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# Social Control

## Bolivia's New Approach to Coca Reduction

by

Linda Farthing and Benjamin Kohl

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*When the indigenous coca grower Evo Morales was elected president in Bolivia in 2005, he promised to fundamentally change 25 years of the U.S.-funded and dictated "drug war." The new policy values the coca leaf and relies on local organizations to control coca production within limits set by the government. A review of its successes and limitations to date suggests that Bolivia's experience may offer lessons for drug control in other parts of the hemisphere.*

**Keywords:** *Coca reduction, Drug policy, Drug war, Bolivia, Evo Morales*

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Since 1980, demand for cocaine and a U.S. focus on elimination of its raw material, the coca leaf, have largely defined Bolivia's relationship with the world. While the expansion of coca production can be seen as one in the series of Bolivian commodity booms that began with silver in the sixteenth century, it also differs substantially because of cocaine's illegality. This status led to the U.S. imposition of a repression-based model of drug control on one of the hemisphere's poorest countries (Youngers and Rosin, 2005).

Of minimal scale for the first 100 years following the successful isolation of the drug in 1865, drug trafficking took off during the 1970s, fostered by the Banzer dictatorship to reward family and friends. The transformation of the coca leaf into cocaine paste has often dominated Bolivian national politics as well. Some argue that the cocaine cartel headed by Roberto Suárez was successful for supporting the coup that brought General Luis García Meza to power in 1981 (Karch, 2006). In that decade, Bolivia provided much of the coca paste and cocaine that was directed to the U.S.-funded Nicaraguan Contras. The upper echelons of the drug trade were consistently tied to the highest levels of the country's political and military power until Evo Morales's election

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in December 2005, and the corruption it generates debilitated Bolivia's chronically weak governments (Lessman, 2005).

During the 1990s, political protests against U.S.-funded repression by coca producers in the tropical Chapare east of Cochabamba repeatedly disrupted the country. Despite violence and human rights abuses, the impoverished but well-organized coca growers became the country's principal resistance to both U.S. drug and neoliberal economic policy. Their strength underpinned efforts to create a new left-wing political movement, the *Movimiento al Socialismo* (Movement Toward Socialism—MAS), that won local municipal elections in 1999 as well as in 2004 and by late 2005 had propelled Morales, head of the confederation of coca producers, to become Bolivia's first indigenous president.

In a dramatic break with the past, the MAS government has instituted a "coca yes, cocaine no" policy under the leadership of former coca growers. In contrast to previous governments, the policy recognizes the importance of the leaf's traditional role in indigenous cultures. Alongside support of joint military-police action to curb drug trafficking and economic development initiatives, an innovative community-led control scheme known as "social control" or "rationalization" works to limit the amount of coca destined for cocaine production.

This article considers the problems generated by the coca reduction policies of the past 30 years before exploring the MAS government's approach. While we focus on the Chapare because it continues to be Bolivia's most important link to the international drug trade, we also consider increasing coca production in the Yungas, the semitropical area east of La Paz. We then examine the impact and the limitations of the Morales government's social-control approach to date.

## COCA LEAF TO COCAINE

Coca has been important to Andean life for over 4,000 years and was one of the first trade goods on the eastern slopes of the Andes. It was of great symbolic importance in the precapitalist context and became a valuable commodity shortly after the conquest (Kohl, 1996). Coca dulls hunger and fatigue, aids in digestion, provides vitamins and minerals lacking in Andean staples, and is widely used in medicine. It is offered at all indigenous ritual and ceremonial events (Allen, 1998). The European discovery in 1865 of how to process the leaf into cocaine and its subsequent criminalization transformed it into a valuable illegal commodity.

Spedding (1997) contends that in the Yungas coca is fundamental to all aspects of life. Cultivated for over 1,000 years, Yungas coca's small, sweet leaves have always been favored for chewing. With the Spanish invasion, production soared to supply the indigenous people forced to labor in the rapidly expanding silver mines in highland Potosí. Yungas coca continued to flourish in response to demands from mining well into the twentieth century, with elite-owned haciendas rather than free indigenous people producing most of the leaf.

Since the 1953 agrarian reform, when land in the Yungas was appropriated by Aymara and Afro-Bolivian families, farmers on landholdings that average less than 25 acres have grown coca to supply domestic markets. As in many

parts of rural Bolivia, given the functional absence of the state, these growers organized into peasant unions that largely filled the role of local governments (Conzelman, 2007a).

Although coca has always been the Yungas's most important cash crop, until the turn of the twenty-first century less of the heavily terraced land was dedicated to coca cultivation than to coffee and citrus (Valdivia, 1991). Coca is an ideal crop—it is pest-resistant and easy to grow, and it produces on average four harvests a year, although as do other crops it depletes the soil over time. Its relatively high value-to-weight ratio makes it easy to transport, especially from remote or mountainous areas.

Bolivia's other important coca cultivation region is the Chapare, an area the size of New Hampshire or a bit larger than Wales with a fragile, highly diverse, largely forested ecosystem. Before the 1950s, the majority of the Chapare's relatively few inhabitants were Yuqui and Yucacaré hunter-gatherers who, despite the efforts of missionaries to force them into villages, maintained much of their traditional way of life. The first significant wave of migration to the Chapare during the 1960s was encouraged by the Bolivian government to relieve overcrowding in the high valleys populated by Quechua-speakers. Migrants established an agricultural production system characterized by small landholdings, mostly under manual production, and a family-based labor force. Colonizers cultivated coca leaf largely for their own consumption as part of a diversified (primarily) subsistence system (Farthing and Kohl, 2005). While larger than the land holdings in highland Bolivia, the average 26-acre Chapare farm is minimal at best for family survival, given the combination of fragile soils and limited agricultural technology. As they do in the Yungas, most families use labor-intensive methods and cultivate less than 7.5 acres of a combination of coca, rice, bananas, and citrus fruits in addition to raising a few cattle and chickens (Bradley and Millington, 2008).

Chapare coca growers formed peasant unions that assumed the role of local governance from the 1960s to the 1980s. Usually with a high level of participation and centralized male leadership, unions assigned land for settlement, resolved disputes, and directed community projects such as building schools or roads (Recasens, 1996). This experience formed the foundation for the local community-led social control that the MAS government draws on for its coca policy. It also forged particularly powerful local union organizations, which, like their Yungas counterparts, are organizationally linked to national worker and peasant federations.

Coca production in the Chapare and the Yungas skyrocketed in the 1980s when the demand for cocaine soared in northern countries, particularly the United States, at a time of political and economic crisis in Bolivia. Hyperinflation, severe drought, and the adoption of a neoliberal structural adjustment program that closed state tin mines in 1985 combined to create a desperate situation for thousands of Bolivia's poorest people. The situation was particularly difficult for the indigenous peasants who make up the majority in rural areas. On the one hand, as neoliberal policies opened international borders prices for local agricultural products, which accounted for 70 percent of the nation's food, plummeted (Rance, 1991). On the other hand, rural areas were already stressed as populations grew and the average size of landholdings shrank because of the division of land among the members of each successive

generation. The resulting *minifundios*, often the size of suburban lots in the United States or Canada, were inadequate to ensure enough to live on.

In a desperate bid for survival and with little understanding of cocaine and its effects, small farmers and displaced miners flocked to the Chapare and, to a lesser extent, the remote reaches of the Yungas to grow the increasingly valuable coca leaf. The coca-cocaine economy became critical to Bolivia's ability to weather the worst impacts of structural adjustment: at its peak during the late 1980s and early 1990s, production was estimated to equal Bolivia's legal export economy—between US\$450 million and US\$635 million or 4–6 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) (Painter, 1994: 49).

The latest UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) figures estimate that two-thirds of Bolivia's coca is grown in the Yungas, where a boom over the past 10 years has spread production east and south, with the bulk of the remainder in the Chapare (*Los Tiempos*, August 6, 2009). However, because Chapare leaf's conversion rate—the amount of coca needed to manufacture cocaine—is higher and Yungas coca is preferred for chewing and tea, just over two-thirds of the coca destined for cocaine comes from the Chapare (*La Razón*, June 26, 2009). In 2009, total production from both regions yielded an estimated 113 tons, making Bolivia the world's third-largest producer behind Colombia and Peru (UNODC, 2009). However, given its small economy, coca is a more important product for Bolivia than for the other two countries.

Despite two decades of repression-based policies, overall coca production in the Andes has not diminished. Instead, coca growing has shifted in response to forced eradication; while Peru and Bolivia were the principal producers in the early 1990s, repression facilitated the spread of coca cultivation in southern Colombia, which by the late 1990s became the world's largest producer of coca for cocaine (Gootenberg, 2009). Markets have shifted too: while the U.S. appetite for cocaine stabilized in the 1990s, increasing demand in Europe, Africa, Brazil, and Argentina has shifted Bolivia's principal trade routes from the north to the east (Rivera, 2003).

## THE LEGACY OF FAILED POLICIES

### REPRESSION

Between the mid-1980s and 2004, drug control policy in Bolivia was dominated by U.S. administrations driven to demonstrate that they were “doing something” about the drug abuse that wracked the United States. Almost all efforts focused on a “supply-side” model dependent on a combination of police and military force that consistently targeted the poorest and most vulnerable participants—small-scale farmers, transporters and paste manufacturers in the Andes, and small-scale dealers and users in impoverished U.S. inner cities.

In Bolivia, the bulk of the funds was directed toward intervention by special U.S.-trained police and military units in the Chapare. Despite Bolivian leeriness of any military involvement in domestic affairs given the country's history of repeated coups d'état, the United States threatened to pull badly needed aid if the country's presidents refused U.S. and domestic military participation in the “drug war.” This pressure was applied without regard for the legally required Bolivian congressional approval, the country's

sovereignty, or political stability (Ledebur, 2005). As in other parts of the Andes, this policy facilitated the expansion of U.S. military presence in South America (Reiss, 2010).

Repressive U.S. policy hinged on draconian anti-drug legislation (Bolivian Law 1008), written in 1988 to satisfy U.S. demands, that delineated which coca fields would be considered legal and which faced eradication (Lessman, 2005). The law categorized the Yungas as a "traditional" area and sanctioned 30,000 acres of "legal" coca there to satisfy domestic consumption for chewing, tea, and medicines. The Chapare and frontier Yungas were deemed either "illegal" or "surplus" production zones, and this coca was slated to be destroyed or replaced.

After 20 years, the law has proven most harmful to coca-growing families and those on the cocaine industry's lower rungs while having little lasting impact on high-level traffickers, whose ability to pay hefty bribes helps them avoid jail (Kohl and Farthing, 2001). The poor have faced arbitrary arrest and lengthy incarceration without trial, as bail has been difficult or impossible to get. Until 2004, security forces often sought out the easily accessible plots of vulnerable coca-growing families, resulting in human rights abuses and harassment (Pettersson and Mackay, 1993; Human Rights Watch, 1996; Farthing and Kohl, 2005). After unrelenting protest by coca growers and human rights organizations, in 2001 Law 1008's most egregious due-process violations were eliminated.

Undoubtedly the worst period for Chapare coca growers was the second presidency of former dictator Hugo Banzer, from 1997 to 2001. Under U.S. embassy pressure, Banzer adopted Plan Dignidad (Dignity Plan), which introduced forced eradication by the military and militarized police. Security forces subsequently killed 33 Chapare coca growers and injured 570, leading to retaliatory attacks on security forces that resulted in 27 military and police deaths (Farthing and Ledebur, 2004). As Godofredo Reinicke, the Chapare human rights ombudsman, explained in a 2003 interview, not only did coca growers suffer at the hands of the police but Chapare families were thrown into severe economic crisis when development programs failed to keep pace with forced eradication.

Turning to the Yungas in 2001, Banzer's government launched the only militarized eradication program that region has experienced, and it was met with fierce resistance by thousands of coca growers both within and outside the "legal" zone. Sustained protests forced the government to abandon the plan. Efforts spearheaded by the Andean Information Network (AIN) and other nongovernmental organizations generated such negative press coverage that U.S. Congressional funding to the Expeditionary Task Force (ETF)—1,500 former Bolivian soldiers—was cut in mid-2002 because of human rights abuses. Furthermore, since 2004, the U.S. Congress has insisted on military cooperation in human rights investigations before annual funds are disbursed. Yet the U.S. State Department has been unwilling to support prosecution of military officers in civilian courts even though its own officials helped write the legal code that requires it (Ledebur, 2005).

## ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT

As campesinos turned to coca as the most secure way to ensure their economic survival, planners proposed alternative development projects to entice

them to abandon cultivating the leaf. The first of these projects began in 1985 in the Yungas. For five years, the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control (UNFDAC) program AgroYungas encouraged Yungas farmers to sign community-wide agreements to give up coca for improved production of other crops, particularly coffee. The short time horizon, the conflict the project generated within communities, the unfulfilled promises, widespread paternalism, and poor market research combined to make the project a resounding failure (Leóns, 1997; Lupu, 2004).

In the Chapare, the majority of coca farmers have participated in at least one of the four major “alternative development” programs of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), which cost approximately US\$270 million between 1983 and 2003 (*Wall Street Journal*, May 13, 2003). The earliest efforts sought to replace coca, but eventually USAID administrators realized that this was an unrealistic goal. Instead, by the late 1980s programs focused on creating alternatives for impoverished Bolivians who provided the labor for coca production. They not only aimed to reduce the economic pulls offered by migrating to coca zones but also increased repression in the Chapare. When that failed, the focus switched to export-oriented production of bananas, passion fruit, palm hearts, black pepper, and pineapple. Growers could participate only if they eradicated their coca, and U.S. policymakers generally perceived this conditionality as the key to success (USAID, 2003: 5).

These programs, however, ignored the best practices standard in development projects by purposely circumventing the participation of the coca growers’ own representatives, the unions. Instead they created parallel local “associations,” generating suspicion because this tactic mirrored similar efforts by the Bolivian government to control rural populations since the 1950s (Albó et al., 1990). As Oscar Sotomayor, board president of the U.S.-financed Asociación de Mantenimiento de Caminos (Road Maintenance Association), explained in a 2003 interview, even right-wing campesinos critical of the coca unions were dubious about the viability of the associations as economic development organizations.

When the coca growers’ unions won the 1995 elections in newly formed municipalities, USAID refused to work with the local governments, although it initiated projects with a third of the country’s other municipalities. Its consistent demonization of the tight-knit *cocalero* unions—often calling their leaders drug traffickers—persisted until 2004 (Farthing and Ledebur, 2004).

In stark contrast, in the Yungas, USAID took a different approach when it funded the Yungas Development Initiative. Beginning in 1999, the project worked closely with seven of the eight municipalities in the “traditional zone,” some controlled by the MAS, and had reasonable success improving roads, building bridges, funding college scholarships, training municipal employees, increasing gourmet coffee and tea production and marketing, and providing rural electrification. In areas of “surplus” coca production, where cultivation is illegal under Law 1008, however, conflicts occurred similar to those in the Chapare (Conzelman, 2007b).

More than 20 years of unfulfilled promises and the destabilization of local economies have made Chapare and many Yungas coca-growing families distrustful of projects receiving support from the United States. For most of

this time, U.S. development programs served as rather transparent attempts to justify U.S.-funded military and police actions by putting a friendly face on a repressive policy designed to separate impoverished campesinos from their livelihoods and demonize an ancient valued part of Andean culture (Farthing, 2009).

## RESISTANCE

Coca growers' unions grew particularly strong in the Chapare as they organized resistance against continual repression. As a result, six powerful campesino federations emerged by 1991 with Morales, who had been leader of the largest of these (the Federación del Trópico [Federation of the Tropics]), elected head of the combined organization—a position he still holds.

Chapare unions now represent approximately 45,000 families organized into almost 700 local unions, with separate women's unions organized after 1994. As Bolivia's other social movements under the leadership of the Central Obrera Boliviana (Bolivian Workers' Central—COB) faltered in the late 1980s under neoliberalism's onslaught, the Chapare coca growers took up the mantle of resistance for the country. Under Morales's leadership, they protested almost without interruption, forging alliances with other groups around the country, from the teachers' unions to eastern indigenous peoples. When militarized repression under Banzer significantly weakened the coca growers, other organizations in urban centers and the Aymara highlands replaced them at the head of social mobilizations.

Bolivian coca growers, while often united in struggle, cannot be seen as a uniform group; they differ not only within their regions but also between the Chapare and the Yungas. The six Yungas agrarian federations, with strong ties to traditional parties, are far less unified than those in the Chapare. In addition, in the Yungas cleavages have emerged between producers who are part of the "traditional" coca-growing zone, who seek to protect their niche economy, and the much larger group in newer more productive areas subject to government eradication, who want to expand production. In spite of these conflicting interests, both factions endorse (a) development with coca rather than substitution, (b) Chapare growers' efforts to resist U.S.-funded eradication, and (c) the industrialization of coca leaf (Conzelman, 2007a).

In the most remote areas of both the Yungas and the Chapare, beyond the reach of the federations or strong local unions, conflict is frequent. These regions, often close to or within national parks, have experienced violent disputes between individual growers, between recently arrived growers and local populations, and between growers and military-police coca eradication forces (AIN, 2009).

## SEEDS OF CHANGE

Two initiatives broke the U.S. policy stranglehold in the Chapare by the late 1990s. The 1994 Law of Popular Participation transferred 20 percent of national tax revenues to existing and newly established municipal governments along

with responsibility for local public infrastructure and services. It mandated participatory planning and the establishment of fiscal oversight committees drawn from community organizations (Kohl, 2003). Although these committees functioned with mixed success throughout the country, often becoming sites of co-optation and corruption, the law introduced the notion of control by community leaders over local government spending throughout Bolivia (Kohl, 2003; España et al., 2005).

For Chapare coca growers, the law propelled their integration into formal government. The unified, highly representative unions easily won the 1995 elections in the Chapare's five new municipalities, which achieved higher levels of community participation in participatory planning than in other parts of the country. Oversight committees were controlled by the unions, expanding their already considerable experience with community social control into fiscal management of government funds. The internal accountability of the unions was evident in 2003 interviews, when various government and nongovernmental organization consultants insisted that Chapare local governments were the most honest in the country. And in the Yungas the law served not only to strengthen rural unions but also to make local elected figures more accountable (Conzelman, 2007a).

The other change began in 1998, when the European Union (EU) undertook its Programa de Apoyo a la Estrategia de Desarrollo Alternativo en el Chapare (Chapare Alternative Development Program—PRAEDAC), which worked through local municipalities. In contrast to the U.S. emphasis on law enforcement and eradication, the EU has always interpreted illegal drugs at the grower level as primarily a problem of poverty, and therefore its programs prioritize participatory development without the precondition of coca eradication (FAO, 2007).

Despite these innovations, police-military repression continued until Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada's resignation in October 2003, when Vice President Carlos Mesa assumed the presidency with a vow to respect human rights. After a combined military and police unit shot and killed two coca growers in 2004, Mesa faced down vocal U.S. opposition and permitted the cultivation of a *cato* of coca in areas where cultivation was already established. Given differential yields, the area of a *cato* in the Chapare is 1,600 square feet and in the less productive soils of the traditional cultivation zones of the Yungas 2,000 square feet. Protest in the Chapare subsided almost immediately.

Growers are required to register their coca fields in order to obtain permission for the *cato*. By 2008 *cato* registration was complete in the Chapare, and it resulted in the legalization of 17,500 acres of coca for the first time since Law 1008 was passed in 1988. The new climate transformed Chapare towns into places bustling with small businesses. In the Yungas registration has been slower, with large remote areas still unreached, and the *cato* accord has exacerbated tensions between growers in the traditional and the frontier zones. The grower-controlled marketing organization, Asociación Departamental de Productores de Coca (Departmental Association of Coca Producers—ADEPCOCA) opposed the *cato*, arguing that an expansion of legal crops would drive the price of coca down for its members. Even where growers agreed to the *cato*, as they did in the expansion zone around Caranavi, coca reduction has lagged (Ledebur and Youngers, 2006).

## MORALES GOVERNMENT POLICIES

As soon as he assumed the presidency in 2006, Morales promised coca-producing families that the painful days of U.S.-funded police and military repression were over. Instead, the government introduced a participatory program called "rationalization" or "social control" that forms the cornerstone of its "coca yes, cocaine no" policy. Touted as a solution to ills from environmental degradation to local land disputes, the concept draws on forms of pre-Hispanic indigenous community organization to privilege collective over individual rights. These permit the community to determine what is in the collective best interest and use a combination of persuasion and coercion to achieve compliance. This concept is framed around an affirmation of Andean cultures' millennia-long relationship with the coca leaf and an insistence that "the sacred coca leaf" must be cherished because it stands at the heart of now-valued indigenous culture and economy (República de Bolivia, 2007).

A central pillar of government policy is economic development and diversification in both the Chapare and the Yungas and the concept of development *with* coca rather than eradication. An important step in improving grower incomes has been to allow growers to sell their coca directly to consumers rather than through the intermediaries required in the past. Campesinos can now trade 150 pounds of coca every three months directly for goods and services (Conzelman, 2007a). But, more significant, the ceiling of permitted coca production has been raised from the 30,000 acres allowed by Law 1008 to 50,000 acres. Government proponents argue that this is a more realistic figure and that increased legal production can be absorbed through sales of alternative coca leaf products such as teas, flours, and toothpaste.

Law 1008's 30,000-acre figure and, for that matter, the new 50,000-acre one were arrived at arbitrarily; they were simply rough estimates of the demand for coca leaf for chewing and other traditional uses in Bolivia in 1988, based on a 1978 study (Carter and Mamani, 1978). Law 1008 did not take into account changes in population or cultural use patterns, which have altered significantly over the past 30 years as Bolivia's population has doubled. To develop future policy that more accurately reflects actual demand, a long-needed study funded by the EU is currently under way to assess current levels of legal leaf consumption.

The government is also aiming to increase global demand for coca leaf by pushing for its legalization in international markets. The EU cooperation director in Bolivia, Nicolaus Hansmann, explained in a 2009 interview that global legalization faces tremendous obstacles. An example is the fate of a 1995 World Health Organization (WHO) study that found that the leaf had no harmful health effects. Although the study was eventually leaked to the public, its official release was suppressed by the United States, which threatened to suspend research funding for the WHO if it was published (Transnational Institute, 2003).

Opposition to the MAS government's coca initiatives stems primarily from Bolivia's weakened right-wing political opposition and the United States, both of which argue that government policy to permit increased cultivation will inevitably lead to more cocaine production. Significantly, these critics offer few alternative proposals, although no Bolivians advocate a return to the

type of earlier, repressive policies that generated so much conflict and disruption. Instead, their vociferous complaints reveal a fundamental lack of understanding of the issues (Kathryn Ledebur, personal communication, November 18, 2009).

## PRELIMINARY RESULTS

### SOCIAL CONTROL (RATIONALIZATION)

Although the social-control strategy got off to a slow start, government officials, both local and national, insist that it works to everyone's benefit in that it contributes to maintaining a stable price for coca leaf and provides a baseline income for families. Key to the program is the grower unions' commitment to the government and its coca policy.

To support union efforts, the EU-funded, MAS-government-run Apoyo al Control Social de la Producción de Coca (Assistance Project for Social Control of Coca Leaf Production), headed by the coca grower Marcelo Terrazas, coordinates closely with the Chapare federations. The program holds meetings in communities—over 180 by June 2009—to convince campesinos that it is in their interest as well as the country's to follow the *cato* agreement to the letter. This project is linked with the government's Chapare Unidad por el Desarrollo Económico y Social del Trópico (Unit for Economic and Social Development of the Tropics—UDESTRO), also headed by a coca grower, which monitors compliance with the agreement.

At a February 2008 congress, local Chapare unions and their parent federations, all loyal to the MAS, agreed to appoint secretaries to take charge of the union's social-control efforts (PACSPHC, 2008). In November 2009 each federation put out bids for EU-funded infrastructure to house its social-control programs and secretaries. These secretaries conduct routine visits to farms, and, if they find more than a *cato* of coca, they eradicate it by tearing out the plants. They are required to produce regular reports to the union, the federation it belongs to, and government social-control agencies. The program is not only structured around voluntary compliance and community pressure. Marcelo Terrazas explained in a 2009 interview that if government monitors find excess coca, the community risks losing its rights to the *cato*. The new rules also allow for the government to seize the land of individuals who refuse to follow the rules.

In the Yungas, social control functions in a two-tier system because "traditionalists" in coca-producing regions are not subject to the policy while those outside these zones are. This exacerbates tensions, sometimes between family members, as the union leader Franz Caravedo explained in a 2009 interview, because young people often head to the frontier zones when production in their communities of origin does not support their growing families. Unidad de Desarrollo de los Yungas (Yungas Development Unit—UDESU) confronts a complex panorama where government influence is weaker than in the Chapare, as Yungas leaders do not exercise the same level of political and social power as do their counterparts in the Chapare's UDESTRO (FAO, 2007).

The Morales administration achieved a reduction in coca production of 14,932 acres in 2009, comparable to eradication efforts under former administrations and ahead of schedule, prompting the UNODC to offer an increase in monitoring funds (*La Razón*, October 13, 2009). The vast majority of the eradicated coca, 12,640 acres, was destroyed voluntarily in the Chapare, compared with only 1,047 acres in the Yungas. Even though the figures from the Yungas were higher than any previous government, they also demonstrate considerable grower resistance to cooperation. Forcible eradication, which still takes place in national parks and Santa Cruz Department, totaled 1,244 acres (Kathryn Ledebur, personal communication, December 4, 2009).

However, reduction figures are not a reliable source of information in assessing how much coca ends up as cocaine. Not only do conversion rates vary but yields of leaf per acre fluctuate significantly. For example, the UNODC (2007) found that while acreage in Colombia increased markedly in 2007, the amount of manufactured cocaine remained almost flat because the new fields had far lower yields than preexisting ones.

Despite the eradication successes, the 2008 UNODC figures also show overall Bolivian coca cultivation of 73,200 acres, up 6 percent, which represents the Andean region's highest increase. There is no doubt that coca continues to be an important source of demand for labor in a country where 75 percent of new jobs are found in the informal sector (Arbona and Kohl, 2004). The UNODC figures also demonstrate coca's continuing impact on the expansion of the agricultural frontier in both the Yungas and the Chapare.

Where unions are strong, cohesive, and committed to the MAS government, social control has had considerable success. The coca farmer Grover Vallejos, a member of the same federation as Morales, explained in a 2009 interview that in his area coca leaf sales are carefully controlled and campesinos sell only to the legal market. The program's accomplishment is reflected in a UNODC (2009) report that demonstrates that more coca is ending up in legal markets—the amount increased 13 percent in 2008.

In 2009 interviews, coca farmers in tight-knit Chapare unions positively contrast the government's program to U.S. repression. Many emphasize the importance of their participation in the program's design and its being headed by coca growers themselves. They herald the program as far more cost-effective and efficient than U.S. programs, and all note that it respects the coca leaf. Some growers also mention the program's role in improving Bolivia's image as a responsible international partner rather than a drug producer.

But pressure to expand the area of permitted coca is intense. Campesinos routinely complain they cannot support their families solely on income from one *cato*, even though the government maintains that they should not expect to. With crop diversification facing the same difficulties it always has—the impossibility of competing with coca in terms of both income and transportation—some growers have tried to obtain rights to grow another *cato* by dividing their land and “selling” it to a family member (*La Prensa*, December 28, 2008). Morales has publicly exhorted growers on more than one occasion to desist from these practices.

In the Chapare, considerable resentment exists against recently arrived newcomers, mostly from the Cochabamba valley, who demand *cato* rights. In

2009 interviews, longtime growers argued that they had suffered considerable hardship and repression to obtain the cato agreement and the new arrivals were taking advantage of their sacrifice. A similar resentment exists on the part of traditional growers in the Yungas toward colonists in the expansion zones.

Getting coca to legal markets in towns far from small remote farms presents another difficulty facing the government in keeping coca out of the drug trade. Drug traffickers do not necessarily pay more than the legal market, but they do travel through the countryside buying the leaf along the roads in sparsely populated areas. Many impoverished farmers with no strong political commitment or obligation to the social-control program often will sell the leaf to a buyer who shows up before they transport the leaf to market. All the government representatives of the social-control program recognize that much work remains to ensure that coca ends up in local markets and not paste laboratories.

The government faces a considerable challenge to prevent coca production from spreading into ever more remote regions where control efforts are often met with armed resistance. Two coca growers were killed in the Yungas de Vandiola in 2006 during a government effort to prevent coca production in Carrasco National Park (Ledebur and Youngers, 2006). In 2009, another confrontation resulted in one death involving illegal growers in Isiboro Securé National Park (ABI, 2009).

Despite these complications, an increasing number of union leaders in both the Chapare and the Yungas are convinced that limiting coca production is in their members' economic interest because it helps to keep coca prices high. This viewpoint plays an important role in maintaining their support for the government's cato agreement.

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COCA LEAF LEGALIZATION

Allowing direct coca sales to consumers has not only made some positive contribution to improving incomes but, perhaps more important, helped to bolster government standing in the Yungas. In the Chapare, with government support, the unions are encouraging their members to grow at least 2.5 acres of rice and offering US\$500 in agricultural loans and housing grants to those who limit their coca to the cato (Friedman-Rudovsky, 2008).

But economic diversification schemes have gotten off to a slow start, particularly in the Chapare. A palm-heart factory is just nearing completion four years after Morales's election, and planned Venezuelan-funded plants to industrialize the coca leaf into alternative products from toothpaste to tea have been built but are not yet operating. Meanwhile in the Yungas, two factories built in the 1980s with ADEPCOCA funding have been restored, and with new funds from the Venezuelan government they are gradually beginning to manufacture bagged coca tea and coca baking flour. A newer industrialization plant has stalled because of disputes between unions about where it should be located and whether the land is properly titled. With its characteristic dramatic flair, in January 2010, the Morales government announced that it would promote a new drink for international export based on coca, called Coca Colla (a play on the Bolivian word for "highlander") (Smink, 2010).

Expectations of improved incomes from all of these ventures are high, especially in the Yungas, where loyalty to the Morales government is relatively weak

(FAO, 2007). Where economic development schemes have shown success, such as the promotion of specialty coffee and tea production (for export) in the Alto Beni and Caranavi regions of the Yungas, coca cultivation has been easier to limit. Most new cultivation in the Yungas is in regions such as La Asunta and Palos Blancos, where investment in development has been very limited to date, pointing to the importance of successful economic development in limiting coca cultivation (UNODC, 2007).

The Morales government has been pushing the legalization of the leaf in international markets. At the end of December 2009 the government announced plans to modify Law 1008 so that it can explore exporting coca leaf to Argentina (where an estimated 1.5 million Bolivians live), as well as to Brazil and Paraguay (Rivera, 2003; *Los Tiempos*, December 29, 2009).

Although interest in coca teas and medicinal tonics is high, the UN International Narcotics Control Board has always represented a major block to expanding legal coca markets, and the EU's Hansmann reported in a May 2009 interview that Bolivia's legalization proposals seemed to be falling on deaf ears. However, a major shift occurred in November 2009, when the board recognized traditional uses of coca and agreed to review current policy at Bolivia and Uruguay's request. This is the first time a review has been conducted since the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs criminalized coca leaf. Reconsideration of coca leaf has also surfaced in the European Parliament: a committee-level resolution was passed in April 2008 calling on member states to consider legalizing coca leaf products (European Parliament, 2008).

## CONCLUSIONS

Bolivia's recent policy innovations on coca bring a fundamentally new approach to the hemisphere's long-standing debates over how to control drug trafficking, one that repudiates decades of policies arising from the U.S.-driven drug war. While validating the historical and current importance of coca to Andean culture and economy, the Morales government seeks to turn the leaf's medicinal and nutritional benefits into an advantage while aggressively controlling drug trafficking. Within this framework, priority is given to a nonviolent solution to the complex problem of reducing the amount of coca leaf that ends up as cocaine. Instead of treating coca growers as enemies of the state, the government works to include them as partners in developing solutions.

With the extension of the cato agreement, the Morales administration hopes to overcome the proven limitations of past policies that were based on delimiting ill-defined zones of production while failing to specify the maximum amount of coca under cultivation (Conzelman, 2007a). Yet the new strategy implicitly promises to replace lost income through other productive activities, and its limitations to date in addressing this could prove the policy's Achilles' heel, especially in the more fragmented Yungas. The small international openings toward the coca leaf in 2009, however, give some hope that Bolivia may find a way in which the medicinal benefits of its sacred leaf can be shared

worldwide, which would have the additional benefit of creating more demand for Bolivian coca and, more important, for campesino labor.

The challenge for Bolivia is to build international support for legalization of the leaf and move coca products to market wherever openings exist. In the case of coca tea (arguably the largest potential international market for the leaf), a 2009 interview with Ricardo Hegeudus, manager of Windsor Teas, which controls the country's largest market share, suggests that the private sector is probably better positioned than the fledgling cooperatives to do this. If the Morales government allows its distrust of the private sector, which usually supports the right wing, to overshadow the need to gain a strong market share, it faces losing this opportunity either to larger countries such as Peru or to packaging operations in other countries.

At the heart of the MAS government's new coca policy is its commitment to Bolivia's international responsibilities regarding drug trafficking while decreasing the violence formerly associated with fighting the "drug war" in Bolivia. By committing considerable resources and actively developing coordination with neighboring countries, the MAS government has demonstrated its commitment to reducing the illegal drug trade. However, Bolivia is determined to conduct this fight on its own terms, without the United States dictating a policy driven by its own domestic agenda.

While Bolivia cannot realistically bring an end to drug trafficking—this is beyond the resources of any government, let alone a small, poor, historically weak one—its innovative social-control program could prove a model for reducing the harm, both for consumers and for poor campesinos in source countries, which drugs and drug control bring. Some form of social control is arguably the only realistic option over the long term because expanding the focus on policing and military intervention as the principal policy pillar has not only failed to halt drug production and distribution but also resulted in increased human rights abuses—from the Chapare to Chihuahua, Mexico, to North Philadelphia (Leticia Diaz, 2009; Patterson, 2009). Social control relies on cooperation within local communities, strengthening democratic participation at the local level rather than relying on top-down impositions from the state or the military (Carol Conzelman, personal communication, January 30, 2010).

The MAS government has embraced the idea of social control wholeheartedly. The idea has entered discussions about framing a Law of Public Administration as well as proposals to rewrite the 1994 Law of Popular Participation, which would be renamed the Law of Participation and Social Control. In late 2009, the Vice Presidency organized an international conference on the topic with participants from throughout Latin America.

What Bolivia possesses that many other areas lack is strong local organizations, especially in the Chapare and highland Yungas provinces, and these are fundamental to effective social-control policies. Adapting this type of policy beyond Bolivia would likely require concerted efforts to strengthen and expand local organizations, an endeavor that has the potential to bring impoverished communities benefits that go far beyond drug control while also more effectively fighting the drug trade and protecting human rights.

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