

Mexico Counts the Ways

Letters to the Editor

November 2, 2010

In Response To:

[Mexican Officials Whistle Past the Graveyard](#)



Let me count the ways in which Mr. Ted Galen Carpenter (“Mexican Officials Whistle Past the Graveyard”, Oct. 25, 2010) again errs in restating that Mexico is headed toward failed-state status:

- 1) Mexico is a dynamic democracy in which elections take place, political institutions operate across the entire territory, and the government has the authority to make collective decisions, raise taxes, and issue coin. Failed states certainly can't do this.
- 2) Mexico provides public services to all of its population and throughout its territory; a failed state doesn't.
- 3) Mexico controls its territory, and does not have internally displaced people. You cannot say the same thing about failed states.
- 4) Mexico has a strong and fully-functioning economy, the twelfth largest in the world, which withstood international financial crises thanks to years of sound macroeconomic management, and that enjoys investor confidence across global financial markets. Failed states don't.
- 5) Mexico is a dynamic player of the international community and its reputation enabled it to be elected and occupy, for the second time in ten years, a non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council during the 2009-2010 biennium, and has been selected to preside over—also this year—the UN conferences on climate change. I have yet to see a failed state that meets this description.

He unfortunately now adds to his list of grievances the purported insensitivity of those who seek to ensure that the rule of law and the empire of liberty are paramount in Mexico.

Precisely because of the tragic losses of so many of my countrymen, among them many journalists and innocent bystanders, we need to ensure that the strategy is holistic and summons the support of Mexican civil society. We cannot look Mexicans in the eye and ask them to

become co-stakeholders in this effort unless we can guarantee one key deliverable in the process of deterring and rolling back transnational organized crime: provide for and ensure human security.

No sugar-coating can or should hide the challenges Mexico faces, but if the author persists in peddling unsubstantiated theories, I will, much to his evident chagrin, continue to poke holes in the theoretical soundness of his sound bites.

Arturo Sarukhan

Ambassador of Mexico

All of this, of course, started with Ted Carpenter's USA Today [op-ed](#)

It takes a brave person to be a reporter in Mexico these days if the intent is to cover the drug cartels. More than 30 journalists have been killed since 2006, making Mexico perhaps the most dangerous place in the world for members of that profession. The country is at least on a par with such countries as Iraq, Sudan, and Afghanistan. It has become so bad that several Mexican journalists have sought asylum in the United States, and at least one has been granted that status.

It is the latest sign that the danger of Mexico becoming a "failed state"—once an absurd notion—is no longer so far-fetched.

And to which Sakhalin [replied:](#)

Resorting to clichés is a formula clearly at play in commentary writer Ted Galen Carpenter's piece "U.S. in slumber as Mexico drug war rages" (USATODAY.com, Wednesday).

While my government does not minimize the seriousness of the challenge posed by organized crime, nor the dire threats to journalists posed by violent criminals, the proposition that Mexico is close to a "failed state," or that it is experiencing an insurgency, is simply misleading and wide off the mark.