

doi: 10.15584/sar.2018.15.1.4

**Agnieszka KACZMAREK**  
University of Applied Sciences in Nysa  
agnieszka.kaczmarek@pwsz.nysa.pl

## **THE RIGHT TO LIFE DENIED: THE CULTURE OF VIOLENCE ALONG THE US-MEXICAN BORDER**

**Abstract:** With a focus on Ed Vulliamy's *Amexica: War Along the Borderline* (2010), the outcome of the author's field research in the American-Mexican borderlands, the article aims to present the progressive brutalization of the border's public life. Discussing the quantitative and qualitative scale of violence in Mexico, it explains the main reasons for the escalation of bloodshed, attributable, among other things, to cartels, which function in a similar way to legal international corporations. The article also exemplifies how drug trafficking organizations shape the culture of violence in public space, discourse, entertainment, and education. In addition, the purpose of this paper is to show that to a certain extent the United States is co-responsible for the flourishing culture of violence there, which clearly affects not only its southern neighbor, but also American citizens.

**Key words:** Vulliamy, Amexica, American-Mexican border, cartel, violence

### **Introduction**

In the March 2009 version of "The Transhumanist Declaration," attached to an online article by Nick Bostrom, professor at Oxford University and co-founder of the World Transhumanist Association now known as Humanity+, we read in point 1: "Humanity stands to be profoundly affected by science and technology in the future. We envision the possibility of broadening human potential by overcoming aging, cognitive shortcomings, involuntary suffering, and our confinement to planet Earth" (Bostrom 2009: 26). When reading Ed Vulliamy's *Amexica: War Along the Borderline* (2010), which, as the title suggests, mainly touches upon the grave situation on the US-Mexican border, one can see neither the enhancement of the human condition nor optimism for

future improvement. Quite the opposite, Vulliamy describes innumerable incidents in which the basic and inalienable right to live a normal life is simply denied. With the focus on Vulliamy's *Amexica*, the article aims to present the progressive brutalization of the border's public life, which obviously takes place in other parts of Mexico. In addition, the purpose of this paper is to show that to a certain extent the United States is co-responsible for the flourishing culture of violence there, which clearly affects not only its southern neighbor, but also American citizens.

### **Ed Vulliamy**

With diplomas from the University of Oxford and the Università di Firenze, Italy, Ed Vulliamy started his journalistic career as a reporter, making current affairs documentaries *World in Action* for Granada Television (Vulliamy 2011: i; Vulliamy 2017). From 1989 to 1994, he worked as a Southeastern Europe correspondent for *The Guardian*, and from 1997 to 2003, he served as a New York correspondent for *The Observer*. The first journalist in history to testify at an international crimes court, Vulliamy gave evidence at the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia in 1996. He has received top honors for his reporting, including an Amnesty International Media Award (1992), a James Cameron Memorial Trust Award (1994), the 1996 Foreign Reporter of the Year, which is one of the British Press awards, and a Ryszard Kapuściński Award for Literary Reportage (2013). Apart from *Amexica*, the outcome of his two borderline trips in 2008 and 2009, Vulliamy is also the author of three other non-fiction books: *Seasons in Hell: Understanding Bosnia's War* (1994), *Sleaze: The Corruption of Parliament* (1997), co-written with David Leigh, and *The War is Dead, Long Live the War: Bosnia, the Reckoning* (2012). Having reported on various issues involving the world's political controversies, military conflicts, and calamities causing great damage to ordinary people's lives, Vulliamy continuously follows events that take place in Mexico, commenting upon the current situation in this country.

### **Quantitative and qualitative scale of violence in Mexico**

When bearing in mind the data collected by Mexico's National Institute of Statistics, Geography, and Information (INEGI), it is impossible to deny the quantitative escalation of violence in Mexico as well as on the frontier (Heinle et al. 2015: vi). Under Ernesto Zedillo's presidency (1994-2000), the total number of premeditated homicides stood at 80,311, and throughout the Vicente Fox administration (2000-2006), it declined to 60,162 homicides. Nevertheless, under

president Felipe Calderón (2006-2012), who broke the *Pax Mafiosa* and declared war on cartels, the number of slayings increased dramatically and reached a total of 121,699 homicides (Heinle et al. 2015: vi). It should be underlined that the levels of violence in Mexico have not been so high as in Honduras and Venezuela, although none of the countries in the Western Hemisphere have experienced "such a large increase in the number or rate of homicides over the last decade" as Mexico, where violence has been mostly attributable to drug-related groups highly active in the borderlands (Heinle et al. 2015: vi). According to United Nations data, in 2007, Mexico's homicide rate stood at 7.8 per 100,000 population, whereas its 2012 rate totaled 21.5, so the figure has almost tripled over five years since Calderón's decision to wage the drug war (Bisogno et al. 2014: 126). For the sake of comparison, in 2012, the United States' homicide rate was 4.7, Honduras's – 90.4, Venezuela's – 53.7, Colombia's – 30.8 (Bisogno et al. 2014: 126-127). In 2011, the Czech Republic's homicide rate equaled 0.8, the UK's – 1.0, and Poland's – 1.2 (Bisogno et al. 2014: 130-131).

With the increase in numbers, equally important is the fact that the act of crime in the Mexican war on humanity has become more callous, grotesque, and outlandish within recent years (Vulliamy 2011: 32). To picture the possible degree of violence, on the list of the crimes committed just at the turn of 2010, Vulliamy refers to the murder of thirty-six-year-old Hugo Hernández, whose body parts were not only found in different locations of Los Mochis, Sinaloa, a Mexican city situated over seven hundred kilometers from the border, but "his face had been flayed, . . . [and] sewn to a soccer ball" (Vulliamy 2011: xliii). In effect, cartels turn murders into rituals by mutilating bodies in order to leave a message for the living (Vulliamy 2011: 32). In the opinion of Hiram Muñoz, a forensic autopsy expert in the Tijuana prosecutor's department, body mutilations have become "a kind of folk tradition" possible to decipher (qtd. in Vulliamy 2011: 33-34). As Muñoz explains, in the code of practice established by executioners, the cut-out tongue denotes rumor-mongering, severed arms may refer to the theft of narcotics or money, and chopped-off legs may mean an attempt to leave a criminal organization. If victims have fingers cut and put into their mouths, they have denounced someone to enemies, since the Spanish slang word for a traitor is *dedo*, i.e., 'a finger'. To the list of the atrocities, we can add cleansing, the annihilation of whole communities, as it was in the case of the Zetas cartel, named after their leader's police call sign Z1, which in November 2010, stormed into Ciudad Mier, a small town on the border with Texas (and a few months later, into Ciudad Miguel Aleman, also on the border) in order to reinforce their position of authority (Vulliamy 2011: xvi, 15, 267). Thus, it is not startling that in Juárez, bordering the American El Paso and nicknamed a few years ago "the most dangerous city in the Americas" (Vulliamy 2011: 97), ordinary Mexican citizens would like to have the *Pax Mafiosa* restored so as to bring back relative peace to the streets and, at least, try to live normally (Rodríguez qtd. in Vulliamy 2011: xviii).

## Cartels as corporations

Apart from Calderón's decision's to break the *Pax Mafiosa*, another reason for the escalation of violence appears to come to the fore. Drug trafficking organizations are leading employers in Mexico, functioning in a similar way to legal international corporations with commercial logic and business strategies (Vulliamy 2011: xxxvi). Like every well-developing firm with prospects, cartels perfect their products by mixing drugs with rat poison or with fertilizers to make them stronger and cheaper (Vulliamy 2011: 147). They also diversify their activities beyond their traditional areas, investing in other branches. Not only do they engage in the drug trade, which in the case of the Zetas syndicate, operating mainly on the eastern US-Mexican borderlands, accounts only for 20 percent of their income, according to the 2009 Drug Enforcement Administration data invoked by Vulliamy (2011: 276). Criminal organizations also control human smuggling and the illegal import of American second-hand clothes by Mexican women, who are obligated to pay cartels a tariff of one, two, or three pesos on the goods they sell (Vulliamy 2011: 241). In addition, the powerful Zetas were reported to steal condensate, a kind of ultralight oil, from Pemex, a Mexican state-owned enterprise, and to sell it to the US legally (Vulliamy 2011: 275-276). Furthermore, to secure the market, selected narco gangs and the Sinaloa cartel, which mainly occupies the western US-Mexican borderlands, formed a merger meaningfully called *Carteles Unidos*, i.e., 'United Cartels', so that they could fight the hegemony of the Zetas, successfully penetrating both North America and Europe (Vulliamy 2011: 17-18).

Operating similarly to any other enterprise, narco businesses also outsource some of their criminal operations to law enforcement personnel and gang members, who eagerly compete for contracts for financial reasons. As Vulliamy notes, there is, in fact, a Spanish phrase for the narco outsourcing strategy – *el derecho de piso*, which denotes 'the right of tender, of passage' (2011: 23). Last but not least, narco companies recruit their employees through public advertisement. On the banner hung on one of the bridges in Nuevo Laredo, located on the border with Texas, where the US closed its consulate after the police chief's murder in 2005 (Vulliamy 2011: 227), a would-be candidate for a job could read: "We offer a good salary, food, and medical care for your families" (qtd. in Vulliamy 2011: 16). Frighteningly enough, more and more women are being hired by cartels, as they have a much higher chance of smuggling narcotics across the border in contrast to their male coworkers. As a matter of fact, "drug trafficking is seen as a more dignified profession than prostitution" (Vulliamy 2011: 10), if we can talk about any kind of dignity at all in either of these two occupations.

## Narco Culture

Major employers influencing different spheres of social life, cartels profoundly shape the culture of violence visible in public space, discourse, entertainment, and educational institutions. As brutal violence can erupt anytime and anywhere, some Mexican border cities are described as “urban Frankenstein[s]” (Resnick 2012: chap. 9). In the bitterly humorous jargon heard in Ciudad Juárez, the urban Frankenstein par excellence, the recently constructed buildings are classified according to the architectural period they exemplify: “Early Narco”, “Mid Narco”, or “High Narco” (Vulliamy 2011: 109). And the housing estate of exclusive villas, officially named *Rincón San Marcos*, which means ‘St. Mark’s Corner’, is unofficially referred to as *Rincón San Narcos*, i.e., ‘St. Narco’s Corner’ (Vulliamy 2011: 109).

Cartels are known to hire artists to create *narcomantas*, banners with messages of different kinds, hung in central public places to be seen by ordinary locals as well as enemies. Apart from the aforementioned job offer, the information on a banner may, for instance, announce a street party for children, celebrate the capture of a rival, or be a warning placed next to a decapitated body, as it happened in the border city of Ciudad Juárez in September 2008 (Vulliamy 2011: xix). Still, in most cases, the narcomanta has one aim, namely, to accentuate a cartel’s domination of a given territory, frequently spreading fear and terror. Interviewed by Vulliamy, artist and instructor Francisco Benítez recounts how one of his students was employed by his acquaintance to prepare a narcomanta “for good money, [...] an offer he couldn’t refuse” (Benítez qtd. in Vulliamy 2011: 269).

As Karla Zabłudovski (2014) notes in her online article on recent public relations practices among cartels, with constantly improving access to the Internet, narcos are more and more frequently using social media like YouTube and Facebook to communicate their policies by showing two pictures: positive and negative. In a similar fashion as the banners, the positive broadcast is, paradoxically, to display cartels’ protection and sensitivity to people’s needs. For instance, the easily accessible two-minute video clip shows how the Gulf cartel brings food and other supplies to the dwellers of Aldama, Tamaulipas, victims of tropical storms that hit the Gulf coast in September 2013. What is more, with music by a group called meaningfully *Cartel de Santa Band*, the online video ends with the image of Jesus Christ (“Cartel” 2013), the juxtaposition that aims at reinforcing the unambiguous message about the cartel’s thinly-veiled goodness and readiness to help out those in distress. Quoting Mexican drug trafficking scholar Jorge Chabat, Zabłudovski (2014) reveals that behind the generous almsgiving, there is sheer pragmatism, since catering for local communities’ needs makes residents loyal to cartels, not to law enforcement personnel. The negative broadcast clearly intends to feature graphic images of the atrocities cartels are capable of. Thus, the code of criminal practice has changed. Before, with

whitewashed evidence, the killing was to remain private. Nowadays, the purpose is not only to annihilate, but to extensively publicize the crime so as to reach the widest possible audience (Muñoz qtd. in Vulliamy 2014).

Enjoying widespread popularity, drug trafficking organizations also exert an indirect and direct impact on Mexico's musical scene, which successfully began to extend into the American border states with concerts attended by legal and illegal Mexican immigrants, sometimes held in casinos on Indian reservation lands (Vulliamy 2011: 78-79). Not rarely drug peddlers who developed into songwriters, musicians, since the 1930s, have composed *narcocorridos*, ballads on drug trafficking, which usually relate flesh-and-blood shootouts as well as glorifying drug lords while turning them into local or even national heroes (Hodgson 2004). One of the narco songs by the band *Los Buitres* ('The Vultures') touches upon the Sinaloa cartel's leader, the semi-literate Guzmán, aka El Chapo (Vulliamy 2011: 13), marked by both "brutality and creativity" (Boudreaux 2005), who, continuing the Colombian Escobar's tradition, is also very generous, sponsoring medical care and public works, the spheres neglected by the Mexican government, which surely explains his widespread popularity. With the stress on Guzmán's God-like omnipresence, the *narcocorrido*'s selected lyrics go as follows: "He sleeps at times in houses / At times in tents / Radio and rifle at the foot of the bed / And sometimes his roof is a cave / Guzmán is everywhere" (qtd. in Vulliamy 2011: 13). It must be emphasized that there are musicians perfectly willing to work for drug-related organizations. Performing under a stage name the Ace of the Sierra, Jose Manuel Camargo admits: "I have a lot of fans who are... well, I call them business people. Mafia people, if you like. [...] It's nice to sing about them" (qtd. in Hodgson 2004). One of the reasons why it seems attractive to enjoy the singing when eulogizing the narcos is the possible payment that the Ace can receive for composing a *narcocorrido*, namely thirty thousand dollars (Hodgson 2004). Strangely enough, the work commissioned by cartels is treated as any other assignment. To put it in the words of Camargo, "It's my job. If somebody pays me to do a *corrido*, I'll do it. If they're a Mafioso or not, it's all the same to me" (qtd. in Hodgson 2004). Perhaps it does not matter to this performer whose payroll he is on, but it appears necessary to highlight that when cartels recruit bands to extol their deeds, they simultaneously make musicians the target of a rival drug trafficking organization, the employment that sometimes entails an artist's tragic death (Vulliamy 2011: 81).

### **Education in Mexican Borderlands**

In the 2009 version of "The Transhumanist Declaration", it is possible to read that "humanity's potential is still mostly unrealized" (Bostrom 2009: 26).

Unfortunately, in the majority of Mexican schools located along the border, teachers cannot peacefully recognize their students' mental abilities, and children cannot demonstrate them. One March morning, in 2008, at Valentína Gómez Farias primary school in Tijuana, a border city with over one million population, situated approximately twenty-five kilometers from San Diego, California, children took the lesson of violence instead of math or biology. On the road leading to the school gate, there were twelve naked, severely mutilated bodies with tongues cut, the plain message to all approaching the entrance not to talk too much (Vulliamy 2011: 33). As the school's principal concedes, it is exceedingly difficult to teach at educational institutions attended by children growing up in narco families and by those who reside in police officers' households. Neither can the administrator guarantee minimal protection at the school he supervises, as the received closed-circuit television camera and alarm button are simply out of order (Tovar qtd. in Vulliamy 2011: 33). In addition, the process of education may be hindered by narco parents literally any minute. In the conversation with Vulliamy, Juárez women's campaigner and high school teacher Marisela Ortiz relates how a *sicario*, a hired killer, once collected his child from the school where she works in order to enable the offspring to watch an execution on the street nearby (Ortiz qtd. in Vulliamy 2011: 178-179), clearly educating his child in what the father perceived as real-life skills.

What is worse, children, teenagers, and students are more interested in the allegedly glamorous narco lifestyle than education, and consciously opt for cruelty and savagery. According to Amanda Ortiz Reina, a 2009 candidate for the post of mayor of Altar, a small town near the border with Arizona, young Mexicans "don't want to take a stand against what is happening. They are happy with this new culture, these new opportunities", treating criminals as role models (qtd. in Vulliamy 2011: 59). Apparently, it seems hard to blame the younger generation for the choice they make, if, since their very childhood, they have been accustomed to cartels' support and care for the impoverished communities in which they were born and raised. For instance, in 2007, the powerful Zetas held a street party with balloons and toys to celebrate Children's Day in Ciudad Acuña, the city on the Rio Grande River. While eating cookies and drinking juice, the youth and their parents could read the wishes "Happy Day to All" from the party's sponsor, Osiel Cárdenas, first a policeman, then the Gulf cartel's leader, and finally the creator of the Zetas (Vulliamy 2011: 15, 218).

### **Maquiladoras**

Another economic factor which shapes the culture of violence in the borderlands is *maquiladoras*, factories manufacturing and/or assembling duty-free goods exported mainly to the US. The outcome of the early 1960s Border

Industrialization Program initiated on both sides of the Rio Grande, the plants, producing, for instance, wrapping for McDonald's straws, jeans for Levi's (Vulliamy 2011: 207), and – in the past – body bags for US military forces (Quiñónez qtd. in Vulliamy 2011: 209), for their American owners, are economic eldorados with low production costs. On the Mexican side, ordinary citizens lose more than benefit from maquiladoras for a few reasons. First of all, manufacturing plant investment was not followed up with the building of proper infrastructure to support incoming labor force. Consequently, lured by slave wages by Western standards, many Mexicans, arriving from various regions of the country, ended up in slum-like housing (Vulliamy 2011: 203). Secondly, as we can easily figure out, working conditions in these factories have left much to be desired since they opened. While Alcoa's chief executive Paul O'Neill stated at the corporation's annual meeting in 1996 that "our plants in Mexico are so clean they can eat off the floor" (qtd. in Preston and Dillon 2004: 473), Juan Tovar Santos, interviewed by Vulliamy, remembers his work at Alcoa's factory in Ciudad Acuña (the city on the border with Texas) a bit differently. In addition to "intoxication of the air by materials used in the factory", "relentless working hours", "punishing production quotas", and "industrial injuries without compensations" (Vulliamy 2011: 198), he distinctly recollects "having to apply for toilet paper, being allowed one piece per go, only being allowed to go to the toilet twice a day and not being allowed to spend more than a minute about one's business in there" (Santos qtd. in Vulliamy 2011: 200). Of great importance is also the fact that the sweatshop factories have hired mainly women, regarding them, with their smaller hands, as more skillful, but also "easier to manipulate" (Quiñónez qtd. in Vulliamy 2011: 204-205). This employment policy has shaken social relations in the traditional Mexican family, in which men used to work for daily bread whereas women looked after the household. As a result, in the opinion of Cecilia Balli, the University of Texas anthropologist, the social change has contributed to "a crisis of masculinity" indicated, among other things, by domestic abuse and femicide, the mass killings of women, murdered, inter alia, because they have achieved a more independent position in Mexican society (Balli qtd. in Vulliamy 2011: 163-165, 177).

### **War on Humanity in the United States**

The theater of the war on humanity raging on the territory of Mexico clearly continues in the United States. According to the American Department of Justice's 2009 *National Drug Threat Assessment*, "Mexican DTOs [drug trafficking organizations] represent the greatest organized crime threat to the United States" (US Department of Justice 2008: iii). It is also noted in the report that "the influence of Mexican DTOs over domestic drug trafficking is unrivaled" (US



Department of Justice 2008: iii). In *National Drug Threat Assessment 2011*, in which the term *DTOs* is meaningfully replaced with *TCOs*, standing for “transnational criminal organizations”, we can find a neatly arranged chart which illustrates major Mexican cartels’ influence over US particular geographical regions, with the Sinaloa cartel in the lead controlling the majority of the contiguous states—Southeast, Southwest, West Central, Pacific, New England, Mid-Atlantic, and Great Lakes (US Department of Justice 2011: 7). Unfortunately, over the last decade the situation has not improved, since the recent 2016 report reveals that “Mexican TCOs remain the greatest criminal drug threat to the United States; [and] no other group is currently positioned to challenge them”, although Colombian, Dominican, and Asian trafficking organizations also supply Americans with illicit drugs (US Department of Justice 2016: vi).

Beyond any doubt, the cartels’ competition for lucrative distribution markets, resulting in the escalation of violence in Mexico, would not be so fierce if the consumer demand for their products had declined. According to the 2016 assessment, marijuana is the most popular illicit narcotic in the United States (US Department of Justice 2016: 111), and, as another research shows, “the prevalence of marijuana use [among American adults] more than doubled between 2001-2002 and 2012-2013” rising from four to over nine percent within the indicated span of time (Hasin et al. 2015: 1235). Although heroin users represent a relatively smaller population, their number has increased dramatically, and “heroin overdose deaths more than tripled between 2010 and 2014” (US Department of Justice 2016: vii). What is alarming is that more and more residents of the United States, including youth and grown-ups, are perceiving soft narcotics as far from being harmful and risky. The 2016 report demonstrates that in 1991 over seventy-eight percent of twelfth-grade students regarded marijuana as a substance with detrimental effects on human health; in 2005, there was a decline of twenty percent, and 2015 saw only thirty-one percent of twelfth-grades viewing the most popular drug as harmful (US Department of Justice 2016: 114).

The good news is that the former American government finally accepted co-responsibility for the Mexican problems on the official political scene, the inaudible voice under Bill Clinton's and George W. Bush's administrations. Clearly against the gun lobby, when speaking on MSNBC Television, on April 9, 2009, President Obama openly conceded: “It’s really a two-way situation here [...]. The drugs are coming north, we’re sending funds and guns south” (Obama qtd. in Vulliamy 2011: 22). The grim news is not only that the present US administration’s response is the continued construction of the wall. Obama’s declaration has not been followed by real action, and the Rio Grande may continually be nicknamed the Iron River due to US pro-gun enthusiasm. Along the border with Mexico, different American cities hold gun shows, which are treated as all-ages attractions enjoyed by whole families on Sunday afternoon. In

October 2009, one of such fairs, was organized in Pharr, in the south of Texas, eight miles from a Mexican city, Reynosa, the heartland of the Zetas cartel. While walking from stall to stall, participants could choose whatever they wished from a broad range of deadly weapons, and even if Vulliamy, a non-US citizen, was not eligible to buy one, he was given a business card with reassurance that the problem could be solved. As the author ironizes, there was also a bookstall, offering “US army manuals on counter-insurgency warfare, with tips on bomb-making, how to blow up bridges and other useful things to know while out hunting deer” (Vulliamy 2011: 252-253). Among the publications, there was additionally a fifteen-dollar manual instructing how to convert semi-automatic AR-15 and AK-47, narcos’ favorites, into their fully automatic versions, whose sale is forbidden in the US (Vulliamy 2011: 253-254). A commercial undertaking on a grand scale, a gun show is held occasionally, yet straw buyers, who are frequently American citizens, may regularly take full advantage of numerous gun stores, which considerably outnumber libraries and museums in Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico, the border territories being among thirty-seven states where there are more possibilities for gun purchase than of visiting the aforementioned cultural institutions (Ingraham 2014).

Apart from American weapon dealers who make profit by the direct and indirect sale of firearms to narcos, there are entrepreneurs in other economic sectors that attempt to earn money by exploiting the culture of violence spreading in Mexico. As Emily Schmall reports, in 2010, Laura and Kate Mulleavy, California women’s wear designers for the fashion label Rodarte, bought, for instance, by Michelle Obama and Cate Blanchett, co-developed the line with clothes and cosmetics “in shades such as Factory, Sleepwalker, Juarez and Ghost Town” (Schmall 2010). In the official press release, it was also stated that the designers had drawn the inspiration for the collection from the “lines of women workers making their way to factory jobs in the middle of the night” (qtd. in Schmall 2010), which maquiladora female employees regard as a nerve-racking experience possibly culminating in femicide. In addition to the world of fashion, an international computer entertainment entrepreneur, headquartered in the US, has also capitalized on the culture of violence commonplace in the American-Mexican borderlands. In 2010, Ubisoft, a video game company originally from France, in cooperation with a Poland-based firm Techland, released *Call of Juarez: The Cartel*, a first-person shooter game which involves players in the combat between narco traffickers and corrupt DEA and FBI agents, who, as heard in one of the trailers, introduce gamers to “the new Wild West” (Techland 2017; “Call of Juarez” 2011). Thus, in reference to Bostrom’s “Transhumanist Declaration” and the Ubisoft and Techland commodity, humanity has truly been affected by technology, yet it is doubtful that the gaming experience has contributed to the overcoming of suffering in any way. The game’s placement on the market has rather led to the virtual expansion of

violence, which, to border residents, is the common element of everyday life, not a component of a product developed to entertain.

## Conclusion

There are voices like Adam David Morton's in "The War on Drugs in Mexico" (2012: 1636), and David Rieff's in his article "The Struggle for Mexico" (2011), which claim that Mexico is not a failed state due to its recent political and economic development. If not a failed state, one wonders what we should call a country where whole communities have been annihilated, the act of crime has become more macabre, drug cartels guarantee social protection as well as entertainment, the colloquial language of its citizens reflects widespread barbarism, and different generations consciously opt for the culture of violence. One may also deliberate on how long it will take the United States to repeal the pro-gun laws, not to mention the curbing of Americans' own craving for narcotics. The answers to these questions are obviously difficult to find. Still, while analyzing *Amexica* with my students, I would like to make sure that one of them who has played *Call of Juarez: The Cartel* is cognizant that behind the computer game, there is the brutal reality in which the right to a normal life is simply denied.

## References

### Books and articles

- Bisogno, Enrico, Jenna Dawson-Faber, Michael Jandl, Kristiina Kangaspunta, Labib Kazkaz, Lucia Motolinia Carballo, Serena Oliva, Felix Reiterer (eds) (2014) *Global Study on Homicide 2013: Trends, Contexts, Data*. Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. [available at: [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/GSH2013/2014\\_GLOBAL\\_HOMICIDE\\_BOOK\\_web.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/GSH2013/2014_GLOBAL_HOMICIDE_BOOK_web.pdf) – accessed January 7, 2018].
- Hasin, Deborah S., Tulshi D. Saha, Bradley T. Kerridge, Risë B. Goldstein, S. Patricia Chou, Haitao Zhang, Jeeseun Jung, Roger P. Pickering, W. June Ruan, Sharon M. Smith, Boji Huang, Bridget F. Grant (2015) "Prevalence of marijuana use disorders in the United States between 2001-2002 and 2012-2013." *JAMA Psychiatry*. Vol. 72/12; 1235-1242. [doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2015.1858].
- Heinle, Kimberly, Cory Molzahn, David A. Shirk (2015) *Drug Violence in Mexico: Data and Analysis Through 2014*. San Diego: University of San Diego.
- Morton, Adam D. (2012) "The war on drugs in Mexico: A failed state?" *Third World Quarterly*. Vol. 33/9; 1631-1645.
- Preston, Julia, Samuel Dillon (2004) *Opening Mexico: The Making of a Democracy*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Resnick, Philip (2012) *The Labyrinth of North American Identities*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Vulliamy, Ed (2011) *Amexica: War Along the Borderline*. London: Vintage Books.

## On-line sources

- Bostrom, Nick (2009) "The transhumanist declaration." [In:] Nick Bostrom, *A History of Transhumanist Thought*, 26-27. [<http://www.nickbostrom.com/papers/history.pdf> – accessed June 2, 2017].
- Boudreaux, Richard (2005) "Mexico's master of elusion." *Los Angeles Times*, July 5. [available at: <http://articles.latimes.com/2005/jul/05/world/fg-shorty5/2> – accessed June 9, 2017].
- "Call of Juarez: The Cartel - GDC 2011: Official Debut Trailer" (2011) YouTube video posted by XboxViewTV - Gameplay & Trailers, March 3. [available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZIENeJMbCdw> – accessed June 23, 2017].
- "Cartel Del Golfo Apoyando Aldama, Tamps" (2013) YouTube video posted by ayudando2013, September 22. [available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YaFqh2WebXA> – accessed June 5, 2017].
- Hodgson, Martin (2004) "Death in the Midday Sun." *The Observer*, September 19. [available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/observer/omm/story/0,,1304449,00.html> – accessed June 10, 2017].
- Ingraham, Christopher (2014) "Where Gun Stores Outnumber Museums and Libraries." *The Washington Post*, June 17. [available at: [www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2014/06/17/where-gun-stores-outnumber-museums-and-libraries/?utm\\_term=.edac6a728056](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2014/06/17/where-gun-stores-outnumber-museums-and-libraries/?utm_term=.edac6a728056) – accessed June 22, 2017].
- Rieff, David (2011) "The Struggle for Mexico." *The New Republic*, March 17. [available at: <https://newrepublic.com/article/85337/mexico-calderon-clinton-obama-drug-cartels> – accessed June 7, 2017].
- Schmall, Emily (2010) "Juarez Chic? Fashion Companies Make Wrong Turn at the Border." *Aol.com*, July 24. [available at: <https://www.aol.com/article/2010/07/24/m-a-c-rodarte-apologize-for-collection-inspired-by-women-of-ci/19565336/> – accessed June 22, 2017].
- Techland (2017) "Witaj na nowym Dzikim Zachodzie [Welcome to the New Wild West]." [available at: <http://development.techland.pl/call-of-juarez-the-cartel> – accessed June 8, 2017].
- US Department of Justice. Drug Enforcement Administration (2016) *2016 National Drug Threat Assessment Summary*. DEA-DCT-DIR-001-17. [available at: <https://www.dea.gov/resource-center/2016%20NDTA%20Summary.pdf> – accessed June 20, 2017].
- US Department of Justice. National Drug Intelligence Center (2008) *National Drug Threat Assessment 2009*. Product No. 2008-Q0317-005. [available at: <https://www.justice.gov/archive/ndic/pubs31/31379/31379p.pdf> – accessed June 20, 2017].
- US Department of Justice. National Drug Intelligence Center (2011) *National Drug Threat Assessment 2011*. Product No. 2011-Q0317-001. [available at: <https://www.justice.gov/archive/ndic/pubs44/44849/44849p.pdf> – accessed June 20, 2017].
- Vulliamy, Ed (2017) LinkedIn profile page. [available at: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/edvulliamy> – accessed June 2, 2017].
- Vulliamy, Ed (2014) "Mexico: How arrest of the last don heralds ruthless new drugs era." *The Guardian*, October 5. [available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/oct/05/mexico-war-on-drugs-hidden-story-joaquin-guzman-war-us> – accessed June 10, 2017].
- Zabludovsky, Karla (2014) "Public Relations, Narco Style." *Newsweek*, January 15. [available at: <http://www.newsweek.com/2014/01/17/public-relations-narco-style-245062.html> – accessed May 23, 2017].