membership profile is between 15,000 and 50,000 core members most of whom are young and predominantly male Muslims, from the northeast region in Nigeria (Aghedo & Osumah, 2014; Blanchard, 2014).

While few details are known about the insurgents' inner operations, there seems to be some form of hierarchical structure. For example, below Abu Bakr Shekau there are two deputies followed by a *Shura* council (the second most powerful decision making body of the group). After which there are commanders who transmit directives from the leadership of the group to cell leaders of sub departments and units which independently perform duties such as media, finance, special duties, security and war etc. (Hütte, Steinberg & Weber, 2015; Onuoha, 2013).

In 2014, BH was estimated to have a net worth of \$25 million a factor that may have enabled the groups acquisition of weapons such as AK47 rifle, general purpose machine guns, anti-aircraft guns, armoured personnel carriers, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), protective vest, land mines, Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs), as well as special ammunition of different types and calibres (Sridharan, 2014; Bodansky, 2015; Omonbi & Marama, 2015). Perhaps, such weapons have made it easy for the group to carry out surprise attacks like suicide bombings, jail breaks

among others against targets ranging from government institutions, political figures, unaffiliated mosque, churches, banks, prisons, schools, media houses, security formations, recreational centres, to international institutions within its reach (LeVan, 2013; Osumah, 2013). The group was also known to have temporarily captured and controlled a land mass of about 20,000 square miles in the Northeast region of Nigeria which it declared a Caliphate in August 2014 but failed to govern justly (Campbell, 2014; Blair, 2015; Pieri & Zenn, 2017).

The Islamic State (IS): Is a global terrorist organisation that has evolved over time to become one of the biggest and richest Jihadi militant group in the world -with a net worth of about \$2billion (Cockburn, 2015; Institute for Economic & Peace, 2015; Weiss & Hassan, 2015). The group which rose to prominence in 2014 has been found to be a construct of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi- a Jordanian by birth with the name Ahmad Fadil al-Khalaylah. He was known as "a tattooed high school dropout, a former video store clerk and petty criminal, uneducated and barely literate, a hard drinker and street brawler" (Boot, 2013:530).

In 2000 al-Zarqawi was appointed the head of a training camp in Herat, Afghanistan which had been established with a \$200,000 loan signed by *Osama Bin Laden* himself. This camp swiftly became the University for members of al-Zarqawi's newly formed terrorist organisation called Jund al-Sham a group that operates independently from al-Qaida's control. Few months later the group was known as Jama'at al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad (JTWJ). And in September 2004, al-Zarqawi's group was absorbed by al-Qaida after the approval of its leadership thus making it an al-Qaida faction in Iraq (Lister, 2014; Weiss & Hassan, 2015). This group was known as al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Known for its brutality and mass targeting of the Shia civilians in Iraq, AQI became an attractive force to other Iraqi Jihadi groups which admire its harrowing activities. Shortly afterwards in 2006, AQI under Zaqawi's watch formed the Majlis Shura al-Mujahideen (MSM), an umbrella Jihadist organisation which had the resistance of the American occupation in the country as its primary objective (McCants, 2015).

On 7th June 2006, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was killed in a United States airstrike and Abu Ayyub al-Masri was appointed by the Mujahidin Advisory Council as the new leader of AQI (Boot, 2013; Weiss & Hassan, 2015). Few months after this transition the new group (MSM) announced the establishment of *al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi Iraq* –which grammatically connotes the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) - but failed to fully materialise owing to the group's alleged overzealousness and alienating policies which were at that time counter-productive to the group's mission perceived as unrealistic by several jihadists including al-Qaida (Lister, 2014).

On 28th June 2014, a second attempt to establish an Islamic State by the group was made and this time the state survived – a Caliphate with *Raqqa*, a town in Syria as its *de facto* capital was established on the Iraqi/Syrian territory spanning about 81,000 sq miles and with a population of about six million (Lister, 2014; Cockburn, 2015; British Broadcasting Corporation News, 2015). Now, the insurgents as well as the territory they control are known as the Islamic State (IS) and its current leader is *Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi* (his birth name is *Awwad Ibrahim Ali al-Badri al-Samarrai*), a Sunni and an Islamic scholar who took a doctorate degree in Islamic studies from the prestigious university of Islamic Sciences in Baghdad, Iraq (Cockburn, 2015; McCant, 2015; Weiss & Hassan, 2015). He shares the same extremist Salafist ideological views with *al-Zarqawi* and this has manifested in both the operations of the group and management of the Islamic State.

Just as the name suggests, IS main objective is to establish a “global Islamic State” that will govern the estimated 1.6 billion Muslims across the world, with a Sunni leader guided by the precepts of Islamic law (Cockburn, 2015; McCants, 2015). The group believes that this will engender a “radical political and social change” across the globe (Lahoud, 2014; Lister, 2014; Cockburn, 2015). Though IS is not internationally recognised as a legitimate state; however, it has some form of bureaucratic structure similar to that of a legitimate state. For example, at the top of this structure is Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (the Caliph), and he is supported by two deputies (who

double as provisional governors for Iraq and Syria), a cabinet of ministers, advisory councils and administrative departments which include *Sharia* and *Shura* councils. Also, there are sub-departments and councils such as; the general management unit, prisons, security, finance, communications, military and security councils, office of the chief of staff, spokesperson as well as courts and many more. In the same vein, this structure is also replicated at the provisional levels where provisional governors are also assisted by councils and administrative departments in their local provinces (Mezzofiore, 2015).

At the peak of the insurgency the group is estimated to have as many as 31,000 Sunni fighters in Iraq and Syria, with about 15,000 said to be foreign fighters who have migrated from at least 90 different countries including the United States, United Kingdom, France and Russia (Lister, 2014). According to a classified document seized from the house of *Adnan Ismail Najem Bilawi* (an ex-General Military Council leader of the group) as at June 2014, the group has approximately 1,000 medium and top level field commanders, who all had technical, military, and security experience (Sherlock, 2014).

In spite of the counter measures adopted by states across the globe, however, the group has continued to pull through with innovation and adaptation. For example, in the infant stage of the group, its leaders appeared to have patronised conventional war strategies where regime forces were engaged in an open battlefield. But as soon as coalition forces began to systematically suppress the group with superior airpower and coordinated battle field defeats in Iraq and Syria, the group has since reverted to a mix of both guerrilla and conventional military strategies (Milton, 2014; Chulov, 2017). The group has also deployed strategies such as threats and hoaxes, kidnapping, assassination, jail breaks, suicide attacks, chemical or biological attack among others; with targets ranging from the Shia Muslim communities, Churches, Shia Mosques, government institutions, oil installations, security formations, military and government officials, hotels, schools, banks, media and Western interests particularly in Iraq and Syria (Blake, 2015; Cockburn, 2015; Weiss

& Hassan, 2015). As studies showed, IS has a strong military wing that has a combatant battalion with both security and reconnaissance units which has at its disposal a number of weapons systems and military vehicles, including armoured personnel carriers and tanks, self-propelled howitzers, field artillery, and multiple-rocket launchers, as well as an assortment of Anti-Tank Guided Missiles (ATGMs), anti-aircraft guns, machine guns, a handful of man-portable air-defense systems and weaponised drones etc. (Hashim, 2012; Lister, 2014; Schmitt, 2017).

Similarly, IS professional use of the internet to propagate its cause, terrorise and sort recruits from a much larger audience has gone beyond anything the world has ever seen (Friis, 2015). The group is known to have a massive media organisation run by professionals who help the group to utilise visual media and internet publishing in its favour. This could be seen in the quality of harrowing video clips produced and uploaded onto different internet outlets for large viewership. IS also has a publishing house which produces the groups official magazine named *Dabiq*- a propaganda magazine used to broaden the groups internet visibility and recruitment (Milton, 2014; Friis, 2015; Weiss & Hassan, 2015).

A Comparison of the BH and IS Movements

Though both groups (BH and IS) are racially, geographically and financially distinct other specific similarities and differences exist between the insurgents' movements. Regarding motivations and ideological views both groups share significant similarities and distinctions. For instance, both are Sunni inclined groups which have significantly upheld their strict adherence to the tenets of *Salafism* – “a doctrine that in its contemporary form advocates a return to theological purity and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad” – in modern states system across the world (Weiss & Hassan, 2015). By implication, they both reject democracy and seek the institutionalisation of a theocratic (Islamic) system of government across the globe. Thus both groups believe that such Islamic institutionalisation would bring about the emergence of a global caliphate where only two camps of human beings would be in existence; with the Muslims and the *Mujahidin* (holy

warriors) on the one hand and the *kuffars*' (unbelievers), which include the crusaders, Jews etc. on the other (Weiss & Hassan, 2015). This explains why both groups have declared their captured territories 'Caliphates' in which they reign supreme. However, the BH Caliphate is subservient to the Islamic State Caliphate as shown by the recent pledge of allegiance (*bayat*) to *Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi* (the leader of IS) an indication that the latter is superior in terms of global jihadi organisational ranking (Institute for Economic & Peace, 2015; Withnall, 2015).

Another similar and distinctive factor inherent in the BH and the IS movements is in the area of strategies and targets. For example, both groups are big fans of guerrilla strategy, where both soft and hard targets are attacked at random with the aim of projecting the groups' complete unpredictability and silently instilling fear in the minds of its audience. Both groups are also known to have deployed brutal tactics such as suicide bombings and beheadings of victims as well as the use of similar weapons and explosives in battles. They both also share similar enemies such as the apostates, Christians and others classified as infidels. In addition, though both groups claimed to be Islamist in nature their operations have reportedly affected fellow Muslims. Despite these similarities however, the IS militants seem to have carried out more coordinated and sophisticated attacks than the BH Insurgents. For example, the deployment of armed drones by members of the IS group in battles against government forces clearly showcase the groups sophistication over the BH insurgents (Schmitt, 2017).

Beyond strategies and targets, BH and the IS militants in their organisation structure and internal workings also share commonalities and distinctions. No doubt, both groups have a structure where their leaders are flanked by two deputies, a *Shura* council as well as sub-departments and units which carry out similar duties in both groups. Both groups operate media units which are responsible for their recent forms of terrorist propaganda along with the production and extensive dissemination of horrific beheading videos of victims by members of both groups in different media platforms which include: YouTube, Facebook,

Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr and many more (Bodansky, 2015; Cockburn, 2015; Friis, 2015). These media platforms have also been used by both groups to claim responsibility for attacks carried out by their members. This strategy of media warfare has made it easy for both groups to terrorise large audience beyond the conflict zones in West Africa and the Middle East. However, the IS militants appear to be the only group which has remarkably utilised internet media to enhance its membership base through the recruitment and radicalisation of youths as shown by the cases of the “Khan Teens” and “Shannon Conley” in the United States of America (Sullivan, 2014; CBS Denver, 2014).

Regarding leadership profile, both groups seem to have leaders which are known for their extreme brutality. While BH is headed by an intellectual light weight, IS on the other hand has an intellectual heavyweight as its leader. Thus, it could be argued that such repository of Islamic knowledge has helped boost the legitimacy of IS activities and the overall goal it seeks to achieve in the eyes of young Islamists who now believe that Jihad as prophesied by *Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi*, is the only means available to purify the existing corrupt order managed by the ruling class. In addition, BH has a majority of commanders and foot soldiers with little or no professional military training. IS on the other hand, is renowned for hosting commanders and foot soldiers with sound military and intelligence expertise – a factors that may have enabled IS ability to operate freely, control captured territory and resist most counter measures thrown at it by the international community.

In the area of territorialisation, both groups also have distinctive elements particularly in the area of size and governance strategies used in managing the internal affairs of their enclaves. For example, at the peak of the BH insurgency it was reported to have had an area of about 20,000 sq miles which it controlled poorly – a factor that may have led to the quick dislodgement of the BH elements from the area. In contrast, IS had occupied and controlled a much larger territory of approximately 81,000 sq miles from 2014 to 2016 – a majority of which the group is known to have governed more efficiently than its BH counterpart (Asrar,

2017; British Broadcasting Corporation, August 16, 2017).

Conflict Pays: Understanding the Political Economic Perspectives of the BH and IS Violence

Though the rhetoric of Islamic revivalism has often been preached by the leadership of both groups as the primary cause for their emergence and violence, however this paper finds that the group’s activities contrast such claims. Starting with the case of BH, its emergence and activities could be well understood within the political-economic structure of the Nigerian society. With a population of over 181million and large deposits of natural resources Nigeria remains a major player in the world economy (National Population Commission, 2017). For instance, it is a country that has over 600 oilfields, 5,284 oil wells, 10 export terminals, 275 flow stations and it is currently the 7th largest oil producer in the world (Aghedo, 2012:267; Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries, 2014). Similarly, in 2014 the Nigerian economy was ranked the largest in Africa and 26th in the world with a Gross Domestic Products (GDP) of \$453,966.81 billion for the year 2013 (Anumihe, 2014; Muhamamd & Ibrahim, 2014).

Regrettably, a large chunk of the proceeds from such a huge economy are only enjoyed by a few members of the society-the ruling elites- who have persistently enriched themselves and their cronies with the continuous exploitation of the masses either through underpayment of wages or diversion of funds meant for the provision of public goods such as roads, health care facilities, pipe borne water, education, power etc. into their personal accounts. As table 1 shows several political elites including governors and federal ministers since 2006 are still being prosecuted in courts across Nigeria mainly for the crime of diversion of public funds.

Table 1: Selected fraud cases involving top government officials in Nigeria 2006-2015

S/n	Suspects	Year of prosecution	Allegation
1	Peter Odili, former Rivers State governor,	2006 till date	Accused of laundering and Diverting over ₦100 billion
2	Ayo Fayose, Ekiti State Governor	2006 till date	Accused of stealing ₦400 Million
3	Saminu Turaki, ex governor of Jigawa State	2007 till date	Accused of money laundering, misappropriation of fund to the tune of ₦36 billion
4	Muhammed Goje, ex governor of Gombe	2011 till date	Accused of conspiracy and money laundering involving ₦25 billion
5	Chimaroke Nnamani, former Enugu State governor	2011 till date	Accused of money laundering of about ₦4.5 billion
6	Gbenga Daniel, ex-Ogun State governor	2011 till date	Accused of money laundering to the tune of ₦211.3 million
7	Murtala Nyako, ex-Adamawa State governor	2014 till date	Accused of money laundering of about ₦15 billion
8	Adebayo Alao-Akala, ex Oyo State governor	2011 till date	Accused of mismanagement of funds up to ₦11.5 billion
9	Orji Uzor-Kalu, ex Abia State governor	2007 till date	Accused of corruption, money laundering to the tune of ₦5 billion
10	Joshua Dariye, former Plateau state governor	2007 till date	Accused of mismanaging ₦1.2 billion
11	Colonel Sambo Dasuki (Rtd) former National Security Adviser	2015 till date	Accused of money laundering and breach of public trust to the tune of \$2.1 billion

Source: Uche-Okobi 2015 and Ajayi, 2015.

Today such corrupt practices perpetrated by the ruling class particularly the political elites have not only brought about underdevelopment but has also manifested in the Nigerian society in several other ways. One of such could be seen in the increasing levels of unemployment which peaked from 20.3 million in 2012 to 22.6 million in 2014. And in the first quarter of 2015, 17.7 million people were already reported to be unemployed or underemployed (Eroke, 2012; Elebeke, 2015; National Bureau of Statistics, 2015). It has also manifested in the recent high

levels of poor public goods across the nation. Most revealing is that despite the continued dominance of the Nigerian political space by indigenes from the northern axis of the country since independence in 1960 however, such hegemony of power has not impacted positively on the lives of the average northerner. In reality they are even lacking more than their southern counterparts in terms of social welfare provision to the regions, including literacy, school attendance, access to potable water, and sanitation (see Table 2).

Table 2: Regional Divergences in Quality of Life in Nigeria

Region	Youth Literacy (% Age 5-16)	Primary School Attendance (%)	Secondary School Attendance (%)	Access to Improved Drinking Water (%)	Access to Improved Sanitation (%)	Small & Medium Businesses Per 100,000	Watches Television Once a Week (%)	Reads a Newspaper Once a Week (%)
North-East	18	43	24	39	28	9	19	9
North-West	24	37	21	47	37	13	21	10
North-Central	43	67	41	51	27	18	49	19
South-West	78	79	64	73	26	20	73	21
South-South	70	80	59	63	32	14	75	30
South-East	66	79	58	71	41	15	52	27

Source: Sodipo (2013)

This privatization of public wealth infuriates the down-trodden especially those with a high level of ignorance who get easily mobilised by violent actors with the promise of a better livelihood. This has been the strategic logic behind the mobilising force of the unemployed graduates, local Islamic clerics, and *ex-almajirai* who now serve as foot soldiers to the leadership of the BH insurgents. This is because they have for long remained victims of exploitation by corrupt political heavy weights within the Nigerian society and thus needs to find alternative means of upper class mobility which will invariably engender wealth redistribution and if possible unseat the ruling class (an act the BH group have attempted by declaring a Caliphate on the Nigerian soil).

However, with failed strategies such as protest or negotiations in the infant stage of the BH uprising, members of the group resorted to the recent forms of violent armed struggle a move which in part may have been instigated by the case of the Niger Delta militants which have utilised violence to demand for wealth redistribution and along with the provision of basic human needs to the underdeveloped oil rich region in the country. Little wonder, in recent years, members of the BH insurgents have now begun the deployment of violent strategies with specific political-economic aim and benefits such as kidnapping for ransom, bank robberies, human trafficking, cattle rustling, arms dealings, and collection of taxes from inhabitants in their enclaves among others. For instance, in February 2013, members of the BH insurgents received \$3.14 million as ransom for the release of Frenchman Tanguy Moulin-Fournier family of seven, after they were kidnapped in Cameroon (Zenn, 2014). Similarly, in July 2014, BH also received \$600,000 in ransom for two reasons; first for the release of Mrs. Amadou Ali - wife of Cameroon Deputy Prime Minister - and other kidnapped victims at the time; second as balance payment for the Moulin-Fournier's (Zenn, 2014). According to terrorism research and analysis consortium the group has also made over \$5million from bank raids in the country (McCoy, 2014). It is worthy of note that other sources of funding exist such as taxes, human trafficking etc.

As one might suspect, the existing ruling class has in turn deployed state apparatus including, all the security agencies, judiciary and ideological agencies such as Churches, Mosques and media outlets alleged to be counter terrorism measures. But the strategic logic behind all of the measures is to suppress and prevent the uprising from below (the BH insurgency) fuelled by their quest for upper class mobility and wealth redistribution. By implication, the deployment of these state owned apparatus will help sustain the political elite's dominance and control of the political and social life which is built on the huge economic machinery of the Nigerian society. Hence the status quo is maintained in favour of the Nigerian political elites.

Correspondingly, the currents which enhanced the incubation of IS in Iraq and Syria could in part be broken into two. First the ousting of President Saddam Hussein (a Sunni- minority group in Iraq) primarily by the governments of the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK) and France under the pretext of his possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and sponsorship of Sunni terrorist groups such as al-Qaida in 2003 (Hashim, 2012; Weiss & Hassan, 2015). But despite Iraq's long history of sectarian clashes among its dominant groups - Shiite's, Sunni's and Kurd's, Saddam Hussein with the help of US, UK and France was replaced by Nouri al-Maliki (a Shiite-the majority group in Iraq) as Iraq's new prime minister. Given the nature of Maliki's speedy rise to power as well as his Shiite identity influence, he was quick to implementing the US proposed policy known as "De-Ba'athification"-a policy which at its core proposes the removal from office and total alienation of all public servants (including army officers, government officials among others) affiliated with the Saddam Hussein led Ba'ath party-a Sunni dominated political group (Banco, 2016). Sadly, this practice has become the new normal in the post-Maliki era in Iraq. However, such re-crafting of Iraq's political landscape by external forces (US, UK and France), did not only bring about the political dominance by Shiite led groups; it also led to the persistent alienation of its rival Sunni groups and Kurds from the corridor of power. To the Sunnis in particular such political tsunami was perceived as a huge loss in terms

of political, social and economic powers to the Sunni groups in Iraq. Hence they seek the restoration of their former position of power and economic control in the Iraqi state (Younis, 2014).

Secondly the personalisation of the Syrian state by members of the Asad's family and their fellow Alawite's (a minority group in Syria which adheres to the Shiite doctrine of Islam) coupled with the attendant alienation of other major groups in the country laid the foundation for conflict eruptions as well. Starting from February 1971 when Hafez al-Asad shot his way into the presidential palace to become President of Syria – a drastic change to what used to be the birth right of Sunni Arabs – the majority group which constitute about 74 per cent of the population in the country today (Kort, 2007; Weiss & Hassan, 2015). Aside the appointment of few individuals who are non-Alawites, Hafez al-Asad ruled Syria for 30 years in a manner that could be best described as a patrimonial system of government where close relatives and members of the Alawite extraction dominate the inner core of his government –known as the “regime barons” (Palmer, 2002:203). This could be seen in the command of his presidential security architecture where 19 out of the 31 highest-ranking officers in Syria were given to Alawites. Among which 12 out of 19 were relatives of Al-Asad (Palmer, 2002).

With the death of Hafez al-Asad on 10, June 2000 political analyst began to think that the Asad's regime and Alawites dominance have come to a close. Paradoxically, on 17 July 2000 Hafez al-Asad son Bashar al-Asad 34 at that time was made president by the same “regime barons” in a ceremony that mirrored the coronation of a new King (Palmer, 2002; Kort, 2007). As one would suspect Bashar al-Asad (who has ruled Syria for over 15 years now) has persistently refused to completely deviate from his father's patrimonial style of governance as well as the continued alienation of rival groups such as the Sunni's and Kurds in a country where they are the majority. Consequently, this strategy has done more evil than good to the peace and stability of the Syrian state. This is because both regimes - Hafez and Bashar al-Asad –succeeded in creating a disequilibrium society where citizen's identity (Sunni, Kurds

or Alawite) are used to determine the nature and type of social, political and economic benefits that they get. Hence such disenfranchisement of the Sunnis and Kurds has left members of such groups in Syria with the option of seeking ways to reverse the current political configuration in which they are left at a disadvantaged position.

In looking at the societies in Iraq and Syria one would recognise the Sunni revolution – in the recent form of IS insurgent movements – as a violent example of class struggle between the ruling elites (Shiite's in Iraq and Alawite's in Syria) and members of the disenfranchised Sunni sect in both countries. For obvious reasons, members of the group began to attack targets and deploy strategies which magnify their intent to achieve wealth redistribution through violent means. For example, through violence IS has been able to gain control of 20 oil fields – 13 in Iraq and 7 in Syria - with varying production capacities ranging from 8,000 to 75,000 barrels per day (bpd) (Brisad & Matinez, 2014; Solomon, Kwong & Bernard, 2015). Added to this are refineries and pumping stations under the groups control which facilitate the groups sales of between 9,000 and 30,000 barrels of oil in the black market generating around \$1-2million a day for the insurgents (Brisad & Matinez, 2014; Weiss & Hassan, 2015). This may have dropped with the increased airstrikes by states on IS oil facilities.

The group also profits from taxes imposed on inhabitants and businesses within its enclave in exchange for the provision of services such as water, electricity, and security for non-Muslim communities and companies etc. According to a witness' testimony of IS rule in the city of *Tikrit* in Iraq “people would not eat at any restaurant that was not up to date with its tax payments to IS lest the place will be bombed while they were dinning” (Cockburn, 2015:49). With such brutality, inhabitants are coerced into frequent payments of their taxes to the insurgents. For example, in 2015 the group was alleged to have generated around \$8million (£ 4.8million) a month from inhabitants and businesses in Mosul alone (Cockburn, 2015). In addition, the insurgents have also generated millions from bank raids. For instance, with the fall of Mosul in June 2014 the provisional governor of Mosul reported that \$425 million in cash were stolen from the Mosul branch of

Central Bank by IS insurgents when they took over the city (Brisard & Martinez, 2014; Institute for Economic & Peace, 2015).

As earlier noted in the case of BH insurgents, the ruling elites in Iraq and Syria have also deployed state apparatus (security agencies, Judiciary, religious institutions etc.) as counter measures to IS attempts to re-craft the political, social and economic landscapes of their societies. This way, the political, social and economic structure will continue to rest firmly in the hands of the political elites.

Though it is rather too early to unravel the political and economic interest of states such as the United States of America (USA) which often predicate their intervention in conflict zones on humanitarian interest such as the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), history suggest that such acts are often laced with USA economic and national interest. For example, in post-Saddam Iraq, it was found that the post-conflict reconstructions in Iraq were awarded to USA companies, particularly Halliburton and its subsidiaries such as Kellogg Brown and Root (KBR). In particular, from a total of \$138 billion spent on contracts awarded to private companies in ten years of the war, KBR won contracts worth \$39.5 billion making it the biggest ever awarded to a company (Young, 2013). Today, the Iraqi oil industry which was earlier nationalized and closed to Western oil firms is now dominated by western companies including British Petroleum, Chevron, ExxonMobil, Halliburton and Shell (Juhasz, 2013). Obviously, these cases reflect the strategic logic behind US and other western state's intervention in conflict zones particularly in Petro-States where they fuel the violence in their favour.

Furthermore, the role being played by Saudi Arabia in the Syrian crisis also offers a number of political economic lessons about state intervention in conflict zones. For example, the provision of financial and military supports by the Sunni-led government of Saudi Arabia for anti-government forces (which are mostly Sunni Muslims) in Syria, could be viewed as an attempt by the Sunni-led government of Saudi Arabia to bring to an end the Shiite/Alawite dominance of the majority Sunni Muslims in Syria (Palmer, 2002; Wagner & Cafiero, 2017).

If this is achieved, it will also bring to an end the Syria/Iran diplomatic ties – a diplomatic relation the Saudi government has long fought to truncate for years (Palmer, 2002; Wagner & Cafiero, 2017).

Conclusion

This paper makes the case that there is need to interrogate the BH and IS terrorism from a political-economic point of view. Thus, it has been argued that these terrorists are rational beings who have deployed violence to achieve political and economic benefits. This way, terrorism becomes 'an end to a means' in the hands of conflict entrepreneurs in capitalist societies. Therefore, there is a strong need for the following.

In the case of BH, the Nigerian government in addition to its repressive counter-measures needs to invest massively in creating white and blue collar jobs for its citizens particularly the youths who easily fall prey to the antics of conflict entrepreneurs like BH. Added to this the government should also prosecute without bias corrupt political office holders who have misappropriated state funds meant for the development and provision of public goods in the society. In the same way, alleged perpetrators of the BH carnage in the custody of government should be given fair hearing in a court of law. If this is done it may help mitigate the further spread of the BH insurgencies in the country and beyond.

In Iraq and Syria, both governments should immediately jettison the culture of alienating other identity groups in the country. In particular, the Iraqi government should discontinue the policy of De-Ba'athification while at the same time acknowledge the presence and needs of all other groups within its territory. In the same way the Syrian government should increase the numbers of Sunni Arabs and other non-Alawite groups appointed into its government structure. In addition, the Bashar al-Asad regime should also begin the setting up of structures that will lead to a successful transition from one government to another rather than the continued personalisation of the state as a private enterprise. This could be achieved through non-violent means including negotiations and dialogue with other aggrieved parties. No doubt

this will bring about governments that reflect inclusiveness rather than alienation in both countries – Iraq and Syria. At the very least, states – Nigeria, Iraq and Syria – must also find ways on how best to cut funding from which BH and IS draw from to fund their campaigns. Until this is achieved, acts of terrorism may never cease to occur in the regions.

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