4th August

Guatemala Calling: Lynchings and the Politics of Inequality

Matthew Klick has a guest post at Political Violence @ a Glance on Guatemala Calling: Lynchings and the Politics of Inequality [http://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2015/08/04/guatemala-calling-lynchings-and-the-politics-of-inequality/] . Matt is a Carnegie Corporation of New York-funded Innovations in Local Peacebuilding Post-Doctoral Fellow at the University of Denver. His post looks at what it will take to reduce lynchings in Guatemala.

> Guatemala, like its immediate neighbors in Central America, and in fact all other countries emerging from violent conflict, needs reforms that disperse public goods and basic opportunities equitably—from decent schools to affordable and adequate healthcare. Instead, Guatemala has the highest rate of inequality in Latin America, the highest incidents of poverty, and among the highest rates of chronic hunger in the world.
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> At same time, despite its middle-income status, it has a regressive and otherwise useless tax system [http://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/CGD-Working-Paper-397-Cabrera-Lustig-Moran-Fiscal-Policy-Inequality-Ethnic-Divide-Guatemala.pdf] , and a closed political system dominated by long-standing elites, financed by illegal activities and special interests to an otherworldly degree [http://www.insightcrime.org/news-briefs/crime-and-corruption-finance-half-of-guatemala-politics-cicig] , as recently verified. Although carrying out necessary reforms is always more complicated than articulating them—given the broad scope of material interests, political and financial costs, and culturally-bound demands for local autonomy [http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15423166.2013.855606#.VbkAE0VcNpk] in places like Guatemala—Guatemala's rural development trajectory is so abysmal, that even minor, sustained investments will yield important improvements. Unfortunately, the will for even these efforts has lagged.
>
> There is a silver-lining, maybe...

Go read the rest here [http://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2015/08/04/guatemala-calling-lynchings-and-the-politics-of-inequality/] .

After reading Matt's piece, I was surprised to see that Guatemalans' support for vigilante justice is high but not that crazy according to a recent LAPOP publication on Crime, Corruption and Societal Support for Vigilante Justice: Ten Years of Evidence in Review

[http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/IO920en.pdf] by Daniel Zizumbo-Colunga. Guatemala comes in behind Suriname, Ecuador, El Salvador, Peru, Honduras, and the Dominican Republic when it comes to support for vigilante justice - a mix of countries with regards to criminal violence , history of civil war, GDP, inequality, corruption, and ethnolinguistic fractionalization.

Guatemala also comes in just ahead of Nicaragua and Belize - lower GDP and, the case of Nicaragua, lower levels of violence. Belize is difficult to compare any country to because of its small population (~330,000). It has a higher murder rate than Guatemala but we are only talking about 100-150 murders per year.

I guess in some ways the question remains: under what conditions does support for vigilante justice in the abstract actually lead to people committing acts of vigilante justice?

Posted 4th August by Mike Allison

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