

The Lessons Taught by the 2019 Murder Rate of the Caribbean Basin.

The sum of murders for any year is not the murder rate of a country, that is the murder toll or sum of murders for one year. The murder rate for one year is the number of murders per 100,000 persons of the population of the said country which affords a comparative analysis of countries with varying population sizes. This article is then a listing of the murder rates in 2019 for countries of the Caribbean Basin (including Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana) indicating the hierarchy of murder amongst the countries of the Caribbean Basin. The Caribbean Basin comprises of those countries washed by the Caribbean Sea with the other more powerful commonality being the impact the globalized illicit trades have on the social orders of these countries, as the Caribbean Basin is the most valuable basin in the world, by the value of the illicit products smuggled through this Basin to North America, Europe Africa and Asia. The hegemonic illicit trades in 2019 are the illicit drug trade, the illicit small arms trade and human smuggling where human smuggling into the Caribbean Basin is now globalized and the Mexican Transnational Trafficking Organizations (MTTOs) continue to exert hegemony over the illicit trades of this most valuable Basin.

The impact of the illicit trades on the social orders of the States of the Caribbean Basin is indicated by the 2019 murder rates with a number of lessons to be learned on the nature of the impact on these social orders of the Caribbean Basin, the abiding reality is the fallacy of well embraced causative explanations for violent crime in the Caribbean Basin.

The table of murder rates is ordered on the highest murder rates in descending order for 2019 and is as follows per 100,000 persons:

1. Honduras: 46.266
2. Jamaica: 44.8783
3. US Virgin Islands: 40.5048
4. Trinidad and Tobago: 38.1335
5. Belize: 32.80
6. St Lucia: 26.8067
7. Colombia: 25.48
8. The Bahamas: 24.6481
9. St Vincent and the Grenadines: 21.7019 (January to October 2019).
10. Venezuela: 21
11. St Kitts & Nevis: 20.8452
12. Guatemala: 20.36
13. Barbados: 17.0458
14. Guyana: 14.5638 (January to October 2019).
15. Grenada: 14.2602
16. Dominica: 13.6462
17. Curacao: 11.875
18. Panama: 11.17

19. Costa Rica: 11.08
20. French Guiana: 10.7849
21. Puerto Rico: 9.9330
22. Haiti: 9.5972
23. Martinique: 7.749
24. Nicaragua: 7.5
25. Dominican Republic: 6.909 (January-September 2019).
26. Suriname: 5.1680
27. Antigua & Barbuda: 3.1206

Analysis

The following realities are now apparent from this hierarchy of murder rates in the Caribbean Basin: The Caribbean Basin has a grave problem with societal violence especially gun violence. The murder rates of States at the periphery of the major pipelines of production and smuggling in the illicit trades are the most violent in the Caribbean Basin. The murder rates of Caribbean Basin States where production and/or smuggling centers are located have noted lower murder rates than States at the periphery of these command and control centers. The poorest States in the Caribbean Basin do not have murder rates that reflect the level of poverty in the social order which falsifies the poverty societal violence causative explanation.

The top 10 of the murder rate hierarchy reveals the nature of murder in the Caribbean Basin. Of the top 10 States, six belong to CARICOM and are all tier two trafficking States, not one of this six is a smuggling or production command and control center. Of the remaining four Colombia is the apex production and smuggling center of the Basin, Venezuela is the trailing production and smuggling center to Colombia and Honduras is a smuggling center in transition to becoming a production center for cocaine and heroin in Central America as it is already the leading smuggling center of Central America, Honduras is then in transition to an offshore production location for the MTTOs. The US Virgin Islands is an important US overseas territory entry point for cocaine, heroin and smuggled humans into the US mainland but it is not the prime entry point in the Caribbean Basin as Puerto Rico is the apex entry point but the murder rate of the US Virgin Islands outstrips that of Puerto Rico (21) and is number 3 in the Basin. The availability of small arms and the illicit trades fuels a volatile mix in the US Virgin Islands. The six members of CARICOM of the top 10 show murder rates that eclipse those of Venezuela and four of the six show murder rates that eclipse those of Colombia. Jamaica a CARICOM member ranks second and Trinidad and Tobago fourth in the murder hierarchy. Clearly the members of CARICOM that belong to the Caribbean island chain have a grave societal violence problem especially gun violence. Jamaica's history of political violence since independence has now merged with the violence that arises in the daily operation of the Caribbean illicit trades creating a volatile mix. The rise of ganja in Trinidad and Tobago in the 1990s organically linked to the illicit trades and the largest ganja demand market in the Caribbean dependent on imported

supply has brewed a volatile mix presented as the Ganja wars. In Belize urban gangland organic to the illicit trades, the local ganja market and increasing loads of product bound for Mexico being landed in Belize continues to fuel the murder rate. In St Lucia the trafficking of product to Martinique and the flow of product from France as Moroccan hashish drives the wars in the illicit trades impacting the murder rate. The Bahamas is on the front line of smuggling to Florida both product and humans and the local ganja market has a supply/demand imbalance as demand outstrips supply driving the ganja wars. St Vincent as a source of locally grown ganja where demand for exports outstrips supply thereby importing foreign wars to St Vincent and the Grenadines. The six members of CARICOM in the top 10 indicate all the complexities of the drug markets of the Caribbean island chain and their impact on murder rates.

What is now apparent is the existence of apex trafficking countries in the Caribbean Basin/CARICOM whose 2019 murder rates were below 10 per 100,00 and these are: the Dominican Republic, Suriname and Puerto Rico. The structure and order of transnational drug trafficking for these countries will partially explain why such a low murder rate but this must be combined with an analysis of the history of the political economy of these States. The exception is the case of the US Virgin Islands. The US Virgin islands is besieged by drug trafficking and human smuggling using it as an entry point to enter the US mainland via domestic routes. In the US Virgin Islands, the right to bear arms exists which feeds into the gun violence but there is also the trafficking of illicit arms from the US mainland and illicit opioids trafficking and ganja from the US as in Puerto Rico but the murder rate is vastly different from Puerto Rico. The one major difference is the hegemony of Puerto Rican transnational organised crime, Asociacion Neta, on the ground in Puerto Rico and a perpetually shifting terrain of hegemony on the ground in the US Virgin Islands. The lesson is then apparent that in a State chosen to be a command and control center for the illicit trades in the Caribbean the control, the hegemony exerted by the MTTOs on the trades through their business model creates an order that minimizes societal violence for it is bad for business, as simple as that. The cases of the Dominican Republic, the command and control centre for the Northern island arch and Suriname the command and control centre for the Southern Caribbean illustrate this reality vividly as the volume of product that moves through both States do not trigger illicit trade wars that ramp up the murder rate. Puerto Rico is showing all the signs that this is the model being now replicated on the ground there.

The most potent lesson afforded is the case of the Dominican Republic (DR) the command and control center of the Northern Caribbean island chain specializing in smuggling to the East coast of the US and Europe and Suriname the command and control centre of the Southern Caribbean Caribbean specializing in smuggling to Europe with volumes that outstrip the DR. In fact Suriname is the premier smuggling point to Europe as it commands smuggling to the French overseas territories and the former members of the Netherlands Antilles of the Caribbean and it is operationally linked to Brazil. The DR remains the premier smuggling point of the North utilizing pipelines that run through the Northern Caribbean to the USA and is being systematically absorbed

into the reconfiguration and expansion of Northern Caribbean pipelines to Europe primarily through containerized cargo. This ongoing dynamic is illustrated by the number of transnational organized European crime groups operationalized in the DR the latest arrival being the Albanians. The DR is organically joined to the illicit trades of Haiti which is now challenging the DR's hegemony of the Northern Caribbean as Haitian organised crime affiliated to the MTTOs now use Haiti as the landing zone then to the DR for export. In the case of the DR, Suriname and Haiti transnational organised crime in conjunction with the MTTOs dominate the illicit trades policing an order that suppresses the orgy of murders that exists in the rest of the Caribbean Basin. In the DR and Haiti transnational organised crime born in the USA and migrated to the home of the Diaspora of these two States are now dominant as Los Trinitarios and Zoe Pound. The same applies to Suriname as transnational organised crime groups of the Suriname Diaspora in Europe especially The Netherlands dominate the smuggling routes to Europe. In these three apex trafficking points under the hegemony of transnational organised crime and the MTTOs there is no murder spiral as the tier two smuggling States of the Basin.

Then there is the case of Venezuela the second terminal for drug distribution combined with illicit drug production that is showing a decline in the homicide rate reaching 21 per 100,000 in 2019. A clear illustration of the hegemony on the ground of the new order of the MTTOs in Venezuela today, where trafficking across and out of Venezuela to the region has now a clear, discernible order noted for its diversity and iron discipline on the ground illustrated by the haves and the have nots on the supply side of the illicit trades. The strangulation of the Venezuelan economy applied by US sanctions has in fact increased the spread of and heightened the hegemony of the MTTOs over the illicit trades of Venezuela to the detriment of the Colombian paramilitaries as Los Rastrojos. The strategic plan of the MTTOs and their affiliates has now refashioned Venezuela into a transport hub where product is moved across Venezuela to Suriname and primarily Brazil for export which has markedly reduced the volume of product leaving Venezuela for the Caribbean and the world as Brazil is now the premier export and consumption hub of the MTTOs in the Western hemisphere with Venezuela now being an offshore production point and a transport hub. There is no Cartel of the Sun in Venezuela only Pax Mexicana!

Venezuela is now in a group of the table which consists of St Kitts and Nevis, St Vincent and the Grenadines and St Lucia. Some impacted by past structures and orders as St Kitts and Nevis by the order of Lil Nut that is now in tatters as the new order brought by the MTTOs and the Eastern Caribbean Trafficking Pipeline (ECTP). St Lucia by the drug trade to/from Martinique, the changes wrought by the ECTP and the order of the MTTOs creating the hierarchy of the haves and have nots. St Vincent and the Grenadines continues to be impacted by the fallout from the St Lucia/Martinique trade, the frantic search for supply as ganja demand explodes especially in Barbados and T&T, the impact of the ECTP and the order of the MTTOs on the drug market. The Bahamas is potently impacted by intensified drug trafficking and human smuggling to the USA,

the increasing demand for ganja in The Bahamas and its export to the US and the drive for hegemony of the new order of the MTTOs. The Bahamas sits in a region of multiple pipelines to the US linking the archipelago to Haiti, the DR, Jamaica and the Turks and Caicos Islands. The salient question remains why transit points in this category have murder rates that way outstrip those of the command and control trafficking centers as the DR and Suriname? St Lucia's murder rate reflects a reality that is now impacting Martinique seen in its murder rate of 7.749 which was the fourth highest in France and its overseas departments for 2019, setting off the alarm bells. But this murder rate in Martinique is also the product of the new order of the MTTOs as the Suriname command and control center has targeted Martinique, Guadeloupe, French Guiana and St Martin to traffick product into France and the EU. The 30 to 39 per 100,000 group follows with T&T having the highest murder rate in this group but its strategic importance to illicit trafficking in the Caribbean pales in comparison to Belize, DR, Puerto Rico, Suriname and Venezuela. T&T is then boxing way above its weight class in the murder rate hierarchy of the Caribbean. Belize borders Mexico and is now a hot landing zone for drug flights moving product into Mexico via Belizean landing strips. T&T has no such strategic value to illicit trafficking but its murder rate places it at the apex of this category largely the result of the ganja wars where the largest market for ganja nearly solely dependent on imports in the Caribbean exists which experiences constant shortfalls in supply. This T&T reality is now reflected in the escalating murder rate in Barbados with 2019 being its highest rate ever recorded as the ganja wars escalate in Barbados as they are the third largest market for ganja in the Caribbean almost wholly dependent on imports, where demand constantly chases supply. The apex category consists of Honduras and Jamaica but they occupy opposite realities in the illicit trades but share similar histories of political economy but Jamaica presents a unique reality. Jamaica and Honduras are linked via a trafficking pipeline that flows both ways as is the case with Costa Rica and Panama. Jamaican transnational crime, Shower, is the premier affiliate of the MTTOs of the Caribbean, operational throughout the Caribbean and the North Atlantic. Jamaican political economy has then produced the most powerful Caribbean transnational organised crime group in the illicit trades of the world and the premier Caribbean affiliate of the MTTOs. An organization built on the production and export of Jamaican premier ganja to the North Atlantic exploiting the advantage their organic links to the Jamaican political order founded on the garrison constituencies of Jamaican electoral politics in post-colonial Jamaica. Jamaica's murder rate is the legacy bequeathed to it by the Jamaican political order, its political economy not solely its illicit trades and Jamaica's strategic value to these trades. T&T's political economy and the ganja wars not its strategic value to Caribbean illicit trafficking are the prime reasons for the 2019 murder rate that is threatening to enter the realm of Jamaica and Honduras. T&T in 2019 is the fourth ranked murder capital of the Caribbean Basin and number 2 in Caricom, a position in no way the product of its strategic value to trafficking rather the result of a systematic failure of governance borne out of the politics of race and voter mobilization rooted in a discourse of racist hegemony.

The conclusion is then obvious: States which are designated as apex smuggling points receive the greater investment from the MTTOs and their affiliates to ensure the hegemony over the illicit trades and this hegemony is predicated on policing their business model to ensure its hegemony. This business model insists on Pax Mexicana, an iron discipline in which violence must be controlled and minimized to ensure the maximum possible generation of wealth and allow violence to retain its disciplinary potency. This model applied throughout the world presently poignantly illustrates that it is not hegemonic in Mexico at present and those involved in smuggling in Mexico do not exert hegemony over the MTTOs. Smuggling in Mexico today is simply a State enterprise politicized to the point where it is consuming the host nation, having lost its rhyme and reason kept alive by the war on drugs.