

ABOUT PRESIDENT CALDERÓN

On December 1, 2006, as fistfights broke out among lawmakers in Mexico City, Felipe Calderón was inaugurated to the presidency in Mexico. Calderón was just the second democratically-elected opposition-party candidate since the PRI began its 70 year period of uninterrupted, single-party rule. While maintaining the same broad economic policy of his recent predecessors, Calderón sought to fight back against the cartels by militarizing Juárez and other Mexican cities.

During his six years in office, Calderón's security policies led to the capture of numerous drug dealers and the seizure of weapons, airplanes, transport ships, narcotics and money, and the destruction of clandestine runways, smuggling tunnels, marijuana and poppy farms. Sadly, these efforts did not lead to decreased violence. According to the Mexican government's own data, drug-related killings steadily increased during Calderón's term—the most violent period in recent memory.

Charles Bowden, Molly Molloy and others have estimated the bulk of the killings have taken place in the shadow of the Mexican army, indicating that the “war” itself is directly responsible for increased killing, or worse, that Mexican military and police forces are themselves doubling as hitmen, paid by the cartels. Intensifying drug enforcement operations remained paramount to Calderón, who once referred to the deaths of innocent victims as “collateral damage.”

It is partially the escalating violence that led Mexican voters to elect the PRI candidate, Enrique Peña Nieto, in Mexico's 2012 presidential elections. Nieto has explicitly vowed to shift security policy away from the war against cartels and toward a general reduction of violence—though one of Nieto's first acts as President was the creation of a new paramilitary organization.

After leaving office, Calderón and his family fled Mexico to the U.S. where he accepted a professorship at Harvard.