

Forum: Economic and Social Council

Issue: Evaluating Social and Economic Repercussions of Rampant Violence in Latin America

Student Officer: Veer Tandon

Position: President Chair

Introduction

The past few decades in Latin American Nations have witnessed a variation of economic, political and social transitions that have influenced the patterns of inclusion and exclusion. These transitions within the region, including migration from rural areas, related rapid urbanization, institutional change, and the characteristics of modern sector growth have reinforced the historical reliance of many on informal mechanisms such as violence and corruption, and transactions for survival. The judicial and law enforcement systems have weakly adapted to new challenges and continue to leave large segments of society without adequate access to justice and economic and physical security.

When examining the results of these governmental inefficiencies, violence and crime, particularly organized crime, are prevalent and recurring in the Latin American Nations. With over 23.9 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants (data from 2012), Latin America has been recognised as one of the worlds most violent regions. The extent of the situation is staggering and tenaciously persistent. Over the past two decades, homicide rates have drastically increased and stayed at about 24 killings per 100,000. Although this rate slightly reduced during the early new millennium, the situation in the region keeps getting worse. When looking at its outcomes, the effects are ubiquitous throughout the region's communities. Violence makes people passive and challenges them to step out of their homes. This results in people not investing in governmental services and capitalist ventures, which eventually leads to the economic downfall of the nation, and its allies. Looking at it from another perspective, violence results in people weakening their interpersonal and social ties that bind communities together.

But most importantly, what is a common trend that intertwines itself to the root of all the violence in the region? This is a question that has been greatly debated over the past few years, and a common point that always seems to resurface is "social inequality". It is clear that Latin America has been one of the most economically uneven regions in the world. As of 2015, roughly 2540 people of Mexico's 125 million

residents, held 43% of the country's entire wealth. This massive gap between the rich and the poor is relatively a major factor contributing to all the violence in the region. And the most adamant aspect of this observation is that the increase of violence leads to the increase of inequality, vice versa. According to a report published by the WB, “those who resort towards violent acts most often lack access to the economic opportunities and the social contacts required to obtain many of the services and resources available to mainstream society. When conventional methods of obtaining and working for increased social status, higher income, and wider influence are limited, as they often are in marginalized areas, some feel compelled to resort to what the mainstream considers illegitimate means, including violent acts”.

Illicit arms and drug trafficking is another key issue that has emerged over the past few decades in accordance with Latin America. Due to this region's turbulent history, mainly being the numerous civil wars and shifts in government, violence proposed by small arms have drastically increased. According to a research on the trade of small arms in Latin America; “At Least 45 to 80 million small arms and light weapons—that is, weapons operated by an individual or small group, including handguns, assault rifles, grenades, grenade launchers, and even man-portable surface to air missiles—are circulating throughout the region”. More than 75% of the region's murders involve firearms, compared to the global average of 40%. This problem needs to be tackled effectively in order to ensure that the level of violence in the Latin American Nations decrease, and that these nations shift towards a more progressive environment.

The issues above that come in accordance with economic/social inequality and violence can be tackled efficiently if countries cooperate with each other and ensure economic cooperation to increase security and aid towards the Latin American nations. Inclusive growth has been proven to be an output of mass growth that is sustained over decades. It is vital to implement newer tactics and strategies as this is the key to unlocking a more integrated and developed society.

Definition of Key Terms

Organized Crime

Organized crime is classified as criminal activities that are planned and controlled by powerful groups and organizations to engage in illegal activity most commonly for profit.

Social Inequality

Social inequality refers to disparities in the distribution of economic assets and income as well as between the overall quality and luxury of each person's existence within a society, while economic inequality is caused by the unequal accumulation of wealth; social inequality exists because the lack of

wealth in certain areas prohibits these people from obtaining the same housing, health care, etc. as the wealthy, in societies where access to these social goods depends on wealth.

Hyperinflation

Hyperinflation is described as the rapid, out-of-control and excessive increase of prices which typically accelerates inflations.

Authoritarianism

A government that enforces strict rules upon the public. This is kept constant with the help of pressure directed towards the population, for example at the expense of their own personal freedom.

Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)

Weapons that fall under this category may include either private or military weapons that are not difficult to carry and therefore may be carried by individuals, animals, or vehicles. Weapons such as pistols, rifles, and light machine guns can be classified as small weapons, whereas heavier machine guns, grenade launchers, portable weapons such as hand-held guns and missiles are generally categorized to be small weapons.

Arms Trade treaty

The Arms Trade Treaty is a multilateral treaty that regulates the international trade in conventional weapons. It entered into force on 24 December 2014. 107 states have ratified the treaty, and a further 32 states have signed but not ratified it.

Fiscal Policy

Fiscal policy is the measure by which a government alters its public expenditure and tax rates to monitor and control aggregate demand in a nation's economy.

Monetary Policy

Monetary policy is the measure through which governments alter the nation's money supply and interest rates to control the rate of inflation in the economy.

LEDCs

LEDC's or Less Economically Developed Countries are countries with an overall small Gross Domestic Product than that of MEDCs which are More Economically Developed Countries that have an overall greater GDP.

MEDCs

MEDCs are More Economically Developed Countries that have an overall greater GDP than that of LEDCs.

Recession

A recession is a stage in the business cycle of the economy when there is a fall in the real GDP for more than 2 fiscal quarters.

The International Monetary Fund

The IMF is an organization consisting of 189 countries working together to foster global monetary cooperation to ensure financial stability, international trade and promote high employment and sustainable economic growth.

Inter-American Convention Against Corruption (IACAC)

The IACAC provides OAS member states with a set of legal tools and an institutional framework to prevent, detect, punish, and eradicate corruption. The convention covers criminalization of corruption, international cooperation, asset recovery, and considers preventive roles for business, civil society and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in curtailing corruption.

Key Issues

Ineffective Security System

As stated above, the increase in violence and organized crime has mainly risen from the government not being able to effectively ensure better security measures in their respective countries. For example, there were 63,880 murders in Brazil in the year 2018. When looking at the subjective aspect of this issue, according to a CAF report in 2014, “less than 20 percent of the population trusts the police in Buenos Aires, less than 10 percent in Lima and La Paz, and around 15 percent in Caracas”. This lack of trust has contributed to two other major issues that have negatively impacted the economy as a whole. The first major reason being migration. People not feeling safe in their hometowns and countries have influenced them to leave the nation and move to other countries or states. People believe that the high levels of poverty and the fragmented neighbourhoods have increased the lack of legitimate employment opportunities, and has increased the overall level of violence in the region. The second region is more prominent towards the economy of these Latin American nations. Due to the increase in migration and the decrease in citizens and residents spending on governmental services, the level of foreign direct investments (FDI's) have decreased and have been kept on decreasing. This means that the government has less resources to help their own people.

Government Corruption

Corruption in the Latin American region continues to be a prominent and persistent issue. Over these past few years, more than 11 presidents and former presidents in Latin America have been relieved of their duties, or jailed or are under investigation for performing illicit or illegal activities. Regional surveys performed in 2018, have also illustrated that the majority of respondents in several Latin American nations believed that corruption was increasing. Many reports and investigations have suggested that the heightened awareness of corruption in the region has been a cause due to several new factors: the growing use of mass communication platforms, to reveal violations and mobilize citizens, greater media and investor scrutiny, or, in some cases, judicial and legislative investigations. Whether or not the perception that corruption is increasing is accurate, it is nevertheless fueling civil society efforts to combat corrupt behavior and demand greater accountability. Voter discontent and outright indignation has focused on bribery and the economic consequences of official corruption, diminished public services, and the link of public corruption to organized crime and criminal impunity.

Crime and Violence

As stated above, crime and violence have greatly affected the overall economy and the society of the Latin American nations. Major parties like El Salvador, Brazil, Honduras Colombia and Mexico have been victims of this rising crime and violence rate, and will continue to suffer unless newer tactics or strategies are implemented. For example, as of 2012, El Salvador had seen an average of 16 killings per day. Moving towards Honduras, the country had 6,239 intentional killings in the year 2010 alone. Looking at a subtopic of violence, youth violence which is a major consequence that has emerged from the wealth inequality of the region and the lack of both education and the necessary facilities that are required to ensure the full development of a child. Young adult males between the ages of 15 and 25 are generally the most violent group in Latin America and suffer from the highest homicide rates and experiences with violence in the region. One study conducted in Honduras revealed that being a victim of a threat, injury, or sexual abuse, being male, knowing other delinquent youth, or living in a neighborhood where gangs operate all contribute to the 16 probability of committing violent acts. Conversely, those respondents who reported being in school showed less probability of committing violent acts.

Income and Wealth Inequality in General

The world is facing many issues that stretch the gap between the poorest and the richest. Right now, politically and economically powerful households have seen their living standards and wealth increase faster than those of the poorest and the middle class. Contrary to those at the top, households at the bottom of the income distribution have experienced stagnant wages and low-income growth. In terms of yearly real household income, the poorest 20 percent earned one-fifth of the income of the richest 20 percent in OECD countries in 2014. Real wages of the richest 1 percent increased by 45 percent between 1995 and 2011 – three times higher than the growth in real median wages in the OECD countries. This causes many inequalities to the current system. The poor have limited access to low-quality healthcare services, education services, transportation services. This worsens the rural environment the children live in which has a big effect on their overall development. Clean water and sanitation, hygiene and disease is also one of the thriving factors that affect LEDC's. As standards of living deteriorate, necessities such as hygiene and sanitation become unaffordable leading to a vicious cycle that makes it more difficult for individuals and families to lift themselves above the poverty line. This eventually leads to widening the gap between the rich and the poor.

Arms Trade

Arms trade is a major issue that contributes towards the acts of violence in this region. When talking about how this issue started in the first place, most fingers point towards the civil wars Guatemala (1960-1996), El Salvador (1980-1992), and Nicaragua (1972- 1991). Most of these arms were provided by cold war allies to both rebels and the state groups. Presently illegal arms trade is evident in the region and observations can be supported with data from the number of homicide and killings in the region. However, a major solution, the ATT (Arms trade Treaty) has helped to divert the human suffering from gun violence in the region over the last decade. In the case of Latin America, theft and leakage from national stockpiles are some of the most common ways in which weaponry is diverted to criminal actors. This issue has been recognized by the ATT Working Group on Effective Treaty Implementation (WGETI), established by the Conference of States Parties (CSP) to explore how States Parties can put their newly-agreed obligations into practice

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)

The tasks the UN DESA has taken upon itself are data analysis of official economic, social and environmental data, norm-setting by facilitating major conferences and summits and capacity building by convincing governments to implement suggestions made by the UN. With their extensive data analysis, they create very useful ideas for integrating sustainable development in post-conflict reconstruction. This forum is a division of the UN DESA which specifically targets sustainable development. In General Assembly resolution 66/288 and 67/290, it is stated what the objectives of the Division for Sustainable Development are. These objectives are orientated around providing a framework for strategic planning and implementation of strategies to establish sustainable development for nations.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

The UNODC or the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is an organization part of the UN established in 1997 as the office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention by combining the United Nations International Drug Control Program and the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division in the United Nations Office in Vienna. It operates in more than 80 countries around the world through its network of 115 field offices with 2,400 UNODC personnel globally. UNODC works closely with Governments and civil society towards building security and justice for all. When looking towards Latin America, the UNODC has done a lot to suppress drug and crime related issues in the region. Recently in 2009, the UNODC also organized a Regional Experts Meeting in Costa Rica to discuss and implement the right action needed in

Central and Latin America to reduce the overall threat of drugs and crime. It is also working closely with these governments to establish rehabilitation centres around the region, whilst establishing new security frameworks to reduce the threat of violence by suppressing arms and drug trafficking.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF)

The IMF also helps reduce poverty around the world and help countries who are suffering through a rough financial situation. In this case, the IMF has supported many countries to modernize their economic plans and look into their fiscal and monetary plans to improve macroeconomics situations. It also lends money to economies that are suffering from pressing economic crises. A big example is that of Argentina. Argentina has been stuck in an economic crisis since the early 21st century. It also helped countries like Uruguay to overcome its banking situation and is also currently helping Greece's economic crisis by altering their economic plans. Currently, it believes that if political power were as unequally distributed as an economic power, with the rich controlling the political process, more unequal societies might not try to lessen their inequalities, hence supporting equal access and rights to economic opportunities for development.

Latin American Nations

The general point of view proposed by the Latin American Nations is that they are trying their best to reduce the overall level of threats such as violence, inequality, unemployment, etc, that could potentially harm them. For example, proposed in 2008, the UNASUR or the Union of South American Nations comprises 12 nations which deal with the economic issues present in the region. These Latin American Nations also work closely with organizations such as the World Bank, the UNODC, the IMF to propose new solutions that aim to improve the overall stability in the region. When looking at the measures taken to reduce the overall corruption in the region, it is clear that the government is directing resources to resolve this prominent issue. For example, in 1996, the Organization of American States (OAS) adopted the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption (IACAC), the world's first anti-corruption treaty. Moreover, through the help of foreign aid, the region has managed to bolster the good use of law, and encourage good governance.

Development of Issue

| Date | Event | Outcome |
|-----------|--|--|
| 1945-1980 | The two wars fought and massive economic depression had a major effect on the development of the region. | Democracies grew at a slower rate, with trade levels diminishing. This widened the gap between the rich and the poor, as the rich were the only people left to dominate the capitalist aspect of the country. People below or close to the poverty line started to move towards more unconventional and dangerous resorts to make money. |
| 1975 | United Nations Latin American Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (ILANUD) was established | Collaborated with many South American Nations to produce effective policies that would affect the economic, social and societal development aspect of the region, mainly directed towards the field of crime prevention and criminal justice. |
| 1992 | The United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs was established. | Part of the Secretariat of the United Nations, the UNDPPA has the responsibility of monitoring and assessing global political developments. |
| 1996 | The Organization of American States (OAS) adopted the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption (IACAC), the world's first anti-corruption treaty | The IACAC provides OAS member states with a set of legal tools and an institutional framework to prevent, detect, punish, and eradicate corruption. |
| 1997 | The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime was established | This allowed more efficient decisions to be made that would help the global community to combat the ongoing threat of drugs and crime, and reduce its overall threat. |

| | | |
|-------------|--|---|
| 2008 | The UNASUR or the Union of South American Nations Conservative Treaty was established. | Helped narrow the gap between the rich and poor, leading to an increase in income per capita GDP. It also created more employment and education opportunities which resulted in a decrease of youth violence. |
| 2014 | The Arms Trade Treaty was Established | The Arms Trade Treaty helped regulate the circulation of weapons around the region. This has helped to reduce the overall crime rate in South America as a whole. |
| 2015 | The UN proposes a new framework on violence against women. | This solution will help tackle and reduce the ongoing violent actions directed towards women in general. |
| 2016 | The UNODC participates in a seminar on Human Rights and Institutional Violence in Latin America. | This provided society with a united agenda that boosted the regional cooperation to ensure that effective security measures were made to reduce violence. |

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Policy Action to Prevent Violence Against Women

Over the years, the United Nations has established many solutions to tackle the ongoing issue of violence against women. Recently the organization has also proposed a 2030 framework to end all types of violence against women. When defining violence it is clear that the most prominent ones are classified as physical violence, sexual violence and psychological violence. Each of these types of violence can have serious effects on female health and well-being. As a response, the United Nations and its specialized agencies decided to implement measures to end violence against women and girls. Many seminars and resolutions have been adopted as a result, progressively building an international Law ensuring the protection of women and girls against violence.

Moreover, the United Nations General Assembly participated in bi-annual resolutions on the issue of violence against women, and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of

Women (UN Women), created in 2010 has the responsibility to reach gender equality and end all forms of discrimination against women, ending violence being one of the frameworks of the Entity.

The Arms Trade Treaty

The Arms Trade Treaty has played a very relevant role in the Latin American Nation. As one of the Treaty's main objects outlined in Article 1 - "Prevent and eradicate the illicit trade in conventional arms and prevent their diversion" - diversion appears several times in the ATT's text and figures most prominently in Article 11, which compels each country involved in an arms transfer to "take measures to prevent their diversion". Since its inclusion in the Treaty's text as an obligation for States Parties, the exact nature and method on how to prevent diversion has garnered significant attention. Among the proposed solutions, tackling the lack of transparency in the international arms trade has often been at the forefront. By looking at it from outside the box, it is clear that through the help of the ATT, the overall circulation of these weapons has significantly decreased, resulting in a decreasing amount of homicide rates, and overall regional security.

World Bank's Focus on Targeting Youth Violence

Over the past few years, the World Bank has significantly contributed to ensuring that the youth get a strong moral foundation and that they are directed towards the right or legal path. When looking at the WB's contribution towards Latin America, recently the organization funded US\$186,000 to study directed towards how violence has shaped communities and what are its evident effects in society. The results obtained from this study was published in "*Stop the Violence in Latin America: A Look at Prevention from Cradle to Adulthood*", a report available to the public which identified the novel policies, validated by rigorous empirical evidence, for reducing violence. According to the WB, "The report considers a broad range of policy interventions, deployed both in the Latin America and Caribbean region and elsewhere, that have reduced antisocial behavior early in life or altered patterns of criminal offending in youth and adulthood". When analyzing the overall effect of the study on the public, it is evident that this report was used to inform the audience about how they can contribute to their nations, and what all can their governments do to reduce the overall level of violence in the region.

Possible Solutions

Ensuring Effective Security Measures

Security is one of the most key elements to ensure a safe and well-protected nation. Evidence obtained from different studies suggest that in order to maintain the level of crime, governments should not only increase police resources as a crime-prevention strategy as they would be incomplete without the detailed consideration and planning of how the resources will be employed. Moreover, establishing whether these policing tactics operate through deterrence or incapacitation is crucial to understanding their overall effect. When law enforcement organizations apprehend potential criminals, the social cost is relatively low. If, instead, heightened police presence simply increases arrests and subsequent incarcerations, the resources involved might be more efficiently used for crime prevention strategies.

Provide International Aid and Support Developing Nations to Increase Income Per Capita

It is proven by the WB that the increase of inequality results in the increase of violence. Hence, making sure all nations collaborate with organizations such as but not limited to the IMF, the ICC as well as the World Bank to ensure the equal prosperity of developing nations and countries that need sustainable economic growth. This can be done by looking at sustainable consumption and production of final goods and services and implementing different strategies and tactics which can be displayed as treaties or resolutions. These solutions can be refined into implementation of sustainable manufacturing or agricultural practices that maximise efficiency and also the inculcation of a recycling and reusing philosophy. Providing international aid to developing nations should also be discussed in such conferences and strategies of mutual development with the provision of International Aid should be implemented.

Revised Economic Policies

Another big solution to the issues stated above is to Inculcate new economic plans that alter fiscal and monetary policies to ensure that the country's finances can be well managed. This can help in reducing public debt and increase salaries as an incentive to attract people into the country. This can also be done by seeking help from the IMF.

Revised Awareness Strategies

Raising awareness is a big contributing factor to making sure that the people of the respective country know what changes are being implemented and why they are being done. This is highly important as there shouldn't be confusion when the policies change. To prevent opposition (caused by

this confusion) to helpful solutions created by the UN. This can be done by requesting nations to broadcast and advertise UN media channels that increase awareness. This can also be done by Inculcating youth campaigns on a larger scale as multi-disciplinary events to tackle world issues.

Information Sharing Platform

Communication is one of the key skills in the well functioning of an idea turning into a product. However, there is a massive limitation of awareness not being accessed by LEDC's as they do not have sufficient equipment to communicate with the higher authorities. This means that they can not also express ideas that might help them as they have been in that viewpoint for a longer time, and have more experience to tackle problems that are affecting the needs of people in LEDC's. That is why "upholding newer and more efficient methods of communication, especially in areas with lower accessibility rates to ensure equal sustainable development" is a very viable solution to this issue. This can also be achieved by seeking help from Green Hope organizations and Volunteers of different organizations.

Bibliography

1. Bank, World. "Stopping Crime and Violence in Latin America: A Look at Prevention from Cradle to Adulthood." *World Bank*, 2018,
www.worldbank.org/en/results/2018/05/17/fin-a-la-violencia-en-america-latina-una-mirada-a-la-prevencion-desde-la-infancia-hasta-la-edad-adulta. Accessed 21 Dec. 2019.
2. COHA. "The Long Road to Arms Trade Transparency in Latin America." *Council on Hemispheric Affairs*, www.coha.org/the-long-road-to-arms-trade-transparency-in-latin-america/. Accessed 2 Aug. 2020.
3. Luhnnow, David, and Brian L Frank. "Latin America Is the Murder Capital of the World." *WSJ*, Wall Street Journal, 20 Sept. 2018,
www.wsj.com/articles/400-murders-a-day-the-crisis-of-latin-america-1537455390.
4. MIRANDA, GUILHERME. "Disorder in Latin America: 10 Crises in 2019." *ACLEDD*, 12 Mar. 2020, acleddata.com/2020/03/12/disorder-in-latin-america-10-crisis-in-2019/. Accessed 2 Aug. 2020.
5. Müller, Markus-Michael. "Governing Crime and Violence in Latin America." *Global Crime*, vol. 19, no. 3–4, 2 Oct. 2018, pp. 171–191, 10.1080/17440572.2018.1543916. Accessed 9 Apr. 2019.
6. NTI. "Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) | United Nations Treaties & Agreements | NTI." *Www.Nti.Org*, 26 June 2020, www.nti.org/learn/treaties-and-regimes/arms-trade-treaty-att/. Accessed 2 Aug. 2020.
7. Patricia Codazzi. "A Framework to Underpin Action to Prevent Violence against Women." *UN Women*, 2019, www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/11/prevention-framework. Accessed 4 Dec. 2019.
8. "SIPRI Expands Arms Trade Treaty Activity Database to Latin America and the Caribbean | SIPRI." *Www.Sipri.Org*, 2016,

www.sipri.org/news/2016/sipri-expands-arms-trade-treaty-activity-database-latin-america-and-caribbean. Accessed 2 Aug. 2020.

9. Wikipedia Contributors. "Crime and Violence in Latin America." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 13 Mar. 2019, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crime_and_violence_in_Latin_America.

Appendices

Report on the how the Arms Trade Treaty has contributed to Latin America

- <https://controlarms.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/ATTDiversiion-Paper-FINAL.pdf>

Report on Inequality

- https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/43443/6/S1800058_en.pdf

Report on Latin American Economics

- <https://carnegieendowment.org/pdf/files/latinamericaneconomics.pdf>

UNODC Report on Homicides

- https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/gsh/Booklet_4.pdf

Corruption in Latin America

- <https://scholar.smu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1087&context=lbra>
- <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.503.5018&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- <https://www.bakerinstitute.org/media/files/files/09570f2e/bi-report-070819-latam-corruption.pdf>

