

Drug War as Neoliberal Trojan Horse

by
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Examination of the U.S.-backed wars on drugs in Colombia and Mexico reveals that, apart from the hegemonic discourse about narcotics control, these wars reinforce the power of transnational corporations over resource-rich areas owned and used by indigenous people, peasants, and the urban poor. Case studies in Mexico demonstrate that recent assassinations of activists and intimidation of communities that are organizing against large-scale mining must be understood within the framework of militarization justified in terms of an antinarcotics discourse. Drug war politics may thus be understood as a mechanism for promoting business-friendly policies and militarizing resource-rich areas. This politics is enshrined in the Mérida Initiative, which includes a national U.S.-style legal reform, modernization of the prison system, and the militarization and training of the federal police and other security forces, equipment transfers, and development funding designed to encourage foreign investment and further transnationalize the national economy.

El examen de la guerra contra las drogas financiada por los Estados Unidos en Colombia y México revela que, aparte del discurso hegemónico sobre el control de narcóticos, estas guerras refuerzan el poder de las corporaciones transnacionales sobre las áreas ricas en recursos que pertenecen y son utilizadas por las comunidades indígenas, los campesinos y los pobres de las zonas urbanas. Los estudios de casos en México demuestran que los recientes asesinatos de activistas y la intimidación de las comunidades que se están organizando en contra de la minería a gran escala deben ser entendidas dentro del marco de la militarización justificada en términos de un discurso antinarcótico. La política de la guerra contra las drogas puede, por lo tanto, entenderse como un mecanismo para promover políticas favorables a los negocios y la militarización de las áreas ricas en recursos. Esta política está consagrada en la Iniciativa de Mérida, la cual incluye una reforma jurídica nacional al estilo de los Estados Unidos, la modernización del sistema de prisiones, la militarización y entrenamiento de la policía federal y otras fuerzas de seguridad, la transferencia de equipos y fondos para desarrollar políticas que promuevan la inversión extranjera y así transnacionalizar más la economía nacional.

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On October 22, 2012, Ismael Solorio Urrutia and his wife, Manuela Solís Contreras, were shot point-blank outside of the city of Cuauhtémoc, in the northern Mexican state of Chihuahua. Solorio was one of the highest-profile opponents of a mining exploration project under way in his ejido, and he had

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formally denounced an attack on him by men from his community who supported the mining project (Amnesty International, 2012). Some of these men were believed to be low-ranking members of the Juárez cartel, an organized crime group thought to be active in the region. According to Martín Solís Bustamante, the decision to kill Ismael “wasn’t a decision made by the bosses of the drug cartels; rather, it was a local decision by low-level operatives of organized crime. They were the ones who made the decision together with [employees of] the mining company” (quoted Paley, 2013a). Solorio and Solís Bustamante were members of El Barzón, a farmer’s rights group active in Chihuahua and other northern states that had carried out early debtors’ protests and actions against devaluation and the lack of agricultural subsidies in Mexico’s countryside. The double murder of mine opponents in Chihuahua represented the first killings of locals resisting transnational mining in the state. (Activists resisting mining had previously been murdered in Oaxaca in March 2012 and in Chiapas in November 2010.)

According to the Servicio Mexicano de Geología (Mexican Geological Service—SMG), in 2010 Chihuahua was the second-most-important state in the country in the production of gold, silver, lead, and zinc (SMG, 2011). More than half of the land in Chihuahua, the largest state in Mexico and almost the size of Texas, has been distributed in mining concessions (SMG, 2011). The volume of precious metals mined has increased since 2006, with silver extraction almost doubling between 2006 and 2010 (SMG, 2011).

Since 2008, Chihuahua has also become one of the most violent states in Mexico. There were 2,601 homicides in 2008, 3,671 in 2009, 6,407 in 2010, and 4,500 in 2011 (INEGI, 2011). The spike in homicides coincided with the militarization of the state, particularly the border area around Ciudad Juárez, in 2008, beginning with Operativo Conjunto Chihuahua, a joint police and army deployment meant to deter organized crime and drug trafficking. In the 10 years preceding the militarization of the region, the murder rate in the state had averaged 586 a year and never gone over 648 (INEGI, 2011).

The murders of Solorio and Solís took place in a context of extreme violence against civilians and in a state with a strong prior history of attacks against activists. Instead of calling for a proper investigation and denouncing the murder of the highest-profile community opponent of its Cinco de Mayo exploration project in Chihuahua, Dan MacInnis, president and CEO of MAG Silver, chalked the killings up to the government’s fight against organized crime. “It was kind of an odd situation considering that 60,000 to 100,000 people have been killed in Mexico in the last six years by organized crime in the so-called drug war,” MacInnis told a Canadian journalist (Munson, 2013). “And rather than the obvious being reported, it was everything but that was being reported.” Asked for a clarification of this statement, MacInnis (personal communication) responded that what was puzzling was the “assumptions about the involvement of mining companies, utility companies, or farmers.”

The company position that it has become normal for civilians to be killed in Mexico reflects a generalized pattern in which the drug war launched by President Felipe Calderón “created a climate of such overwhelming violence and impunity that assassinations of political opponents—indigenous rights leaders, human rights advocates, anti-mining activists, guerrilla insurgents—are quickly

swept into the ever rising body count without much attention or outcry" (Gibler, 2011: 29). MacInnis may be able to chalk up the double murder of opponents of his mining project to the widespread violence happening around the country, but Solorio's and Solís's three orphaned sons and their extended family will live with the loss for the rest of their lives. Their community, Benito Juárez, is deeply divided over the prospect of mining in the territory. Following the murders, the ejido passed an ordinance against mining for the next 100 years that the company says is illegal (Paley, 2013b). The company has announced that it has stopped work for permitting reasons but plans to pick it up again as soon as possible (Paley, 2013b). More violence seems like a potential outcome should the company attempt to have workers resume exploration.

The killings of Solorio and Solís did not happen in isolation. Activists in Chihuahua and elsewhere in Mexico find themselves at a crossroads of environmental activism and organized crime in a region where all armed actors (police, army, organized crime groups) operate with near-total impunity. "In this state today, you can't go into the mountains, you can't go into communities more than 50 kilometers from the capital," said Oscar Castrejón Rivas, a lawyer who serves as head of the state lawyer's college. "And in the state capital you have the absurdity that in the entrance of the [main government building], they killed Marisela Escobedo, and in another important city they killed the two leaders of El Barzón." Escobedo was a mother fighting for justice in the case of her murdered teenage daughter and was gunned down on the corner of the city's central park in December 2010. Some of her closest supporters, including Castrejón, believe that her assassin is still on the loose.

Saúl Reyes Salazar, an activist from the Juárez Valley, estimates that in the state of Chihuahua alone, 40 activists have been killed since December 2006, something he likens to an ideological cleansing in the state. Two of his sisters, his sister-in-law, and two of his brothers were murdered between January 2010 and February 2011. The Reyes Salazar family was known for its environmental activism, having successfully fought a proposed nuclear waste facility in Texas and carried out campaigns against contamination and toxins being illegally disposed of in Juárez. Reyes Salazar links the killings of his siblings to their outspoken conviction that the army was responsible for murdering and disappearing family members (beginning with Josefina Reyes's son). Today, he lives in El Paso, Texas, having been granted asylum along with his immediate family in January of 2012, and his activism is now focused on denouncing the killings and the war that destroyed his family and forced him to flee Mexico. In an interview with me in March 2013 he said,

Today there's pretty much no one who talks about this, but the Juárez Valley is still contaminated by a 100-kilometer canal that carries Juárez waste water, the farming lands are contaminated by chemicals by various maquilas that dump their chemicals in the waste, there's oil from the mechanics' shops, and of course all of the human waste from all of the houses in Ciudad Juárez ends up in the valley, which is basically the septic tank of Juárez.

Indeed, news of environmental actions in the border region has fallen off in the face of the violence.

Chihuahua, like other parts of Mexico and Central America, is at once experiencing an important expansion in transnational mining and a state-led militarization under the pretext of the war on drugs. While disappearances and murders of environmental activists by state or irregular forces are obvious examples of environmental violence in Mexico, the rise in killings, kidnappings, and threats to civilians in Mexico is also of the utmost importance. I believe that what now appear as indiscriminate murders may eventually begin to appear as patterns linked either to the clearing of territory through terror for future resource extraction in rural areas or to capital-flow-facilitating infrastructure projects such as highways, airports, and border bridges in urban settings.

For example, at Vasco Gil, a tiny ranching hamlet in the mountains of Durango, in the summer of 2009, approximately 30 soldiers showed up and began carrying out surveillance and harassing residents. A few days later 10 to 15 more soldiers arrived and kidnapped 12 men from the area. Residents said that the soldiers asked them “where the armed groups were, and especially if [locals] had any knowledge about suspected narcotraffickers Ismael El Mayo Zambada and Joaquín el Chapo Guzmán” (*Riodoce*, 2009). The criminalization and terrorization of residents of Vasco Gil and nearby hamlets was carried out in the name of the fight against drug cartels, but closer inspection reveals that there is an even larger interest in the region. The Vancouver-based Chesapeake Gold Corporation has plans to build an open-pit mine in the area, removing 821 million metric tons of ore over 19 years of operations. These plans would necessitate the displacement of all residents of Vasco Gil (M3 Engineering and Technology, 2011). M3 Engineering and Technology, the consulting company that prepared the technical report for Chesapeake, described living conditions in Vasco Gil and surrounding communities as primitive and the community as isolated. It mischaracterized the local economy as based on ranching when forestry is actually the predominant economic activity.

The stakes in the area surrounding Vasco Gil are high: the Canadian company will need to invest Can\$486,926,000, to operate the mine, and there are claims that the areas contain “one of the largest undeveloped disseminated gold and silver deposits in the world” (Chesapeake, n.d.; M3 Engineering and Technology, 2011: 21). For Chesapeake the residents of Vasco Gil and nearby hamlets represent potential barriers to profit maximization. It owns 5,776 hectares of concessions in the area and acquired core samples in March and April of 2009 (M3 Engineering and Technology, 2011). Perhaps it is a coincidence that almost four dozen soldiers arrived in town months after the latest round of drilling took place in the area, but it seems useful to consider factors other than drugs (in this case, transnational mining interests) as potentially influencing violence aimed at local populations in resource-rich areas.

The fact that there is a resource rush taking place in tandem with the militarization (and paramilitarization) linked to the drug war is an open secret, one that provides a more adequate explanation of why governments (host and foreign) are promoting drug control strategies that do little to control drug trafficking or lessen consumption. To understand how this is taking place, it is helpful to consider the lessons emerging from antidrug efforts in Colombia through the 2000s.

HOW PLAN COLOMBIA INFORMED PLAN MÉXICO

As soon as Felipe Calderón became president in December of 2006, he announced that he would crack down on the drug trade. Less than a year later, Mexico announced the Mérida Initiative, a bilateral antinarcotics initiative funded by the United States and Mexico. Critics immediately began calling the agreement Plan México after its predecessor, Plan Colombia. Plan Colombia ended in 2006; in 2007 the United States shifted its weight behind the war on drugs from Colombia to Mexico; it introduced the Central America Regional Security Initiative (Plan Central America) in 2008 and the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (Plan Caribbean) in 2010.

Plan Colombia was launched in 2000 as a six-year plan to reduce cocaine production in Colombia and trafficking to the United States. Between 2000 and 2012, the U.S. government spent over US\$8 billion on Plan Colombia and related initiatives (Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, 2012). For all its spending, drug trafficking was not stemmed. A U.S. Government Accountability Office report found that drug-related targets were not met and “estimated flow of cocaine towards the United States from South America rose over the period” from 2000 to 2006 (U.S. GAO, 2008: 23). The Colombian military received US\$4.9 billion in of U.S. State Department and Defense Department assistance between 2000 and 2008 (U.S. GAO, 2008: 11). By 2005 there were an estimated 800 U.S. military personnel and 600 private military contractors working for the United States in Colombia (Forero, 2004). During former President Álvaro Uribe’s two terms (2002–2010) the army was commanded by now-president Juan Manuel Santos. The army was known to carry out joint patrols with right-wing paramilitary groups and was found to have perpetrated the “false-positives” scandal, which saw soldiers capturing and murdering civilians and then dressing them up as guerrilla combatants in order to claim progress in the war (Evans, 2009). According to a 2011 report on U.S. cooperation with Colombia prepared by the RAND Corporation and sponsored by the U.S. Air Force, U.S. support for Colombia through the 2000s included the supply of radar systems, helicopter carriers, heavy artillery, surveillance and interdiction training, training for port authorities, advice and equipment for aerial crop spraying programs, and U.S. Special Forces advisers to train the Colombian police and army (Chalk, 2011).

For much of Colombia’s poor and rural population, Plan Colombia meant increased militarization and violence. The aerial spraying of coca crops amounted to chemical warfare, as peasants and their lands were poisoned from above (O’Shaunessy, 2001). A historic process of paramilitarization was compounded by the war on drugs, which effectively forced indigenous and peasant communities off of their territories in order to open up land for foreign-owned corporations (Maher and Thompson, 2011: 96). In rural areas the presence of armed actors from state, guerrilla, narco, or other interests has severely impacted people’s daily lives. “Peasants and rural inhabitants have been deliberately terrorized by these uniformed, armed groups of men,” wrote María Victoria Uribe (2004: 91). By 2014 the total number of people displaced in Colombia was estimated at 5,368,138, and the total number of victims (including those killed and disappeared) over the past 50 years reached 6,073,437

(Sierra, 2014). Violence increased markedly with the implementation of Plan Colombia, and in 2002 there were 673,919 victims of violence in the war in Colombia, the largest number recorded for any year in recent decades (Sierra, 2014).

As Ibáñez and Vélez (2008: 661) point out,

Forced displacement in Colombia is not a casual by-product of the internal conflict. Armed groups attack the civil population to strengthen territorial strongholds, expand territorial control, weaken the support of the opponent, and accumulate valuable assets (e.g., land or extraction of natural resources). Forcing out population as a war strategy aims at impeding collective action, damaging social networks, and intimidating and controlling civilian population.

The displacements in Colombia did not drop off when Plan Colombia ended. According to the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (2012), “While there has been a drop in the rate of new displacements, an estimated 100,000 people were displaced internally in 2010, representing a net increase of 35 per cent compared to 2009, according to the Government.” The number of displaced recorded by the Colombian nongovernmental organization Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento (Consultancy on Human Rights and Displacement—CODHES) in 2011 was more than double the 2010 number, at 259,146 persons (Consultoría, 2012). Between 2005 and 2010, 265 trade unionists were murdered, many by the same paramilitary groups spawned to fight guerrillas and protect narcotics traffickers (U.S. Leap, n.d.). The situation of indigenous people became so dire that human rights groups warned of genocide. According to the Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia (National Indigenous Organization of Colombia—ONIC), 64 of Colombia’s 102 indigenous groups are at risk of extinction, and indigenous peoples have been and continue to be disproportionately impacted by the armed conflict in Colombia (ONIC, 2010: 8–11).

For all the damage wrought and the money spent in Colombia, Plan Colombia failed to reduce in a meaningful way the amount of cocaine flowing from South America to the United States. Homicide rates in the Andean nation remain among the highest in South America (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2011: 93). Mass displacements of the rural population continue. In retrospect, it appears that the economic impacts of Plan Colombia outshone any progress on controlled substances and the ongoing violence in the countryside. Halfway through Plan Colombia, in January of 2003, the International Monetary Fund approved a US\$2.1 billion loan to Colombia. “Subsequently, the president privatized one of the country’s largest banks (BANCAFE), restructured the pension program, and reduced the number of public-sector workers in order to cut budget deficits, as required by the international lending institution” (Hristov, 2009: 17). According to the Committee for the Abolition of Third World Debt (2002), “Although not directly related to Plan Colombia, the IMF’s Colombia loan fits in to Plan Colombia as part of the larger strategy to revive the Colombian economy.”

If opening up the economy (rather than narcotics control) was the desired outcome of Plan Colombia, it was a success. Foreign direct investment increased

steadily following the launch of Plan Colombia. At the outset it was calculated at US\$2.4 billion, and by 2011 it was more than US\$13.4 billion, registering the fastest growth in Latin America; in 2012 it reached US\$15.65 billion (Banco de la República, 2013). Foreign direct investment in the mining sector (including coal) has grown from US\$47 million in 1994 to more than US\$2 billion in 2012, when it accounted for nearly half of nonpetroleum investment. Oil and gas also make up an increasingly important portion of Colombia's inward foreign direct investment, increasing from less than one-tenth in the mid-1990s to over one-third by 2012, when it reached US\$5.389 billion (Banco de la República, 2013). U.S. bureaucrats were happy to take credit for the country's economic turnaround. "Colombia's economic takeoff after 2003 did not happen by chance," noted a representative of USAID in a 2008 report to the GAO. Fifty-two areas of Colombia's economic system were targeted for reform during Plan Colombia, and "USAID provided technical assistance to the [Government of Colombia] to help it design and implement policies ranging from fiscal reform to financial sector strengthening to improving the environment for small businesses, and many others" (U.S. GAO, 2008: 101).

One of the companies opened up to private investment under Plan Colombia was the formerly fully state-owned oil firm Ecopetrol. Ecopetrol was founded in 1951 as a state company but, following a partial privatization scheme introduced by President Uribe, is now a mixed corporation that is 89.9 percent owned by the state and 10.1 percent by shareholders. In addition to backing the partial privatization of the state oil company in 2002, the U.S. government began funding the Colombian army to protect sections of the Caño Limón-Coveñas oil pipeline (Dunning and Wirpsa, 2005: 84):

Violent attacks on Colombian energy installations, prior to and within the context of the post-11 September global anti-terrorism campaigns, have provided U.S. lawmakers and members of the executive branch with legitimating arguments for increasing military aid to Colombia and expanding significantly and without precedent, the U.S. mission there beyond counter-narcotics to include counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism.

By 2005 U.S. Special Forces had "provided training and equipment to about 1,600 Colombian Army soldiers" (U.S. GAO, 2005: 2). There are proven links between this infrastructure protection plan and the drug war: the aviation component of the U.S.-led militarization of the pipeline was administered by the U.S. Narcotics Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Bogotá (U.S. GAO, 2005: 8). The Caño Limón-Coveñas pipeline serves oil fields exploited jointly by Occidental Petroleum (U.S.), Repsol (Spain), and Ecopetrol.

The unfolding of Plan Colombia in Putumayo, a vast region encompassing Colombia's southern jungles and shared border area with Ecuador, provides further insight into the way antidrug initiatives have benefited transnational oil companies. According to the journalist Gary Leech (2004),

In December 2000, U.S.-trained counternarcotics battalions, U.S.-supplied Blackhawk helicopters and U.S.-piloted spray planes descended on Putumayo department to conduct Plan Colombia's initial aerial fumigation campaign. But while Plan Colombia has failed to affect the price, purity and availability

of cocaine in U.S. cities, its militarization of Putumayo has contributed significantly to increased oil exploration by multinational companies in this resource-rich region.

In 2006 there were 4,500 soldiers guarding oil facilities in Putumayo, as well as two extra brigades and one special brigade trained by the U.S. army. Part of the oil drilling in Putumayo is taking place on the land of the Cofán people, some of whom have been displaced as part of a concerted strategy to make the land they occupy available for mega-projects. According to the Colombian government's Sistema de Información Indígena de Colombia (Indigenous Information System of Colombia—SIIC), "The fumigation of their territory as part of a military plan to weaken the stability of the guerrillas and battles between the FARC and paramilitaries caused a migration of the Cofán to Ecuador." However, there have been challenges to the government's assertion that the displacement of the Cofán from their oil-rich land was a result of military battles between armed actors. "This displacement is not only the result of armed actions by the various factions fighting in the area; it must also be seen as the outcome of a strategy for expropriating lands that are part of the Cofán's ancestral territory" (Tenthoff, 2007: 2).

As Plan Colombia wound down, government authorities began to make it clear that the militarization of drug trafficking was also considered a precursor to the signing of a free-trade agreement between Colombia and the United States. A report prepared by the Colombian government noted "promoting conditions for employment generation and social stability" and expanding "tariff preferences in compensation for the negative effects of the drug trade and to favor a free-trade agreement that will broaden employment opportunities" were desired outcomes of Plan Colombia (National Planning Department of Colombia, 2006: 9). When Condoleezza Rice attended her confirmation hearing to become U.S. Secretary of State in 2005, she was asked about Colombia. Here is part of what she said (Rice, 2005: 22):

It is a country that has potential but has really been—a lot of the potential has been held back by the terrible security situation produced by narco-trafficking. And as the narco-trafficking situation is brought under control, we obviously will want to be a partner with Colombia in how they build a vibrant democracy. Part of that is that they have asked us to discuss with them what we might be doing in the area of free trade.

The U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement went into effect seven years later, on May 15, 2012.

In a response to the GAO report on the failure of Plan Colombia to meet drug reduction targets, the State Department argued that other impacts of the plan should be emphasized, including Colombia's transition to a U.S.-style justice system and the extension of Colombian police forces throughout the national territory. "In many ways, Colombian programs and U.S. support have evolved from our original, more narrow focus into a comprehensive strategy that can now serve as a model to inform efforts in other challenged or failing states," wrote Bradford Higgins, assistant secretary for resource management and chief financial officer of the U.S. State Department (U.S. GAO, 2008: 90).

Colombia's economic boost following Plan Colombia has to do with financial and legal reforms instituted as part of the "antinarcotics" program, but it also goes hand in hand with the repressive social order and militarization imposed during (and after) the initiative. Territories around the country were cleared of communities and later occupied and exploited by transnational corporations, unions weakened, and indigenous and popular movement left reeling from the violence exerted against their members.

What are the primary insights from Plan Colombia from the perspective of the U.S. government? First, that the war on drugs can be used as a mechanism to promote business-friendly policies and, second, that the paramilitarism that results from militarizing drug trafficking and drug production can assist in the maintenance of control over territories and populations. A refined version of the comprehensive U.S.-backed "drug war" strategy is what has been applied in Mexico, beginning in 2007. Seen through this lens, the war on drugs appears to be a bloody fix to the United States' economic woes. The drug war, as embodied in Plan Colombia, Plan Mérida, and CARSI, combines terror with policy making in a neoliberal mix, cracking open social worlds and territories previously unavailable to globalized capitalism. The social worlds targeted for destruction include "occupational contact networks, invisible colleges, behaviour systems, activity systems, and subcultures" (Unruh, 1980: 271); the intrusion into the territories on which these social worlds often overlap is a necessary next step for the continued advance of neoliberal capitalist development.

PLAN MÉXICO: NEOLIBERAL REFORMS AND MILITARIZATION

Looking at the way conflicts and wars intersect with resource extraction is becoming an increasingly important analytical frame for understanding so-called civil wars and other conflicts around the world. It is also the lens through which we can begin to grasp the overlapping of the violence of the war on drugs with environmental violence, understood here as violence against civilians acting to protect the natural environment as well as against residents of resource-rich areas with the purpose of clearing social and physical territories for the expansion of extractive capitalism.

Though pillage, profit, and plunder have been a mainstay of war since pre-colonial times, there is a hegemonic shift away from the focus on the role of finance and economics in war. "In the recent literature on conflict and, even more so, in the practice of international and nongovernmental organizations, comparatively little systematic attention has been given to the precise role of economically-motivated actions and processes in generating and sustaining contemporary civil conflicts" (Berdal and Malone, 2000: 1). In the case of the war on drugs, a reading of the conflict that includes economic analysis has generally been reserved for speculation as to the profits of drug traffickers and reportage on cash laundering in major banks. But, as Berdal and Malone state, in civil wars today "the role of the international private sector, particularly that of extractive industries (petroleum, mining), is key" (12). The majority of a recent body of empirical studies examining the links between resources and conflict "find a strong positive association between fiscal dependence on oil

exports, in particular, and the incidence and duration of civil war" (Dunning and Wirpsa, 2005: 81). The emergence of new orders through periods of conflict is something that is increasingly understood as necessary to study.

The resource conflict analysis of Colombia often focuses on the largely ignored role of oil in that country's protracted conflict. In Mexico, the makeup of the oil sector makes such an analysis more difficult, since there are (to date) no private oil companies independently extracting and exporting oil from Mexico. While there is no doubt that the privatization of *Petróleos Mexicanos* (PEMEX) was and continues to be an aim of the transnational elite, the assault on Mexico's oil sector is taking a primarily legislative form at the moment, as local elites team up with foreign oil interests to promote an increasingly open oil sector. According to the *Financial Times*, "an opening of Mexico's highly protected oil sector, which is dominated by state behemoth PEMEX, could provide untold opportunities for U.S. oil companies as well as the sort of technology-transfer Mexico desperately needs" (G. Thompson, 2011). President Enrique Peña Nieto claimed during his campaign that he was the only candidate who could open Mexico's oil sector to increased private investment, including possibly selling shares in the company (Krause-Jackson and Cattán, 2012). An indication of the importance of Mexico's oil sector is that between 2004 and 2007 Mexico was the second-largest oil supplier to the United States and in 2008 it ranked third after Canada and Saudi Arabia (Fletcher, 2009). Physical attacks related to oil that could be linked to the war on drugs have tended to be on PEMEX union members and workers, who have been kidnapped, killed, and threatened by criminal groups for carrying out their regular labor. Mexico's as yet undeveloped shale gas sector is worthy of analysis in that many of the gas-rich regions in northeastern Mexico have also been among the most violent areas in the drug war. For the purposes of this article, the modern metals mining industry provides a similar sectoral analysis through which to examine the application of drug war policies in Mexico in relation to resource extraction. Other sectors that would be worth exploring in the same vein are the biofuels industry, the wind power sector, new hydroelectric projects, small and medium-sized business, the manufacturing sector, and the real estate sector.

Naomi Klein (2007: 248–249) reminds us that

Mexico's economy suffered a major meltdown known as the Tequila Crisis: the terms of the U.S. bailout demanded rapid-fire privatizations, and *Forbes* announced that the process had minted twenty-three new billionaires. . . . It also cracked Mexico open to unprecedented foreign ownership: in 1990, only one of Mexico's banks was foreign owned, but "by 2000 twenty-four out of thirty were in foreign hands."

Mexico went through a series of what Klein calls "shocks," and some sectors (such as banking and telephony) were thoroughly privatized, but large corporations like the *Comisión Federal de Electricidad* (Federal Electricity Commission—CFE) and PEMEX remained in government hands. Also, and important for our purposes, though weakened by constitutional amendments made by President Carlos Salinas before the North American Free Trade Agreement went into effect, communal landholder organizations including

ejidos and *comunidades indígenas* have not been entirely undone by neoliberal reforms. According to the most recent agrarian census, carried out in 2007, over half of Mexico's national territory is still owned communally by ejidos and indigenous communities (INEGI, 2007). The undoing of these large state companies and the displacement and murder of communal landholders like Ismael Solorio and Manuela Solís in Chihuahua is now being attempted through violence and terror linked to the drug war, itself a kind of permanent shock.

To understand the drug war in Mexico, a general overview of the Mérida Initiative is in order. What became the Mérida Initiative was first discussed between President George W. Bush and his counterpart, Felipe Calderón, in Mérida, Yucatan, in the spring of 2007. The initiative was crafted in secret negotiations that took place the following summer. "These negotiations were not public, and members of both the U.S. and Mexican Congresses reportedly have expressed frustration that they were not involved in the discussions" (Cook, Rush, and Seelke, 2008: 1). The U.S. State Department openly touts the success of Plan Colombia as an important factor in the creation of the Mérida Initiative and CARSI. "We know from the work that the United States has supported in Colombia and now in Mexico that good leadership, proactive investments, and committed partnerships can turn the tide," Hillary Clinton told delegates to the Central America Security Conference in Guatemala City in 2011 (Clinton, 2011).

The Mérida Initiative was officially announced by the U.S. and Mexican governments in the fall of 2007. Total U.S. funding appropriations for the initiative between 2008 and January 2012 were US\$1.9 billion for Mexico; an additional US\$466.5 million went to Central America over the same period and US\$42 million to the Dominican Republic and Haiti (Meyer and Seelke, 2012; Seelke, 2010: 2), and US\$234 million was requested by Congress for 2013 (Seelke, 2013: 13). The U.S. government did not provide any cash to the Mexican government as part of the Mérida Initiative, instead spending the earmarked dollars on U.S.-made equipment and various private contracting firms. Additionally, non-Mérida antidrug assistance was provided by the U.S. Department of Defense, totaling US\$208.6 million between 2009 and 2012 (Seelke, 2013: 14). The initiative served as catalyst for a sharp increase in domestic police and military spending in Mexico. "Prior to 2008, Mexico was not a significant recipient of U.S. security assistance, with typical allocations averaging between \$60 million and \$70 million per year" (Chalk, 2011: 60). It is calculated that the Mexican government matched Mérida Initiative funds between 10 to 1 and 13 to 1 (Brownfield, 2013c, 1; Voice of America, 2012). Chalk (2011: 61) points out that

Mexico has devoted considerable monies of its own to combat drug-related crime in the country, increasing the defense budget from just \$2 billion in 2006 to \$9.3 billion in 2009. This investment has been used to mobilize thousands of troops and federal police, underwrite interdiction of drug shipments, implement institutional reform, and enhance inter- and intra-agency cooperation and intelligence sharing.

Calderón officially launched the drug war in December 2006. His offensive "was backed by the United States under the Mérida Initiative and included deployment of 96,000 army troops, together with thousands of marines and the

appointment of dozens of military officers as police chiefs in towns and cities” (International Crisis Group, 2013: ii).

As U.S. and Mexican security cooperation (and spending) increased, the body count in Mexico began to rise. Violence spiked, and violent incidents spread throughout Mexico. According to Shannon O’Neil (2013: 3) of the Council on Foreign Relations,

When the Mérida Initiative was signed in 2007, there were just over two thousand drug-related homicides annually; by 2012, the number escalated to more than twelve thousand. Violence also spread from roughly 50 municipalities in 2007 (mostly along the border and in Sinaloa) to some 240 municipalities throughout Mexico in 2011, including the once-safe industrial center of Monterrey and cities such as Acapulco, Nuevo Laredo, and Torreón.

The link between U.S.-backed militarization of the drug trade and the shifting geography of criminal activity (and therefore violence) is one the U.S. government itself has acknowledged. “Just as Plan Colombia helped push the focus of criminal activity and presence north to Mexico, so has the impact of the Mérida Initiative pushed the same activities into Central America itself,” said William Brownfield (2013a), assistant secretary of the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. When it was conceived, the original focus of the Mérida Initiative was to “confront the violent transnational gangs and organized crime syndicates that plague the entire region and directly undermine U.S. security interests” by dismantling criminal organizations, strengthen air, maritime and border controls, reform the justice system, and diminish gang activity while reducing the demand for drugs (Feeley, 2013: 2; Seelke, 2010: 3). In 2010 the initiative was retooled to consist of four pillars: disrupt organized criminal groups, institutionalize reforms to sustain rule of law and respect for human rights, create a twenty-first-century border, and build strong and resilient communities.

From a critical perspective, it is possible to understand the Mérida Initiative and the activity it has inspired within the Mexican state as being made up of two primary elements: legal/policy reforms and militarization. The paramilitarization of crime groups in response to state militarization of trafficking routes is a third effect of the initiative that can also prove beneficial to the expansion of capitalism. The initiative is today the primary vehicle through which drug war capitalism, as developed in Colombia and applied to Mexico, is enshrined bilaterally between the United States and Mexico.

Recent testimony by Brownfield (2013b: 1) highlights the fact that the motives of the U.S. government in funding the Mérida Initiative go beyond security:

In every society, citizen security underpins economic stability and allows trade, investment, energy development, and education exchanges to flourish. The partnership forged between the United States and the Government of Mexico over the past six years under the Mérida Initiative exemplifies how strengthening citizen security supports these broader objectives.

In Mexico, the backdoor reasoning for the drug war is the strengthening of the neoliberal state, which is committed to macroeconomic stability and the

protection of corporate interests. In an interview with the English journalist Ed Vulliamy, then presidential spokesperson Alejandra Sota Mirafuentes said, "The president is clear: the fight is not against drugs, it is against the violence and the ability of criminal organizations to subvert the state. The president knows that drugs will not disappear" (quoted in Vulliamy, 2010: 39).

Gian Carlo Delgado-Ramos and Silvina María Romano (2011: 94) argue that Plan Colombia and the Mérida Initiative are forms of U.S. interference connected to the expansion of global capitalism. "The Colombia Plan and the Mérida Initiative are paradigmatic but not isolated cases of U.S. interference in Latin America. With the purpose of guaranteeing its 'national security' (that is, its socioeconomic and geopolitical interests), the United States promotes ad hoc mechanisms of internal order throughout the region." They point out that "the aim of the interference, pressure, and stabilization-destabilization policies employed by the United States in strategic regions is strongly linked to political-economic factors and the associated cronyism" (93). It follows that many of the regions of Mexico (as well as Central America and Colombia) that have been destabilized through violence related to the drug war are resource-rich. There is a lack of reporting or critical analysis on anything related to the drug war in Mexico other than the bloody violence. This violence is rarely presented in context, and the focus on blood and guts provides a media climate in which other aspects of the Mérida Initiative and other U.S.-backed economic plans are operationalized almost undetected.

The policy component of the drug war in Mexico is perhaps one of the greatest innovations inherited from Plan Colombia: fostering the creation of a more welcoming investment climate while carrying out the war on drugs. This part of the Mérida Initiative is overseen mainly by USAID, which "coordinates implementation of Mérida economic and social development and rule of law programs with USAID Missions in Central America as well as Mexico" (U.S. GAO, 2010: 29). One of USAID's program goals is that the "Government of Mexico becomes more effective in curbing monopolies and eliminating anti-competitive practices" (USAID, 2010: 29). According to a USAID call for proposals issued in January 2012, "USAID is working with Mexican partners to improve economic governance and increase private sector competitiveness by improving the business enabling environment and by building sustainable support for continued policy reforms and systemic changes" (USAID, 2012a: 11). Not all of this work is taking place using Mérida Initiative funds, but there is coordination between Mérida programs and competitiveness programs. One document posted by USAID for the Mexico Competitiveness Program noted that though the program is 80 percent national, "subnational interventions shall prioritize geographic areas identified by Pillar IV (build strong and resilient communities) of the Mérida Initiative, as appropriate" (USAID, 2012b: 12).

USAID funds the Red Mexicana de Competencia y Regulación (Mexican Network on Competition and Regulation—RMCR) and the Centro de Investigación para el Desarrollo, A.C. (Center for Research for Development—CIDAC), whose policy proposals for Mexico's economy look as if they had been drawn directly from a U.S. State Department wish list. The CIDAC promotes a new regulatory regime and additional privatization, deregulation, and foreign direct investment in the transportation, financial, energy,

and telecommunications sectors. In addition, USAID subcontracts work to private firms, which it tasks with carrying out various programs designed to improve the investment climate in Mexico. In 2009 it awarded Abt & Associates US\$17.8 million to carry out the Mexico Competitiveness Program, which consists of four elements: building sustainable environmental governance, increasing private sector competitiveness, making precursor markets more competitive, and increasing investment in and use of clean energy (Abt & Associates, 2012). Abt subcontracted out the private-sector-competitiveness section of the program to Casals & Associates. This segment of the program aims to increase government transparency and accountability, promote competition within government through policy reforms and regulatory changes, improve government communication, and promote nongovernmental organization networks and public-private partnerships to strengthen the role of civil society. Casals and Associates and Abt & Associates both have direct ties to the U.S. military. Casals & Associates is owned by DynCorp, a defense contractor that, according to its web site, has “recruited, trained, and deployed more than 6,000 highly-qualified civilian peacekeepers and police trainers to 11 countries, including Haiti, Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Iraq, for the Department of State,” while Abt got its start “transferring defense-related technology and systems to civilian application” (Abt & Associates, n.d.; DynCorp, n.d.). Both of these military-linked corporations are today at work in Mexico promoting policy reforms aimed at further opening the country to transnational corporations and investors seeking to do business in Mexico.

There is also a juridical aspect to the Mérida Initiative, the importance of which is often overlooked. “Mexico is doing things that go much beyond fighting drugs, yes, we’re fighting organized crime and organized delinquency, which is one aspect of drug trafficking, but the truth is that the struggle in Mexico is a struggle for the transformation of its security and justice institutions,” stated Alejandro Poiré Romero, who served as secretary of the interior during part of Calderón’s administration (*Economist*, 2012). In February 2012 the U.S. government announced a new training program for 8,500 prosecutors and investigators in Mexico (U.S. Embassy, 2012). By 2016 all of Mexico is expected to be using a U.S.-style legal system, a complicated transition funded under the Mérida Initiative. As Castrejón Rivas, the lawyer from Chihuahua, put it (quoted in Paley, 2011a),

Just as within globalized commerce [the United States] wants a world where everywhere there is a McDonalds, an Applebee’s, a Home Depot, a Walmart, a Sam’s [Club], they also want a world where tribunals are the same everywhere as they are in the United States, so that whatever legal issues they have can be dealt with perfectly well by a legal firm from the United States, which can operate in the U.S., in Puerto Rico, in Argentina, in Chile, and so on.

According to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill law professor Deborah M. Weissman (2014: 18), “The impetus behind rule of law projects has often been the belief that markets require predictable legal structures to protect property rights, facilitate foreign direct investments, and contract enforcement—that is, to establish U.S. law as the ‘lingua franca for business and politics.’”

In addition to USAID, the Quebec Bar Association, the U.S. Federal Judicial Affairs Council, the National Judicial Institute, the National Democratic Institute, and the Federal Judicial Affairs Council have all been involved in promoting such legal reforms in Mexico. The economic basis for the reforms has been established by the USAID-funded Mexico Competitiveness Institute. According to the USAID chief Rodger Garner (2009),

The Mexican Competitiveness Institute identifies the creation of an objective and reliable justice system as Mexico's top priority to improve competitiveness and to attract both foreign and domestic investment. Our Mérida programs in Mexico are designed to support those Mexican institutions as they fundamentally change their entire justice system and train an estimated 1 million people in new, more transparent and accountable ways of administering justice.

The push to change Mexico's legal system could negatively impact popular resistance to mega-projects with foreign beneficiaries. Weissman (2014: 28) points out that although there are many serious problems with the Mexican legal system, it does include "ongoing attention to indigenous rights, constitutionally designed cooperative land use, corporative models of labor relations, and legal pluralism."

The U.S. rule-of-law program in Mexico also falls in lockstep with counter-insurgency efforts, according to Weissman (quoted in Paley, 2013c):

If you look at the allocation of Rule of Law money, it's for surveillance, it's for activating, whatever the heck that means, new prisons in Mexico, it's for training Mexicans with regard to the adversarial and oral trial systems, yet they do not introduce the jury system. You have a Rule of Law program in what is essentially a plan to militarize the drug war. You see that everywhere.

According to the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (2013), with regard to the prison system, the United States has provided Mexico with "expertise in facility design, security procedures, objective inmate classification, entry-level and advanced training for corrections officers, and the provision of specialized equipment."

Police training is another crucial part of the Mérida Initiative. The *New York Times* reported in August of 2011 that "the United States has trained nearly 4,500 new [Mexican] federal police agents and assisted in conducting wiretaps, running informants, and interrogating suspects" (G. Thompson, 2011). According to Senate testimony provided in June 2013 by William Brownfield (2013b: 2),

With [U.S.] assistance, the Government of Mexico has: Augmented the professionalization of police units by providing training to more than 19,000 federal and state police officers, 4,000 of which are federal investigators; built a stronger legal framework through the training of over 8,500 federal justice sector personnel; improved the detection of narcotics, arms, and money, reaching almost \$3 billion in illicit goods seized; expanded secure incarceration at the federal level from five facilities with a capacity of 3,500 to 14 facilities with a capacity of 20,000; and provided civic education and ethics training to more than 700,000 Mexican students.

In addition to the United States, police from Canada, Israel, Colombia, France, Spain, El Salvador, Holland, and the Czech Republic are all actively training different branches of Mexican police (Hawley, 2009). Increasingly since 2006, Mexico has openly collaborated with Colombian police and military officials, sometimes with encouragement by the U.S. government. "Colombia and Mexico are more united than ever in the fight against transnational organized crime and are also ready to collaborate with third countries in the region to combat this scourge, particularly with our brother nations in Central America," said President Calderón in 2011 (Corcoran, 2011). In 2012 Colombian police trained 12,000 Mexican police in specialized subjects ranging from antiskidnapping to antidrugs and civilian security (*Animal Político*, 2012). Mexico's new president, Enrique Peña Nieto, appointed the Colombian police officer Oscar Naranjo as an adviser during his presidential campaign and stated that Colombia provided him and the world with a successful model for achieving peace and security (Zapata, 2012).

The intense paramilitarization that has taken place in Mexico since Calderón declared war on drug cartels in December 2006 can be understood as stemming from two elements of U.S.-promoted militarization policy in Mexico. The first is that historically in Latin America the professionalization of the police has resulted in paramilitarization. According to Huggins (1998: 21),

Devolution from bureaucratized militarization is often manifested in the emergence of social-control groups with less direct, more tenuous links to the state. These take the form of death squads related only in varying degree to police, or police-linked *justiciero* lone-wolf killers, or parts of the internal security system that have turned against other parts—as when one internal security organization spies on, or takes action against, another.

The second is an outcome of confronting well-financed drug trafficking groups that have a large supply of cash and almost unfettered access to arms using military force. As a consequence of state attempts to militarize their trafficking routes, drug trafficking organizations recruit and arm foot-soldiers to protect their trade. Instead of being called "paramilitaries" these armed groups are referred to in the mainstream press and by government officials as drug cartels or in some cases the "armed wing" of a given drug cartel. Many of these groups are initially formed by deserters from state security forces in the pay of crime groups, sometimes receive protection from police, soldiers, and officials, and enjoy high rates of impunity for the crimes they carry out. The notion that they are loyal to a particular organization (or, more absurd, to the trade of a particular commodity) is vastly overstated in hegemonic discourses about drug cartels. A more accurate way of understanding these groups is that their members work for anyone who can pay them. At one moment in time they could be in the pay of drug traffickers, at another by elite groups looking for executors of extrajudicial repression. This phenomenon is particularly worrying with a view to the longer term. When drug trafficking patterns eventually shift away from Mexico as history indicates that they are bound to do, it is likely that those who will be able to afford to pay members of paramilitary groups will be people connected to the state and the so-called legal economy.

MINING THE DRUG WAR

In August 2011, Mexico's former finance minister, Bruno Ferrari, told *Bloomberg* that "nowadays what we are seeing is that we are having a big fight against crime so that, as I said, [it] guarantees the future investments and the investments we are having right now because what we are seeing is that Mexico is fighting to prevail against crime" (quoted in *Bloomberg*, 2011, 19:45). In one example from Ciudad Juárez, Mexican police secured corridors between foreign-owned maquilas and the U.S. border to ensure the security of U.S. citizens returning home from work in Juárez (Smith, 2009). Mexico's police reform combined with an increasingly business-friendly policy environment has not gone unnoticed. In 2008, before the financial crisis spread to Mexico, foreign direct investment reached US\$23.2 billion, but it fell the following year to US\$11.4 billion (Lange, 2012). It has since rebounded, by 2013 surpassing US\$35 billion, primarily in manufacturing (73.8 percent), mining (7.9 percent), and commercial services (4.9 percent) (Comisión Nacional de Inversiones Extranjeras, 2011; 2013).

Historically, the drug war has been used in Mexico as a way to attack and undermine left-wing organizations. According to a declassified document from the Central Intelligence Agency that dates to the 1970s, "The Army will also take advantage of the eradication campaign to uncover any arms trafficking and guerrilla activities. . . . Army eradication forces may devote as much effort to internal security as eradication. They do not however have their own airline support capabilities and they may seek helicopters and other equipment from the Attorney General's limited eradication sources" (quoted in Grillo, 2011: 51). The repressive impacts of the U.S.-backed drug eradication programs of the 1970s, however, pale in comparison with the number of dead and disappeared in today's war on drugs. Where once drug war assets were used to criminalize weak and fragmented guerrilla movements and populations in Mexico's high mountain regions, today the tools of the drug war have been deployed in major urban centers and extensive regions, in particular areas rich in natural resources.

Events in the mountain town of Madera, Chihuahua, give some insight into this process. Police and soldiers sent into the Sierra Madre on the pretext of fighting organized crime were used to escort workers of a Canadian mining company past a blockade of the project erected by ejido members in 2008 (Paley, 2011b). According to Dante Valdez Jimenez, a local teacher and activist, "At the blockade, there were always, permanently, soldiers travelling in the company trucks, dressed like civilians, [and] as many as eight company trucks watching the demonstrations, the blockade" (quoted in Paley, 2011b). Not only were blockaders intimidated by the presence of soldiers but the company continued to have access to the mine, passing through the blockade because they had soldiers in their trucks. As in the blockades, the militarization of the region factored into Pan American Silver's ability to win support for its open-pit mine. Luis Peña Amaya, a member of Ejido Huizopa who helped organize the blockade (Paley, 2011b), said:

The Federal Police had a presence and intimidated people on many occasions. In the decisive assembly, they took control and surrounded the inside of the

salon where we held our assembly. When things turned against the other group, which was the group preferred by the mining company, [Federal Police] intervened to ensure that we didn't exercise our rights.

The ejido eventually signed an agreement with the company. Environmentalists and human rights organizations in the area confirmed that they feared traveling to the mine site because the road was under the control of organized crime groups.

In Guerrero, community members have prevented the army from entering their territories in the belief that where the army goes transnational mining companies will follow. "If we allow the army to enter communal territory, they will never leave. The government has its sights on exploiting the mines, they want us to fight amongst ourselves, so that they can come in and militarize the territory. That's the bottom line here," said Claudio Carrasco, former coordinator of the Coordinadora Regional de Autoridades Comunitarias–Policía Comunitaria (Regional Committee of Community Authorities–Community Police—CRAC-PC) (quoted in Quintana, 2013). Guerrero has three producing mines, a host of exploration projects, and vast expanses of mountainous land that have not yet been granted in mining concessions. In July of 2013, 300 people, most of them children, were displaced from seven villages of San Miguel Totolapan and Coyuca de Catalán after having received threats from organized crime groups (Ocampo and Briseño, 2013). There are approximately 2,000 people who have been displaced from the region (Araujo, 2013). Manuel Olivares of the Red Guerrerense de Organismos Civiles de Derechos Humanos told *Desinformémonos* (quoted in Araujo, 2013), "It is said that there are mining concessions, but most of the territory consists of ejidos. The state leaves the dirty work of de-populating the area to organized crime, and when the mining companies arrive, there will be no one to oppose them."

Violence has also been wrought on members of the ejidal commission in Carrizalillo, Guerrero, where the president of the ejido was murdered in May of 2013 (Agustín, 2013). This murder came after years of protests by the ejido, including blockades against a local subsidiary of Vancouver's Goldcorp. Two months later, two workers at the same mine in Guerrero were murdered when their vehicle was sprayed with more than 100 rounds of AK-47 fire (Notinfomex, 2013). These murders have not been linked directly to organized crime, but the fact that they took place in a climate of violence allowed nearby mining companies to avoid coming under the spotlight.

Just as in Colombia after Plan Colombia, it appears the Mérida Initiative and U.S.-led policy change and militarization may help Mexico become an increasingly hospitable destination for foreign investment. Paramilitarization stemming from the drug traffickers' response to military attempts to disrupt their supply routes can also create a less hostile business environment, as we understand from Colombia and also from the fate of Solorio and Solís and the many others who have suffered displacement or repression because of the violence created by the drug war. The drug war thus fits with Wallerstein's (2004: 24) suggestion that the capitalist system requires structural elements that ensure the basis for endless accumulation: "If we say that a system 'gives priority' to such endless accumulation, it means that there exist structural mechanisms by

which those who act with other motivations are penalized in some way, and are eventually eliminated from the social scene, whereas those who act with the appropriate motivations are rewarded and, if successful, enriched." Drug war policies whose end result is communal landowners' being forced off their land, destruction of the social fabric, the interweaving of terror and social control, and extreme policing of the movement of migrants and the poor can all be understood as forms of penalization (and in some cases elimination) of individuals and social worlds that exist at least partially outside of the capitalist system.

A rebranding of the conflict in Mexico is currently under way in the U.S. media, shifting the focus away from violence and toward the country's economic potential. There has been a slate of reforms since Peña Nieto was elected in July of 2012, including energy reform, financial reform, tax reform, labor reform, political reform, education reform, and telecommunications reform. "If all of this unfolds successfully, Peña Nieto will have moved Mexico forward more than anyone since NAFTA was passed, putting Mexico on the path to economic and democratic modernity," said James R. Jones, co-chair of Manatt Jones Global Strategies (quoted in Hershaw, 2013). Even as these reforms are implemented and international rebranding takes place, the body count continues to rise, more than 100,000 murders remain in near-total impunity, and little effort is being made to locate the more than 27,000 disappeared.

It is clear that Mexico is far from consolidating peace after seven years of drug war policies. In fact, with the passage of new reforms particularly in the energy sector, it is likely that violence against peasants, communal landowners, indigenous people, and land defenders will intensify in order to guarantee security for transnational investors. Deepening our understanding of how the violence connected to the war on drugs is linked to privatization, the economy, and the extractive industries is critical to understanding what is taking place in Mexico and elsewhere today. Only once we begin to move toward such an understanding will we be able to position ourselves as effective allies for peace.

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