

The ideological power of the Mexican Cartels escalates violence

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Armed Mexican Troops at random checkpoint

Carilyn Pointer - The drug cartels in Mexico are gaining strength across the country. The current president of Mexico, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, recently “dissolve[ed] the Federal Police to build a civilian-led National Guard policing.” This strategy has not been effective though, with homicide rates rising 32 percent from last year. The ideological power of the cartels is allowing the carnage to spread, and the government is starting to lose control.

Both the government and the cartels have access to guns and weapons, so what is making the cartels so much more powerful? The answer is ideological power. Ideological power is the ability to have people readily accept your agenda without considering other options. If ideological power is effective, people will follow the political goals that are of greater benefit to the more powerful, because they assume “that is the way things are done.” This is seen in the “narcoculture” that has become mainstream in many parts of Mexico. The subculture adopted by many youth affects their slang, dress, music, and religious beliefs. Which makes those that do not conform seem rebellious and a threat to the identity of the gang, for many standing up to these gangs no longer seems a viable possibility, because those that do are immediately killed or ostracized. Assimilating is the only answer since the government clearly is not fulfilling their duty to protect their people. As a result, the cartels have become the illegitimate power source in Mexico. Understanding the impact of ideological power on society explains why the Cartels are spreading like “cockroaches” and cannot be stopped by Mr. López Obrador’s strategy of “hugs, not bullets.”

While the cartels have been gaining power in recent years, the policy to dissolve the Federal Police has only made the situation worse. The implications of the new policy are hitting the local people hard, and yet the government seems to be in denial. The drug cartels also have strong material power in the form of guns. Their material power in combination with their ideological power, will only continue to make matters worse for the government. If the government continues to ignore their power, there may be significant irreversible consequences for both the government and the local people.