



A Well-Oiled Machine?

*Linkages between youth violence,
motivators, and oil rentierism in Nigeria*

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SGED10, Spring 2021

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Acknowledgements

I would first and foremost like to sincerely thank my supervisor, Magnus, for his guidance and support throughout the whole process of writing this thesis. His advice has been invaluable.

I also want to thank my friends for their constant solidarity and encouragement over the course of this project.

Finally, my family has my deepest gratitude for their unwavering support of my academic path, my move to Sweden and everything leading up to this point. Thank you, always.

Abstract

This thesis is presented as an analytical synthesis of theoretical and case specific literature and statistics discussing youth bulge theory and its connections to oil rentierism in the case of two regions in Nigeria. The main method used for analysis was a combination of content and deductive thematic analysis of primary and secondary sources. The analysis of this paper finds that in the Niger Delta region of the southeast of Nigeria, violent conflict has rather obvious and direct linkages to the rentier state, while these connections are far more subtle and indirect in the northeast. This thesis also finds that youth participating in violent conflict tend to be motivated by need or grievance as opposed to greed, though it is difficult to specifically pinpoint one or the other, thus an additional approach has been employed to illustrate how these concepts overlap and interact.

Keywords: Oil rentierism, violent conflict, youth, youth bulge, need, greed, grievance, resources, terrorism, Boko Haram

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1. Introduction

The United Nations Population Division estimates that by the year 2050, the population of Western Africa will have reached nearly 800 million people, over half of which are projected to live in Nigeria alone (United Nations 2019). Despite being one of the most ethnically diverse African nations and boasting the highest GDP on the continent (Statista 2021), Nigeria faces a crossroads. The massive oil reserves located predominantly in the southeast region of the Niger Delta provide over 90% of the country's exports (Offiong 2019), though the reserves of 'black gold' generate more than just revenue. Nigeria's economy, like some other states dominated by oil production, has become highly dependent on the resource, neglecting other sectors of the economy like manufacturing and agriculture, the latter of which was a pillar of the economy prior to discovery of oil in the country. This has left many Nigerians without work and impoverished, not least of all the country's considerable youth population. In fact, as recently as 2020 it has been estimated that 40% of the Nigerian population is living below the poverty line of 381.75 USD per year (World Bank 2020a). Because of the Nigerian government's limited capacity to provide equitably for their citizens, the levels of inequality in Nigeria are extremely high and it's Human Capital Index is amongst the lowest, globally (World Bank 2020b). This inequality is notably resultant of the unequal distribution of oil revenues, the majority of which end up back in the hands of the state which neglects to invest this revenue in infrastructure and support systems that would benefit the Nigerian population.

The limited economic opportunity due to lack of economic diversification maintained in Nigeria's petroconomy has greatly impacted the country's large population of youth, which is estimated to be between 30-50% of the total population. The levels of unemployment and underemployment across the country are not exactly optimistic, leading to resentment towards the state. In many different cases and contexts, this resentment coupled with other factors such as oppression has historically led to instances of violence and violent conflict between youth populations and the state, a prominent example of which is the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011. It is this pattern of poverty, lack of opportunity and oppression that has similarly catalysed violence in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria as well as youth participation in the terrorist sect, Boko Haram, in the northeast of the country. While it is certainly not ground-breaking that large cohorts of underemployed or unemployed youth increase the risk of violence in a given region or state, there has been less research conducted on how youth violence and the motivations of these actors in the two abovementioned regions may be related to oil rentierism.

Left unaddressed, youth violence and terrorism are likely to wreak havoc on the country as youth are destitute and desperate, seeking solutions through violent conflict. Therefore, the following thesis will seek to explore the interacting mechanisms between violence and youth in the northeast and southeast of Nigeria and discuss how oil rentierism in the country additionally factors into the unrest found in these two regions of the country. The following research will thus seek to address to abovementioned gap by further exploring the connections between youth violence and oil rentierism in the case of Nigeria.

1.1 Aims and Research Questions

The aim of this research is to explore the connections between Nigeria's oil rentier economy and large youth cohort relative to the population in the context of violence in the northeastern and southeastern regions of the country. Two research questions have been employed to discuss the two-fold aims of this study. These specific aims are:

- To explore the connections between Rentier State Theory and Youth Bulge Theory in the context of two regions in Nigeria;
- To discuss the motivators behind youth participation in violent conflict in these two regions.

The main research question this thesis seeks to answer is therefore:

- a. *How is Nigeria's oil rentier economy connected to the different forms and perpetrators of violent conflict in the northeast and the southeast of Nigeria?*

The secondary research question is:

- b. *In what ways is Nigeria's large youth population connected to the ongoing turmoil perpetuated by oil rentierism in these two regions?*

1.2 Delimitations

It is important to acknowledge that this study has been strictly delimited to the occurrence of youth violence in conjunction with oil rentierism in two regions in Nigeria. While the theories discussed in Chapter Four may be broadly applicable to other regions and contexts, the scope of this study is focused on the Niger Delta region in the southeast and the northeastern region for the country. It is additionally important to address the term 'youth' in the context of this paper. Though not always expressly stated, the term 'youth' in the context of a youth bulge and violence more often than not refers to the male youth population. This

does not hold true to all data sources used in this research; therefore, the term ‘youth’ refers to both sexes. Additionally, the age range of youth varies based on sources, as will be further discussed in the analysis, Chapter Six. Many multilateral institutions utilise the range of 15-24 in their statistics while the most recent range from Nigeria is 15-29. For this research, it has been decided that ‘youth’ primarily refers to the Nigerian range of 15-29 as this is the context of the case study and encompasses the oft-utilised range. This is also due to the fact that it is difficult to know which range certain studies utilise when it is not expressly stated. The author therefore acknowledges that there is the possibility of discrepancies due to the differing ranges.

1.3 Structure of Thesis

This thesis is organised into seven main chapters. Following the introduction is a literature review summarising important previous research conducted in more broad terms about rentier states, the resource curse and linkages between youth and violence. Chapter Three provides the reader with the necessary background information to understand the technicalities of the thesis and its analysis of the case. Chapter Four then discusses the theoretical framework on which the analysis of this project is based. After this is the research design which includes information about the data used for the study, the methodology utilised for the analysis, and a brief reflection about the philosophical grounding of the research. Following this chapter is Chapter Six, the analysis and discussion which presents the findings of this thesis and answers the two research questions. The final chapter concludes the research with reference back to the above research questions, sums up the main findings, and reflects on further research that should be conducted on this topic.

2. Literature Review

This chapter will review some of the main pre-existing literature concerning oil rentierism and forms of political violence in a general context which will be further discussed in the analysis using Nigeria as a case. The theories discussed below will be further elaborated upon in the theoretical framework.

2.1 Rentier State Theory

The broad definition of rentier states was brought forth predominantly by Hossein Mahdavy, describing them as “*countries that receive on a regular basis substantial amounts of external*

rents” (Mahdavy 1970: 428). More recent research has built upon and conditionalized this definition, particularly when it comes to the concept of the resource curse, or the paradox of plenty. For example, it is argued that rents should come from foreign sources, not domestic, the government must be receiving the majority of rents, and only a minimal portion of the population is involved in the production of the resource (Ngwu & Ugwu 2015: 424-425).

In Mahdavy’s 1970 work, ‘The Patterns and Problems of Economic Development in Rentier States: The Case of Iran’, he discusses several components of Iran’s rentier economy and important contextual conditions that facilitate a continued reliance on oil production and exportation for revenues. Importantly, he notes that the lack of necessity of taxation can lead to stronger authoritarianism and lower accountability, as well as lack of investment in other sectors (Mahdavy 1970: 432, 453, 456; Ross 2015: 243-245). He claims that the initial abundance of a sought-after resource such as oil creates a short-sightedness that leads to a lack of development and technological innovation in any sort of urgent manner, which is unlike the majority of relatively resource poor countries that have experienced faster and more dramatic growth than rentier economies (Mahdavy 1970: 443; de Soysa 2000: 121). This deficiency in the economic sector is illustrated in massive income disparity between rural and urban populations and neglect of other sectors such as agriculture (Mahdavy 1970: 443; Kemi 2016: 105). These negative consequences, among a multitude of others, are sometimes described as the phenomenon of the resource curse, or the paradox of plenty.

2.2 The Resource Curse Thesis

The resource curse has also been a topic of much scholarship, from whether it exists at all to the search for generalisable explanations fitting across differing contexts. Richard Auty first coined the term ‘the resource curse’ in a 1993 publication, *Sustaining Development in Mineral Economies: The Resource Curse Thesis*, building off of literature concerning the Dutch Disease (Perkins 1995: 159), a primarily economic phenomenon in which a weak manufacturing sector is resultant of reliance on a singular commodity or export, expanded upon in the theoretical framework (Chapter Four). The concept of the resource curse is relatively straightforward: a country that is almost exclusively reliant on the exportation of natural resources is more likely to experience stagnation of the economy, authoritarian regimes and political violence, possibly in the form of civil war (D’Amato & Del Panta 2017; Ghatak & Karakaya 2021).

Previous to this concept, it was assumed as late as the 1950s that resource rich countries would have a developmental advantage over those that lacked in this category, however, several (mainly structuralist) scholars viewed this endowment differently, that is to say, they viewed the reliance on resources as a vulnerability in a fluctuating international market and a weakness in the national economy of these countries (Ross 1999: 301). This was due to disproportionate emphasis of importance in favour of resource revenues, production and exportation over other economic sectors (ibid). During the following decades, however, an increased reliance on natural resources in resource-rich economies resulted in devastating economic losses during the numerous crises and crashes at the end of the 20th century, leading to the exploration of concepts such as the resource curse (Ross 1999: 302-303).

The concept of the resource curse has been notably discussed by Jeffery Sachs and Andrew Warner in their 1995 paper entitled “Natural Resource Abundance and Economic Growth” which addresses the lack of economic growth associated with oil and resource rich countries in comparison to those without an abundance of natural resources. However, other authors such as Alexeev & Conrad (2011) find contradictory evidence, claiming that there is not a significant negative relationship between abundance of natural resources and economic growth. As the aim of these authors is to explore the “*impact of natural resource endowment, and especially oil wealth, on economic growth and its factors, institutional development, and certain aspects of welfare in the economies in transition*” (Alexeev & Conrad 2011: 446), it could be argued that the fact that these authors essentially exclude certain political factors is what contributes to the contradictory perspective, a notion discussed by another important contributor to the ongoing debate concerning the resource curse.

Michael L. Ross has put forth a number of oft-cited reviews and studies about the resource curse over the past decades (Ross 1999, 2001, 2004, 2015). According to his 1999 literature review of rentier economy literature, he finds that there is a disconnect between political and economic perspectives, the former searching for multitudes of explanations for the existence of the resource curse, while the latter have focused on producing significant data sets that exclude several of these robust explanations (Ross 1999: 299). Though all of these scholars understand that a lack of growth and development existed in resource revenue reliant countries (particularly, those exporting mineral and petroleum resources), the issues stemmed from a lack of explanation(s) for as to why it exists in some contexts but not others. Ross goes on to note the recurring issue of lack of validity in several prominent works which discuss oil

rentierism and the resource curse prior to his 1999 review, which creates significant gaps in the existing research. The lack of comparative power and undefined variables across several studies continues to illustrate his earlier contention that political studies lacked empirical support and were often contradictory, habitually because the authors attempt to compare oil rentier states that do not have enough in common to properly compare or gain significant validity (Ross 1999: 313-319).

The author revisited the subject in 2015, acknowledging the vast number of studies conducted on the topic since 2001 (Ross 2015: 240). While it is still widely acknowledged that there exists a link between certain natural resources (namely petroleum, gemstone and other hard rock minerals) and violence, a difficulty lies in finding generalisable explanations for natural resource dependent countries (Ross 2015; Basedau & Lacher 2006: 23). Perhaps this stems from a lack of valid empirics and testing from politically oriented studies, attempts at comparing vastly differing contexts, or general lack of available and reliable data from sub-Saharan Africa and other developing regions and countries (Jerven 2013: 8). Certainly, some level of discrepancy lies in the large assortment of measures and indicators to explain and test the many hypotheses within the realm of rentierism and the resource curse, as it would fail to generate results that are comparable. Even so, the varying contexts and circumstances create difficulty on their own, even between states that produce petrol. Despite this, positive correlations between high levels of oil wealth and strengthening of autocratic regimes are widely present in scholarship, such as Mahdavy (1970), Wilson (2010), Ross (1999, 2015), Wahman & Basedau (2015), and beyond. Additionally, if the political components and explanations for the operation of rentier states are viewed to be equally or potentially even more important than the economic components, as Mahdavy suggests, (1970: 466), then this is even more problematic than originally thought, as there exists little concrete evidence that points to causal explanations of the resource curse in a generalisable context. While generalisability certainly is an important factor to consider, the extremely differing cases and contextual factors surrounding rentierism, the resource curse, and violence therefore seem to require a more specified lens for analysis, as opposed to searching for patterns across countries. It is for this reason among several others that this thesis is focused on a singular country.

There exists a large amount of scholarship concerning the connections between rentier economies and the concept of the resource curse. A country's reliance on a singular, primary resource exported for revenue can create a lack of diversification in an economy, leading to

lack of employment opportunities in other sectors. Thus, the issue of unemployment or underemployment may be created, based on contextual conditions, as witnessed in studies by Kemi (2016) or Costello (2016). One important factor that can contribute to, or be affected by, the paradox of plenty is governance. In rentier economies with strong governments and resource management policies and practices, there is evidence that shows that these factors likely mitigate several issues associated with the resource curse, such as excessive internal violence and unemployment, for example in Norway and Botswana, both of which are democratic (Mähler 2010: 8). However, countries with weak governance and lacking attempts at economic diversification, for example many other famous oil rentier economies such as Iran, tend to face these negative consequences. This could explain why there is a connection between oil and strengthening authoritarian regimes (different from a weak government¹), and conflicted results on oil's effect on democratic regimes (Ross 2015: 243-245). It is found that oil may strengthen both authoritarian regimes and democratic regimes, though it is highly dependent on contextual factors like the pre-existing strength of the democracy and the quality of institutions (Ross 2015: 245-246; Wahman & Basedau 2015: 4-6).

2.3 Oil Resources and Violent Conflict

While there has been relatively extensive research on the connections between political violence and natural resources, or within rentier states in general, there is less so concerning the linkages between terrorism and rentier states. However, there are several ways in which it is possible to draw connections between the two based on pre-existing literature. First, violent conflict is more likely to escalate to civil war in oil production states (Lee 2018; Ghatak & Karakaya 2021). This is due to a multitude of factors, including governance, regime type and ethnic makeup of a country or region. Urdal (2006), for example, noticed that governments that fall in between authoritarian and democratic are less likely to experience internal conflict, while starkly autocratic or democratic societies are at a higher risk (Urdal 2006: 613). However, Ghatak and Karakaya (2021) have noted that the opposite is true, rather that countries that fall somewhere in the middle of democracy and autocracy are actually at a higher risk of conflict (Ghatak & Karakaya 2021: 11). Though Nigeria would refer to itself as democratic, other factors such as limited taxation or low accountability of government as well as a heavy-handed military point the country in a more autocratic direction. As this puts the country in a sort of

¹ For the sake of this thesis, a weak government or state is characterised by weak institutions that are unable to safeguard citizen properties and rights, tax the population and otherwise provide for the population socially, economically and politically (de Soysa 2000: 122).

middle ground, it is important to acknowledge other risk-enhancing factors and note that combinations of different contextual factors are usually more indicative of accurate explanation than more generalisable theoretical claims.

Thus, the concept of territory or space is important here—groups that stake claim to a territory based on ethnic, religious or other grounds are also more likely to resort to terrorism and potentially civil war, due to like-minded nationalism and ethno-religious ties. Interestingly, territorial claim or lack thereof does not make a statistical difference in creating civil conflict, but the likelihood rises with the level of oil production (Ghatak & Karakaya 2021: 12-13). Land scarcity is another potentially motivating factor that may result in conflict and violence between groups or against the state (Yusufu Bagaji et al. 2011: 39).

D'Amato & Del Panta (2017) review the abundance of literature connecting civil war and rentier states, ultimately suggesting that a general connection between the two is weak, though the likelihood rises with the presence of certain conditional factors, particularly that of ethnic tensions and economic inequalities between different groups. They go on to discuss the two blanket statements that are important pillars of the oil debate, the first being that oil hinders development and the second being oil causes civil war (D'Amato & Del Panta 2017: 362). Most importantly, they note the fact that these two arguments are rarely discussed in the context of the other, leading to contradictions in scholarship, as well as the previously discussed issue of the absence of politics in favour of economic and structural factors (ibid).

2.4 Youth and Violence

Though the following theory will be further fleshed out in Chapter Four, it is still relevant to mention in the discussion of pre-existing literature concerning political violence and oil rentierism. Henrik Urdal is noted as one of the foremost scholars on the Youth Bulge Theory, a theory contending that a high relative population of youth (often accompanied by other context-specific factors) greatly increases the risk of violence such as riots, terrorism and domestic armed conflict (Urdal 2006: 623), all of which are present in the two regions of Nigeria that will be explored in this thesis. Recently, two scholars have rebuffed this theory, though only to the extent that a significant youth bulge will affect the onset of non-ethnic wars, though have little effect on ethnic wars (Yair & Miodownik 2016). Though different studies examine the different ways in which youth bulges and violence interact, there is no shortage of

studies that confirm a positive correlation between the two (see Goldstone 2002, Samuel 2017, Cramer 2011 and beyond). As an example of such, one might also think back to the uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region around 2011, which came to be known as the Arab Spring. The violence and riots that characterised this region for many months was played out by youth in the region, furious with the extremely low levels of employment, rising food and basic necessity prices, and political regimes (Mulderig 2013: 14; Hoffman & Jamal 2012: 170-171). Hoffman & Jamal (2012) point out that the relative high population of youth in the MENA region is only topped by the comparative youth population rates of Sub-Saharan Africa, and that this in combination with the citizenry's discontent of their respective states catalysed this violent series of events.

Despite these empirics and other examples, yet other scholars note that a youth bulge is indicative of opportunity, not just as a risk factor. For example, Omoju & Abraham (2014) discuss the potential of obtaining a demographic dividend through youth empowerment and investment, which is achieved when a relative high population of youth “*stimulate economic growth and development*” (Omoju & Abraham 2014: 352). Therefore, a significant youth population is not inherently dangerous, but in combination with other factors, youth are easier and quicker to mobilise.

3. Background

This chapter will explain the relevance of Nigeria's historical connections to oil as well as the country's demographics and governance. Following this is a brief background on the organisation known as Boko Haram.

3.1 Demographics and Historical Context of Nigeria

Before the modern effects of oil rentierism and violence in Nigeria can be discussed, one must first take a look into the history and demographic makeup of the country. Nigeria is a federation made up of 36 autonomous states with a wide array of religious and ethnic groups dominating certain areas (World Bank 2020b). The majority of the northern region is populated by Islam practicing Hausa-Fulani and Kanuri people while the southern states, are dominated mainly by Christian Yoruba, Ijaw², and Igbo ethnic groups, influenced by Christian missionaries during

² May also be spelled “Ijo”. This ethnic group is less dominant in the southern regions than the Yoruba (southwestern region) or the Igbo (southeastern region).

Nigeria's colonial years under Britain (Mähler 2010: 22; Wunsch 2003: 172). The west and southwest are predominantly Christian Yoruba people with even more historically direct linkages to the British, as Lagos was an important colony for the empire (Smith 2015: 63; Uche 2008: 115).

The amalgamation of north and south Nigeria under a single British governor, Lugard, proved to be impractical due to the sizeable cultural and ethnic differences between the regions (Uche 2008: 114-115). Therefore, tensions between these groups may be partially attributed to regions governed and influenced differently under imperialist powers, as is the case with many countries that were colonised by European countries, however, a notable difference in the case of Nigeria is that of the presence of such a precious resource as oil, discovered and starting to be produced in 1956 in commercial quantities (Smith 2015: 7; Mähler 2010: 14).

Despite the revenue generation of oil, employment opportunities in this dominant economic sector are extremely low relative to the population of the country. For example, Mähler estimates that, as of 2010, only about 35,000 jobs were directly related to oil and its production (Mähler 2010: 18), while the country's population was over 158.5 million at this time (World Bank 2019b). Compounded with this is the availability of arms and weapons supplied to youth populations by politicians and elites for political purposes of intimidation that have not been recovered (Mähler 2010: 28), as well as international and cross-border arms dealing that has provided militants, security forces and terror groups alike with weapons (Ikoh 2013: 40-41; Mähler 2010: 26). As oil continues to dominate the economy and agricultural employment declines, youth find fewer economic opportunities and are underemployed, even those with university certifications (Mähler 2010: 18; Okoli 2015: 14).

Civil conflicts are not new in Nigeria. The piecing together of the richly diverse northern and southern portions of Nigeria by colonial powers increased pre-existing tensions between groups of different religious beliefs and ethnicities (Uche 2008). The commercial production of oil beginning in 1956 was not nearly the only catalyst of violence between different groups against each other under a weak state which was unequipped to handle enormous quantities of people and the ensuing conflict, though the issues of oil wealth distribution certainly exacerbate the existing tensions (Smith 2015: 65-66). These tensions, coupled with the commodification of oil in the southeast, and to some extent, the central or midwest, contributed to the facilitation of the Nigerian civil war, beginning with a coup in 1966 and secession of Biafra (predominantly Igbo people of the southeast) in 1967, pitting Biafra against the federal government, each side

backed by different international actors acting on their own economic and political interests (Uche 2008; Wunsch 2003). The war came to an end in January of 1970 with the surrender of Biafra to the Nigerian federal government (Wunsch 2003: 170). Since this time, the southeastern region around the Niger Delta has experienced turbulence and violent conflict in the form of rioting, destruction of property, kidnapping and beyond. These crimes are often politically or economically linked to oil in some regard, be it outright oil theft or pipeline vandalism. Despite the 2009 amnesty agreement and disarmament in the region, violence has continued to plague the Niger Delta.

Historically, Nigeria, and indeed much of African governance has been plagued by electoral fraud and political violence and thuggery (Samuel 2017: 2; Yusufu Bagaji et al. 2011: 39). In Nigeria where political elites maintain much of the power and wealth in the rentier economy, godfatherism, clientelism and rent-seeking behaviours perpetuate corruption and favouritism along political and ethnic lines. Further intensifying ethnic conflicts was the re-election of Goodluck Jonathan as Nigeria's president, a Christian from the Ijaw ethnic group in the south of the country, despite the rather informal rotation of representation between candidates from the north and the south (McKenna 2020). However, he was beaten in the presidential race in 2015 by Muslim military leader and former governor of Kaduna state, Muhammadu Buhari, who many believed would be able to better tackle the insurgency of Boko Haram in the northeast (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2020).

3.2 Boko Haram

The terrorist organisation that originated in the northeastern states of Nigeria refers to itself as *Jama'atu Alhus Sunnah Lid Da'awati Wal Jihad*, translated as 'People Committed to the Prophet's Teachings for Propagation and Jihad' (Anugwom 2018: 48). This organisation is more commonly called Boko Haram, essentially translated as 'Western education is forbidden' (ibid), which can be said to form some sort of basis of their ideals of Islamisation of Nigeria and beyond. Much of their attacks have been contained to their area of occupation in the northeastern states, though their actions present a threat to the entire country as well as neighbouring nations.

Borno state, in the northeast, contains the large city of Maiduguri, portions of which operate as a base for Boko Haram, as their first leader, Mohammed Yusuf, established a religious centre

there in 2002 (Okoro 2014: 108). After the death of Yusuf, resultant from a Boko Haram attack in 2009, Abubakar Shekau took over as leader of the organisation, though little is known about the man (Anugwom 2018: 113; Smith 2015: 109). Under Shekau, attacks have become increasingly more frequent and violent with no signs of slowing down. Discouragingly, much is still unknown or unclear about the structure, funding and participants of Boko Haram insurgents, including the possibility that there are several jihadist factions and domestic terrorist cells in northeastern Nigeria, at least one of which is a splinter group claiming to be supported by the Islamic State (Anugwom 2018: 14). As the structure of the organisation is not known beyond skeletal basics (Okoro 2014: 109), it is not possible to know if these other factions are offshoots of Boko Haram itself or independent groups inspired by Boko Haram's actions.

Unlike the Maitatsine movement³ and riots in the latter 20th century, the sect is not entirely anti-modern but rather at one point attempted to distinguish which aspects of Westernisation were and were not *haram*, such as vehicles (which Yusuf himself drove) or certain medicines (Anugwom 2018: 81). Yusuf seemed to utilise this at will rather than consistently, notably during interrogation shortly before his death in 2009, where he is cited for wearing Western style trousers (deemed permissible by Yusuf because the cotton material they were made from comes from Allah), and confronted about the contradiction that the Qur'an urges Allah's followers to acquire knowledge (Smith 2015: 56-57, 81). Yusuf answers some questions and avoids others in a way that could be described as his selective interpretation of the Qur'an and the teachings of Allah (ibid) that potentially made the initial messages of Boko Haram so appealing to young, impoverished men of the northeast. In fact, Yusuf was described by the deputy governor of Borno state as having "*this kind of monopoly in convincing the youth about the Holy Qur'an and Islam*" (Smith 2015: 79). Though Yusuf was a charismatic man, his messages of anti-governmental and anti-Western sentiment were also not hard to exemplify. During the colonial period, the British were rather hands-off in the north of Nigeria, focusing predominantly on their colonies in the south and neglecting the education of the highly populous northern regions (Smith 2015: 63; Uche 2008: 115), therefore making it easier for Boko Haram to demonise the West. For decades, violence inflicted by federal security forces

³ Sometimes cited as a precursor to Boko Haram, the Maitatsine movement was a form of violent Islamic fundamentalism that wreaked havoc particularly in the 70s and 80s, involving riots that resulted in thousands of deaths in the northern regions of Nigeria (Smith 2015: 75; Anugwom 2018: 41-43).

on the population has been an issue, so it was not a far stretch to claim that the military and state are anti-Islam and therefore enemies of Boko Haram (Anugwom 2018: 74).

Solidification of Islam in the north can be seen through the official implementation of Sharia law throughout many of the northern regions, post 2000 (Wunsch 2003: 171). Despite Boko Haram's proclamations of jihad and pursuit of Islamisation across the country, this implementation of Sharia was not seen as 'good enough' by the organisation's leaders and members who suggest that even the Muslim elites of the north are in some way tainted by the West and are not true followers of Islam (Okoro 2014: 108). This perspective, among others to be further discussed in the analysis, gives rise to the idea that Boko Haram is not purely religiously motivated as they claim to be, but have other underlying goals and incentives that drive their terroristic actions.

The consequences of Boko Haram's activity and violence are not solely contained to the northern states. While the majority of attacks have taken place in the northeast, with the notable exceptions of the UN and police headquarters attacks in Abuja, the failure of the Nigerian government and security forces to address the insurgency has created problems across the country. Not only is there a lack of confidence and trust in the country's security forces in handling the insurgency but security force violence against the citizenry is a continual problem, leading to violence across the nation (AI 2020: 7).

4. Theoretical Framework

The following section will more thoroughly explain the theories introduced in the literature review. The data collected for this study will be analysed through the lens of several theories. The intention behind using multiple theories is to thoroughly delimit and specify the factors that this study will be exploring while still leaving room for additional contextual factors, this study being non-exhaustive. The theories below have been chosen as a way to guide the analysis of the collected data while not wholly relying on the overall generalisability, as this is a case-specific study. As there are certain overlapping elements within these theories, they will be used in combination to more thoroughly examine and analyse the data collected, as will be specified further in this section below.

4.1 Rentier State Theory and the Resource Curse

The overarching theory employed in this paper is Rentier State Theory (RST), essentially a categorisation of states that, as previously explained, obtain most of their revenue from external rents derived from a natural resource, such as oil or minerals (Mahdavy 1970). The definition of a rentier state is relatively broad in nature, though some scholars have attempted to narrow it down slightly by specifying where the revenues come from (external actors) and who the rents end up going to (the state) (Benli Altunışık 2014: 77). Rentier states are also characterised by some additional factors, notably when it comes to regime type. The revenues gained from exporting resources lead to rent-seeking behaviour (for example, clientelism), lack of public institutions and low levels of taxation, all of which combine to weaken democracy and foster autocratic regimes as citizens are reliant on the state but have little say or power on state actions (Basedau & Lacher 2006: 11). In terms of redistribution of revenues, it is more often than not localised to the area in which the resource was produced, but far more likely kept in the hands of the state or elites, leading to high levels of inequality (Mähler 2010: 16; Ngwu & Ugwu 2015: 423). Most importantly, this theory is central to the investigation but not the only pillar upon which the analysis stands. Giacomo Luciani, known well for his contributions to scholarship on rentier states, commented in a recent interview that RST should have been utilised more as a tool for interpretation instead of the sole explanation for the behaviours of oil rentier states (Yamada & Hertog 2020: 1). This use of RST as the ‘only theory’ in analysis is a main reason for the criticism of it, though Luciani argues that its original intention was to be used in combination with other theories as it cannot, on its own, fully explain a single case (ibid). Thus, Rentier State Theory is included in the theoretical framework as a basis for categorising Nigeria and partially helping to explain some of the economic and political conditions within the state, for example the difficulty in building or maintaining a strong democratic regime or the lack of employment opportunities. RST is pertinent to this thesis because it draws the connection between differing contexts with some similar attributes (other rentier nations) and allowed the researcher to discover additional sources of data relevant to the case. Therefore, the purpose of this theory in this framework is primarily an explanatory backbone from which the following theories and concepts will build on to discuss the case of Nigeria.

Accompanying RST in the theoretical framework is the concept of the resource curse. At its most basic, this refers to the pattern that states that are rich in natural resources also tend to

experience negative consequences as a result of this abundance and subsequent dependence on said resources. Scholarship concerning the resource curse often falls into one of two categories, which are either economic, predominantly concerned with growth and diversification, or socio-political, more focused on violence and instability that is assumed to occur in resource rich states (Yusufu Bagaji et al. 2011: 36). From the economic perspective, the resource curse contends that a country's abundance of natural resources may hinder development and lead to a lack of economic diversification (Ngwu & Ugwu 2015: 422-423; Karl 2004: 662). The Dutch Disease is also frequently discussed in the context of the resource curse. This term describes the lack of economic growth in natural resource-rich countries that is resultant of a decline in the manufacturing sectors of an economy due to an increased demand of non-tradable goods (Sachs & Warner 1995: 6). de Soysa (2000) connects the negative consequences of the Dutch Disease to rentier states, noting that the stagnating effects on the resource-rich economies in question are exacerbated by the direction of revenue streams towards the government or elites as opposed to increasing institutional capacity or improving social provisions (de Soysa 2000: 121).

It is important here to note that the resource curse itself is not inevitable, but rather based on country specific contexts and factors that accumulate to result in poor economic performance and other negative consequences like civil war or different forms of violent conflict (Ngwu & Ugwu 2015: 422-423; Mähler 2010: 6). For example, countries such as Botswana and Norway, both of which have abundant natural resources and are well-developed and economically efficient democracies have not experienced such a 'curse', likely due to differing factors in the specific cases of the country (Mähler 2010: 8; Ngwu & Ugwu 2015: 429-430; Karl 2004: 662). Earlier industrialisation, strong manufacturing sectors and economic diversification have all been connected to better economic growth (Mähler 2010: 8; Sachs & Warner 1995: 3-7) and are essentially the opposite of something like the Dutch Disease which is created by a weak manufacturing sector and reliance on a single commodity.

However, using Nigeria as a case, its dependency on oil for state revenue while neglecting other economic sectors, for example agriculture, the resource curse may be applicable when taken into consideration among other factors such as regime type and state stability (Karl 2004: 668; Wahman & Basedau 2015: 5). These social and political factors lead into the second school of thought on the resource curse, which is that resource reliance results in violent

conflict, despite, or perhaps in accordance with the semi-authoritarian nature of the state (Yusufu Bagaji et al. 2011: 36; Collier & Hoeffler 2004, 2005).

4.2 Need, Greed and Grievance

This also brings into the equation the concepts of greed and grievance, predominantly argued for by Collier & Hoeffler (2004, 2005). In other words, these scholars assert that violence is either motivated by some form of economic incentive gained from proliferation of violence or a way to ‘right the wrongs’ done to the people by the state. The ‘greed’ concept is more normally referred to as ‘opportunity’ in more recent works, though still maintains relatively similar implications (Cramer 2011: 3; Berdal 2005: 689). Laurie Nathan (2005) critiques the works of Collier & Hoeffler for several reasons. Backing up the majority of Nathan’s arguments is the fact that she finds their claims to be based on insufficient empirical evidence. She criticises the way the authors collect their data, essentially arguing that they cannot make these broad claims based on the limited data they have collected and analysed and the conclusions they draw cannot be justified based on their methodology and research (Nathan 2005). Despite criticisms of this theory, multilateral actors such as the United Nations and World Bank have fixated on the distinction between greed and grievance and used this differentiation to help to form policy addressing such ideas of ‘greed-driven’ rebel groups (Berdal 2005: 688-690).

It should be noted, however, that the explanations for violence and civil war are not at all binary. The concept of ‘need’ has also been added to these explanations, extending to crime as well as violence, asserting that violence against the state or other actors is necessary for survival in some way (Okoli 2019: 14-15), for example, oil bunkering or theft in order to provide resources or money for one’s family. However, the addition of this third explanation of course does not suffice in providing a substantial explanation for why civil wars or violent conflicts begin, but these three concepts may provide the basis for understanding motivation for participation in violent actions. Therefore, this thesis argues that the use of these ideas is not invalid but rather can be used in combination with other theories as well as context-specific factors that inform on the case itself, keeping in mind that these three explanations are not all-encompassing, but rather provide directionality. It may be more conducive to instead view these three explanations as a Venn diagram (see Figure 4.2 below) with overlapping sections that are not necessarily easily distinguishable and can change based on the actors or crimes

committed. The rigidity of the distinction between these concepts is something this thesis seeks to discuss in the context of Nigeria.

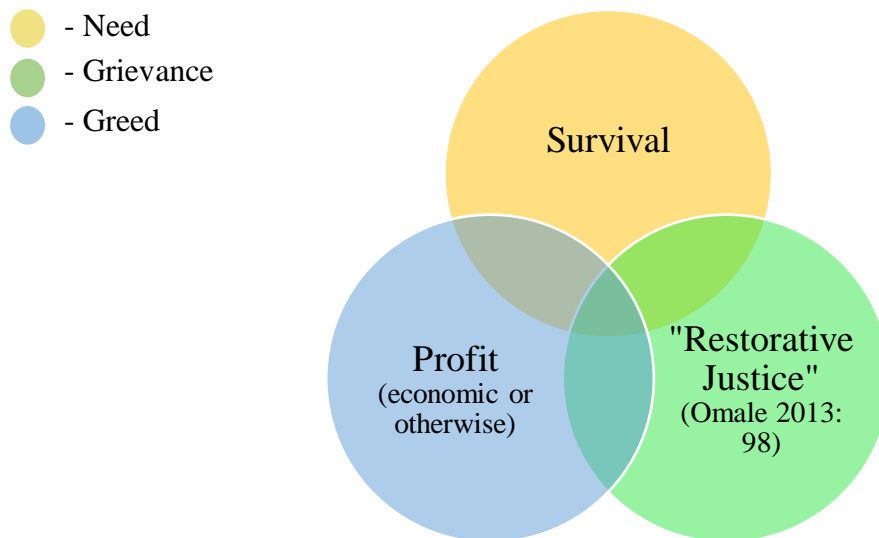


Figure 4.2 Venn diagram depicting overlapping terms of need, greed, and grievance

Figure 4.2 depicts the overlapping nature of the three concepts of need, greed and grievance discussed in this thesis. This figure briefly describes what is meant by each of these three terms in accordance with the key above.

4.3 Youth Bulge Theory

To analyse demographic factors, Youth Bulge Theory (YBT) will be employed, a theory that has made connections between a high relative population of unemployed or underemployed youth, generally agreed upon to be between the ages of 15 and 24, and violent conflict (Urdal 2006; Goldstone 2002). As has been the case with the previous theories, a high relative youth population is not grounds alone for claiming causality of political violence or violent conflict but in combination with other factors, such as a weak state, under- or unemployment and pre-existing tensions, there exists extensive research on such a positive correlation (Mähler 2010; Urdal 2006; Cramer 2011). There have been several factors shown to increase the risk of violence when there is a relatively large population of youth in a given regional context. Despite different motivators and environmental factors, Urdal (2006) notes that the presence of youth bulges or cohorts do indeed have linkages that increase the risk of violence and terrorism in a given context (Urdal 2006: 623). Therefore, this theory will be employed to partially describe

and explain the relationship between Nigeria's population demographics and violent conflict in the northeastern and southeastern regions of the country. In combination with the greed versus grievance versus need concepts, this theory will be used to analyse and discuss motivations for participation in violent conflict as well as contextual factors that may have an impact on these motivations, directly or indirectly such as education or social belonging. This is as unemployment, underemployment or lack of suitable employment opportunities, though integral factors, cannot wholly explain participation in violence.

These theories in combination indicate that the conditions in Nigeria lend themselves to increased risk, and indeed increased instances of violent conflict and terrorism. In the following sections, these theories will be employed to further analyse how and why these conditions in this specific context lend themselves to creating an environment that is conducive to violent conflict.

5. Methodology

This chapter will discuss the practical, methodological aspects of this thesis. The research design and philosophical reflections describe the case in more broad terms while the subsequent sections detail specifically how the research was conducted and information on how the data was collected and utilised.

5.1 Research Design

This thesis is organised as a qualitative single case study exploring the connection between oil rentierism and violence in the northeastern and southeastern regions of Nigeria. More specifically, this type of case could be described as a critical case (Bryman 2016: 62). This is the most fitting type as the theories in the framework of this study are historically well-developed in scholarship and the following analysis critically discusses the relevance of these theories to the case (ibid). The critical case study has allowed the author to apply these broad theories to also assist in the determination of external validity and generalisability, as will be discussed below (Halperin & Heath 2017: 214-215). Therefore, employing a single case study design has allowed the researcher to examine the chosen theories and their relation to violence in Nigeria in an in-depth and "*reveal the unique features*" (Bryman 2016: 61) of these connections within the case.

5.2 Philosophical Reflections

The philosophical grounding that has guided this study is critical realism, prominently discussed by Andrew Sayer. This ontological perspective contends a differentiation between the real, the actual and the empirical, the first being the potential or latent “power” held by an object while the actual is what occurs when this power is activated (Sayer 2000: 11-12). The empirical may be associated with either of the two concepts and extends to the “*domain of experience*” (Sayer 2000: 12) and provides a level of observability that increases the confidence in knowledge, though is not required for existence. Aside from these building block terms of the philosophy, critical realism acknowledges that the role of an individual in society is inherently dependent on relations with other individuals and that these dependencies continue to build up social structures which affect each other and so on (Sayer 2000: 13). The relation of this philosophy to the presented thesis lies predominantly in that which is the identification of causal mechanisms (not pure causality) and how they work in certain contextual conditions which social phenomena are dependent on (Sayer 2000: 15; Bryman 2016: 25). Herein lies the grounding reason for exploring the specific contextual conditions of the Nigerian oil state and economy as a part of a whole and how it interacts with other social structures within society.

5.3 Data Collection and Methodology

The collected data for this project consisted of primary and secondary data sources such as previous research, academic journal articles and statistics gathered from online databases. In essence, this thesis is organised as an extensive literature and research review with a critical analysis and discussion, including elements of content analysis. The specific sources of data collected were qualitative data from academic journals, working papers, books and articles published by organisations such as Amnesty International, United Nations and various other multilateral organisations and institutions. Supplementary quantitative data was collected from census and statistics bureaus, the World Bank and other such institutions and integrated with the qualitative data to illustrate and support the findings of the qualitative data. The use of both qualitative and quantitative data has also granted this research a certain level of triangulation that has created “*more complete data*” (Halperin & Heath 2017: 161). Policy documents and action plans from Nigeria have also been reviewed and analysed for content and orientation, specifically the National Youth Policy documents from Nigeria.

The main tactic used for finding relevant scholarship was a keyword search on online databases such as Google Scholar and LUBSearch based on the research questions and snowballing from their sources used (Bryman 2016: 110; Laws et al. 2013: 106; Efron & Ravid 2019: 61). Keywords used included but were not limited to ‘oil rentierism’, ‘terrorism’, ‘youth and violence’ and ‘Boko Haram’. To further narrow down the sources for analysis, a time frame of 2000-present was implemented, excluding the few prior sources presented in the literature review and used to back up the theoretical framework, such as Mahdavy 1970, Ross 1999 and Sachs & Warner 1995. In these cases, purposive sampling was employed to obtain sources from dominant theorists or scholars in their field, such as those previously mentioned, and other relevant theoretical works. This sampling method was further utilised to gather critiques and contrary perspectives of the context and more importantly the theories utilised in this framework in order to establish the groundings for a critical perspective on the theories and case presented hereafter. This provided a more comprehensive basis for analysis and supported the critical nature of the analysis. It was possible to use non-probability sampling as the goal of this research is case and context specific and not intended to be overly generalisable (Halperin & Heath 2017: 347).

5.4 Data Organisation

Using many academic texts, previously published statistics and other primary or secondary sources requires a high level of data organisation and coding. NVivo software was employed for this purpose. The sources were downloaded and briefly described after a preliminary read-through of each text for easier categorisation and comparison of different texts and articles. Each of these sources has then been coded (for example, ‘Weapons and arms dealing’, ‘greed perspective’, ‘ethnic tensions and conflict’) using NVivo software to discern similar concepts, themes, keywords, and topics that have been synthesised into a discussion and comparative analysis between the two regions, thus facilitating a larger analysis of all compiled data, described below.

5.5. Data Analysis

The analysis in Chapter Six takes the shape of a synthesised literature and research review of the evaluated sources, including elements of a qualitative content analysis. The choice of this analysis method stemmed from the literature review format and the necessity of exploring latent content such as motivation and purpose (Halperin & Heath 2017: 346; Snyder 2019:

333). The chosen method will allow for a thorough exploration of the presented theories in the context of Nigeria based on previous research, topic-relevant research in other cases, and statistics. It was vital that all data collected from these sources had been analysed for relevance towards this thesis project and that the ‘original intention’ of the analysed sources was taken into account as a means of counteracting biases and misinterpretations of the content (McLennan & Prinsen 2014: 85; Snyder 2019: 334-335). The sources utilised in this thesis have all been assessed for relevance to the topic while those that did not possess strong enough relevance were not included in the review or analysis. Some sources that were not case or context specific (ie. not pertaining to Nigeria) were able to be employed in the preliminary literature review and theoretical framework but were not always able to be used for the analysis of the case.

The methods of data collection and analysis also grant the researcher the ability to retrospectively explore how the relevant theories or contexts have changed, an aspect that would be far more time consuming and more than likely impossible to produce should the researcher have conducted some of this research in the given time frame for this thesis (McLennan & Prinsen 2014: 89; de Vaus 2001: 113-115). Collected data was critically analysed through a combination of content and deductive thematic analyses to determine the relationship between oil rentierism and violent conflict in Nigeria. The coding assisted in this process by highlighting similarities between the different sources as well as emphasised what is missing in the pre-existing literature to be discussed as the research findings. The author went through a process of preliminary thematic coding which assisted in finding similarities across sources for comparison. Codes at this level were adjusted and added as needed. The ‘Text Search’ and ‘Word Frequency’ functions in NVivo were also used to gather more information out of sources that may have been missed throughout the process as more codes were added. Additional annotations were made in the texts to relate different sources to one another or point out supporting or contrary evidence to be discussed in the analysis. The themes and conclusions drawn in the following chapter, Chapter Six, are resultant of reviewing and analytically synthesising the chosen sources with the accompanying statistics. In line with the philosophical reflection of this thesis, the analysis does not necessarily inform causality but rather discusses the mechanisms, structures and actors that are linked to one another that contribute to the environment of the chosen context.

Additionally, Figure 4.2 discussed in Chapter Four aids in the analysis after the coding process concerning need, greed and grievance. Depicted again below, Figure 5.5 illustrates the portion of the Venn diagram which has informed the analysis and discussion the most concerning motivation, outlined in black. While reading and coding, it was determined that it is difficult to fully place a given actor's motivation for participation in violence firmly in one of the three categories. Therefore, this way of thinking about the three concepts allows for more realistic understanding, focusing more on where the concepts overlap and interact instead of solidly placing one's actions or motivations in only one category.

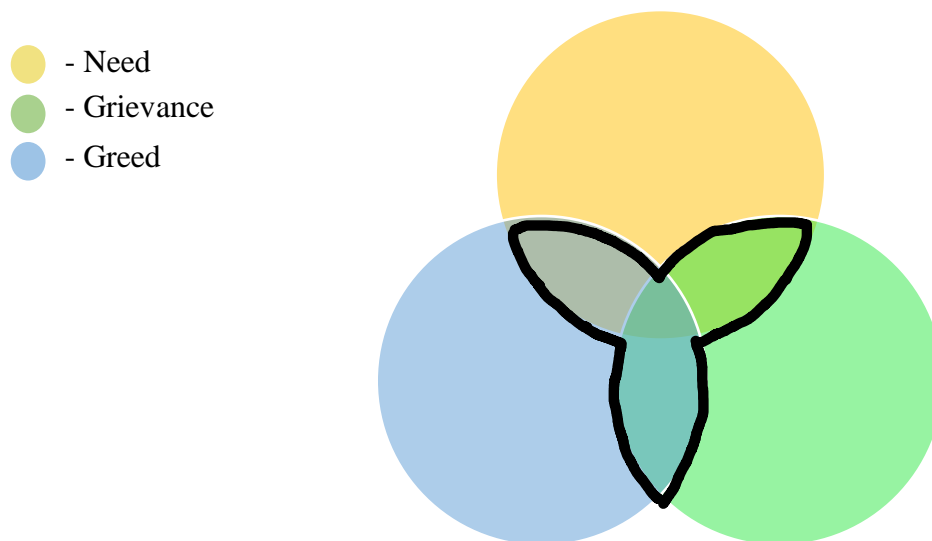


Figure 5.5 The overlapping of need, greed, and grievance.

5.6 Limitations, Ethics and Positionality

There are several limitations that have led the project in the direction of a theory-based study. First, given the shortage of time and resources, it was not possible to travel to Nigeria to collect other types of primary data such as surveys or interviews. This would have been particularly useful to gather some first-hand perspectives concerning motivation in relation to need, greed and grievance. As this was not possible, the project became more theory focused, thus it was more justified to use existing literature on the theories explained in the theoretical framework and combine them with contextual information to discuss the reliability of these theories and concepts in the case of Nigeria. Additionally, existing published literature and statistics, particularly academic sources, are more easily verifiable and accessible online than other types of data (McLennan & Prinsen 2014: 82). However, there does lie difficulty in collecting fully reliable statistics as they are not always frequently or reliably published, so it is possible some

figures are out of date or do not represent the population with complete accuracy (Jerven 2013: 8). As was mentioned in the delimitations and will be discussed further in the analysis, there was also the issue of different age ranges to describe the term ‘youth’ which may also cause some sort of misrepresentation.

As this study is a case study of a specific context, the external validity of the findings may not be generalisable across other cases or contexts (Halperin & Heath 2017: 174). It is possible that a varying degree of generalisability would be possible in other oil rentier economies that contain both a high population of youth and continual instances of violent conflict, though it is not certain to be fully generalisable. The intention of using a single case study is to obtain a level of high internal validity for the specific context while acknowledging that the external validity is not quite as strong (Bryman 2016: 384).

The chosen method of analysis is an unobtrusive method, which reduces the amount of bias as well as ethical issues that more frequently occur in other forms of research (Halperin & Heath 2017: 345; Bryman 2016: 303). Though this research was conducted without the involvement of participants such as interviewees, there are still some ethical considerations and comments to be made. First, though the author falls into the category of “youth”, she does not have personal knowledge of what it is like to fall into this demographic category in Nigeria. In some ways this allows for removal of certain bias, but without this personal experience of the context, a certain level of ignorance is unavoidable. Some level of personal bias is also to be expected in the analysis of the texts as the author has interpreted the data according to her own understanding. In being fully transparent, the author also acknowledges that the following analysis has been gleaned from the literature which the author interpreted along the lines of the theoretical framework as well as her previous research skills and knowledge (Halperin & Heath 2017: 357).

6. Analysis and Discussion

The following section makes up the analysis and discussion which presents the main findings of this research. This section will be examined based on the presented theoretical framework, taking the preliminary literature review and background into consideration. It is organised into five sections as such: The first discusses YBT in the context of Nigeria, the second and third discuss this theory in the Niger Delta and the northeastern regions where Boko Haram is active,

respectively and the fourth contextually discusses the need, greed and grievance motivations. The final section ties the preceding analysis sections back to RST.

6.1 Youth Bulge Theory in Nigeria

As explained in the theoretical framework, Youth Bulge Theory argues that a higher relative number of youths with limited economic opportunities within a given population will increase the risk of violence and violent conflict (Urdal 2006). Many scholars have confronted the idea of the youth bulge and its relation to violence (for example, Collier 2000, Urdal 2006 and Goldstone 2002). By reading and synthesising these and other texts, it has been made clear that there are several factors which can affect this relationship. Several of the factors discussed in this thesis are the relative population of unemployed or underemployed youth (most commonly described as being between the ages of 15 and 24)⁴, level of education, relative deprivation of services and strong institutions, and poverty and discontent towards the state or main political force (Abbo & Zain 2017; Urdal 2006; Caruso & Gavrilova 2012; Goldstone 2002).

In Nigeria, the total population amounted to approximately 202 million as of 2020 (World Bank 2020b), increasing at a rate of 2.6% per annum (World Bank 2019a). This indicates that the population will double in approximately 26.9 years (based on the doubling formula $70/r$ when $r=2.6$). The United Nations World Population Prospects, which takes more than a basic equation into account, estimates that the population of Nigeria will reach approximately 401 million by 2050 (United Nations 2019). This figure attempts to account for other contributing factors such as the rate of urbanisation, migration and fertility, though it is still not entirely possible to accurately predict a country's future demographics, which leaves an uncertain future for Nigeria's demographics and governmental capabilities. The National Youth Policy of the country estimated that in 2006, youth aged 15-34 accounted for 35.6% of the population (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2019: 26). Though more recent statistics with their current youth age bracket of 15-29 were not reported in the document, it assumes that this number is the most accurate representation of the age bracket of 18-35 which was in place until recently in 2019 (ibid). According to The Borgen Project, a non-profit organisation combatting poverty, the number of individuals between the ages of 15 and 35 constitutes more than half of the Nigerian

⁴ It is pertinent to note that the 2009 National Youth Policy of Nigeria defined youth to be between the ages of 18 and 35 (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2009), but it has since been updated to the range of 15-29 in their 2019 edition of the Policy (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2019). Therefore, youth and population statistics done on a national versus international scale may differ.

population (Meribole 2020). Some difficulty lies in gathering reliable statistics, those that are consistent between institutions or even those that use the same scale of measurement, as can be witnessed above. For the sake of this analysis, the Nigerian youth age bracket of 15-29 will be generally utilised as it is specific to the case, acknowledging that other literature reviewed for this research uses the range of 15-24.

In this case, it is possible to broadly estimate that the population of youth aged 15-29 is makes up somewhere between 30% and 50% of the total Nigerian population. Even at 30% of the population, this far surpasses the critical level of 20% that Huntington (1996, in Urdal 2006) acknowledges as making a region or society particularly prone to war or violence (Urdal 2006: 615). It thus makes sense that the Federal Government has included in their National Youth Policy goals to support their youth population that are in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and aims to “*meet the needs and aspirations of youth as well as seek a solution to their problems*” (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2019: 9). Though this statement itself is broad, the more specific needs and problems the government plans to address over the next years that are particularly relevant to this paper and theoretical framework include: “*Productive workforce and sustainable economic engagement*” and “*participation, inclusiveness and equitable opportunities for all youth*” (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2019: 10). These are two of five goals, each with specific sub-goals and benchmarks geared towards meeting these.

This policy document and other initiatives by the government continue to express the need for education, higher education and training in vocational skills in order to make youth more appealing in the labour market. While this is certainly extremely important, it could be ignoring the greater systemic issue that there simply aren't enough lucrative economic opportunities in the country. Given the unfortunately high levels of youth⁵ unemployment in the country as estimated by Nigeria's National Baseline Youth Survey of 2012, which were over 50% as of 2012 (National Bureau of Statistics 2012: 9), one can see where trouble may start to arise. This survey, while outdated, certainly illustrates the endemic problem of youth unemployment in the country, arguably solidifying the choice to employ YBT in this context. Here it is appropriate to remind the reader that there exists a difference between unemployment and underemployment, though for the sake of this argument, one could say that both are potentially

⁵ This 2012 National Baseline Youth Survey classifies youth as individuals between the ages of 15 and 35, as it was undertaken before the 2019 update (National Bureau of Statistics 2012).

problematic as low employment or insufficient opportunities for economic gain and provision contribute to youth searching for other means of making ends meet.

6.2 Youth and Violence in the Niger Delta

From here the research will delve into the relation between YBT and youth involvement in violence in Nigeria, beginning in the southeast around the Niger Delta, depicted below in Figure 6.2. This area is also the region with the four largest oil producing states in the country with the state and the amount of oil produced per day shown below in Table 6.2.

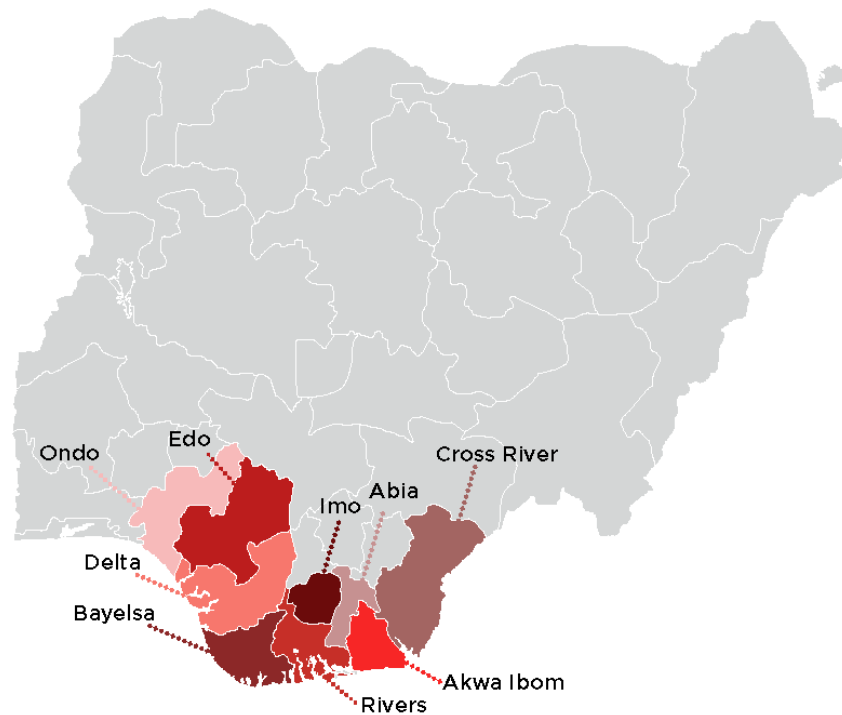


Figure 6.2 States of the Niger Delta region. (Stakeholder Democracy Network 2020).

STATE	Akwa Ibom	Delta	Rivers	Bayelsa
BARRELS PER DAY (BPD)	504,000	346,000	344,000	290,000

Table 6.2 Top oil producing states in the Niger Delta and production amount. (Offiong 2019).

Oil production in the southeast has vastly overtaken agrarian production as the major export out the country, and as this extractive sector of the economy employs a much smaller portion

of the population than agriculture, employment opportunities have fallen in the wake of agrarian neglect resulting in mass poverty and unemployment (Kemi 2016: 104; Emmanuel, Olayiwola & Babatunde 2009: 224). In addition, the oil industry requires highly trained or experienced workers (Kemi 2016: 104), which one is unlikely to find even in a large batch of either educated or uneducated youths (Caruso & Gavrilova 2012: 8). Therefore, unemployment and poverty skyrocket in these southeastern states, which Okoli (2015) finds is directly related to the rent-seeking nature and lack of infrastructural development that characterise Nigeria's rentier state. It is therefore unsurprising that adults and youth alike migrate to large cities such as Lagos in search for employment opportunities that remain in low supply across the country. Though Urdal (2006) finds that the possibility to migrate for employment may actually decrease the risk of violence created by a youth bulge, it begs the question of whether this holds true when the location (within the country) to which people migrate is not able to offer the economic opportunities expected as rural communities may not foster the necessary educational opportunities for obtaining employment in other places (Onwuka 2005: 659). Based on the high statistics of violence, population density, and unemployment levels in Lagos, and the violence, poverty, and unemployment levels in the southeast, the author would argue that this is likely not entirely applicable to the case of Nigeria. This again points to the endemic problem of poor infrastructure in the nation which creates an employment void for youth which has been shown by several scholars (Urdal 2006; Goldstone 2002) discussed throughout this thesis to greatly increase the risk for violence.

In line with the neglect of the agricultural sector that oil has forced upon the country, the petroleum industry has severely damaged the environment in the southeast. What little arable land is available for cultivation is at risk for becoming infertile, oil spills have killed fish and wildlife and sullied sources of fresh water, and gas flareups generate dangerous pollution and acid rain affecting humans and wildlife alike (Mähler 2010: 16; Onwuka 2005: 656-658; Emmanuel, Olayiwola & Babatunde 2009: 226). While Goldstone (2002) argues that there is not a strong correlation between environmental degradation and violence (Goldstone 2002: 6), the author of this thesis would argue that the ruination of the environment and sources of livelihood and lacking economic opportunity due to the large presence of the oil industry in the south, it creates discontent, unrest, and fosters grievances against the state and the multinational oil companies present in the region. This in addition to the fact that there is a high number of weapons and arms in the region creates a background of tension and possibility for violence to break out.

These weapons have a number of potential sources. They may be obtained from cross-border smuggling from nations such as Togo or Benin (Yusufu Bagaji et al. 2011: 40), from overseas through the Gulf of Guinea or internally through illegal sale of weapons from legal owners such as the soldiers who, in 2008, sold 7,000 army issued guns to militants in the Niger Delta (Ikoh 2013: 41). Politicians have been known to employ unemployed and underemployed youth as a means of influencing elections by arming youth for intimidation tactics (Reno 2000: 50; Awojobi 2014: 145), but when these groups are disbanded, the weapons are not recollected and what remains is a group of heavily armed and disillusioned youth (Yusufu Bagaji et al. 2011: 39). These individuals or groups go on to attack oil pipelines, companies, protection personnel and security forces as well as participate in gang activities and other militant action against multinational oil companies, their property and the state, such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) (Arowosegbe 2009: 576). Violent political action against these multinational companies has essentially transformed into anti-state sentiment that is furthered by mistrust in the state's power of egalitarian distribution and ethnic favouritism (Arowosegbe 2009: 580). Not only does this demonstrate youth dissatisfaction but also mistrust in the state security forces, though this is also not without just cause. The Joint Security Task Force deployed in the region, for example, is famously violent against citizens and militants, throwing the region into a cycle of violence and turbulence bolstered by the state's authoritarian nature under the guise of democracy (AI 2020: 7).

An amnesty deal made in 2009 came about after it was made clear that the heavy-handed tactics by the security forces were not sufficient to put an end to youth uprisings in the Niger Delta. This deal promised youth insurgents who turned themselves in compensation and job training for handing over weapons, which appeared to be successful in the 60-day window allotted by the government. However, when it came around to the payment and training, allowances were lower than promised and militants were stranded in various camps with no information or direction. When counter-militancy and vocational training did finally come about in 2010, it appeared successful but posed other issues. Militants not participating in the training continue to commit crimes and act violently against the state and their countrymen while the notion of quick cash for weapons encourages a cycle of violence perpetuated by youth who need money and those who were excluded from the program in the first place (Oluwaniyi 2011: 50-52). The insufficient desirable effects of this program indicate that it was not targeting the necessary underlying mechanisms but focused in part on fast disarmament, an ineffective tactic as the

money distributed for weapons could easily circulate back into the purchase of arms or funding for militant action (ibid). Using an expanded method for determining the motivations of actors based on need, greed and grievance could therefore create the possibility of more effective policy implementation that address the real underlying causes of violent conflict in both the Niger Delta region and the northeastern areas of Nigeria afflicted by Boko Haram.

In the Niger Delta region, farming remains the primary profession of the region's population, though of course it is not the most revenue generating sector due to nationwide neglect (Onwuka 2005: 658). It can therefore be argued it is not pure environmental degradation that is causing grievance related violence but the loss of property and livelihood, inducing impoverishment. State violence, lack of economic opportunity and highly unequal distribution of revenues create an environment of desperation and undoubtedly anger towards those in power, resulting in violent conflict. As these factors are resultant of Nigeria's rentier economy and the state's mismanagement of such, it can therefore be argued that oil rentierism in this case is a strong underlying cause of such violence, as is particularly illustrated in the southeastern region around the Niger Delta.

6.3 Boko Haram and Youth Radicalisation

Endemic impoverishment, unemployment, underemployment, and violence also characterise the northeastern regions of Nigeria, though the perpetrators of violence differ in several ways compared to the southeast, as will be detailed throughout this section. Though it is true that many violent actors in the northeast are indeed youth, issues stem from religious radicalisation in addition to impoverishment, low levels of education and lack of economic opportunities (Onuoha 2014: 1). The definition of radicalisation tends to slightly vary across scholarship, but for the sake of this thesis, it is loosely defined as the process of adopting extremist social, political or religious views that include the condonation of violence as a means to a group's or individual's ends (Onuoha 2014: 2). In the delimitations of this research, terroristic acts and groups related to Boko Haram are particularly focused on radicalisation in the context of youth. While religious radicalisation is undeniably connected to Boko Haram, some authors argue that this factor is not inherently related to the violence but rather used as a tool for rousing social belonging, identity and subsequent recruitment (Okoro 2014: 120-122; Ghatak & Karakaya 2021: 10; Omenma 2019: 3). In the northeast, discontent and poverty, lower levels of education (particularly Western education and religious teachings that are true to the holy book) and

ethnic or religious ties may encourage them to join terror organisations like Boko Haram (Onuoha 2014: 4-7). Not only does this cost the organisation less than recruiting educated and skilled fighters (Collier 2000: 94; Omale 2013: 98), but these youth are more vulnerable to radicalisation stemming from state neglect, relative deprivation and enticing propaganda from the terror organisation itself (Anugwom 2018: 97-98; Collier 2000: 94; Onuoha 2014: 5-7).

The presence of a large number of ethnic and religious groups across the nation continues to contribute to factionalism and fractionalisation, creating tensions between regions and groups that are further exacerbated by the location of the primary economic sector of oil production (Arowosegbe 2009: 578). Interestingly, Collier (2000) finds that largely heterogenous populations will actually reduce the risk of political violence as it is argued that collective action measures and mobilisation are more difficult to achieve when there are several groups with different beliefs and identities (Collier 2000: 98). This may, however, not be entirely applicable to the case of Nigeria as, despite the numerous ethnic groups, a very strong division appears to be between the predominantly Christian south and the Islamic north. In the case of Boko Haram specifically, it is more of an 'us versus them' situation in which any non-member of the fundamentalist organisation is an enemy, even those who practice Islam (Okoro 2014: 116; AI 2015: 6). This indiscriminate violence may point towards several explanations or motivations. Addressing the issue of collective action, the process of radicalisation seems to be a strong and viable solution for Boko Haram. The indoctrination of youth vulnerable to a cause becomes easier, particularly when their level of education is low or their understanding of Islam that is true to the Qur'an is skewed by fundamentalist preachers that are not uncommon in the northern regions (Abbo & Zain: 7; Anugwom 2018: 76). The incentive of potential economic gain (in the wake of unemployment) or grievance explanation may also influence an individual's decision to join the operation, which will be discussed in the following sections. Acknowledging that religion and religious radicalisation certainly play very important parts in understanding and recruitment and motivation for joining Boko Haram, this paper will instead primarily focus on the social, political and economic factors that contribute to participation in the terrorist organisation.

Reports and studies have shown that Boko Haram is comprised of university students, university dropouts, destitute children and Almajiri⁶, unemployed youth (primarily men) and some high ranking, wealthy officials and politicians (Onuoha 2014: 3; Okoro 2014: 108-109; Adenrele 2012: 22-24). While one cannot with good confidence assume to know the motivations each of these actors, it would be safe to assume that such a diverse cast of characters would each have their own reasons for participation in a terrorist group.

6.4 Need, Greed and Grievance

In the vast majority of the literature reviewed for this thesis, it is obvious that youth violence in the northeast and Niger Delta regions is attributed mostly to need and grievance related explanations, though it is not possible to classify all actors under this umbrella, nor individual actors under one single explanation of greed, grievance or need. If speaking in broad terms, one could assume that Boko Haram as an entity or organisation is economically motivated, likely falling more directly under a greed explanation while the organisation's young actors and foot soldiers may be operating more under grievance or need explanations, particularly based on the levels of impoverishment in the region. Though the organisation cites political corruption as a grievance-related reason behind their actions, some authors (for example, Collier 2000) have cited the propensity of terrorist organisations to publicly announce grievances as motivation despite more likely greed motivations. This is yet another way of recruitment and mobilisation through like-mindedness and social or political identity (Omale 2013: 99). If radicalised university dropouts and underemployed youth and those from a similar demographic are not provided some sort of compensation or opportunity by the government and they are actively told that the government is anti-Islam, they could be categorised as acting by grievances, a mindset encouraged by the overarching organisation and the violence framed as a way of 'retribution' against the state. But framed slightly differently, they could be motivated by need insofar as they do not have any other option for survival because they cannot find employment opportunities to support themselves, or they are children like the Almajiri who are estranged from family and dependant on their religious teachers already. These latter two perspectives may also overlap, as in the Venn diagram figures in Chapters Four and Five, to create a more wholistic picture of the motivations of individuals, particularly youth involved

⁶ Almajiri are children approximately between the ages of 7 and 15 that follow a form of Qur'anic teaching that includes begging for alms on the street under direction of a religious cleric. They may be denied Western education and often socially excluded, contributing to issues of alienation. Besides Nigeria, these children may also enter from Nigeria's highly porous borders with Niger and Chad (Adenrele 2012: 22; Abbo & Zain 2017: 4-7).

in the organisation. Of course, one cannot deny the possibility that some may be involved for additional economic benefits beyond subsistence, also blurring the line between need and greed.

Though concerning different actors, this idea of overlapping the three concepts still stands in the Niger Delta region and context. In this region, grievance motivated violence may be a result of loss of land or property and consequently livelihood as a result of environmental damages from oil pipelines and spillages. Adults and youth who farm or fish as their main source of revenue may be expected to be motivated in this way as they are the ones most directly affected by these environmental impacts that negatively impact their economic opportunity. Unemployed or underemployed students, graduates or other youth categories who are not able to find opportunities for employment may also react violently in the name of 'just retribution' for the state's failure to provide for its citizens. The overlap between grievance and need may in the case of these stakeholders be unintelligible. The same actor could have different motivations for different oil-related crimes, for example, oil theft compared to property destruction. Bunkering and selling the stolen oil may provide an individual with money or resources for survival (a need motivation), whereas pipeline vandalism or destruction of oil company property would more likely fit into sending some kind of political message, falling more into a grievance category, as such crimes may not be directly related to one's immediate survival despite being committed by the same actor for related reasons.

The greed explanation could be more aligned with the oil bunkering actions of smuggling and violent actions perpetrated by large criminal organisations like the Nigerian Mafia who gross large profits from illegal activities including large scale sale of bunkered oil (Ikoh 2013: 43-45). Youth involved in such criminal and violent organisations benefit monetarily as well, however, as discussed above, it is likely based on impoverishment and underemployment statistics that their involvement at all stems from need or grievance related motivations. Once involved, the economic gains made are likely what encourages them to remain participants in acts of violence, once again making it difficult to fully ascertain a stark line between need, greed and grievance.

The purpose of utilising a framework like need, greed and grievance is not just to put a label on a motivation but to further understand how these motivations interact with each other and how they affect or are affected by the actors or contexts in which they are situated.

Understanding the basis of one's motivation(s) can create discussion around policy making that is actually effective and properly targeted, as opposed to implementing a blanket solution that doesn't address the needs of a population at all. Without directly conversing with the actors who perpetrate violence in these two regions, it is not possible to accurately categorise specific actors or groups under these umbrella terms. However, based on the types of violence, the actors involved and the context itself, this thesis has been able to utilise these explanations in more broad terms. Given more time and in-depth research, it would theoretically be possible to judge each situation and actor on a more specified, case by case basis.

6.5 Connections to Oil Rentierism

Given the above analysis, it is possible to relate the two differing regions back to oil rentierism in several ways, answering the research questions,

- a. *how is Nigeria's oil rentier economy connected to the different forms and perpetrators of violent conflict in the northeast and the southeast of Nigeria?*
- b. *In what ways is Nigeria's large youth population connected to the ongoing turmoil perpetuated by oil rentierism in these two regions?*

Beginning with the Niger Delta region in the southeast, which is inherently more connected due to its proximity to the production of oil, the linkages are more straightforward. The population is directly affected by the production as traditional forms of revenue and employment in the region, that is, agriculture, have been neglected as well as negatively affected by loss of land, oil spillages and gas leaks that lead to environmental degradation, further endangering the livelihoods of those who live in this region. An effect of the resource curse, lack of economic diversification, has furthered these consequences as the state has failed to provide or promote alternate forms of employment in the wake of loss of agricultural employment and the disproportionately small number of jobs required for oil extraction in the region. This is supported by figures that measure growth and development such as GDP per capita and rate of economic growth⁷. Despite the high GDP of the country, the explosive population growth as well as rent-seeking behaviours associated with rentierism illustrated in Nigeria and other rentier states prevent these revenues from adequate disbursement and reallocation. While not all of the violent conflict in the region can be attributed to rentierism

⁷ As of 2019, the GDP per capita of Nigeria was approximately 448 billion USD (World Bank 2019c).

with certainty, the contextual factors of this case do point to this type of economy being a large structural issue that creates problems for this population.

In the northeast, it is much more difficult to directly link the Boko Haram violence and insurgency to oil rentierism. While there is a strong possibility that the organisation itself is highly economically motivated in order to fund their actions, there are few proven linkages to oil money, aside from monetary funding of certain elites who likely glean the rewards of an oil-rich economy with low redistributive action. Those that exist are more localised to attacks on facilities in the region around Lake Chad, on Nigeria's northeastern border, where the terrorist organisation has strongholds, using the oil and natural resource-rich region as both a bargaining chip and a threat to the security of the Nigerian economy (Omenma 2019: 6). However, due to Boko Haram's presence in the area, the Nigerian government has been far more hesitant to invest in oil exploration and extraction than its neighbours with larger territorial claims to the lake's basin. In this way, it can be said that Boko Haram uses the presence of oil in this region as an intimidation tactic against the government and secular Nigeria.

In relation to youth, one possible connection that can be made is the anger outpouring concerning the amnesty deal of the Niger Delta in 2009. It has been posited that youth in the northeast feel aggrieved that no such amnesty deal has been offered to them for disarmament or similar (Omale 2013: 98). However, this claim has not been well supported by other evidence nor thoroughly researched, so it is not possible to comment on its validity besides its existence as a link between the northeast and southeast in relation to oil rentierism. Youth violence and involvement in Boko Haram in the northeast can however be related back to governmental failure that stems from poor reallocation and lack of provision of resources, as appears to be the case in the Niger Delta and likely throughout the country.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Concluding Discussion

Elites taking advantage of a state weakened by its own failures to provide support and infrastructure to its citizens continues to widen the gap between the haves and have nots, strengthening an enduring problem of conflict and violence throughout Nigeria. These large

structural issues that enable the conflict-ridden environments of the Niger Delta in the southeast and the northeastern region in Nigeria are at least in some ways attributable to Nigeria's oil rentier economy. Even if outbreaks of violence are not directly related to oil production or extraction, it could be argued that the resource curse is alive and well in the country, preventing the government from being able to sufficiently provide for and protect its citizens. The high revenues from oil that funnel back primarily into the hands of the government and elites limits the accountability for responsible governance and highlights the corruption in the country.

This study has made a number of findings. Nigeria's demographic makeup creates a suitable environment in which to test the Youth Bulge Theory given the high relative number of youths in the population. In line with the theory, there are indeed high instances of violence conflict in the chosen regions of the northeast and southeast of Nigeria, both of which contain high numbers of youth, many of whom are unemployed or underemployed and impoverished with few economic opportunities. This therefore strongly supports the use of this theory to assist in explaining the high levels of violence in the two regions. Additionally, this study attempted to link the violence connected with a large youth cohort to Rentier State Theory and the resource curse, answering the research questions that guided this study:

- a. *How is Nigeria's oil rentier economy connected to the different forms and perpetrators of violent conflict in the northeast and the southeast of Nigeria?*
- b. *In what ways is Nigeria's large youth population connected to the ongoing turmoil perpetuated by oil rentierism in these two regions?*

This study therefore posits that the connection between youth violence and Rentier State Theory is stronger in the southeast around the Niger Delta where oil is primarily extracted and where crimes like oil theft, pipeline vandalism, and destruction of multinational oil company property are most frequent. This is as there is a large population of youth with limited economic opportunity in the area who may be motivated by need, greed, grievance, or a combination of these explanations for involving themselves in violent conflicts and perpetrating crimes in the Niger Delta. Impoverishment may drive violent action out of necessity for survival whereas grievances may explain other violence or crimes as environmental degradation from the oil industry in the Delta continues to diminish farmable land in the region. It may of course be a combination of these factors that motivate youth to participate in violent conflict, alongside with the economic gain that would be deemed as a greed motivator. Overall, in the southeast there exists a more or less direct link of youth violence to oil rentierism, a connection that is not

quite as strong in the northeast concerning youth involvement in the Boko Haram terrorist organisation.

YBT is still applicable in the northeastern regions, where a significant threat arises from the religious radicalisation of youths to join the jihadist organisation, Boko Haram. As in the southeast, impoverishment and unemployment exacerbate violence and in the northeast the government's continual neglect of the region has only fuelled grievances which may potentially lead to involvement in anti-state organisation such as Boko Haram. While there is not such a strongly visible link between oil rentierism and youth violence here, it can be argued that the issues are more structural in nature, and that this continued neglect stems from reliance on oil and poor redistributive policies. The need, greed, and grievance discussion in the context of youth participation in particular, its connection to violence, has revealed that it is quite difficult to put one actor or crime into a single one of these categories, highlighting the importance of taking the individual case and actor into account and acknowledging that these concepts overlap.

Other contributing factors include political use of youth for intimidation, including provision of arms and weaponry. With these weapons in the hands of disillusioned youth who have little reason to trust in state security forces, a significant threat to safety and stability throughout both regions and indeed the whole country is incurred. Existing tensions between ethnic groups in different regions may also exacerbate conflicts and lead to further outbreaks of violence in the two regions.

7.2 Further Research

This study has further revealed the need for more research on these theories in the context of Nigeria. The intention of including the need, greed, and grievance explanations in this thesis is thus to put forth a possible method for better addressing the issues of youth violence in the Niger Delta and the northeast. This may also assist in policy recommendations and decisions, as this thesis has highlighted the necessity of not just improving education and vocational training to make youth more attractive in the job market but to address the more systemic issues that plague youth in these regions, which are overall lack of legal economic opportunities and access to provisional services.

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