

Discuss the relevance of the greed vs. grievance debate in quantitative studies on civil war for post-war peacebuilding interventions.

Greed and Grievances over Organized Crime in Mexico

Drug smuggling into the United States from Mexico has been an active business for over a century now. First, the Mexican Revolution in the early 19th century had the abandonment of agriculture and morbid impoverishment of peasants throughout the country as its central claim. Second, the prohibition production, importation, transportation and sale of drugs and alcohol in the late 1910's, conformed the breeding ground for the modern criminal organizations that operate in Mexican territory up to this day. (Recio, 2002: 22).

At this point on the Mexican side, but also currently valid, we can see a clear division between those actors who were pushed to enter into business. It was greed of those who owned *latifundios* –colonial legacy of vast amounts of land– who got rich(er) practically overnight with relatively small productions of opium poppy and marihuana. While peasants saw their grievance tied to inherited poverty and an absent State.

The rather unseasoned criminal groups grew rapidly and exponentially, along with few State actors that participated, enabled, eased or looked the other way at the very least in the illicit activities. In the same logic, those few individuals in a power position, whether in the State security forces, in the political sphere or in the private sector have been attracted to the very lucrative business by greed.

A lot is seen in the mainstream media about the violence produced by the so-called drug gangs. But I consider that in today's landscape, this term is inaccurate not only because drug cartels are actual multinational enterprises with vast economic, political and belligerent resources. But because it also reduces a sophisticated machinery to media entertainment products in form of drug lords and narco-life as idols.

Such misrepresentation allowed the Mexican President to declare warfare against the criminal organizations in 2006, with the simplistic idea that these could be defeated by firepower. A recent research (Hernández, 2019) has exhibited that the so-called "warfare against narcos" was a facade operation to indeed defeat or at least tame some criminal cells but favoring the one criminal organization that has remained as the most prominent for three decades.

Dozens of drug cartel leaders have been either detained and imprisoned or killed since then. However, violence has only grown exponentially with no prospect for improvement. This has shown that when these organizations are "beheaded", instead of dying, they reproduce and the violence bounces even stronger (El País, 2016). This is well observed in other situations where security forces target leaders, such as the Taliban leaders in Afghanistan and Iraq: "...Insurgent and terrorist cells are being relentlessly 'decapitated' by targeted strikes, but the hydra-like insurgency is now active over a wider area and the insurgents more numerous than ever." (Dear, 2013: 293).

But the mutilation of the criminal organizations do not mean their end, but their division in multiple smaller groups that now fight over the control of the same territory. This is to be read as the mercantilist or colonial wars in Murshed's Theory of Greed where belligerent groups fight over the control of the sources of profit. (Murshed, 2010: 67).

The outcome in official figures is 250,000 dead persons from 2006 to 2018 (Hernández, 2018) and 61,000 missing persons from 2006 to 2020. (El País, 2016). Criminal organizations today make more profit than the most lucrative legal business in the United States. (Rizzo, 2019).

The social cost in terms of lives lost, along with the loss of talent and workforce this represents, the damage of the social fabric marked by rampant violence and state of impunity is palpable and by all means paid by the poorest. That quarter million dead bodies do not come from those in power positions attracted by greed, but those with grievances that using their individual agency and with the hope thriving in the business, are recruited by the criminal organizations.

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