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Mexico – is NOT a failed state

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MEXICAN DRUG CARTELS' MAIN AREAS OF INFLUENCE





Five myths about Mexico's drug war

1. Mexico is descending into widespread and indiscriminate violence.
2. The Mexican government lacks the resources to fight the cartels.
3. Endemic corruption allows the cartels to flourish.
4. Drug violence is a Mexican problem, not a U.S. one.
5. Mexican drug violence is spilling over into the United States.

Myth #1: Mexico is descending into widespread and indiscriminate violence.

- Violence is not as widespread or as random as it may appear.
- Drug-related deaths are concentrated among the traffickers.
 - Deaths among military and police personnel are an estimated 7 percent of the total.
 - A reshuffling of leaders and alliances is occurring among the top organized crime groups.
- The bloodshed is also geographically concentrated in key trafficking corridors, notably in the states of Sinaloa, Chihuahua and Tamaulipas.
- Organized crime is not threatening to take over the federal government.
- Mexico is not turning into a failed state.

Myth #2: The Mexican government lacks the resources to fight the cartels.

- The week after our first lecture, the Mexican newspaper *Milenio* released a survey indicating that:
 - 59 percent of Mexicans believe the cartels are winning the drug war.
 - Only 21 percent believe the government is prevailing.
- The battle is not lost.
 - There appears to be a genuine commitment by Mexican officials.
 - U.S. is cooperating.
 - Important cartel leaders have been arrested.
 - Arrelano Felix cartel in Tijuana has been seriously weakened.

More on myth #2

- The Mexican government has the tools to succeed, but it must redirect its efforts.
 - “Presence and patrol” strategy presents only a minor inconvenience.
- Mexico needs to:
 - modernize and professionalize Mexico's police and courts. (2008 constitutional reforms were a good start.)
 - evolve into a system where evidence is presented in open court.
 - develop a professional national police force.
 - improve state and local police forces.
 - boost investigative capabilities.
 - create a national police database that allows authorities to track crimes in different parts of the country.

Myth #3: Endemic corruption allows the cartels to flourish.

- Corruption does continue to be a major challenge for Mexico.
- There appears to be a real commitment by honest officials to root out malfeasance.
- Recent arrests and prosecutions have brought down:
 - the head of Mexico's Interpol office
 - senior officials in the attorney general's office
 - three state public security chiefs
 - hundreds of state and local police officers
 - a few mayors and local police commanders
- Mexico is slowly cultivating a culture of lawfulness.

Myth #4: Drug violence is a Mexican problem, not a U.S. one.

- Mexico and the United States share a 2,000-mile border.
- Mexico is our third-largest trading partner.
- Moving drugs from south to north and weapons from north to south.
- The problem and the solution will inevitably involve Washington.

Myth #4 cont.



- The United States needs to:
 - redouble its efforts to reduce American demand for illegal narcotics - especially of cocaine, marijuana, heroin and methamphetamine.
 - accept responsibility for what Clinton recently argued was "our shared responsibility to combat and defeat organized transnational crime."
 - Increase funding for prevention and treatment.

Myth #5: Mexican drug violence is spilling over into the United States.

- There has been little violence on the American side of the border.
- El Paso, one of the least violent cities in the United States, sits right across from Ciudad Juarez, the most violent in Mexico.
- In Mexico, a crime has only a 1 to 2 percent chance of leading to a conviction and jail time.
- The greater likelihood of arrest in the United States leads traffickers to keep most of their violent activities south of the border.



Source

- Washington Post, Sunday, March 28, 2010; B03; Andrew Selee, David Shirk and Eric Olson