A War that Can’t Be Won
Binational Perspectives on the War on Drugs

Edited by TONY PAYAN, KATHLEEN STAUDT, and Z. ANTHONY KRUSZEWSKI

The first bi-national look at the “narco wars”

More than forty years have passed since President Richard Nixon described illegal drugs as “public enemy number one” and declared a “War on Drugs.” Recently the United Nations Global Commission on Drug Policy declared that “the global war on drugs has failed with devastating consequences for individuals and societies around the world.” Arguably, no other country has suffered as much from the War on Drugs as Mexico. From 2006 to 2012 alone, at least sixty thousand people have died. Some experts have said that the actual number is more than one hundred thousand. Because the war was conceived and structured by US policymakers and officials, many commentators believe that the United States is deeply implicated in the bloodshed.

A War that Can’t Be Won is the first book to include contributions from scholars on both sides of the US–Mexico border. It provides a unique breadth of perspective on the many dimensions of the societal crisis that affects residents of both nations—particularly those who live and work in the borderlands. It also proposes practical steps toward solving a crisis that shows no signs of abating under current policies. Each chapter is based on well-documented data, including previously unavailable evidence that was obtained through freedom-of-information inquiries in Mexico. By bringing together views from both sides of the border, as well as from various academic disciplines, this volume offers a much wider view of a complex problem—and possible solutions.

Tony Payan is an associate professor of political science at the University of Texas at El Paso. He is the author of Cops, Soldiers, and Diplomats: Understanding Agency Behavior in the War on Drugs and The Three US–Mexico Border Wars: Drugs, Immigration, and Homeland Security. He is also a past president of the Association for Borderlands Studies. Kathleen Staudt is professor of political science at the University of Texas at El Paso, where she founded and directed the Center for Civic Engagement. She is the author of seventeen books, including Violence and Activism at the Border: Gender, Fear, and Everyday Life in Ciudad Juárez. Z. Anthony Kruszewski is a professor of political science at the University of Texas at El Paso. One of the original founders of the Association for Borderlands Studies, he is the co-editor, with Payan and Staudt, of Human Rights along the US–Mexico Border: Gendered Violence and Insecurity.

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