

Chapter 13

Youth Bulge and Broken Down Windows Theories in Youth Violence: A Critical Juxtaposition

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ABSTRACT

The chapter is a comparative analysis of two theories, Youth Bulge and Broken Down Windows, on their relevance and influence on youth participation in political violence that was recorded in Bindura town from year 2000. The analysis juxtaposed the two theories in relation to what other scholars have said on the same subject matter. This was in view of the fact that there are some theoretical assumptions that are traditionally aligned to particular studies and social realities. The analysis concluded that while the two theories may not have influenced youth involvement in political violence in Bindura in the same way and gravity, they both played a role. It was established that most of the youth violence would have developed over time before a slight incident triggered its explosion.

INTRODUCTION

Various studies have been conducted on the youth in relation to their involvement and participation in violence (Reeler, 2009, RAU, 2012a, Dodo & Msorowegomo, 2012; Dodo et al, 2016). Equally, various studies have proffered various reasons for youth participation in violence in different settings. It has also been observed that youth in different settings have varying commitments to violence and the subsequent effect of the violence is often different. In view of the different arguments proffered by different theories, the article sought to juxtapose the implications and relevance of the two theories; Youth Bulge Theory

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(YBT) and Broken down Windows Theory (BDWT) on the involvement of youth in political violence. This is against a background of communities the world over defined by disorder, instability and conflicts at the instigation of the youth.

BACKGROUND

Bindura town is a traditional mining town located 89 kilometres to the north of Harare, Zimbabwe. Traditionally, the town is economically sustained by mining and commercial farming activities. It lies in the ecological region two, which is good for crop farming. From the aforesaid, it shows that traditionally, the town was inhabited by migrant workers especially from Malawi and Mozambique who provided with cheap labour to both mining and agriculture sectors. Formal education and proper family systems in this environment were never prioritised (Dodo, 2010). Generally Bindura town is a run-down urban settlement with poor service delivery and poorly maintained infrastructure (RAU, 2012a). With the advent of the 2000 Land Invasions, commercial farming and all the mining activities collapsed subsequently impacting on the lives of the migrant workers. Because of the desperate conditions surrounding most migrant workers, the ruling party had always arm-twisted them for their political support and sympathy.

Bindura urban has always been defined by political intolerance and violence given the fact that it is traditionally viewed a ZANU PF stronghold on account of the fact that the local migrant youth are prepared to play foot-soldiers' role. This is despite the fact that the opposition political contestants have of late managed to wrestle power. Post-2000, the first recorded episode of political violence was during the Land Invasion era before it was upgraded to fatalistic levels during the 2002 Presidential elections (RAU, 2012b). This is not to say that there was no violence during the 2001 Parliamentary by-election. The other wave of violence was recorded in 2005 during the *Murambatsvina* (Operation Restore Order) exercise. The operation in a bid to clear urban areas of illegal settlements, ended up leaving households in the open and exposed to diseases and cold. During the process, tens of people especially children and the sick died (RAU, 2012a). During the same period of 2005, Trojan Mine and Ashanti Goldfields, the two major mines that employed over 20000 people scaled down operations by over 90%. The retrenchments led to instability and subsequent violence by the youth (Dodo, 2010).

In 2008, there were two national plebiscites. The first on 27 March was termed Harmonised elections when all Parliamentary, Senatorial, Local government and Presidential elections were jointly held. The election process was peaceful as it was guided by the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Democratic Elections (Dodo, 2010). After the elections, there was no announcement of the results for 42 days during which time hostilities, mistrust and anger developed in the people against known and perceived political rivals. The following 35 days from the date when election results were announced were characterised by intense persecution especially by members of the ruling party supported by national security agents against members of the opposition political groups (Dodo & Msorowegomo, 2012).

The 35 days of political violence leading to the second plebiscite on 27 June 2008 resulted in serious ethnicised, politicized and regionalized hostilities and violence. During the buildup of the violence, the ruling party meticulously deployed security agents, former liberation war participants popularly called 'war veterans' and some youth to unleash violence on known and perceived political opponents. The violence also included the establishment of torture centres popularly known as 'bases' (Dodo & Msorowegomo, 2012; Dodo et al, 2016).

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