

# VOICES of Mexico

CISAN • UNAM

## An Interview with U.S. Ambassador Carlos Pascual

*Leonardo Curzio*

## Crime and Violence in Mexico

*Articles by Raúl Benítez, Armando Rodríguez, José María Ramos, Pablo Cabañas and Malgorzata Polanska*

## The Schengen Agreement A Model for the Americas?

*Kurt Schelter*

## Barack Obama's First Year

*Paz Consuelo Márquez-Padilla*

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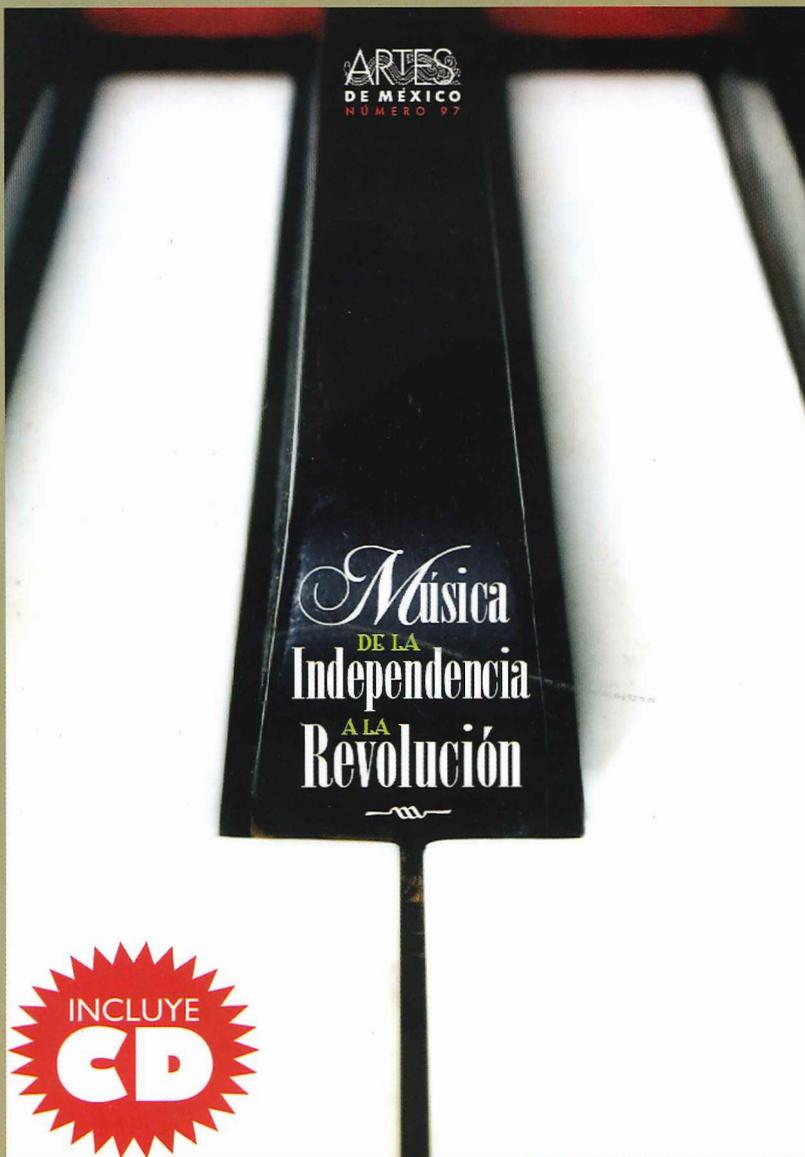
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*El piano: un gusto caso*

El piano es un instrumento que ha sido parte de la vida cotidiana de México durante siglos. Desde su llegada al país en el siglo XVIII, ha sido un instrumento que ha acompañado a la música de la independencia y la revolución. En este artículo se explorará la historia del piano en México y su papel en la música de la independencia y la revolución.



REVIVA UNA ÉPOCA EN LA QUE LA MÚSICA FUE UN REFLEJO DE LAS ENSOÑACIONES ROMÁNTICAS DE NUESTRO PAÍS. Y OBSERVE CÓMO HISTORIA DE LA MÚSICA SE MEZCLA CON LA HISTORIA DE LA VIDA COTIDIANA.

# VOICES<sup>TM</sup> of Mexico

ISSN 0186 • 9418

*Voices of Mexico* is published by the  
Centro de Investigaciones sobre América del Norte, CISAN (Center for Research on North America), of the  
Coordinación de Humanidades (Office of the Coordinator of Humanities), Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México,  
UNAM (National Autonomous University of Mexico).

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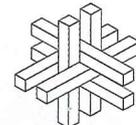
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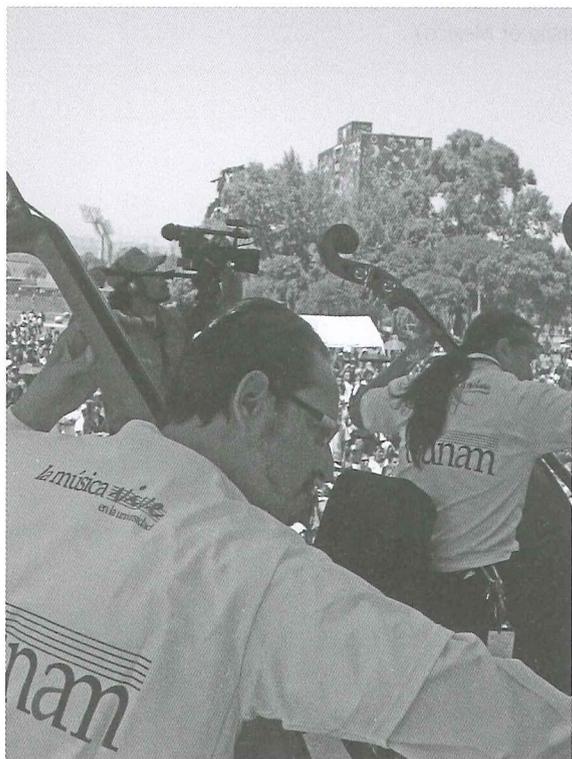
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# VOICES<sup>TM</sup> *of Mexico*

Issue 87 Spring-Summer 2010



Elsie Montiel

## Cover

Medals from UNAM's Contemporary Collection

UNAM Centennial, 999-grade silver,  
60 mm in diameter, 100 grams, written  
along the edge, struck in 2010.

Prince of Asturias Award for Communications and the  
Humanities 2009, aged bronze, 66 mm in diameter,  
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Photos: Elsie Montiel

## Back Cover

Titanote agave leaves.  
Photo: Abisai García

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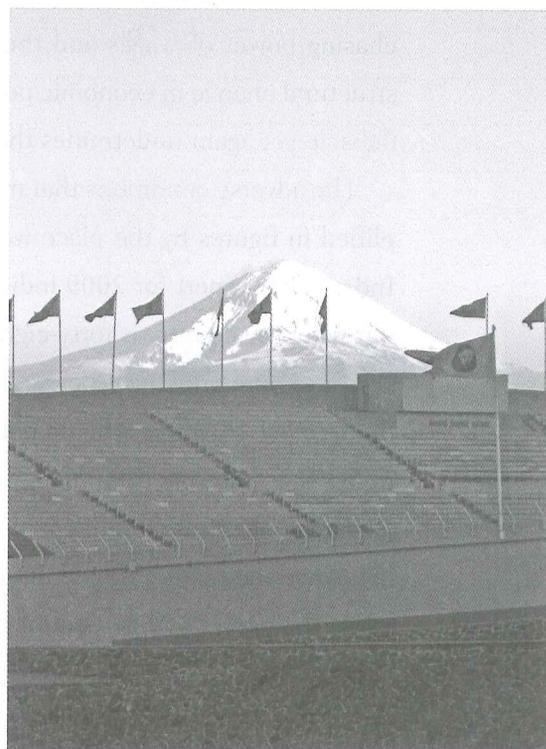
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Elsie Montiel

# OUR VOICE

Four months into 2010, the news in Mexico has been full of alarming reports of the country's growing insecurity. As a result of the struggle over territorial control among the drug cartels and their violent reaction to President Felipe Calderón's frontal strategy to fight them, altogether the confrontations have made for about 3,000 executions so far this year.<sup>1</sup>

Because of the size of the country, most of the population still leads a normal life; however, a general state of disquiet is beginning to emerge in the face of the ominous signs of focal points of violence throughout the country.

The complexity of understanding the circumstances that led Mexico to its current state of affairs cannot leave out decisive elements. While the declining purchasing power of wages and the collapse of the job market seem related to the structural change in economic policy that began three decades ago, the 2008 world debacle yet again undermines the possibilities for creating new equilibriums.

The adverse conditions that millions of Mexicans are dealing with can be exemplified in figures by the place we occupy on the United Nations' Human Poverty Index.<sup>2</sup> The report for 2009 indicates that 7 percent of the Mexican population is illiterate; the country is forty-eighth among 150 nations in terms of the population's access to pure drinking water; and, as an indicator of health care and good nutrition, the number of people who do not live past 40 is high, as is the number of children under five suffering from malnutrition.

The concentration of income adds to the ominous inequality we are experiencing, since the richest 10 percent of homes concentrate 36.3 percent of all income, while the poorest 10 percent of homes survive on 1.7 percent.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *El Universal*, [www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas](http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas), May 10, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, *Human Development Report 2009, Mexico*, [http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/country\\_fact\\_sheets/cty\\_fs\\_MEX.html](http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_MEX.html), accessed May 11, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> *CIA World Fact Book* (2008), <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mx.html>, accessed May 11, 2010.

Considering that the gradual deterioration of Mexico and growing criminality are not a problem that involves this country's population and government alone, since both their origins and repercussions have to do with both internal and external conditions, we can say at this point that not only the United States and Canada, as our regional partners, but also the entire international community have begun to react and search for lasting responses that will counter the power accumulated by the global networks of organized crime.

In the midst of this scenario, the Mexican political class, although it agrees on the gravity of the situation, has not been able to come to an agreement about what it wants from the National Security Law. Much less has it been able to agree on the kind of alliance the governments of the United States and Mexico should forge to create a common front.

In this issue of *Voices of Mexico*, we present our readers with the viewpoints of several experts who analyze the context of insecurity in the country, in addition to the position of U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Carlos Pascual, who talks about bilateral relations *vis-à-vis* security. Dr. Kurt Schelter has made a significant contribution to this issue about the urgent need to explore alternatives for the region's future, exemplified in the European Union's Schengen model.

We also include a series of articles dealing with the diversity of the National Autonomous University of Mexico's cultural patrimony in a year when we Mexicans celebrate not only the centennial of the UNAM as a modern institution, but also the bicentennial of our independence and the 100-year anniversary of the Mexican Revolution.

With this panorama in mind, our wish is that the festive vocation that characterizes us culturally as Mexicans can inspire us to a renewed enthusiasm for overcoming our problems, leading us to a profound reflection to review our achievements as a nation, but, above all, to recognize our failures and commit ourselves to overcoming them.

*Silvia Núñez García*

# Universidades

n. 45 • abril - junio 2010

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# Interview with Carlos Pascual, U.S. Ambassador to Mexico<sup>1</sup>

Leonardo Curzio\*

**LEONARDO CURZIO:** Mr. Ambassador, let me begin the conversation mentioning the death of Arturo Beltrán Leyva, one of the drug kingpins most wanted by U.S. authorities. What is your evaluation of this?

**CARLOS PASCUAL:** First, I must congratulate the government of Mexico, the SEMAR [Mexico's Ministry of the Navy] teams, for this operation. They were very professional, protecting civilians as they carried out the operation effectively, even though they were in a highly populated area. I want to acknowledge the efforts made to train these forces because they're really getting results. This is a very important step because it sends the kingpins the message that they're not going to be able to proceed with impunity, that they'll pay a price for everything they do—and it may turn out to be their lives—and that this fight is going to continue on all fronts.

**LC:** Is cooperation, the principle of co-responsibility, which is the basis for the Mérida Initiative, the right thing to do? Are we on the right road?

**CP:** I think so. The efforts of the last six months should be especially highlighted, as cooperation has sped up in intelligence matters and creating trustworthy control groups. In addition, we've made getting the equipment to Mexico much more expeditious. Our response capability has increased on both sides of the border, and this can be seen in the way the Mexican government is now implementing operations.



United States Ambassador to Mexico Carlos Pascual.

**"In 2009, Mexico extradited more than 105 individuals to the United States, more than in any other year. This indicates that our joint work is getting results in capturing criminals."**

I have to emphasize that these operations always happen on the Mexican side; the United States is not carrying out operations in its territory. The credit for these actions, then, all goes to Mexico; but the success stems from the joint effort. Contributing to Mexico's having this response capability has really been a great pleasure for us.

**LC:** Are the different security agencies' teams—both of the Mexicans and the Americans— fully conscious of being

\* Journalist and researcher at CISAN.

**“We have to look at drug addiction in a totally different way. We have to emphasize prevention, treatment, working inside jails.”**

on the same side? That is, has the trust and sense of co-responsibility penetrated all spheres?

**CP:** I think so. One fundamental thing is that this work began with the relationship between the two presidents. If that hadn't been positive, it couldn't have spread to the other spheres. That is, the trust between them has pushed the rest of the bureaucracies and agencies to work in this same vein. When we have political meetings, they're in a climate of absolute trust, and that positively impacts the agencies' work, both internally and with each other. What we want is for them to work together as much as possible: sharing information, experiences, lessons, techniques for functioning more effectively. All that contributes to generating the trust that will strengthen both governments' capabilities.

**LC:** Cooperation on issues of intelligence and sharing tactical, operational and even strategic information are fundamental for two governments that recognize drug trafficking as a threat to their own security. What is your view of the technological development Mexico has achieved, for example, with the Mexico Platform? That is, does its having these technological capabilities improve its operational relationship with U.S. agencies?

**CP:** The investments on the Mexican side have brought excellent results. It's really been a pleasure for us working with you. We've supported the Federal Police in its creation of the Mexico Platform, but the main investment has clearly been Mexican. This is a good example of the kind of cooperation that exists, because for every dollar we've spent, Mexico is investing five or six times that amount. And that is as it should be because Mexico is the center of operations. What we're also trying to do is to look toward strategic areas where we can invest, to see if we can bring in tailor-made technology or if we can create a model that can be reproduced elsewhere. We've helped consolidate the program with certain technologies, but also with training to support the education of the Mexican forces. Now we're seeing how this model

can be reproduced in training the police forces in the states and municipalities.

**LC:** In the beginning, the Felipe Calderón administration started up an aggressive agenda of extraditions to the United States. I suppose this is an important message to the drug traffickers that the border will not harbor them with impunity. How has this progressed?

**CP:** Well, in 2009, Mexico extradited more than 105 individuals to the United States, a higher number than in any other year. This indicates, first off, that our joint work is getting results in capturing criminals, and that we have the capability of ensuring they be tried in the United States. Secondly, what it also highlights is that there is greater understanding between the two governments about how to process the extraditions so that the main objective is putting criminals in jail. The issue is not whether they're in Mexico or in the United States; the issue is who has the best case prepared to be able to try them and see the whole trial through to a positive outcome.

**LC:** Some say that with the Mérida Initiative, Mexico and the United States are applying all the capability of the state to deal with these criminals and that the Beltrán Leyva case is proof of that. But they also say that we've neglected—to use the military term—the addictions front; that there has been a failure to cut demand. What's your opinion, Mr. Ambassador?

**CP:** We're dealing with this challenge on both sides of the border. The drug trade that began in Mexico doesn't only consist of the purchase and sale of these goods, but entails consumption. Therefore, the United States has had to face this challenge in an unprecedented way, which has been possible because of the big change represented by President Barack Obama and Secretary Hillary Clinton coming to office. Presidential advisor Gil Kerlikowske has come to Mexico several times and some of these visits have been to deal specifically with this issue.

We have to look at drug addiction in a totally different way. We have to emphasize prevention, treatment, working inside jails. When these people leave prison, we have to make sure they have opportunities to develop, access to a job. If not, they can fall back into addiction. And that's a task that has to be taken up all over the country, focusing on communities

**“It’s important to give new impetus to the human rights issue to assure the population that the fight against drug traffickers and crime does not imply sacrificing human rights.”**

where we’ve found that work has to be intensified. In Mexico, the same thing is being attempted: establishing links between Mexican and U.S. addiction treatment centers, exchanging experiences and offering support to Mexican centers. However, there’s still a lot to be done against this threat.

**LC:** There’s one issue that is sometimes discussed in the U.S. Congress because some Democratic legislators and NGOs are concerned about human rights. In one of his most memorable speeches, when talking about the fight against terrorism, President Barack Obama said the United States could not have the slightest doubt, that one of its fundamental values as a republic is respect for human rights and that this is not incompatible with improving security levels. Do you think that in Mexico we’ve understood that that equation has to be simultaneous, that is, that guaranteeing security must not involve violating human rights?

**CP:** I’m glad you touched on this issue, Leonardo, because it’s absolutely fundamental. I think that every country must analyze its behavior, and we’ve already done that in the United States. That’s why on his first day in office, President Barack Obama said we would close the base at Guantánamo.

**LC:** Some of the prisoners are already being moved to Illinois.

**CP:** Yes. And we’ve committed ourselves once again to complying with the Geneva Conventions and all the conventions against torture because these aren’t issues you can play around with. They have to be analyzed and very strict measures have to be implemented. I think it’s important to give new impetus to the human rights issue to assure the population that the fight against drug traffickers and crime does not imply sacrificing human rights. We’re prepared to support our Mexican colleagues on this point, exchanging knowledge with human rights groups about how to create systems that will make it possible to guarantee transparency and accountability. In the courts and on an international level there are mechanisms for dealing with specific cases to ensure compliance.

We would like to maintain the possibility of working with those systems and sharing the experience. We’re talking with our colleagues in the government about this.

**LC:** In Latin America, civilian-military relations have not always gone well; there are countries where they are very fragmented. Mexico may be an exceptional case, since they function, even surprisingly well. Surveys rate the army as one of the most trusted institutions, despite the fact that right now it’s facing a very complex task in spearheading the fight against drug trafficking. You have told us on several occasions—and we would like you to explain— what you mean when you say the army should not be left alone.

**CP:** Absolutely. I believe the fight against drug traffickers and organized crime requires the efforts of an entire country, and the army is taking on the role that has been demanded of it, even if it’s something it doesn’t want to do. In Tijuana, we can see how the army acts when it is called in to fight criminals, even drug traffickers: they move out accompanied by a unit of city police, which is who has the authority to cordon off the area and gather and present the evidence to the judicial system. On the other hand, it’s absolutely necessary for the population to have the confidence to be able to make accusations against criminals. We have to combine the army’s capabilities with those of police forces, who have the legal authority to put together civil cases. You have to work with prosecutors, but also with civil society, because all of these parties are essential to success in this fight.

**LC:** Security very often takes up a good part of the time we dedicate to analyzing Mexico-U.S. relations. However, the importance of our relationship goes beyond this issue; sometimes we forget that we’re trade partners, that 80 percent of Mexican trade is with the United States and that there’s a very tightly-woven human, entrepreneurial fabric that joins the two countries. What’s your view of the state of relations in this area? Was 2009 really a horrific year for the two economies?

**“For years, many countries—including our own— denied that climate change was happening. Those times are gone. However, implementing a new global policy is going to be difficult.”**

**CP:** I think we’ve touched bottom in the recession, and now we’re beginning to grow. This, on the U.S. side especially, will help generate the demand that will give impetus to both economies. That’s not the only thing I can say about it, but it’s basic to the answer. The crisis of the last 18 months has not affected only Mexico and the United States, but the entire world. We hadn’t gone through a recession like this in more than 100 years, and that’s why both presidents’ efforts have concentrated on getting the economies back on their feet to then focus investments appropriately to begin a growth process. And now we have to look at another problem associated with all these investments: we have to observe fiscal policy to guarantee fiscal responsibility, in order to ensure that we haven’t generated so much debt that we can’t finance future projects.

**LC:** And to avoid making new generations pay the price. At the Trilateral Meeting, which Stephen Harper also attended, I noticed that great emphasis was placed on issues of energy and the environment.

**CP:** Let me round out two ideas before moving on to that point. Now that we’ve hit the bottom of the recession, it’s absolutely necessary to start to grow. Both countries have to have a strategy for coordinating policies, increasing competitiveness—and here, I’m talking about the competitiveness of both countries and North America as a whole, in the framework of a globalized economy. Both countries need to have the capacity, for example, of selling an automobile, since in the United States, we can’t sell a car *competitively* if Mexico and the United States aren’t integrated.

**LC:** In the big struggle for global competitiveness, are Mexico and the United States in the same boat, Mr. Ambassador?

**CP:** Absolutely. It’s China, India and Europe who are competing with us. We’re working in such a way that the capabilities we achieve between the two countries will allow us

to produce better quality and at a lower price than any other individual nation.

**LC:** However, we need jobs in the region...

**CP:** That’s right, and we’re creating jobs in the region. We have to look at the whole picture, because if we just look at any single sector, it could be argued that integration and cooperation have caused job losses in the United States or in Mexico. If we look at the full picture, we can see that we’ve created more jobs for the two countries working this way. Then, here comes the political conflict, because we can see the impetus of protectionism in specific areas, even though in a broader sense, what we’re seeing is that that cooperation is what is allowing us to compete more effectively on a global level. The challenge for our politicians is explaining this to our populations with specific examples so we can keep the two economies open.

**LC:** You have to have a broader vision to see that in North America, without distinguishing among the countries themselves, the impetus to the economy is the same.

**CP:** Absolutely. Now we’re focusing on North America, but let’s go on to the issue of climate change and renewable energies globally. This is a fundamental issue for the future of the planet. If we don’t deal with it now, we’re going to be forced to have to concern ourselves with it in 50 years, but by then large parts of our countries will have disappeared under water, while other parts will be completely arid, and we’ll be dealing with a natural disaster. In Copenhagen, we tried to get all the countries to begin international negotiations to reach a global understanding about how to control emissions that cause or foster climate change. Where are we going? We don’t know yet, but it’s important not to see Copenhagen as the end of climate change negotiations, but rather as the beginning of a new way of looking at the problem.

For years, many countries—including our own— denied that climate change was happening. Those times are gone.

However, implementing a new global policy and a policy in every country is going to be difficult because in the short term, we will have to meet certain costs, because cutting carbon dioxide emissions means that you have to put a price on it. If you don't, you create no incentives for that reduction. We'll also have to find other ways of producing energy. But for the time being, putting a price on carbon dioxide emissions will have an impact on sectors like the auto, metallurgy, aluminum, glass and cement industries. We have to see how we can support the workers in those sectors.

**LC:** In a transition, right?

**CP:** That transition has to be carried forward, and at the same time we have to start creating new ways of strengthening the economies. This is where we have a tremendous opportunity for Mexico and the United States, since Mexico's capacity for creating renewable energies —solar and wind, mainly— is tremendous.

In the southern United States, we have very large fields of windmills. In Mexico, Oaxaca is one of the places with the highest winds in the world. A few weeks ago in the United States, we approved a guarantee for an US\$80-million loan as part of a project we're financing together with the Inter-American Development Bank, which will help produce 250 megawatts of electricity using aeolian energy. And that's only the beginning. We're studying how to formulate the rules, the conditions, the transmissions systems, the standards, in order to produce renewable energy here in Mexico that can be used in the United States. Therefore, having standards is absolutely essential because the production of this kind of energy has to jibe with the methods we have in the U.S. For example, by 2020, 30 percent of renewable energy will be produced in California. The thrust of these investments will come mostly from the United States because that's where most of the demand is. So, we have to see how we can harmonize standards to ensure that Mexico has the incentives needed for the investment required.

**LC:** What do you imagine the region will be like in 50 years? Can we expect supranational integration to be consolidated in North America, respecting the specificities of each country with support from the public, unlike the case of NAFTA, in which certain political sectors of the three countries blame it for all of our ills? In short, do you imagine Mexico-U.S. relations —let's bring Canada into the equation if you like—

**“We have to understand that we must cooperate as never before, because the problems of today are such that no country can successfully face them alone.”**

will in coming years achieve deeper, much friendlier integration, in which the historical lack of understanding that has troubled us in the past will have been reduced?

**CP:** I think we're at a historic point worldwide where we have to change what we think about integration among all countries and how we function *vis-à-vis* a global system. We're in a world where capital, labor, ideas and technologies recognize no frontiers, and we have to understand a reality in which there are millions of people living in poverty, in which we have witnessed the re-launch of countries like China and India, but also of Mexico. Fifteen years ago, it would have been difficult to think that Mexico could be involved with the world's main powers in the G-20 deciding the fate of the planet.

On the other hand, we have to recognize that there are threats that have no respect for borders, like drug traffickers and organized crime. We have to understand that we must cooperate and take advantage of our capabilities as never before, because the problems of today are such that no country can successfully face them alone. We've seen that if we manage to work together, we can be very successful, like in controlling the terrible economic recession. To do that, we have to open up and integrate our economies and implement new policies. We're going to continue working like this, since each country has a responsibility to its own population, but also a global responsibility. I think that in the future, we'll see a stronger, more dynamic integration of Mexico and the United States because we're in this together, and this is a time when the success of one can favor the other. Because it's unthinkable for one country to advance while another gets left behind. Those times are over, and we have to look to the future in a different way.

**LC:** Ambassador Pascual, thank you very much for your comments. **MM**

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Interview originally broadcast on the Mexico City radio program “Enfoque” (Focus), December 17, 2009.

# The Importance of Setting Agendas President Calderón's Proposal For Political Reform

Fernando Dworak\*

Probably the great issue pending on the political agenda is the one known as the “reform of the state.” For more than 20 years, forums, consultations and conferences have been held and negotiating tables set up in Congress. But, the little that has been passed is linked primarily to the interests of our political parties, especially regarding elections.

For some, this change should be the founding moment of a renovated state and the consolidation of the transition process in which the whole of society makes a pact about the institutions everyone wants. Others propose fostering a clear agenda of reforms that by their very dynamic would modernize and update the rules.

Thus, the political reform—or the reform of the state—can be defined as the gradual, incremental, ongoing process of evaluation and renovation of institutional arrangements, so that the state can continue fulfilling its basic functions: providing security and stability.

Last December 15, President Felipe Calderón introduced a bill to the Senate putting forward his agenda for political reform. Some actors rushed to disqualify it saying that no consensus had been reached on it with the Congress. Others supported it, arguing that it delineated the agenda for discussion.

## WHERE ARE WE COMING FROM?

Before analyzing President Calderón's reform, it is a good idea to know where we are coming from and what is needed at the current juncture.

The system designed in 1917 emerged from the need to rebuild the state after the revolutionary period. This was done through political centralization, both in the sphere of



Guillermo Perea/Cuartosuro

Two governors, Marcelo Ebrard of Mexico City's Federal District and Fidel Herrera of Veracruz, discuss the president's proposal.

the president's normal faculties and in the construction and consolidation of a hegemonic party based on an authoritarian patronage system and corporatism. Thanks to this, the party of the regime almost completely monopolized political posts, inhibiting the appropriate functioning of the checks and balances written into the Constitution.

Four conditions came together to achieve this: 1) the presidential system of government established in the Constitution; 2) a unified government in which the hegemonic party controlled the three branches of the federal government and the majority of the state governorships and legislatures; 3) the highly disciplined party, which consolidated itself by banning the reelection of legislators and municipal authorities; and 4) the de facto leadership the president exercised in the

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\* Political analyst and writer.

party thanks to the mechanisms he wielded for rewarding and punishing.

Starting in the 1960s, a gradual liberation of the regime began in the face of demands made by actors who questioned its entire legitimacy. The changes were mainly to the electoral sphere, permitting greater certainty in the vote count and increased political pluralism.

In 1997, there stopped being single-party majorities in the Chamber of Deputies, followed by the Senate in 2000. The president's constitutional powers were also limited to an important extent in the last decade, or were transferred to other bodies like the Federal Electoral Institute, the Electoral Tribunal of the Federal Judiciary, the Federal Auditor's Office and the Supreme Court. The local government for Mexico City's Federal District is now elected instead of appointed by the president. Congress was given the power to appoint or ratify public servants, and municipalities were strengthened.

However, since the institutions were designed for the domination of a hegemonic regime, democracy has been ineffective in providing the reforms our country needs. In this context, the political reform should have four characteristics:

- 1) To modernize institutions, making possible a relationship of responsibility between representatives and represented;
- 2) To generate mechanisms so that political actors can overcome the competitive dynamic created during electoral campaigns and move on to cooperation and agreements in decision making;
- 3) To ensure that the incipient democracy can be governed in different scenarios of the distribution of power; and
- 4) To open channels for public participation in the decision-making process.

There is a great deal to reform, and there are other agendas that are equally pressing, like labor, energy or taxes. However, all bills are processed through political institutions and procedures that have not been revised in decades and whose time-frame horizons are limited to the next election.

This means that to the extent that these procedures are not revised to their very core, the results of further reforms will be similar to the ones we have already had. Therefore, the political reform is the necessary condition—though insufficient in itself—for dealing with the other issues.

#### PRESIDENT CALDERÓN'S BILL

Now that the current challenges to political reform have been described, let us review the 10 points of President Calderón's bill:

- 1) *Consecutive reelection of federal and local legislators.* Permitting the reelection for consecutive terms of federal legislators for up to 12 years and raising the ban on consecutive election for local legislators, so that each state can decide the issue for itself.
- 2) *Consecutive reelection of mayors and heads of boroughs.* Raising the ban on consecutive reelection for mayors and heads of boroughs, so that each state can decide for itself.
- 3) *Reducing the size of Congress.* Creating a Chamber of Deputies with 400 seats: 240 elected by absolute majority by district and 160 by the principle of proportional representation. Creating a Senate with 96 seats, three per state, decided by the 25-percent-plus-remainder method.
- 4) *Instituting a run-off round of voting for presidential elections.* This would require that the president-elect must have 50 percent plus one of the votes. If no candidate won that amount in the first round of voting, the run-off ballot would be a contest between the two front-runners. Elections for Congress would take place on the date of the second round of voting for the first executive.
- 5) *Increasing the voting threshold to 4 percent.* Stipulating that for a political party to retain its official status or legal registration and obtain seats in Congress, it would need a minimum of 4 percent of the vote.
- 6) *Creating the legal category of independent candidacies.* Allowing individuals to get on the ballot for all elected posts without having to be nominated by a political party. They would have to be backed by at least 1 percent of the citizens registered to vote in the corresponding district.
- 7) *Creating the legal category of citizen's bills.* Recognizing the right of citizens to propose bills of law or decrees when they have the backing of at least 1 percent of the registered voters nationwide.
- 8) *Allowing the Supreme Court to introduce bills in its field of jurisdiction.*
- 9) *Creating the category of preferential bill and referendum* to be presented by the president for constitutional

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reforms. Give the president the faculty of introducing two bills before Congress in each legislative session that would have to be voted on in committee and on the floor before the end of that session. If Congress did not vote on them in committee and on the floor, the bill would be considered passed as initially presented. Preferential bills for constitutional reform would not go into force before having been approved in a referendum.

- 10) *Introducing the partial veto for legislation and the federal spending budget.* Explicitly establishing the president's right to make either partial observations about, or completely veto the federal spending budget. If the executive completely vetoed the bill and the two-thirds majority required for Congress to overturn the veto did not materialize, the existing legislation would continue in force until a new bill passed. The executive could completely or partially veto the law on revenues passed by Congress as well as any other legislation. If it were a partial veto and the time limit was up, the federal budget for revenues that had been in force in the previous fiscal year would continue in force.

#### WHAT DOES PRESIDENT CALDERÓN'S PROPOSAL REPRESENT?

President Calderón's bill consists of two central elements. The first is the modernization of representative democracy through something that all democracies have enjoyed since the nineteenth century except our own and that of Costa Rica: the consecutive reelection of legislators and mayors. On the other hand, although in a rather exaggerated way *vis-à-vis* similar models,<sup>1</sup> the proposals for preferential bills and presidential vetoing of the budget create a balanced presidential system in which the executive and legislative branches have checks and balances to monitor the other and withstand their onslaughts. However, these proposals are not very popular.

Two proposals would improve the performance of our democracy as long as consecutive reelection were established:

independent candidacies and the popular (citizen's) referendum or proposition. As long as he or she had politically responsible officials available to him/her, a non-partisan candidate would have incentives for being accountable and an effective competitor. A responsible Congress, for its part, would deal more effectively with citizens' referendums.

Other proposals are popular, but would not improve our democracy's performance in and of themselves. Reducing the size of Congress does not attack the problem of effectiveness, since legislators get involved or not in parliamentary tasks to the extent that it furthers their political future, and this does not happen if there is no possibility of being reelected to the same post. Increasing the percentage of votes required for a party to keep its registration or to get seats in Congress also does not make for a better democracy since the problem is not the number of parties in our electoral system, but their disengagement with the electorate.

The other reforms could either not achieve the desired effects or would not be very useful in practice. Although it is to be expected that holding the second round of voting for the presidency at the same time as electing Congress would help create a majority for the winner's party, the outcome is still uncertain. Finally, giving the Supreme Court the right to present bills does not mean that they would not have to be lobbied.

#### WHAT CRITICISMS HAVE BEEN LEVELED AT PRESIDENT CALDERÓN'S BILL?

As always in the political game, the first executive's proposal has met with criticism by different political groups. The following are the main ones:

- 1) *The reform would weaken Congress.* For some, the creation of the preferential bill would subject the legislative branch to the demands and time frame of the executive. Actually, the proposal would balance the president *vis-à-vis* the two chambers by giving him/her the power to set the agenda. The possibility that the preferential bill would be approved if Congress does not act is very remote. In any case, the legislature would not lose power, but the political leaders who slow up debate as a form of blackmail would. If that were not enough, the preferential bill does not imply that Congress has to approve it, or that the executive

is not obliged to design a communications strategy or to carefully consider how appropriate it is to present polemical bills. For example, the legislature would probably immediately vote down an unpopular proposal.

- 2) *Several of the proposals are unpopular*, like the consecutive reelection of legislators and municipal authorities. Although polls state that consecutive reelection only has about 20 percent approval among the public, when citizens are asked if they would like to evaluate representatives at the end of their terms, approval goes up to more than 50 percent. Therefore, the acceptance of the measure is a matter of how the question is phrased, not the issue itself.
- 3) *The executive's proposal is inconsistent*. Some critics add that it is contradictory. However, if we leave to one side the proposal of increasing the threshold of representation to 4 percent, the rest of the bill seeks to modernize our democracy, making it more plural within the framework of a presidential system.

#### WHAT ARE ITS CHANCES OF PASSING?

Any constitutional reform bill requires a two-thirds majority in the legislature. Therefore, cooperation is required of the party with 47.4 percent of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 25.7 percent in the Senate: the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI).

Last February 23, the PRI Senate caucus presented its political reform bill, and, at the time of this writing, its Chamber of Deputies caucus is expected to present another.

The PRI proposes something that can be understood as making the system more parliamentary. That is, the belief that we would look more like a parliamentary regime if more powers are taken away from the executive branch and transferred to the legislature.

Comparative evidence shows that the argument of "parliamentarization" is unfounded. In parliamentary systems, the executive is chosen from and depends on the support of a parliamentary majority. The dynamic of government is to keep the majority group cohesive, not to monitor the prime minister. This is why legislative bodies in parliamentary systems are structurally weak.

If the PRI proposal were implemented, it would take maneuvering room away from the executive and could create greater ineffectiveness than the public sees. If what is want-

### Two proposals would improve our democracy's performance if consecutive reelection were established: independent candidacies and the popular (citizen's) referendum or proposition.

ed is a strong Congress, it is also necessary to have an effective administration.

Nevertheless, if the PAN and the PRI find common points and issues for negotiation, a minimal scenario for passage could exist, assuming that the left parties do not participate and the PRI caucus in the Chamber of Deputies does not present a totally different reform bill. The proposals the PRI might make include a mechanism for replacing the president in his/her absence or inability to fulfill the functions of office; the ratification of the cabinet by the Senate; the consecutive reelection of federal and local legislators; a reduction of the size of Congress; a mechanism for maintaining the previous spending budget if the Chamber of Deputies cannot pass one in time; creating the mechanism of popular consultations for important decisions; making prosecutors' offices autonomous; and a revision of the system of immunity for certain public servants.

Several factors will have an influence on the passage of some combination of political reform proposals. The capacity the political actors have for getting public approval for their agendas will be important. Electoral timetables will also play a significant role in negotiations.

And, above all are the calculations of those perceived as "presidential material." For them, supporting or blocking this or that issue, no matter how important, could increase or decrease their possibilities for 2012.

For example, behind the PRI bills in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate could be State of Mexico Governor Enrique Peña Nieto and Senator Manlio Fabio Beltrones, both seen as possible hopefuls for their party's nomination. This means that the negotiations could become difficult if both see the issue of the political reform as a way of positioning themselves or blocking each other. ■■■

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Although the preferential bill is an instrument the first executives enjoy in presidential systems, President Calderón's proposal is that they would be considered passed if Congress does not analyze and vote on them.

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# The Schengen Cooperation According to the Lisbon Treaty A Model for the Americas?

Kurt Schelter\*



Thierry Roge/Reuters

The European Parliament in Brussels.

I have worked in European affairs for 25 years. Those years covered the Single European Act of 1986, the Treaty of Maastricht of 1992, the Treaty of Amsterdam of 1997 and the Treaty of Nice of 2001.

Those treaties have in common that they adjust the basic laws of the European Community and the European Union to the fundamental changes in the political situation in Europe. The lifting of the Iron Curtain, which had divided this continent for more than half a century, gave us the

chance to reunite Europe in freedom, security and justice, and to enlarge the European Union.

The precondition for this historic operation was to make the European Union fit to open its doors to 12 new member states. "Fit" in this context means:

- facilitating and accelerating the decision-making process in the Community and in the Union;
- clarifying which competences have to be located on a European level and which ones have to be dealt with by the member states; and
- improving the democratic legitimacy of the various Community and Union bodies.

But these ambitious goals were not achieved because the majority of member states refused to hand over more of their

\* Former Minister for Justice and European Affairs in the German state of Brandenburg, Secretary of State for Home Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany and Director General at the Bavarian State Ministry for Federal and European Affairs. He is a professor of law at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität of Munich and works as a lawyer in Berlin, Munich and Brussels.

**The lifting of the Iron Curtain, which had divided this continent  
for more than half a century, gave us the chance to reunite Europe in freedom,  
security and justice, and to enlarge the European Union.**

sovereignty. Again and again, they were not courageous enough to make the big leap to greater integration, more transparency and more democracy in the Community and the Union.

The European Council of Nice in December 2000 adopted a “Declaration for the Future of the Union,” which opened the door for more transparency, democracy and efficiency, crowned by a Charter of Fundamental Rights. In December 2001, the European Council in Laeken inaugurated a European covenant to design a “Treaty for a Constitution for Europe.” In October 2004 the heads of state signed a treaty to establish a “Constitution for Europe.” But France and the Netherlands rejected the treaty by referenda; and other member states stopped ratification of the treaty.

In the first half of 2007, the German presidency opened the way for a compromise by the Berlin Declaration, on the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Treaties of Rome in 1957. In December 2007, the Lisbon Treaty was signed by 27 heads of member states. After problems in Ireland, Poland and the Czech Republic, the Lisbon Treaty came into force in December 2009.

It was a long way from the Treaties of Rome in 1957 to this Reform Treaty. And this will not be the end of this integration process of states and nations, unparalleled in human history.

What does this mean for the citizens of the European Union? I will try to explain it by the implications of the Lisbon Treaty in the fields of justice and home affairs. Let us dream together just for a couple of seconds:

- Can you imagine traveling by car from Mexico City to Anchorage without a visa or any passport controls?
- Can you imagine leaving the Benito Juárez Airport for Lima by plane without border controls and just an identity check by the airline?

This is the Schengen Border Regime explained in the shortest possible way: abolishing internal border controls and intensifying border checks at the external borders of the respective area.

At the beginning of European integration after World War II in the fiftieth year of the twentieth century, it seemed absolutely impossible

- to open borders between France and Germany;
- to abolish border controls between Poland and Germany;
- to allow German police to follow criminals across the borders to the Netherlands, Belgium or Denmark;
- to issue a common visa for more than one European country;
- to follow the same principles concerning political asylum;
- to establish a European Police Agency (Europol) to fight international organized crime and terrorism and an agency for judicial cooperation (Eurojust).

It was an idea of two statesmen, the president of the French Republic, François Mitterrand, and the chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Helmut Kohl, to bring their nations and their people together by opening the borders between their states. This led to the Schengen Agreement, which was signed by the heads of state of France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Germany in the small town of Schengen, Luxembourg, near the Belgian-German border in June 1985. In June 1990, the Convention Implementing the Schengen Agreement was signed by the heads of state. Its key points were:

- Harmonizing provisions relating to entry into the Schengen Area and short stays in there by non-EU citizens, which meant implementing a uniform Schengen visa;
- Asylum matters;
- Measures to combat cross-border drug- and weapons-related crime.
- Police cooperation; and
- Cooperation among Schengen states on judicial matters.

The Convention Implementing the Schengen Agreement entered into force in September 1993 and took practical ef-

**The Treaty of Lisbon states that the Union shall constitute an area of freedom, security and justice with respect for fundamental rights and the different legal systems and traditions of the member states. It shall ensure the absence of internal border controls for persons and shall frame a common policy on asylum, immigration and external border control.**

fect in March 1995. With the entry into force of the Schengen Protocol to the Treaty of Amsterdam in May 1999, Schengen Cooperation, based on an international agreement, was incorporated into the Law of the European Union.

So the idea of two statesmen, executed by an international inter-governmental agreement, was sealed by the member states by accepting this idea as a fundamental principle of the European Union: freedom of movement for all its citizens within its borders, and protection of all citizens against threats by international organized crime from outside them.

The idea of Mitterrand and Kohl was so attractive that since 1995, there have been several expansions of the so-called Schengen Area: Austria acceded in 1997. The Nordic Countries (Denmark, Sweden and Finland) joined in 2000, and Norway as well as Iceland were invited as associate members. In December 2007, the European Council decided to include the new EU member states of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

The so-called “Schengen Acquis,” which means the sum of all legislation concerning the Schengen Cooperation since 1999, is an integral part of the Acquis of the European Union. One can imagine that it was not easy to follow the idea of opening the internal borders in Europe after the Iron Curtain had lifted, because we had to face the danger that thousands of illegal migrants and criminals from Eastern Europe would misuse this new regime. Schengen nevertheless has become one of the best success stories in European integration. The idea of “more freedom of movement and more security via cooperation at the external borders” works, but the necessary measures are not yet complete and need to be updated as threats continually change.

We have to continue our work on an integrated border police of the Schengen member states and, hopefully, in the end, of the European Union. We need an integrated border police provided by the Schengen members. The Schengen Information System, which provides the police on external borders with the information they need, has reached the very limit of its capacity and needs to be enlarged.

The concept of an area of freedom, security and justice already features in the previous treaties. However, the Lisbon Treaty gives the Union better means of reaching solutions in accordance with the scale of the challenges facing it. Regarding justice, freedom and security, several improvements are made with the Lisbon Treaty. In this area, the Lisbon Treaty is a major step forward. On almost all relevant issues qualified-majority voting will be used.<sup>1</sup> This means that it will be easier to make decisions at European level in this field. Furthermore, new legislation in this field will fall under the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice, giving citizens extra protection.

The Lisbon Treaty confirms the European Union’s commitment to the development of a common immigration policy. This will ensure a consistent approach on immigration, taking into account our continent’s economic and demographic evolution, and giving due attention to social integration. The treaty also confirms the development of a common European asylum system with the establishment of a uniform status and common procedures for all persons in need of international protection.

People will live in a safer Europe as the Union can make decisions faster and more easily in the field of security. Europe will be more effective in combating terrorism, dealing with criminal gangs, crime prevention, illegal migration and human trafficking.

The Treaty of Lisbon underlines the Schengen Acquis and shapes the future development of this idea: according to Article 61f, the Union shall constitute an area of freedom, security and justice with respect for fundamental rights and the different legal systems and traditions of the member states. It shall ensure the absence of internal border controls for persons and shall frame a common policy on asylum, immigration and external border control, based on solidarity between member states, which is fair toward third-country nationals. The Union shall endeavor to ensure a high level of security through measures to prevent and combat crime, racism and xenophobia, and through measures for coordination and cooperation between police and judicial authorities and other competent authorities, as well as through

**Together with the four fundamental freedoms of the internal market,  
implemented by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, Schengen opens the way  
for free movement of goods, services, capital and persons  
for about 480 million citizens of the European Union.**

the mutual recognition of judgments in criminal matters and, if necessary, through the approximation of criminal laws. The European Council shall define the strategic guidelines for legislative and operational planning within the area of freedom, security and justice. It shall be open to member states to organize between themselves such forms of cooperation and coordination as they deem appropriate between the competent departments of their administrations.

The Lisbon Treaty replaces Articles 62 to 64 of the former Treaty of the European Union with a new Chapter 2: "Policies on Border Checks, Asylum and Immigration." According to the new Article 62, the Union shall develop a policy with a view to ensuring the absence of any controls on persons, whatever their nationality, when crossing internal borders, carrying out checks on persons and efficient monitoring of the crossing of external borders and the gradual introduction of an integrated management system for external borders.

The European Parliament and the Council shall adopt measures concerning the common policy on visas and other short-stay residence permits, the checks to which persons crossing external borders are subject, the conditions under which nationals of third countries shall have the freedom to travel within the Union for a short period, any measure necessary for the gradual establishment of an integrated management system for external borders and the absence of any controls on persons, whatever their nationality, when crossing internal borders.

Those articles shall not affect the competence of the member states concerning the geographical demarcation of their borders, in accordance with international law. The Union shall develop a common policy on asylum, subsidiary protection and temporary protection with a view to offering appropriate status to any third-country national requiring international protection and ensuring compliance with the principle of *non-refoulement*.<sup>2</sup> This policy must be in accordance with the Geneva Convention of 1951 and the Protocol of 1967 relating to the status of refugees and other relevant treaties.

The European Parliament and the Council shall adopt measures for a common European asylum system comprising:

- a uniform status of asylum for nationals of third countries, valid throughout the Union;
- a uniform status of subsidiary protection for nationals of third countries who, without obtaining European asylum, are in need of international protection;
- a common system of temporary protection for displaced persons in the event of a massive inflow;
- common procedures for granting and withdrawing uniform asylum or subsidiary protection status, criteria and mechanisms for determining which member state is responsible for considering an application for asylum or subsidiary protection, standards concerning the conditions for the reception of applicants for asylum or subsidiary protection and partnership and cooperation with third countries for the purpose of managing inflows of people applying for asylum or subsidiary or temporary protection.

According to Article 63a, the Union shall develop a common immigration policy aimed at ensuring the efficient management of migration flows, fair treatment of third-country nationals residing legally in member states and the prevention of, and enhanced measures to combat, illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings.

The Union may conclude agreements with third countries for the readmission to their countries of origin or provenance of third-country nationals who do not or who no longer fulfill the conditions for entry, presence or residence in the territory of one of the member states.

The European Parliament and the Council may establish measures to provide incentives and support for the action of member states with a view to promoting the integration of third-country nationals residing legally in their territories, excluding any harmonization of the laws and regulations of the member states. This shall not affect the right of member states to determine volumes of admission of third-country

nationals coming from third countries to their territory in order to seek work, whether employed or self-employed.

Schengen is not a model for other regions of our planet. But it is an example of how a vision is able to move ahead even against strong resentments. Together with the four fundamental freedoms of the internal market, implemented by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, this idea opens the way for free movement of goods, services, capital and persons for about 480 million citizens of the European Union. And it guarantees the protection of all citizens against threats by international organized crime from outside the Union.

Like in Europe, in the Americas, the idea of a free trade area became a reality at the same time: the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Canada, the United States and Mexico was signed in December 1992. It entered into force in January 1994. Article 102 enumerates the only trade-related objectives of this agreement. But let us once again dream for just a couple of seconds: Can you imagine this agreement amended by an article stating that even the freedom of movement of people between Mexico, the United States and Canada is granted? Can you imagine the internal borders between those three countries opening up and no longer being points of border controls?

Sometimes dreams come true, if we work hard on them. I admit it: Schengen is not a small town in the Americas; it is not Tijuana; and it is not San Diego. But it stands for an idea:

- trusting each other;
- helping each other against threats; and
- living together in freedom, security and justice. ■■

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Qualified majority voting replaced unanimous voting in the EU system, making decision-making easier. According to the European Union glossary, qualified majority voting is defined as follows: "After 1 January 2007, following enlargement of the Union, the qualified majority went up to 255 votes out of a total of 345, representing a majority of the Member States. Moreover, a Member State may request verification that the QM represents at least 62% of the total population of the Union. If this is not the case, the decision is not adopted." [http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/qualified\\_majority\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/qualified_majority_en.htm) [Editor's Note.]

<sup>2</sup> *Non-refoulement* is the principle of international law forbidding the expulsion of a refugee to a place where he/she might be expected to suffer persecution. [Editor's Note.]

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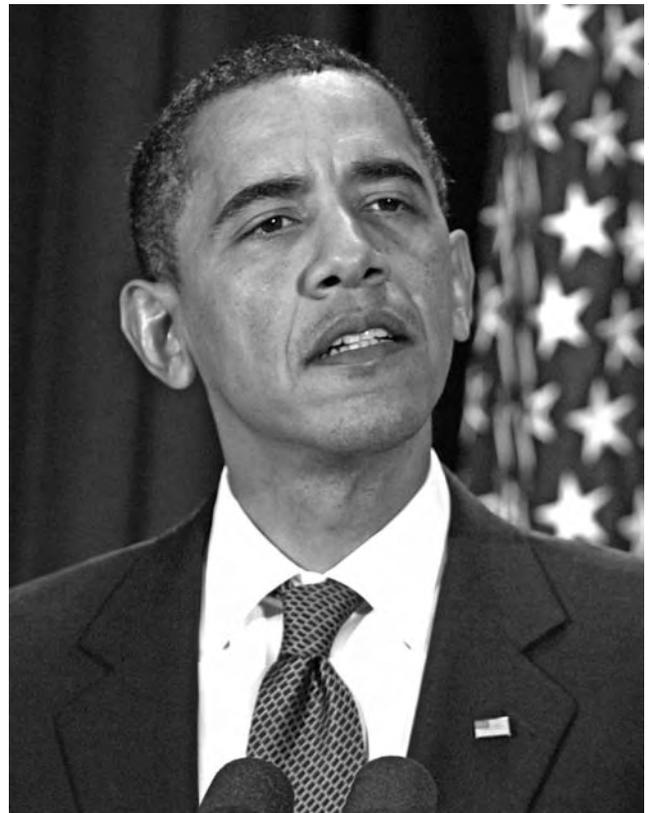
# Barack Obama And the House upon a Rock

Paz Consuelo Márquez-Padilla\*

While it has been said that democracy is not the best form of government, we could paraphrase Winston Churchill and say that it is the least pernicious. As we know too well, there is nothing in the democratic process that assures us that the best candidate will actually be elected. In the case of the election of Barack Obama, the process was legal and legitimate, but until now we cannot say it was the best. We also cannot judge it fully after a single year of administration. We academics—and politicians even more so—tend to talk about his first year in absolute terms as a total failure, although those who accent his wins tend to forget his mistakes. Beyond these judgments leaning to one side or the other, the point is to analyze the context and his leadership.

## OBAMA'S PARADOX

Undoubtedly, domestically, his electoral victory represented the high point of the civil rights movement, and also a gradual repositioning of the United States as an international leader. However, with all the euphoria of the victory and the hope for change, we tend to leave to one side the analysis about how Obama came to office. We forget that during the campaign, more than a strong alliance among supporters, what was forged was a temporary alliance among voters who all agreed on ousting George W. Bush and who cast their votes to punish the Republicans.<sup>1</sup> Once he was driven out of



the White House, that seemingly solid alliance fell apart, and each group began to pursue its own interests. This is where Obama's paradox is situated: between following the demands of his party's rank and file—left, center or more conservative—and listening to the voices of the “independents,” who, far from having a common banner, represent a very broad gamut of interests, and, on the other hand, responding to the Republicans' ferocious criticisms.

We should remember that in his inaugural speech, the president underlined that he would govern for everyone. The question is whether that will be possible. Generally, policies are the result of strategic decisions. That is, the policy picked is not the best solution, but the least pernicious among all the possible solutions. But to benefit one group, you have to step on the toes of another. It is not easy to harmonize the Democrats' protectionist demands with the expansionist eco-

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\*Researcher at CISAN.

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economic policy supported by the Republicans. What is more, in economics, there are no golden rules for solving problems; it is a matter, rather, of weighing the different strategies, believing in them, implementing them and waiting for them to be seen as appropriate so that they can become self-fulfilling prophecies.

For example, in the case of the Recovery Act (the US\$787-billion-dollar stimulus package), we can see that the Obama administration has not been effective in communicating its impact. Though it is true that it has been credited with creating only 1.8 million jobs and not the 2.5 million it promised—while what is needed is actually 8 million—given the critical situation, as August Goolsbee said, it did have the virtue of averting a cataclysm.<sup>2</sup> Despite this, the Republicans and the more conservative television channels like Fox News have taken it upon themselves to underline his “failure,” giving broad coverage to the Tea Party movement, which opposes any possible tax hike or increase in public social spending, despite the fact that the current deficit is a legacy of Bush’s military spending.

The expectations were enormous because Obama promised several changes: universal health care, financial reform, investment in infrastructure, promoting green energy, reducing carbon emissions, creating jobs and improving the economy. But it is precisely the state of the economy that has hemmed him in and made it difficult to swiftly deliver on many of his promises. All these measures are fundamental long-term transformations, and Obama knows that real change takes time.

Although the administration seems to have a clear vision of what it is trying to do and where it wants to go, it has not been adept enough at communicating that message through a well-structured narrative with examples that are understandable for the average citizen. It must not be forgotten that it was also his discourse full of ideas of renovation and hope that ushered the Democrats into office, not just opposition to Bush, since, if it had just been the latter, Hillary Clinton could have been president today. Obama said during his campaign, “But what we know, what we have seen, is that Amer-

ica can change. That is the true genius of this nation. What we have already achieved gives us hope—the audacity to hope—for what we can and must achieve tomorrow.”<sup>3</sup>

#### THE CONTEXT VERSUS THE PROMISES

The context in which Obama took office was one of the most critical in recent history, comparable only to the Great Depression of 1929. The budget deficit was close to US\$1 trillion and the national debt, over US\$10 trillion. As Kissinger predicted, the illusion that the economic system could indefinitely be sustained by taking on more debt vanished.<sup>4</sup> Several financial institutions went into crisis or simply disappeared, at the same time that home real estate prices plummeted as swiftly as they did in the Great Depression. Demand dropped in most sectors and, with it, investment.

Many Democrats demanded the president keep his promise of quickly withdrawing the troops from Iraq, but once he took office and had access to all the information, obviously, Obama realized that it was much more complicated than he had thought. We could characterize this as a “paradox of hope”: the inexperience of new office-holders for carrying out change is directly proportional to the hope generated. Bush himself had already been confronted with the difficulty of rapidly withdrawing the troops from Iraq: doing it can cause great instability in the region due to the lack of support for nation-building, which can be devastating. The problem is a structural one.

With respect to Guantánamo, we saw that Obama began the process to close the prison as soon as possible, but he also realized that it was not all that easy to transfer these terrorists to the United States, nor is it a simple matter to find jails where they can be well guarded. Public protests have not been long in coming from people opposed to having the trials held in their communities for fear of reprisals or terrorist attacks. While Obama is clearly against the abuses committed in Guantánamo, the solution is not easy either. Setting foot on American soil gives them rights and protections that they lack on the island.

The Obama campaign also promised to take a stand to make up for the fact that the United States had not signed the Kyoto Protocol. However, not much was achieved in Copenhagen, where the goal was that the big carbon polluters like the United States and China would make significant reductions. The so-called green technology that protects the environment

requires big support that for the time being will have to be put on hold. In harsh economic circumstances, thinking about sustainable development will be rare since the accent will be put on immediate, not long-term, profits. Despite this, it is important to mention that the Recovery Act supported “green” programs, and projects oriented to seeking alternative sources of energy are emerging.<sup>5</sup>

Undoubtedly, the first big setback was that the Democratic Party lost its absolute majority in the Senate. Obama’s support for the Democratic candidate did little good where the voters expressed their dissatisfaction with the economy. In addition, Massachusetts was a Democratic bastion. Now, the problem is not only the number of seats, but the wide ideological spectrum among Democrats: everything from economically protectionist conservatives to the most liberal supporters of gay marriage. To lead such a diverse group takes great ability, political skill and experience.

Today, we can celebrate Obama’s victory on the issue of the health reform. He demonstrated a capability for negotiation to achieve the difficult bi-partisan alliance. While the citizens of France, England, and Canada, among others, enjoy universal health care, in the United States, private medicine and the insurance and pharmaceutical companies get rich at the expense of the ill and senior citizens, who go into debt or even die because they cannot pay the high price of medical care.

The battle is just beginning; some state governments have already appealed, arguing that the law is unconstitutional. The insurance and pharmaceutical companies will spend millions to attack President Obama, who has not played hard ball attacking these interests in kind, since the White House thinks that would not be a good strategy. Let’s hope they’re right. But the most important thing about the health reform is that Obama resumed his role as leader, taking the helm from his advisors. If he had not done this, he would not have achieved such a significant victory. Heilemann and Halperin emphasize the fact that given the vicissitudes of his election campaign, Obama started winning when he took the helm over from his managers.

#### REBUILDING PRESTIGE

Undoubtedly, one of Obama’s great achievements has been improving the United States’ reputation in the international concert, after its enormous loss of prestige due to its uni-

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lateral policies. This administration has exercised the smart power Joseph Nye talks about, according to which diplomacy and soft power are used in international relations, without forgetting military might, to turn a country into one that appropriately leads the international community.<sup>6</sup> This was achieved after Bush left behind him the image of a Lone Ranger country, shooting right and left.

Barack Obama has very rapidly managed to begin to reconstruct the delicate web of relations with the international community. With the help of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, he has quickly begun to reposition himself as a prestigious world leader.

We should remember that years ago, world leaders supported President William Clinton’s successes when he put forward a new democratic creed that included globalization, free markets and democracy. He could count on worldwide euphoria after the fall of socialism, which made capitalism and democracy look like the only possible way forward, as Francis Fukuyama underlined. The disappearance of the Soviet Union led the United States to proclaim “universal” political goals, whose objectives were defined by slogans rather than their real feasibility, but made for a clear narrative that indicated the way the country was going.

Today’s international context is very different. The financial crisis reveals the failure of the capitalist model, at least the U.S. version. In the opinion of Nobel Prize winner for economics Joseph Stiglitz, market fundamentalism, that is, the idea that the market on its own can ensure economic prosperity and growth, has come to an end. The legacy of this crisis consists of the need for a new economic debate to achieve solid financial regulations.<sup>7</sup>

Obama is being disappointed by out-of-control capitalism. According to Kissinger, in the past, when small crises occurred, they were not seen as signs of danger, but as mistakes in the developing countries that should be corrected by restrictions that the developed countries did not apply to themselves.<sup>8</sup> Undoubtedly, the current crisis demands a serious discussion to avoid its repetition. The state must help give capitalism a kind face; it has certainly already shown

us the worst it has, the face of savage capitalism: corruption, ambition and voraciousness. It is up to Obama to lead the debate about new ideas for the economy.

According to Kissinger, economic constraints are going to force the United States to define its global objectives in terms of a mature conception of national interests. Naturally, a country proud of its exceptionalism is not going to abandon the moral convictions that it defines its greatness by, but the United States has to discipline itself and follow a gradual strategy to achieve greatness in the accumulation of the achievable. It must recognize the limits of its hegemony and learn to listen to others, looking beyond its own conception of the world. This requires a new dialogue between the United States and the rest of the world. A new order must emerge whose participants support it because they helped build it.<sup>9</sup> Undoubtedly, Obama is not headed in this direction.

Though international prestige has been recovered, unfortunately for Obama, it is the U.S. voters who make the final decision. Time is against him and the November elections could hit him with voter disappointment. We should also remember the other setback Obama suffered with the 5-to-4 Supreme Court decision on electoral financing, overturning the McClosky Act, which had limited the amount of money a company could donate to a candidate. The legal argument was that freedom of expression could not be limited, but it is difficult not to think that behind this is the return of the biggest interest groups to dominating future elections. We could even venture the hypothesis that Obama might not ever have won the presidency if this limitation had not been in place, since what allowed him the win was the support of millions of small contributors who, all together, created a large war chest.<sup>10</sup> Now, if Obama wants to regulate financial institutions and banks, it should come as no surprise that these institutions will invest large sums to get the Republicans back in the driver's seat in Congress.

If Obama's work has not been easy with both the House and the Senate dominated by the Democrats, the situation will become even worse if the Republicans take back the Congress. A difficult—but effective—bet would be to concentrate on a single point of the agenda: economic recovery. If he unifies his team around this issue, he might be able to reduce the disappointment and reverse the negative trend in public opinion against his administration. So, more than approval from outside and disappointment internally, it is preferable to win back domestic confidence by strengthening the domestic market and, then, with the impetus this would give the

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global economy, consolidate international support. The state-of-the-nation speech at the beginning of the year was a good start: returning to a position in the center, he communicated his desire to fight unemployment and alluded to a bright future.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Obama's practical spirit makes him forget the weight of ideas. And it is not that he lacks them, but rather that his administration has not been able to present a narrative of reality that makes sense of all the president's policies for the average American. In one of his speeches, when referring to the Sermon on the Mount, he mentioned the house upon the rock as a metaphor for the need to re-found society on a more solid basis: economic growth, investment in education, universal health care services and energy generation based on new sources, all of which require great changes and sacrifices if you are thinking in the long term. At the same time that Americans' pocketbooks get noticeably fuller, it will be necessary to put into motion the great policies that will transform the country.

A "must" debate is how to redefine American capitalism. The task is necessary, but by no means easy, because today, the middle class sees Obama as the savior of the banks, and financiers think he is a socialist because he wants to regulate the financial system and because of the high taxes he has levied on their bonuses. It is important to underline that although the president wants to create jobs, he is not expecting them to be in the public sector, but in the private sector. That is, like Roosevelt did with the New Deal, he is expecting to create jobs, but now fundamentally by supporting small businesses.

According to George Packer, the beginning of the Obama presidency has been similar to that of Ronald Reagan, whose popularity at the end of his two terms was incredible, though at the start he had to content himself with a 51-percent approval rate, while Obama aspires to more: he wants to be accepted for his character, for having made the right decisions for the majority of the population.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps all

that remains is to ask whether Obama will be like President Carter, a good man but a bad politician who ended by disappointing even the most liberal, or like Reagan, who it should be recognized went down in U.S. history because he led Americans to where he said he would. To be more precise, will Obama achieve what he himself recognized in Reagan? Heilemann and Halperin quote him as saying, "What I said is that Ronald Reagan was a transformative political figure because he was able to get Democrats to vote against their own economic interest to form a majority to push through their agenda, an agenda that I objected to."<sup>12</sup> Given U.S. impact on the international context, it is to be hoped that it will have a president who is up to the demands of his time, who manages to communicate his message to his own citizens to transform the nation along a path that is not only good for it, but for the entire world. A president who is the right leader to guide the change needed in U.S. society to overcome the crisis and capable of leading the international community toward greater global equilibrium. **MM**

NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> "A country at war, an economy on the brink, and an electorate swept up, regardless of party, in a passionate yearning for transformation," write John Heilemann and Mark Halperin in *Game Change. Obama and the Clintons, McCain and Palin and the Race of a Lifetime* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2010), p. 10.
- <sup>2</sup> George Packer, "Obama's Lost Year," *The New Yorker*, March 15, 2010, p. 43.
- <sup>3</sup> Heilemann and Halperin, op. cit., p. 237.
- <sup>4</sup> Henry Kissinger, "An End of Hubris. The World in 2009," *The Economist* (London), November 19, 2008, p. 67.
- <sup>5</sup> In the case of Martinsville, the Recovery Act supported renewable energy projects, conversion of methane gas into electricity and even a bio-diesel-fuel refinery. See George Packer, op. cit., p. 42.
- <sup>6</sup> Richard L. Armitage and J.S. Nye, Jr., *CSIS Commission on Smart Power: A Smarter, More Secure America* (Washington, D.C.: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2007).
- <sup>7</sup> Joseph Stiglitz, "Wall Street's Toxic Message," *Vanity Fair*, July 2009, p. 83.
- <sup>8</sup> Kissinger, op. cit.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> Heilemann and Halperin, op. cit., p. 92.
- <sup>11</sup> George Packer, op. cit., pp. 41-51.
- <sup>12</sup> Heilemann and Halperin, op. cit., p. 205.

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# U.S.-Latin American Relations An Alternative Geopolitical Approach?

José Luis Valdés-Ugalde\*  
Bernadette Vega\*\*



Enrique Marcarian/Reuters

Latin American presidents and foreign ministers at the May 2010 Union of South American Nations summit in Campana, Argentina.

A multiplicity of elements help in analyzing how Latin America fits in with U.S. security strategy: the various analytical focuses about U.S.-Latin American relations; the opposition of security paradigms (national vs. hemispheric); the priority issues on the national security agenda; and the historic situations that have presented themselves in recent decades.

September 11 sparked a rigorous review of U.S. security strategy, giving rise to doctrines like preemptive action and

homeland security, demonstrating how the United States concentrated on implementing unilateral policies by guaranteeing security “*vis-à-vis* everyone and despite everyone.”<sup>1</sup> In the Bush national security plan, Latin America was thus relegated to a back burner, as was multilateralism, the mechanism *par excellence* for solving conflicts on the international plane. In the eight years of the Bush era, the United States returned to vertical unilateralism, with extraordinary implications for international security. The election of Barack Obama represents the second turning point since the fifth debate on security began. In his administration, Latin America has not been totally restored to U.S. national security strategy only because of its traditionally being part of its area of influence; but there is not indifference either. Obama’s pragmatism and

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\* Researcher at the Center for Research on North America. Visiting professor at the Division of International Studies at the Center for Economic Research and Teaching (CIDE). [jvaldes@servidor.unam.mx](mailto:jvaldes@servidor.unam.mx), [joseluis.valdes@cide.edu](mailto:joseluis.valdes@cide.edu).

\*\* Research assistant at CISAN and CIDE. [bernadette.vega@cide.edu](mailto:bernadette.vega@cide.edu).

**The 9/11 terrorist attacks were the catalyst for putting Latin America second among White House foreign policy priorities, in part due to its tardy show of support after the attacks.**

anti-ideological, issue-per-issue treatment of world affairs set a different tone for approaching the region; as a result, there are clear hints of a most dramatic change in the U.S. stance toward the hemisphere to an almost respectful one. The question here would be whether Latin America is ready for this new conciliatory U.S. approach.

LATIN AMERICA, A PRIORITY?

The relationship between the United States and Latin America plummeted to its lowest point during the administration of George W. Bush. U.S. reaction to the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington was exclusionary, deepening the distance with a region that did not share its anti-terrorist obsession. In this context, the distance between the two Americas was determined by the U.S. setting foreign policy priorities based on immediate considerations and the return to “hard power”: military solutions as the way to reposition the United States at a time when it was going through a crisis of hegemony. That particular moment favored the plans of the neo-conservative elite whose philosophy was most accurately expressed in the Project for the New American Century.<sup>2</sup>

In effect, in the National Security Strategy designed in 2002 as the official response to the September 11 attacks, Latin America is mentioned in two sections: the chapter dealing with defusing regional conflicts and in the chapter that talks about the new era of global economic growth. The former proposes the formation of “flexible coalitions” with countries like Mexico, Brazil, Chile and Colombia, with which the United States identifies shared risks, particularly the priorities involving the fight against activities related to or derived from drug trafficking and extremist groups in Colombia.<sup>3</sup> In the second chapter, the framers attempted to dredge up and make a priority of the dubious proposal—now completely exhausted—to create the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) planned for 2005.<sup>4</sup>

It is evident that Latin America was simply not included as one of the highest priority regions for several reasons:

because it has not been yet perceived as a fertile breeding ground for terrorist cells threatening U.S. national security; because it continues to be thought of as “the United States’ back yard”; because specific issues of interest can be more easily handled piecemeal; or because the supremacy of hard power relegates issues that can be dealt with by non-military means to the back burner.

VISIONS OF HEMISPHERIC RELATIONS

It is understandable that the distancing of the Colossus of the North from the rest of the region was not only the result of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, given that it had already insinuated itself into President Bush’s plans when he moved into the White House. By putting such a high priority on terrorism, the United States neglected other geostrategic issues that were also very important to hemispheric security.

Once the Cold War was over, Latin America was no longer a region in dispute ideologically, and the nature of its political systems did not seem to be at high risk. While the abandonment was already evident, the 9/11 terrorist attacks were the catalyst for putting Latin America in second place among White House foreign policy priorities. This was partially brought on by Latin America’s tardy show of support after the attacks and the energetic rejection of the Iraq invasion by some important countries in the region like Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Venezuela, Chile, Mexico and Peru.

A string of missed opportunities is the way the current relationship between the two Americas is best described, in the sense that the United States forgot its promise of making its relationship with Latin America a priority, and issues that are *de facto* related to each other like migration, drug trafficking and security, have been fragmented. In the very design of a monothematic foreign policy agenda—terrorism—a project of regional integration that included common prosperity as its most important boon was postponed, conditioning it to advances in democracy and security. This is the reason why we can consider that the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP) is already in the process of collapsing, if it ever existed as an institution capable of regulating the exchange on prosperity and security among the three partners.

Different perspectives have been proposed for interpreting relations between the United States and Latin America. First of all is the idea of “the Western Hemi-

sphere,”<sup>5</sup> “linked to the archetypal geopolitical notion prevalent in the United States whereby the Western tradition had to have conditions for settling itself within a geographical piece of the American map.”<sup>6</sup> The concepts of “inter-American community” and “pan-Americanism” used during the Kennedy and Nixon administrations flow from this vision. However, their relevance in the twenty-first century is questionable. In addition to the “idea of the Western Hemisphere,” Roberto Russell recognizes three other visions: that of the “growing irrelevance of Latin America,” that of the “imperialist will and practice,” and that of the “decline of U.S. hegemony” in Latin America, particularly in South America.<sup>7</sup> There are specific cases that could well validate each of these focuses; however, all of them are linked to the imperialistic image of a hegemony that underscores the sovereignty and self-determination of the neighbors. Even the alleged vision of the growing irrelevance of Latin America intrinsically demands attention and specific action from the U.S.

The discussion of how Latin America fits into the national security and hemispheric security paradigm needs to be dealt with. Is the United States really interested in getting involved in a hemisphere-wide security effort? Regardless of the focus used to analyze relations and of the conflict between security paradigms —national or hemispheric— the underlying factor derived from the traditionally paradigmatic U.S. hegemony was Washington’s reticence to accept reciprocity in its foreign relations. The disinterest and lack of thoughtfulness in Bush’s Latin American policy were part of the big puzzle whose central pieces are the absence of understanding, sensitivity and mutual knowledge. That is, it was a proximity unresolved on both sides for many reasons. For the U.S., security agendas are non-negotiable; for that same reason, agendas of common risks can also not be agreed upon mutually. For some in Latin America, the imperialistic past casts a shadow on any attempt at proximity.

In this regard, there has been a trend toward bilateral relations dominating U.S. relations with the hemisphere in all of the sub-topics of integration, in matters of both trade and security. And it is in the area of security that Washington has forged its greatest bilateral commitments, above all with Mexico, Canada and Colombia. However, the approach in the case of Brazil is clearly dominated by a strong commitment toward cooperation on development and other issues, such as alternative energies.

The negative interpretation of the phenomenon arising out of U.S. hegemony is that it would not necessarily need

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to commit itself at all in a multilateral game in which it does not get the benefits it does from the bilateralization of its relations. In policies to fight drug trafficking and to defend energy security, it has clearly expressed the idea of bilateralization because these issues represent a latent threat for U.S. domestic and economic stability. That is why the strategic alliances have been created for the defense against threats, even occasionally producing divisive strategies contrasting with the sometimes naked pragmatism Washington has accustomed us to.

This is not a particular feature of the Bush administration or particular conservative factions. Obama himself has found bilateralization useful for managing some priority issues on his agenda, whether the aforementioned emphasis on energy with Brazil or the war against drugs with Mexico. The difference is situated in the doctrine underlying the pragmatic decisions: while George W. Bush reestablished unilateralism and hard power, Obama has tried to use multilateralism and smart power as the guiding principles of his foreign policy; proof of this are the pledges at the G-20 summits, the messages to the Muslim world, the Afghanistan surge and, in this region, the Honduran crisis.

Regionalism based on bilateral relations with the dominant actor (the U.S.) can be justified by a) the enormous differences dominating relations among the Latin American countries (according to the nature and degree of their economic independence, their commitment to international competition, the patterns of their activity in the world economy or the strength of their democratic institutions); 2) asymmetries with the United States; and c) the importance that the issue of risk has when the U.S. weighs its priorities.

IS A NON-IMPERIALIST LEADERSHIP POSSIBLE?

In the last six months, the Honduran crisis has illustrated some of the most worrying ills and stability threats to the Latin American region; at the same time, it has thrown into the international spotlight the current geopolitical weight

of the regional actors and their particular approach to regional dynamics, which is dramatically different from similar previous crises. The main questions arising from the crisis are: To what extent is the U.S. acting as a regional leader without the imperialistic glitter that some members of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) insist on highlighting? And, is Latin America ready to get over its past with the U.S.?<sup>8</sup>

First, it has been widely commented that a contagious illness is spreading in the Southern Cone regardless of political affiliation: the need to remain in power. Right, left or center, Latin American governments have presented bills to legalize multiple re-election and broadening executive powers, some openly illegitimate and overriding the law. Apart from the illegality of the coup and its leaders, Zelaya's attempt to illegally remain in power should not be dismissed. A second threat is the trend of making the internal affairs of another country a collective issue. The principle of non-intervention has been customized in the sense that, for some, intervention is allowed and demanded if it fits the interests of a particular side in the conflict. That is the case of the Venezuelan and even Brazilian interference in the Honduran affair.

A third threat is not, for a change, U.S. intervention, but the ironic demand for U.S. interference especially made by the so-called anti-imperialist leaders (all of them members of ALBA). The first White House reaction to the coup was described as weak and non-committal, while Hugo Chávez openly questioned U.S. non-action. The following declaration of Obama marked a shift in the hemispheric relation: "the same critics who say the U.S. has not intervened in Honduras are the same people who say we are always intervening and Yankees need to get out of Latin America.... You can't have it both ways." For a country traditionally accused of interventionism and being the sponsor of coups, non-action and caution is not that mistaken and may be a clue to a fifth vision of hemispheric relations, namely a new "non-imperialist U.S. leadership," a rational and more constructive dominant actor in regional affairs. So, is Manifest Destiny evolving?

And yet, the distribution of power in the region exhibits interesting trends: 1) the U.S. continues to be the regional leader with a legitimate voice; 2) Brazil emerging as the southern leader respectable enough to establish a dialogue with the U.S.; 3) the ALBA block trying to be a counterpart to the "imperialist menace"; and 4) former regional leaders being asked to endorse initiatives but do not have enough

**A contagious disease is spreading through Latin America: the need to remain in power. Right, left or center, Latin American governments have presented bills to legalize multiple re-election.**

leverage to head them up (Costa Rica, Mexico, Argentina among others). It is interesting to note that Latin American public opinion seems to be reflecting this renewed distribution of power and attitude: in the newly released poll conducted by Latinobarómetro in 18 Latin American countries, Latin Americans gave Chávez the worst rating on a list of 17 regional and world leaders; Barack Obama topped the list, followed by Brazilian President Luiz Inácio *Lula* da Silva.<sup>9</sup> On the Honduran crisis, even though 58 percent of the Hondurans polled stated they were against the coup, 48 percent were in favor of the president being expelled by the military if he violated the Constitution.<sup>10</sup>

There is an outdated tone in every anti-imperialist statement coming from ALBA. However, what was the actual participation of the U.S. in the conflict? And could it be categorized as intervention? Washington's official participation was as mediator. A delegation composed of Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs Thomas Shannon, Ambassador Craig Kelly, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs, and Special Assistant to the President for Western Hemisphere Affairs Dan Restrepo was sent to Tegucigalpa by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and President Obama. They were instructed to provide support for the national dialogue and to underscore the necessity of an agreement in order to win broad support in the international community for the suspect electoral process that Honduras held on November 29. On the other hand, Republican senators flew to Honduras to meet with *de facto* President Roberto Micheletti and some members of the Honduran Congress with the purpose of ensuring that the November elections were free and fair. Contrary to the White House position, they openly supported the *de facto* government.

Even though it is accepted that the U.S. establishment had a relative role in the saga of the Honduran affair, this does not necessarily mean that the White House played an interventionist, big-stick role. In any case, we would argue that the coup was more of a burden than a boon for Obama.

For a country traditionally accused  
of interventionism, non-action and caution  
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a new “non-imperialist U.S. leadership.”

NEW TIMES FOR  
U.S.-LATIN AMERICAN RELATIONS

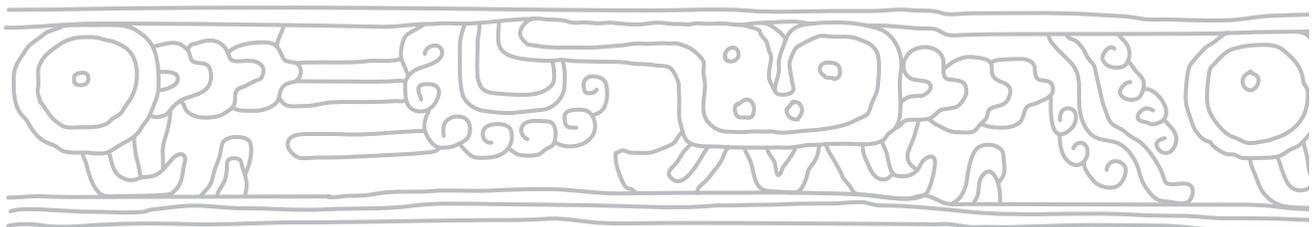
Political conditions in Latin America change periodically. In line with the hegemonic theory, U.S. supremacy follows an irregular course as long as it continues to maintain its position as dominant power. The “hegemonic presumption,” a term coined by Abraham Lowenthal to describe regional relations with the United States, existed and was effective in the context of bi-polar competition characteristic of the Cold War.<sup>11</sup> However, in today’s international order, the idea of a Western Hemisphere as an inclusive, generalizing concept is no longer valid. The image of a “consolidated backyard” no longer fits in with the very diverse nature of twenty-first-century Latin American countries either. That is, this old notion of U.S. hegemony over Latin America seems to have definitively lost its validity in the face of recent political events, and this is perhaps already a very strong perception that follows some of the policies of Foggy Bottom in the region. And yet, some Latin American actors insist on not accepting any kind of U.S. role in the region, let alone an interventionist one. However, we can foresee contradictory views in the way actors will play the anti/pro-interventionist card depending on the specific cases, just as happened in Honduras.

This is perhaps the reason why Washington will have to think seriously about reinforcing its position as a *constructive partner*. Thus, the challenge is to develop a strategy of both joint responsibility and cooperation that consolidates—in the Latin American collective consciousness and public opinion—a distance from the United States’ past inter-

ventionist tradition. Such an approach can find resonance with partners that are in a position to accept this framework of mutual collaboration to resolve the critical issues affecting domestic development in most Latin American countries. It has yet to be confirmed that the Obama leadership is actually non-imperialistic, nonetheless, and if the U.S. decides to go non-interventionist, it remains to be seen if this will be accepted by Latin Americans and consequently, if they can handle the absence of the ugly American. May this virtuous circle occur; then we will witness a valuable opportunity to shift toward a new intellectual tradition in our thinking about the Americas. ■■■

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Leonardo Curzio, *La seguridad nacional en México y la relación con Estados Unidos* (Mexico City: CISAN-UNAM, 2007).
- <sup>2</sup> See “The Project for the New American Century,” <http://www.newamericancentury.org/>.
- <sup>3</sup> The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: White House, 2002).
- <sup>4</sup> Part of this proposal was the importance of signing free trade agreements with Chile and Central America and the need to resolve trade disputes with Mexico and the European Union.
- <sup>5</sup> This term is a territorial extension—and an ontological representation—of the U.S. conviction that the “American creed” and thereafter, the “American way,” were the philosophical pillars of its conception of civilization. See José Luis Valdés-Ugalde, *Estados Unidos: Intervención y poder mesiánico. La guerra fría en Guatemala, 1954* (Mexico City: CISAN-Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas-UNAM, 2004), p. 200.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> Roberto Russell, “América Latina para Estados Unidos: ¿Especial, desdénable, codiciada o perdida?” *Nueva Sociedad*, no. 206 (November-December 2006), pp. 48-62.
- <sup>8</sup> For a recent analysis on the Honduran coup d’état, see José Luis Valdés-Ugalde, “Las Honduras abiertas de América Latina,” *Voices of Mexico* 85, May-August, 2009, pp. 7-8.
- <sup>9</sup> Corporación Latinobarómetro, *Informe 2009*, <http://www.latinobarometro.org/>.
- <sup>10</sup> Encuesta Latinobarómetro 2009 “La región desaprueba el golpe en Honduras,” *El País*, December 14, 2009, [http://www.elpais.com/articulo/internacional/region/desaprueba/golpe/Honduras/elpepiint/20091212/elpepiint\\_2/Tes](http://www.elpais.com/articulo/internacional/region/desaprueba/golpe/Honduras/elpepiint/20091212/elpepiint_2/Tes).
- <sup>11</sup> Abraham F. Lowenthal, “Estados Unidos y América Latina a inicios del siglo XXI,” *Foreign Affairs en Español* (January-March 2007).



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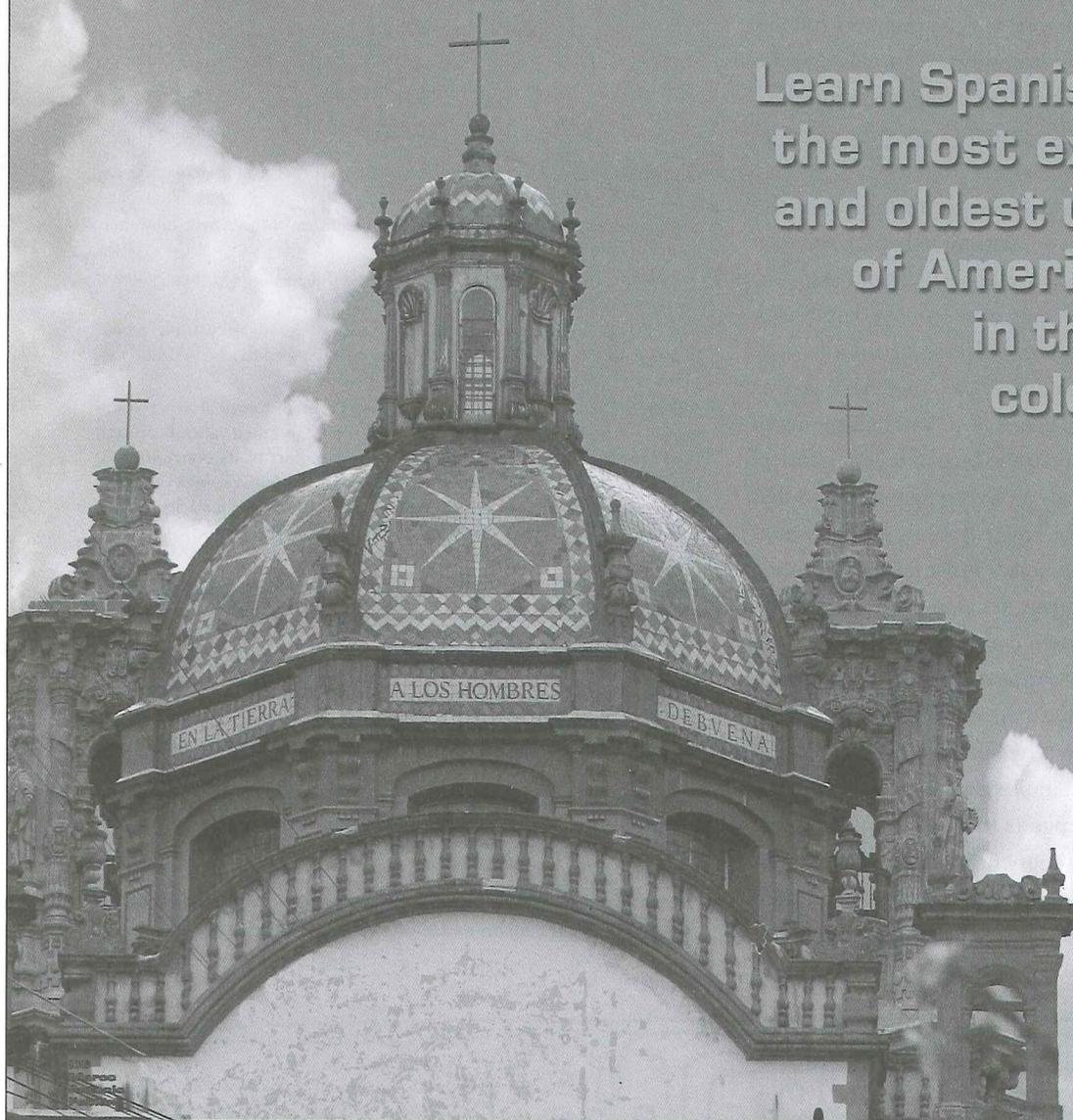
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# Celebrating the UNAM Centennial



# The Institute of Biology's Botanical Garden

## A Gem Nestled in the UNAM

Javier Caballero Nieto\*

Botanical gardens are living museums, where the public can see and learn about biodiversity and its importance. Today, they also play a vital role in ex situ conservation of flora by maintaining their collections of endemic, rare or endangered plant species. There are more than 1,800 botanical gardens in 148 countries of the world. Their collections preserve examples of more than 80,000 species, almost one-third of all the world's vascular plants, those considered of a higher evolutionary level because they have lignified tissues that allow substances to be distributed throughout their structure. Today, very few countries are without at least one botanical garden. In Mexico we have about 40.

\* Researcher at UNAM's Institute of Biology and head of the Botanical Garden.



José Guadarrama (left), Arturo Gómez-Pompa (center), Javier Valdez (right) and Ramón Riba (kneeling), on one of the first trips to collect plants for the Botanical Garden. Photo: Fototeca del Jardín Botánico (Botanical Garden Photo Archive)



Panoramic view of the National *Agavaceae* Collection.



Ramón Riba

Removing the *Beaucarnea gracilis* ("elephant foot") from its natural habitat in the Tehuacán Valley, 1963.

**The UNAM's Botanical Garden was founded in 1959 and the first stages of its growth were intimately linked to the development of modern botany in Mexico.**

The UNAM Institute of Biology's Botanical Garden is the second oldest of its kind in Mexico and our country's most important in terms of size, diversity and the scientific value of its collections. It was founded in 1959 by botanists Faustino Miranda and Manuel Ruiz Oronoz, with support from medical physiologist Efrén del Pozo, at that time our university's secretary general. A few years after its inauguration, the garden came under the aegis of the Institute of Biology. The first stages of its growth were intimately linked to the development of modern botany in Mexico. Originally from Spain, Miranda, a botanist and tropical ecologist, forged a team of young enthusiasts to collect samples of plants from all over the country. That team included Ramón Riba, Arturo Gómez-Pompa and Javier Valdez, who years later would become outstanding specialists in botany in Mexico. Other illustrious scientists who participated in different ways in



Abisai García

A flowering *Fourcraea martiniezii*, 2003.



Jesús Salgado

The "elephant foot" collected in Tehuacán Valley 47 years ago.

Among the outstanding plants is an "elephant foot" (*Beucarnea gracilis*), which is more than 300 years old.

the project were Teófilo Herrera, Eizi Matuda, Otto Nagel, Helia Bravo, Francisco González Medrano, Hermilo Quero, Claudio Delgadillo and Mario Souza.

Considered by renowned specialists from the United States and Europe as one of the world's most important, the garden is the leader of its kind in Latin America. From the very start, its objective was to keep a collection of live plants representing the diversity of Mexico's flora that would be a basis for botanical research and education.

Located in the southeastern part of the university campus, the garden is also home to the Faustino Miranda Greenhouse, which dates from the first stages of its development and is in the campus's historic area. The garden totals 12.7 hectares: 2.75 hectares are open to the public and the rest is filled with working greenhouses and other installations, plus the natural vegetation native to the San Ángel Lava Rocks Ecological Reserve. Since 2005, it has been one of the reserve's buffer zones. Between its outside collections and those in the greenhouses, it has more than 300 rows of gar-

Javier Caballero



Greenhouse for plants intended for sale.

den boxes, housing about 5,500 plants that represent 1,200 Mexican plant species.

The collections are organized using taxonomic, ecological, geographical, utilitarian and biodiversity conservation criteria. Today there are 15 different collections, some of which are thematic, like those of ornamental, medicinal, tropical, wild and aquatic plants, as well as the arboretum. Other collections are taxonomic, like the yuccas and *Dasylliria*, orchids, cacti, wild prickly pear cacti (*Opuntia* and *Nopalea*), *Crassulaceae*, and *Agavaceae*s. The last three have been recognized as National Collections by the Mexican Association of Botanical Gardens because they include samples of more than 60 percent of the Mexican species in these groups, they have accessible information about where the samples came from and are a reference point and source of

The Desert Garden was conceived of as an educational and training tool for technical personnel involved in controlling illegal trafficking in plants from arid regions.



Researchers and technicians explaining plant domestication processes to the public on National Botanical Garden Day.

Javier Caballero



Tigridia, the garden's store.

Javier Caballero

samples for biological and technological studies. The cacti collection is the largest of its kind in Mexico and includes the main species from this botanical family, both from the deserts of Chihuahua and Arizona-Sonora, as well as the arid regions of central and southern Mexico.

It also has a 300-square-meter Desert Garden dedicated to the memory of Helia Bravo, a pioneer in the study of Mexican cacti. Here are gathered samples of plants from arid regions that are used in illegal trade. The collection was conceived of as an educational and training tool for technical personnel involved in controlling illegal trafficking in plants.

Some of the most noteworthy species found in the Botanical Garden are the barrel cactus (*Echinocactus* and *Ferrocactus*), the old-man cactus (*Cephalocereus*), as well as the "burro-ear" (*Echeverria gibbiflora*) and laui (*Echeverria laui*) echeverias and the *Graptopetalum* from the *Crassulaceae* family. Other outstanding plants are the agaves for making pulque (*Agave salmiana*) and for making mescal (*Agave potatorum* and 20 other species from this genus), as well as the Spanish bayonets (*Yucca* spp), the sotols (*Dasyllirion* spp) and the "elephant foot" beucarnea (*Beucarnea gracilis*), one of which is more than 300 years old and has been part of the garden's collection since it was founded. This particular plant was used as the symbol of the garden's fiftieth anniversary celebration in 2009.



Jesus Salgado

Tropical plants in the Faustino Miranda Greenhouse.



Jesus Salgado

An *Echinocactus grusonii*, known as "mother-in-law's chair".



Jesus Salgado

Manuel Ruiz Oronoz Greenhouse.

It is important to mention that the garden is the only one in Mexico with a research area with different programs about the knowledge, use and conservation of plant diversity. The areas are cytogenetics, anatomy, taxonomy and the molecular systems of biologically very important groups of plants, like cacti, palms, orchids, *Crassulaceae* and *Agavaceae*. Studies are also done on the propagation of plant fibers through cultivation of endangered species and species that could be of economic interest, as well as ethno-botanical studies about the evolution of domesticated plants and the use and sustainability of plant resource management among indigenous populations.

The non-sustainable extraction of plant resources, changes in soil use, global warming and other factors caused by human activity have come to a critical point and are endangering at least 60,000 plant species throughout the world. This process has reached alarming levels in Mexico, one of the five countries in the world with the broadest biodiversity. Mexican norm NOM-059 states that at least 981 of the more than 22,000 Mexican plant species are extinct, endangered or require some kind of special protection.

This is why the UNAM Institute of Biology participates actively through the garden in implementing an international plan to save endangered plant species. Based on the Convention on Biological Diversity of Rio de Janeiro, this plan is known as the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation and has been signed by governments, educational and research institutions and civil society organizations. It establishes measurable goals for actions on a global, regional, national and local level focusing on documentation, conservation and the sustainable use of plant species.

So, the Botanical Garden's collections contribute to the ex situ conservation of 577 of the 7,320 plants endemic to

**The UNAM Institute of Biology participates actively through the garden in implementing an international plan to save endangered plant species.**



A variety of cultivated dahlias, our national flower.



Victor Chávez

Multiple shoots of *Bletia urbana* (Orchidaceae) obtained through tissue culture.

This botanical garden is the only one in Mexico with a research area with different programs about the knowledge, use and conservation of plant diversity.



Javier Caballero



Jesus Saigado

*Agave americana* and *A. celsii* from the National Agavaceae Collection.



Javier Caballero

The learning garden.

The garden also participates in identifying priority areas and species for conservation, and collaborates with federal authorities in dealing with confiscated plants.

Mexico. They also contribute to the conservation of at least 245 species that are at some level of risk according to NOM-059, including 48 percent of the *Agavaceae*, 58 percent of the cacti and 100 percent of the *Crassulaceae* in the country that are under threat or endangered. The garden's researchers and technicians also participate in identifying priority areas and species for conservation, and the garden collaborates with federal authorities in dealing with confiscated plants.

The development of cultivation protocols, both using conventional methods and in vitro cultivation, make it possible to propagate plants that are then used, in joint efforts with rural communities and producers, for recovering natural populations. Until now, 84 species of cacti and *Crassulaceae* that NOM-059 cites as under some kind of risk have been cultivated, one-third of which are already sold in the Botanical Garden's Tigridia Shop. This is part of a pilot plan to discourage their illegal trade and over-exploitation. Also, ethno-botanical research documenting the use and handling of more than 4,000 species of Mexican flora by different



Jesus Salgado

*Equisetum hyemale* and *Nimphaea mexicana* of the Water Plants Collection.



indigenous groups contributes to the sustainable management of plant diversity.

The Botanical Garden plays a very important role in implementing the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation in the fields of education, dissemination of scientific knowledge and creating public awareness about the value of plant diversity and the importance of its conservation. Every year more than 50,000 visitors to the garden have access to guided tours, courses, workshops, advisory services and other activities.

As if all this were not enough, this is one of the few educational and leisure spaces where the inhabitants of one of the world's most populated cities can come into contact with nature and learn that plants are a vital part of the planet's biological diversity and an essential resource for human well-being. Its contribution to research, education and the conservation of biodiversity undoubtedly makes the Institute of Biology's Botanical Garden one of the gems of the UNAM. **MM**

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The Botanical Garden is open in winter from  
Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

In summer, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

We open Saturdays all year long from 8:30 to 3 p.m.,  
except for UNAM's winter vacations.

Admission is free. Guided visits for groups available.

For more information, contact:

Área de Difusión y Educación del Jardín Botánico del IB-UNAM

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"Magueyito" (*Echeveria agavoides*).

Jesús Salgado



View of the National *Agavaceae* Collection, including agaves, dasylires and yucca trees.

Jesús Salgado



ofunam

Music Lives in the University

Interview with Alejandro Guzmán Rojas<sup>1</sup>

The National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) is more than just Mexico's main institution of higher learning. It also houses the most diverse kinds of cultural and sport activities, and everything it does involves Mexican society in general. Music is no exception: the university has a philharmonic orchestra, whose home base, the Nezahualcóyotl Hall in the University Cultural Center, is a point of pride, not only for people in the university but for the entire nation. Alejandro Guzmán Rojas, the assistant executive director of the UNAM Philharmonic Orchestra, or OFUNAM, as it is better known, tells *Voices of Mexico* a little about its history and current projects.

**Alejandro Guzmán:** The orchestra's history dates back to 1929 when the push for autonomy was in full swing. At that time, the National Conservatory of Music was part of the university, but when the latter became autonomous, the conservatory split off. But, some of the conservatory's teachers decided to stay on. With the idea of doing cultural work, they would get together with some students and play at a ceremony or other. Then they'd split up again, and "the orchestra would disappear." This went on for several years, until 1936, when it began to come together formally (next year will be its seventy-fifth anniversary).

Two people, both teachers, were decisive in this: José Rocabrana and José Vázquez. They loaned their materials out, they didn't charge for conducting, and the musicians were the students themselves and a few teachers. That was the first kernel. The orchestra began with a few more or less regular seasons. The performances were free, and it was all very oriented to serving the public. The university was in downtown Mexico City, and they performed in the Theater of the People and rehearsed in the Simón Bolívar Amphitheater, which was in the National Preparatory School.

So its beginnings were very humble, but very enthusiastic. From the start, it was conceived of in close relation with what the university should be: a place to offer education and culture for everyone. It was a small orchestra and it

◀ Performance at the Aragón Faculty of Higher Studies (FES).



Juan Antonio López/Coceta UNAM

The Nezahualcōyotl Hall, home to the OFUNAM.

worked miracles. They didn't have any contracts or money: it was "you play, we pay." The musicians loaned their own instruments; Maestros Rocabruna and Vázquez loaned the sheet music, wrote arrangements, composed, conducted; they did everything. Little by little the symphony orchestra took shape, and that's how it was until the 1960s.

Then came Maestro Icilio Bredo, an Italian musician who came to Mexico to teach at the conservatory. One of his contributions was to request a more formal situation for the orchestra because, even at that time, they would meet, play and then get paid. But there was no security to speak of. That was when their home base changed to the Justo Sierra Auditorium in the School of Philosophy and Letters in University City.

Next, there was "an earthquake," Maestro Eduardo Mata. He took the reins very young and gave the orchestra new impetus. I think he was about 25 when they called him in to work in the office for musical activities—I can't remember its exact name.

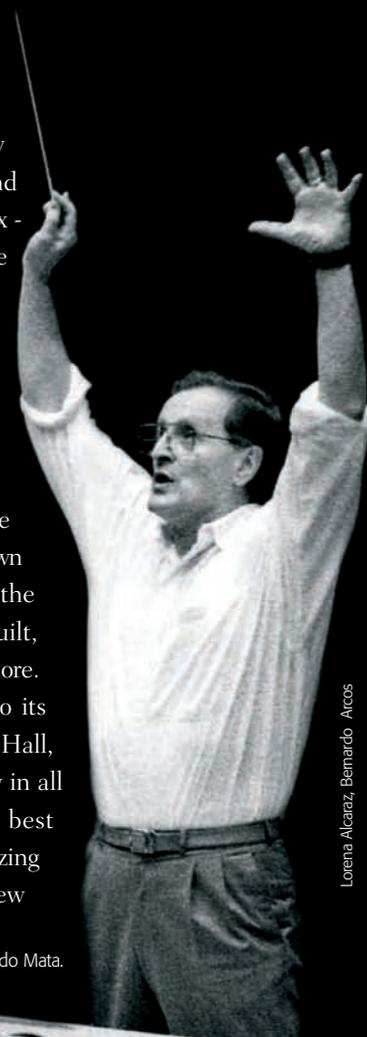
Mata did everything, and I think he was the one who started to create the audience we now have, a more adult audience. At that time we didn't have our own venue; the orchestra rehearsed and gave concerts at the Justo Sierra Auditorium and occasionally at San Ildefonso and in the Schools of Architecture or Medicine. That is, they moved around. Of course, it was still a small orchestra and so it fit in certain halls that can't be used now. Appointing Eduardo Mata as artistic director marked the beginning of a new and brilliant stage in its development, a period that lasted nine years. It was during that time that the University Symphony

Orchestra became the UNAM Philharmonic Orchestra, the name and character it retains until today.

**Voices of Mexico:** What's the difference between a symphony orchestra and a philharmonic orchestra?

**AG:** Well, I would say that today, the difference is only in the name; the number of musicians is very similar. Practically, they could play the same work on the same day, and it wouldn't be any different. The explanation I'm familiar with is that the musicians were hired for a symphony orchestra after an audition, and for a philharmonic orchestra by invitation, but now, to get into either, you have to audition.

So, to get back to Mata....He was one of the main promoters of the idea that the orchestra needed its own hall. That was one of the reasons the University Cultural Center was built, with the Nezahualcōyotl Hall at its core. In 1976, the orchestra moved into its current home, the Nezahualcōyotl Hall, which has the best acoustics of any in all of Latin America and among the best in the world. Naturally, I'm summarizing a lot of the orchestra's history in a few



Lorena Alcaraz, Bernardo Arcos

Maestro Eduardo Mata.

minutes. After Mata came other maestros: Héctor Quintanar, from 1975 to 1980; from 1981 to 1984, two co-conductors, Enrique Diemecke and Eduardo Diazmuñoz; followed by Jorge Velazco, Jesús Medina, Ronald Zollman, Zuohuang Chen and Alun Francis, who is about to finish his work this year. Two years ago, Rodrigo Macías was appointed assistant conductor.

**VM:** How are orchestra members picked?

**AG:** The musicians are hired as university workers with tenured positions. Besides the audition, they have to go through a trial period, because auditioning is one thing, and working is another. If they pass the trial period, then they're accepted in the orchestra. Picking the artistic director falls to the UNAM's general director of music, but he or she always listens to the orchestra's opinion; they make suggestions. Those up for consideration are invited to come as guest conductors so the orchestra can get to know them, because that's who they're going to be working with; after that there's an evaluation, a decision is made, and finally, the university rector makes the appointment.

Big stars are impossible for us, but quite a few foreign and Mexican conductors are interested in heading up this orchestra, because it's good and open to working hard; the hall is marvelous and the audiences are excellent. We are also a hothouse for developing future first-rank conductors.

**"Music Lives in the University"**  
aims at breaking the paradigm  
that says that the artists are on one side  
and the audience on the other.

There are very good conductors who are just starting out, and in the future are going to be top notch. I think that in Latin America there is no other university with an orchestra and a hall like ours. In terms of pay, perhaps compared to other orchestras we're not the best, but it's quite decent.

**VM:** One interesting aspect of how the orchestra works is how its members are renewed. In the UNAM, this involves something that we don't often pay attention to: the human factor.

**AG:** Renovating the orchestra is a human problem. Once they have been confirmed in their post, they are, let's say, irremovable, unless they do something silly. All musicians have a period in which they're at the top of their game, and then they start to decline. There are those who accept that their time has passed and they retire; others continue thinking they can give more and they do; and there are some whose time has passed, but they can't be forced to retire because they're musicians and what they want to do is to play. So, we

The Nezahualcóyotl Hall reopening concert in April 2010.



Juan Antonio López/Gaceta UNAM

try to get the musician himself or herself to recognize what's going on. In this orchestra there are a lot of young people who have just come on board together with musicians who have been in it for 30 years. There's nothing wrong with that: we are nurtured by the experience of the latter and we take advantage of the impetus of the former.

OFUNAM at Preparatory High School 9.



Lorenza Alcaraz

**VM:** For anyone who goes to a performance for the first time, the ritual of the concert, a custom that exists in all the world's concert halls, can go completely unnoticed. How would you summarize that ritual?

**AG:** It's very simple. After the conductor, the second ranking person artistically is the concert master. The concert master is always the first violin, the person who comes into the hall when all the other musicians are seated and there's only one empty chair left. The audience claps for him, and he invites the orchestra to rise and acknowledge the applause. Then he takes his place and leads the orchestra in tuning up. Once that's finished, the conductor enters and the audience applauds again. The conductor asks the orchestra to stand up again to receive the applause and then he goes to the podium and begins the concert. That's how it's done the world over.

**VM:** Another thing that goes unnoticed, and that's important given that this is a university with limited resources, is the cost of having an orchestra of this caliber.

**AG:** The basic UNAM orchestra is made up of 106 musicians, plus the conductor, plus the whole administrative support team, the librarian, the people who set up, who put out and take away the chairs, move the instruments, put everything in its place, do the lighting, help with the sound equipment....That's why time management is so key; every minute of the orchestra's time is quite expensive, because we're paying the musician, the conductor, the team and also for the music, because only the pieces that no longer have copyrights are free. Some of the music we buy and it stays in our musical library, but a lot is paid for by contract: they send it to us, it's played and we return it. That could be for a couple of concerts and their respective rehearsals. The orchestra rehearses three hours a day, four days a week, and we give concerts on Saturday night and Sundays at noon. We have three short seasons: two in the first half of the year and one in the second half.

**The idea is that the university community as a whole, including, of course, high school youngsters, come into contact with music and get to know their orchestra.**



OFUNAM at the Uxmal archaeological site.

**This is a university orchestra.  
We want to educate, and we are educating  
a more open, more aware audience, more  
committed to the music and to the university.**

**VM:** Here we come to one of the OFUNAM's most important artistic extension projects, "Music Lives in the University," which aims at breaking the paradigm that says that the artists are on one side and the audience on the other.

**AG:** The idea is that music and its context expand further and further, that the university community as a whole, including, of course high school youngsters, come into contact with music and get to know their orchestra. Going into the preparatory high schools is something completely new; never before in the history of the university had the OFUNAM performed in all nine of the UNAM-affiliated preparatory schools. This experience brought us very pleasant surprises. In the surveys we did after the performances, we got comments like, "Come back soon," "I hope this happens very often," "We loved it," "I thought I was going to be bored, but I wasn't," and "I thought this music was for old people, and it's really great!"

I think this all has to do with the way we work, Rodrigo, our assistant conductor, and I. The idea is to stop being stiff and try to communicate with the students through music, but using their own language. People might criticize us for asking them if they thought "it was cool," but language is a living thing. It changes, and what seems to be nails on a blackboard in the ears of older people, in the future is going to be commonplace.

Rodrigo and I agreed to use their language, but also to give them information, because we believe that knowledge produces pleasure: if I go to a concert and I don't understand anything and nobody explains it to me, well, I'm not

going to like it or it'll scare me. But, if somebody gives me a little information, even just basic info, about what's going on, then I start to pay attention. I'll learn that the orchestra is divided up in a certain way, and that this guy is the concert master, and that they have to tune up at so many hertz. Along the way I learn what a hertz is...because I do ask them if they know what a hertz is —after all, we are in undergraduate schools and high schools— but if they don't know, we explain it. Then, at some point, a kid who already knows more about what an orchestra is decides to impress his girl and he explains it to her. That's what we're looking for, for these youngsters to get into musical language a bit, for them to know that, like in any language, in musical discourse, there's a period to end a sentence, a period at the end of a paragraph, a comma, and exclamation points. The only thing is that it's complicated to follow, so we explain that one principle of composition is repetition, so we can retain it.

**VM:** The preparation of these concerts, then, the selection of the music and the performance time are all fundamental for getting these young people's attention.

**AG:** It's all perfectly planned. Each performance is conceived of like dosages of homeopathic medicine. Even though in the surveys there were comments like, "It was too short" —which we, of course, were delighted with— we think that the people who were there for the first time probably wouldn't be able to take a two-hour concert. But after these small doses, maybe they would. The themes are organized with an eye to accessible music, with an expla-

At Preparatory High School 3.



David Delcorte/Archivo JB Arcos Estudio

Lorenza Alcaraz



Elsie Montiel

Next year we're planning to go to the five Sciences and Humanities High Schools. They're a tough audience, too.

**VM:** To document this activity, a film was made that will be broadcast on the UNAM television station. It also reflects the spirit of many of the participants in this huge undertaking that is university cultural activity.

**AG:** The filmmaker who made the documentary, Bernardo Arcos, was nominated for an Ariel<sup>2</sup> for another one he did on the Mining Palace Symphony Orchestra. He's really someone who contributes and who works with us above all for love of the UNAM. We also have experts who contribute their photographs for publicity, and some of us lend equipment to save the orchestra from having to rent it and use up its budget. This is the kind of impetus that Gustavo

**Music, like all the arts, is connected to a part of human beings, the most spiritual part. In it, there is color, there are timbres, there are subtle differences, but there is also conflict and passion.**

nation beforehand. All music is complex, but with this language, up to a certain point, we are getting them to understand what it's about. But I also question them; I make them see that I can tell them anything, and maybe that's not so; so they think about and get involved in what's going on. We also use a few tools, like a program, where not only do we explain what the piece is about and who composed it, but we also add suggestions about how to listen to the music, or quotes from books on the history of music. It's all very short so people's minds don't stray.

The programming includes music that has a certain reference point, that might remind them of something, for example, the Overture to the *Barber of Seville*, which a lot of them recognize because it's used in cartoons. That's the hook. But then we play something they haven't heard before. It's a short program, about an hour long including what Rodrigo and I tell them. The idea is to not tire them out, to give them the information they need and invite them to come to our home, the concert hall, so that the work we're doing to familiarize them with music can fully flower.



Rivero Weber, the UNAM's director of music, is trying to maintain. He was the one who thought of going out to the high schools and of hiring an assistant conductor. Rodrigo Macías is very young, no more than 30-something. He studied in Mexico and then in Italy; then he came back, auditioned and won the post. He's helping us enormously; he's very easy to talk to, very pleasant and patient with young people; he talks to everyone. It's really good that we have someone with his profile, his musical talent, and his desire to work, to contribute to the university, because he's one of our main spokespersons.

We are attempting to reach out to young and not-young people. We believe we're also achieving a lot with the ones who go to the rehearsals open to the public on Saturday mornings. While the orchestra was on its break, which lasts half an hour, we realized that the audience remained seated waiting for them to start again. And we wanted to take advantage of those moments. So, now I stand there and start explaining how the orchestra is made up, what a musical scale is, the sounds, and, even though there's a program that explains this also, I try to answer any questions they may have about the pieces and the composer. Be-

cause —coming back to this— this is a university orchestra, and we're taking full advantage of that. This is an orchestra with a social objective. We want to educate, and we are educating a more open, more aware audience, more committed to the music and to the university. At the end of the day, music, like all the arts, is connected to a part of human beings, the most spiritual part, the part that creates enjoyment that goes beyond the immediate emotions. In it, there is color, there are timbres, there are subtle differences, but there is also conflict, passion. And this orchestra is here to discover all of that. **MM**

**Elsie Montiel**  
*Editor*

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> All quotes and information in this article are from an interview with Alejandro Guzmán on April 15, 2010 in the OFUNAM offices at the University Cultural Center.

<sup>2</sup> The Ariel is Mexico's top award for cinema. [Translator's Note.]



Elsie Montiel



Elsie Montiel

Photos previous page and this page, performance at "The Islands" area in the heart of University City.



# The **University Olympic Stadium** Harmony in Time and Space

Isabel Morales Quezada\*

**Majestic, and at the same time discreet, when seen from afar, you inevitably think of the constructions erected by the ancient indigenous civilizations surrounded by the natural landscape.**



2010

Inaugurated November 20, 1952, the University Olympic Stadium emerges from the earth, from the fields of lava rock, out of an area that, despite its wildness, was fruitful and provided the main materials used to build it: earth and rock, like those constructions from pre-Hispanic Mexico that we marvel at so much today. Its creation is linked to that remote past, to the history and the natural phenomena that gave rise to the site where it was erected. On this same site, thanks to the vision and technical and artistic capability of a team of architects headed by Augusto Pérez Palacios, all the elements came together to make the University Olympic Stadium one of the most renowned in the world, not only in its time, but even today in the twenty-first century.

The research about it by Dr. Lourdes Cruz González Franco, researcher and coordinator of the Archives of Mexican Architects, together with her assistant, architect María Eugenia Hernández Sánchez, is ample proof of this. Their study, based on Pérez Palacios's archives, made possible an exhibition inaugurated September 3, 2008 in our university's School of Architecture. The exhibit carefully reviewed all the information collected about the stadium, the details of its construction and the impact it had on a world scale. Cruz González Franco is also preparing a book on the topic, the source for the quotes used here about the stadium's construction, in addition to an interview she gave this writer, essential for developing this article.

After looking over its construction details and architecture, the Olympic Stadium can do no less than reveal itself as a kind of lasting work of art and sculpture. This is not only because of its form, but because of the way it was built. This fundamental aspect, its construction, is what invariably leads us to eras as remote as that of the eruption of Xitle Volcano in A.D.300, which resulted in the formation of the Valley of Mexico's San Ángel Lava Rock Fields (the Pedregal de San Ángel), where the stadium stands today. The decision to build it there is the start of the fortunate history of the space, about which Pérez Palacios commented,

The foundation was then laid for the third sun.  
 Its sign was 4-Rain.  
 It called itself Sun of Rain [of fire].  
 It happened that during it, it rained fire,  
 those who lived in it were burned.  
 And during it, it also rained sand  
 and they said that in it  
 rained the little stones we can see,  
 that the *tezontle* rock boiled  
 and that then the crags reddened.  
*Legend of the Suns*

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\*Voices of Mexico staff writer.  
 Unless otherwise specified, photos belong to the Archives of Mexican Architects of the UNAM School of Architecture.

I believe that the solution we arrived at is the best demonstration that we proceeded logically, because the Olympic Stadium is one of the most beautiful structures in University City. To favor the economy of construction, one of the main rules is to have the materials as nearby as possible. In building the Olympic Stadium, we used the magnificent material we had at hand, the very earth where it was going to be erected.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the integration of the natural surroundings —what so many people talk about when a new work of architecture is about to be built— was successful. The land chosen already had a natural depression and was then excavated to form the cone of the elliptical base that became the playing field and then part of the bleachers. Later, the earth extracted was used to build a circular embankment around the playing field, whose talus is nestled in the natural resting place of the material that was later covered with volcanic rock, also dug from this site. Finally, the upper bleachers were built on the embankment.

The site where the stadium was built was undoubtedly the first determining factor for its final form. The edifice's simplicity results from using the materials found on the grounds (more than 100,000 cubic meters of earth and rock) and the combination of ancient and modern building techniques. As Cruz González Franco said in her interview,

The University Olympic Stadium is one of the main works of University City as well as of contemporary twentieth-century architecture, since it brings several qualities together: a contemporary building with contemporary language, which uses construction systems from the Mesoamerican past, like the base for pyramids, and at the same time advanced systems, like dams being built at that time in Mexico.<sup>2</sup>

If the terrain was a determining factor for this building, the memory of the Mesoamerican past, present in architect Pérez Palacio's creative thinking as well as in that of artist Diego Rivera, was fundamental in consolidating the stadium as an element of national identity, reaffirming the memory of our roots and the desire for progress, because we should remember that the stadium is part of the National University's educational project.

Visual integration was an original part of the architectural conception of University City, and that is why Mexico's most renowned muralists were invited to contribute to several of its buildings. Diego Rivera, a great friend of Pérez



The architect, Augusto Pérez Palacios, explaining the project to President Miguel Alemán.

**The edifice's simplicity results from using the materials found on the grounds (earth and rock) and the combination of ancient and modern building techniques.**

Palacios, was commissioned to create the mural that now graces the central part of the stadium's eastern façade.

Rivera's original idea was for a mural that would completely cover the stadium's exterior, depicting human figures playing a sport or during an episode in Mexico's history. This project could not be completed, however, due to Rivera's delicate health and probably for economic reasons. Nevertheless, the work he was able to finish became yet another symbol of University City. It is nationalistic and historical, exalting the past and the mixture of cultures, but it also speaks to the present. It is made up of the National Autonomous University of Mexico coat of arms, which depicts the American condor and eagle posed on a nopal cactus. In their wings, they hold a man with European features and an indigenous woman who are handing their mixed-blood son

the dove of peace. On either side are enormous figures of male and female athletes lighting the torch from the Olympic fire. It should be said that the mural is a mosaic, done by tracing the figures on the wall and then sculpting them in relief using naturally-colored stones like Mexico's red *tezontle*, *tecali* (a transparent marble), white marble, green and pink stones and river rocks.

In the words of the artist himself,

The development of sports in Mexico from the pre-Hispanic era until today links University City's Olympic Stadium, a current reality in space, to the total space and time of the people who built it. That is, our intervention as sculptor-painters has given the aesthetic monument greater historic and social reality, but of an absolutely and very profound social and public function. We have achieved public social art.<sup>3</sup>

This historic and social reality is materialized with the creation of the stadium, which, as mentioned above, owes its originality to the site where it was erected and to the memory of the pre-Hispanic era, but also to the harmonious combination of construction techniques from the past with the more advanced techniques of today. Thus, there is equilibrium and consistency between the role this venue would play in society and its architectural form.

Architect Augusto Pérez Palacios was able to project a space that brings to mind the history and roots of a people, that alludes to them subtly but forcefully, and that at the same time fulfills all the requirements of a contemporary building. It even innovates in different areas: internationally, it was the first to have a press, radio and television box, known as "the Dovecot"; it pioneered the use of the Tartan track; and it has appropriate dressing rooms and bathrooms.



Panoramic view of the stadium and all of University City in 1954.



Diego Rivera's mosaic.

**Diego Rivera created the mural that graces the central part of the stadium's eastern façade, yet another symbol of University City.**



The best solution in terms of the stadium's functioning, bleachers, isoptics (the calculation of spectators' visibility), form, lighting and structure was achieved in great measure thanks to the study Pérez Palacios made of several stadiums abroad and of different proposals he found in contemporary publications. His architectural solution was based on a diagram by American Gavin Hadden, according to which the form of stadiums should be determined by the way spectators naturally seat themselves: first they sit in the center, and then, in a descending pattern, occupy the sides. Another very functional thing is access to the venue, which is level or by ramps: since it does not have stairs, the stadium can fill up and empty more quickly and without people stumbling.

The success of the University Olympic Stadium can be measured by the influence it had on the construction of others worldwide, like in Rome for the 1960 Olympic Games, and the remodeling of the Tokyo stadium for the 1964 games. Its originality and transcendence as a work of architecture can also be appreciated in the critiques of it by some of the most important figures in modern architecture of its time:

The stadium of the University of Mexico is just right for Mexico....It is there that the great, ancient traditions of Mexico that bring honor in modern times can be appreciated. But this structure does not imitate. It is a creation in the true sense and will take its place among the great works of the Architecture of today and tomorrow. (Frank Lloyd Wright, March 15, 1954)<sup>4</sup>

In the end, the most favorable result of this superb structure is its convincing scale in harmony with the landscape surrounding it and the felicitous visual integration of its architecture with the gigantic sculpture-painting created by a master: Diego Rivera. (Walter Gropius, March 18, 1954)<sup>5</sup>

About the University City Stadium, I can certainly say with complete conviction that it is one of the most forceful structures I have had the privilege to see under construction, and that it incorporates great innovations, both in its general solution and in its details. (Richard Neutra, March 16, 1954)<sup>6</sup>

When you look at the stadium, you can say without hesitation that a symbiosis was achieved between the totality of the building, with its volcanic rock and Rivera mural, and the structures of reinforced concrete: the balcony, tunnels, press box and lamp posts. The simplicity of their form identifies them and unites them at the same time. The elements do not clash with each other; they complement each other, creating a harmony between the traditional and the modern.

This place has witnessed many, many sports victories and matches: the 1954 and 1990 Central American and Caribbean Games; the 1955 and 1975 Pan American Games; the 1968 Olympics; the 1970 and 1986 World Soccer Championships; and the World *Universiada* in 1979, among others. Many records and achievements were set here during the

1968 Olympics. But, above all, right up until today, the stadium has fulfilled one of its main functions: being a public space for leisure and entertainment. In that sense, it fits completely with what Rivera called “public social art.”

Last, but not least, it can be said that the stadium is a space that is integrated not only into the whole University City, but into the landscape around it. The spectators who go there have the feeling of being inside and outside at the same time, thanks to a line of sight that allows you to be a part of the surrounding landscape even when you are inside.

Majestic, and at the same time discreet, when seen from afar, you inevitably think of the constructions erected by the ancient indigenous civilizations in the open air, surrounded by the natural landscape. Its form, defined by Rivera as an “architecturalized crater,” reminds us of the Xitle Volcano, which can be seen from inside the stadium, next to the Ajusco Hill.

From the day of its inauguration in 1952 until today, time and again the sounds of the voices of the people have rung through the stadium, the ovations, the shouts of “Goal!” the applause and the cheers, that as soon as they are made,

echo back, because the stadium is a living space, that palpates with every competition, with every match, with every meet. More than half a century old, the University Olympic Stadium continues to be sound; it has not aged, but rather has become one more of the symbols of the wealth of our university culture. Its virtues have given it a definitive place in the modern architecture of the world and in the catalogue of the most representative constructions of contemporary Mexico. **MM**

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Lourdes Cruz González Franco, “Notas sobre el proyecto del libro *El estadio olímpico universitario*,” developed for the September 2008 School of Architecture exhibit. Author’s photocopy, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Dr. Cruz González Franco on April 12, 2010, in her offices in the School of Architecture’s Lino Picaseño Library in University City.

<sup>3</sup> Cruz González Franco, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 26.



The world’s first stadium with a special press box.

**Mexico’s University Olympic Stadium exerted tremendous influence on others worldwide, like Rome’s and Tokyo’s for the 1960 and 1964 Olympic Games.**





## THE SPACE AND ITS CONTEXT

The University Contemporary Art Museum (MUAC) opened its doors in November 2008 after more than two years of conceptualization and construction. Located in the University Cultural Center, the MUAC eloquently expresses the National Autonomous University of Mexico's commitment to cultural exten-

sion, and a response to the on-going, lasting demands for spaces for the arts with structure and infrastructure. Architect Teodoro González de León, experienced in museum architecture, designed the MUAC. He conceived its location as part of a harmonious, articulated cultural space that also took into account the privileged natural, geographical surroundings that the development of University City managed to preserve in the face of Mexico City's overwhelming growth.

The MUAC's design reconciled this transparent dialogue with its surroundings with the demands for space and installations needed for a contempo-

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\* Coordinator of academic activities at the UNAM's University Contemporary Art Museum (MUAC).

Photo of the facade by Pedro Hiriart, courtesy of the MUAC. Photos of interiors by José Antonio Ruiz, courtesy of the MUAC.

# The University Contemporary Art Museum

## A Living Space

Jorge Reynoso Pohlenz\*



rary art museum. Of necessity, the building is large, but that size is not intimidating to the visitor. Instead of a labyrinthine, oppressive vastness of infinite sequential rooms, the public moves through corridors that can be considered opportunities for reflection during their journey between exhibition halls, where they also come upon patios and visual escapes to the outside of the museum.

In our Spanish language, there is no completely positive connotation for the words “idly meander” or “loiter,” but it is this open receptive attitude without a fixed destination that the MUAC invites

its visitors to adopt. Anyone who goes into the non-public areas —and we will talk about some of these later— will discover that its offices, warehouses, workshops and equipment make the MUAC an exceptional space for operating, producing and presenting exhibitions. The idea here is not to talk about the number of square meters the museum has for exhibitions, or the kilometers of electrical installations, or the number of workers or of art works it has, but rather to turn our attention to the description of the programs that seek to set it in motion.

## THE CURATORIAL PROGRAM

Today, museums have to respond to intense demands and expectations from society, while the public expects constant, attractive updating of their exhibitions. This means running the risk that content will echo more the moment and occasion than a process of profound, well-founded critical reflection. In the sphere of today's public opinion and media, contemporary art museums are simultaneously famous and controversial. But frequently, that fame and controversy do not extend to broader, more all-



inclusive terms that spark a real dialogue between the experiences of art and collective life, a life that is complex and in which art allows us to broaden our horizons.

Taking into consideration its being part of the university, the MUAC team thinks of art as one of the transcendental means for knowing the world and strives for its programming to be a means for activating significant experiences, regardless of quantitative or media successes. A curators' seminar was set up to articulate a coherent program of exhibitions, and, based on dialogue, discussion and collegiate reflection, it has structured the programming into curatorial cycles. While not ignoring the international art scene, these cycles seek to orient the program from a national and Latin American standpoint, proposing artists, works, projects and ideas that resonate with the history and thinking of other places

and moments from the standpoint of a university, a country and a time.

More than a single theme, the cycles unfold a series of lines of thinking that, starting from art, link up with other disciplines and facets of today's culture. The third cycle, entitled "Facts and Deliriums: Underpinnings, Material and Work," is currently underway. Its exhibitions revolve around the ways in which today's art depicts production processes, re-ordering the idea of what constitutes a work of art.

Included in the programming are individual and collective exhibitions, shows conceived by the MUAC

**The MUAC team thinks of art as one of the means for knowing the world and strives to activate significant experiences, regardless of quantitative or media successes.**

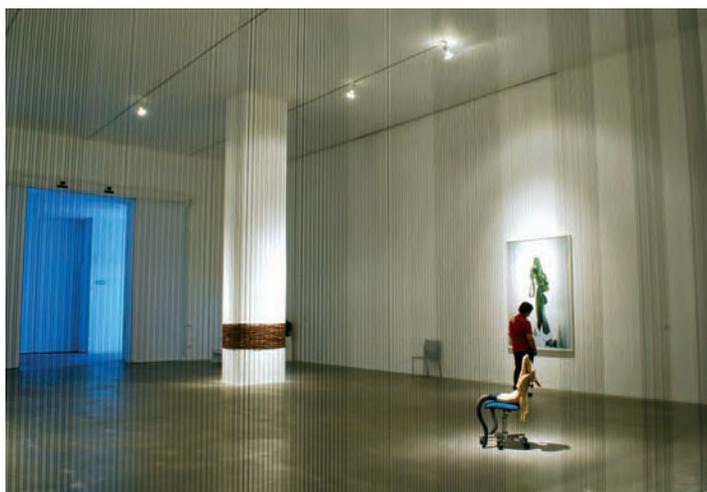


team, curatorial co-productions and external shows akin to the outlines of each cycle. In the context of the bicentennial celebrations of the emancipation of Latin America and the centennial of the National University of Mexico, the cycle "The Phantom of Freedom" will begin in late 2010 and continue into 2011, and will include exhibitions on the reflections and repercussions of memory, reality and the libertarian utopia in today's art and aesthetics.

## THE COLLECTION

The MUAC boasts a collection of art produced in the last half century that became part of the patrimony of the university. The first works in this collection came from the exhibitions at the University Museum of Science and Art (MUCA) beginning in 1960, mainly from donations. In 1999, the first efforts were made to design a systematic, critical policy for expanding the collection, but it was not until 2005 that the policy was consolidated, intentionally coinciding with the creation of the MUAC, by establishing

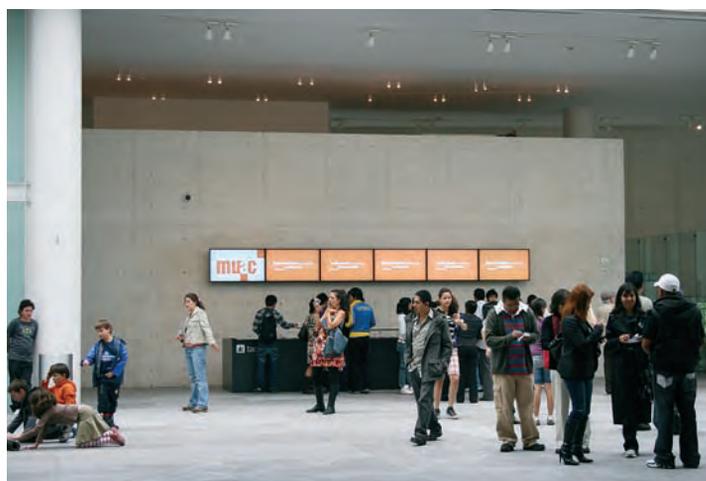
**Programming is structured into curatorial cycles that link art with other disciplines and facets of today's cultures, rather than by single themes.**



a system for the acquisition of recent Mexican art in accordance with the UNAM's scrupulous collegial regulations.

Mexico has few public collections of modern and contemporary art, which makes this initiative fundamental. At the same time it is in step with an institution which, in addition to including recent art as part of its offering in cultural extension, has schools for teaching art and research institutes for the visual arts.

Before the MUAC existed, there were no optimal spaces for storing these collections, a problem solved by including two warehouses for the collection, another for works in transit and a restoration workshop, all with ideal temperature and humidity controls and security conditions. Augmenting the museum's collection is a long-term project aimed at making it representative of the paths taken by Mexican art in recent decades. At the same time that this university collection is catalogued, preserved, documented and researched, the museum has partnered with collectors like Patrick Charpenel and the Grupo



Corpus, who have generously donated works to MUAC, benefitting and enriching both research and curatorial projects.

As mentioned above, the MUAC's programming is based on cycles that allow its team and the public to renew their perspectives about art, its creators and its contexts. In this dynamic, no space for exhibiting the permanent collection was conceived of, but rather, parts of it are integrated into the different exhibits and, once a year, an exhibition is held exclusively to show the permanent collection, making it possible to constantly think about and reconsider its works.

## SPACE AS A PRODUCER OF KNOWLEDGE

The MUAC team has established the premise of thinking of its space not only as a means for exhibition and storage, but also as a place that produces knowl-



No space for exhibiting the permanent collection was conceived of; rather, parts of it are integrated into the different exhibits and, once a year, an exhibition is held exclusively to show it, making it possible to constantly think about and reconsider its pieces.

edge, a principle that links together the museology extension, educational and academic programs. Education is conceived of not as a unidirectional process, but as the dialogue with museum visitors. The MUAC educational liaison team does not limit its activities to the large museum-pedagogical space called the Agora, but moves into the exhibit halls, broadening the scope of its activities from the usual child visitors to other kinds of museum-goers who are part of the plurality of the university cultural spheres. The “Links” program has been particularly effective: through it, students participate in mediation processes, contributing their enthusiasm to museum activities after intense training in museum-pedagogical techniques and in curatorial content.

Visitors who wish to broaden their informational contexts or have further dialogue can use the Experimental Space for the Construction of the Senses, where they have access to wide-ranging documentary and bibliographical information, and sessions

—called “conversatoria”— are held to discuss the exhibits and watch audiovisuals. With no intention whatsoever of overwhelming the public with activities, periodically, series of lectures, round table discussions and film and video showings are offered, seeking to broaden the impact of the curatorial cycles. In addition to the Experimental Space, the MUAC has an auditorium, set up and equipped to carry out very different kinds of performances and musical activities; a conference room; a shop-bookshop with recent publications about contemporary art and Mexican avant-garde design; plus a Space for Sound Experimentation. The latter is a recognition of the process of creativity in the visual arts extending to other paths of the senses. Its acoustical conditions and equipment make it possible to optimally play sound recordings on 24 channels. The creation of this space, inaugurated in November 2009, was accompanied by a laboratory project to bring together creators and sound technicians.

The public can consult specific or specialized materials on recent art at the Arkheia Research and Documentation Center, which boasts a growing library and document archives contributed by specialists like Olivier Debroise —who conceived of Arkheia— and Edgardo Ganado, or outstanding artists like Felipe Ehrenberg. Arkheia aspires to actively participate in a process that would allow access to a documentary history of Latin American art and permit its wide circulation, taking on tasks of cataloging and digitalization as well as setting up collaborative networks with other similar institutions.

With regard to the production of specialized knowledge, using its Expanded Campus program, the MUAC has launched two seminars on critical theory headed by students and professionals dedicated to different aspects of recent art, in collaboration with the UNAM’s art history graduate program. Coinciding with the cycle “The Phantom of Freedom,” an international

seminar will be organized about emancipatory and revolutionary aesthetics.

At certain times of day, a seminar participant might cross paths with a family visiting an exhibition, every member of which might have a different—even opposed— opinion about what he or she saw and experienced. The museum is also a wealth of things that happen inside and outside its exhibition halls. **M**

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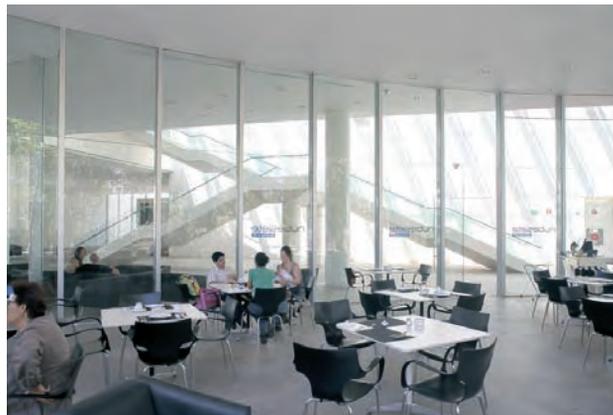
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Arkheia Research and Documentation Center.



Museum gift shop.



Nube Siete Restaurant.

# The UNAM's Exceptional Contemporary Medal Collection

Elsie Montiel\*



Elsie Montiel

This page: UNAM Centennial, obverse, 999-grade silver, 60 mm in diameter, 100 grams, written along the edge, struck in 2010. Next page, same medal reverse.

Elsie Montiel



The UNAM is one of the country's few educational institutions that has an on-going program for issuing medals.

Medals unique for their beauty and age, and medals struck as distinctions for outstanding members of the university, renowned for their work and contributions, or to commemorate important moments in the history of our institution: these are all part of the exceptional numismatic collection that is one of our university's cultural assets.<sup>1</sup> The older medals date from the eighteenth century when Gerónimo Antonio Gil, an engraver from Madrid's San Fernando Academy, arrived in New Spain, and culminate in the first third of the twentieth century. The latter are part of the contemporary collection, begun in 1948, and continually growing since the UNAM is one of the country's few educational

institutions that has an on-going program for issuing medals.

#### NUMISMATICS AND THE UNIVERSITY

The university's old medal collection, stored at the San Carlos Academy, dates back to the end of the eighteenth century, even though the Mint began striking medals in New Spain in 1536 for the Royal University of Mexico. With the arrival of Gerónimo Antonio Gil to these shores in 1778, steps were taken to organize a school for engravers at the Mexico City Mint (1781), the precursor for the San Carlos Royal Academy of the Three Noble Arts (1785) in New Spain. The relationship between the Mint and San Carlos was established thanks to the interest of Gil, the mint's greatest engraver, in education.

<sup>1</sup>Editor of *Voices of Mexico*. We wish to thank the University Office for Property Management (DGPU) for providing us with information and giving us the facilities for photographing the medals.



Patricia Pérez

30 Years, UNAM Sculptural Walk, electrolytic pewter, 100 x 60 mm, struck in 2009.



University City, World Heritage Treasure, 999-grade silver, 60 mm in diameter, 100 grams, struck in 2009.



20th Anniversary of Nezahualcóyotl Hall, 999-grade silver, 64 x 50 mm, 100 grams, struck in 1996.

**The collection boasts 320 medals, divided into two kinds: medals given in recognition of merit and commemorative medals.**

The academy's numismatic production declined after Gil's death and came to a complete halt between 1812 and 1824, when it closed its doors due to the War of Independence. In the mid-nineteenth century, these activities received renewed impetus when a new team of professors came to the academy, among whom was Juan Santiago Bagally, engraver to the London Mint, who brought with him an interesting collection of pieces of English manufacture. The academy's numismatic collection increased when Mexico's representative in London, Francisco Facio, acquired examples of English medals.

In the early twentieth century, this activity again declined due to a lack of interest among students and the technological lag in the procedures used, which contrasted with the new production techniques in practice elsewhere that yielded more precise results. Engraving courses were suspended in 1903. A short time later, some courses on specific topics were renewed, and academic and commemorative medals were designed.

The National University of Mexico, founded in 1910, inherited this collection when it absorbed the old San Carlos Academy in 1929, dividing it into the National School of Architecture and the Central School for the Visual Arts. The latter, in 1933 dubbed the National School for the Visual Arts, renewed the striking of medals, thus increasing the academy's collection.

The pieces struck from 1948 on are part of the modern collection. They are an interesting sample of numismatic versatility, but receive little attention from the university community.

**THE CONTEMPORARY COLLECTION**

The collection boasts 320 medals, stored by the University Office for Property Management (DGPU) in safe deposit boxes in several banks. It is divided into two kinds: medals given in recognition of merit and commemorative medals. Their designs run the gamut from the traditional, based on the old academy's medals,



60 Years of Academic Service, obverse (coat of arms of the Royal Pontifical University of Mexico), 24-carat gold, 33 mm in diameter, 20 grams, struck in 1992.



20 Years of Academic Service, obverse (design by Felipe Ehrenberg), copper patina, 38 mm in diameter, struck in 1986.



Elsie Montiel

Gabino Barreda Medal for University Merit, obverse (given to the student with the highest grade-point average in his/her high school or college graduating class), 999-grade silver, 40 mm in diameter, 38 grams, struck in 1982.

to completely innovative images showing the evolution of numismatics. The forms go way beyond traditional round medals, to elliptical, square, rectangular, hexagonal, heptagonal, octagonal and decagonal. One interesting point is that the collection has not been gathered for exactly artistic reasons, which is why the pieces are never on display. And, although publications do exist that catalogue their aim, appearance and year of issue (like the one this article is based on), as a collection, the holdings are almost completely unknown both among members of the university and the Mexican public in general.

#### MEDALS OF MERIT

The purpose of these medals is to recognize the efforts of members of the university com-

munity in different spheres. Those conferred for university merit are part of the tradition of any center of learning and have different aims:

- a) To honor the academic efforts of professors and researchers. This is the case of the Justo Sierra Medal, given a single time to those who have distinguished themselves in teaching and research; the Gabino Barreda Medal, given to high school students and undergraduates who finish their course work with the highest grade-point average in each school or faculty; the Antonio Caso Medal, awarded to graduating students with the highest grade-point average in each master's and doctoral program; and the Juana de Asbaje Medal, given to women academics who have shone in their fields.
- b) To acknowledge the work of members of the institution's collegiate bodies: among these



Elsie Montiel



Patricia Pérez

Bicentennial of the School of Visual Arts and Architecture (Carlos III Medal), 999-grade silver, 67 mm in diameter, 150 grams, struck in 1982.

are the Board of Governors Medal and the Medal for Service in the University Controller's Office, the University Council Medal and the Technical Council Medals, among others.

- c) To pay tribute to extended service as academics and administrative posts in the institution. Among others, medals for 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 and up to 60 years of academic service are awarded, while in the case of administrative employees, a medal is given for 25 years of service.
- d) In recognition of a specific activity or of those who have performed outstandingly in their profession.

#### COMMEMORATIVE MEDALS

These testify to important moments and significant dates for the UNAM and society in general. Among them are:

- a) Institutional medals, issued to commemorate dates like the foundation of the university in 1910, the anniversary of its becoming autonomous, the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the



Prince of Asturias Award for Communications and the Humanities 2009, aged bronze, 66 mm in diameter, struck in 2009.

Patricia Pérez



San Carlos School of Fine Arts, Polytechnic University of Valencia, obverse, 999-grade silver, 67 mm in diameter, 150 grams, struck in 1995.

arrival of the first printing press to Mexico, the moment when Congress approved the UNAM charter and the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Royal Pontificate University of Mexico (the UNAM's predecessor). The design of the last two medals was picked from the entries in a competition open to the public.

- b) Pieces struck to pay homage to individuals who have left their mark on the university, like those commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> and 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Don Justo Sierra, the main promoter of the creation of the National University; the centennial of the birth of distinguished members of the university community and UNAM presidents like Dr. Ignacio Chávez and Mario de la Cueva, among others.
- c) Medals celebrating significant cultural activities like the exhibition "Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries," housed in the Old College of San Ildefonso, one of the UNAM's most important cultural venues, or important events like the total eclipse of the sun in 1991.

**Commemorative medals testify to important moments and significant dates for the UNAM and society in general.**

Elsie Montiel

Renowned sculptors and engravers, like Mathias Goeritz, Sebastián, Helen Escobedo, Arnaldo Cohen, Vicente Rojo and Federico Silva, designed many of the pieces.

- d) Pieces issued at the request of different academic institutions or administrative offices to celebrate a significant date or event in their history. Examples are the medal commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the Nezahualcōyotl Hall, the first elliptical medal in this collection; and the Law School Two-Metal Medal, made of bronze and silver.
- e) Medals issued at the request of other institutions, and some made jointly by them and the UNAM.
- f) Annual calendars with designs alluding to the institution, which began being issued in 1998.

Several things distinguish the collection as a whole. First, most of the pieces include the UNAM's official coat of arms, at the center of which is a map of Latin America encircled by the UNAM motto, "The spirit will speak for my race," held up by an eagle representing Mexico and a condor representing the Andean

region. All this rests upon an allegory of volcanoes and a nopal cactus. Another characteristic is that many pieces display the UNAM mint itself: this is important because few institutions actually have their own numismatic mark (see box about the parts of the medal). Another plus is the participation of renowned sculptors and engravers in the design of many of the pieces, like, for example, Mathias Goeritz, Sebastián, Helen Escobedo, Arnaldo Cohen, Vicente Rojo, Federico Silva, just to mention a few.

We are able to reproduce only very few medals here; for reasons of space it is impossible to include even a third of the collection. Nevertheless, we hope to have piqued our readers' interest in seeing the other treasures an institution like the UNAM preserves. In the 100 years of its history, the UNAM has offered Mexican society something more than a good place for their children to study and contribute to the development of their country's knowledge. **UNAM**

NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This article has been written using information from *Medallas universitarias contemporáneas*, published by the University Office for Property Management (Mexico City: UNAM, 2003).



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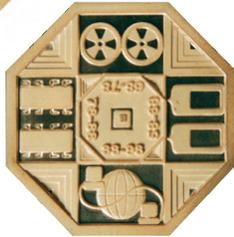
Evaluating Commissions, 999-grade silver, 38 mm in diameter, 40 grams, struck in 1979.

## PARTS OF A MEDAL



[1]

The **obverse** is the main face of the medal with the most significant image.



The **reverse** is the back of the medal, which includes secondary symbols and images.

The **edge** is the part that shows the thickness of the piece, and it can be smooth, lined, or have something written on it, etc.



[2]



Patricia Pérez

[3]

The **rim** is the part around the circumference of the medal, next to or very near the edge; it can also be smooth, dotted, lined, etc.

The **inscription**: words or phrases with the name of the medal or alluding to the event being commemorated, usually placed along the rim.

The **field** is the entire area of one side of the medal; some call the field only the part of the side that is not occupied by a portrait or another image.



[4]



Patricia Pérez

The **mint mark** is a seal of the mint that struck the medal.

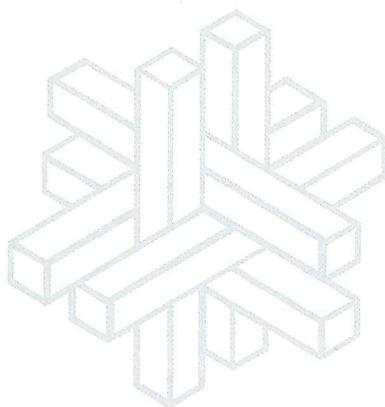
[1] 40 Years of Computing in Mexico, 999-grade silver, 66 mm in diameter, 110 grams, struck in 1997.

[2] UNAM Centennial, obverse, 999-grade silver, 60 mm in diameter, 100 grams, written along the edge: National Autonomous University of Mexico, struck in 2010.

[3] 60 Years of Academic Service, reverse, 24-carat gold, 30 mm in diameter, 20 grams, struck in 1992.

[4] 50 Years, University Olympic Stadium, obverse, 999-grade silver, 60 mm in diameter, 100 grams, struck in 2002.

Photos 1 and 4 in this box, courtesy of the University Office for Property Management (DGPU).



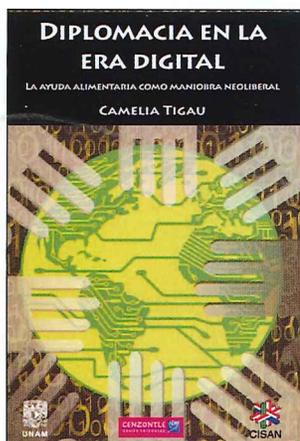
CISAN

p u b l i c a t i o n s

***Diplomacia en la era digital.  
La ayuda alimentaria como  
maniobra neoliberal***

Camelia Tigau

Understanding diplomacy as a series of subterfuges, tricks and other methods of war has had a negative impact on international relations. This includes the issue of food: neoliberal maneuvering has blocked the flow of aid from the rich to the poorest countries. Undoubtedly, moving ahead toward a more democratic or network-based diplomacy would renew the ways individuals, communities, provinces and nations relate to each other, just as this work suggests.



***Franklin y Jefferson:  
entre dos revoluciones.  
Inicios de la política  
internacional estadounidense***

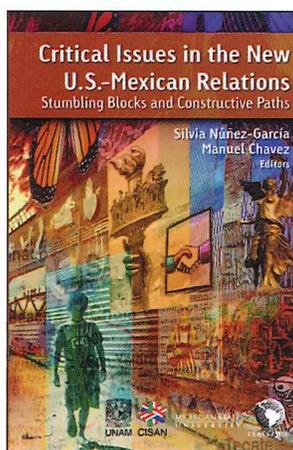
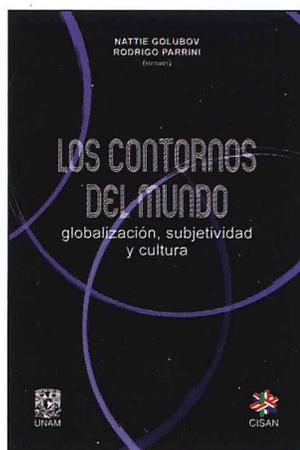
Ignacio Díaz de la Serna

Until the early nineteenth century, the United States performed an astute balancing act between its own interests and those of France and its former colonial master, Great Britain. This book analyzes the conditions in which it carried out that policy based on the diplomatic achievements of its two main architects, Franklin and Jefferson.

***Los contornos del mundo,  
globalización, subjetividad  
y cultura***

Nattie Golubov y Rodrigo Parrini  
editors

Traders and narcissists, intersexed people and Newyoricans, the dead and the "living," migrants, consumers, borders that move, entrepreneurs of their own lives, Zapatistas and social-justice-fighter cybernauts: these are all actors in this book. Its aim is to respond to a substantive question: what are the relationships among the process of globalization, subjectivity and culture? The result is complex, contradictory and surprising.



***Critical Issues in the  
New U.S.-Mexico Relations  
Stumbling Blocks and  
Constructive Paths***

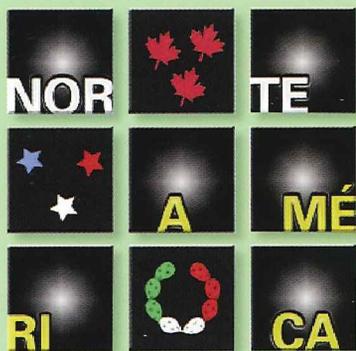
Silvia Núñez-García and  
Manuel Chávez editors

This work's multidisciplinary approach provides a broad spectrum of analysis: it not only deals with issues that have caused frequent tension on the bilateral agenda such as migration and the economic impact of maquiladora plants, but also other, more recent topics. Among these are national security, the adjustments the international situation demands of both countries' foreign policy and the role of the mass media. It also covers contemporary issues like the emergence of new transnational actors and the regulation of genetically modified organisms.

**For further information contact**

Centro de Investigaciones sobre América del Norte, CISAN

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Torre de Humanidades II, piso 9, Ciudad Universitaria, 04510 México, D.F. Tels. 5336-3558, 5336-3601, 5336-3469 y 5623-0015; fax: 5623-0014; e-mail: vocesmx@servidor.unam.mx



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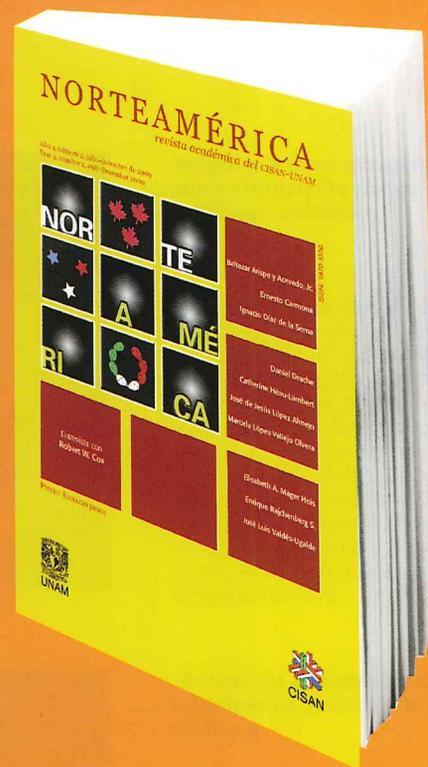
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Centro de Investigaciones sobre América del Norte (Center for Research on North America) (CISAN),  
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM)

Torre II de Humanidades, pisos 9 y 10,  
Ciudad Universitaria, México, D.F., c.p. 04510.  
e-mail: [namerica@servidor.unam.mx](mailto:namerica@servidor.unam.mx)  
Phone: (011 5255) 5623-0246, ext. 42301  
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Photos courtesy of Lorenzo Ochoa's family

## Lorenzo Ochoa Salas

### Friend and Contributor to *Voices of Mexico*

Archaeologist and anthropologist Lorenzo Ochoa died last December. *Voices of Mexico* is compelled to pay him homage, not only for having been one of the most critical, authoritative voices in the study of the country's Huasteca region and a scholar of the Mayan and other Mesoamerican cultures, but also because, from the time he published his first article in our magazine ("The Huasteca Region in Time in Space," *Voices of Mexico* 60, July-September, 2002), Lorenzo became our project's most enthusiastic contributor, kindest advisor and number one promoter.

Lorenzo always believed in *Voices of Mexico*. So, he supported me on countless occasions, whether by writing arti-

cles or calling on the endless list of his colleagues and friends to ensure that the magazine would include pieces by the best pens available for all the possible topics in his area of knowledge. A simple phone call was all that was needed to get him moving. "Say, I'm thinking of dedicating 'The Splendor of Mexico' section to Campeche. What do you recommend?" Right off, he would start listing topics, the names of specialists, their e-mail addresses, phone numbers, and minute details about each author. "So-and-so is an expert in this topic, but he writes really badly. It's better to go to this other one because he writes very well, even though sometimes he can be difficult.... It's better if I call this other one so he can

get you the article quickly....I can't remember the info on this one, but I'll send it to you this afternoon." In the afternoon, the info would be in my in-box, and two days later I'd have everything I needed to get *Voices of Mexico* the best names for the best topics.

He never hesitated to recommend our publication and join his name and prestige to ours. It is Lorenzo we owe for having gotten splendid contributions, both his own and from colleagues of his, in the issues dedicated to Chiapas, Campeche, Tabasco, Yucatán, Veracruz, Tamaulipas, Quintana Roo, Guerrero, and, of course, his beloved Huasteca.

His name opened the most interesting doors to me. Just as an example: when I went to Tamtoc, a Huasteca archaeological zone, far off the traditional archaeological beaten track, Guillermo Ahuja, the director of the dig, received me unenthusiastically. He wasn't familiar with our magazine and didn't know what to expect. We began the visit coldly, but then I remembered that my friend Lorenzo must know him because the Huasteca was his specialty. So I asked him, "Do you know Lorenzo Ochoa?" His expression changed immediately. "The Huasteco?" It was my turn to be flummoxed. "I

don't know. Is that what they call him?" "Sure I know him!" And he burst out laughing.

From then on, my visit couldn't have been better. Detailed explanations were interspersed with anecdotes about Lorenzo, his adventures and their innumerable agreements and disagreements about the study of the site. At the end, we snapped a picture of ourselves in front of a spectacular piece recently discovered in the area, a photograph I took it upon myself to send as soon as I could to Lorenzo, who was spending a few months in Spain at the time and still hadn't seen the find standing upright. Of course, I got the article and the rights for the magazine to print the first photograph of the piece.

Lorenzo was a friend to *Voices of Mexico*, but he was also my friend. I appreciated his generosity, his sarcasm, his sense of humor, and, above all, his unending dedication to the UNAM and his love of work and knowledge. My life in the UNAM will never be the same without him. **MM**

Elsie Montiel  
Editor



Lorenzo was a friend to *Voices of Mexico*, but he was also my friend. I appreciated his generosity, his sarcasm, his sense of humor, and, above all, his unending dedication to the UNAM.



# A Singular Man, A Plural Way of Seeing

Mario Humberto Ruz\*



**T**abasco, the Huastecas regions, Tlailco, Veracruz, Campeche, Hidalgo, Jalisco and Puebla: a wide swathe of land from which to scrutinize an equal number of ethnic formations: Huastecs, Chontals, Nahuas, Olmecs, Mayas, Zoques and Totonacs.

Archaeology, history, ecology, ethnography and linguistics: a plurality of disciplines for approaching river or maritime cultures, cultures from the mountains or the highlands, from the swamps and the wetlands; to look at the ecology of ancient landscapes and changes in the use of the soil; traditional

and hydraulic agriculture; settlement patterns and housing units; physical types and dress; eating habits and pre-Hispanic medicine; the ceramics of the post-classical and contemporary periods; yesterday's ports and trade routes, today's markets; from prehistoric rock paintings to the development of the state; from the rituals of the peasants of today to the complex cosmogonies of the pre-Hispanic elites.

His sources? Mainly pre-Hispanic evidence obtained from others or from his own work, whether from the soil (topographic surveys, the collection of surface materials, digs), from the air in reconnaissance flights, or from the water, using *cayuco* canoes and rowboats. Plus chronicles and other colonial documents, old dictionaries, the writings of nineteenth-century travelers, participatory observation, guided or semi-guided interviews, ethnological analogy...

Nothing seemed alien to Lorenzo Ochoa's way of seeing; everything interested him. Scattered, some say; I would call it pluralistic.

Certainly, in his work there are priority cultures, themes and periods: the Huasteca region and the lowlands of Tabasco constantly reappear on the list of his writings and lectures. The interest in articulating geographical diversity and the cultural unit seem primordial in many of them, and the pre-Hispanic is an element that connected not a few of his penchants. But they never limited his efforts as a researcher, an educator of human resources or a disseminator of culture.

Dating from at least 1974, his contributions to knowledge about the pre-Hispanic territory that is now Tabasco are as numerous as they are varied. Outstanding among them are undoubtedly those dealing with topics and archaeological approaches to the Olmec presence in the Usumacinta Valley, to Mayan development in the northwestern lowlands, the study of the trading ports that flourished in the post-classic-

\* Director of the UNAM Peninsular Center for the Humanities and Social Sciences (Cepheis).

al period like Potonchán and Xicalanco, the history of river and land routes between the Tabasco coast and inland areas, as well as the geography and archaeology of the Gulf region in the classical and post-classical periods and at the moment of contact; his careful approximations to the development of Tierra Blanca and Jonuta (by analyzing their ceramics and figurines, respectively), settlement patterns in the San Pedro Mártir Basin or how and why floodplains were abandoned.

He also concerned himself with writing the history of the work of those he considered precursors of anthropological and archaeological efforts in the state of Tabasco, like Carl Bartholomeus Heller, Desiré Charnay, Francisco J. Santamaría and Francisco Pimentel; plus some more contemporary work like Soyataco's studies on modern ceramics and even the spread of stories originating as far away as the Tarahumara in the Balacán area.

Equally broad in terms of the periods dealt with and covering an even more sweeping array of topics is his contribution to knowledge about the Huasteca in the pre-Hispanic period, which has in him one of its most profound, versatile scholars. It is impossible in such a short article to do justice to the far-reaching range of disciplines that his interests touched on. Suffice it to point to the fact that he paid particular attention to sculpture and ceramics; landscape and culture; space and territoriality; the social, political and economic order; dress and customs; the conquest of the southern part of the Huasteca by the Nahuas (and the role that the Triple Alliance played in that); and, above all, Teenek and Totonac religion, including the Mayan impact on them. Cosmic views and cosmogonies present in the language, in representations of the universe, in the pantheons of divinities (particularly those linked to agriculture, health and death), in witchcraft or funeral customs. Beliefs, concepts and imaginaries found in writing, prayer and even dance.

Besides looking at these topics separately, he offered us larger works with a more holistic perspective and greater diachronic depth, in which he summarized the pre-Hispanic history of the Huasteca, that of its language and culture, and even that of the archaeological and historical research done about it.

His was not a solitary effort. He knew how to interest others in his own academic passions, as his students can testify to, and as is demonstrated in the invaluable texts that came out of projects he coordinated in the northwestern lowlands of the Mayan zone, in the sheltered rocky areas of Tenosique, Tabasco, in the Candelaria River, Campeche, and



**Nothing seemed alien to Lorenzo Ochoa's way of seeing; everything interested him. Scattered, some say; I would call it pluralistic.**

Tamiahua Lagoon Basins, or in the market and trade route systems of the Huasteca.

A passionate, demanding editor, he thoroughly enjoyed writing book prologues and prefaces—he was always willing to accede to the requests of colleagues—writing reviews and commentaries—always critically—and promoting the founding of or consolidating magazines. We owe him the initiative of creating *Tierra y Agua*. *La antropología en Tabasco*, a journal that meant so much to publishing new research or old work about the Olmec, Mayan, Zoque and Nahua worlds of Tabasco—which, unfortunately, like so many academic efforts, succumbed to some change of presidential administration—and the consolidation of *Anales de Antropología* between 2003 and 2006. He was a constant contributor to both, as well as to journals like *Estudios de Cultura Maya*, *Fronteras*, *Arqueología Mexicana*, *Cultura Sur* and *Voices of Mexico*.

Strict and severe in his judgments to the point of sometimes being exasperating, he also had the gift of recognizing his mistakes and, above all, infecting others with his enthusiasm with the power of his frank smile and irresistible optimism.

For those to come, the legacy of his written work will remain; for those who had the privilege of his friendship, the memory of his unbounded generosity will also remain. ■■

# Traveling through the Huasteca With Lorenzo

Gerardo Gutiérrez\*

One day in May 1995, about 3:30 in the morning, I was dozing in the back seat of one of those old VW vans that belonged to the UNAM Institute for Anthropological Research. I was exhausted after two days of taking pictures of the Chicomexóchtli ceremony in the community of Sasaltitla, Municipality of Chicontepec. Suddenly, the van door opened and Lorenzo Ochoa's hoarse voice woke me, saying urgently, "Hurry up. They've started killing the chickens. Take your camera and run over there while I put a new roll of film in mine."

I roused myself as best I could and ran toward the house where they were holding the ritual. No fewer than 50 Nahuatl men and women crowded in together were dancing in unison to the repetitious tune of the Huastec violin. At each turn flew the neck of some unfortunate chicken, whose blood splattered all over an altar covered with hundreds of figures of deities cut out of tissue paper.

Less than a minute later, Lorenzo came in the other door; we had the perfect angles for documenting the event. The ceremony was at its most effervescent. Participants were spraying mouthfuls of beer and soft drinks, making it impossible to keep the camera lens dry. Lorenzo made signs for me to move into the group and see what the Huehuetlaca was doing. All by himself in a corner, with his own miniscule altar on the floor, he was killing a little chicken and spraying more tissue-paper figures.

Two women went into a trance. When asked in Nahuatl what Chicomexóchtli had ordered, they responded with very specific directives from the deity and the date the next ceremony was to be held. Suddenly, the Huehuetlaca stood up in his corner and went outside the house to another altar, followed by all the participants. Lorenzo was in a better position to capture the whole outside ritual.

\* Assistant professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Colorado at Boulder.



**Traveling with Lorenzo Ochoa through the Huasteca was exciting. Mountains, plains, coast and lagoon; he knew every nook and cranny, and his network of sources was vast and endless.**

About 6 a.m., activities had calmed down and all the participants stopped dancing. Tamales were served and we all ate. At this point, the women began filling their baskets with more tamales, tortillas, *mole* sauce and chicken meat. The men hoisted crates of soft drinks and beer, flowers, candles and more live chickens on their backs. Around 7:30 a.m. we were all climbing a nearby mountain. On the way up, we stopped at three dif-

ferent altars. After the second one, only a group of the men were going to continue the ascent to the top.

Lorenzo and I were debating about whether it would be better to split up to get pictures of what each of the groups did, when the Huehuetlaca told us that the ones who stayed behind were going to prepare the food, so, if we had the energy, the two of us could go to the top. I was dead on my feet, but Lorenzo was as fresh as could be. When I saw his shining face, I knew there was nothing for it but to continue climbing the steep mountainside.

Around midday, we got to the top. The men quickly repaired the altar that was already there. In half an hour, it was covered with flowers, candles and the representations of the gods of the wind and the land cut out of tissue paper. The proper ceremonies were held. The Huehuetlaca and his assistant still had two live chickens. I prepared my camera thinking that at any moment they were going to slaughter them, but they let them go. The altar candles were put out and the Huehuetlaca ordered everyone to go down to join up with the larger group. The last chickens had been left alive as an offering to the “Owner.”

That’s what it was like traveling with Lorenzo Ochoa through the Huasteca. Every journey was exciting. Mountains, plains, coast and lagoon. He knew every nook and cranny, and his network of sources was vast and endless. From the famous “Queen of the Mountain Cats” on the Island of the Idol, to the

Huehuetlaca of Sasaltitla. I accompanied him for two years. I can count almost 180 days of untiring experiences together, in which we walked on mountains, visited markets, navigated in speedboats through the estuaries of the Tamiahua Lagoon and flew in tiny bi-planes from Poza Rica to Tampico.

Lorenzo was a generous man: he shared his knowledge and his stipend. What I enjoyed most about going out into the countryside with him was lunchtime. He had a mental map of the best places to eat from Poza Rica to Tampico, and from El Cabo Rojo to San Luis Potosí. It never failed him. He knew where to find the best *zacahuil* tamales, the best crayfish, the best crab claws, the best salt-water crabs....And if we didn’t pick one of those, we could always make a stop in his hometown, Tuxpan, where he would cook up an excellent alligator-head fish. I’ll always remember him with his draft Corona, eating shrimp on the shell on the boardwalk.

The last time we talked he was very enthused about the class on Mesoamerican urbanism he had taught at the School of Restoration. As always, he was preparing a new trip to the Huasteca. And —also as usual— our conversation turned into an animated debate of ideas and hypotheses. He knew how to listen, but he didn’t give ground easily. You had to convince him with good arguments.

My much-esteemed Lorenzo Ochoa, your friends will miss you, but I know you’ll always find a good *acamaya* crayfish ready for you in the Huasteca. **MM**



**My much-esteemed  
Lorenzo Ochoa, your friends  
will miss you, but I know you’ll  
always find a good *acamaya*  
crayfish ready for you  
in the Huasteca.**

## A Sketch of His Career

Lorenzo Ochoa Salas, recognized as one of the most incisive critical voices of Mexican anthropology, was born May 25, 1943 in Tuxpan in the Huasteca region of Veracruz, with which he maintained a warm, enduring relationship.

He studied archaeology at the National School of Anthropology and History, where he also got his master's in anthropology in 1974 with the thesis *Historia prehispánica de la Huasteca* (Pre-Hispanic History of the Huasteca Region), published in 1979, considered one of the pillars of archaeology in the region. From then on, Ochoa was firmly entrenched as one of the most prestigious scholars of that area.



As a researcher at the National Autonomous University of Mexico's Institute for Anthropological Research, he was a level II researcher in the National System of Researchers. Because of his professional merits, experience as a teacher, and important body of research and popular dissemination work, he was invited to be part of the group of evaluators of research projects by the National Science and Technology Institute (Conacyt), an advisor for countless theses, and a participant in the peer review of innumerable books, articles and presentations.

His studies centered on the Huasteca, the northwestern lowlands of the Mayan area and Hidalgo's upper mountain ranges. The results of this research became more than a dozen books and a little over 200 articles, book chapters, prologues, archaeological guides and reviews. Among them can be mentioned *Estudios preliminares sobre los mayas de las tierras bajas noroccidentales* (Preliminary Studies of the Mayas in the Northwestern Lowlands) (Mexico City: UNAM/Centro de Estudios Mayas, 1978); *Renunciar al paraíso. Paisaje y arqueología en las tierras bajas pantanosas de la Cuenca del San Pedro y San Pablo y Xicalango* (Renouncing Paradise: Landscape and Archaeology in the Swampy Lowlands of the San Pedro and San Pablo and Xicalango Basin) (Campeche: Gobierno del Estado de Campeche, 1997); *Frente al espejo de la memoria. La costa del Golfo al momento del contacto* (Facing the Mirror of Memory. The Gulf Coast at the Moment of Contact) (Mexico City: Instituto de Cultura de San Luis Potosí/Conaculta, 1999); "La zona del Golfo en el Posclásico" (The Gulf Area in the Post-Classical Period) in *Historia antigua de México* (Ancient History of Mexico) (Mexico City: Porrúa/IHAM/UNAM, 2001), pp. 13-56; "La Huasteca in Time and Space," *Voices of Mexico* 60 (2002), pp. 73-78; "The La Venta Museum-Park Recreating a 3000-Year-Old Political-Religious Center," *Voices of Mexico* 69 (2004), pp. 89-94; Lorenzo Ochoa, comp., *Cinco miradas en torno a la Huasteca* (Five Views of the Huasteca Region) (Xalapa, Veracruz: Consejo Veracruzano de Arte Popular, 2007); "Topophilia: A Tool for the Demarcation of Cultural Micro-Regions. The Case of the Huasteca," J. E.

Staller and M. Carrasco, eds., *Pre-Columbian Foodways: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Food, Culture, and Markets in Mesoamerica* (New York: Springer, 2009), pp. 535-552.

He participated in and contributed to a notable number of national and international academic gatherings, in addition to organizing and coordinating colloquia, round table discussions and symposia. Outstanding among them were his organizing efforts in the 1998 seminar on the Huasteca, which from then on held monthly meetings without interruption. His publishing work includes founding the Tabasco-based magazine *Tierra y Agua* (Land and Water), editing the UNAM Institute for Anthropological Research journal *Anales de Antropología* (Annals of Anthropology), and participating in the Editorial Board of Poland's University of Warsaw journal *Itinerarios*.

He taught with rigorous discipline the course on Mesoamerica at the UNAM School of Philosophy and Letters College of History, and gave classes on conservation, restoration and museography at the National School of Anthropology and History. He also taught diploma courses and undergraduate and graduate courses on pre-Hispanic cultures, both in Mexico and abroad.

In recognition of his contributions to the archaeology of the Tabasco, the state government gave him the Silver Juchimán National Prize for Science in August 2008 in Villahermosa.

He died December 7, 2009, after finishing what would be his last fieldwork in his beloved Huasteca. Rest in peace, "Maestro Lorenzo," as everyone used to call you. ■■■

*Eladio Terreros Espinosa*

Archaeologist and Lorenzo Ochoa's research assistant

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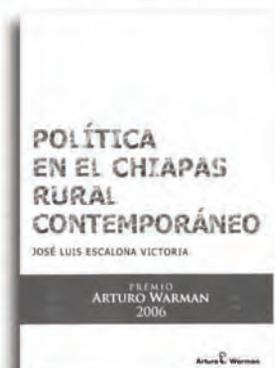
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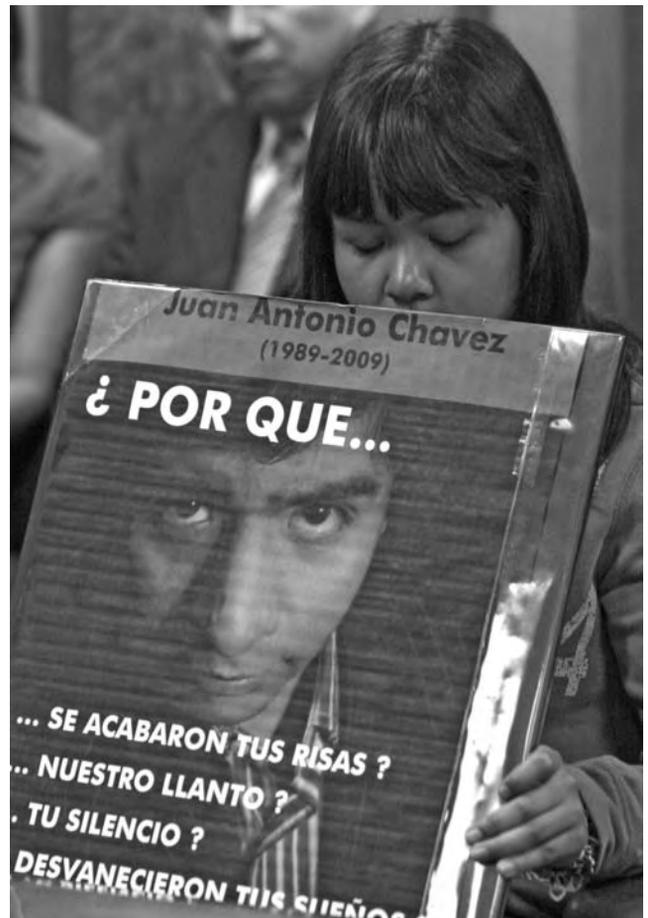
# Ciudad Juárez War Zone

Raúl Benítez Manaut\*

What is called “the war on drug trafficking” in Mexico—whether a misnomer or not—falls in the category of what have been labeled asymmetrical conflicts, low-intensity warfare, irregular wars, wars without borders, etc. Clearly it is a transnational conflict, since Mexico is a transit country for cocaine, located between consumers in the United States, where the profit is made—the U.S. government recovers very little of the revenues from this criminal activity—and the place the cocaine is produced. This leads us to say that the clash is not solely Mexican, and that strategies have to be coherently multi-national.

It is also a protracted war. It began in the 1950s with the production of marijuana and heroin for satisfying U.S. consumers (in a kind of totally complementary space for production and markets mainly between the Mexican state of Sinaloa and California). That was followed by the addition of cocaine to the production-trafficking-consumption circuit, adding Colombia. Throughout all of this, very powerful criminal networks were built. Because of its transnational na-

\* Researcher at CISAN. President of the Collective for an Analysis of Security with Democracy (Casede).



Cuartoscuro

Protesting the murders of students in Ciudad Juárez last January, still unpunished.

ture, the violence of the war on drug trafficking is now invading Mexico’s northern borders because the fight to export marijuana, heroin, cocaine and methamphetamines feeds Mexican violence.

Ciudad Juárez has become the barometer for violence in Mexico. When the international press reports on Juárez, they transmit the image that “all Mexico is Ciudad Juárez.” This has even contributed to increasing the country-risk rating and affecting foreign investment. When Mexicans see and hear stories about beheadings, executions, and bodies dissolved in acid every day on television, on the radio and in the newspapers, they are shocked and think the govern-

Mexico's national security debate focuses on whether the war on drug trafficking is being won or lost. Maintaining that Mexico is a failed state, or that it is leaning that way, is a fallacy. However, there are cities and states where the argument could be made.

ment is incapable of controlling the country, particularly the drug traffickers. Violence and murder have surprisingly become indicators of governability and government efficiency. This is the real reason President Felipe Calderón has taken the unprecedented step of recognizing the Mexican state's inability to fight the big drug cartels alone and asked for help from the United States through the Mérida Initiative. Logically, U.S. intelligence services know a lot about drug trafficking in Mexico since it is from here that the drugs are taken in to California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas, and then distributed to all 50 states and even to Canada. A large part of the profits are also laundered and legalized in the United States, where the weapons used by the drug lords are bought in their armories and weapons fairs, protected by the U.S. Constitution and laws on self-defense that make it easy for any citizen to purchase and own them.

Mexico's national security debate focuses on whether the war on drug trafficking is being won or lost. Maintaining that Mexico is a failed state, or that it is leaning that way, is a fallacy. However, there are cities and states in the country, where the argument could be made. This is the case of the state of Chihuahua on the Texas border, and particularly Ciudad Juárez. In November 2009, the Ciudad Juárez business community took an unprecedented step through the president of the Association of Export Maquiladoras and the local leader of the National Chamber of Commerce, who called on the UN to send peacekeeping troops given the grave insecurity there. They argued that the violence has already led 6,000 local businesses to either close or set up shop elsewhere, many in El Paso, Texas:

We are asking that a group be formed to request the Inter-American Human Rights Commission to intervene, as well as that a group of UN peacekeeping troops be sent to put a stop to this uncontrollable situation of violence. Ciudad Juárez has not received any kind of attention from the authorities, which is why it is thought of as the most violent city in the world, with the world's highest death rate. A rate of 10 deaths a day is considered a war zone.<sup>1</sup>

This statement speaks to Juárez residents' distrust of municipal, state and federal governments, which have not been able to lessen the impunity or alleviate the clashes among rival drug cartels. The Mexican federal government has termed the declaration completely hair-brained and out of place. The president of Ciudad Juárez's Citizens Council for Public Security and Criminal Justice, for his part, compared his city with the most dangerous of Latin America: "In Juárez, murder rates grew in a very short time as had never been seen anywhere in Mexico and very rarely in the world. Between 2007 and 2009, they shot up more than 800 percent. In Juárez in 2009, there were 191 murders for every 100,000 inhabitants. Following Juárez is San Pedro Sula, with 119, and San Salvador, with 95."<sup>2</sup>

When Felipe Calderón took office, Chihuahua was a state as yet untouched by drug cartel violence. In December 2006, there had only been one execution; by December 2007, there had been 11; by December 2008, 173; and by December 2009, 231. In the state as a whole, 148 executions took place in 2007; in 2008, 1,652; and in 2009, 2,082. These figures become even more grim if we compare them with Colombia in the 1990s, considered the most violent years of the war on drug trafficking, where in Medellín and Cali, the murder rate never climbed above 100 per 100,000 inhabitants. The latest statistics on murder throughout Mexico made January 9, 2010 the most violent day of the Felipe Calderón administration, with 52 homicides.<sup>3</sup>

In the case of Juárez, the Calderón administration's strategy for controlling the situation has not gotten results. The federal government sent 5,500 troops there in 2007; in mid-2009, the number was upped to 6,000. In January 2010, 2,000 Federal Police were added, and it was decided that the command of all operations would pass to the Federal Police. With this militarization, the government has not managed to decrease the violence. Thus, we can say that the increased use of military forces does not get results, and even, perversely, that the demonstration of force by the state using more violence is causing a symmetrical response, with more homicides and impunity.<sup>4</sup>

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Accusations have also been made that in Juárez the armed forces are source of significant human rights violations. The Juárez city government had to open up an office to handle citizens' complaints about violations by the armed forces and federal police. These include everything from what is called "abuse of authority" to serious crimes.<sup>5</sup>

This puts Juárez residents in the crossfire. First is the violence unleashed by the war among the drug cartels: the Pacific Cartel, the Gulf Cartel and the Zetas and the remains of the Juárez Cartel, whose leader, Amado Carrillo Fuentes, the Lord of the Skies, who died in 1997, was famous for smuggling cocaine into the United States in low-flying planes that flew under the radar of the world's best militarily protected nation. Second, the city's streets are flooded with Mexican government troops and police, and are rife with rumors that a state of emergency will be declared to lay siege to the cartels and their hit men.

This came to a head on January 31, 2010. An armed commando of hit men broke violently into a student party, slaughtering 15 teenagers. President Calderón and his minister of the interior insinuated that this had been a clash between gangs, inciting the wrath of the community. This was followed by apologies and the design of a "comprehensive strategy" to save the city by the federal and Chihuahua state governments.

Analysts maintain that Juárez is the main theater of operations of violence in Mexico, and if it were a matter of rating the city, it would fit perfectly into what military theory defines as a "war zone": the population works for and in favor of the war or to defend itself from it. In Juárez, the population has dropped from 1.3 million to one million; more than 100,000 families have migrated to safer locations like El Paso, Texas, and more than 5,000 businesses have closed in the last three years. This means that 25 percent of dwellings have been abandoned, and 30 percent of businesses closed.<sup>6</sup> The drug cartels stage this war, first of all, among themselves, in an attempt to control supply routes and highways, the shipments and warehouses for the cocaine from Colombia and the marijuana and heroin from Sinaloa and

other Mexican states like Guerrero and Michoacán, plus the import of new drugs like amphetamines, the ingredients for which come from China and the United States itself. The entry of drugs into El Paso, and from there to the succulent, voracious market in the central and eastern United States, is the main explanation for this violence in Juárez. In the past, the cartels were careful not to affect civilians in order not to alienate the public. Now, innocent civilians, mainly young people, have become the hit men's preferred targets.

Thus, Ciudad Juárez has accumulated many social deficits as a result of the federal and state governments' abandoning it to its fate, prompting the transformation from accelerated economic growth in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s to total socio-political decomposition today.<sup>7</sup> Out-of-control migration, the absence of social, urban and security infrastructure, and the collapse of traditional forms of political control all led to a breakdown of the fabric of society, to criminality and the arrival of the cartels, which could control the territory with total impunity and export drugs to the United States. In other words, what grew here was a "perfect storm" of security.<sup>8</sup>

Criminal organizations take advantage of the weaknesses of national security structures for their own benefit. One of the most noteworthy elements profiting drug traffickers is the lack of cooperation and coherence among the structures of the police, the military and the administration of justice.<sup>9</sup> This is one of the common arguments of critics of the Mexican government who point out that the constitutional and legal structure, above all the division of federal, state and municipal powers, is the Mexican state's main vulnerability. This is why two main strategies have been implemented to try to transform the federal government's capabilities: in the first place, reforming the sub-systems of national security, defense, intelligence, justice and the police in the federal, state and municipal governments, and in the second place, accepting U.S. assistance, which will be used to start up these structural reforms and provide technology unavailable on the market.

We can say that the Mexican state is losing the war against drug trafficking and that therefore it must radically change

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its strategy because of the following: the president’s declaration of war against the cartels; the spike in executions; the exponential increase in U.S. aid; the increased presence of the armed forces in the fight against drug trafficking and in public security in high risk cities; the transformation of Juárez into the most dangerous city in the world; increasing cocaine consumption; and the opinions that Mexico could become a failed state.<sup>10</sup> Some critics say that the change in strategy should reorient toward forms of legalization of drugs. Another interpretation suggests that the government’s strategy will win out in the end because it has strengths that are only beginning to be brought together and that will bear fruit in the medium term.<sup>11</sup>

Many asymmetrical, irregular or low-intensity conflicts have been classified and analyzed as “strategic stalemates,” in which the war cannot be said to have been won or lost. In the clash—or war, as the Mexican and U.S. governments call it—between Mexican government forces and the cartels, the social impact—violence—hurts the government by creating the image that it has lost what is called “the legitimate monopoly of the use of force” and the territorial control that every state must perforce exercise. The perception of a “state tending to failure” is produced when indicators are used that lead people to understand that what is happening in Ciudad Juárez is a reflection of the entire country.

It is difficult to affirm categorically that the government is *winning the war*, but the idea that the government strategy has *already failed* is also a hypothesis that cannot be maintained. That is why what we see is a “strategic stalemate” that will tip in either direction depending on whether the government’s major military campaigns and its strategy for restructuring all the national security institutions are successful or the cartels, amidst their reorganization and internecine conflicts, manage to overcome their adversities and win the day. In the event of a catastrophic outcome breaking the tie in favor of the cartels, Ciudad Juárez would be exported to the rest of Mexico as a “model.”

Something else that should be taken into account is that the theory of war says that it is won by those who win the

“hearts and minds” of the population. The public perception in Mexico, derived from a one-dimensional reading of the number of organized-crime-related murders, has led some to talk about a government failure. The implementation of the so-called comprehensive strategy, for example in Juárez in February 2010, in addition to demonstrating itself effective and showing indicators of success, must transmit the idea among Juárez residents that the federal, state and municipal governments are going to be able to recover the city from the cartels. But at a national level, Felipe Calderón’s administration must win the war on this front. Not an easy matter under current conditions. ■■■

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Reforma* (Mexico City), November 11, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> “Juárez, la más violenta del mundo,” *Reforma* (Mexico City), January 11, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> *Reforma* (Mexico City), January 14, 2010, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Excelsior* (Mexico City), January 15, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> *Excelsior* (Mexico City), January 16, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> *Milenio* (Mexico City), February 16, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Carlos González Herrera, “Chihuahua 2008, testimonio desde Juárez,” Raúl Benítez Manaut, Abelardo Rodríguez Sumano and Armando Rodríguez, eds., *Atlas de la seguridad y la defensa de México 2009* (Mexico: Colectivo de Análisis de la Seguridad con Democracia [CASEDE], 2010), p. 169.

<sup>8</sup> Luis Rubio, “Juárez,” *Reforma* (Mexico City), February 14, 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Elena Azaola, *Crimen, castigo y violencias en México* (Quito: Flacso, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> Rubén Aguilar and Jorge G. Castañeda, *El narco, la guerra fallida* (Mexico City: Santillana, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> Among those who maintain that the government strategy will be successful are Barry R. McCaffrey, “El desafío mexicano: corrupción, crímenes y drogas,” Raúl Benítez Manaut, Abelardo Rodríguez Sumano and Armando Rodríguez, eds., op. cit., p. 132; U.S. Ambassador Carlos Pascual, “Estados Unidos está totalmente comprometido con el combate al narcotráfico,” *Reforma* (Mexico City), September 4, 2009; and Joaquín Villalobos, “Doce mitos de la guerra al narco,” *Nexos* (January 2010).

# Aims and Limits Of the Mérida Initiative

Armando Rodríguez Luna\*



Ivan Stephens/Cuartoscuro

The Mérida Initiative includes, among other contributions, shipments of military equipment for fighting drug trafficking.

Drug and arms trafficking have become a threat to Mexico's national security. These kinds of organized crime challenge not only the institutions in charge of security and the administration of justice, but all government institutions. Society as a whole is affected by the corrupting power and violence that has characterized their activities, particularly in the last six years. For their part, the drug traffickers' organizational capabilities have put them among the main cocaine distributors in the United States.

To deal with this transnational phenomenon, in March 2007, Felipe Calderón and George W. Bush agreed to imple-

ment a security cooperation program known as the Mérida Initiative. Officially announced October 22, 2007, this new framework for cooperation is rooted in the principle of shared responsibility and aims to fight drug and arms trafficking and the violence generated by organized crime. The program was slated to last three years and cost a total of US\$1.4 billion in Mexico. It includes additional resources for Central America, the Dominican Republic and Haiti. It is important to take into account that these budget items are subject to approval by the U.S. Congress, which means that the annual transfer of the funds can vary according to U.S. internal political conditions.

Felipe Calderón's strategy against the drug traffickers, based on the use of force through the military and public security institutions, has resulted in an overall increase in

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\* Member of the Collective for an Analysis of Security with Democracy (Casede).

The value of drugs confiscated in Mexico compared to the overall value of the drug trade comes to 4.65 percent, while that of illegal arms comes to only 1.4 percent of the total value of the weapons entering Mexico.

violence nationwide, measured in the number of gangland executions since he took office, which soared from 2,221 in 2006, his first year in office, to 8,281 in 2009. In addition, the value of drugs confiscated in Mexico compared to the overall value of the drug trade comes to 4.65 percent, while that of illegal arms comes to only 1.4 percent of the total value of the weapons entering Mexico.<sup>1</sup>

U.S. intelligence reports reveal that the Mexican drug trafficking organizations are the main threat from organized crime operating in the United States because they control cocaine distribution in almost the entire country.<sup>2</sup> According to the White House's Office of National Drug Control Policy, both the supply and the purity of cocaine have increased in the United States, while prices have decreased.<sup>3</sup> Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) figures indicate that almost 87 percent of the weapons confiscated by the Mexican government from different drug cartels in the last five years come from the United States. An important part of this percentage is high power weapons like the AR-15 semi-automatic rifles.<sup>4</sup>

In the context of the Mérida Initiative, cooperation for security is understood as the transfer of mainly military and computer equipment technology, the exchange of information and training programs. This means giving Mexico access to an aid package that allows it to strengthen its operational capabilities for fighting the country's drug cartels. For its part, the United States assumes responsibility for being the world's biggest drug consumer and for being the origin of more than 90 percent of the illegal small arms and light weapons traffic into Mexico, as well as a significant part of the chemical precursors for making synthetic drugs, and for being key in the financial circuit that provides resources to the Mexican cartels.

The Mérida Initiative includes handing over four large resource packages. The first will be used to fight terrorism and drug trafficking and at the same time safeguard border security by land and by air. Almost 60 percent of these resources are earmarked for Mexico's Ministry of National Defense (Sedena) and the Ministry of the Navy (Semar).

This includes CASA 235 airplanes destined for Semar for patrolling and surveillance mainly along the Caribbean and Pacific maritime borders. In fact, this is the only thing this ministry will receive from the program. Also of note are the Bell 412 EP helicopters equipped with night vision for rapid deployment destined for the Sedena. The latter will also receive non-intrusive gamma-ray equipment and ion scanners to be utilized at inspection points within Mexico to detect drugs, arms, chemicals and explosives.

The transfer of computer equipment for creating data bases with registries of individuals, arms, drugs and vehicles is also part of the program. The main recipients of this technology will be the Federal Attorney General's office (PGR), the Center for Investigation and National Security (Cisen), the National Migration Institute (INM) and the General Customs Office (AGA). It should be pointed out that one project involving the PGR focuses on the northern border and aims to create a digital data base of traffickers in persons, arms and drugs based on the registry this office already has.

The INM has already put into operation a project to set up an electronic verification and control network establishing points for biometric identification at Mexico's 165 air, land and maritime ports of entry, although the priority is implementing them along the southern border. Finally, the General Customs Office will receive X-ray equipment to review commercial transport, vehicles and baggage, in addition to a comprehensive intelligent surveillance system with the capacity to centralize data sent from all Mexican ports. This is part of the strategy of the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP), designed to guarantee safe trade within the region.

The second package of Mérida Initiative funds is earmarked for the Attorney General's Office (PGR), the Ministry of Public Security (SSP), the Ministry of Finance (SHCP) and the Ministry of Health (SS). The PGR will receive armored and communications equipment for public officials and police, including everything from vehicles to bullet-proof vests. The SSP is the institution most favored by this, since it will get 60 percent of the resources, including Cessna Caravan air-

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives figures indicate that almost 87 percent of the weapons confiscated by the Mexican government from different drug cartels in the last five years come from the United States.

planes for surveillance and communications monitoring; UH60 helicopters, also known as Blackhawks, for transportation and rapid deployment; and mobile gamma-ray and X-ray equipment.

The SHCP will be given computing infrastructure to strengthen its Financial Intelligence Unit's (UIF) capacity against money laundering. This infrastructure will connect the UIF to Platform Mexico, the informational computer system that links up all the institutions participating in the National Strategy for the Prevention and the Fight against Crime launched by the Felipe Calderón administration.

The Mérida Initiative establishes that the essential point of U.S. co-responsibility is to monitor its financial system to prevent its being used by the drug cartels. So, President Barack Obama asked Congress to include the Gulf Cartel, the Sinaloa Cartel and the criminal organization dubbed The Michoacán Family on the list of drug traffickers subject to the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act, which authorizes the U.S. Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) to freeze the bank accounts of members of those crime organizations.<sup>5</sup>

The Ministry of Health, for its part, will receive computer equipment to link up the state and municipal offices of the National Council against Addictions (Conadic), in order to extend its drug use prevention and treatment programs to more places. The fight against drug trafficking should emphasize more the reduction of drug use in Mexico, but mainly in the United States, since consumption, particularly of cocaine, has risen in both countries in recent years, requiring the design of comprehensive preventive policies.

The third aid package is to strengthen institutions in the justice system. Once again, the PGR is to receive resources—and the largest sum—in the form of computing informational and training packages. The items are defined as part of programs to improve the criminal justice system, outstanding among which is the funding of the Witness Protection Program. Another program attempts to modernize crime labs, specifically those related to ballistics, chemical-biological and cybernetic analysis. It will also include a

program to digitalize prosecutors' administrative processes and establish exchange of information and analysis between Mexico's National Planning and Intelligence Center (Cenapi) and the U.S.'s Operation Against Smugglers Initiative on Safety and Security (OASISS). The latter is part of the bilateral Mexico-U.S. agreement to fight the smuggling and trafficking of persons along the border, in force since October 2005.

The last package focuses on fostering transparency through bringing non-governmental organizations into the efforts and training on human rights, oriented not only to inform about these rights, but to promote respect for them. At the same time, it aims to combat corruption inside government bodies, a budget item that absorbs 90 percent of the resources of this package.

However, everything mentioned above is clearly insufficient to fulfill the established objectives. Let us simply take into account that in the period the Mérida Initiative will transfer these resources (US\$1.4 billion over three years), Mexican and Colombian drug traffickers will launder between US\$18 billion and US\$39 billion a year in profits in the United States.<sup>6</sup> The plan to safeguard both countries' borders, based on criminal and financial intelligence information exchange, faces the challenge of increasing the percentages of confiscation pointed to above and of offering useful, timely intelligence with a real impact on the drug trade in Mexico and the United States.

Technology transfer and update in Mexican institutions doing intelligence work, administering justice, and dealing with taxes and customs are important. However, Mexico also needs to improve cooperation and coordination among its security institutions and among the three levels of government, something that technology alone cannot achieve. In this sense, implementing the General Law on the National Public Security System, in effect since January 2, 2009, is key to making the Mexican security apparatus more efficient. Very worthy of note are the powers given to the National Public Security Council (CNSP) for promoting harmonization and development of prosecutorial, police and evidentiary models in the country's public security institutions.

The Mérida Initiative establishes that the essential point of U.S. co-responsibility is to monitor its financial system to prevent its being used by the drug cartels.

An important defect of the Mérida Initiative is its lack of specific budget items for monitoring the use of the resources; this means that in practice, this will be left up to the U.S. Congress as part of the legislative process for freeing up the funds. Mexico, for its part, must strengthen its auditing and monitoring processes for the sums assigned to security. The General Law on the National Public Security System gives some of the authority to do this to the CNSP, but coordination with the Ministry of Public Functions and the Federal Auditor's Office, the other bodies of the Mexican state that guarantee accountability and transparency, is also important.

The United States is still in the midst of increasing coordination among the agencies in charge of combating arms trafficking into Mexico. For example, in June 2009, the National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy, implemented by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), went into effect. Among its objectives is establishing coordination mechanisms between the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to analyze and share information relative to border violence and arms traffic.<sup>7</sup> This information is controlled by the El Paso Center for Intelligence, but both the ATF and ICE use different information platforms, resulting in the dispersion of the information and even the duplication of functions at these two agencies. It is not clear up to what point this strategy is linked with that of the Department of Homeland Security, called Southwest Border Security, implemented beginning in 2009.

In short, the Mérida Initiative is a bilateral cooperation program that attempts to strengthen both the border surveillance and control structure and public security institutions on the Mexican side. However, it is not clear whether equipping them militarily is the best way of decreasing the Mexican drug cartels' operational capability and the violence they generate. It should be remembered that the Federal Police (formerly the Federal Preventive Police), a part of the

Public Security Ministry, has more than 15,000 officers originally from the armed forces.

In this sense, the Mérida Initiative has the parallel objective of gradually withdrawing the Mexican armed forces from the fight against drug trafficking, as stipulated in the legislation authorizing its content and objectives,<sup>8</sup> particularly regarding tasks in the areas of patrols and the administration of justice that have had to be taken on in some of the country's municipalities.<sup>9</sup> This explains the importance of providing the Ministry of Public Security and the Attorney General's Office with operational and intelligence-gathering capabilities. This will only be possible to the extent that the Mexican government improves the level of cooperation, coordination and professionalization of its institutions and security elements. In other words, the success of the Mérida Initiative still depends on the internal actions undertaken by the Mexican and U.S. governments. ■■■

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Sergio Aguayo Quezada, *México. Todo en cifras* (Mexico City: Aguilar, 2008), p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> National Drug Intelligence Center-U.S. Department of Justice, "National Drug Threat Assessment 2009," December 2008, <http://www.justice.gov/ndic/pubs31/31379/index.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> The Office of National Drug Control Policy, White House, "The National Drug Control Strategy. Data Supplement 2009," January 2009, <http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.org/SearchResults/SearchResults.asp?qu=ncj&x=1&y=1>.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), "Firearms Trafficking. US Efforts to Combat Arms Trafficking to Mexico Face Planning and Coordination Challenges," June 2009, <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-09-709>, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> See [http://mexico.usembassy.gov/eng/releases/ep090415\\_BOBama\\_Drug\\_Trafficking.html](http://mexico.usembassy.gov/eng/releases/ep090415_BOBama_Drug_Trafficking.html).

<sup>6</sup> David Johnson, "Guns, Drugs and Violence: The Merida Initiative and the Challenge in Mexico," statement before the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, March 2009, <http://www.state.gov/p/inl/rls/rm/120679.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> Office of National Drug Control Policy, "National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy," June 2009, [http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/swb\\_counternarcotics\\_strategy09/swb\\_counternarcotics\\_strategy09.pdf](http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/swb_counternarcotics_strategy09/swb_counternarcotics_strategy09.pdf), pp. 29-36.

<sup>8</sup> See section 2, paragraph 6: "Mérida Initiative to Combat Illicit Narcotics and Reduce Organized Crime Authorization Act of 2008," H.R. 6028, 11th Congress, 2D Session, Senate of the United States, June 11, 2008, <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h110-6028>.

<sup>9</sup> Jesús Aranda, "En 16 meses el ejército ha recibido casi 15 mil denuncias," *La Jornada*, May 25, 2009.

# The Mérida Initiative On the Mexico-U.S. Border

José María Ramos García\*



Leovigildo González/Cuartoscuro

Destroying opium poppy fields.

Insecurity along the Mexico-U.S. border has increased significantly, among other reasons, because of the limitations of U.S. policy on drug trafficking south of its border, as well as the deficiencies of Mexico's policy to fight trafficking in its own territory. U.S. policy has been characterized by the following:

- emphasis on border control and prevention of addiction;
- different strategies of territorial influence: financial, institutional, commercial;
- the lack of a comprehensive, cross-cutting vision;
- lack of coordination and bureaucratic conflicts;

- increased consumption and expansion of the U.S. market; and
- disputes among criminal groups for position in the territory (2001-2008).

As a result, to the extent that these problems are not dealt with comprehensively, taking into account their social, economic, political and institutional dimensions, and with strategic vision, it is only to be expected that organized crime along Mexico's borders will increase.

Security may be a priority in U.S. policy, but it is fundamental to build a strategic bi-national security agenda. For Mexico's northern border states, it is important to reconcile the different dimensions and impacts of everything related to national security (organized crime, drug and arms trafficking and money laundering), public security (robbery, addic-

\* Professor at the Northern Border College, Tijuana, Baja California.

tions and kidnappings), human security (addiction prevention programs and a culture of legality) and border security (restrictions on the flow of migrant workers to the United States and delays in border crossings). This is why it is fundamental to evaluate the alternatives that both the Partnership for Prosperity and Security of North America (SPP) and the Mérida Initiative can offer to strengthen programs for development, prevention and legal reform along the northern border. Nevertheless, this evaluation has not been carried out since the border states have not participated in any inter-governmental agenda. The importance of this has still not been identified as part of a comprehensive strategic plan.

#### WHAT DO THE SPP AND THE MÉRIDA INITIATIVE OFFER?

The SPP proposes creating investment projects in communities in central Mexico. In addition, it has aided in strengthening Mexico-U.S. anti-drug cooperation. However, it has not been effective in reducing drug trafficking along the border. This is why the SPP is facing the challenge of being redefined with a security and regional development focus in which both priorities would be balanced. Nevertheless, there are doubts about the new U.S. administration's ability to conciliate a strategic focus that could link up with the Mérida Initiative and the rest of the border control schema promoted by the Bush administration. This lack of definition in bilateral policy opens up a space for criminal groups to continue positioning their organizational capabilities on the border. The question is whether it is viable to redefine the bilateral anti-drug strategy in the framework of the implementation of the Mérida Initiative.

#### CHANGES IN PUBLIC POLICY?

If a series of changes are made to public policy, there must be a comprehensive diagnostic analysis that underlines the interdependence of the determining factors of public insecurity, national security, border security and levels of social inequality. Also, policy strategies must have a comprehensive, transversal, strategic focus, emphasizing the central role of the army and navy, particularly in intelligence gathering. In addition, the rest of the police forces will have to change their focus, capabilities, incentives and anti-corruption controls. The role of the police forces must be based on a pattern of operational and

inter-institutional cooperation, thereby reducing the structural limitations that have prevented this kind of link. In this, there must be a legitimate civilian command responsible for the executive coordination of the different tasks.

Strategic and operational programs to articulate police actions and those of others related to social preventive measures with an inter-organizational focus must also exist. These program profiles must be a public policy priority, considering that international experience indicates that they are indispensable for reducing or controlling insecurity. What is more, it is fundamental that they be subject to evaluation so their advances, impact and setbacks can be seen. It should be pointed out that in Mexico, evaluation of public administration is in beginning stages, particularly the review of police forces; this means it is extremely important to strengthen these processes, changing and reformulating some aspects of security policy by:

- on-going security policy formulation, given the capacity of criminal groups to reinvent themselves with a strategic vision and with consensus;
- ensuring presidential and military leadership allied with police forces;
- including an effective inter-governmental, inter-organizational focus;
- promoting police training with new values, focuses and disciplines;
- linking up with plans for police policy and operations; and
- adopting a preventive approach for policing.

These premises offer an idea of the complexity and the challenges implicit in moving the SPP ahead in Mexico-U.S. relations with a focus on development. This is why its greater effectiveness will depend on a series of factors linked to operations, priorities, political agreements, a greater vision, capacity, leadership and strategic planning by the different Mexican and U.S. actors.

#### BORDER CHALLENGES

##### FOR THE BILATERAL AGENDA: SECURITY

Border instability and insecurity in both nations have been the product of the limitations of U.S. anti-drug policy with regard to the border, the absence of effective bilateral coop-

One of the priorities of bi-national policy must be reducing the flow of arms across the border, most of which come from the United States. An influential factor is “liberal” policies for the purchase and bearing of arms, favoring their acquisition and commercialization.

eration, arms smuggling into Mexico and, finally, Mexico’s disarticulated inter-governmental actions against insecurity. This has resulted in the same levels of cocaine, marijuana, heroin and recently methamphetamines flowing into the United States as in the early 1990s. The increase in border violence since late 2008 has changed the main problem on the agenda with the United States: it is no longer migration; now it is insecurity, violence and organized crime on the border. In fact, President Barack Obama’s visit to Mexico in April 2009 dealt fundamentally with these issues.

One of the new problems on the border agenda is the increase in addictions in the main border cities on the Mexican side, as a result of the spike in the drug supply on both sides of the border and the limitations of seizures of shipments in both countries. In this context, current U.S. anti-drug policy, in place since 1992, has not reduced the capacity of criminal groups to transport marijuana, cocaine and methamphetamines from Mexico. Also, while actions to fight money laundering have increased, they have been insufficient given the limitations in transparency and financial control.

The importance of the Mexico-U.S. border, specifically the border between California and Baja California, is illustrated by the fact that an estimated 40 percent of the drugs confiscated from 2007 to October 2008 in the entire United States were confiscated there. This illustrates the significance of U.S. society’s demand for drugs supplied by Mexican criminal organizations.

One of the priorities of bi-national policy must be reducing the flow of arms across the border, most of which come from the United States. One influential factor is “liberal” policies about the purchase and carrying of arms, favoring their acquisition and commercialization. U.S. authorities estimate that there are 7,000 armories along their southern border, most in California and Texas, not counting the gun fairs and exhibitions open to the general public where any kind of item can be obtained. The bilateral challenge in this area is to strengthen laws and programs like Gunrunner. This Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF)

program seeks to focus resources on investigation, intelligence and training to decrease arms trade to Mexico and slow the violence generated by them on both sides of the border. However, the program’s efficacy and impact depends, among other things, on greater determination by the U.S. government using a comprehensive vision including taking into account the influence of the gun lobby, the importance of individual freedoms, prevention and shoring up the judicial, police and health sectors. Also, the evaluation of border programs to fight arms trafficking should become more effective by using past experience and present challenges, in addition to fostering Mexican police forces’ professionalization and anti-corruption controls, particularly among customs police.

To counter the deepening problems of border insecurity, Mexico’s federal government has strengthened the presence of the army and part of the navy in Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez since the end of 2007. However, this has not reduced organized crime in the area since the policy is limited in design, in the implementation of comprehensive, cross-cutting strategies, its evaluation methods, and its lack of support from local, state and federal police. For these reasons, the Mexican army’s effectiveness has been cut, leading to the urgent need to reformulate the strategy based on the following criteria:

- developing a comprehensive, cross-cutting design that will promote reactive and preventive policies;
- strengthening elite military groups specialized in the fight against organized crime;
- improving the capabilities of the institutional actors (PGR, the Federal Investigation Agency [AFI], Federal Preventive Police);
- achieving effective inter-governmental coordination;
- professionalizing the human resources dedicated to investigation and intelligence work;
- respecting human rights and fostering a closer partnership with NGOs; and
- consolidating the capabilities of the judicial and preventive systems supporting military action.

The increase in border violence since late 2008 has changed the main problem on the agenda with the United States: it is no longer migration; now it is insecurity, violence and organized crime on the border.

As I already mentioned, insecurity in border states poses the opportunity of evaluating the alternatives the Mérida Initiative can offer, as an option to strengthen strategic programs of prevention, judicial reform, human rights defense and comprehensive justice. A general diagnostic analysis done prior to the implementation of the Mérida Initiative indicates the following weaknesses:

- Diagnostics are partial.
- Training and professionalism in the systems of administration of justice are deficient.
- Institutional capabilities are limited, particularly on the local and state level.
- Mechanisms for controlling corruption are inadequate.
- There is no incentives policy.
- Unilateral and discordant views prevail.
- Policies are short-term, not long-term.
- There is a notable absence of planning and evaluation.
- Public participation is very limited.

The Mexican government needs a strategic security plan for the border states, incorporating the different dimensions of security already mentioned, because what has actually happened are isolated, short-term actions that only keep the problems at bay, if, indeed, they do not aggravate them. For their part, the Americans continue expressing concern about the risks to their security. In this context, the Mérida Initiative could be an option to support an effective bilateral program if accompanied by the following conditions:

- a multidimensional strategy (including the police, preventive, legal, institutional and military aspects);
- a military leadership in favor of synergies with other key actors;
- the articulation of a strategy with different national, regional and cross-border options;
- inter-governmental operations effective in security matters, accompanied by development policies;

- promoting greater professionalism inside the police forces;
- tougher anti-corruption controls;
- effective public participation, not only monitoring possible police abuses, but promoting and evaluating preventive programs.

Mexico is facing the challenge of strengthening inter-governmental coordination to resolve national and border security problems. So, the priority is to intensify coordination among border-state governments and federal agencies like the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Attorney General's Office and the Ministry of Public Security.

#### NEW BORDER POLICIES:

##### THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR BORDER AFFAIRS

The U.S. government has appointed former Justice Department official Alan Bersin as Department of Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for International Affairs and Special Representative for Border Affairs, in charge of directing efforts against drug-trafficking related violence along the Mexican border.<sup>1</sup> An experienced official, Bersin's actions are oriented to making his country's borders more secure, promoting trade and transactions, and facilitating cooperation between federal, state and local U.S. authorities and their counterparts in Mexico. Nevertheless, he may encounter limitations in achieving his goals, like the difficulty in coordinating the diverse federal agencies associated with anti-drug policies and security, given their autonomy and bureaucratic nature; past experience with U.S. anti-drug policy focused on the Mexican border, where drug trafficking has not substantially diminished; the history of U.S. border security policy, which has not achieved a balance between easing border crossings and security; Washington's lack of knowledge about the different dimensions and contexts of border insecurity; and the implementation of the Mérida Plan, which empha-

sizes the policing approach, ignoring the rest of the dimensions of security. It clearly reiterates the emphasis on a reactive, policing policy that does not promote prevention-oriented alternatives. In other words, it will be difficult for a single person to integrate, design, execute, coordinate and evaluate the different programs related to border issues, when, in addition, there are different bureaucratic priorities, inertias and deficiencies of inter-governmental operations.

Bersin's role could have a bigger short-term impact if, among other things, he had the political support of Secretary Janet Napolitano and carried out a comprehensive, strategic, cross-cutting diagnostic analysis of the dimensions of border insecurity, as well as an evaluation of current programs in order to focus his priorities and impact. In addition, defining the priority programs and articulating them through effective inter-governmental operations is important. Greater attention must also be paid to preventive programs on the U.S. side of the border, particularly programs to reduce consumption and generate synergies with key actors in Mexican border development from the angle of shared responsibility. In this way, a more comprehensive vision of the Mérida Initiative would be created, putting a priority on strengthening institutional capabilities on both sides of the border.

#### OBAMA'S VISIT

Obama's first visit to Mexico in April 2009 took place amidst great U.S. government concern about the violence and insecurity prevalent along the border. Obama was preceded by Hillary Clinton and Janet Napolitano, who underlined their government's interest in strengthening a focus of shared responsibility in the fight against organized crime and drug trafficking. The question is how it will be implemented and whether pressure will be brought to bear given the concerns of U.S. police forces about a history of corruption among their Mexican counterparts.

Greater cooperation and co-responsibility in the face of the unprecedented violence by drug traffickers is the main change in Washington's discourse. One example of this is Hillary Clinton's statement admitting that 90 percent of the guns used by drug traffickers come from the United States. However, the challenge for the U.S. administration is articulating these initiatives with concrete programs operated with an international focus and with on-going evaluations, both usually absent in its anti-drug cooperation policy. Washington

gave another sign of support for Mexico by stating recently that the U.S. property of three of the most powerful cartels (Sinaloa, La Familia and Los Zetas) might be seized and confiscated.

In short, it is expected that U.S. interest in bolstering anti-drug cooperation will increase in order to reduce the power of these criminal groups both along the border and in the central part of the country. Thus, Mexican priorities *vis-à-vis* the United States are

- reiterating that border insecurity is a bi-national, international problem and therefore a mutual responsibility;
- evaluating the impact of U.S. anti-drug policy in order to avoid repeating experiences with deficient, low impact;
- proposing initiatives oriented to strengthening cooperation, coordination and cross-border planning on issues of security and development;
- promoting a strategic operations focus that would tend toward competitiveness and border development in the framework of the SPP;
- creating equilibrium among the border security and prevention policies;
- supporting inter-governmental operations so they can be competitive and facilitate development;
- analyzing the Mérida Initiative from the perspective of protecting human rights;
- strengthening cooperation between the two countries by identifying priority, high-impact actions that correlate with Mexican priorities.

#### FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In short, security will continue to be the most important issue for the coming years, seemingly postponing the fulfillment of the campaign promise of legalizing the approximately 12 million Mexican immigrants in the United States. In the meantime, the bilateral relationship is going through a complex moment that requires several profound reformulations. Doing this deficiently could facilitate better positioning of the criminal organizations, which today seem to enjoy a certain social and even political support. ■■

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Bersin worked as the "border czar" for Attorney General Janet Reno under President Bill Clinton.

# The Costs of Violence as a Strategy For U.S.-Mexico Border Security

Pablo Cabañas Díaz\*



Ignacio Ruiz/Cuartoscuro

Unprecedented levels of violence, including clashes inside and between the drug cartels, and between them and the Mexican military, have pushed the United States to publically recognize its role as the cause of violence south of its border. During her late March 2009 visit to Mexico, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated that the “insatiable” demand for drugs in her country forced it to take “joint responsibility,” and therefore, to help Mexico in its fight against the cartels. In this context, the border security strategy President Barack Obama announced March 24, 2009 is an attempt to begin to correct the mistakes of U.S. anti-drug strategy.

The emphasis on reducing consumption is a timid turn that began at the start of the Obama administration when, in May 2009, he reported that while he would not stop trying to put the brakes on supply, the discredited concept of the “war against drugs,” coined by Richard Nixon in 1969, would disappear from official language. In his 2011 budget proposal, Obama requests a 13.4 percent increase (about US\$5.6 billion) in resources to fight consumption. Even given this, however, it can hardly be termed a “balanced approach,” since resources to suppress supply, both inside and outside the United States, come to more than triple the amount earmarked for programs to reduce demand.

The last time there was an attempt to emphasize prevention was during William Clinton’s administration. In a famous government-financed study, the Rand Drug Policy Research Center proposed transferring US\$3 billion of anti-narcotics

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\* Professor at the Center for Communication Studies of the UNAM School of Political Science and member of the Mexican Association of Communication Researchers.pcabanas@correo.unam.mx.

In Washington a broader consensus is being structured around the idea that the “wars against drug trafficking” have been a failure. It is necessary to put an end to them and to come up with a new strategy to deal with drug consumption and trafficking.

police budgets to prevention and treatment programs. However, Barry McCaffrey, the controversial military man who at that time was the country’s drug czar, rejected the idea. Today, it is public knowledge that McCaffrey, a consultant to Mexico’s Attorney General’s Office, has been accused in the U.S. press of having been motivated by a conflict of interest, given his role as a paid advisor to the arms industry.

#### THE FAILURE OF THE ANTI-DRUG WAR

Clearly, in Washington, a broader consensus is being structured around the idea that the so-called “wars against drug trafficking” have been a failure. This means that it is necessary to put an end to them and to come up with a new strategy to deal with drug consumption and trafficking. Along these same lines, a speech by Mexico’s Minister of Defense General Guillermo Galván Galván is quite noteworthy: at the February 19 Army Day celebration, he said that if the war against drug trafficking goes on too long and the confrontation is prolonged excessively, not only will the number of innocent victims increase, but it will also cause additional damage to the populace because people “could end up getting used to the culture of violence.”<sup>1</sup>

In an essay in *Nexos* magazine, writer Fernando Escalante mentioned a key piece of information: before the “war” against the drug kingpins, the homicide rate had been falling.<sup>2</sup> Taking into account the increase in the population, homicides have dropped an estimated 20 percent nationally in the last decade. In a clear downward trend, Mexican rates are relatively low in regional terms. Again, the numbers belie the justification for the “war.”

On September 21, 2006, then President-elect Felipe Calderón recognized that the drug trafficking phenomenon “threatened the Mexican state.” Calderón and his advisors began his term with the launch of the Michoacán Joint Operation, with firm intentions, but with zero short-, medium- or long-term strategies for recovering territories and areas of the country. This operation in Michoacán (the state where more soldiers have died in anti-drug actions than any other)

was followed by seven other troop deployments, particularly to the northern part of the country. The cartels responded by sending commandos to different locations and shoring up their presence in places the federal government was trying to recover.

A clear case of failed strategy is the Chihuahua Joint Operation and its expansion, begun in January and February 2009 in Ciudad Juárez. In 2010, this operation’s failure has been fully consummated, and the federal authorities have only managed to defend themselves by arguing that the results will be seen in the long term.

However, the military presence has not slowed down drug-cartel activity, and the proof is that their financial structures remain intact. Therefore, the result of this “war” is that the Mexican cartels, in addition to their growing violence domestically, are an increasing threat for U.S. national security, thus reinforcing the image among the public that Mexico is experiencing a severe crisis.

#### U.S. CONCERN

It should be noted that at his first press conference after taking office, Central Intelligence Agency Director Leon Panetta pointed to Mexico as an area of particular interest for his job. He stated that Mexico was an area of concern because of the drug wars taking place there, and that President Calderón had faced the issue bravely, but that it was an area the United States would be paying a lot of attention to.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, former Arizona governor and current Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano told Congress that the violence unleashed in Mexico due to the fight against the drug traffickers is reaching levels and degrees never seen before.

And it is true. This violence and the security crisis in Mexico have reached extraordinary levels in the last two years. In some parts of Mexico, security has deteriorated so significantly that middle-income Mexicans —not just the upper classes— are emigrating to the United States, despite the economic crisis there and the resulting loss of job opportunities north of the border.

Violence and the security crisis in Mexico have reached extraordinary levels in the last two years. In some parts of Mexico, security has deteriorated so significantly that middle-income Mexicans are emigrating to the United States, despite the economic crisis there.

Few areas of Mexico remain immune to this violence, with the resulting economic costs this implies. The states of Mexico most affected are beginning to experience a reduction of economic activity, visible, for example, in the decline in investments and tourism and the drastic increase in the cost of services like private security and bodyguards.

#### FORECASTS ABOUT THIS WAR

This scenario had already been visualized in 1996 in the book *The Next War*, by former U.S. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and Peter Schweizer. In the 50 pages dedicated to Mexico, they emphasize that drug trafficking and corruption have the upper hand in our country.

Later, in a report to the Senate February 16, 2005, then-CIA Director Porter Goss warned that the 2006 Mexican elections could bring instability since, in his view, they would slow the advance of the fiscal, labor and energy reforms. No further mention was made of Mexico in the report, but the fact that our country was catalogued as a “red light,” together with Cuba, Haiti, Colombia and Venezuela, did not go over well in Mexican political circles. Goss made his comments during the first part of a hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee that would deal with current and projected threats to U.S. national security. The second part of the hearing was closed.

When asked by former presidential candidate and current Senator John McCain to classify the risk of terrorist infiltration through the border with Mexico, Goss called it “very grave” and mentioned Latin American countries together with Middle Eastern and African nations when talking about potential areas of instability. If Felipe Calderón can be sure of anything, it is that five years ago the CIA already saw Mexico as a country at increasing risk of instability in the framework of the presidential succession.

The Department of Justice’s National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC) recently referred to the Mexican drug cartels as the greatest organized crime threat for the United States. Former CIA Director Michael Hayden also said that in terms

of national security [threats], Mexico is second only to Iran. A November 2009 U.S. Department of Defense report stated that the “sudden collapse” of Mexico in the face of drug trafficking pressure and the possibility of a civil war breaking out in Pakistan were the two worst threats for U.S. and world security.

General Hayden (Rtd.) stated that the violence in Mexico, particularly that generated by the drug cartels, is of a nature such that Mexico and Iran will be the main challenges for Barack Obama’s foreign policy. He went on to say that U.S. intelligence services have been undertaking new efforts for greater cooperation with the Mexican government.<sup>4</sup> For his part, Former National Director of Intelligence Mike McConnell stated that even though Mexico is under threat of violence, the United States is not planning to send ground troops there, but rather to bolster training of Mexican agents to make them more effective.

What is the cost of keeping up the war against the drug traffickers? What levels of violence are we willing to tolerate? How much freedom will be lost when the government initiates new measures? Drug trafficking is unbearable for Latin American countries, particularly our own. The hypotheses the fight against it has been based on until now maintain that there will never be negotiations nor will assumptions different from the existing ones ever be accepted. In short, the government’s intention is to move forward with its strategy: solving the problems of drug-trafficking-related violence using violence. The cost of that move is that now we find ourselves in a blind alley. ■■■

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See article at <http://www.diariocritico.com/mexico/2010/Febrero/noticias/195327/a-nadie-conviene-que-la-lucha-contra-el-narcotrafico-en-nuestro-pais-se-prolongue-de-manera-indefinida.html>. [Editor’s Note.]

<sup>2</sup> Fernando Escalante Gonzalbo, “Homicidios 1990-2007,” *Nexos* (September 1, 2009), <http://www.nexos.com.mx/?P=leerarticulo&Article=776>. [Editor’s Note.]

<sup>3</sup> David Brooks, “Cárteles de México, amenaza para EU, alertan funcionarios,” *La Jornada*, February 27, 2009, <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2009/02/27/index.php?section=politica&article=008n1pol>. [Editor’s Note.]

<sup>4</sup> Pablo Cabañas Díaz, “Triunfos mediáticos, derrota real,” on the Círculo Latinoamericano de Estudios Internacionales web site, [http://www.claei.org.mx/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=69&catid=11&Itemid=7](http://www.claei.org.mx/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=69&catid=11&Itemid=7). [Editor’s Note.]

# Homicides and Organized Violence In Mexico, 1990-2008<sup>1</sup>

Malgorzata Polanska\*



Saúl López/Cuartoscuro

In recent years, the headlines in the Mexican media have been the number of drug-related killings, called executions or “narco-executions,” particularly since President Felipe Calderón’s administration began his “war on the drug cartels” when he took office in December 2006. The use of the armed forces to fight drug trafficking, mainly because of the public’s distrust of the police, has meant that public and nation security issues have been constantly mixed. By 2009, the Conflict Barometer categorized Mexico’s clash-

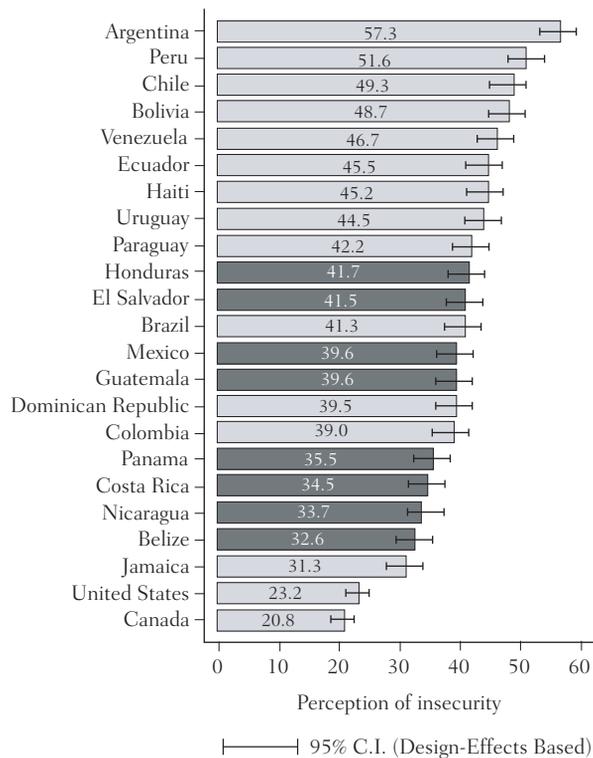
es between the drug cartels and the government as a severe crisis, ranked fourth among five types of conflict intensity. This article aims to address the need to examine social and organized violence through the study of surveys of homicides and drug killings, making comparisons whenever feasible. As a result, it presents possible causes of the increasing perception of insecurity, in contrast with the decline (until 2007) of the number of crimes that most shocks society: homicides.

In Mexico, homicides come under local (municipal) jurisdiction. On the other hand, the gangland slayings called “executions” are not classified under the law, and therefore there are no official figures for them. Hence, there is no reliable official source of data regarding drug-related violence; this article uses the figures used by the San Diego University

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\* Professor of the International Relations Department at the Monterrey Technological Institute of Higher Learning (ITESM), State of Mexico campus.

FIGURE 1  
PERCEPTION OF PUBLIC INSECURITY IN THE AMERICAS, 2008



**Source:** Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), “Americas Barometer Insights: 2009,” no. 28, José Miguel Cruz, *Public Insecurity in Central America and Mexico* (Nashville, Tennessee: Vanderbilt University, 2009).

Trans-Border Institute Justice in Mexico Project, gleaned mainly from Mexico City’s *Reforma* newspaper surveys. The official data on the number of deaths by homicide collected by the National Institute for Statistics and Geography (INEGI) are used. In addition, the Citizens Institute for Studies on Insecurity (ICESI) and the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) constitute important sources of data used in this article.

#### THE PUBLIC’S PERCEPTION OF INSECURITY

Between 1990 and 2007, Mexico experienced a decrease in the absolute number of deaths by homicide, which dropped from 14,520 to 8,868. This contradicts the high perception of insecurity among Mexican citizens: 65 percent of society feels unsafe in their state. The impact of media dissemination

of crimes committed by organized groups is thought to be one of the factors that boost subjective insecurity. In fact, the amount of time dedicated to covering these crimes contributes to breeding the fear of crime among people who have not been a victim of one; as a consequence, increasing numbers of people make changes in their way of life.<sup>2</sup>

Despite media exposure, the feeling of insecurity may be derived from different causes than the high levels of real violence. Interestingly, it was in Argentina, Peru and Chile that in 2008 the largest percentages of Latin Americans surveyed perceived their neighborhoods as unsafe. Mexico is located in the middle of the graph (figure 1), showing the level of public perception of insecurity much below these countries (almost 40 on a scale from 0 to 100). On the other hand, the United States and Canada show the lowest levels of fear of crime, corresponding to the low levels of their crime rates. Even if it is a well known issue, it is important to underline the need to study the reasons for high levels of insecurity perception compared to low rates of real violence.

The LAPOP study presents the four most relevant factors for strengthening the perception of insecurity. First, it takes into account socio-demographic variables among vulnerable groups. The younger population, especially poor women in metropolitan areas, tends to perceive their environment as more insecure than the rest of the society. Second, victimization —public sector corruption included— has been proven to reinforce the perception of insecurity. Third, a positive correlation exists between perceptions of economic conditions (national or individual) and feeling insecure; the worse the economic situation is perceived as, the more insecure the society considers itself. Fourth —and this seems the most relevant— is LAPOP’s evidence of the importance of the security environment in the perception of the place one lives, like police involvement in crime, drug trafficking and other illicit organizations.

Significantly, the LAPOP study provides contradictory results to ICESI’s. According to LAPOP, and contrary to the authors’ expectations, media exposure in Mexico and Central America is not a relevant variable for increasing the perception of insecurity. On the other hand, ICESI research indicates that it does have an impact on the perception of insecurity, as mentioned above.

It should be underlined that corrupt police forces, economic uncertainty and community and social individual vulnerability increase the perception of public insecurity even among those who have been never a victim of any crime. In

Corrupt police forces, economic uncertainty and community and social individual vulnerability increase the perception of public insecurity even among those who have been never a victim of any crime.

other words, not only institutional efficiency and transparency but also the presence of drug cartels and organized crime reinforce the perception of public insecurity; in addition, it should be remembered that authorities' lack of efficiency implies lack of public trust in them.

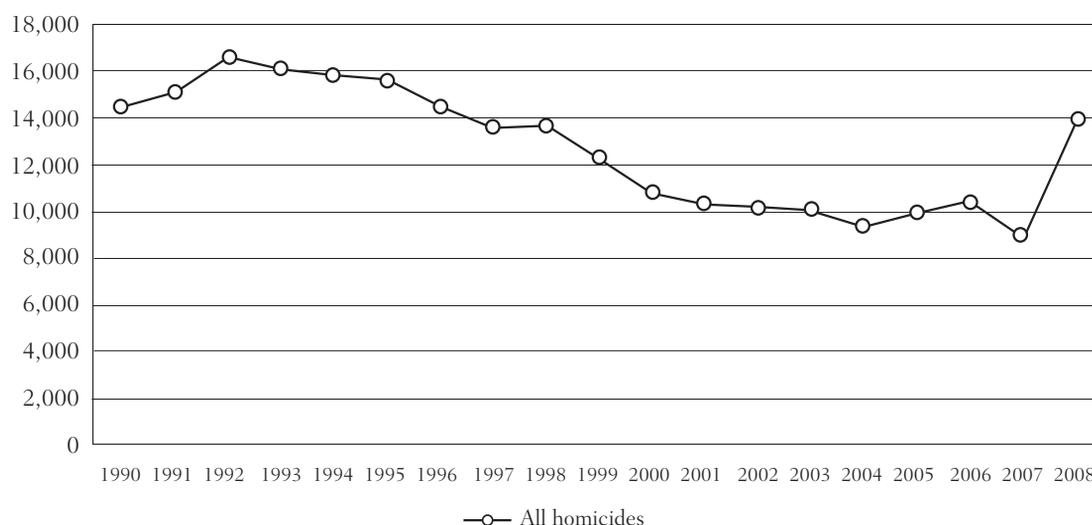
#### HOMICIDES AND THE PERCEPTION OF INSECURITY

The latest available data, from 2008, shows a significant change in trends in the number of victims: homicide rates throughout Mexico increased to 14,007. This number is almost the same as 19 years before, in 1990. This is not a simple return to the 1990 homicide rate; it constitutes a strong signal to authorities, civil society and the international community in terms of the fight against drug trafficking. It is important to underline that this increment is most probably not because of more efficient crime detection and investigation. On the contrary, impunity in Mexican society on

a national scale is increasing with time: in 2008 it rose to 85 percent.<sup>3</sup>

This article divides Mexico into five regions: the Northwest, Pacific, Central, Mexico City Metropolitan Area and the Southeast, based on execution rates. It is important to highlight that the northwestern region is considered the most unsafe in the country due to its execution rates and the highest spike in homicide levels. This is, in fact, the only region where homicide rates among the population —not including public security officials— are rising. On the other hand, the southern border region has the lowest homicide rates among citizens. At the same time, the state with the highest perception of insecurity (85 percent —the Federal District) experienced a national-record decrease in homicide rates, with the highest decline among security and defense staff. As a result, it can be said that in the Mexico City Metropolitan Area there are other reasons for such a high perception of insecurity. One of them may be the media and its sensationalist depiction of violence of organized crime in particular.

FIGURE 2  
HOMICIDES IN MEXICO, 1990-2008



Source: Created by the author using the INEGI data base, [www.inegi.gob.mx](http://www.inegi.gob.mx).

Between 1990 and 2007, throughout Mexico the number of homicides dropped 39 percent. Contrary to this trend, in just one year, 2008, there was a significant increase (58 percent) in the number of violent deaths among the Mexican population.

Another factor contributing to the increasing perception of insecurity is that those in charge of providing security for society are increasingly vulnerable. In a period of 18 years, homicides among citizens increased only in the Northwest; however, homicide rates among security and defense personnel have risen in almost all the regions studied. In other words, the gap is decreasing between the two groups analyzed: society on the one hand, and security and defense personnel on the other, which means security is decreasing for the military and police in particular.

NATIONAL LEVEL

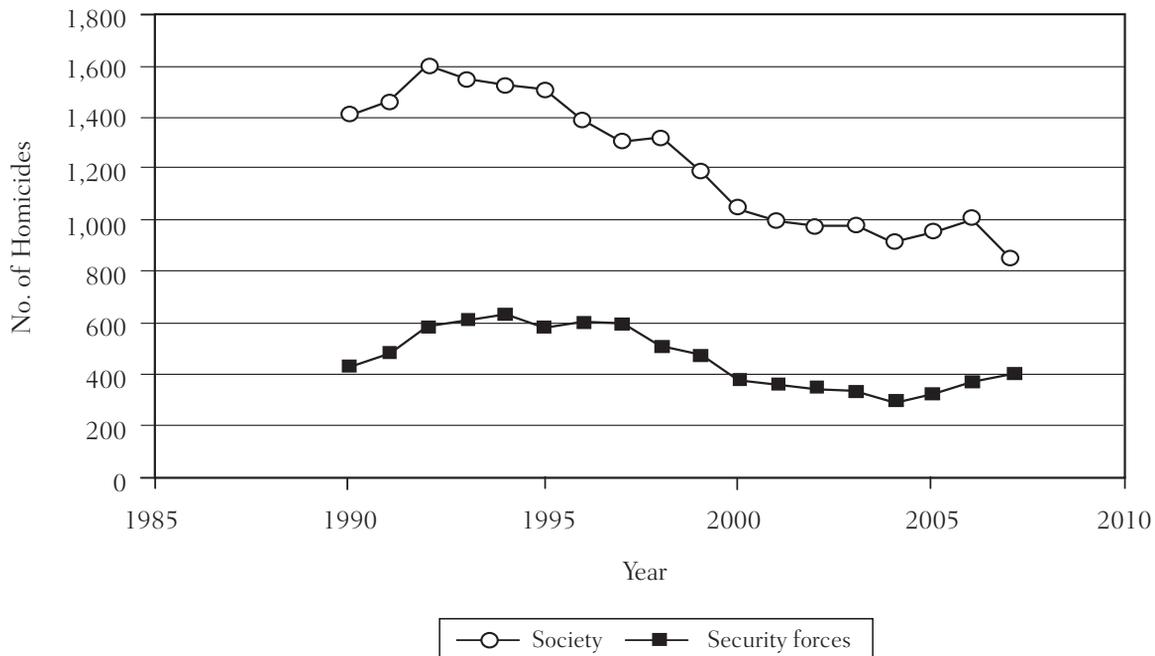
Between 1990 and 2007, throughout Mexico the number of homicides dropped 39 percent. Contrary to this trend, in just

one year, 2008, there was a significant increase (58 percent) in the number of violent deaths among the Mexican population.

As media reports underline, since 2006 there have been over 16,000 drug-related killings. In 2007 alone, drug-related killings constituted one-quarter of all homicides. One year later, this proportion shot up drastically to 37 percent. This means that in only one year the number of deaths related to drugs increased by 17 percent as a proportion of all deaths caused by killings in Mexico. It is important to point out that between 2007 and 2008, there was also a significant increase in executions and homicides.

In addition, at the moment of writing, there is no access to official data on homicides for 2009; however estimates for that year put the number of “narco-executions” at 6,587. It is important to mention that another press source, *Milenio*, quotes 8,281 drug-related deaths in 2009. Considering

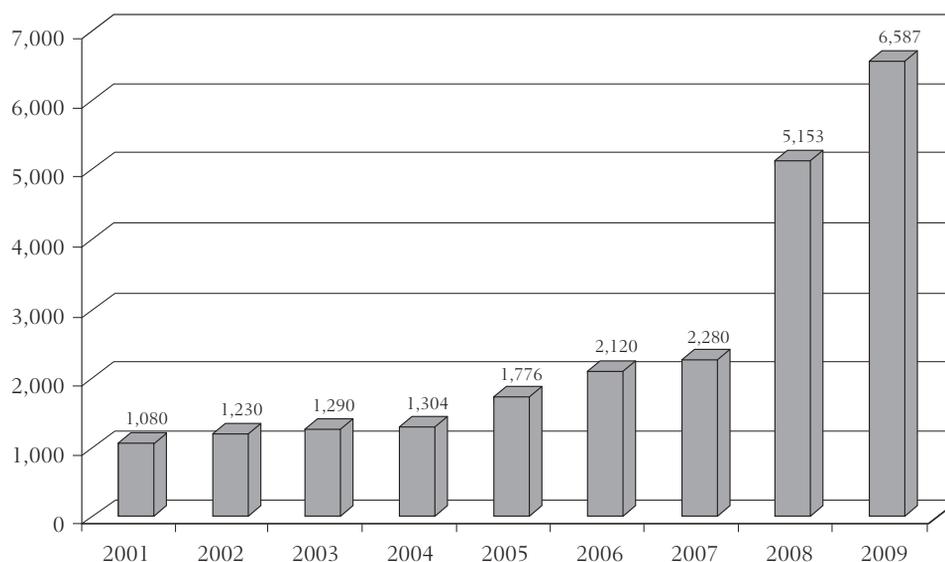
FIGURE 3  
HOMICIDES IN MEXICO: SOCIETY AND SECURITY FORCES, 1990-2007



Source: Created by the author using the INEGI data base, [www.inegi.gob.mx](http://www.inegi.gob.mx).

Note: Due to lack of data access, there is a division for security forces (military and police forces) and society only for the 1990-2007 period.

FIGURE 4  
DRUG-RELATED KILLINGS IN MEXICO, 2001-2009



**Source:** Justice in Mexico Project, *Drug Violence in Mexico. Data and Analysis from 2001-2009*, Trans-border Institute, San Diego University, [www.justiceinmexico.org](http://www.justiceinmexico.org) (January 2010).

5,153 drug-related homicides solely for 2008, the increase was over 28 percent for the following year.

#### ON THE STATE LEVEL

The northwest region consists of eight states: six on the U. S. border plus Sinaloa and Durango, included because of their drastic increase in “narco-executions.” This region is the most insecure in Mexico in terms of drug-related killings as well as homicides in general. Regarding the latter, even though they are not the highest levels in the country in absolute terms, the dynamic of their increase is, indeed, the highest. In the case of security personnel, a 119 percent hike between 1990 and 2007 can be observed. Furthermore, in this region, homicides increased by 14 percent among society at large, excluding security forces.

Other observations indicate a significant rise in killings in the Northwest as a percentage of all Mexican homicides. In 1990, 16 out of every 100 soldiers or police killed in Mexico lived in this region. However, by 2007, the latest avail-

able data for this occupational group, they represented 37 percent of all victims among security forces nationwide.

The Northwest is Mexico’s most insecure region because it is the only one among the five where homicides among normal citizens, not only security forces, are on the rise; in addition, the spike in the number of killings is the most dynamic of all those studied.

What may come as a surprise for many is that in the Mexico City Metropolitan Area, surveys indicate an over 50-percent decline in homicides during the period studied, the biggest drop nationwide. On the other hand, due to its demographics, in absolute terms the number of murder victims is the highest. In contrast, in the entire country, the highest number of people who perceive their neighborhoods as unsafe are found in this region. As mentioned above, other significant factors must be taken into account to explain the high perception of insecurity among Mexico City Metropolitan Area residents.

Other observations indicate that the Pacific region, consisting of the states of Michoacán, Guerrero and Oaxaca,

report similar numbers of drug-related killings as the more dangerous northwest region. Moreover, these three states present similar numbers of homicides to 14 other states that make up Mexico's central region.<sup>4</sup>

It is worth mentioning that while the northern border is Mexico's most insecure, in contrast, the southern one has the lowest levels of both homicides and drug-related killings. During the period studied, homicides in the Southeast represented four to five percent of all killings officially registered in the entire country.

CONCLUSIONS

The fight against drug trafficking has not created greater security in Mexican society. Thus, though the considerable decline in Mexico's homicide rates over 18 years fueled optimism, the latest available data, from 2008, presented a significant increase in homicides: 58 percent in only one year. Moreover, drug-related killings represented more than one-third of all homicides that year and the proportion is expect-

ed to increase. Much remains to be done regarding the high perception of insecurity in Mexican society, and even more with respect to spiking levels of the most serious crimes, homicides and their spectacular variation, drug-related killings.

The war on organized crime does not curb drug cartel activities nor does it help guarantee security for Mexican society: it shows the state's inefficiency when it comes to accomplishing its basic tasks. ■■

NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> These research results, including tables and trends, were published for the first time in *Atlas de la seguridad y la defensa de México 2009* (Mexican Security and Defense Atlas 2009), available for free downloading at <http://seguridadcondemocracia.org/>.
- <sup>2</sup> Instituto Ciudadano de Estudios sobre Inseguridad (ICESI), ENSI-6 2009, *Sexta Encuesta Nacional sobre Inseguridad*, <http://www.icesi.org.mx/>.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>4</sup> The 14 states that make up the central region are Baja California Sur, Zacatecas, San Luis Potosí, Veracruz, Nayarit, Jalisco, Aguascalientes, Guanajuato, Querétaro, Hidalgo, Puebla, Colima, Morelos and Tlaxcala.



Year 4, number 2



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*NORTEAMÉRICA, Academic Journal*

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(Center for Research on North America) (CISAN),  
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM)

Torre II de Humanidades, pisos 9 y 10,  
Ciudad Universitaria, México, D.F., c.p. 04510.  
e-mail: [namerica@servidor.unam.mx](mailto:namerica@servidor.unam.mx)  
Phone: (011 5255) 5623 0246, ext. 42301  
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# Climate Change What Is Expected From Mexico in 2010?

Edit Antal\*



David Gray/REUTERS

Copenhagen was definitely a disappointment. Too many expectations were raised and the results—if we can say there were any at all—were insufficient. The main polluters did not accept a binding agreement to reduce carbon emissions. The next climate summit will be in Mexico in December 2010, but what is at stake and what can reasonably be expected?

In Copenhagen, the world's leaders and their ability to move ahead on the most complex overall cooperation problem the planet faces undoubtedly failed. Not only did they not reach an agreement, but they were also unable to outline roads forward for negotiating the issue of climate change. It is even seriously in doubt whether the United Nations' frame-

work for discussion (one country-one vote), in which 190 countries' deliberations are set, will be the appropriate mechanism to make it possible to arrive at a unanimous decision, since, when the powers do not want to come to an agreement, the mechanism can only lead to paralysis.

To better understand this issue's transcendence, let us take it by stages. First, we have to understand why climate change is such a complex, delicate matter. Second, we have to look at who the main players are and the key points that divide them. Then, we will review the proposals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), that is, the mechanisms and possible entities that would negotiate. With all this in mind, we will be able to have a panorama of what is really at stake and what could therefore be the object of the 2010 summit in Mexico.

\*Researcher at CISAN.

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#### COMPLEXITIES

Climate change is one of the world's most important cooperation problems because it poses the reduction of GHG emissions, which has a direct impact on the possibility for growth of all areas of the economy that use fuel, that is, practically every human activity. In theory, the solution is simple: we have to use less fossil energy derived from burning coal, oil and gas. This means nothing less than changing our way and style of life, just like the environmentalists propose. However, changing on a grand scale the consumerist, dirty-energy-wasting lifestyle humanity has become accustomed to, at least since the industrial revolution, requires a real change of paradigms that cannot be achieved without public policy that stimulates it powerfully, quickly and effectively.

In addition, seen from the global point of view, an especially complex problem of justice arises when the question is posed internationally: which countries can grow and how much? In other words, we are faced with the issue of who has the authority to dictate the limits of economic growth on a worldwide level. Climate change will only be mitigated if a cap is put on the consumption of energy or if a price is paid—a tax or a duty—for consuming coal, oil and gas. Both measures limit economic growth.

We have to keep in mind that countries rarely adopt measures to reduce emissions on their own, since international competition is ferocious in the era of globalization. This means that the political proposals to solve the problem of climate change must necessarily be both global and long-term, making them extremely difficult to delineate and put into practice, since politicians prefer local, immediate solutions.

#### THE POINTS OF DIFFERENCE

Once the Kyoto Protocol comes to an end in 2012, there are two avenues to explore. One is along the same lines as the previous one, a kind of "Kyoto II," which would imply

that the industrialized countries follow the United Nations (UN) rules of the game and commit to reducing GHG emissions. The main opponent to this is the United States, which has not accepted the accord, and the main winner would be the UN mechanism itself, which, as we all know, protects the weakest.

The other avenue is negotiating a different accord altogether that would both bring in all parties, mainly the United States and the main emerging countries in terms of development, like China, India, Brazil and perhaps also Indonesia and South Africa, who together account for 80 percent of the world's pollution. Since this road is new, it presents a series of aspects that are yet to be ironed out; among the most important of these is who must reduce emissions, by how much and starting when?

Regardless of which of these roads is followed, it must be clear that the failure in Copenhagen was due to U.S. legislators—both in the House and the Senate—not passing a federal law to reduce emissions compatible with the aims of a potential world accord. To this should be added—particularly if we are talking about the second road—that China has been reticent to commit itself to making verifiable reductions before the United States does. Indonesia, Japan, India and Brazil have made statements in the same vein, saying they are unwilling to set reduction proposals as long as the biggest polluter has made not commitments.

Forging a consensus about who must reduce emissions is the core point of any global agreement on climate change. We must remember that, in its time, the philosophy of the Kyoto Protocol was based on common but differentiated responsibility, rooted in the argument that countries that had been industrialized for years had already polluted a great deal, and for that reason should take on commitments to reduce emissions and finance new technologies that would make it possible for the developing countries to not repeat this environmentally unsustainable model. The Kyoto Protocol was built on the idea that the developed countries are responsible for shouldering the cost of decarbonizing the developing countries.

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Today, in the prelude of a new accord, we are facing the same concern: who must reduce emissions? What is meant by the biggest polluter? Who has polluted in the past, who is doing it today and who will do it in the future? For that matter, should pollution be measured as a function of the total amount of metric tons emitted or as a function of emissions per capita? These are very relevant, important points because they elicit different answers that will define what must be done. What is not at all in doubt is that the United States is the world's biggest polluter in all senses: in terms of absolute amounts of emissions, historically and per capita.

In contrast, in the case of China, enormous differences can already be observed: despite the fact that it is second in terms of absolute amounts, it comes in 122<sup>nd</sup> in the world in terms of emissions per capita. The case of India is even more extreme, since it is the world's seventh largest polluter in absolute terms, but among the lowest ranking per capita, where it comes in 163<sup>rd</sup>. Europe is the third largest polluter and also fourteenth per capita. Mexico emits 1.5 percent of the planet's pollution, but is thirteenth in terms of absolute amounts, fifteenth historically, and ninety-third in terms of emissions per capita.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) figures frequently say that China will become the world's largest consumer of energy in the first years of the next decade and that, together with India, will be responsible for 45 percent of the increase in world consumption projected for 2005-2030. What OECD International Energy Agency reports do not usually stress is that, despite this, by 2030 China and India's carbon emissions will continue to be much smaller than those of the OECD countries. For example, experts calculate that by 2015, India's per capita emissions will barely reach 1.4 tons, compared to the OECD's 10.4 tons. What is more, by 2030, India will only be producing 2.3 tons and China, 7.9, compared to the projected 19 tons in the United States and 11.6 in the OECD countries.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the idea shared by many in countries like the United States, Canada and Japan that the Kyoto commitments were unfair because they imposed great sacrifices by

the industrialized countries while giving the emerging economies a free rein should be taken with a grain of salt. It is quite absurd and far from any notion of justice, for example, that a country like the United States, which emits 20.6 tons per capita, should try to convince India, which emits only 1.2 tons, to take on obligatory emission cutback commitments. This would mean, for example, denying access to electricity to the more than 500 million inhabitants of India who do not yet have it. There is no doubt, however, that the developing countries have a right to develop and also the obligation to make a priority, not of reducing their GHG emissions, but of their poverty levels.

#### THE MECHANISMS

In recent years proposals have been offered as alternatives to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, particularly by presidents of the United States, in an attempt to create a new forum that would this time come under their leadership.

In May 2007, President George W. Bush created the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate (APP). Through this partnership, the United States offered clean technologies and the possibility to disseminate them among a select group of major world polluters, basically in Asia, including China, India, Australia, Canada, and later probably even Mexico. The idea was that through the APP, the big polluters would establish voluntary accords to reduce carbon emissions using U.S. technology. The idea was to introduce so-called "clean technologies," like, for example clean coal, nuclear energy, carbon capture (a method not for reducing emissions, but for capturing already consumed emissions), and bio-fuels. It should be mentioned that most of these technologies continue to be questioned by environmentalist groups as possible substitutes for fossil fuels.

To promote the partnership and in order to present an alternative to the Kyoto Protocol, the United States has carried out a series of bilateral negotiations. In 2009, just

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before the long-awaited Copenhagen summit, Barack Obama announced the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate (MEF).<sup>2</sup> This forum was “intended to facilitate a candid dialogue among major developed and developing countries, help generate the political leadership necessary to achieve a successful outcome at the December UN climate change conference in Copenhagen, and advance the exploration of concrete initiatives and joint ventures that increase the supply of clean energy while cutting greenhouse gas emissions.”<sup>3</sup> The United States seems confident that a modified version of the MEF could play a leading role in future negotiations and win legitimacy in the United Nations.

The so-called G20 —actually nothing more than the G8 plus the European Union and a series of emerging nations like Saudi Arabia, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, South Korea, South Africa and Turkey— has also been suggested as a possible alternative forum for dealing with climate change. This group, until now mainly focused on financial and trade issues, undoubtedly includes the biggest polluters, although, just like in the case of climate change in the UN, they are very at odds with each other. In contrast with the Kyoto Protocol, the very nature of this forum would require creating an institution similar to the World Trade Organization to deal with climate change, and that would not be so much for negotiating an accord, but for creating a regulatory body on climate change issues.

#### EXPECTATIONS

Expectations for the Mexico 2010 summit are not very encouraging. The players who deactivated Copenhagen have not given out very positive signals: U.S. senators have begun to criticize the bill passed by the House, and China, for its part, has said it has no intention of changing its position, and every time it has had the chance, it has underlined the right of nations to grow without subjecting themselves to international commitments.

Given this situation, at the next summit, Mexico basically has two choices. The first is to try to convince participants of the benefits of a new treaty in the Kyoto Protocol style, which would imply obligatory reduction commitments by industrialized countries, but this time broadened out to include at least China, India and Brazil. The task would by no means be easy, and the time remaining is short, not favoring this choice. If the U.S. House and Senate do not decide to establish reduction commitments within U.S. territory this year, thus not allowing the nation to agree on commitments with the rest of the world, then this first option (to achieve something in the area of emissions reduction) would be completely closed. We would be left, then, with the second option, the “soft” one. Instead of trying for an accord on reductions, we could at least reach an agreement on a related issue: what is known as adaptation to climate change. This would imply focusing on raising as much money as possible and discussing the mechanisms for distributing it so that poor countries can better adapt to the devastating effects of climate change. This option, more reduced in scope, could lead to concrete results.

Lastly, given the threat of climate change, we must remember what Bolivian President Evo Morales said about the recent earthquakes that have shaken Latin America: we must act because it seems that “Mother Earth is angry.”<sup>4</sup> ■■■

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Pablo Bustelo, “China e India: energía y cambio climático,” Real Instituto Elcano (ARI), document number 136/2007, December 28, 2007, [http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/analisis/ARI2007/ARI1362007\\_Bustelo\\_India\\_China.pdf](http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/analisis/ARI2007/ARI1362007_Bustelo_India_China.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> This was announced on March 28, 2009. The 17 major economies participating in it are Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, the European Union, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States.

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.majoreconomiesforum.org/>. [Editor's Note]

<sup>4</sup> President Evo Morales made this comment before the UN during the commemoration of Earth Day on February 28, 2010. [Editor's Note.]

# From Human Rights to Civil Rights The Unavoidable Challenges of International Migration

Ariadna Estévez López\*



Bobby Yip/REUTERS

While citizenship is understood as a broad legal and social framework for belonging to a specific political community delimited by territory, the doctrine of human rights projects this legal framework beyond territorial borders and national sovereignties. This is the big attraction of human rights *vis-à-vis* the exclusionary function of citizenship in a world where opportunities and prosperity are distributed unequally among nations.

The dominant theory of citizenship in political sociology is English writer T.H. Marshall's, even in countries like Mexico, where the welfare state was not based on rights of citizenship but on corporatism and the political patronage system.

For Marshall, citizenship consists of ensuring that within a liberal-democratic welfare state, all members of a community are treated as equals through the adjudication of rights. Marshall created a typology that includes political, civil and social rights, historically defined and adjudicated to different social subjects. The state ensures that, with the guarantee of these three kinds of rights, each citizen feels an equal part of the community and is motivated to participate in it.<sup>1</sup>

One problem with this concept of citizenship is membership or nominal citizenship, also known as nationality, which is symbolized by possessing a passport and categorizing individuals in accordance with the name of the state they belong to. Today, nominal citizenship is being seriously questioned as fundamentally state-centric in a world in which this is increasingly irrelevant. The rights associated with residency and

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\*Researcher at CISAN.

**Frontiers separating citizens  
from non-citizens simultaneously include  
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belonging to a state create a division between citizens and non-citizens, which in turn creates a hierarchy of non-residents at the bottom of which are the undocumented. For those who wish to enter, exclusion continues to be absolute, with no degree of inclusion, given that citizenship serves to keep them out.<sup>2</sup>

These frontiers separating citizens from non-citizens serve to simultaneously include and exclude even if the emphasis is on the nation-state or the community, and they operate as physical limits and structural and symbolic barriers. These patterns are crisscrossed by gender and race, though in ways that reflect specific national, cultural and historic contexts. From this standpoint, we can identify citizenship as a form of inclusion/exclusion in which migrants are simultaneously excluded from being granted rights, from receiving cultural recognition and from political participation.<sup>3</sup>

Brysk and Shafir state that globalization has created a context in which many social phenomena are beyond the sphere of states, thus creating conditions for the violation of human rights and different levels of opportunities for claiming them. A “citizenship gap” is being created in which non-citizens (migrants) and second-class citizens (the marginalized and discriminated against) are permanently at risk. However, at the same time, they find a tool for struggle in human rights,<sup>4</sup> which have become a global political culture, a symbolic international order and an institutional and normative framework that orients and constricts states.<sup>5</sup>

In the case of migrants, some authors maintain that the normative scope of the human rights discourse has already gone beyond national citizenship, so much so that documented and even undocumented immigrants have benefitted from a series of civil and social rights (particularly freedom of expression, of association and of assembly, plus the rights to education, to health and to vote in municipal matters) because the countries in question have different commitments to international human rights legislation.<sup>6</sup> However, Dunn believes that these views overestimate the scope of the discourse, since what he calls nationalist citizenship unfortunately continues to prevail. However, he says, it must be recognized that

the mechanisms offered by the universal and inter-American rights systems are useful for immigrants.<sup>7</sup>

From a moderate or openly optimistic perspective of the political potential of the human rights discourse for broadening the concept of citizenship, these rights—granted because one possesses *humanity* and not a *nationality*—can be considered an answer to the vulnerability migrants experience, without the rights that could guarantee their social, economic, political and legal autonomy. Human rights are seen as a legal framework that protects persons who decided or were forced to migrate because chance placed them in a nation that did not give them the opportunities for a life.

Based on some of the epistemological overlap between citizenship and human rights (natural, inalienable rights in the civil, political and social spheres and more recently in the cultural sphere), in globalization the human rights discourse has inspired some ideas of citizenship. First off are the proposals that consider it important to preserve the broadest possible gamut of rights for national citizens and give a more limited range to migrants, particularly regarding matters that make them more vulnerable or that are occasioned by economic globalization. So, the priority is put on labor, cultural and/or political rights, as well as a broader range of rights, without being as complete as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR).

First, outstanding among the new ways of conceptualizing citizenship emphasizing labor rights are transnational labor citizenship<sup>8</sup> and flexible citizenship.<sup>9</sup> Gordon proposes transnational labor citizenship as a new migratory status that would allow free transit to workers. This means that work visas would not be granted by national governments through employers (as is the case with temporary work visas, for example), but through the transnationally organized workers’ movement. That is, workers confederations in a country would work together with those of other nations to give this kind of citizenship to those who request it, making sure that employers and states respect migrants’ labor and social rights. According to Gordon, this proposal is not simply normative, but is empirically based on the support of European unions for undocumented employees of cleaning companies that contract out the work.

Ong has re-conceptualized citizenship from a neoliberal standpoint as exercised by elite migrants (basically corporation employees and businesspersons) to instrumentally use rights that these privileged strata have access to. According to Gordon, flexible citizenship brings out the accumulation of

transnational practices by elite migrants for enjoying two kinds of advantages offered by economic globalization: 1) different global benefits, like business subsidies, real estate, enrollment in global Ivy League universities, and even social security for their families; and 2) the utilization of business, legal and social goods facilitated by a high degree of mobility. For example, a Japanese citizen may take advantage of English liberalism to invest in Hong Kong, while his wife and small children live in the United States, and he sends his older children to study at Oxford. All this time, the children can take advantage of free British health services, and his wife, of the cultural services offered by a city like New York. Although a rightwing notion, flexible citizenship deals with rights that all international migrants should aspire to, above and beyond the basic rights involved in transnational labor citizenship.

Secondly, the proposal that emphasizes cultural rights is transnational citizenship, based on the idea that globalization produces cultural and social identities that transcend national frontiers, thereby generating multiple, differentiated forms of belonging. The survival of democracy, says Castles, depends on finding appropriate ways to include individuals and their multiple identities in a broad range of political communities both above and below the nation-state.<sup>10</sup>

Bauböck points out that, taking into account the new social phenomena involved in the globalization of migration, the following possibilities must be considered: broadening out political rights for simultaneous participation in the country of origin and the country of residence; sweeping inclusion of cultural rights bringing in the importance of factors like preserving one's language, customs, traditions, religion, etc.; and the collective exercise of these and social rights. This approach denies that establishing rights and membership goes beyond the nation-state and must be implemented by a global state. The nation-state is seen as the entity in charge of carrying out the practice of the formal, substantive contents of citizenship, but, in accordance with the content of international human rights legislation.<sup>11</sup>

Third, according to Barry, citizenship that favors political rights is external. Transnational citizenship focuses on the exercise and enjoyment of rights migrants have in their countries of origin instead of in receiving countries. Barry underlines the growing recognition by sending countries of their citizens living abroad given their economic contribution and the political and cultural leadership they assume in their communities. Based on this, governments have negotiated with their emigrants different forms of incorporation that are recon-

**The view known as “migration without borders” holds that the way to respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is to respect the right to migrate/emigrate of all persons.**

figuring national citizenship, giving it an external dimension. This happens in three key areas: 1) the economy, through remittances and capital flows; 2) the legal sphere, by recognizing that a person may hold two or more citizenships; and 3) politics, through voting abroad.<sup>12</sup>

A more complete proposal that does not, however, argue the universality of rights is that of civic citizenship, which is already being implemented in Europe, though unevenly in each country. Civic citizenship guarantees certain basic rights and obligations that resident, documented immigrants can gradually acquire so that they may be treated as the equals of nationals of the host state, even if they have not taken on national citizenship. These rights are the following: freedom of movement and residence; the right to work; access to services; the ability to vote and run for office in elections for the European Parliament and the municipality where they live; diplomatic and consular protection; and the right to petition, to information and to non-discrimination for reasons of nationality. According to the defenders of this position, this is a way to “de-nationalize” citizenship.<sup>13</sup>

Then there are views known as “migration without borders,” that hold that the way to respect the UDHR is to respect the right to migrate/emigrate of all persons, and that, as a result, all human rights of all persons must be recognized regardless of where they are. According to Soysal, there are two positions in this group: 1) that of those who reformulate citizenship based on human rights; and 2) that of those who refuse to apply adjectives to citizenship and as a result, try to justify the existence of rights to mobility emanating from the right to migrate granted by the UDHR.<sup>14</sup>

The first group includes Soysal's influential proposal of a post-national citizenship, which establishes that, while states insist on closing their borders and restricting migration, there is a growing universalization of rights due to the imposition of legal regimens like that of human rights, which are leading to new, more universal, inclusive notions of civic belonging counterposed to the idea of citizenship limited by state sovereignty. The weakening of national sovereignty and the growing importance of international human rights regimes

The proposal that emphasizes cultural rights is transnational citizenship, based on the idea that globalization produces cultural and social identities that transcend national frontiers.

lead Soysal to propose a citizenship that goes beyond the idea of national identity and assigns rights as a function of the status of “human being.” She says that post-national citizenship is nothing more than the recognition of rights already being exercised by immigrants who do not have national citizenship, but participate in the political and social community, and that they are universal because the migrants themselves demand them as human —not only civil— rights.

In addition, there is the proposal of a global or cosmopolitan citizenship, inserted into the normative framework of cosmopolitanism, which refers to a global policy model in which relationships among individuals transcend the nation-state and are increasingly regulated by global legal institutions and regimes, including, significantly, that of human rights. Cosmopolitanism suggests that there must be a distinction between citizens’ rights and nationality and that people should enjoy civil, social and even political rights in more than one country, which would constitute the right to be treated equally.<sup>15</sup> This approach takes on board all these values and, in addition, incorporates activism in transnational social movements as a central factor. According to Carter, this activism’s central objective is to defend human rights and democratize supra-national institutions in order to build a truly democratic global state.<sup>16</sup>

For their part, Pécoud and De Guchteneire propose the recognition of the right to mobility as a contemporary reinterpretation of Articles 13 and 14 of the UDHR, which establish the right of moving from one country to another (the right to emigrate) and the right to asylum (the right to immigrate).<sup>17</sup> Both these rights were formulated and interpreted in the context of the holocaust and the Cold War, which means they should be reinterpreted in light of the socioeconomic and environmental consequences of globalization. In this context, the right to migrate is also a reinterpretation of the right to freely choose a job and to enjoy an appropriate standard of living, both of which are recognized in the International Charter of Human Rights.

Lastly, we have Vitale’s proposal of *ius migrandi* (the right to migrate).<sup>18</sup> This view justifies the existence of a right to mi-

grate that goes beyond the nationalist basis, no matter how much it is questioned and reconfigured. Vitale uses a cosmopolitan argument to justify that it be guaranteed based on international human rights statutory law. Only by upholding the right to migrate it will be possible to overcome the nationalism that embraces the idea of citizenship and to affirm the revolutionary, non-criminal nature of migration. ■■■

## NOTES

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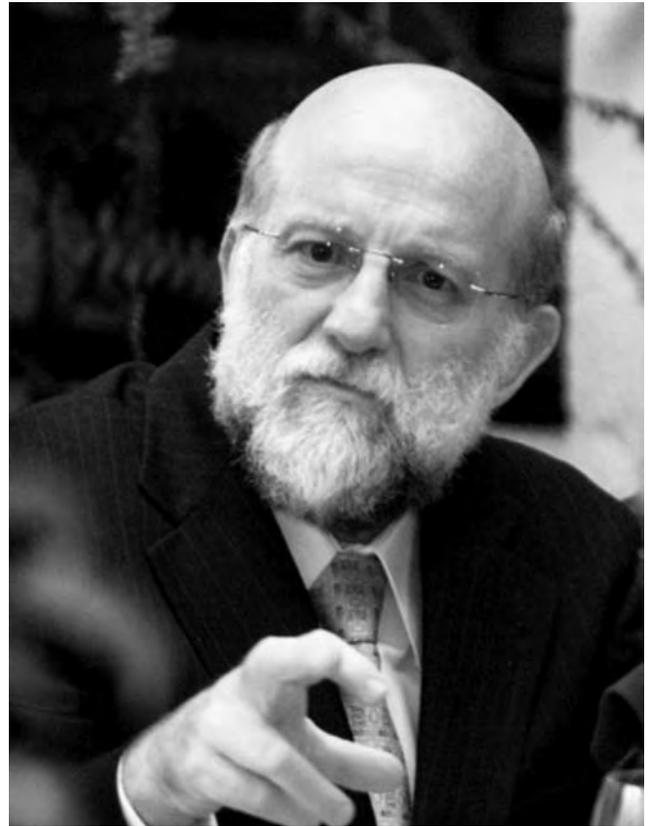
# Carlos Rico Ferrat

## A Good Heart Guided by Solidarity (1950-2010)

*Respected diplomat Carlos Rico Ferrat died in Houston, Texas, where he was doing research about the Mexico-U.S. border. Voices of Mexico pays him homage in the words of his closest relatives, colleagues and friends.*

**Marisa Studer:**<sup>1</sup> “I had the privilege of knowing Carlos Rico, an exceptional person, when I took the course he taught for several years at El Colegio de México [Mexico College] on Mexico’s foreign policy .... Above all things, Carlos was my teacher. His example taught me to take on any project with fervor and complete commitment. In his absolute devotion to research, Carlos taught me the fundamental importance of academic rigor and intellectual honesty. His mind —brilliant, erudite and crystal clear— was an infinite source of inspiration. His profound humanity taught me that it wasn’t worthwhile winning the argument if that meant humiliating the other person or losing a friendship. He also taught me that originality of thinking is a precious gem that must be cultivated through constant learning. He was a visionary, a precursor of many innovative ideas in the field of international relations.”

**Luis Maira:**<sup>2</sup> “Carlos Rico was my best Mexican friend among the many very good ones I had in the 12 years I lived in exile in Mexico City. Affection for Carlos was incremental. It increased the more you knew him and got to know the different facets that made him more complete and original: the vastness of his literary, cinematic and musical culture; his collector’s passion for searching out books, records or movies that he would then have trouble classifying and organizing.... I also admired the generous relationships he established with his many disciples and their recognition of him.... I remember his solidarity with those fighting for freedom and democracy in our countries and his commit-



His mind —brilliant, erudite and crystal clear— was an infinite source of inspiration. His profound humanity taught me that it wasn’t worthwhile winning the argument if that meant humiliating the other person or losing a friendship.

ment to building a more united, integrated Latin America. I traveled through almost all the countries of the hemisphere with him and saw how everywhere, invariably, the number of followers and the affection increased.”

**Juan Rebolledo Gout:**<sup>3</sup> “I met Carlos at the Instituto Patria around 1965 or 1966. We used to frequent proto-literary circles, aficionados that we were of history and lan-

### Carlos Rico Ferrat

Born in Mexico City in 1950, Rico did his undergraduate work in international relations at El Colegio de México (The Mexico College). He received his master's in diplomatic studies from the Matías Romero Institute for Diplomatic Studies, and his doctorate from Harvard University.

As vice-minister for North America between December 2006 and September 2009, he was one of the negotiators of the Mérida Initiative together with Mexico's ambassador to the United States, Arturo Sarukhán. From the time he accepted this post, he accompanied Minister of Foreign Relations Patricia Espinosa on innumerable occasions and President Felipe Calderón on his trips to the United States, since he worked unceasingly to improve bilateral relations between Mexico and the United States.

Before that, Rico was a Walter J. Levy Fellow of the Council on Foreign Relations in 1980 and a senior consultant for the Inter-American Dialogue from 1982 to 1983. He also did outstanding work as the head of chancellery at Mexico's embassy in Japan (1992-1994); in the the Ministry of Foreign Relations as general director for Latin America and the Caribbean (1997-1998) and for North America (1998-1999); as consul in Boston (1999-2002); minister for political affairs in Washington (2002-2004); and Mexico's ambassador to Israel (2005-2006). He left his post as vice-minister for North America in the Ministry of Foreign Relations last October to head up the beginning of the Mérida Initiative, of which he was one of the ideologues. After laws were passed in the United States a couple of years ago infringing on undocumented Mexicans' rights, he also worked to defend immigrant rights north of the border.

Rico was also recognized for his academic work, in which he focused on North America, and among other important achievements, he headed up the Institute for United States Studies (1984-1986) at the Center for Economic Research and Teaching (CIDE), one of the first institutes of its kind in Mexico. Also, he was a visiting professor at the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies at the University of California at San Diego (1983-1984), and at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Duke University (1986-1987). He was also a professor at CIDE (1976-1980) and El Colegio de México (1987-1992), and a researcher at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (1989). His diplomatic experience led him to act as an advisor and on editorial boards of several publications in Mexico and the United States, among them *Voices of Mexico*, in addition to being a tutor and example for several generations of new researchers and diplomats.





guage. We weren't anarchists or history-biased, but we used to enjoy seeing things as they were and imagining what they could be. I leaned toward philosophy and Carlos, history. Our eagerness to understand the world was even greater than our desire to change something in the world. [With time] we created mechanisms for working with the Americans and the Central Americans; I don't know if they've lasted, but in their time, they were useful for the country."

**Abraham F. Lowenthal:**<sup>4</sup> "Carlos managed to develop in tandem both his analytic, intellectual and academic skills and vocation, but also his mastery of public policy, bureaucracy, politics and diplomacy. He had a restless curiosity and a capacity to frame good questions and to get them answered. But he also had a strong commitment to action, aimed at solving problems and improving situations. He was never too academic to be relevant and useful, indeed indispensable, to the foreign ministry. But he was also never so political or diplomatic as to weaken his intellectual acuity and integrity... Jewish culture emphasizes the qualities of a *mensch*, a Yiddish word that means a good and decent person, someone whom other people like and look up to. Carlos was, above all, a *mensch*."

**Roberto Bouzas:**<sup>5</sup> "Our presence testifies to his generosity, his decency, his love for Mary and his profound pride in Ana and Deni.<sup>6</sup> When we saw each other in Houston last November, as he looked at photos of his children when they were

little, Carlos said, 'We have to be proud of our children.' And Carlos was. There are few things that can make anyone happier than the love of his partner and pride in his children. He had both. Carlos was a happy guy. Today, it falls to me to write these words with the tears falling on the page from somewhere unexpected, but a place not foreign to Carlos (Jerusalem). As I said at the beginning, these words don't mean to be a farewell, but to pay homage."

**Ana and Deni Rico:** We knew and we know that his greatest quality and what distinguished him is that he was a good man, in the full meaning of the word. He was generous; he watched over our dreams; he helped us and educated us. He really opened

the doors of the world to us, as well as the doors to his heart.... He was brilliant, honest, and always intelligently humorous; he knew how to enjoy life and he taught us to enjoy it, too.... Our dad was always our guide, offering the best of his counsel and taking great interest in us. He had many lives and we had the good fortune of sharing some of them with him. He lived intensely, giving himself over 100 percent to everything he did." **MM**

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> María Isabel Studer Noguez is the director of the Center for Dialogue and Analysis about North America, an institution linked to the Monterrey Technological Institute of Higher Learning (ITESM) Graduate School for Administration and Public Policy (EGAP), Mexico City campus. [Editor's Note.]

<sup>2</sup> Luis Maira is a Chilean lawyer and socialist politician, a former minister in the cabinet of President Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle and currently his country's ambassador in Argentina. [Editor's Note.]

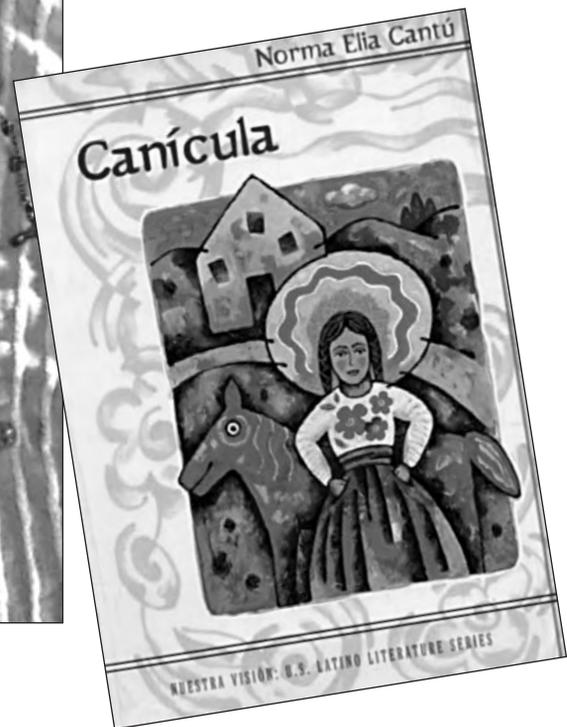
<sup>3</sup> Former vice-minister of Foreign Affairs for North America and the European Community (1994-2000) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SRE) during the period when Carlos Rico was the General Director for North America (1998-1999). [Editor's Note.]

<sup>4</sup> Abraham F. Lowenthal is a foreign policy expert focusing on Latin America and the Caribbean, professor of international relations, University of Southern California College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, and President emeritus of the Pacific Council on International Policy. [Editor's Note.]

<sup>5</sup> Roberto Bouzas is the academic director of the Flacso-University of San Andrés-University of Barcelona master's program in international relations and negotiations, and professor of international economics at the University of Buenos Aires School of Economic Sciences. [Editor's Note.]

<sup>6</sup> His wife and children. [Editor's Note.]

# Reviews



## **Canícula. Snapshots of a Girlhood en la Frontera**

*Norma Elia Cantú*

University of New Mexico Press

Albuquerque, 1995, 132 pp.

## **Canícula. Imágenes de una niñez fronteriza**

*Norma Elia Cantú*

Houghton Mifflin Company

Boston, 2000, 238 pp.

A Literary Quinceañera<sup>1</sup>

Quinceañera fiestas, or coming-of-age celebrations, are still very big in Mexico. And en la frontera. On April 23, an unusual event, a Literary Quinceañera—complete with *madrinas* and *padrinos*, godmothers and godfathers—was a literary happening in the borderlands. It celebrated the fifteenth anniversary

of the publication of Norma Elia Cantú's moving, unique and unconventional fictionalized memoir, *Canícula. Snapshots of a Girlhood en la Frontera*, originally published in 1995 and available as of 2000 in a Spanish version translated/rewritten by Cantú—quite a literary feat in itself.

A celebration such as this—that took place in San Antonio, Texas, Cantú's present home—is a

reminder that literary and community activities and events transmute traditions into meaningful statements that continue to recreate rich, ever-changing tapestries of everyday life experience en la frontera.

Chicana pioneer theorist and writer Gloria E. Anzaldúa in her acclaimed ground-breaking book *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987) refers to the Mexico-U.S. border as “*una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds.” Chicana poet Gina Valdés writes about “a wall of barbed lies,/a chain of sighs, a heart/pounding, an old wound/...A cross of stones/extending to the four points,/each stone a prayer,/each prayer a murmuring stone/...a fresh wound on an old cut.” Chicana writer Alicia Gaspar de Alba personifies la frontera as a “sleeping beauty”: “Her waist bends like the river/bank around a flagpole....Her legs/sink in the mud/of two countries, both/sides leaking sangre/y sueños.”

**Speaking from the herida-frontera, *Canícula* addresses major moments of personal and collective drama and minutiae that Sandra Cisneros refers to when she writes about it.**

A re-reading of *Canícula. Snapshots of A Girlhood en la Frontera* 15 years later brings the reader face to face with myriad realities of this “land in-between,” as Norma Elia Cantú calls life en la frontera, those “borderlands” that embrace far more than 1,952 geographical miles of barbed wire, built walls, flowing blood-tinged waters, hundreds of cameras and border patrol units. Over a century and a half ago this boundary came into being through the 1848 Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty that signed away 55 percent of Mexico’s territory to the U.S. in return for a sum of money that around the time *Canícula* was written could be said to be roughly equivalent to a year’s of Mexico’s annual budget.<sup>2</sup>

En la frontera, the in-between land where dreams and nightmares cohabit, those borderlands where boundaries between reality and the imaginary seem almost seamless, is where the narrative voice in *Canícula* is situated, witnessing and testifying to a

legacy of generations. The protagonist Azucena’s “situated knowledge,” as Donna Hathaway calls it, is where genealogies acquire new yet recognizably traditional values and perspectives; where the dogged continuity of old ways is (suf)fused in unique hybridity; where the cross-borderings of realness and fiction are integrated into daily life as a matter of course, as the annual seasons arising and passing away. Where reality can often be larger than fiction. From this land in-between is voiced a range of everyday experiences that acquire renewed dimensions when carefully crafted and shaped into a deliberate aesthetic form. When they are lovingly shaped into shareable ways en la frontera communities by making both English and Spanish versions available.

“*Cuando vives en la frontera*,” Gloria Anzaldúa once wrote in her poem “To Live in the Borderlands Means You,” “people walk through you, the wind steals your voice.” The fact is, though, that having written *Canícula. Snapshots of a Girlhood en la Frontera*, the wind has not stolen a single note from Norma Elia Cantú. This Literary Quinceañera event attests to this, along with the numerous readings Cantú has been asked to do at universities and community colleges throughout the U.S. in these 15 years, including one in Mexico shortly after its publication. There is no danger Cantú’s voice or that of the communities she voices can be stolen by the whirlwinds of history. At this distance in time, it could be confidently stated that this is now a classic of Frontera and contemporary Chicana literature.

Speaking from the herida-frontera, *Canícula* addresses major moments of personal and collective drama and minutiae that celebrated author Sandra Cisneros refers to when she writes about *Canícula*: “Intimate as a poem and as large as a Texas sky, these stories are at once diminutive and grand.” This “collage of stories,” as Cantú refers to them, take place during a specific time of year related to the book’s title. As she explains in a brief introductory note for the benefit of those unfamiliar with the term, “la canícula” refers to the “dog days”: “a particularly intense part of the summer when most cotton is harvested in South Texas; at that time because of the intense heat, it is said, not even dogs venture

out.” Moreover, the title alludes to the specific time she wrote the book with intense dedication during the 1993 dog days under a New Mexico and a Texan sun.

*Canícula*, as the curiously tongue-in-cheek introduction to the book announces, is the second volume of a (fictitious, in reality) trilogy that opens with *Papeles de mujer* (written entirely in Spanish) and concludes with *Cabañuelas*. *Canícula* is aptly subtitled *Snapshots of a Girlhood en la Frontera*. These “snapshots” that suggest the spontaneous, the ephemeral, the instant chance moment frozen into a permanent paper memory, are able to hold time within the contours of a faded frame, and trigger a string of associative memories in the narrator-author that lure the narrative flow forward while moving backward in time. *Canícula* smells of musty, parchment-like, sepia-tinted pictures that live suspended in time in an old shoebox, from where, tied up with an old ribbon—so the author announces—these photographs are taken out at random, whether they are textually included or not as specific visual memory-moments in the book itself: “a collage of stories [is] gleaned from photographs randomly picked, not from a photo album chronologically arranged, but haphazardly pulled from a box of photos where time is blurred.”

The 86 “snapshots” or “short stories” are strung together into what many critics consider a novel. Happy times are retraced, so are fears, death and sorrow, physical and psychological heridas (wounds), several thresholds of Azucena’s girlhood’s life-moments. These time-shiftings are fingerprinted by a narrative omniscience that shuffles photographs, memories, time-frameworks, experiences, providing an overall picture. Cantú explains in her introduction, “The story emerges from photographs, photographs through which, as Roland Barthes claimed, the dead return; the stories mirror how we live life in our memories, with our past and our present juxtaposed and bleeding, seeping back and forth, one to the other in a recursive dance.”

By means of the young Azucena’s narrative voice, fresh testimonial honesty is gathered and conveyed, even as the author’s aesthetic awareness is able to transmute, for instance in the opening story “Las

pizas,” the rough-and-tough experience of cotton-picking chores under a blazing sun with poignant and breezy poeticity.

“Martin High,” the story that brings to a close the “girlhood en la Frontera” time-framework in *Canícula*, is introduced by a photograph of several Martin High School students and briefly explores the variety of roads taken by those specific characters caught in a past moment of innocence and hope—even a touch of teenage awkwardness. These roads, reader is reminded, have not been easy or sorrow-free, often caught in or freed by multiple-layered meanings and experiences of the land in-between. “Martin High” brings the book to a close by stating, “Some of us love, and some of us hate, some of us love and hate our borderlands. Some of us remember, some of us forget.” The author ends with the reminder of memory as all-important in personal and collective memories, however painful the past, which

**These “snapshots” suggest  
the spontaneous, the ephemeral,  
the instant, chance moment frozen  
into a permanent paper memory.**

is something each of the stories between these covers celebrates as being still alive. Another final implication is that the once-upon-a-time future is, in fact, now—even as we engage in reading *Canícula*, or re-reading it 15 years later, or even reading this very book review.

The sense of spontaneity and the fragmentary nature of *Canícula*, reminiscent of other writings by Chicanas in which the coming of age life-threshold is brought to the forefront, bears witness to another frontera: the elusive border between autobiography and fiction that Cantú deliberately and provocatively embroiders on. The author’s introductory note offers the fascinating term “fictional autobioethnography” as a means of encompassing the multiple intentions encoded in *Canícula* that are as much autobiographical as they are fictional, as much personal as collective, as much a story as herstory (vs. history) en la frontera. In this sense, *Ca-*

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*nícula* becomes, as renowned Chicana author Ana Castillo has aptly put it, a “personalized ethnography that feels as familiar as my own family album, and as touching.”

Linguistic fronteras are also crossed in this unprecedented collage of kaleidoscopic memory-fragments. In the English version, Spanish is naturally interspersed with what could be referred to as classical Chicana literary precision and spontaneity. Yet the difference between codes is erased through the deliberate non-use of italics, thereby integrating the Spanish code of intimate expression akin to oral code-switching common to everyday language en la frontera and U.S. Chicano/a culture.

Cantú does make concessions to readers unfamiliar with the Spanish language. Several strategies are used, for instance, to integrate a natural and unobtrusive translating process into the narration itself, as this example from “Las piscas” shows: “Strange insects —frailillos, chinches, garrapatas, hormigas— some or all of these pests— ticks, fleas, tiny spiders the color of sand —some or all of these bichos— find their way to exposed ankles, arms, necks and suck life-blood, leaving welts, ronchas —red and itchy— and even pus-filled ampulas that burst and burn with the sun.” No exact parallel translation is overtly provided. Instead, a particular interplay revealing the complexities of bilingualism and interlingualism (the alternate use of both codes in a spontaneous and natural way) is illustrated on the very page. English-language comprehension is never jeopardized, yet the right to use untranslated Spanish as an assertion of a collective cultural and heart-held expression becomes almost a character in itself. One of the implications being, of course, that the literary and the political can happily cohabit en la frontera.

The authorial consciousness in *Canícula: Snapshots from a Girlhood en la Frontera* becomes a self-consciously politically-engaged and community-

devoted gifting to the reader, wrapped with a musty ribbon like that of the shoebox full of sepia-tinted photographs mentioned in Cantú’s prologue. The authorial voice is simultaneously detached from and is an intimate alphabet for Azucena’s rites of passage. As claimed at the end of the prologue that is integrated, the reader may be surprised to note, into the narrative process itself, “The stories of her girlhood in that land in-between, la frontera, are shared, her story and the stories of the people who lived that life with her is one. But who’ll hear it?” This expressed concern for who the recipient(s) might be, for those on the decodifying end, alludes to yet another frontera, to a communication crossbordering the author undertakes and includes in the writing act itself.

In this sense, the adolescent rites of passage en la frontera bordercrossed by Azucena, the female protagonist —Cantú’s alter ego positioned on somewhat shifting sands by the very fact the label “fictional autobioethnography” is offered on a silver platter to the reader— becomes aptly commemorated by the Literary Quinceañera celebration of *Canícula*.

Whether this will set a new trend in future literary communities remains unknown, although, in the meantime, it is certainly in a celebratory mood that we can embrace reading or re-reading *Canícula*. Gloria E. Anzaldúa once wrote that to “survive the Borderlands/you must live *sin fronteras*/be a crossroads.” We could easily assert that *Canícula* and Cantú are indeed living and memorable crossroads. ■■■

Claire Joysmith  
Researcher at CISAN

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<sup>1</sup> The deliberate strategy of using un-italicized words in Spanish interspersed in the English text in Cantú’s *Canícula* is mirrored in this review as a tribute to the novel and its linguistic-literary strategies. In this review I have respected, too, Gloria E. Anzaldúa’s use of italics in those texts of hers that are quoted. In this way, I aim to maintain consistency, above all, with those decisions made by each of these writers.

<sup>2</sup> Michael C. and William L. Sherman, *The Course of Mexican History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 351.



**Diplomacia en la era digital**  
**La ayuda alimentaria como maniobra neoliberal**

(Diplomacy in the Digital Era. Food Aid as a Neoliberal Maneuver)

*Camelia Tigau*

CISAN, UNAM/Cenzontle

Mexico City, 2009, 164 pp.

The complex phenomenon Camelia Tigau describes in her book could be clearly seen at the recent United Nations Conference on Climate Change in Copenhagen. A great many actors, visions and interests converged on that capital to set positions and conceivably negotiate framework agreements that would replace the Kyoto Protocol. What was demonstrated was that not only were there differences among the conceptions of the official and non-governmental actors, but that, with the unquestionable contribution of the media, the very exercise of diplomacy has changed.

While Danish royalty dined with heads of state from around the world, President Nasheed from the Maldives, at risk of disappearing due to climate change, criticized the diplomatic stance of the most developed countries and the emerging economies on a Danish television program.<sup>1</sup> Felipe Calderón, for his part, told the BBC and Danske Radio, “We are going to ask the government and the people of the United States to commit to this [binding] accord, and we will do exactly the same with the Chinese.”<sup>2</sup> On his radio and television program “Aló Presidente,” Hugo Chávez stated that Barack Obama left by “the back door” because he did not achieve inclusive accords, but only considered the interests of the economic powers and the large gas-emission producers like China, India, Brazil, Russia and South Africa.<sup>3</sup> This picture was filled out with the thousands of citizens and social and environmental organizations protesting in the streets of Copenhagen, linked together through networks using information and communications technologies.

**Tigau exemplifies her theses using  
the case of world food aid,  
dismantling it from a profoundly  
critical position.**

Undoubtedly, these collectives have created a kind of world citizens' diplomacy.

This dynamic, multi-factor scenario is what Tigau looks at in her book, whose solid, didactic structure allows the reader to delve more deeply into the elements that have given rise to the transformations in the exercise of diplomacy, particularly contemporary diplomacy up until the so-called digital era. Her starting point is the communications sciences and systems theories. Her complex vision makes it possible to reflect on aspects that frequently escape traditional analysis of international relations, like the infinity of inter-relations and correlations, nodes and vacuums that make up the fiber of diplomacy and the communication and action networks implicit in its workings. To this is added the emergence of new official actors (non-central governments, specialized national agencies, international and supranational bodies) as well as non-official ones (NGOs, companies, universities, scientists) on the international stage, and the construction of multi-level regional, international and global agendas.

The book is divided into two parts and sub-divided into six original, illuminating chapters. The first part offers the theoretical groundwork for understanding Tigau's specific vision. The second part focuses on evaluating the real significance and results of international food aid policy without being distracted by official discourse. The objective is to look at how diplomacy has evolved from an empirical activity by incorporating certain attributes into a difficult task within contemporary international relations.

The second chapter looks at what dynamic factors have favored the development of inter-relations among actors and networks for the chaotic expansion of diplomatic activities in different ways and areas. In the following section, the author defines the importance of the networks and so-called catalytic actors for the *good* functioning of diplomacy, since *good*

results will depend on the quality and quantity of relationships maintained with the many participating actors and networks. The end of the state's monopoly of international relations and the transformation of political, economic and civil power have led diplomacy to "more open" spaces. This is why neologisms like "netpolitik" and "noopolitik" have been coined.

In her fourth chapter, the author delves into the role of communication in public diplomacy and the adaptation of the state to globalization in the design of international image and communications strategy. This allows the reader to understand something essential to diplomacy in the digital era: the need to design a comprehensive strategy for diplomatic negotiations in the face of multiple counterparts, contacts and agents who define this form of international relations.

To conclude, Tigau exemplifies all this using the case of world food aid, dismantling it from a profoundly critical position. Behind food aid is the experimentation with and introduction of genetically modified organisms into markets opened up by the crisis and neoliberalism; the production of bio-fuels; and the elimination of transgenic commercial surpluses in producing countries. That is, Camelia Tigau offers us a well-argued analytical position that provides the reader with a broader view of current international relations and the way they may evolve. ■■■

*Leonardo Díaz Abraham*

**Professor and researcher  
Autonomous Metropolitan University,  
Cuajimalpa campus**

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<sup>1</sup> Claudia Beltrán Herrera, "Insta Mario Molina a sacar por lo menos una agenda en Copenhague," *La Jornada*, <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2009/12/19/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> AFP, DPA and Notimex, "Critican Castro, Morales y Chávez resultados de la cumbre climática," *La Jornada*, <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2009/12/21/>.