The Mirror of Dignity: Zapatista Communications & Indigenous Resistance

by

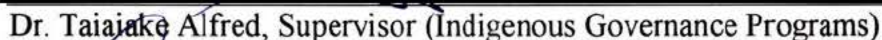
Brock Pitawanakwat
B.A., University of Regina, 2000

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

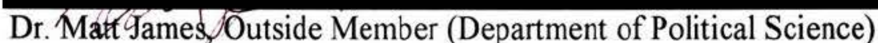
In the Indigenous Governance Programs

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard



Dr. Taiaiake Alfred, Supervisor (Indigenous Governance Programs)

Dr. Leslie Brown, Departmental Member (Department of Social Work)



Dr. Matt James, Outside Member (Department of Political Science)

Dr. Doug West, External Examiner (Department of Political Science)

© Brock Pitawanakwat, 2002
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy
or other means, without the permission of the author.

Supervisor: Dr. Taiaiake Alfred

ABSTRACT

The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) is an indigenous resistance movement that has achieved remarkable results in its communications campaign in Chiapas, Mexico. The EZLN has successfully drawn attention to indigenous rights domestically and internationally, a success that offers potential lessons for the decolonizing efforts of indigenous peoples elsewhere. Although limiting factors exist, this thesis generalizes the Zapatistas' particular communications experience into a model of action that directs other indigenous resistance movements to: (1) self-consciously build on the historical context of their communities and nations to create an identity of resistance; (2) develop communications infrastructure; (3) develop spokespersons; (4) attract and maintain media and public interest; (5) clearly frame the adversary and the objective; (6) nationalize and internationalize their cause; (7) offer useful services to communities; (8) avoid message manipulation and cooptation; and (9) beware of "perception management" by the adversary.

Examiners:

Dr. Taiaiake Alfred, Supervisor (Indigenous Governance Programs)

Dr. Leslie Brown, Departmental Member (Department of Social Work)

Dr. Matt James, Outside Member (Department of Political Science)

Dr. Doug West, External Examiner (Department of Political Science)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ii

TABLE OF CONTENTS iv

LIST OF ACRONYMS vi

PREFACE vii

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION, RESEARCH DESIGN, AND RATIONALE 1

Communications & Politics 2
Constructing an Identity of Resistance 4
Is the EZLN indigenous? 6
Research Rationale 10
Research for Decolonization 11
Searching for Answers & Lessons 12
Endnotes 13

CHAPTER TWO - SURVEYING THE BATTLEFIELD 17

Contending Narratives 19
1. Origins of the Rebellion 20
2. Indigenousness of the EZLN 23
3. National Significance of the Uprising 25
4. Maintaining Law & Order 27
5. Smearing Marcos 28
6. Xenophobia 30
7. Military Objectives 31
8. "Perception Management" of the San Andrés Accords 33
Summary 36
Endnotes 37

CHAPTER THREE - ZAPATISTA SYMBOLS 42

Symbol: Indigenous Identity 42
Symbol: "Leading by Obeying" 47
Symbol: Indigenous Languages 50
Symbol: Zapata 51
Symbol: Ski Mask 52
Symbol: Weapons & Armed Resistance 53
Symbol: The Power of the Word 54
Symbol: Role of Women 55
Symbol: The Land 57
Symbol: Marcos 58
Summary 60
Endnotes 62

CHAPTER FOUR - MEDIUM, TECHNIQUE, & AUDIENCE **66**

MEDIUM: RADIO, TELEVISION AND NEWS PRINT 66
MEDIUM: COMMUNIQUÉS 67
MEDIUM: PRIVATE VERSUS PUBLIC DIALOGUE 69
MEDIUM: ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS CAPACITY 70
MEDIUM: INTERNET 71
TECHNIQUES 72
TECHNIQUE: NGO "SWARMING" 72
TECHNIQUE: MEDIA RELATIONS 74
TECHNIQUE: PUBLIC RALLY – *ENCUENTROS, CONSULTAS & INTERGALÁCTICAS* 75
TECHNIQUE: ZAPATOURS 77
TECHNIQUE: MEDIA DISPLAYS & MEDIA AVOIDANCE 79
TECHNIQUE: BREAKING CONTAINMENT 81
TECHNIQUE: FINDING COMMON CAUSE 82
TECHNIQUE: HUMOUR 83
TECHNIQUE: SILENCE 83
TECHNIQUE: SLOGANS 86
AUDIENCE 86
AUDIENCE: LOCAL & INDIGENOUS 87
AUDIENCE: NATIONAL & MEXICAN 88
AUDIENCE: INTERNATIONAL 89
AUDIENCE: IDENTIFICATION WITH THE OPPRESSED 91
AUDIENCE: ELECTORAL INFLUENCE OF THE EZLN 91
SUMMARY 94
ENDNOTES 94

CHAPTER FIVE - LEARNING FROM THE EZLN **100**

CONTRAST WITH THE EPR 103
LIMITATIONS OF A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 105
EXPORTABILITY OF THE ZAPATISTA EXPERIENCE 107
1. SELF-CONSCIOUSLY CONSTRUCT AN IDENTITY OF RESISTANCE 110
2. DEVELOP COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE 112
3. DEVELOP EFFECTIVE SPOKESPERSONS 114
4. MAINTAIN MEDIA & PUBLIC INTEREST 115
5. CLEARLY FRAME THE ADVERSARY AND THE OBJECTIVE 118
6. NATIONALIZE AND INTERNATIONALIZE THE CONFLICT 119
7. MEET COMMUNITY NEEDS 121
8. AVOID MESSAGE MANIPULATION & COOPTATION 122
9. BEWARE PERCEPTION MANAGEMENT BY ADVERSARY 123
POSTSCRIPT 124
ENDNOTES 125

REFERENCES 129

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANCIEZ	Emiliano Zapata National Independent Peasant Alliance
APC	Association for Progressive Communications
CCRI	Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee
CCRI-CG	Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee General Command
CEOIC	Indigenous and Campesino State Council of Chiapas
CND	National Democratic Convention
CNI	National Indigenous Congress
COCOPA	Commission of Agreement and Peacemaking
CONAI	National Commission of Mediation
EPR	Popular Revolutionary Army
EZLN	Zapatista National Liberation Army
FLN	National Liberation Forces
FZLN	Zapatista National Liberation Front
IFE	Federal Electoral Institute
INI	National Indigenist Institute
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCEZ	Emiliano Zapata Campesino Organization
PAN	National Action Party
PRD	Democratic Revolutionary Party
PRI	Institutional Revolutionary Party

PREFACE

Looking back on the past eight years, the present topic seems the logical choice for my Master of Arts thesis. So a preliminary statement of qualification may be helpful to understanding the tortuous path that has led to its conception. The images of the 1994 indigenous uprising in Mexico sparked what is becoming a lifelong interest and devotion to studying the communications, history, and politics of indigenous peoples and their relationships with nation-states in the Americas. In 1996, I made the first of several forays into Latin America that would include much of the *Mundo Maya*, or "Mayan world," a vast geographical area that includes parts of Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador and Honduras. Cumulatively, I have averaged four months out of each of the past six years in Mexico, the Caribbean, or Central America. During that time, I have been to Chiapas six times and spent a year working and studying at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Autonomous University of Chiapas in San Cristóbal de Las Casas.

My undergraduate background seemed to have been in many respects an ideal preparation for a Zapatista communications topic. I graduated from the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College in 1997 with a Certificate in Indian Communication Arts and from the University of Regina in 2000 with a Bachelor of Arts in History. Between 1997 and 1999, language courses in Cuba, Guatemala, El Salvador and Chiapas, Mexico, allowed me a tenuous comfort level in Spanish. Since joining the Indigenous Governance program here at the University of Victoria, three term papers and a major course presentation on a variety of topics related to indigenous politics in Mexico are proof that the Zapatista rebellion remains a source of both academic and personal fascination. Last summer, I presented my first academic conference paper brazenly titled

"Zapatista Communications: By Any Media Necessary," at the Canadian Indigenous Native Studies Association gathering in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. These experiences provided me with a glimpse of a few of the challenges facing indigenous peoples in Latin America.

The title of the thesis, *The Mirror of Dignity*, was a recommendation too good to pass up. Its origins lie in the story of a Mayan elder, Old Antonio, who was a mentor to the first EZLN guerrillas. In the "Story of Dreams," Antonio recounts how the first Mayan gods gave the gift of dignity to the Mayan people in the form of a mirror. Their dignity was so powerful that when "the demons who deal in darkness" looked upon them, the demons' reflection revealed their "nothingness" and the demons were destroyed. This lone parable contains within it many different elements of the Zapatistas' communications campaign: an indigenous identity; the reliance on indigenous traditions; the emphasis on indigenous dignity; and, of course, the struggle between the EZLN and the Mexican state.

I am grateful for the guidance provided by my thesis committee and external: Taiaiake Alfred, Leslie Brown, Matt James, and Doug West. The completion of this thesis is testament to their assistance and encouragement. Thank you also, Susanne Thiessen and Sheila Watts, for always managing to extricate me, no matter how big the administrative mess I got myself into. Several professors also deserve mention for sharing their time and wisdom: Michael Asch and Isabelle Schulte-Tenckhoff from the IGOV program; as well as Shannon Avison, Ken Leyton-Brown, Neal Mcleod, and James Pitsula, from the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College and the Department of History at the University of Regina.

My sister Robyn and the rest of my family have been constant sources of encouragement during the adjustment to the graduate level. Fellow graduate students, Stu Bradfield, Gabe Haythornthwaite, Roman Joerger, Bruce Leslie, James Ward, and Lloy Wylie enriched my learning experience through our friendship. Finally, I must thank the very talented IGOV doctoral student, Shauna McRanor, for reasons too innumerable to be listed in full, but most of all, for her companionship and unwavering support during the past two years.

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION, RESEARCH DESIGN, AND RATIONALE

The 1994 rebellion in Mexico grabbed headlines around the world when the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) seized several municipalities in Chiapas. Although the EZLN was soon driven back, its dramatic act of resistance against the Mexican government mobilized widespread media coverage and public sympathy through an impressive communications campaign that emphasized the rebel army's indigenous identity. The EZLN has received extensive praise for an effective communications offensive that surpassed its military endeavours. The parameters of *Zapatista communications* have been broadly defined for the purposes of this thesis and extend to include all aspects of the EZLN's activities that were public and, at least in part, designed to attract media attention: written communiqués; interviews granted to the press; public and community consultations or *Consultas*; marches and other public demonstrations; the Zapatista conferences or *encuentros*; and finally, the rebellion itself as both a symbolic and real act of resistance. Such a broad definition of communications allows for an encompassing macro-evaluation of the EZLN's achievements, which have important implications for other indigenous groups that are in the process of decolonizing elsewhere. Different decolonization strategies require examination by indigenous peoples throughout South and North America because nation-states are already developing new countermeasures to defeat EZLN-inspired movements.[1] This thesis contributes to this kind of examination with an analysis organized in five chapters: Chapter One begins with a discussion of the theorists who inform the research, followed by a concise literature review and, in turn, the methodology and rationale for the

research; Chapter Two summarizes the points of contention between the EZLN and the Mexican government; Chapter Three analyzes the information content of the communications war through the key symbols employed by the Zapatistas; Chapter Four lists the types of media employed, various communications techniques as well as the specific audiences targeted by the Zapatistas; and Chapter Five considers the implications of EZLN communications for other indigenous organizations.

Communications & Politics

Kanien'kehaka (Mohawk) scholar Taiaiake Alfred identifies the vital role that communications serve in indigenous governance systems that traditionally depended on persuasion to influence community decisions.[2] The Kanien'kehaka are known for such political traditions which emphasize the power of persuasion to move people toward peaceful resolution of conflict in a political environment which rejects coercion. Among the Rotinohshonni (Iroquois) Confederacy, a political organization to which the Kanien'kehaka belong, the importance of good internal and external communications is ritualized in the Condolence ceremony with the symbolic act of lighting a torch.[3] These few examples, drawn from the Kanien'kehaka in particular and the Rotinohshonni in general, demonstrate that communications are an essential part of indigenous governance.

The communications strategy of the EZLN reinforces this observation. The Zapatistas have always chosen dialogue before combat. For example, prior to combat the EZLN invariably requested the surrender of any Mexican soldiers or police. But this invitation was more than an invitation to surrender; it was an invitation to join the

indigenous insurgents. The Zapatistas' preference to persuade the enemy to join their insurgency rather than fight against it can be seen as an example of the indigenous communications traditions identified by Alfred. Moreover, it is precisely this prioritization of communications over combat that makes the EZLN such an intriguing case study for the development of future indigenous resistance strategies.

A useful point of departure for a communications analysis of the EZLN is the landmark study, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, in which sociologist Manuel Castells identifies a proportional rise in identity politics with the elimination of communication barriers made possible by information technology.[4] He proposes that the resurgence of nationalism is due to the increased speed of international integration with regional isolation swept away by a tide of information that links disparate parts of the globe via modern communications technologies of radio, television, and the Internet, media formats that have contributed to what Castells calls *Informational Politics*.[5] He then cites the EZLN uprising as an example of an indigenous movement that employs modern communications technology as an act of resistance.[6] Consequently, this meeting of communications and indigenous nationalism in the Zapatista experience offers an ideal case study of his hypothesis linking identity and modern communications. This thesis seeks to uncover the implications of this connection between communications and indigenous identity because indigenous peoples throughout the world are engaged in public and media relations efforts to attract attention and generate support. The EZLN experience is one example of how indigenous peoples can organize this effort by constructing and promoting a pan-indigenous identity of resistance. Elements of this analysis will include communications and media relations,

political symbols, identity, propaganda, political marketing, and strategic communications.

Constructing an Identity of Resistance

Identity construction is an important aspect of communications because, for a movement to grow and recruit new members, it must project an attractive image to potential adherents. Castells' definitions of identity will now be discussed as they relate to this aspect of Zapatista communication. Castells defines identity as the prioritization of certain cultural attributes that symbolically identify a "social actor" and serve to influence his or her actions. Internalization of those attributes must occur for this prioritization of attributes, and for identities and their attendant meanings to be instilled in individuals.[7] Castells argues that identities and their attendant meanings only exist if they have been internalized by the individual. This internalization is evident in the widespread practice of self-identification with the EZLN, whereby individuals and even entire communities define themselves as Zapatista. Three types or forms of identity are identified by Castells: legitimizing, resistance, and project. *Legitimizing identity* is the identity that is promoted by the state to legitimize its power and authority.[8] In Chiapas, all citizens were expected to identify as Mexican and/or *Chiapaneco* until the EZLN rebellion swept away the hegemonic myth of a single state-constructed identity with the arrival of an opposing Zapatista identity.[9] Castells' second and third forms of identity enlighten an understanding of this new identity as well as the political transformation of indigenous peoples in Chiapas. *Resistance identity* is generated by marginalized groups who build

"trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society."[10] The *Project identity* is constructed from available cultural materials to redefine one's "position in society and, by so doing, seek the transformation of overall social structure."[11] In the case of the EZLN, Castells' definitions of resistance and project identities, as outlined above, are not mutually exclusive; indeed, both definitions clearly apply. The Zapatistas share a resistance identity due to the marginalization of its membership, the indigenous and poor *campesinos*, the Spanish term for rural farmers or peasants. The EZLN also clearly employs a project identity because it is fighting for an overall societal transformation that extends beyond Chiapas and even beyond Mexico. Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, the reactionary element of Castells' "resistance" definition is combined with the proactive element of his "project" definition. In the interests of clarity and brevity, this combination will be referred to simply as the Zapatistas' resistance identity, or rather the identity they self-consciously constructed and implemented through their communications campaign; in short, the identity that contested the legitimizing identity promoted by the Mexican state.

Castells' resistance identity construction corresponds well with Alfred's principle of *self-conscious traditionalism*, which is defined as the "intellectual, social, and political movement that will reinvigorate those values, principles, and other cultural elements that are best suited to the larger contemporary political and economic reality."[12] The contention is that a mechanical and unthinking adoption of non-indigenous political institutions is a mistake because such a process cannot honour or reflect indigenous values. Following indigenous traditions also means rejecting the legitimizing identities

created by nation-states and reconstructing "indigenous identities as autonomous individual, collective, and social beings."[13] Identity reconstruction can be undertaken if indigenous peoples engage in a "process of self-conscious reflection and selective re-adoption of traditional values."[14] By suggesting that an identity of resistance to colonialism can draw upon both history and tradition, Alfred and Castells demonstrate the decolonizing potential of an indigenous resistance identity to combat the imposed legitimizing identities developed by nation-states. The purpose of this thesis is to draw lessons from how the EZLN developed the communications capacity that generated and sustained its own resistance identity.[15]

Is the EZLN indigenous?

Whether the EZLN should be considered an indigenous movement is a subject of academic debate. In his analysis of the root causes of the 1994 rebellion, George Collier warns against essentializing the EZLN as an indigenous movement because of the complex social and political relations in indigenous communities.[16] Indigenous peoples have backed both the EZLN and its government and paramilitary opponents. The same is true of *campesino* support which is split between pro-government and pro-Zapatista factions. In fact, the vast majority of communities throughout Chiapas have both EZLN supporters and opponents within them. Consequently, the EZLN support base in eastern Chiapas must be understood as a geographical region that has a higher concentration of Zapatista sympathizers. Government supporters do live inside this area and pitched battles have occurred between the rival factions. The situation is further complicated by

the presence of paramilitaries who harass, intimidate, and frequently terrorize and even kill EZLN supporters in Chiapas.

An example of this social complexity lies in the events of December 22, 1997, at the small community of Acteal in Chiapas. Forty-five unarmed Tzotzil Mayans (19 children, 19 women, and 7 men) were systematically murdered by a paramilitary group.[17] What is particularly heartbreaking is that the perpetrators of this brutal crime at Acteal were themselves Tzotzil Mayans. The people of Acteal were members of the *Abejas*, a Zapatista support group that was targeted by the paramilitaries because of an ongoing struggle between those who supported the EZLN and those who supported the government. Therefore, it is simplistic to think of the struggle in terms of the indigenous EZLN versus the non-indigenous Mexican government. The truth is much more painful. Indigenous peoples have taken up arms provided by the Mexican state and turned those weapons on their own people. Why? An insufficient but correct answer is poverty. The Tzotzil of eastern Chiapas are among the most impoverished of Mexicans. The men who participated in the massacre were all supporters of the ruling PRI and participants in a constant local struggle for land. Only a few days before the carnage at Acteal, a truck running stolen coffee was ambushed and a PRI supporter was killed.[18] His death triggered the vengeance at Acteal.

One unresolved area of inquiry is the difficulty of establishing the dividing line between indigenous issues in particular and social justice issues in general in the Chiapas conflict. Indeed, there is no consensus on even what constitutes the indigenous component of the Zapatista movement.[19] That most Zapatistas are indigenous is undeniable but the controversial question remains whether the EZLN is an "indigenous

movement." However, many attempts have been made to categorize the rebellion accordingly. Several scholars have challenged the popular view that the Zapatista rebellion is an explicitly indigenous enterprise.[20] As a result, distilling the indigenous component from the Zapatista conflict has become highly controversial. Indeed, as mentioned above with respect to the Acteal massacre, a few indigenous communities, albeit a minority, have opposed the Zapatistas. Some indigenous community leaders have accused the Zapatistas of spreading messages of class warfare that further divide and undermine the distinctiveness of the indigenous peoples themselves.[21]

Two perspectives have generally been taken by scholars. The "indigenous" perspective accepts the EZLN as an indigenous movement because its membership is overwhelmingly made up of people of Mayan descent. The second and alternative view suggests that the indigenous identity of the EZLN has been overrepresented. This view contends that the drawing power of the organization is primarily economic; that poverty and class struggle are what unite its membership. Supporters of the "class" perspective enumerate the many examples of indigenous individuals and organizations who have condemned and criticized the EZLN. Moreover, many of the Mexican Army soldiers and paramilitaries who have fought against the EZLN are themselves indigenous.

Resolving the question of whether the EZLN is an indigenous or class-based movement is beyond the scope of this thesis. It is virtually impossible to demarcate where a Zapatista's identity as a Mayan can be separated from his or her economic role as a peasant farmer or *campesino*.[22] Decades of channeling indigenous grievances into non-indigenous political processes, by deliberately undermining and weakening autonomous indigenous political institutions, have blurred ethnic and indigenous identities throughout

Mexico.[23] What should be emphasized is that the EZLN has acquired support from secular and religious, wealthy and poor, indigenous and non-indigenous, as well as Mexican and international sectors. This thesis seeks to extract lessons that can guide indigenous resistance movements as they develop their own communications strategies with an analysis that focuses on the indigenous elements of the communications campaign. To this end, therefore, the EZLN will be considered to be an indigenous resistance movement similar to the American Indian Movement or the Warrior Societies found in North America despite the academic controversy and the inherent difficulties of essentializing the EZLN as indigenous.

A racist undercurrent to this identity debate was apparent in the immediate reaction of the Mexican government to the rebellion.[24] It was considered impossible that Indians could have orchestrated a coordinated and effective occupation of the Chiapas highlands. Many blamed outside agitators who manipulated the indigenous peoples into an uprising. John Ross notes that "no one gave the Indians any credit for taking matters into their own hands" even though the Zapatista forces that occupied San Cristóbal de las Casas on New Year's Day were Tzotzil, Tojolabal, Tzeltal, and Chol.[25]

The Mexican government has only reluctantly acknowledged the indigenous component of the EZLN rebellion. For propaganda purposes, the EZLN has been portrayed as foreign in order to encourage a xenophobic rejection of the rebels by other Mexicans. The government has depicted a movement made up of "guileless but gullible natives inspired and led by foreign subversives."[26] Such accusations damage the EZLN, particularly because its chief spokesperson is not indigenous. Xenophobia increased the EZLN's need to demonstrate a concomitant patriotism to convince Mexicans that it was

an indigenous *Mayan* and particularly *Mexican* rebel army. The EZLN has achieved this unity by focusing on consensus symbols that broadly appeal both to *campesinos* and indigenous peoples, as well as many others in Mexican society. The EZLN's counterstrategy will be explored further in Chapters Two and Three.

Research Rationale

A literature review reveals gaps in the English historiography of indigenous issues in Latin America but this is not necessarily the case with the EZLN. Due in part to the large following that the EZLN has fostered through its effective handling of the mainstream media, North Americans' ignorance of their struggle is less evident. Although the general communications strategy and tactics have received some attention, relatively few of the journal articles, books, films, and music that draw inspiration from the EZLN uprising have focused specifically on the potential of the EZLN communications model of rebellion for other indigenous groups. This thesis therefore seeks to present Zapatista strategies and tactics in a manner that is accessible and relevant to other indigenous communities. Since the movement has risen to prominence only in the past several years, it is understandable that secondary sources are relatively few, with the bulk of those sources focusing on the relationship between the EZLN and anti-globalization. A body of literature, comprised mainly of journal articles written since 1995, does however examine the EZLN and its communications techniques and strategies.[27] Along with a wide variety of secondary and primary sources that touch indirectly on the topic, the analyses of Aczel, Bob, Huntington, Knudson, Nash, Ronfeldt

et al., and Ross will form the core of the following examination of the communications policy of the EZLN.[28] Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to compare and contrast the EZLN with indigenous resistance efforts elsewhere, this study does hope to provide data for future comparative efforts.[29]

Research for Decolonization

There are many reasons - political, moral, and economic - why colonial relations between indigenous peoples and nation-states may be considered unjust. An indigenous research approach, as articulated by scholars such as Taiaiake Alfred and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, links the power of research to the project of decolonization.[30] Such scholarship also contains an embedded critical social scientific philosophy, and strives to transform the unjust relations that exist between the colonizer and the colonized.[31] The political struggle of indigenous peoples in Chiapas against Spanish and Mexican colonial authorities will be outlined in Chapter Three, but a grasp of the magnitude of the challenges facing indigenous peoples in the Americas is necessary to begin to understand the task at hand.

The United Nations acknowledged the crushing poverty that many indigenous people face around the globe by declaring 1993 the Year of Indigenous People. Some of the most striking examples of income disparity between indigenous & non-indigenous can be found in Latin America. For example, Mexico has a non-indigenous poverty rate of 17.9% overall while 80.6% of its indigenous populations fall below the poverty line.[32] The socioeconomic indicators for Chiapas are the poorest in the country, with high rates

of illiteracy, overcrowding, and limited access to potable water.[33] Higher relative rates of poverty amongst indigenous populations also exist in Bolivia, Guatemala & Peru.

Notwithstanding the deplorable conditions in which indigenous peoples live, mere improvement of their material conditions would be insufficient if it were not accompanied by a concomitant change in their political relations with the nation-states that occupy their traditional territories. In Mexico, the EZLN has led the way in drawing attention to the need for constitutional changes that will protect indigenous rights. Indigenous demands for autonomy are widespread throughout Latin America in an effort to shield their communities from *Indígenismo*, the common term for assimilative nation-state policy in Latin America whose origins will be discussed further in Chapter Two.[34]

Searching for Answers & Lessons

This study seeks to extract lessons from the EZLN experience in Chiapas in a way that will help indigenous peoples develop skills to allow their communities to operate autonomously and effectively in the information age.[35] In general, the objective is to provide useful information with which indigenous peoples can compare their own communications operations. The specific purpose is to offer potential lessons, based on the EZLN experience, which will enable indigenous organizations to develop their strategic communications potential. The research questions that direct this thesis are the following:

- *What are the contending narratives in the communications struggle between the Mexican state and the EZLN?*

- *What were the symbols that formed the information content of the Zapatista communications campaign?*
- *What media were employed and what means were used in order to transmit those symbols to Chiapanecos, Mexicans, and the world?*
- *And finally, what can we learn from the EZLN's communications strategy since the 1994 uprising?*

The exploration of the above questions will be informed by a review of the secondary literature as well as by key primary sources, including interviews and Zapatista communiqués. It will occur in four parts. Chapter Two begins with a thematic review of the "battles" that emerged in the communications war between the EZLN and the Mexican state between 1994 and 2001. Chapter Three analyzes the core symbols drawn from Mayan and Mexican history that the EZLN used during those battles to self-consciously create their identity of resistance as an indigenous rebel army and a worldwide opposition to neo-liberalism and neo-colonialism. Chapter Four explores how the Zapatistas used a variety of media and techniques to communicate those symbols in order to acquire local, national and international support. Finally, Chapter Five concludes with a brief discussion of the issues involved in considering the Zapatista experience along with a summary of its implications for future indigenous resistance movements.

Endnotes

[1] David Ronfeldt, John Arquilla, Graham E. Fuller, and Melissa Fuller, *The Zapatista Social Netwar in Mexico* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Arroyo Center, 1998), 128-30. However, one need read no further than the book's title page which bears the phrase "Prepared for the United States Army".

[2] Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power, Righteousness – An Indigenous Manifesto* (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 1999), 25.

[3] Ibid., xxii. Subcommandante Insurgente Marcos has also metaphorically described the EZLN as a light for indigenous peoples. "Five Hundred Years of Indigenous Resistance," in *Our Word is Our Weapon – Selected Writings*, Editor Juana Ponce de León (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001), 40.
[4] Manuel Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture – Volume II – The Power of Identity* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 1-2.
[5] Ibid, 310-2.
[6] Ibid., 79.
[7] Ibid., 6-7. Neil Harvey provides a similar argument by identifying the "*construction* of citizenship [as] the central question for analysis" in his book, *The Chiapas Rebellion – The Struggle for Land and Democracy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 11-2.
[8] Castells, 8-9.
[9] Castells observes that the rebellion "struck a major blow to PRI [the then governing Institutional Revolutionary Party] mythology" because previously loyal *campesino* and indigenous sectors of Mexican society were in open revolt against the Mexican government. Castells, 282. Mexican scholar José Manuel Valenzuela Arce describes how the Mexican government attempted to create a legitimizing identity for its citizens (25) while the indigenous peoples have resisted such efforts by maintaining their identities as indigenous peoples. "The Zapatista Army of National Liberation and the Demands of the Mexican People" in *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, Vol. (1-2), October 1996, 254-5.
[10] Castells, 8.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Alfred, xviii.
[13] Ibid., 2.
[14] Ibid., 80-1.
[15] Ward Churchill employs a similar concept to Alfred when Churchill speculates that the Zapatistas are "conscious traditionalists" by linking their rebellion to previous indigenous uprisings rather than the recent guerrilla movements of Latin America. Ward Churchill, "A North American Indigenist View," Katzenberger, 150-1. Another complementary perspective is provided by Stuart Hall who believes that "identity is continually contested and reconstructed" in the process of "discourse...which involves an individual's identification with the constructed images and cultural narratives that dominate our ways of seeing and representing the world." Hall therefore "locates media representation and the dynamic construction of collective and individual identity within the ideological struggle of power relations." Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, "Rights and Warriors: First Nations, Media and Identity" in *The Mass Media and Canadian Diversity*, Editors Stephen E. Nancoo and Robert S. Nancoo (Mississauga, Ont.: Canadian Educators' Press, 1997), 114.
[16] George A. Collier, *Basta! Land and the Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas* (Monroe Oregon: Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1994), xiv.
[17] John Ross, *The War Against Oblivion: The Zapatista Chronicles* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2000), 241.
[18] Ibid., 238.
[19] A useful definition is provided by Carlos Montemayor, "To be an Indian in Mexico is not just to have a particular physical appearance...[i]t is also to speak an Indian language, to live on ancestral land, to practice traditional customs, and to hold the age-old values of the community within which you live." As quoted in Ignacio Ramonet, "Marcos Marches on Mexico City," in *The Zapatista Reader*, Editor Tom Hayden (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press/Nation Books, 2002), 137.
[20] Most if not all scholars concur that the Zapatista movement is primarily indigenous in its membership and outlook. Those who still use a primarily class-based explanation for the rebellion include Collier and Harvey. Scholars such as June Nash, Rodolfo Stavenhagen, and Lynn Stephen use either a synthesized indigenous/class explanation or emphasize the former in their analysis of the rebellion.
[21] Collier, 36.
[22] Many scholars see the EZLN's inclusiveness and reluctance to engage in ethnic nationalism as its primary strengths. This approach has not prevented, but rather augmented, the Zapatistas efforts to "make recognition of the rights and cultures of indigenous peoples an integral part of democratization in Mexico." Harvey, 228-9.
[23] Indigenous peoples have generally had their politics subsumed within non-indigenous political institutions such as peasant, student, and union organizations. Julio C. Tresierra, "Mexico: Indigenous

Peoples and the Nation-State," in *Indigenous Peoples and Democracy in Latin America*, Editor Donna Lee Van Cott (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 190.

[24] Patricia Huntington. "Challenging the Colonial Contact: The Zapatistas' Insurgent Imagination," in *Rethinking Marxism* Volume 12, Number 3 (Fall 2000), 69.

[25] Ross (2000), 19.

[26] Collier, 4.

[27] When studying the EZLN's efforts to develop and distribute information, it becomes possible to perceive all EZLN actions as a series of publicity stunts. This would be a grave miscarriage of justice to the EZLN, its supporters and all Mexicans who have suffered during the rebellion and its aftermath. Since the ceasefire on January 12th, 1994, many more Mexicans have been killed by guerrillas, paramilitaries, or civilian factions. Caution must be observed when reading accounts of the negotiation process and Zapatista efforts to attract international media attention. If the EZLN appears to be a media hound, then it must always be remembered why.

[28]The Audrey M. Aczel's 1997 MA thesis looks at the function of the Internet in the Chiapas uprising. Aczel identifies three consequences of the Zapatistas media and public relations efforts. The overall impact of the EZLN's communications campaign was to shift the emphasis from military to political confrontation and to consequentially reduce the potential for further bloodshed. Futhermore, indigenous issues were thrust into the national spotlight as never before. Audrey M. Aczel, "A Communications Analysis of the Chiapas Uprising: Marcos' Publicity Campaign on the Internet," (MA Thesis, McGill University, July 1997), 106-9. Jerry W. Knudson has written an article that looks at the role of the Internet in the EZLN's public and media relations. Jerry W Knudson, "Rebellion in Chiapas: Insurrection by Internet and public relations," in *Media, Culture & Society*, Vol. 20, No. 3, July 1998, 507-18. Anthropologist June Nash has contributed several publications that document the indigenous people's frustrations with a changing local economy. Her most recent book, *Mayan Visions – The Quest for Autonomy in an Age of Globalization* praises the Maya because they "are still integrated into an indigenous cosmology and a syncretic religious paradigm that provides them with a framework for resistance to colonialism and domination." June Nash, *Mayan Visions – The Quest for Autonomy in an Age of Globalization* (New York: Routledge, 2001), xix. Finally, Nash has written an article on the role of the mass media and its coverage of the rebellion from an anthropological perspective, "Press Reports on the Chiapas Uprising: Towards a Transnationalized Communication," in *Journal of Latin American Anthropology*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1997, 42-75. John Ross is a Mexican-based American journalist who has written extensively on Latin America. His major contribution to the EZLN communications literature is *The War Against Oblivion: Zapatista Chronicles*, 1994-2000 (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2000). However, Ross offers keen insight into the EZLN and its communications strategies and tactics as well as sharp criticism of their perceived shortcomings. Furthermore, Ross's chronology is valuable because he is well positioned as a journalist to evaluate the day-to-day and month-to-month ebb and flow of public opinion regarding the EZLN. Ross is the absolute authority in the English literature on the communications war between the EZLN and the Mexican government. Indeed, many other scholars of the Zapatistas cite his work in their own. For these reasons, the following Chronology of the Communications War is heavily indebted to his presentation of the EZLN uprising and its aftermath. Unfortunately, *The War Against Oblivion* is poorly referenced. Another reason to proceed cautiously with Ross as a source is that he obviously admires the Zapatista cause and evidence of bias that frequently manifests itself in the form of slanted language while speculating on the Mexican government's motives. Wherever possible, Ross's conclusions and opinions have been cross-referenced with other sources in an attempt to limit the bias in his work.

[29] Paul Havemann has done extensive comparative work on international indigenous issues and outlines the challenges involved in such a complex undertaking but insists that comparative studies are imperative to the development of a cross-cultural dialogue in *Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Australia, Canada, & New Zealand* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[30] Alfred, xvi-xvii; see also Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research & Indigenous Peoples* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 116-7.

[31] Critical Social Science (CSS) is a label borrowed from W. Laurence Neuman's *Social Research Methods – Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (Toronto: Allyn & Bacon, 1994), 66-72. Its basic tenets are an activist approach to bring about profound structural change that favours "an historical –comparative method because of its emphasis on change and because it helps a researcher uncover underlying structures" (72).

---

[32] Michael P. Todaro. *Economic Development* (7th Edition). Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 2000: 175-6.
[33] Elaine Katzenberger, "Living Conditions," Katzenberger, 33-4.
[34] For a discussion of nation-state assimilative policies towards indigenous peoples in a global context, see Alfred. For discussion of assimilative policies specific to Latin America, see Hector Díaz Polanco, *Indigenous Peoples in Latin America – The Quest for Self-Determination*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview, 1997. For a historical summary of the intellectual origins of assimilative policies in Latin America, see Part I of Robert A. William Jr.'s, The *American Indian in Western Legal Thought – Discourses of Conquest*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990. For a discussion of assimilative policies specific to the Mexican context, see Tresierra.
[35] Alfred, 33.

CHAPTER TWO - SURVEYING THE BATTLEFIELD

A few points of clarification are required when considering Mexican politics, society, and the role of the mass media. It should be remembered that the existence of a "free press" is in many respects an ideal rather than the present reality throughout much of Latin America.[1] A communications study of Mexico would be remiss if it failed to acknowledge the high level of concentration of, and resultant lack of pluralism in, the mass media. This is particularly true in the television industry, where privately owned Televisa dominated the market with 90% ratings until the launching of TV Azteca in 1993.[2] Such a high degree of concentration likely contributed to political manipulation during the 71 year PRI reign when the mainstream Mexican press generally restricted itself to promoting the state-party line. Media concentration and influence-peddling in the television industry facilitated this process because the majority of Mexicans receive their political news via this medium. Mexican reporters are confronted with many challenges to independent journalism, including very low wages, which lead many to frequently accept bribes from politicians and political parties in return for favourable coverage.[3] As a result, the mass media context presents certain challenges when assessing the news coverage of events within the Mexican press.[4]

The Zapatistas emphasized the importance of independent media in their negotiations with the Mexican government with two specific clauses in article 8 of the San Andres Accords, which were signed in 1996 as part of the peace process:

> *Article 8.- Means of communication. With the purpose of creating an inter cultural dialogue from the community level up to the national level, that may allow a new and positive relationship between the various indigenous groups and between these groups and the rest of society, it is essential to endow these towns with their own*

means of communication, which are also key mechanisms for the development of their cultures. Therefore, it will be proposed to the respective national authorities, to elaborate a new communications law that may allow the indigenous towns to acquire, operate and administrate their own means of communication.

The Federal and State governments will promote that the means of communication currently in the hands of the Indigenists become indigenous means of communication, which is a demand made by the indigenous communities and towns.

The Federal Government will recommend to the respective authorities that the seventeen INI (National Indigenist Institute) radio stations be given to the indigenous communities in their respective regions, with the transference of permits, infrastructure and resources, when an expressed request by the indigenous communities has been issued to this effect.

In the same manner, it is necessary to create a new judicial framework in the area of communications that may consider the following aspects: national pluriculturalism; the right to use indigenous languages in the media; the right to rebuttal; guarantees to rights of expression, information and communication; and the democratic participation of the indigenous towns and communities before the authorities who decide on matters of communication. The participation of interested parties in establishing a civic responsibility process for the decision making authorities in the area of communication, can be realized through the creation of a communications Ombudsman or a citizens' Council of communications.[5]

Another point of clarification involves Mexico's sensitivity to international public opinion in the early to mid 1990s. Mexico was involved in trade talks with Canada and the United States prior to 1994, and following the successful ratification of NAFTA, immediately embarked upon a similar trade initiative with the European Union. Consequently, these economic objectives made the Mexican government acutely aware of, and sensitive to, international public opinion on Chiapas.[6] Furthermore, the Mexican president at the time of the uprising, Carlos Salinas, was organizing a run for the presidency of the World Trade Organization and was careful not to inflame international opinion by crushing the Zapatista rebellion in the final year of his mandate.[7] Prior to 1994, the Mexican government had stifled reports of guerrilla activity for fear that signs of political instability would prevent Mexico from joining NAFTA.[8] This policy of

information suppression continued after the uprising as well. During the initial fighting in January 1994, a Mexican army officer who would later defect reported orders received from a Mexican general to "take no prisoners, but be careful if the press is around."[9]

Contending Narratives

The Mexican government's efforts to discredit the EZLN provide a valuable lens through which to identify those elements of the Zapatista communications strategy that are most threatening to the Mexican state: its indigenous identity, its patriotism, and its firm grounding in Mexican history. The contested ground between the Mexican government and the EZLN can be summarized in eight themes. A review of these themes, or points of contention, is necessary because they structured the Zapatista response and constrained the communications strategies and tactics they employed. The eight points of government-Zapatista contention, each of which are discussed in turn and in further detail below, may be framed as follows:

1. *Where did the rebellion come from?*
2. *Is the EZLN indigenous?*
3. *Are the Zapatistas even Mexican?*
4. *Is the EZLN separatist?*
5. *Is Marcos a Marxist or a narco-terrorist?*
6. *Is the rebellion of merely local or national significance?*
7. *What were the EZLN's military objectives?*
8. *What became of the San Andrés Accords?*

1. Origins of the Rebellion

In her analysis of the Mexican government's propaganda efforts, Patricia Huntington casts doubt on the government's feigned surprise when the rebellion occurred.[10] Huntington cites evidence that both the United States and Mexico knew of the rebels in Chiapas at least as early as 1992.[11] In March 1993, the Mexican army engaged the EZLN in a firefight and captured one of their weapons caches at Las Calabazas.[12] However, ratifying NAFTA in the US Congress made it necessary to limit and downplay reports of guerrilla activity in southern Mexico.[13]

A brief historical overview is warranted to understand what caused the 1994 Zapatista rebellion. While assimilative policies had been underway for some time at regional and state levels, the federal government became involved for the first time in the 1940s.[14] This policy became known as *Indígenismo* and Mexico has set the standard for much of Latin America in its implementation and design.[15] *Indígenismo* was intended to integrate indigenous peoples into the mainstream of Mexican society. The National Indigenist Institute (INI), a Mexican equivalent of Canada's Department of Indian Affairs and the United States' Bureau of Indian Affairs, [16] was created in the 1940s in order to achieve this end.[17] Although an improvement over previous administrations' complete apathy for indigenous Mexicans, the consequences of the INI's establishment and its mandate were largely ethnocidal.[18] Unrest grew as land shortages increased due to the encroachment on indigenous lands by the growing cattle industry and the arrival of migrants from outside states. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Mexican government sought to appease this unrest by promoting agriculture in indigenous communities while gradually

integrating indigenous peoples into a market economy.[19] Roads, schools, and health clinics were constructed as the government sought to develop an economic and social infrastructure in undeveloped areas.[20]

The 1968 massacre of student protesters in Mexico City was a watershed in 20th century Mexican politics. The students were calling for democratic reforms and a commitment of the current administration to the promises of the 1917 Constitution. The government responded with violence. At least 300 protesters and perhaps hundreds more were killed when President Gustavo Díaz called in the army to clear the students and their supporters from the Plaza de las Tres Culturas in Tlatelolco.[21] This violent repression by the Mexican government led to a proliferation of violent guerrilla movements throughout the country.[22]

At the same time, the Mexican government attempted to undermine indigenous resistance to economic development in Southeastern Mexico.[23] Despite ostensible efforts to encourage indigenous participation in the INI, policies remained rooted in the dogged pursuit of *Indígenismo*.[24] The logic was that, rather than recognize indigenous autonomy, it would be more effective to "simply absorb ethnic differences rather than suppress them," to create a situation "in which indigenous people would take their place as *equals* but not as *different*."[25] Growing indigenous and *campesino* hostility to the INI led to the government's shifting of responsibility for its development agenda to the newly established Program of Socioeconomic Development of the Highlands of Chiapas (PRODESCH).[26] The end of the oil boom and the subsequent arrival of internationally imposed austerity measures only fostered greater indigenous disenchantment with government policy. The severe curtailing of government spending in Chiapas was

devastating for a rural economy in which many *campesinos* had left their plots of land to work on petroleum and infrastructure projects. Upon returning home, many found that the agricultural work they had abandoned no longer existed because many of the large estates had shifted production from labour-intensive agriculture to cattle raising.[27]

This shift in production had displaced thousands of workers and was a major catalyst in the establishment of several new independent *campesino* and indigenous organizations. One such organization, the Emiliano Zapata National Independent Peasant Alliance (ANCIEZ), would be the civilian front for the EZLN and was active throughout the 1980s during a period of renewed land invasions which pitted landowners against the landless.[28] The landowners hired and armed paramilitaries to attack and intimidate squatters, destroy their settlements, and drive them off their estates. The need for protection from armed ranchers and their hired paramilitaries drew many people who were desperate for land to join the young movement.

The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) dates its origins to November 17th, 1983.[29] The six-person army's initial headquarters at La Sultana were moved to a location near Guadalupe Tepeyac in the Lacandón jungle, and a recruit who would become famous under the alias Subcommandante Insurgente Marcos arrived the following year.[30] Recruitment into the growing rebel army was conducted "through kinship lines" in indigenous communities throughout Chiapas and the EZLN was invited into its first community in 1986.[31] Rural health care and military training were offered to help draw recruits and mobilize local support. The EZLN grew quickly, from 80 to 1,300 between 1988 and 1989, after the fraudulent election victory of the PRI's Salinas over the new Democratic Revolutionary Party's (PRD) Cárdenas.[32] In 1992, military preparations

were already underway when ANCIEZ organized a Columbus Day demonstration in San Cristóbal that climaxed with the destruction of a statue of the 16th century Spanish conquistador of Chiapas, Diego de Mazariegos.[33] A military command structure was put in place in early 1993 once the communities had decided to go to war and troop strength was already approximately 12,000.[34] The Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee – General Command (CCRI-CG) was the operational centre of the entire support base of the EZLN, with representatives of the local CCRIs represented in the CCRI-CG.[35] By 1993, the federal government was aware that a guerrilla movement was operating in Chiapas and the local military garrison was reinforced with 15,000 soldiers.[36] Finally, the decade leading up to the rebellion had been spent cultivating rural and indigenous support by working in the economically depressed eastern and highland communities of Chiapas. This enormous effort to build the EZLN and train its soldiers prior to the uprising would have been virtually impossible to hide. Therefore, government contestation of the rebellion's origins should be understood as part of a larger strategy to undermine the legitimacy of Zapatista grievances by feigning confusion and disbelief over why anyone would feel the need to rise up in arms against the government.

2. Indigenousness of the EZLN

As discussed in Chapter One, scholars have vigorously debated to what extent the EZLN is an indigenous or a class-based movement.[37] The EZLN has appealed to both indigenous Mexicans and *campesinos* in order to widen its popular support base, as

indigenous peoples account for only half the total population of 3.9 million Chiapanecos.[38] Both the Zapatista leadership and its rank and file are overwhelmingly indigenous, as is much of their popular support in Mexican civil society. The major exception is the movement's chief spokesperson and military commander, Subcommandante Insurgente Marcos, who has been at the centre of the media's obsession with the EZLN. The reasons for the cult of personality surrounding Marcos are also controversial and will be explored in more detail further on. However, even Marcos stresses that the universal dimension of the EZLN is precisely its indigenous content because the indigenous (the particular) embodies all that the human rights regime (the universal) is meant to protect.[39] Public awareness of the indigenous component has risen since 1994 as indigenous leaders such as Tacho, Moises, and Ramona have received increased media attention. Additional evidence of indigenousness might be the leadership principle known as "mandar obediciendo," or "leading by obeying," which is both practiced and promoted by the EZLN and will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.[40] Another example is Subcommandante Marcos's deference to the Mayan CCRI-CG and his role as a self-described Zapatista spokesperson rather than commander-in-chief.[41] And finally, the San Andrés negotiations between the government and the EZLN demonstrated a prioritization of indigenous issues given that the first round of talks was to focus upon "Indian Rights and Culture."[42] But despite this and other evidence, the government has continuously contested the EZLN's role as a representative for indigenous Mexicans.

3. National Significance of the Uprising

The Mexican government's efforts to downplay the EZLN's importance fit the common state strategy of domestication of indigenous issues. The federal government has resisted outside intervention or international mediation of the Chiapas conflict with the argument that it is merely a 'domestic' problem.[43] This isolation strategy has been supported by the Mexican military's siege to both restrict the rebels to a small geographical area and also restrict outsiders' access to the rebel zone. During the peace negotiations in February, 1994, the government negotiators seemed determined to limit discussion to local issues in order to thwart EZLN efforts to expand the conflict into one of international significance by holding peace talks outside Mexico or having the EZLN recognized as a belligerent force under international law.[44] Despite these measures, the government has never succeeded in completely containing the EZLN to Chiapas, even though as many as 60,000 Mexican troops are stationed within its borders.[45]

The government's response to the massacre of 45 Tzotzil pro-Zapatista villagers at Acteal is an example of its attempts to downplay the conflict's significance in Chiapas. The Attorney General attempted to remove any political overtones from the tragedy with a report that such acts were merely "intercommunal or interfamilial" disputes.[46] The presence of paramilitaries was dismissed by the Mexican government and army. The second major television station in the country, TV Azteca, gave the following instructions to its reporters:

1. *"Stress that the fight is between Indians.*
2. *The causes are land [i.e., blame the ejido system] and religion [i.e., blame the diocese].*

3. *Stress that the PRD is trying to shift blame [from the Zapatistas] by calling the paramilitaries PRIistas – we cannot approve of calling them PRIistas..."*[47]

The EZLN dismissed the government's self-absolution and blamed Ernesto Zedillo, then-president and PRI leader, for the killings. An angry exchange between the government and the EZLN over who was to blame for Acteal was the first dialogue that had occurred between them since San Andrés negotiations had collapsed in September 1996. This public relations disaster for the PRI led Zedillo to make the future PRI presidential candidate, Francisco Labastida, his new Interior secretary. Labastida promptly blamed the EZLN's establishment of autonomous municipalities for the massacre and declared his intentions to see Chiapas disarmed.[48]

The government's isolation strategy was particularly successful in 1999. Back in Chiapas, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights toured the state in November despite the government's recalcitrance. However, the EZLN stated that "it would be unethical for us to accept human rights intervention" from the UN in light of the latter's failure to condemn the NATO bombing in the Balkans over the Kosovo dispute, where the UN lost its "'moral authority.'"[49] The isolation of the EZLN worsened as it lost two staunch allies, the retiring Bishop Samuel Ruíz and his unexpectedly transferred heir apparent, after a long campaign to have them removed by conservative factions in the state and Mexico's Roman Catholic Church.[50] While traveling in Europe before the 2000 election, President Zedillo announced to reporters that the EZLN uprising was merely "'an incident in history.'"[51] His successor, Vicente Fox, continued with this downplaying tactic in June, 2001, by recommending that Mexicans "'shouldn't give any more space or situations of power to the Zapatista movement.'"[52] The Mexican government continues

to oppose Zapatista efforts to connect their struggle to national economic and political issues.

4. Maintaining Law & Order

Another zone of contention is the legality of the rebellion. The Mexican government characterizes the rebellion as lawless violence that threatens harmony and order in Chiapas. On the other hand, the EZLN has often stressed that the Zapatistas are legitimate rebels and cite Article 39 of the Mexican Constitution as legal proof:

> *National sovereignty essentially, and originally resides in the people. All political power emanates from the people and its purpose is to help the people. The people have, at all times, the inalienable right to alter or modify their form of government.*[53]

One example of how the EZLN has challenged the "lawless" label occurred on the first day of the uprising in San Cristóbal, where EZLN troops occupied the municipal palace and selectively destroyed parts of the city's archives while preserving those considered of historical value. The burning of the documents was noted by an observer to be:

> *[n]ot an act of vandalism, as the authorities tried to define it. It was a symbolic act: the EZLN set fire to the lies, robbery, oppression and cynicism of the system, as represented by City Hall. It was an act of purification. In the same way, the Zapatistas opened jails and released prisoners, the majority of whom were victims of unjust judicial proceedings, which had been tainted by bribery or consigned to oblivion...All of this was carried out under the symbol of liberty.*[54]

The Mexican government has repeatedly returned to this "lawless" strategy in order to legitimize its rule and undermine support for the EZLN. The government's invasion of the EZLN territories in February 1995 was justified by President Zedillo on national

television because the CCRI-CG of the EZLN were terrorists and neither indigenous nor *Chiapaneco*.[55] The army was ordered to escort police into the jungle in order to fulfill arrest warrants for several Zapatista *comandantes*.[56] Another example of this strategy occurred after the San Andrés negotiations broke down in late 1996, when the Mexican government attempted to kill the Accords by suggesting they would balkanize the country. Zedillo portrayed autonomy for indigenous peoples as a certain return to marginalization and discrimination while he travelled the country criticizing the Accords as exclusionary.[57] The EZLN's response was to challenge the Mexican government's authority by establishing autonomous communities throughout its support base in Chiapas.[58] The government clearly perceived indigenous autonomy as a threat and responded by attempting to restore its authority by sending in police and soldiers to arrest the leaders of the autonomy movement. Upholding the rule of law would be the government's justification for these police actions against the autonomous communities.

5. Smearing Marcos

Subcommandante Marcos's role in the rebellion is important because his enormous popularity made him an effective critic and an obvious target of the Mexican government.[59] Efforts to discredit him portrayed him as an outside instigator engaged in self-aggrandizement rather than altruism. Marcos was derided as a foreigner, a Marxist, and a narco-terrorist.[60] Confusion reigned for months over the colour of his eyes in order to engender xenophobia and divide his Mexican supporters.[61] When Marcos's identity was revealed in 1995, his identity as a Mexican was finally confirmed during a bizarre

televised "unmasking" that fed into the "media frenzy" of infotainment analysis that focused on the clash of personalities between the Mexican president and Marcos.[62] The "cult of personality" surrounding Marcos was the very reason that he figured so prominently in the government's smear campaign against the EZLN. However, the other Zapatista commanders have always come to his defense and rebuked those who used such tactics to discredit their Subcommandante.

Following other revolutionary movements in the preceding 40 years, such as Shining Path (Peru), FARC (Colombia), 6th of July (Cuba), URNG (Guatemala) and the FMLN (El Salvador), it was hoped that the EZLN could be lumped in with the likes of these Latin American Cold War guerrillas. The Zapatistas' *First Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle* emphasized their Mexican origins in order to preempt the anticipated xenophobic and red-baiting government counterattacks:

> *The EZLN does not have any foreigners in its ranks, and has not received support or advice from revolutionary movements of other countries or other governments...We have never had ties with the Salvadoran FMLN, nor with the URGN of Guatemala, nor with any armed movement of any part of the world. We learned our tactics from Mexican history itself, from Hidalgo, Morelos, Guerrero, Mina, from the resistance to the Yankee invasion of 1846-1847, and from popular resistance to the French intervention, from the heroic deeds of Villa and Zapata and from the long history of indigenous resistance in our country.*[63]

The linking of Marxist rebel groups in Latin America with the drug trade has been an effective way of justifying both government repression and the supply of Mexico's military with American military hardware.[64] The Mexican government has frequently conducted drug raids on Zapatista communities in attempts to prove the EZLN is financing its rebellion with illicit drug-trade profits, despite the fact that the EZLN "has no known ties to drug traffickers."[65] The truth is that the EZLN prohibits the cultivation of any drugs in their territory and even frowns upon alcohol. Preventing their movement

from being labeled as "narco-guerrillas," thus forms an important part of their communications strategy. Indeed, in a 1994 interview, Marcos explains that the "Communist ghost, can no longer be invoked" by the government. "So now there is another ghost: drug smuggling."[66]

6. Xenophobia

Xenophobia marshaled domestic backing for government efforts to choke off the EZLN's international support by expelling foreign Zapatista sympathizers, an activity that began in 1996.[67] The international fury that followed Acteal in early 1998 was met by the government with another sustained campaign of xenophobia. Charges of subversion were leveled against foreigners who attended anti-government or merely pro-EZLN rallies, resulting in detention and immediate deportation. One of the most famous deportees was Tom Hansen, the director of the Mexican Solidarity Network.[68] As part of the Mexican government's containment strategy, TV Azteca was recruited to portray the EZLN support camps in Chiapas as Euro-American rather than Mexican and foreigners found in autonomous Zapatista communities were arbitrarily deported.[69]

In 1998, Marcos accused the government of "chauvinism" and "xenophobic campaigns in the press."[70] That the government and Zapatistas continuously courted international public opinion and support is proof that the presence of foreign supporters of the Zapatista movement benefited the EZLN and hindered the Mexican government. After all, the mobilization of transnational networks of NGOs in January 1994 and February 1995 is believed to have helped deter the Mexican army from crushing the

rebellion. The Zapatista cultivation of NGO support will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

7. Military Objectives

Along with Ocosingo and San Cristóbal, a total of five other municipalities, Las Margaritas, Altamirano, Chanal, Oxchuc, and Huixtán, were occupied by EZLN forces.[71] The military base at Rancho Nuevo, built on a Mayan burial ground, was the main military target.[72] Severe fighting soon erupted and four hundred were killed during the first 12 days of the rebellion.[73] Military objectives continue to be disputed because the EZLN declared from the outset the intention to go all the way to Mexico City.[74] Some believe that the rebels were largely bluffing because they lacked the necessary military capacity for a sustained war with the Mexican army and the Zapatista objectives were simply to "be heard" on the international stage.

> *[I]n reality it was a rebellion that was and remains localized both geographically and historically; it did not spread violence – though it did spread political and social awareness to the rest of the country...The real impact of the uprising came from its power as gesture and then from the conversion of Marcos into perhaps the first "postmodern guerrilla." It was through his faxes from the jungle, his interviews for the newspapers and television that the image of Marcos acquired a virtually impregnable position. On the Internet, he moved across the world, appealing to the romantic idealism of an age that had lost many of its myths. The military phase of the war had been brief and totally unsuccessful, but in a way the guerrillas had triumphed by other means, through the media.*[75]

Nonetheless, there exists some evidence that the EZLN was hoping to trigger a country-wide revolution that would force the ruling president to step down. The Zapatistas had planned a series of attacks to acquire weapons and take the Chiapas state capital of Tuxtla Gutiérrez before moving north towards Mexico City.[76] The encirclement and

annihilation of the EZLN units at Ocosingo and the mauling of their forces at Rancho Nuevo near San Cristóbal prevented the escalation of the conflict beyond the Chiapas highlands.

Furthermore, Marcos criticized those, whether government or supporters, who believed the rebellion was merely "photo-op."[77] For example, Mexican foreign minister, Angel Gurria, opined that the only conflict in Chiapas was of "ink and the internet."[78] Nonetheless, Marcos himself notes that the EZLN is an atypical army that launches informational and political operations rather than military ones.

> *Because what the EZLN does when it is silent to the outside, is to intensify its work inside, to unite the base more, to expand its political message within the adjoining territories. What an army would theoretically do, by expanding itself through occupying territories militarily, the EZLN does by expanding territories through the political message. This is not news, it is not a letter, it is not a communiqué, it is not an interview, but the work which is made from below and which begins to grow.*[79]

The EZLN's efforts to turn Mexican military units by inviting them to join the rebellion suggest that it was considered possible to remove president Salinas by force to install a transitional government. When the hoped-for defections failed to occur, the EZLN shifted gears and emphasized a commitment to peaceful negotiations rather than armed rebellion. The communications and propaganda war then took priority. However, the rebels' refusal to stand and fight the Mexican army when Zedillo ordered the arrests of Marcos and other Zapatista leaders in February, 1995, was interpreted as a sign of military weakness and proof that the EZLN only intended a brief uprising of symbolic violence from which they could launch a communications rather than a military campaign.[80]

8. "Perception Management" of the San Andrés Accords

Alfred observes that "dishonesty is one of the essential elements of colonialism."[81] An effective strategy of the Mexican government has been to "pretend" it was following through on its commitments. After refusing to implement the San Andrés Accords in December, 1996, President Zedillo created his own "Indian Rights & Culture Law" that eliminated key elements from the San Andrés version: indigenous autonomy; territoriality (the right of communities to join together to form autonomous regions); collective resource management; and justice reform. The government launched a promotional campaign through the mass media to demonstrate a commitment to implementing the San Andrés agreement while gutting many core components. The EZLN rallied support to keep the San Andrés Accords from being arbitrarily altered by the government with a "National Indian Insurrection" in which thousands participated in public demonstrations throughout the country.[82]

Another example of this "perception management strategy" of the government involves the building of roads leading into the Lacandón jungle. Back in 1994, one of the EZLN's 34 demands was improved access to markets via the building of roads. The request for roads was immediately criticized by environmentalists who condemned the proposal to further open up the Lacandón rainforest to development.[83] However, a more immediate danger to the EZLN was the increased mobility that new roads offered the Mexican military. The government had initiated "Peace and Civilization," a major public works program in the Zapatista zone that included the construction of a network of roads that would encircle the EZLN's jungle bases and provide access to the rumoured

petroleum deposits underneath the forest. This danger was realized in 1999 when Zapatista supporters faced off against Mexican military engineers at Amador in a confrontation over the construction of a road that soon became a media spectacle with the press flown in to observe the standoff.[84] In a taped address, Marcos explained that the Zapatistas "were not opposed to roads that bring us hospitals and schools, but the roads you bring have no benefit to us...with your roads come the vehicles of war, your prostitutes, your alcohol..."[85] Comandante Tacho echoed Marcos: "the highways do not bring prosperity, but they bring sadness, death, and desperation."[86] A final offer came from Zedillo through the new Interior minister Carrasco but the government refused to agree to a military pullback or the implementation of the San Andrés Accords, which were existing Zapatista conditions for renewed dialogue. The proposal was backed up by a "mass propaganda campaign," titled "One More Step for Peace," that was televised domestically and distributed internationally in Europe, where another key vote was coming in the European Union over Mexican participation in a free trade agreement.[87]

President Fox employed the same "perception management" strategy once elected in 2000. Fox instituted a series of half measures. Three areas that the EZLN wanted addressed prior to resuming negotiations: some Zapatista prisoners released; the Mexican military pulled back from some of their positions; and an Indian Rights Law that was a shadow of the 1996 San Andrés Accords would be passed by Congress.[88] The EZLN and its indigenous supporters have disapproved of Fox's electioneering style of governance that seems more concerned with good publicity than the achievement of real political reform. For example, Marcos criticized Fox for attempting to "bask in the media spotlight" and attach himself to the EZLN in a "popularity contest."[89] The Fox

administration has attempted to treat the EZLN and the Chiapas conflict as "resolved" even though none of the three Zapatista conditions have been met for resumed dialogue: release of all Zapatista prisoners; a full military pullback; and the implementation of the San Andrés Accords in their entirety.

The Mexican government waged a hard fought communications battle with the EZLN, one that sought to discredit the organization and particularly its leading spokesperson, Subcommandante Marcos. In their bid to undermine the EZLN's legitimacy in the eight areas outlined above, the government recruited intellectuals to further its agenda.[90] Intellectuals were prominent amongst those who condemned violence, whatever its source, and called for the restoration of public order by crushing the guerrillas.[91] Even Octavio Paz and former ambassador Carlos Fuentes, two of Mexico's most famous social critics, condemned the violence of the Zapatista uprising.[92] In what appears to have been a coordinated communications effort on the part of the government to discredit the EZLN during the February, 1995, invasion of the Zapatista bases, Mexican scholar Carlos Tello published an inflammatory book accusing the EZLN leadership of disguising and falsely disavowing their Marxist origins with a cynical manipulation of democracy.[93] Intellectuals also played a prominent role in killing the San Andrés Accords in 1996 before they were even put to a vote in Congress. For example, certain pro-government intellectuals attacked the Accords with fear mongering about the balkanization of Mexico or the resumption of human sacrifice by the Mayans, thereby suggesting that the "rights of the majority" would be imperilled if Zedillo and Congress enacted the Accords.[94] And, finally, whitewashing the Acteal massacre to

absolve Zedillo and his government from culpability was delegated to a PRI intellectual named Gustavo Hirales.[95]

Intellectuals' complicity in the propaganda war against the Zapatistas is a betrayal of their responsibility to "expose the lies of governments, to analyze actions according to their causes and motives and often hidden intentions."[96] Marcos has criticized such complicity in a communiqué that targets those who attempt to wear the "Mask of 'Intellectual Objectivity'" while siding with the government.[97]

> *The former independent intellectuals, and today devoted advisors, counselled "a strong hand," and "firmness" in the government treatment of the indigenous rebels of southeastern Mexico. "All the costs have already been paid, we have nothing to lose," they said to support their recommendation of using a military road to definitively solve the conflict. They also advised a "new media campaign" (the name by which the government, and their advisors, know the speeches during public activities, press conferences and interviews at receptions) that would be consistent with "the policy of action" (c'est a dire de war) that they were carrying forward in the indigenous communities in the country. Result: barking, slogans, scoldings, boasts, threats, words and contradictions...*[98]

Summary

There are many facets to the Zapatista's efforts to counter the Mexican government's communications campaign. Both sides were quick to attack and demonize their opponents at the first opportunity. Forest fires in Chiapas became fodder for a propaganda skirmish with the EZLN and the government each denouncing the other for causing or failing to contain them.[99] Even so, EZLN communications were so effective that the Mexican government demanded a temporary ceasefire in the communications war as a condition for negotiations in late 1995. Both the EZLN and the government agreed to not stage "propaganda events" so as keep the negotiations on track.[100]

The EZLN successfully maintained a public profile despite government efforts to ignore or belittle it because the Zapatistas relied heavily on Mexican nationalist symbols to rebut xenophobic attacks or false accusations of secessionism. Consequently, the EZLN has defended itself from government attacks and counterattacks by constantly returning to its indigenous identity to retain local and national legitimacy within Mexico.

Having surveyed the major themes of the communications war, the next chapter will proceed with the specific content of the Zapatistas communications by analyzing the important symbols that the EZLN utilized to self-consciously construct its identity of resistance.[101]

Endnotes

[1] See, for example, Eduardo Ulibarri and Ricardo Trotti's "Difficulties and Dangers for the free press in the Americas," in *Media and Democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean*, Editor Rosa M. González, (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1996), 191-202.
[2] Daniel C. Hallin, "Media, Political Power, and Democratization in Mexico" in *De-Westernizing Media Studies* (eds.) James Curran & Myung-Jin Park, (New York: Routledge, 2000), 97, 105.
[3] Hallin cites the example of journalists at the television network, Televisa, who consider themselves to be "very strictly servants of the company, without a conflicting sense of loyalty to the profession or the public." Hallin, 100-103. Mongo Sánchez Lira and Rogelio Villareal lampoon the opening of the Mexican mass media in "Mexico 1994: The Ruins of the Future," Katzenberger, 226. Sánchez and Villareal accept that "the much-touted modernization has consisted of a minimal opening of the media" and the end of the state organ Televisa's monopoly of Mexican television but note that the Mexican state is still struggling to adapt with these changes. They suggest that "an increasingly popular written press" has begun to replace the television press due to the latter's "general discrediting" (227).
[4] Nonetheless, there remains some reason for optimism because of a growing trend towards transparency and openness in the Mexican government and media. Tim Weiner, "Mexico Ending Coziness For Press and Powerful" in *The New York Times*, Sunday, October 29, 2000: Section 1, 12. Hallin attributes the opening of the television media to market factors with the arrival of Televisa's competitor, TV Azteca, in 1993. Hallin's article is unusual because he fails to mention the role of the 1994 uprising in contributing to a subsequent increase in the diversity of public opinion allowed in the media. Hallin, 105-6.
[5] "[S]e garantice el acceso a información veraz, oportuna y suficiente sobre las actividades del gobierno, así como el acceso de los pueblos indígenas a los medios de comunicación existentes, y que se garantice el derecho de los pueblos indígenas a contar con sus propios medios de comunicación (radiodifusión, televisión, teléfono, prensa escrita, fax, radios de comunicación, computadoras y acceso a satélite)." Raúl Avila, "Lenguaje, medios e identidad nacional" in *Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe*, June 1998, 110. *San Andrés Accords*, http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/san_andres.html
[6] Maria Elena Martinez-Torres provides a succinct summary of how the Mexican economy's performance had been maintained through high interest rates and an overvalued currency. Consequently, Mexico was extremely vulnerable to capital flight. So vulnerable that the "government was more sensitive to what CNN broadcast in the U.S. than it was to domestic dissent, because the U.S. is where the investors are." It

was this vulnerability that allowed the EZLN to "turn information – essentially the scaring of investors and the mobilizing of international support – into a key tool to force a ceasefire and bring the government to the negotiating table." "Civil Society, the Internet, and the Zapatistas," in *Peace Review* Volume 13, Number 3 (2001), 348-9.

[7] Castells, 78.

[8] Raúl Pérez López-Portillo, *Chiapas México Desconocido* (Madrid: Silex, 2000), 39.

[9] Ross (2000), 24.

[10] Huntington, 68.

[11] Ibid., 69.

[12] Pérez, 140.

[13] Huntington, 70.

[14] Thomas Benjamin, *A Rich Land A Poor People – Politics and Society in Modern Chiapas* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 201-2.

[15] Rodolfo Stavenhagen, "Indigenous Movements and Politics in Mexico and Latin America," in *Aboriginal Rights and Self-Government*, Editors Juan D. Lindau & Curtis Cook (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), 75.

[16] An appropriate model for this project would be E. Brian Titley's *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986). Titley's analysis of the Department of Indian Affairs in Canada is more than a biography while at the same time more than an institutional history. Unfortunately, there is very little information in either the English or Spanish historiography of Mexico. In many respects, despite a much longer period of European/Indigenous contact, Mexican indigenous studies lag far behind comparable efforts in Canada and the United States.

[17] There is some confusion regarding the exact translation of the I.N.I. into English. I have come across at least three variants: National Indigenist Institute; National Indigenous Institute; and finally National Indianist Institute. To avoid confusion, reference will only be made to the Spanish title or the Spanish abbreviation: I.N.I.

[18] Thomas Benjamin, 202.

[19] June Nash, "Community, Ethnicity and the Mexican State" in *The Explosion of Communities* (Copenhagen: International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs, 1995), 26.

[20] Thomas Benjamin, 227.

[21] Daniel Cosío Villegas, Ignacio Bernal, Alejandra Moreno Toscano, Luis González, Eduardo Blanquel and Lorenzo Meyer, *Historia Mínima de México* (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 1998), 169.

[22] Ibid., 170.

[23] John Ross, "The EZLN, A History: Miracles, Coyunturas, Communiqués" in *Shadows of Tender Fury: The Letters and Communiqués of Subcomandante Marcos and the Zapatista Army of National Liberation* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1995), 11.

[24] Stavenhagen, 77.

[25] This view conveys the belief inherent in "Indigenista" policy that justice would be achieved not with respect for difference, but with equality through assimilation. Harvey, 201.

[26] Thomas Benjamin, 229.

[27] Collier, 111.

[28] Harvey, 195.

[29] Pérez, 130.

[30] Ibid., 131.

[31] Harvey, 166.

[32] Ibid., 167.

[33] According to some sources, Marcos watched the demonstration and videotaped the march while "preparing for the 'real' occupation of the city." Harvey, 198.

[34] Ronfeldt et al., 31.

[35] Harvey, 198.

[36] John Warnock, *The Other Mexico – The North American Triangle Completed* (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1995), 257.

[37] As stated previously in the Historical Background and Literature Review section of this paper, the identification of the Zapatistas as a marxist insurrection movement akin to those elsewhere in Latin America has become largely discredited. Actions such as the EZLN's left handed salute have been

interpreted as a means of identification with the political left. The reality is that the Zapatistas have done their best to avoid such associations in order to prevent government efforts to paint the EZLN as foreign and socialist as an excuse to crush its followers. The left handed salute is reportedly a tribute to a former left handed Zapatista who was accidentally killed during training exercises. Collier, 81.

[38] Paul Knox, "Chiapas divided over rebels," *The Globe and Mail*, 24 February 2001, sec. A, 17.

[39] Pérez, 53.

[40] Many sources exist that discuss this Zapatista leadership principle. For example, see Huntington, 58-80.

[41] Marcos's prominence should not overshadow the "reality that Zapatismo is essentially an indigenous search for self-determination and, beyond that, a struggle for the 'national liberation' of all of Mexican society." The changes going on within the autonomous communities are proof that the movement is profoundly transforming indigenous Chiapas. Huntington, 75.

[42] Harvey, 200.

[43] The US government has also provided some technological support to the Mexican army in order to assist its containment of the EZLN and appears anxious to see the final suppression of the uprising. Noam Chomsky, *Latin America from colonization to globalization* (Melbourne, Australia: Ocean Press, 1999), 101; and Harvey, 239-40.

[44] Harvey, 204.

[45] The Mexican military denied such figures and asserted that only 18,000 troops were in Chiapas in the summer of 1998 when other sources offered estimates that ranged anywhere from 60,000 to 70,000. Ross (2000), 287.

[46] Ibid., 245.

[47] Ibid., 246.

[48] Ibid., 247.

[49] Ibid., 326. The UN Secretary General had deeply disappointed the EZLN in an earlier visit to Chiapas because of a failure to even refer to the EZLN by name. Kofi Annan's visit was a propaganda coup for the Mexican president because Annan praised Zedillo's "unlimited patience for peace". Pérez , 186-7.

[50] Ross *(2000)*, 330-2, 334.

[51] Ibid., 337.

[52] Tom Hayden, "Introduction," Hayden, 1.

[53] General Command of the EZLN, "Declaration of War," in *Zapatistas! Documents of the New Mexican Revolution* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1994), 50.

[54] Juan Bañuelos, "The Unfinished War," Katzenberger, 196.

[55] It is likely that the sudden drop of the Mexican currency, soaring interest rates, and a resultant implosion in the national economy led the Zedillo administration to divert attention from economic problems back to the rebellion in Chiapas. The Mexican economy remained in a freefall until President Clinton arranged an economic bailout. Jaime Suchlicki, *Mexico – From Montezuma to NAFTA, Chiapas, and Beyond* (Washington: Brassey's Inc., 1996), 166-7.

[56] Ross (2000), 103.

[57] Ibid., 215.

[58] The Zapatista campaign to establish autonomous indigenous communities fits with Alfred's assessment of indigenous peoples' need to stop "opposing external power [ie Euro-American governments], but instead [focus] on actualizing and preserving their intellectual independence." Alfred, 48.

[59] June Nash, "Press Reports on the Chiapas Uprising: Towards a Transnationalized Communication," in *Journal of Latin American Anthropology*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1997, 50.

[60] Díaz, 149; & Huntington, 73.

[61] "Successful insurgent leaders...often look surprisingly like the audiences they seek to capture, and quite different from their downtrodden domestic constituencies" because the media seeks a rebel leader "who neatly embodies their own ideals, meets the pragmatic requirements of a 'test case,' or fulfills romantic Western notions of rebellion-in short, a leader who seems to mirror their own central values." Marcos is a perfect example of such a leader. Clifford Bob, "Merchants of Morality," in *Foreign Policy* (March/April 2002), 43.

[62] It is widely believed that Marcos is Rafael Sebastián Guillén Vicente who was born in northern Mexico around 1957. Guillén studied philosophy and became a professor of graphic design and communications in Mexico City before leaving for Nicaragua to work as a volunteer during the Sandanista government.

Enrique Krauze, *Mexico Biography of Power: A History of Modern Mexico 1810-1996* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998), 784.
[63] Collier, 65.
[64] This strategy is clearly in use today in Colombia as the new administration has used the post-September 11th hysteria over terrorism and the continued US-led War on Drugs to acquire increased military aid to crack down on the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). The US has also provided equipment and training to the Mexican military that has been used against the EZLN. Huntington, 71-2.
[65] "The EZLN has no known ties to drug traffickers." Ronfeldt et al., 92.
[66] Medea Benjamin, "Interview: Subcommandante Marcos," Katzenberger, 57.
[67] Ronfeldt et al., 67.
[68] Hansen was charged with attending the San Andrés negotiations while in Mexico with only a tourist visa. For his transgression, Hansen was evicted from Mexico and banished for ten years. Ross (2000), 259.
[69] Ibid., 258, 268, 270-3. A group of Italians was thrown out of the country for attempting to visit one of the autonomous communities that had been retaken by state police and military forces. Despite the best efforts of the Mexican government, the Italians immediately launched a protest in Strasbourg in an effort to block the ratification of a free trade agreement between the European Union and Mexico. However, the vote was passed despite their efforts.
[70] Subcommandante Marcos, "Above and Below: Masks and Silences," http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/marcos_masks_july98.html , 7.
[71] Harvey, 6.
[72] Blanche Petrich, "Voices from the Masks," Katzenberger, 45.
[73] Pérez, 31
[74] Ibid., 34.
[75] Krauze, 787.
[76] Ross (2000), 20.
[77] Ibid., 127.
[78] Ibid., 131.
[79] Elena Gallegos, *Subcommandante Marcos Interview: 15 Years Since the Formation of the EZLN – November 16th and 17th, 1998.* http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/1998/inter_marcos_nov98.html 6.
[80] Harvey, 208.
[81] Alfred, 83.
[82] Ross (2000), 265-6.
[83] Ibid., 312, 339.
[84] Ibid., 315.
[85] Subcommandante Marcos, as quoted in Ross (2000), 316-7.
[86] Pérez, 204.
[87] Ross (2000), 319.
[88] The Zapatistas cite several missing clauses that have effectively gutted the original compromise agreement with the removal of clauses on autonomy and self-determination; justice; traditional lands and territories; natural resource ownership; municipal elections; and freedom for municipalities to form larger regional associations or governments. CCRI-CG. *Response to Fox's Indian Rights & Culture Law*, April 29, 2001. http://www.ezln.org/documentos/2001/ezln010429b.es.htm
[89] Gabriel García Marquéz and Cambio, "Marcos Speaks – An interview with Subcommandante Marcos," Hayden, 184.
[90] Nash (1997), 52-3. Also see Ross (2000) and Pérez.
[91] Pérez, 40.
[92] Ross (2000), 36.
[93] Harvey, 9.
[94] Ross (2000), 207.
[95] Ibid, 248.
[96] Noam Chomsky, "The Responsibility of Intellectuals," in *The Chomsky Reader* (New York: Pantheon, 1987), 60.
[97] Subcommandante Marcos, "Above and Below: Masks and Silences," http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/marcos_masks_july98.html , 8.

[98] Gallegos, 8-9.
[99] Ross (2000), 266.
[100] Ross (2000), 153.
[101] Marcos has admitted in interviews that, "as an organization we are constructing an identity." Subcommandante Insurgente Marcos, as quoted in García, 186.

CHAPTER THREE - ZAPATISTA SYMBOLS

The Zapatista uprising has emerged as a "war of symbols" since the initial fighting in January, 1994.[1] These symbols relate to the eight themes or contending narratives of the government and the EZLN discussed in Chapter Two insofar as they were invoked by the Zapatistas to challenge the Mexican government's attempts to undermine the rebels' resistance identity. This chapter explores in some detail the specific symbolic content of the EZLN's response to the government's efforts to discredit and undermine their movement through a review of key symbols that, although treated separately, are interdependent and frequently transcend categorical distinction. As a consequence of this review, an account is offered as to how the EZLN self-consciously constructed an identity of resistance that resonated with Chiapanecos and Mexicans at the state and national levels, as well as with indigenous and non-indigenous peoples and organizations locally and globally.

Symbol: Indigenous Identity

Indigenous peoples throughout the Americas are reaffirming an indigenous identity and rejecting the legitimizing identities that nation-states have created for them.[2] The EZLN is a classic example of these sorts of identity politics according to Alison Brysk's *From Tribal Village to Global Village – Indian Rights and International Relations in Latin America*.[3] Here she echoes some of the sentiments expressed by Castells and Alfred with

regard to history, tradition, and identity, which were discussed at the beginning of Chapter One.

> Identity Politics *should involve an explicit appeal to identity for movement mobilization and external campaigns, the use of identity markers as symbols, and the politicization of cultural practices. Identity politics often cuts across other axes of political affiliation such as class and political party. Characteristic (but not exclusive) mechanisms of identity politics include symbolic appeals, information campaigns, and legitimacy challenges to dominant institutions and regimes.*[4]

The manner in which the EZLN employ symbols to construct an identity of resistance is informative of their presentation for different purposes. A useful point of departure for an analysis of this issue is the peace negotiations in February and March, 1994, in San Cristóbal, Chiapas. The negotiations quickly established some of the key symbols of the EZLN's communications strategy that highlighted the movement's indigenous characteristics and its loyalty to Mexico. For example, a dramatic unfurling of the Mexican flag by the Zapatista delegation was meant to prove their patriotism to fellow Mexicans, but Marcos, being non-indigenous, reiterated his role as spokesperson rather than supreme leader of the CCRI-CG, and translation was provided between Spanish and the four Mayan languages of the CCRI-CG: Chol, Tojolabal, Tzeltal, and Tzotzil.[5] Most of the initial Zapatista demands were broad and politically relevant to all of Mexico: the original Article 27 regarding land reform; the removal of President Salinas and the installation of a transitional government. However, eight of the Zapatistas' 34 demands made specific reference to indigenous peoples:

1. *"the creation of an independent indigenous radio station*
2. *the mandating of compulsory indigenous languages for primary through university education*
3. *respect for indigenous culture and tradition*
4. *an ending to discrimination against indigenous peoples*

5. *the granting of indigenous autonomy*
6. *the administration of their own courts by indigenous communities*
7. *the criminalization of forced expulsion from communities by government-backed caciques and allowing the expelled to be able to return*
8. *the establishment of maternity clinics, daycare centres, nutritious food, kitchens, dining facilities, nixtamal and tortilla mills, and training programs for indigenous women."*[6]

Not surprisingly, the EZLN has been accused by the Mexican government and military of exaggerating its indigenous identity to strike chords with indigenous-sympathizing national and international audiences. The EZLN has even been accused by scholars of "playing the 'indigena card.'"[7] Indeed, the rebels' indigenous identity has figured significantly in their movement. As explained in Chapter Two, the EZLN's pre-1994 recruitment was conducted through indigenous kinship lines that enabled the movement's support base to grow rapidly but secretly.[8] Zapatista members often wear ceremonial Tzotzil hats at press conferences and meetings with civil society, a symbolic gesture that allowed the EZLN to play into the recent attention that indigenous issues have received internationally since the United Nations' declaration of the Year of Indigenous People and the anniversary of Columbus's arrival in the 'New World.' The EZLN also explicitly links its struggle to indigenous resistance against colonization elsewhere in the Americas. In a 1998 communiqué, Marcos writes that "the Mexican federal army carries out…[in Chiapas] the same work which General Custer did with the indigenous in the United States."[9]

EZLN communiqués contain frequent references to over 500 years of oppression and resistance. The roots of the rebellion run deep in a country marred by centuries of colonization, slavery, and warfare, the scars of which remain to the modern day. After the conquest of the region by the conquistador Diego de Mazariegos in the 16th century,

Chiapas fell under the Spanish colonial administration of Guatemala. The indigenous population served as forced labour for the export of coffee and timber to Spain despite several attempts at revolt, the largest of which, Cancuc, was crushed by Spanish troops. In addition to this revolt, the EZLN uprising has also been linked by the Zapatistas to the three major indigenous rebellions in the post-contact history of Chiapas: Chiapas & Zoque (1532-34); Tzeltal (1712-3); and Chamula (1867-70).[10] Despite the defeat of all three and countless other smaller indigenous rebellions by the Spanish or Mexican governments, a strong indigenous identity has endured into the 21st century.[11] The EZLN uprising is in many respects a contemporary manifestation of these great indigenous rebellions of the past.[12]

The emphasized indigenous component of the EZLN helped shield it from xenophobic contentions that the movement was not Mexican but foreign. This emphasis was a conscious decision by the indigenous leadership of the EZLN in order to avoid, according to Marcos, a government dismissal of their movement "as purely local in character," one that could then be marginalized and set apart from the rest of the country.[13] As Marcos explained in an interview, "We must emphasize our Mexican and Indian roots and show that this is not a movement financed by foreign governments…[W]e have to show people that this is a Mexican and Indian movement."[14] Furthermore, the references to 500 years illustrated the patience of the rebels and their reluctance to embrace armed conflict. This fusion of a Mexican and indigenous identity is also significant because the EZLN has avoided presenting itself as a pan-Mayan movement for fear that it would be misinterpreted as separatist.[15]

From the beginning, the CCRI-CG thrust indigenous members into the spotlight, and over time, the role of indigenous Zapatista leaders has become increasingly prominent.[16] For example, a showdown occurred in 1996 between the EZLN and the Mexican government over Zapatista plans to attend the National Indigenous Congress' (CNI) founding conference near Mexico City to commemorate the 504th anniversary of indigenous resistance. Sabre rattling by the Mexican army failed to convince the EZLN to back down before a deal was reached to allow ten unarmed Zapatistas to attend the CNI's inauguration.[17] The surprise pick to lead the delegation was Commandanta Ramona, a Tzotzil woman and former street vendor in San Cristóbal.[18] Ramona was introduced to the press by Marcos as the EZLN's "most belligerent and intransigent part, and our greatest symbol of war."[19] This selection of Ramona was ingenious because not "only did the move put them back on the front page, but the image of this tiny, terminally ill Indian woman traveling alone up to the capital when, for weeks, the mal gobierno [bad government] had been painting the Zapatistas as war demons, handed the rebels the moral high ground yet again."[20] Ramona's speech at the founding of the CNI was patriotic and expressed the commitment of both the EZLN and the CNI to remain Mexican while continuing to fight for indigenous autonomy: "'We must never forget that we are a part of Mexico.'"[21] Major Moises and Comandante Tacho, both of whom are indigenous, have also played leading roles in the rebellion but have not attracted the same media fascination as Marcos or Ramona. However, the prominence of the Zapatistas and its impact on indigenous peoples should not be overestimated in the Mexican context. For fear of discrimination, many indigenous peoples have often articulated land-based or

campesino concerns in order to avoid an indigenous identification prior to 1994.[22] Ross observes that the EZLN uprising is part of a larger indigenous awakening:

> *During the 1970s and '80s, Indians lost their cultural identity and became "campesinos," and whether or not they were members of the rural proletariat was a crucial quandary – cultural issues being irrelevant to the class-driven Left (Marcos is an exception). But the 1992 500 Years of Resistance movement put Indian Rights back on the Left's map. Rigoberta Menchú's Nobel Peace Prize focused worldwide attention on the role of Latin America's 50-million-strong Indian underclass. The Zapatista rebellion strengthened the global resonance of Indian resistance, and by the Fall-Winter of 1995-96, indigenous peoples were in the vanguard of social change in Mexico.*[23]

From the outset of negotiations in late 1995, it was apparent that indigenous issues were an EZLN priority and that it was helping to galvanize indigenous resistance to the state. In October, negotiations finally began on the substance of new "Indian Rights and Culture" legislation.[24] The government negotiating team included indigenous members who worked for the INI and other organizations allied with the PRI government.[25] The leader of the government delegation was, however, nervous since the discussions often occurred in indigenous languages which frustrated his monitoring of the indigenous government negotiators. At least one indigenous government representative did in fact defect to the EZLN camp during the negotiations.[26] The government soon dismissed its own indigenous representatives in favour of more "reliable" mestizos.[27]

Symbol: "Leading by Obeying"

"Mandar obedeciendo", or "leading by obeying," refers to populist leadership where the leader consults with and follows the direction of the community with the understanding that "there is no central or coercive authority and decision-making is collective."[28] These

community consultations were a source of frustration for government negotiators who were used to operating without such democratic restrictions. Marcos's title of "sub-commandante" implies this principle, with the "sub" suggesting that the people command him.[29] The EZLN operates under the convention "that no decision would be made without the consent of the communal assemblies."[30] The result is a romantic image of the EZLN as a democratic, honourable, and in many respects patriotic army of men and women seeking autonomy for their communities and justice for all Mexicans.

This "leading by obeying" symbol also relates to the EZLN's indigenous identity because the Zapatista army's command structure was developed according to indigenous demands.[31] Guerrillas from the EZLN's predecessor, the National Liberation Forces (FLN) imagined a movement governed by a General Command (CG), but indigenous refusal to submit to a hierarchy required that power and authority rest with the CCRIs.[32] As a result, the CCRI-CG always consulted with their followers in eastern Chiapas before proceeding with a government proposal. Indeed, the decision to go to war was made democratically in 1992 and 1993 in the Zapatista support bases.[33]

The "leading by obeying" principle was an extremely important buffer against a government which was adept at divide-and-rule tactics and encouraged competition between indigenous communities for government favour.[34] The state was also largely responsible for the establishment of indigenous comprador elites to help control dissent and keep indigenous peoples tied to the ruling party. This process is known as *Caciquismo* and is derived from the title *cacique*, which has indigenous roots and roughly translates to chief, strongman, or ruler. This term was adopted by the Spanish and reserved for local indigenous leaders. Therefore, *Caciquismo* refers to the Mexican

government's co-optation of indigenous leaders in order to realize their *Indígenismo* policy.[35]

After the initial round of peace negotiations in February 1994, the CCRI-CG took the meagre results of their negotiations back to their home communities for discussion and ratification. By June 12th, the EZLN had completed the consultations and announced the results: almost 98% did not accept the government's proposals but a similar number wanted to continue negotiations.[36] Marcos interpreted the results as proof that the word "surrender" did not exist in the Mayan languages.[37] There is no doubt that these consultations were time-consuming. When government negotiators expressed their suspicions that such consultations were merely a stalling tactic, they were invited to accompany the Zapatista representatives into the jungle and highlands to witness the proceedings for themselves, but the invitation was turned down. Indeed, many of these indigenous communities were so remote that communications were only possible by delivering messages on foot.

When negotiations continued, Comandante Tacho, the leader of the EZLN delegation at the San Andrés negotiations, recommended the formation of a series of workshops to discuss several different themes.[38] Once again, the government negotiators accused the EZLN of stalling and threatened to buy off Zapatista supporters with state funds in order to pressure the rebels into an early compromise.[39] The EZLN completed its consultation in February, 1996, and the CCRI-CG announced its mandate to sign the San Andrés Accords.[40] Despite continuing demands for regional autonomy, the EZLN accepted their constituents' wish to proceed with the Accords as a minimal agreement,

although it already suspected that the government had no intention of living up to the proposals.[41]

Symbol: Indigenous Languages

The EZLN's general command has representatives of at least four Mayan dialects: Chol, Tojolabal, Tzeltal, and Tzotzil, whose translation during negotiations was a time-consuming process.[42] Tensions soon developed because of the delays. When a government negotiator complained that the Zapatistas were being disingenuous by frequently pausing for translations from Spanish to Mayan, a Zapatista negotiator turned the tables by lecturing them in Tojolabal.[43] The symbolic importance of indigenous languages is identified by Castells when he describes them as "the trench of cultural resistance, the last bastion of self-control, [and] the refuge of identifiable meaning" in the face of widespread "cultural homogenization by the ideology of modernization and the power of the global media."[44] But, as an indigenous *Chiapaneco* explained, many "have stopped speaking them, because they think that their language is inferior [to Spanish]."[45] Even so, he credits the rebellion for restoring pride in having an indigenous identity, which has resulted in the renewal of indigenous languages. It is also interesting to note that the news coverage of the rebellion marked the first time that the indigenous languages of Mexico were heard on national television.[46]

Symbol: Zapata

The modern Mexican state was forged during the revolution of 1910 to 1920. Emiliano Zapata, namesake of the EZLN and a national hero, was one of the most famous revolutionaries along with Francisco (Pancho) Villa, Francisco Madero, and others who succeeded in the overthrow of the unpopular régime of Victoriano Huerta.[47] Renowned for his patience, determination, and legendary charisma, Zapata became a martyr of the poor *campesino*. After Huerta's fall, Zapata kept fighting while leading the southern wing of the rebel armies that toppled the short-lived revolutionary governments of Díaz and Madero. Zapata was a devoted anarchist whose manifesto, *Plan de Ayala*, promised land redistribution.[48] Zapata's army, which was made up overwhelmingly of indigenous *campesino*s, dismantled many large estates in the Mexican south and turned the land over to peasants.[49] He was ambushed in 1920 at Chinameca, a name synonymous with treachery for the current Zapatistas, by an honour guard that had barely finished its military salute to Zapata before it turned its weapons on him.[50]

Invoking the name of Emiliano Zapata was a brilliant appeal to the national psyche.[51] During the Mexican Revolution, Zapata had fought for the ideals that the EZLN continued to pursue 75 years after his death: autonomy and land for *campesinos*. Like the army of Zapata, the EZLN was a people's army, one that spoke indigenous languages, and had both men and women commanding troops as well as serving side by side on the front lines.[52] The EZLN made frequent references to Chinameca, the site of Zapata's murder, when they feared that the government or military were luring it into a

trap.[53] Identification with Zapata, like the indigenous identification, also helped to counter accusations that the EZLN was a foreign entity.

An interesting example of how Mexican and indigenous identities have merged for the Zapatistas is the symbol of Votán-Zapata. In April, 1994, the EZLN allowed reporters into its territory for their ceremony honouring Emiliano Zapata on the 75th anniversary of his death and the 100th day of their war. In a speech, Marcos merged the Tzeltal "heart of the people," Votán, with Emiliano Zapata. Votán was the "first man sent by God to distribute land among the indigenous, and Zapata was the Mexican Revolution's foremost proponent of land redistribution."[54] This fusion of Mayan and Mexican symbolism in Votán-Zapata was matched by a theatrical display of marching troops for the gathered media.

Symbol: Ski Mask

Perhaps the most visible and well-known Zapatista symbol is the ski mask, balaclava, or *pasamontañas* in Spanish. During the first day of the uprising, Subcommandante Marcos explained to surprised witnesses of the rebellion in San Cristóbal that until indigenous peoples put on their masks, no one saw them.[55] Various interpretations exist for their use by the rebels. For example, they:

1) maintain equality amongst the leadership and dispute the idea that it was led by any single rebel;[56]

2) show solidarity between the indigenous and the *mestizo* within the EZLN;

3) constitute a unifying form of self-identification analogous to the beards of the Cuban rebels during that country's 1959 revolution;

4) function as a symbol of Mexico's refusal to recognize its indigenous peoples;[57]

5) shield the identities of the rebels in order to prevent reprisals against their communities and families; and

6) perhaps more practically, protect against the cold weather.[58]

Marcos, has stated that he will remove his own mask only when "Mexican society takes off its own mask, the one it uses to cover up the real Mexico."[59] In his first appearance in the media spotlight, Marcos explained to reporters that the rebels were masked in order to prevent any particular commandante from becoming a figurehead and therefore a target for government cooptation or corruption.[60] But in preventing the figurehead syndrome, the mask also helps to maintain a collective and diffused leadership that prevents "protagonism" and supports the movement's "leading by obeying" principle.[61] The mask has been symbolically tied to Mexico's attempt to hide the third world conditions in which its indigenous peoples live while its government attempts to secure first world status with trade deals such as NAFTA.[62]

Symbol: Weapons & Armed Resistance

The uprising in 1994 represents much more than the beginning of a war of words between the EZLN and the Mexican government. Severe fighting ensued until the rebels retreated and a ceasefire was declared by the president on January 12th, 1994. The rebels insisted that this was not a defeat but rather a strategic withdrawal to prevent further

bloodshed. Many observers believe that Mayan protests would have been ignored if not for the conscious decision to take up arms.[63] A Zapatista delegate succinctly made this point in February 1995 in San Cristóbal, Chiapas: "The weapons gave us a voice."[64] Ross supports this view:

> ...[W]*ithout these dramatically bellicose devices - props if you will - the Zapatistas would have had little resonance on the national and international stage. They would have indeed been just one more loser band of Indian farmers to be crushed or coopted...*[65]

Marcos affirmed Ross's perspective when he observed that the mestizos of San Cristóbal only respected the indigenous rebels because "they have guns."[66] Further proof can be found in the Mexican state's efforts to downplay and deride the rebels as an effective military force, yet such dismissals of the EZLN's military capacity nevertheless underscore its importance in political negotiations. At the same time, however, the EZLN's real relative weakness made the organization appear like an indigenous David facing down a US-supplied military Goliath. Indeed, the EZLN was "ragged, undernourished, and barefoot, bearing wooden guns, the faceless and the voiceless, pitted against a professional army like the armed forces of Mexico, well-equipped, naturally, with all the latest weapons."[67] The power inequality between the combatants and its apparent injustice garnered the EZLN considerable sympathy.

Symbol: The Power of the Word

Another obvious Zapatista strength emerges from the emphasis on communications over combat. This emphasis has been most succinctly expressed as the Zapatistas' use of the "word" as their weapon.[68] The EZLN's *Second Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle*, for

example, employed this symbol by quoting Zapata's delegate to a historic conference during the Mexican Revolution: "The Revolution is not just the launching of projectiles on the battlefield but the launching of new ideas and words of liberation. It is the wedding of the sword and the idea that overthrows empires..."[69]

Many observers have noted that the EZLN "is a movement keenly aware of the power of words and symbols."[70] As Elaine Katzenberger, the editor of one of the first books to appear in English on the EZLN, observed: "Having won access to the international press and communications media [using words and symbols], the Zapatistas used them to wage a parallel war of words and symbols [against the Mexican state], an effective decolonization of public language."[71] This kind of intellectual decolonization is required because a major obstacle for indigenous recovery is the hegemony of Western ideas.[72] As such, Marcos continues to emphasize the importance of words in the Zapatista arsenal, citing reading as the manner in which he prepares for battle.

> *In the armies that came before us, soldiers took the time to clean their weapons and rally themselves. In this case our weapons are our words, so we have to depend on our arsenal all the time.*[73]

Symbol: Role of Women

The role of women is paramount in the Zapatista struggle and entire books have been deservedly written on their invaluable contributions to the EZLN uprising.[74] One out of every three Zapatista soldiers are women who serve alongside the men and command troops in battle.[75] In a poignant tribute written two years after the uprising, Marcos summarized the contributions of twelve key Zapatista women, including Mayor

Insurgente Ana María, who commanded the column that captured San Cristóbal in January, 1994.[76]

Indigenous women are the most marginalized group in Chiapas. The EZLN has promoted women's political participation in indigenous communities while denouncing domestic abuse and certain traditional practices unpopular with indigenous women, such as arranged marriages.[77] According to Marcos, the women successfully overcame men's resistance to the ending of arranged marriages by making their support to the rebellion conditional on improving women's rights in Zapatista communities.[78] The EZLN's Revolutionary Women's Law has been a key element in drawing support from other *Chiapanecas* (Chiapas women) and feminists around the world. The Revolutionary Women's Law has 10 points:

> 1. *"Women, regardless of their race, creed, color, or political affiliation, have the right to participate in the revolutionary struggle in a way determined by their desire and ability.*
> 2. *Women have the right to work and receive a fair salary.*
> 3. *Women have the right to decide the number of children they will bear and care for.*
> 4. *Women have the right to participate in the affairs of the community and to hold positions of authority if they are freely and democratically elected.*
> 5. *Women and their children have the right to primary attention in matters of health and nutrition.*
> 6. *Women have the right to education.*
> 7. *Women have the right to choose their partner and are not to be forced into marriage.*
> 8. *Women shall not be beaten or physically mistreated by their family members or by strangers. Rape and attempted rape will be severely punished.*
> 9. *Women will be able to occupy positions of leadership in the organization and to hold military ranks in the revolutionary armed forces.*
> 10. *Women will have all the rights and obligations elaborated in the revolutionary laws and regulations."*[79]

Notwithstanding its accomplishments, the EZLN has not been immune to criticism from women who believe that the rebel army did not do enough to stop sexual assaults committed by Mexican soldiers on indigenous women.[80] Nevertheless, the EZLN has become an important vehicle for the promotion of women's rights and has articulated a progressive approach to gender issues in its recruitment campaigns in Chiapas.

Symbol: The Land

Indigenous connections to the land are an essential element of indigenous identity in Mexico and beyond.[81] Zapata's dreams of land distribution did not become state policy until fifteen years after his death when Lázaro Cárdenas became president in the midst of the Great Depression. Cárdenas acted quickly to contain an economic crisis that had devastated Mexico's export economy by implementing Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution, an *ejidos* redistribution program with more than 40 million acres for indigenous and non-indigenous *campesinos* and their communities. The Cárdenas presidency marked a turning point in indigenous-state relations in Mexico because the federal government encouraged the expropriation of land from large estates or *haciendas* by promoting land invasions, a process that involved moving onto private land and building small settlements.[82] According to 1994 data, almost 60% of the labour force in Chiapas was engaged in agricultural work.[83] For decades, the prospect of the return of land to the indigenous population meant that indigenous peoples perceived the government as an ally.

The clear catalyst for the Zapatista rebellion was the end of Cardénas' land redistribution policy in 1992, when revisions to Article 27 eliminating communal property were rejected by indigenous Chiapanecos.[84] The fear of cultural death is widespread in the EZLN, which is made up overwhelmingly of poor indigenous *campesinos* whose participation in the Mexican economy is limited to subsistence agriculture. Thus, along with more land, the Zapatistas are seeking access to technology and farm implements that will allow them to improve yields on the land they already possess.[85] Moreover, they are resisting government efforts to dismantle the collectively owned *ejidos* in order to replace them with private plots of land.[86] For the indigenous peoples of Mexico, land has been "an essential part of being, and is worked, cared for, and ritualized in this context."[87] This importance was evident in their selection of San Andrés as the location for the peace talks, a site that is significant for the Tzotzil Mayans who trace their origins as a people to it, known by its indigenous name of Sakamchíén.[88]

Symbol: Marcos

Subcommandante Marcos often refers to himself in the third person to emphasize that "Marcos" is a movement rather than an individual. Marcos notes that the ski mask is also symbolic here because "Marcos does not even have a face."[89] These gestures enable Marcos as a movement to become immortal because if "they kill me, someone else can put on the mask and say they're Marcos... [so] there will always be a Marcos."[90] Using a similar strategy, Marcos invites others to identify with him to support the EZLN: "'If you want to know who Marcos is, see who's hidden behind the mask, then take a mirror and

look at yourself. The face you see there will be the face of Marcos, because we are all Marcos.'"[91] The phrase "Todos Somos Marcos" (We are all Marcos) has become a customary chant at anti-globalization and pro-Zapatista rallies throughout Mexico and around the world.

Marcos is also important as a cultural bridge between indigenous and mestizo Mexico.[92] He "is the *portavoz* or one who 'carries the voice' of the Zapatistas to the non-Mayan world...[and] employs his uncanny poetic skills and his sharp insights into the world of cynical politics to negotiate that uncertain terrain where the indigenous world ends and the powerful racial contract impedes their voice."[93] Marcos's credibility as a spokesperson for indigenous rights benefits greatly from his own identity as a mestizo for at least two reasons. First, just like "white privilege" in North America, "mestizo privilege" in Mexico means he automatically receives more credibility than an Indian.[94] Second, being mestizo also removes self-interest as an explanation for demanding justice for indigenous peoples. Indeed, many Zapatista sympathizers likely identify more with an urban, middle-class intellectual than with the indigenous peoples he represents.[95] Marcos has therefore been invaluable to the EZLN because the mass media represents the "primary arena for manufacturing ideology and public sentiment...[which] is not easily combated by indigenous peoples who simply lack resources to generate images that reflect their way of life and their aspirations."[96]

Another key element of Marcos's celebrity is his status as a sex symbol. A description of "eroticism" in Marcos's personal appeal is provided by Guillermo Gómez Peña in his essay, "The Subcomandante of Performance:"[97]

> *Eroticism was a crucial ingredient in Marcos's hype. His soft and sincere voice, and "beautiful hazel eyes" framed by the black mask, turned him into an icon of*

> *forbidden sexuality. Many lonesome housewives and starry-eyed students projected their sexual fantasies onto him, writing passionate love letters that were regularly published in national newspapers.*[98]

Gómez describes one such letter in which "an upper class señora described her desire 'to get lost in the jungle with Marcos.'"[99] Marcos clearly enjoys the attention but stresses that he receives no personal benefit: "Women don't come here for me – just journalists…There are no sexual benefits in this for me, I don't sell books on myself, I don't make any money off this image."[100] Still, Marcos insists that whatever attention he draws benefits the EZLN.

Summary

The EZLN employed key symbols like the ski mask to project a resistance identity that rejects the figurative masks imposed by the government: e.g., foreigner, Marxist, or narco-terrorist. Although some symbols such as Zapata or the Mexican flag required no introduction to Mexicans, others were more complex and required interpretation. Nevertheless, it is important to note the way that Zapatista symbols are tailored to the historical context of Chiapas and Mexico. The exportability of specific symbols is therefore obviously limited because many are laden with meaning unfamiliar to non-Mexicans. For example, an indigenous social movement in Canada or the United States, while unlikely to name itself after the Mexican Revolutionary hero, Emiliano Zapata, might link itself to the memory of local and regional indigenous heroes such as Gabriel Dumont, Geronimo, or Pontiac. The only arguable national indigenous icon in Canada would be Tecumseh. Unlike Mexico, however, there is no obvious hero that is mutually

admired by both indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. What is exportable, therefore, is the *process* by which the EZLN self-consciously chose symbols to construct an identity of resistance, and it is this process which has been analyzed here.

The implication for future indigenous social movements wishing to employ an EZLN-inspired communications strategy is that symbols must be consciously selected to ensure that the message is effectively transmitted to its audiences. For example, the EZLN could have burned the Mexican flag to express its frustration with the Mexican government. However, many observers would have interpreted that act as unpatriotic. As discussed in Chapter Two, the Zapatistas were loath to provide the Mexican government with any justification for their suppression. By attaching meaning to symbols such as the Mexican flag and a ski-mask, the Zapatistas offer *consensus* symbols to attract support rather than *conflict* symbols to distance themselves from other Mexicans.[101] The preceding analysis of the core Zapatista symbols demonstrate that the EZLN has sought to break down barriers rather than create them, making consensus symbols more appropriate for their inclusive approach. However, when exclusion or clearly demarcated difference is in order, conflict symbols are more effective, and indigenous peoples' frequently rely on them to have their difference and rights respected. The dilemma for indigenous resistance movements is how to argue for external recognition without throwing up barriers that turn away the potentially necessary support of outsiders.

It must be borne in mind, however, that symbols are effective only to the extent that this requirement demands effective communications media and techniques to diffuse the message to their targeted audiences. As such, therefore, despite the obvious potential

of symbols, they are, as Alfred warns, insufficient.[102] Chapter Four explains "how" the EZLN delivered its message with an exploration of different media and techniques that the EZLN solicited to target local, national, and international audiences.

Endnotes

[1] Castells concludes that a major global trend is the "development of symbolic politics." Castells writes that these symbolic politics can also be "defined as issue-oriented, non-partisan politics" and he perceives them gaining "legitimacy in all societies." Castells, 352-3. The phrase "war of symbols" belongs to Bañuelos, 196.
[2] Alfred, 6.
[3] Alison Brysk, *From Tribal Village to Global Village – Indian Rights and International Relations in Latin America* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 23.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ross (2000), 52.
[6] Harvey, 203-4.
[7] Not surprisingly, it is the US military's research team who has made this accusation. See Ronfeldt et al., 66.
[8] Harvey, 166-7.
[9] Subcommandante Marcos, "Above and Below: Masks & Silences," http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/marcos_masks_july98.html , 5.
[10] Ibid., 54-8.
[11] José Manuel Valenzuela Arce distinguishes two ways in which indigenous Mexicans have "disappeared". One is by genocide that saw a dramatic decline in the indigenous population of Mesoamerica. However, indigenous peoples also disappear "when they lose their social memory or have it plundered, when the markers that define the boundaries of their social identities become blurred." Valenzuela notes that indigenous peoples have long known the "function played by collective memory" in their survival as distinct cultural groups; "that is why Mictlán, lord of Mictlantecutli and god or lord of the netherworld, represented the site of oblivion (el olvido), of the loss of memory." Valenzuela suggests that indigenous peoples "continue striving to recover, re-appropriate, and re-create their founding myths – those elements that provide them with continuity and recognition through time – as well as other elements that they take on as symbols of social and cultural resistance." Valenzuela, 254-5.
[12] Pérez, 65; and Churchill, 148-9.
[13] Stavenhagen, 83.
[14] Andres Oppenheimer, "Guerrillas in the Mist," Hayden, 54.
[15] Ronfeldt et al., 106.
[16] Lynn Stephen, "The Zapatista Opening: The Movement for Indigenous Autonomy and State Discourses on Indigenous Rights in Mexico, 1970-1996," in *Journal of Latin American Anthropology*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1997, 14.
[17] Ross (2000), 198-9.
[18] Terry Wolfwood, "Who is Ramona? The Transformation of a street vendor into a revolutionary leader," in *Briarpatch*, Volume 26, Number 9, November 1997, 22-3.
[19] Ross (2000), 200.
[20] Comandanta Ramona had been diagnosed with cancer back in 1994. Part of the reason for her selection as the EZLN's delegate was the hope that she would be able to receive treatment while in Mexico City. Ibid., 200.
[21] The creation of the CNI was an important development in Mexican indigenous politics. Unfortunately, its potential was never fully realized due to internal divisions and logistical obstacles. Uncertainty over whether a new constitution was required undermined unity in other areas including the determination to

restore indigenous autonomy; to reinstate land reform provisions in the Constitution; to eliminate the INI; and to implement of the San Andrés Accords. Ibid., 201-2.

[22] SAIIC, "Interview: Indigenous and Campesino Council of Chiapas," Katzenberger, 122.

[23] Ross (2000), 146.

[24] The five subsections of the Indian Rights and Culture session were: (1) justice, (2) defence of culture, (3) access to communications, (4) political participation, and (5) women's rights.

[25] The reference to co-optation is to challenge the reader to consider where an indigenous person's loyalties would lie if they are employees of the Mexican state. Ibid., 145.

[26] Ibid., 147.

[27] The replacement of the INI negotiating team of government negotiators with "hard-liners from the Chiapas state government" meant that the "political context" of the negotiations moved against the EZLN in late 1995. Harvey, 222.

[28] Alfred identifies this indigenous ethic of governance as part of the indigenous philosophy that respects individual autonomy. Alfred, 25. He later elaborates with a description of "consensus decision-making" as "a group process in which the common will is determined through patient listening to all points of view. Ibid., 93.

[29] Pablo Gonzalez Casanova, "Causes of the Rebellion in Chiapas," in *Identities*, Vol. 3, October 1996, 288.

[30] Ross (2000), 56.

[31] Mayan influence in the development of the EZLN is a perfect example of Taiaiake Alfred's aspiration for indigenous social and political institutions that embody traditional values. Alfred, xvii.

[32] Ronfeldt et al., 34-5.

[33] Medea Benjamin, 65.

[34] Collier, 31.

[35] Nash (1995), 23.

[36] Editorial Collective, "Timeline" in *¡Zapatistas! Documents of the New Mexican Revolution* (Brooklyn, New York: Autonomedia, 1994), 339.

[37] Ross (2000), 69.

[38] The themes to be discussed in the workshops which were to "proceed from dialogue to negotiation to agreement" included: "Democracy and Justice; Indian Rights and Culture; Women's Rights; Agrarian Rights, Economic Welfare and corresponding regional issues." Ibid., 129.

[39] Ibid., 134.

[40] Harvey, 221.

[41] Regional autonomy notwithstanding, the Accords promised several constitutional reforms at the federal and state levels that would provide improved indigenous participation and representation at the state and local levels of government. Harvey, 222.

[42] Ross (2000), 52.

[43] Ibid., 126.

[44] Castells, 52.

[45] SAIIC, 122.

[46] Avila, 109.

[47] Lawrence E. Harrison, *The Pan-American Dream* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), 182.

[48] Cosío et al, 141.

[49] Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz, *Indians of the Americas – Human Rights and Self-Determination* (Brooklyn, NY: Praeger, 1984), 20.

[50] Krauze, 302-3.

[51] Churchill, 143.

[52] The EZLN has reached out to indigenous women in their recruiting efforts and have made the conditions of women in Mexico a priority in their negotiations with the Mexican government. Collier, 60-1.
For a description of the EZLN's gender policies regarding women and homosexuals, please see Harry Cleaver's "Introduction" in *Zapatistas – Documents of the New Mexican Revolution* (Brooklyn, New York: Autonomedia, 1994), 18-9.

[53] Ross (2000), 44-5.

[54] Subcommandante Insurgente Marcos, "Votán-Zapata or Five Hundred Years of History," Ponce de León, 21ff.

[55] Pérez, 32.
[56] Jerry W Knudson, "Rebellion in Chiapas: Insurrection by Internet and public relations," in *Media, Culture & Society*, Vol. 20, No. 3, July 1998, 508.
[57] Marcos's 1998 story, "Above and Below: Masks & Silences," develops the mask metaphor that Mexicans hide their true values and interests behind masks that they create or have created for them by others. http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/marcos_masks_july98.html
[58] Marcos explains that the rebels "used facemasks because of the cold. But suddenly the facemasks caught on with the people, and so now we keep them on." Nevertheless, Marcos has used a poetic flourish in other dispatches to offer different reasons for their continued symbolic power. Collier, 87.
[59] Medea Benjamin, 70.
[60] La Jornada, "Testimonies of the First Day," in *¡Zapatistas! Documents of the New Mexican Revolution* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1994), 62-3.
[61] Ibid., 62.
[62] The masks did have an obvious drawback: the Zapatista image was frequently expropriated for criminal activity or government propaganda. Cattle rustlers dressed up as Zapatistas operated in Ocosingo and Las Margaritas. Ross (2000), 41. However, undoubtedly the worst incidents were those of rape by ski-masked men including four reported incidents in October, 1995, alone. Ibid., 150.
[63] Guillermo Gómez Peña, "The Subcomandante of Performance," Katzenberger, 90.
[64] Pérez, 31.
[65] Ross (2000), 18.
[66] Ibid., 21.
[67] Bañuelos, 196.
[68] A volume of Marcos's writings bears the title *Our Word is Our Weapon* and, coincidentally, the "power of the word" was the MA thesis title of the communications professor widely believed to be Marcos, Rafael Sebastian Guillen. Ronfeldt et al., 64 ff.
[69] Ross (2000), 71.
[70] Naomi Klein describes Marcos as a "one-man Web...a compulsive communicator, constantly reaching out, drawing connections between different issues and struggles. His communiqués are filled with lists of groups that he imagines are Zapatista allies – small shopkeepers, retired people and the disabled, workers and campesinos." "The Unknown Icon," Hayden, 117, 119.
[71] Elaine Katzenberger, "Introduction," Katzenberger, i.
[72] Alfred, 5.
[73] García, 187.
[74] Please see Guiomar Rovira's *Women of Maize: Indigenous Women and the Zapatista Rebellion* (London: Latin American Bureau, 2000); and Harvey, 196-7.
[75] Wolfwood, 22-3.
[76] Subcommandante Insurgente Marcos, "Twelve Women in the Twelfth Year – The Moment of War," Ponce de León, 11.
[77] Huntington, 75.
[78] Medea Benjamin, 63.
[79] EZLN, "Revolutionary Women's Law," Katzenberger, 109-10.
[80] Harvey, 226.
[81] Alfred, 111.
[82] Harrison, 183.
[83] Elaine Katzenberger, "Land," Katzenberger, 131-2.
[84] The changes were described as "completely negative...[and] the weapon that will destroy our people, because it is a way of dividing us into pieces...because the lands will be privatized...and the collective life of the community will be destroyed." SAIIC, 120.
[85] Medea Benjamin, 63-4.
[86] Ibid., 64.
[87] Neyra P. Alvarado Solís, "Land and Indigenous Cosmovision," Katzenberger, 128.
[88] A rebellion had originated here in 1974 when the Tzotzil drove out the non-indigenous landowners. Ross (2000), 121-2.
[89] Medea Benjamin, 69.

[90] There is a deeper symbolism here because Marcos was the name of a Zapatista who died before the uprising. Subcommandante Marcos adopted the name to honour his memory. Ibid., 70. This interview also discusses the benefits to the movement of the cult of personality that has developed over Marcos.
[91] Ramonet, 141.
[92] Medea Benjamin, 68; and Iain A. Boal, "Up From the Bottom", Katzenberger, 173.
[93] Huntington, 75.
[94] Vine Deloria Jr., describes this phenomenon in an interview. "[T]hey have access to the white world as whole personalities...simply because they are white – hence credible." Alfred, 78. There is a strong essentialist element in indigenous communities that chafe at the idea of representation by a non-indigenous. Ibid, 142. Nonetheless, Marcos can be considered to be indigenous in many respects because he has married into the community and has lived in the Lacandón jungle for almost two decades.
[95] It is difficult to determine when the cult of personality surrounding Marcos may add or subtract from the overall purpose of bringing attention to the plight of indigenous Mexicans. As the upcoming comparison with the other Mexican guerrilla force, the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR), will illustrate, Marcos is a very gifted and able spokesperson who helped foster widespread public sympathy for the Zapatista cause. The EPR lacked a spokesperson of his stature and failed to achieve the communications successes of their guerrilla predecessors from Chiapas.
[96] Huntington, 75-6.
[97] Gómez, 92.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Medea Benjamin, 69.
[101] The distinction between consensus and conflict symbols was recommended by Dr. Matt James as a way of categorizing the key Zapatista symbols.
[102] The limitations of a communications strategy's potential to change power dynamics between nation-states and indigenous peoples will be discussed further in Chapter Five. "Symbols are crucially important, but must not be confused with substance." Alfred, 27.

CHAPTER FOUR - MEDIUM, TECHNIQUE, & AUDIENCE

The EZLN employed the symbols discussed in Chapter Three to create a message that resonated not only with their fellow compatriots but also with a worldwide audience. However, the message required a medium. In terms of the methodological and technological aspects of communications, the EZLN would prove as adept at transmitting its message as it was at creating it. Whether it came through the mainstream or alternative press, Internet, public rally, or Zapatista merchandise ranging from buttons, dolls, and T-shirts to condoms, the EZLN delivered its freedom, justice, and equality message, to paraphrase Malcolm X, by any media necessary.[1] In addition, several musicians wrote lyrics or dedicated entire albums to the Zapatistas, including Carlos Santana and the bands El Gran Silencio, Rage Against the Machine, and Manu Chao.[2] The most important forms of media and techniques, as well as the specific local, national, and international audiences to whom they were directed, will now be reviewed.

Medium: Radio, Television and News Print

The EZLN attempted to use traditional media without much success because both newspaper and radio efforts eventually failed. The Zapatista newspaper, *El Despertador Mexicano*, eventually went out of print.[3] Zapatista troops took over the radio station XEOCH in Ocosingo, and "Radio Zapata" went on air with the *Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle* and repeated promises to protect the civilian population from harm, but the Mexican army soon recaptured Ocosingo after a violent siege.[4] During this time, Mexican television news vaguely referred only to "armed Indians" in San Cristóbal with

no mention of their *Declaration* or the fact that there were several other municipalities, like Ocosingo, occupied by the Zapatistas.[5]

Nevertheless, the EZLN successfully stage-managed their interactions with television news on other occasions, with perhaps the most famous example occurring in February, 1994. On live television, the EZLN handed over a former Governor that the rebels had taken into custody in the first days of the uprising.[6] The handover provided Mexicans a glimpse of one of the leading EZLN commandantes, Mayor Moisés, who presented the captive and read the *The Clamour of the Lacandón Jungle*, which repeated their 11 core demands while blasting the federal and state governments for corruption.[7] Television viewers, who had little prior knowledge of the Mayans of southeastern Mexico, were shocked by the images of the rebels' small stature and the bold public condemnation of the PRI government.[8]

Medium: Communiqués

The most familiar form of Zapatista communications is the written communiqué, which is a letter that is usually signed personally by Marcos on behalf of the CCRI-CG. The EZLN's reliance on messengers for the delivery of the CCRI communiqués meant frequent delays in their communications from within the jungle to the outside.[9] The first one to be widely disseminated was the *First Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle* which marked the EZLN's arrival on the world stage.[10] In it, war was declared on the government and Mexicans were invited to rise up and join the EZLN in a return to the original principles of the Mexican Revolution. The Zapatistas hit the ground running

after the *First Declaration*, with the Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee General Command (CCRI-CG)[11] issuing a string of 72 communiqués in the first two months of the conflict.[12] These communiqués were translated into English in Texas within the first weeks of the uprising and posted on the Internet.

The political writing of Marcos has taken many literary forms that have distanced the EZLN from the laconic language often used by guerrilla movements. Among these forms is poetry. The political power of indigenous poetry was recognized in 1976 when Vine Deloria Jr. suggested that the best way to foster new relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous would be to "get all the poets of each group together."[13]

> *Poetry is one means of describing the human condition that transcends institutional concepts and definitions. We need poets and expressions of insights by artists more than we need alternative solutions or institutions.*[14]

Deloria also wrote that indigenous poets "are the only ones today who can provide this bridge, this reflective statement of what it means and has meant to live in a present which is continually overwhelmed by the fantasies of others of the meaning of past events."[15] Although Marcos is mestizo, he frequently credits indigenous sources for the Zapatistas' "politics of poetic resistance."[16] One observer of the Zapatista uprising demonstrates how "poetic language is useful in revolutionary practice:"

> *Poetic language very clearly harnesses the pleasures of self-constitution but without binding them to the reigning symbolic value system because poetry in part breaks up ordinary laws of grammar and narrative. By loosening attachment to a predominant social narrative, poetic discourse avails the lawful citizen the chance to undergo a reverse epistemic shift [and reveal] the mask covering a disposition to violence...[I]t is not accidental that the belligerent Zapatista army has resorted to poetics in conducting its strange guerrilla warfare."*[17]

Besides poetry as a distinct communiqué genre, Marcos repeats stories told to him by his Mayan mentor, Old Antonio, who had been the first to invite the Zapatistas into an

indigenous community.[18] His stories serve as contemporary parables that draw on Mayan history and mythology and constitute the Zapatista "guide to the history and traditions – even the geography – of Chiapas[,]...their link to the past and the future."[19] For example, the National Democratic Convention's resumption in Tuxtla Gutierrez proved to be a nightmare of internal dissension and, in an effort to unite the broad spectrum of political opinion, the CCRI-CG used a Mayan parable, that recounts how the gods who created the world "all wanted to be stars in the heavens and left no one to tend the earth."[20] At the Special Forum on Indian Rights and Culture in 1996, Marcos told the delegates Old Antonio's *Story of the Seven Rainbows*, which describes how the first Mayan Gods approached the Maya to seek a consensus among all people. According to the parable, the CNI was to be the forum for a new consensus among indigenous Mexicans. It was also an Old Antonio story, "The Story of Noise and Silence," that explained why the EZLN withdrew from dialogue with the Mexican government in late 1996.

Medium: Private versus Public Dialogue

The Zapatistas have publicly rejected backroom deals with the Mexican government, and as a result, communications between the federal government and the EZLN had been frustrated by the former's preference for private dialogue and the latter's rejection of secret negotiations. When President Salinas adopted a ceasefire in January, 1994, peace talks ensued at San Cristóbal. Upon assuming office on December 1st later that year, Zedillo announced that the ceasefire would be respected by his government and invited the EZLN to resume negotiations with them. Marcos answered Zedillo's invitation with

the demand that Zedillo resign and warned that the EZLN would remain extant as long as Zedillo was in power.[21] Since Fox's inauguration as president in December, 2000, the EZLN has insisted on three conditions for the resumption of dialogue and negotiations: the release of Zapatista political prisoners; a military pullback; and the implementation of the San Andrés Accords. The EZLN has repeatedly brushed aside requests by Fox for private meetings until these conditions have been met. The requirement that negotiations be public avoids alienating Zapatista supporters who might fear that its leaders and negotiators could become coopted or sell out.[22]

Medium: Electronic Communications Capacity

Initially, the EZLN was thought to have circumvented possible state manipulation of its communications through the electronic transmission of communiqués sent via email to the national and international press. According to this account, after the first days of the uprising, the EZLN used portable generators, cell phones, and laptop computers to communicate with supporters and the mainstream press while preserving their mobility in the Lacandón jungle.[23] But, by 1995, the EZLN could no longer transmit messages electronically because "high tech equipment donated by the U.S. to the Mexican army...could pick up the locale from which they were transmitted."[24] This scenario is extremely unlikely.[25] By most accounts, the Zapatistas relied on runners to get their communiqués to civilian supporters who then arranged for them to be distributed and posted on the Internet. In this respect, it was the Zapatista support network of Mexican and international NGOs who used the Internet so effectively to enable the rebels to

bypass government efforts to contain the rebellion and limit journalists' access to the conflict.[26]

Medium: Internet

The Internet played an insignificant role in rallying local support for the EZLN. Zapatista ranks contain many of Mexico's poorest people. They have high rates of illiteracy never mind statistically significant computer and Internet access.[27] Nonetheless, Marcos was keenly aware of its communicative clout.[28] The Internet was the medium that helped the rebels "establish a space for dialogue" outside of Chiapas and helped indigenous peoples "overcome geographical barriers, increase the speed and efficiency of the dissemination of their public messages, decrease their reliance on more traditional forms of communication, while providing them with an alternative space through which to present their political grievances, ideas, and goals."[29] Their first website was developed by an American graduate student in early 1994 and the Zapatistas' Internet presence soon exploded.[30]

The Mexican government responded aggressively to try and limit the EZLN's digital communications resources. For example, Javier Elorriaga, who was responsible for much of the EZLN's Internet presence, was arrested during the February, 1995, invasion of the Lacandón jungle by the Mexican military and state police.[31] Even so, the EZLN continued to develop public relations, media relations, member communications, recruitment, political discussions and fund-raising through the Internet.[32]

Overall, the Internet enabled several major communications achievements by allowing the EZLN to: 1) escape geographical isolation; 2) avoid political isolation; 3) decrease its dependence on traditional print and broadcast media; 4) attract international attention; and 5) offer a platform with a direct link to potential supporters.[33] The speed that pressure brought to bear on Mexican authorities was incredible. In one instance, a mob-incited riot in San Cristóbal was stopped by local authorities only after an email from a local priest had mobilized public protest abroad. News of the riot then travelled quickly to the Mexican consulates, and then from there to the federal government. It in turn, notified the Chiapas state government, which ordered the police to intervene.[34]

Techniques

The preceding section demonstrated "where" the Zapatistas conducted their communications operations: radio, television, newspaper, communiqué, public dialogue, and the Internet. The next step is to uncover how or by what means the EZLN used the above media to wage their information war. The most important Zapatista techniques will now be reviewed individually.

Technique: NGO "Swarming"

The Internet was particularly useful in connecting the EZLN to broader social networks through established NGOs. The EZLN successfully tailored its message to attract support by emphasizing broader issues, such as indigenous rights or opposition to

NAFTA, which dovetailed with the existing priorities of NGOs, the infrastructure of which then became available to drum up even more international support.[35] Because relatively uninspiring demands for reversing the 1992 changes to the Mexican constitution's Article 27 held little international appeal, the EZLN's main message would be simplified and universalized so effectively that the Zapatistas became an international symbol of indigenous resistance against neo-colonialism and neo-liberalism.[36] The effect was a "swarming" attack by coalitions of social and human rights activists from all over the globe who concentrated their lobbying on the Mexican government within days of the uprising in January 1994.[37] This process was assisted by the creation of a National Commission of Intermediation (CONAI), which organized national and international NGOs to support a peaceful resolution of the conflict.[38]

Researchers preparing a study for the US military on counter-strategies to the successes of the EZLN's communications have focused on the importance of reorganization to counter swarming tactics that they term "social netwar."[39] Social netwar seeks "to shape beliefs and attitudes...[and involves] battles for public opinion and for media access and coverage at local through global levels [via]...propaganda campaigns, psychological warfare, and strategic public diplomacy, not just to educate and inform, but to deceive and disinform."[40] Certain NGOs, such as the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), help other NGOs "acquire the equipment and the training their members may need in order to get on-line."[41] Despite its potential, social netwar can be effectively disrupted by military intervention. For example, the February, 1995, federal invasion of the Zapatista support bases was a serious blow to the EZLN because its alliances with local peasant and indigenous organizations were disrupted at a

crucial time in negotiations between the CEOIC and the government.[42] The result was a fallout between the EZLN and some of the civilian indigenous and *campesino* organizations who were members of the CEOIC and other coalitions. Marcos labeled those who had begun negotiations while the EZLN was under attack as "'traitors' for thinking that 'the struggle would be easy, comfortable, full of photographers and big demonstrations.'"[43]

Technique: Media Relations

When the crisis began, the mass media arrived in such force that it was soon dubbed the "Third Army."[44] The national press initially lagged well behind their international colleagues in both the quality and quantity of their coverage, with a pro-government bias especially evident in the Mexican television news coverage.[45] Notwithstanding these challenges, media relations were a Zapatista specialty from the beginning of the conflict, and it soon became obvious that Marcos knew "a great deal about the internal workings of the media."[46] Journalists were allowed freedom of movement within the rebel zone as well as ready access to interview the EZLN leadership. Certain newspapers were targeted by the EZLN and communiqués were regularly provided to the media in order to keep it abreast of all developments on the rebel side.[47] The EZLN also courted journalist opinion by distributing leaflets that clearly laid out the Zapatistas' reasons for rebelling. However, the Zapatistas demonstrated they were ready to act when the media coverage they received was deemed unfair. In March of 1994, Marcos banned the presence of the country's leading television network, whose coverage of the rebels had been especially

critical. His response to critics was that "Televisa doesn't have to be there because they invent the news anyway."[48] The extent of the EZLN's popularity made it impossible for Televisa to ignore the uprising, with the network struggling to overcome the Zapatista media ban by various means.[49]

Technique: Public Rally – *Encuentros, Consultas & Intergalácticas*

Public rallies or *Encuentros* have been especially effective at retaining public attention once the EZLN's military capacity was effectively exhausted. *Encuentros* continued as a show of strength and popular support for the rebels, and therefore remain politically important venues because they allow individuals to demonstrate support for the Zapatistas outside of organizations that are uncertain about taking a public position on the EZLN.[50] This is crucial because many indigenous organizations fear government reprisals if they show sympathy for the Zapatistas.

Similar to the *Encuentros* were the *Consultas*, or consultations, in 1996 and 1999. The first *Consulta* was organized by the CCRI-CG organized a national and international consultation to recommend whether the EZLN should become a political organization. Delegated to the Zapatistas' National Democratic Convention (CND), the voting was scheduled for August on six questions.[51] Ross describes the *Consulta* as "a real 'war of the Internet,' heavily promoted on the World Wide Web by solidarity groups both in and outside of Mexico, an exercise that demonstrated the Zapatistas' growing electronic range – one could even vote in the *Consulta* electronically."[52] The two key questions were roughly split in their support with a slight majority vote for the EZLN to become a

political organization but a slight majority vote against joining an established party. The government immediately attempted to spin the results in its favour by misconstruing the results as a vote for the EZLN disarmament, but in fact, no such mandate existed.

In July, 1998, the *Fifth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle* announced the National Consultation on Indian Rights and Culture (*Consulta*), a Zapatista-organized plebiscite intended to rally public support for the implementation of the San Andrés Accords and generally raise public awareness about indigenous rights. Always conscious of linking their movement to historical precedents, the *Consulta*'s date matched the beginning of the Mexican Revolution. The March 21st, 1999, *Consulta* offered four questions to all Mexicans and a fifth aimed specifically at expatriates.[53] In total, 1,100 organizations comprising 27,000 individuals served as volunteers, two Zapatistas were sent to each of Mexico's 2,500 municipalities to get out the vote, a telephone hotline was set up to give details to the public, and an NGO was charged with recording the results. The *Consulta* also arranged translation of the questions into indigenous languages as well as traditional voting in indigenous communities. The future PRI presidential candidate and current Interior minister at the time, Francisco Labastida, as well as others in the government, showed their disdain for the Zapatista initiative by dismissing its significance.[54] Despite government efforts to downplay the process, more *Chiapanecos* participated in the March 1999 *Consulta* than had voted in the state elections the previous autumn, even with government pressure tactics that included the videorecording of polling stations by the Mexican army.[55] In the end, however, the *Consulta*'s massive political mobilization had a negligible impact on government policy.

In 1996, Chiapas hosted a hemisphere-wide forum of the Americas in April at La Realidad, but the main event would come later that summer with the week long *Intergaláctica*, which drew three thousand delegates from 55 nations. Debates included how the EZLN could best exploit "netwar," with the famous Zapatista activist from Texas, Harry Cleaver, proposing a "cyberspace mosaic of local struggle."[56] The entire event was noted for the disparate interpretations of the budding ideology of *Zapatismo* whose very vagueness made it appealing to those seeking a flexible set of principles or values as a foundation for a global movement. Despite the obvious benefits of such coalition-building, problems did arise because of some delegates' promotion of same-sex marriages and the legalization of drugs, both taboo topics in Zapatista communities that are overwhelmingly Christian and fearful of government efforts to criminalize the rebellion by associating it with narco-trafficking.

Technique: Zapatours

The EZLN successfully organized massive marches from Chiapas to Mexico City in 1997 and again in 2001. The 1,111 march in September, 1997, was joined by a Zapatista delegate from each of the EZLN's autonomous communities in Chiapas and coincided with key patriotic dates of Mexican history.[57] The EZLN offered "protester" classes to the delegates, an activity that involved the substantial logistical challenges of feeding and transporting supporters on the long trek to Mexico City.[58] The march north started in San Cristóbal and drew huge crowds of indigenous supporters in Oaxaca and similar support extended the entire route. The main events included a meeting with the CNI and the

founding convention of the Zapatista National Liberation Front (FZLN).[59] The political message that the EZLN hoped to convey on this first Zapatour was to remind people of the San Andrés Accords and, in so doing, re-establish a national Zapatista presence.

The second Zapatour included the EZLN's leadership, the CCRI-CG, which once again grabbed international headlines with its "March for Indian Dignity" to Mexico City in February and March, 2001.[60] Again invoking historical symbolism, the March followed the same route taken by Zapata's southern liberation army in 1914.[61] Furthermore, the itinerary emphasized rallies enroute as it culminated with the CNI's III Congress, all of which reflected the EZLN's preference for dialogue with civil society rather than with the Mexican government.[62] A caravan of Zapatistas and their supporters left on the morning of February 25, 2001, and began the long journey northward to the capital.[63] It was hoped that a massive show of public support along the way would help push through the San Andrés Accords. The Zapatistas' efficient communications machine was back in high-gear as the EZLN invited requests for interviews, appealed to journalists to "register for regular news bulletins," and established a website with "daily updates on the caravan's progress."[64]

As part of the event, the EZLN hosted a rally in the Zócalo, the historic centre of the ancient indigenous city of Tenochtitlan and the heart of Mexico City. The EZLN commandantes spoke to the crowd "with their backs turned to the balcony of the National Palace (the most important political space in the country)."[65] While in Mexico City, Marcos explained that the EZLN was not a vanguard, but rather a plough that surfaced the many injustices, wounds, and demands of the Mexican people.[66] The EZLN's role was to present the demands of its indigenous communities in Chiapas with the aim that

their efforts would "start a chain reaction in which the people could present others."[67] An EZLN representative, Commandante Esther, addressed the lower house and emphasized the Zapatistas symbolic touchstones: indigenous identity; Mexican patriotism; commitment to peace; and their oft-repeated three requirements for the resumption of negotiations.[68] However, the CCRI-CG returned to Chiapas "empty-handed," and the new president soon dimmed EZLN hopes even further by urging Mexicans to not "'give any more space or situations of power to the Zapatista movement.'"[69] Nonetheless, the 2001 March for Indian Dignity is only the latest example of an extraordinary string of communication coups that have kept the EZLN and indigenous issues on the national and international agenda.

Technique: Media Displays & Media Avoidance

The Zapatistas clearly plan their activities and events to generate attention. Television has been an ideal medium for the EZLN because it has placed as much emphasis on images as ideas. The EZLN, and Marcos in particular, have been accused of shamelessly pandering to the media. This charge has never been denied because any attention helps their cause. . Marcos has stated that even the cult of personality that surrounds him benefits the movement because Marcos is not a real person. The Zapatistas seem to subscribe to the belief that "the ascendancy of image over idea is that it tends to transform the politician into an actor."[70] One example was the EZLN's 11th anniversary on November 17th when a military ceremony honoured Marcos as the military leader of a multiethnic army of Tojolabal, Tzeltal, Tzotzil, Chol, Mam, Zoque, and Mestizo.[71] Such

displays were so effective that the Mexican government negotiated a communications ceasefire in late 1995, one that the EZLN respected by hiding its military arsenal during the second anniversary celebrations of the uprising and the unveiling of the *Fourth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle*.

The government attempted its own brand of theatrics with another example of a media display. A year after Acteal, the state governor of Chiapas had announced a demilitarization proposal that would see armed groups in Chiapas (paramilitaries or EZLN) turn in their weapons in exchange for livestock and farm implements.[72] A bizarre desertion of Zapatistas appears to have been staged by the governor, Roberto Albores, who also hosted reporters at a resort near Ocosingo. A group of sixteen, dressed in Zapatista uniforms, handed over 11 rifles and announced to the gathered press that they were defecting from the EZLN. Both Televisa and TV Azteca led their nightly news with footage of the reputed EZLN desertions of the "counterfeit rebels" who received a *campesino* king's ransom of "10 Swiss cows, four calves, a tractor, and an ambulance" in exchange for their "theatrics."[73]

The EZLN was skilled at avoiding media spectacles prepared by the Mexican government. One example was the signing of the San Andrés Accords in 1996. Conscious of the symbolism attached to signing an agreement with the state, the EZLN demanded that it be carried out without witnesses in order to prevent the Mexican government from using images of the event for propaganda purposes.[74] But it would appear the agreement was used by the government for these purposes after all. The international support base that the Zapatistas had won in Europe was an obstacle that required evidence that the Mexican government was making progress in Chiapas. As

such, a likely reason for the government's acquiescence to the San Andrés Accords but future refusal to implement them was a need for "the illusion of an agreement with the Indians" to further trade negotiations with the European Union.[75] Although it was denied a video or photographic recording of the Accords' signing, the Mexican government promoted the signing throughout Europe in the months that followed. However, Zedillo never submitted the Accords to Congress for endorsement and implementation as his negotiators had promised.

Technique: Breaking Containment

The Mexican government's main strategy since the cease-fire in January, 1994, has been to contain the rebellion to its remote support bases in eastern Chiapas.[76] The Zapatistas have used several techniques to thwart this containment strategy. One has been the reliance on the international media and the EZLN's civilian support network to get its message out to the national and international public. A second technique has been to invite international observers and social activists to Zapatista-inspired and Zapatistas-managed events, such as the CND and the *Intergaláctica*. A third technique has been symbolic offensive actions such as the "Peace, Justice, and Dignity for the Indian Peoples" offensive launched in December 1994, which attempted a peaceful break out of the cordon by creating new autonomous municipalities.[77] The military and police were dispatched to reoccupy the new rebel-aligned communities, but the Zapatistas withdrew before fighting broke out. Whether the EZLN had really escaped the army's containment or whether Zapatista supporters beyond army lines had simply risen up remains unclear.[78]

Regardless of the method, the results demonstrated the EZLN's ability to coordinate activity over a wide geographical area (over half the state's land mass).[79]

Technique: Finding Common Cause

The EZLN has also been successful in linking its struggle to those of other organizations. This is especially true in the case of alliances the EZLN has created in opposition to neo-liberalism. A frequent error in Zapatista literature is the statement that the EZLN timed the rebellion to coincide with the moment that NAFTA came into effect.[80] Nonetheless, the EZLN has stated its opposition to the free trade agreement.

> *NAFTA is a death sentence for the indigenous people. NAFTA sets up competition among farmers, but how can our campesinos – who are mostly illiterate – compete with U.S. and Canadian farmers? And look at this rocky land we have here? How can we compete with the land in California, or in Canada? So the people of Chiapas...were the sacrificial lambs of NAFTA.*[81]

An inverse corollary to the above alliance-seeking technique was the refusal of the EZLN to accept political or religious affiliation. For example, the Zapatistas never officially endorsed any political party even though they harboured a vacillating sympathy for the one headed by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, son of the Mexican president who first initiated land reform during the Great Depression.[82] Similarly, the EZLN kept its distance from the Catholic Church despite the repeated interventions of the Bishop of San Cristóbal, Samuel Ruiz, to prevent violence. When reporters asked if the Zapatistas were a product of Liberation Theology, Marcos replied that theology was not needed for liberation, and that the EZLN ranks included "evangelicals, Catholics, atheists and warlocks."[83]

Technique: Humour

The EZLN has also exploited another important function of mass communications: entertainment.[84] Indigenous leaders have long recognized the power of humour and the EZLN has used it effectively through a variety of devices.[85] The Zapatistas frequently poke fun at powerful politicians such as Governor Albores, who Marcos derided as Zedillo's attack dog. Marcos nicknamed Albores, "Croquetas", which is the Mexican term for dog biscuits.[86] Another famous example of Zapatista humour is Don Durito, a beetle that lives in the Lacandón jungle with the rebels and who has written extensive critiques of neo-liberalism. Don Durito is a key advisor and an obvious literary parallel to Don Quixote. Many of Marcos's self-deprecating communiqués refer to his discussions with Durito who is often contemptuous of the rebel leader's grasp on world politics. Marcos is also famous for his playfulness with journalists, which was evident in February, 1994, during peace talks between the federal government and the EZLN. Upon arriving in San Cristóbal, Marcos walked by the waiting media horde and pulled up his "pant leg to display a muddy boot and a slice of hairy white flesh...'showing some leg'[is] a gimmick invoked by starlets at major motion picture premieres" in Mexico.[87]

Technique: Silence

The EZLN countered the Zedillo government's refusal to implement the promised San Andrés Accords with a complete withdrawal from dialogue not only with the government but also with the EZLN's own support network. Marcos announced in January, 1997,

that Zedillo's alternative to the San Andrés agreement was an insult to indigenous peoples. The EZLN went into seclusion, denying all requests for interviews for the first six months of the year; even the FZLN seemed to lose contact with its military wing. Ross opined that the EZLN's withdrawal from the media was a disaster because its "visibility dried up and the civil society forgot about them."[88] Marcos would later justify this disengagement from the media by declaring that "silence is an Indian weapon."[89] As discussed previously in Chapter Three, Marcos marked the San Andrés Accords' first anniversary with an Old Antonio parable, "The Story of the Noise and the Silence", which figuratively described the decision of the EZLN to turn away from the Mexican government.[90] Rather than continue dialogue with the federal government, the Zapatista strategy shifted to direct action as the EZLN organized its support bases as autonomous communities independent from state and federal control. This process led to clashes between indigenous supporters of the government and the EZLN, as well as increased paramilitary activity that led to the tragedy of Acteal later that year.

Racism might have been a factor in the furor over the EZLN going offline because some observers felt that, "If Marcos is not on the other end of the line, the EZLN has not spoken."[91] But even though Marcos and the EZLN were silent they remained active nonetheless. Still, the CCRI-CG did reappear in July, 1997, with a series of communiqués, including one written only in the indigenous language of Nahuatl.[92] However, the main communiqué was the essay "Above and Below: Masks and Silences." Following soon after was the *Fifth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle*, which provided an explanation of why the Zapatista's primary weapon of the word had been replaced by the new weapon of silence.

> *While the government piles up hollow words and hastens to argue with a rival that constantly slips away, the zapatistas make a weapon of struggle out of silence, which they do not understand and against which they can do nothing, and time and again they oppose our silence with sharp lies, bullets, bombs, blows. Just as we discovered the weapon of words after the combat in January of 1994, now we do it with silence. While the government offered everyone threats, death and destruction, we could learn from ourselves, teach ourselves and teach another form of struggle, and that, with reason, truth and history, one could fight and win . . .being quiet.* [93]

In November, 1998, Marcos detailed the EZLN's withdrawal strategy in an interview that marked the 15th anniversary of the movement's formation. Marcos candidly acknowledged mistakes and described how reductionism and hasty generalizations had alienated the Zapatistas from potential supporters and sympathizers in the three major political parties, in other Mexican guerilla movements, and in civil society as a whole.[94] However, Marcos attributed these missteps to the growing pains of a young political organization and credited the indigenous communities for teaching the new Zapatistas how to listen to others and learn from their mistakes.[95] Furthermore, Marcos defended the decision to lapse into silence rather than continue dialogue with a government whose strategy was to bore and frustrate the country back into a state of apathy.[96]

Nonetheless, Marcos admitted that the tactic had created a public discourse vacuum in which the government's positions and rhetoric became almost hegemonic.[97] For example, while unable to communicate with the EZLN in early 1997, the buffer organization between the EZLN and the federal government, the Commission of Agreement and Peacemaking (COCOPA), decided to act on its own and recommended that negotiations be reopened on the Accords. In response, the infuriated EZLN high command accused the COCOPA of abandoning the EZLN during the dry season when

the Mexican military was most mobile and the rebels most vulnerable to attack.[98] Despite such setbacks, however, the silence technique saved the Zapatistas' political and media power capital for future engagements that held more promise than the negotiations with Zedillo seemed to offer at the time: for example, the reemergence of the EZLN onto the world stage with its 2001 "March for Indian Dignity" to Mexico City.

Technique: Slogans

Another Zapatista communications coup was the employment of a concise two word slogan for their rebellion: "¡Ya Basta!" or "Enough already!" The short phrase "represents a judgment against a five-hundred-year-old colonial contract of suffering, neglect, and violent abuse.[99] The two words became synonymous with the EZLN and its demands for dignity and justice not only for indigenous peoples, but for all Mexicans.[100] Another effective slogan has been, "For us nothing, for everyone everything," which represents the Zapatista political philosophy that emphasizes leadership as sacrifice for the community. In 2001, Marcos suggested that the new Zapatista slogan would be, "'No one will do it for us.' We must reorganize and rethink our political duties so that this will be possible."[101]

Audience

A remarkable element of the EZLN's appeal is the resonance of its messages with indigenous and non-indigenous, as well academic and non-academic audiences.[102] The

EZLN is adept at tailoring its messages to its intended recipients whether they are at the local, national, or international level. In terms of media relations, the rebels have avoided an approach that uses the media "as an instrument for making a positive or negative impact on people."[103] Instead, the Zapatistas were careful to approach media relations as a "process and a relationship…[one that] assumes that the audience is not a passive receiver but an active participant in the relationship, with its personal and social character, its conflicts and contradictions."[104] For example, while maintaining their defiance towards the Mexican state, the EZLN was anxious to show the world that arms were taken up only as a last resort after years of pent-up frustration.[105] Through their communications, the EZLN has challenged people both within Mexico and around the world to reflect on and even revise their aspirations and values.

Audience: Local & Indigenous

An easily overlooked Zapatista audience is its membership. Like any organization, an external communications strategy that represents the Zapatistas to the outside world must be balanced with internal communications that maintain the organization's links with the foot soldiers and militants who represent its lifeblood. An analysis of the internal communications of the EZLN is speculative in many respects because of the rebel army's need for guarded secrecy in a war environment. However, some key elements of their internal communications have become apparent. The EZLN is a multilingual army whose officers and soldiers speak the indigenous languages of the region: Tojolabal, Tzeltal, Tzotzil, and Chol. The EZLN changed its "internal decision-making process" by

incorporating communications "methods used in indigenous communities and organizations."[106] Also, a broad command structure was implemented because it was deemed unacceptable by indigenous Zapatistas that only a select few would lead the movement.[107]

At the local level within Chiapas, the Zapatistas' audience-centred approach is especially evident in their relations with indigenous peoples, whose dignity has been emphasized in order to shatter "all those less tangible symbolic forces that threaten to seduce them into hatred of their Mayan past, that allocate them to the space of dirty Indians or that, at the very least, bar them from belonging to the full-blooded race of humanity."[108] Furthermore, the EZLN had undertaken important initiatives to provide modern education and health care to indigenous communities that were ignored by the state and federal governments. By meeting peoples' needs and desires for respect, education, and health, the EZLN has assumed the role of a government in its base communities and enjoys considerable popular support.

Audience: National & Mexican

At the national level, the EZLN adopted a pro-Mexican rhetoric that called for a return to the principles of the 1917 constitution and an end to NAFTA. One Mexican scholar points out that "calling themselves Zapatistas and revolutionaries is itself a message to all *campesinos* and to all Mexicans, for in the collective subconscious of Mexico and the genuine and false emotional education of all Mexicans, we all feel ourselves to be Zapatistas and we are all revolutionaries."[109] In addition to Zapata, Marcos also cited

other national heroes such as Villa, Morelos, Hidalgo, and Guerrero as his main influences.[110] The use of history and national myths were expertly delivered to a national media that was largely under state control.[111] Rather than rely on reporters and editors to deliver their message, the EZLN demanded that its communiqués be published in their original form to prevent media manipulation. The EZLN's initial reluctance to appeal only to indigenous peoples kept the movement inclusive and relatively free of indigenous nationalism when it was attempting to trigger a Mexico-wide rebellion.[112] The EZLN actively pursued coalitions between social activists, students, workers, and other members of civil society who were opposed to the PRI regime. For example, the Zapatistas publicly supported striking students at the country's largest university, Universidad Autonoma de México (UNAM).[113] But even with all this coalition building within Mexico, the EZLN still managed to educate the general public about the political aspirations of indigenous Mexicans. In doing so, the Zapatistas engaged in an essential decolonizing project, one that successfully challenged mainstream Mexican "society to questions its own structure, its acquisitive individualistic value system, and the false premises of colonialism."[114]

Audience: International

The Zapatistas were not the first to recognize the amplification offered by international attention to a Mexican issue.

> *For a decade or two, Mexican intellectuals, scholars, critics, and activists have pointed out that a good way to get their message known is to make a statement in Washington, D.C., New York, or some other prominent venue in the United States, so that it is picked up, commented on, and fed back in to Mexico by the U.S.*

media. This way, their message has greater impact and is seen by more people than if they made the statement in Mexico City.[115]

At the international level, the EZLN targeted the foreign media by ensuring that English translations of their demands were readily available. The international press was allowed ready access to the EZLN for interviews and had free passage within the rebel-controlled territories. Furthermore, the EZLN was skillful at adapting its message to suit foreign audiences. For instance, Marcos played on popular resentment against illegal migration of Mexicans into the United States during a 1994 interview with an American journalist. Marcos warned that it was in the best interests of the US government to ensure that the Mexican military did not continue its campaigns against the civilian population of Chiapas, because the resultant refugees would only increase the pressure within Mexico for migration to the US.[116] Also drawing international attention was the massacre at Acteal, which sparked worldwide protests against the Mexican government.[117] A Zapatista element was also evident in the wave of anti-globalization protests grabbing media attention around the globe in the summer and fall of 1999.[118] Celebrities also contributed their star status to the EZLN's cause. Movie director Oliver Stone scheduled a trip to Chiapas to coincide with the Academy Awards in Hollywood in March, 1996, and arrangements were made for a satellite phone that would have been used by Marcos to accept the award in the event that *Nixon*, Stone's nominated movie, were to win an Oscar.[119]

Audience: Identification with the Oppressed

The EZLN also spoke to audiences that cut across social and geopolitical boudaries. An especially effective and far-reaching example was the Zapatista identification with oppressed people everywhere. Perhaps the most famous instance of this identification was Marcos's reaction to homophobic accusations that were levelled to undermine his support amongst *macho* Mexicans: "Marcos is gay in San Francisco, black in South Africa, an Asian in Europe, a Chicano in San Ysidro, an anarchist in Spain, a Palestinian in Israel, a Mayan Indian in the streets of San Cristóbal, a Jew in Germany, a Gypsy in Poland, a Mohawk in Quebec, a pacifist in Bosnia, a single woman on the Metro at 10:00 P.M., a peasant without land, a gang member in the slums, an unemployed worker, an unhappy student and, of course, a Zapatista in the mountains."[120] This widely quoted phrase illustrates how the Zapatistas have linked their efforts with those of other oppressed groups around the world. This approach helps overcome the "invisibility" and "fragmentation" of many of the forgotten and neglected segments of civil society, not only in Mexico, but around the world.[121]

Audience: Electoral Influence of the EZLN

The EZLN has often struggled to forge alliances with other Mexicans because of its reluctance to participate in electoral politics, an arena from which many of its supporters in Chiapas have withdrawn in order to return to traditional forms of governance.[122] In 1997, the autonomous Zapatista communities did just that. But they

also did more. The Zapatistas disrupted the congressional and state elections that year by "destroying polling stations in several districts in an attempt to have the elections nullified," costing the EZLN public support because of their apparent "poor sportsmanship."[123] Worse still for the Zapatistas, the PRD win in Mexico City actually boosted Zedillo's profile by "enabling the media to praise him as a great reformer."[124]

Some have interpreted the timing of the EZLN rebellion in the 1994 presidential election year as proof that it was staged to help or hinder one of the three leading candidates.[125] Similar rumours swirled around the 2000 presidential election, but Marcos denied accusations that the EZLN was holding out in hope that those elections would bring the PRD candidate, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, to power in order to improve negotiations: "The problem isn't who gets in, whether the PRD, the PRI or the PAN...[but] whether or not the political class is willing to accept that it has to settle that unfinished business, such as with the indigenous peoples."[126]

In 2000, the country's attention was firmly focused on the upcoming presidential election that had the PAN candidate, Vicente Fox, running neck and neck with the PRI candidate Labastida. The PRI had a huge advantage over its rivals because of access to state funds for patronage and vote-buying, and because it could garner a disproportionate amount of media coverage (The PRI secured "76% of all electronic media election news in Chiapas").[127] The obvious hope for Zapatistas was the Alliance for Mexico candidate, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, who promised to pull the Mexican military out of Chiapas and implement the San Andrés Accords. Labastida had been a thorn in the side of the EZLN during his term as Interior Secretary and was likely the worst-case scenario for Zapatistas. Of all, however, Vicente Fox was the vaguest on Chiapas, offering only the

claim that "15 minutes" would be all that was needed to end the conflict. Eventually, he matched Cárdenas' commitment to legislate the San Andrés Accords if elected.[128]

In a communiqué dated two weeks before the July 2nd election, Marcos discussed the role that the Mexican mass media was playing in predetermining the outcome. Marcos cited polling as an example of how the electorate was being presented a stark choice between the two leading candidates rather than a genuine debate of political principles, simply because the "infotainment" media outlets suggested, through those polls, claimed that a vote for anyone but the two frontrunners would be a wasted vote.[129]

> *The citizenry are not making their decisions based on different political options, but based on the media, that is, based on the image they are presenting of political proposals...The exercise of political power has not passed from the political class to the citizens, but to all the publicists, editorial heads, announcers and commentators. If it was once said that one could govern through the media, this has been degraded: now one governs (and contests the government) in and for the media. The replacement of the citizens by radio and television is not democracy, it is virtual government and virtual change in governments. Government palaces, legislative chambers and election boxes are no longer in their real homes, but in the news programs.*[130]

While Marcos recognizes the importance of the media as communicators between the electorate and the candidates, he nevertheless argues here that the media have gone too far by prejudging the candidates before voters get the opportunity to evaluate them. Marcos has repeatedly pointed out elsewhere the unfair distribution of media coverage among the political parties.

Another electoral issue and obstacle was the coordination of the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) with the Mexican Army in Chiapas. Marcos reported that the IFE was allowing the Mexican military to monitor voter registration files and photos in order to root out potential Zapatistas.[131] In the end, the EZLN promised not to interfere with the

election as a response to the IFE activities, but warned the victor that the larger war would continue if Zedillo's Chiapas policy of deceit was adopted by the new president.[132]

Summary

Because of its media-friendly and media-savvy approach, the EZLN won many admirers within the press, as well as within its reading, viewing, and listening audiences. The Zapatistas exploitation of several different kinds of media, ranging from modern electronic versions such as television and the Internet to low-technology handwritten communiqués, enabled the EZLN access to a broad spectrum of audiences with messages that were encoded in a manner that made them easily accessible: ear-catching slogans, entertaining stories, and dramatic media displays. The Zapatistas successfully breached their geopolitical isolation to build alliances with other social movements by deftly employing a variety of communications media and techniques that simultaneously projected their message – a message that focused attention on indigenous rights in Mexico – to many different audiences. The final chapter will provide a more extensive and conclusive assessment of Zapatista communication strategies for future indigenous movements.

Endnotes

[1] Knudson, 511. The Malcolm X quote paraphrased above actually advises the pursuit of freedom, justice, and equality "by any means necessary."
[2] Ross (2000), 327.
[3] Knudson, 508.
[4] Efraín Bartolomé, "War Diary," Katzenberger, 5, 26. Ross (2000), 23.
[5] Ibid., 20, 28.

[6] The Mexican government would not follow through on its promise to release 31 suspected Zapatistas. Ibid., 41.
[7] Ibid., 43.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid., 31.
[10] General Command of the EZLN, "First Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle," Hayden, 218-20.
[11] In an interview with the Zapatista leadership, author Blanche Petrich recorded Comandante Javier's explanation of the CCRI's name and meaning. "Committee because we are organized as collectives. Clandestine because we know there is no place for us in the government, and if the people rise up in armed struggle like this, they know they have no place. That's why we organize this way, secretly. Revolutionary because we are conscious, and there's no other option left but to rise up in arms, to struggle, to see if that way they'll find solutions to our needs. Revolutionary because we want a new society with another way of life." Petrich, 52.
[12] Ross (2000), 40.
[13] Vine Deloria Jr., as quoted by Robert Allen Warrior in *Tribal Secrets – Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1995), 116.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., 89.
[16] Huntington, 68.
[17] For a discussion of genotext and a full description of the concept, please see Huntington, 58-80 (especially 65-8).
[18] Harvey, 166; and Ross (2000), 70.
[19] JoAnn Wypijewski, "Comic Relief, NEA-Style," Hayden, 71.
[20] Ross (2000), 86-7.
[21] Ibid., 90.
[22] Alfred, 103.
[23] Knudson, 508-9.
[24] Nash (1997), 64.
[25] A research study done for the US military dispels the notion that the EZLN was "a 'wired' indigenous army." Ronfeldt et al., 23.
[26] Ibid., 25-6.
[27] Ross has ridiculed fears raised by Ronfeldt et al. in *The Zapatista Social Netwar in Mexico* that "social netwar" threatens government stability as merely "another attempt at censorship." Darrin Wood, "Net Wars," in *Index on Censorship*, Vol. 24, No. 3, May 1995, 23.
[28] Marcos observed in an interview that the Mexican government was frustrated because the EZLN had managed to establish a presence in "the Internet…a territory not occupied by anybody…[which forced the Mexican government] to fight against an image" that cannot be controlled "from Mexico, because the information is simultaneous on all sides." Ronfeldt et al, 70.
[29] Douglas Kellner, "Intellectuals, the New Public Sphere, and Techno-politics," *Politics of Cyberspace*, Editors Chris Tolouse and Timothy W. Luke (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), 183; and Aczel, 112.
[30] Martinez-Torres, 352.
[31] Elorriaga would eventually be sentenced to 13 years when his trial was finally heard in 1996. An international uproar immediately followed and the sentence would later be commuted. He would subsequently coordinate the development of the EZLN's civilian wing, the Zapatista National Liberation Front (FZLN). Ross (2000), 176-8.
[32] Wayne Rash Jr., *Politics on the Nets – Wiring the Political Process*, (New York: W.H. Freeman, 1997), 96-7.
[33] Attracting international support took various forms. Email or letter writing campaigns, demonstrations abroad at Mexican consulates and national capitals, and international solidarity missions to Chiapas were all effective in demonstrating outside attention to what the Mexican government maintained was a domestic issue. Aczel, 104-6.
[34] Joel Simon, "Mexico's Virtual Guerrillas," in *Mother Jones* Vol. 20, Number 4 (July 1995), 12.
[35] For a description of the EZLN's indigenous-rights networks, see Ronfeldt et al., 37-9. Political scientist Clifford Bob observes that "[f]ocussing on an internationally known and notorious enemy (such as

globalization or NAFTA) is a particularly effective way of garnering support...[b]laming a villain accessible in the developed world also forges strong links between distant social movements and the "service station on the block," thus inspiring international solidarity (41)." However, Bob warns that NGOs' "goals, tactics, constituencies, and bottom lines" are reflected in their main priority of "organizational survival (44)." Bob.

[36] For example, when the EZLN finally arrived in Mexico City in March 2001, the Zapatista caravan was guarded by uniformed Italian anti-globalization activists. Ibid., 40-1.

[37] Ronfeldt speculates that the Mexican "army had more problems dealing with the NGOs than with the EZLN." Ronfeldt et al., 15-16, 75.

[38] The state and federal governments also targeted the CONAI and its leader Samuel Ruiz, a staunch EZLN ally, in a smear campaign that included accusations of Satanism. Ross (2000), 232, 256. The state's slander strategy drew blood because Ruiz dissolved the CONAI in June. This was a tremendous blow to the Zapatistas because the CONAI had provided a "more open information environment" which limited the Mexican government's ability to use "traditional tools of control, cooptation, deception, and repression." Ronfeldt et al., 65.

[39] Ibid., 18.

[40] Ibid., 21.

[41] Ibid., 55.

[42] Harvey, 219-20.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Nash (1997), 47.

[45] Rosa M. González, "Points of View," González, 77; Ronfeldt et al., 69.

[46] Nash (1997), 50.

[47] Guillermo Gómez Peña lists, *Der Spiegel, Cambio 16, Le Figaro*, the *New York Times*, the San *Francisco Chronicle, NACLA*, and *Vanity Fair* as the international publications whose journalists were invited to conduct interviews. The Mexican print media was restricted to *La Jornada* and *El Financiero*. Gómez, 91.

[48] Knudson, 512.

[49] The banishment of Televisa from Zapatista "press conferences and the peace talks...was an act of defiance Televisa couldn't accept. Their reporters did everything they could to get close to him. They tried to sneak in as members of other TV networks. And when they couldn't, they bought footage from European television." Gómez, 91.

[50] Stavenhagen, 82.

[51] The six questions were the following:

1. Did the respondent support the EZLN's 11 demands?
2. Should the democratic forces in the country work together to achieve these demands?
3. Did the Mexican state require a profound reform to achieve democracy?
4. Should the Zapatista Army of Nacional Liberation?
5. Should the Zapatista Army of Nacional Liberation join with other democratic forces to form a new opposition alliance?
6. Should women be integrated on an equal basis into the nation's developing democratic culture?

Ross (2000), 136.

[52] Ibid., 137.

[53] *1) Should Indians be included in Mexico's national project and take an active role in building a new nation?*

2) Should peace be achieved through dialogue and the Mexican military returned to barracks?

3) Should the government obey the will of the people and abide by the results?

4) Should Indian rights be recognized in the Mexican Constitution with the integration of the San Andrés Accords offered by the COCOPA?

5) Do you agree that Mexicans living outside of the country should take an active part in the construction of the new Mexico and have the right to vote in elections? Ibid., 299.

[54] Labastida had previously stated that "laws are not made in the jungle" and he repeated this opinion during the lead up to the *Consulta*. Ibid., 301.

[55] Chiapas tallied 461,000 votes while the previous election had recorded only 406,000. Approximately 2.9 million Mexicans living in 27 different countries participated in the *Consulta*. Ibid., 305.

[56] Ibid., 190.
[57] These two dates are anniversaries of Mexico's independence from Spain and the war against the United States. The timing of the 1,111 march is yet another example of Zapatista efforts to ensure that their movement was not seen by Mexicans as unpatriotic or separatist. Ibid., 226.
[58] Ibid., 227.
[59] Pérez, 215. The 1996 *Fourth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle* outlined a three-point plan for the creation of an organization that would help develop the EZLN into a political organization. The Zapatistas made three proposals: "the convocation of an international forum against neo-liberalism to consolidate non-Mexican support, the resurrection of the National Liberation Movement, and the construction of the Zapatista National Liberation Front"(FZLN). Ross (2000), 155. The FZLN would be removed from party politics to the extent that participation therein automatically disqualified one from joining the FZLN. However, the FZLN's ban on participation in political parties severely limited its ability to expand its membershi By 1999, the FZLN had failed to build much political momentum and had largely fallen into disuse as the EZLN sought to network with other organizations rather than establish such a network internally. Ross (2000), 310.
[60] John Ross, "The Story of the Boot and the Chessboard," Hayden, 190. *Knox (24 February 2001)*, A17.
[61] Ramonet, 133.
[62] Juan José Hinojosa, "Fox y Marcos: la guerra de la mercadotecnia," *El Proceso*, No. 1263, 14 January 2001, 42-3.
[63] Paul Knox, "Insurgency pauses for a close-up," in *The Globe and Mail*, 25 February 2001, A1, 9.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Homero Aridjis, "Indian is Beautiful," Hayden, 142.
[66] García, 182.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Comandanta Esther, "Words of Comandanta Esther at the Congress of the Union," Hayden, 195-204.
[69] Tom Hayden, "Introduction," Hayden, 1.
[70] Arthur Siegel, "Mass Communications and Political Power,"in *Politics and the Media in Canada* 2nd Edition (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, Ltd, 1996), 24.
[71] Ross (2000), 88.
[72] Ibid., 305.
[73] Ibid., 307.
[74] Ibid., 162.
[75] Ibid.
[76] "It has deployed a strategy of low-intensity warfare in which military patrols and constant harassment of Zapatista sympathizers are combined with the provision of food, roofing materials, and health care to factions allied with the government." Harvey, 235.
[77] Ross (2000), 95.
[78] Ibid.
[79] The Zedillo government initially dismissed the offensive as a minor series of demonstrations by a few hundred Indians. Nonetheless, the government would later cite the Zapatista offensive as the reason for the government's decision to devaluate the Mexican currency which sent the economy into a deep recession that soon spread throughout Latin America. Such an argument was ridiculed by financial analysts and it is clear that the true causes ran much deeper than the EZLN's bloodless December offensive. Regrettably, Marcos accepted the government's blame for the collapse of the Mexican economy with a glib remark that "we were like the pinprick that opened up the hole and let the air out of their balloon." Marcos interview with Le Bot, as quoted in Ross (2000), 98.
[80] Marcos remarked in a 1994 interview that the preferred date for an uprising was October, 1993, "but the army discovered our arms cache up in the mountains...[so] we had to pull back and postpone our plans until December." Medea Benjamin, 66.
[81] Ibid., 67.
[82] Despite this tacit approval of Cárdenas, the EZLN humiliated him on several occasions. Particularly during the 1994 presidential campaign when Cárdenas went to Chiapas deep into the rebel-held territory for a meeting with the CCRI. Marcos was respectful towards Cárdenas but labelled his party undemocratic and criticized the PRD for colluding with the PRI and PAN. Ross (2000), 67-8.
[83] Pérez, 35.

[84] Siegel, 20-1.
[85] Alfred cites Russel Barsh's description of humour as an essential trait of indigenous governance. Alfred, 90.
[86] Subcommandante Insurgente Marcos, "Under Siege – The Zapatista Community of Amador Hernandez," Ponce de León, 157.
[87] Ross (2000), 52.
[88] Ibid., 210.
[89] Ibid., 211.
[90] The first Mayan Gods had found that they could only find solitude from the incomprehensible noise that was intended to confuse and prevent them from understanding. Their only relief from the noise was to seek silence by looking "inside themselves" which enabled them to find silence, find themselves, and find their path. Subcommandante Insurgente Marcos, "The Story of Noise and Silence," Ponce de León, 387.
[91] Ross (2000), 283.
[92] Ibid., 284.
[93] CCRI-CG, *Fifth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle*, July 1998, http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/ccri_5_dec_lj_july98.html , 2.
[94] Gallegos, 2-3.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid., 5.
[97] Damage was done to "communication which had been opened with civil society. The contact we had was one of going and coming, because we contributed to those social sectors, but they also contributed to us." Marcos believed that efforts to make up for the EZLN withdrawal were ongoing. "At the moment the silence was broken, what happened was we said "here we are,' and we tried to start mending it. In some cases we have achieved it, in others, not yet. That, then, would be the greatest cost of the silence." Ibid., 6.
[98] Ross (2000), 216.
[99] Huntington, 58.
[100] Harvey, 199.
[101] García, 183.
[102] Huntington, 73.
[103] María Victoria Polanco, "Cultural Identity and Communication," González, 118.
[104] Ibid., 118-9.
[105] Knudson, 512.
[106] Stephen [1997], 14.
[107] Ibid., 13-4.
[108] Huntington, 60.
[109] Pablo Gonzalez, 286.
[110] Medea Benjamin, 60.
[111] Marcello Scarone, "Freedom and Restrictions: Perspectives" González, 33-4.
[112] Peter Rosset, "Understanding Chiapas," Katzenberger, 165.
[113] The strike began in April, 1999, and Marcos wrote 10 communiqués supporting the strikers. Ross (2000), 320.
[114] Alfred, 21.
[115] Ronfeldt et al., 68.
[116] Marcos also argues that the US must stop aiding the Mexican PRI government because such intervention props up a corrupt and undemocratic regime. Medea Benjamin, 59.
[117] Ross (2000), 253-4.
[118] The EZLN-inspired Second Encounter of the Americas in Defense of Humanity and Against Neo-Liberalism took place in December 1999 in Brazil to which two Zapatistas were dispatched. Ross (2000), 329.
[119] Ibid., 168.
[120] Klein, 116; and, for a slightly different translation, Knudson, 512.
[121] "The strength of the message coming from Chiapas resides in the fact that this invisibility, this complete atomisation and fragmentation of an entire population within the huge global productive machine is not only a characteristic of the Maya people in Southeast of Mexico. It is increasingly a condition of existence

of all kinds of people and individuals." Massimo De Angelis, "Globalization, New Internationalism and the Zapatistas," *Capital and Class*, No. 70, Spring 2000, 21.

[122] Indigenous non-participation in electoral politics is one example of how indigenous peoples are shedding the legitimizing identities, as defined by Castells in Chapter One, that nation-states seek to impose on them Alfred explains that, whether by criteria of principle or practicality, indigenous participation in mainstream electoral politics is futile, and worse, a clear disavowal of indigenous claims to autonomy and nationhood. Taiaiake Alfred, "Why Play the White Man's Game?" in *Windspeaker*, October, 1999. http://www.ammsa.com/windspeaker/windguest99.html#anchor244490 The 1994 election of the PRI presidential candidate, Ernesto Zedillo, was a setback for the EZLN because it illustrated that its rebellion had been unable to topple the PRI. Marcos had made statements that made many Mexicans uncomfortable with the EZLN; and by extension Cárdenas and the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD). For example, Marcos's statement in the *Second Declaration* that the "PRI must die by suicide or firing squad" only served to marginalize both the EZLN and its informal political alliance with the PRD. Ross (2000), 82. By November, 1994, Zapatista efforts to encourage a resolution of differences between the CND's factions were shifted to the creation of a new "National Opposition Front" with the PRD leader, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas.

[123] Ross (2000), 142, 224; and Harvey, 234.

[124] Harvey, 237.

[125] Ross (2000), 66.

[126] Gallegos, 13, 8-9.

[127] Ross (2000), 343.

[128] Ibid., 343-4.

[129] CCRI, "EZLN Communiqué Regarding Elections" June 19th, 2000. http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/2000/ccri_elections_june.html , 1-2, 5.

[130] Ibid., 2.

[131] Ibid., 7.

[132] Ibid., 8-9.

CHAPTER FIVE - LEARNING FROM THE EZLN

EZLN members and their core supporters have endured enormous personal sacrifices for their resistance. The decision to rebel split many indigenous communities into proponents and opponents of the uprising.[1] Many have been killed and many more have become refugees.[2] Still, the Zapatistas have so far managed to avoid the "largely unreported" fate of a similar guerrilla group who were crushed in Guerrero during the 1970s.[3] A major factor contributing to the EZLN's survival has been its "self-conscious and sophisticated use of the media,"one that places "as much importance on staging press conferences and theatrical photos as on their military strategy."[4] The international attention that this sophistication managed to draw has likely prevented more genocidal acts, such as the one at Acteal, but killings of individuals and small groups remain a frequent occurrence in the region and go largely unnoticed by the international press.

January, 1994, marked not only the commencement of the Zapatista uprising, but also the the beginning of a major national dialogue on indigenous issues within Mexico. These issues had never received such a prominent place in the national media prior to that heady time. Indeed, the televising of the discussions between EZLN and government negotiators offered many Mexicans their first opportunity to hear the Mayan dialects of Chiapas.[5] For indigenous peoples themselves, June Nash notes, their "mere appearance…in the media, regardless of disparaging or negative commentary by analysts, was recognition that they were making their own history."[6] Moreover, the attention "magnified the power of the rebels in the eyes of Chiapas' indigenous people… [and] galvanized the men and women throughout the highland communities."[7] Mayan land

occupations of mestizo and foreign owned properties accelerated immediately after the EZLN uprising, and a new organization, the Indigenous and Campesino State Council of Chiapas (CEOIC), was created to represent their interests and take "advantage of the political space opened by the January rebellion."[8]

Despite this opening, however, indigenous issues are still too often ignored in Mexican politics.[9] Early hopes for improvement from PAN president, Vicente Fox, and the Alianza por Chiapas governor, Pablo Salazar, have been left wanting. A power struggle developed between the new president and the CCRI-CG, with the former insisting the two sides meet unconditionally and the latter refusing to do so; the CCRI-CG was adamant that the three key demands be met first.[10] So far, the Fox administration has taken small but highly publicized steps in all three areas, but the EZLN maintains that it will not open negotiations with the federal government before these demands have been fully addressed; that is before it sees proof that the Fox government intends to effect changes in its treatment of Mexico's indigenous peoples.[11] Although Fox fulfilled a promise that his first act in office would be to send the San Andrés Accords to Congress for ratification, major legislative changes to the Accords further weakened what the EZLN had always considered a bare-minimum agreement. For example, the changes subject indigenous autonomy to both state and federal legislation and it is restricted to municipal level powers. Furthermore, the new "Indian Rights and Culture Law," which is what the gutted version of the Accords is called, will not allow indigenous communities to form larger corporate communities transcending state borders. For these reasons, the EZLN, CNI, and other indigenous organizations have resoundingly rejected Fox's iteration of the San Andrés agreement.

Therefore, it may appear that the Zapatistas war of words with the government has done little to advance the indigenous cause domestically. But the breadth and scope of the EZLN's communications strategy and its constituent symbols, media, and techniques outlined in the previous three chapters complicate assessments of their effectiveness – assessments that might proceed from, for example, economic, military, or political angles. An economic assessment could suggest that Zapatista communications effected some positive changes given the increase in government spending in the eastern Chiapas region. These macroeconomic indicators are, however, inadequate for determining whether *Chiapanecos* are better off than they were prior to 1994. Indeed, many Zapatista proponents are, in fact, more marginalized than before the uprising, having been driven off their lands by paramilitaries and other supporters of the PRI.[12] A military assessment is similarly unclear. Since 2000, the military has started to pull back from some of its advance positions but Chiapas nevertheless remains a state under military occupation. Partial EZLN success could be granted, however, under a political assessment of the rebellion. In 1994, Marcos stated that the EZLN sought "to create the political space…[for] the people to have the education and the political maturity to make good choices," even if that meant a right-wing party won power.[13] The left-wing Alliance for Mexico, the electoral coalition that was most closely aligned with the EZLN, finished a distant third in the 2000 presidential elections which were won by the right-wing Alliance for Change. In other words, although the PRI reign is finally over and change has come to Mexican electoral politics, it has not moved in the direction that the EZLN tacitly directed its support.

However, these economic, military, and political measurements of EZLN success fail to account for the profound surge in indigenous spirits in Chiapas and throughout Mexico. A constant theme of the Zapatista discourse has been the restoration of indigenous dignity, and renewed pride in indigenous heritage is perhaps the EZLN's greatest legacy. Although it is by no means universal in Chiapas or Mexico, the Zapatistas have earned grudging respect even from sectors of Mexican society that once could only muster pity or disdain for their indigenous neighbours.

Contrast with the EPR

Another way of assessing the EZLN rebellion and communications strategy is afforded by a comparison with a rival guerrilla movement that emerged in Guerrero state in 1996. The Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR) initially stole the media and political spotlight from the EZLN with a devastating offensive that spread across eight states and claimed the lives of 15 and injured 23 more.[14] But the two movements had radically different approaches that soon became apparent. Beyond the superficial red handkerchief instead of a ski mask, the EPR showed disdain for Subcommandante Marcos's communication methods, offering the opinion that "poetry is no excuse for politics."[15] This might explain why the EPR never developed an effective communications strategy, instead choosing armed violence and what it termed, "armed propaganda" as the means of resistance for its movement – a movement that was identified as an exclusively class-based one of workers and peasants and never as indigenous.[16]

The EPR offensive brought a quick response from the EZLN, which distanced itself from the new and more violent guerrilla movement. However, Marcos skilfully used the arrival of the EPR to point out the differences between it and the EZLN, thereby highlighting the strengths of the latter: "You fight to take power. We fight for democracy, liberty, and justice. It is not the same thing. Even if you have success and win power, we will keep fighting for democracy, liberty and justice..."[17] In his summary of the EPR's impact, Ross writes:

> *Despite its classic guerrilla pose, expensive weaponry, headline-grabbing attacks, hundreds of political prisoners[,]...and detailed reports of human rights atrocities committed against Indian villages, the EPR never galvanized much popular support. The new guerrilla had no Marcos to speak for it, and its rhetoric was clunky and lacked the poetry to reach the national heart. Although the EPR dispatched dozens of communiqués to the Mexican press, unlike those of the silver-tongued Zapatistas, they were never published.*[18]

The above observation is a reminder of the importance of communications to the overall Zapatista strategy of resistance. If armed insurrection by any means were its objective, the EZLN surely could have armed itself through kidnapping and ransom like the EPR. However, the EZLN always maintained that they were reluctant warriors who turned to violence only as a last resort. The EPR was able to grab headlines to the detriment of the EZLN, but that communications success was fleeting because it was unable to sustain the public's curiosity. The EPR clearly attempted to model itself on some elements of the EZLN movement, but failed to arm itself with the Zapatista's most powerful weapon: communications savvy.[19]

Limitations of a Communications Strategy

Further proof of the apparent communications advantage that the EZLN enjoyed over the EPR is provided by American political scientist Clifford Bob. Bob contends that the potential benefits of "marketing rebellion" have been exaggerated with thousands of deserving calls for justice going unnoticed in a "harsh, Darwinian marketplace where legions of desperate groups vie for scarce attention, sympathy, and money."[20] At the same time, however, Bob argues that the myth of a "global meritocracy" – of a world in which all worthwhile causes receive redress – is also harmful because it "breeds apathy and self-satisfaction among the industrialized nations," that expect the merit of a movement, rather than its marketing savvy, to be the sole determinant of its success.[21] But according to Bob, it is precisely the opposite: savvy, not merit, is key to establishing a foothold on the world stage. NGOs figure prominently in this area. Attracting their support, and the funds, training, and legitimacy that flow from it, is crucial to a movement's communications success.

In this context, Bob discusses two strategies used by the Zapatistas to promote their cause: the internationalization of their struggle to increase its public profile and the universalization of "their narrow demands and particularistic identities to enhance their appeal to global audiences."[22] The EZLN successfully implemented both of these strategies but Bob warns that conforming to the criteria of international NGOs and otherwise supportive organizations can undercut a movement's original aims and intentions.[23] For example, the EZLN has often struggled with parts of the anti-globalization movement because of conflicting values over issues related to the

legalization of drugs, as well as with elements of the environmental movement because the Zapatistas and their supporters live in a protected national park. Tensions have also arisen occasionally amongst EZLN supporters, and sometimes between those supporters and the EZLN itself, as happened when some indigenous and Marxist organizations attempted to impose their own objectives on the Zapatistas.[24]

Another communication strategy limitation involved the potential for dangerous domestic consequences arising from confrontations with the state. According to Bob, the ability of the international community to mediate a dispute between a state government and part of its population cannot be guaranteed due to the Westphalian principle of domestic sovereignty, a principle rarely challenged by other states.[25]

> *[T]he much-vaunted emergence of a[n] [open and democratic] global civil society [with] the power of technologies meshed seamlessly with the good intentions of NGOs to offset the callous self-interest of states and the blithe indifference of faraway publics… remains a myth and a potentially deadly one. Lost in a self-congratulatory haze, international audiences in the developed world all too readily believe in this myth and in the power and infallibility of their good intentions. Meanwhile, the grim realities of the global morality market leave many local aspirants helpless and neglected, painfully aware of international opportunities but lacking the resources, connections, or know-how needed to tap them.*[26]

Bob's reservations regarding the "global morality market" thus correspond with doubts raised in certain quarters about the tangible benefits that such communications strategies actually yield. In other words, the Mexican government's containment strategy of the Zapatistas was effective insofar as the EZLN was unable to generate the necessary support for the San Andrés Accords to be passed by the Mexican Congress.[27] That said, it is certainly no small feat that the EZLN avoided the fate of so many of its guerrilla predecessors in Mexican history: annihilation. Yet concrete results beyond survival are

difficult to assess. Ronfeldt et al. explain the complexity of such an assessment, alluded to earlier in the "Perception Management" section in Chapter Two.

> *[I]t may appear that networked NGOs obliged officials to make some change, but in fact the change (e.g., establishment of a commission, or a halt to military operations) surely had multiple causes. Or what initially appeared to be a change may not prove much of one later (e.g., the government halts a military operation, but then renews it in a slow-motion manner that does not arouse the media or the NGOs). Thus, a "perception management" game may be played, in which the Zapatistas appear to have influence when the government announces concessions or reversals – but then the government quietly returns to business as usual.*[28]

Ronfeldt et al. have also speculated on how states may respond to swarming tactics by networked NGOs (see "NGO Swarming" in Chapter Four). A "Counternetwar," for instance, could be launched by governments trying to "monitor, harass, arrest, and expel both domestic and foreign activists; regulate the formation and behavior of NGOs through administrative and judicial methods; and even create 'dummy' NGOs…to hijack an agenda."[29] Other measures may include limiting access to communications technology or the manipulation of the media. Finally, "misinformation and disinformation campaigns" may be employed to "embarrass or confuse the netwarriors."[30]

Exportability of the Zapatista Experience

There are several limiting factors affecting the exportability of the Zapatista communications model. The first and rather obvious one concerns the symbols employed by the EZLN, many of which would have little resonance elsewhere. As discussed in Chapter Three, all Mexican school children learn about Emiliano Zapata and the Mexican

Revolution, so the context is already established for the appropriation of his name and the spirit of the revolution by the EZLN.[31] Therefore, other indigenous movements wanting to apply a *Zapatismo* ethos must define it in their own terms by "self-consciously" exploring their history and traditions to find and create their own symbols.[32]

A second limiting factor is the territorial integrity that the Lacandón jungle provided the Zapatista fighters. The EZLN suffered heavy casualties in its two major firefights with Mexican troops at Rancho Nuevo and Ocosingo in January, 1994, as a result of engaging in open combat rather than in traditional guerrilla warfare. The retreat into the Lacandón rain forest was strategic, because the region's lack of roads and the jungle canopy made it difficult for the Mexican military to track and destroy the rebels. However, the jungle's inaccessibility and protection was probably insufficient to save the rebels from a sustained attack by the much larger and better equipped Mexican military. As explained in Chapter Four's section on the NGO swarming technique, the resumption of hostilities in February, 1995 – and the military's push into the jungle – landed a severe blow to Zapatista communications. But two ceasefires stopped the Mexican military's advance and provided the rebels with a pocket from which it could organize and coordinate its communications efforts with the outside world. One is therefore able to speculate that the EZLN communications strategy benefited greatly from the stability that a secure land base provided.

A third limiting factor, one that is somewhat related to the second, is the large *campesino* and indigenous population of Chiapas, which enabled the EZLN to build a substantial militia force and frustrate the Mexican military's efforts to isolate it from the general population. There are very few regions in the Americas wherein the high

concentration of indigenous could be similarly utilized, like for instance in Bolivia, Guatemala, Peru and remote parts of other countries such as northern Canada. Therefore, the critical mass required for a Zapatista-scale is not available in most parts of the hemisphere.

A fourth limiting factor was the international sensitivity of the Mexican government given its dependency on trade and tourism. This sensitivity was especially acute in early 1994 because of the outgoing Mexican president's ambition to become president of the World Trade Organization. As a result, the Zapatistas' mobilization of international public opinion against a Mexican military solution to the rebellion became possible. Thus, when its international profile is high, the Mexican government has demonstrated more flexibility with the rebels, a flexibility further evidenced by the signing of the San Andrés Accords during trade negotiations with the European Union and the initial lenience demonstrated by Vicente Fox at the beginning of his presidency.

A final limiting factor is the relative economic independence of indigenous communities vis-à-vis the Mexican state. The highland and Lacandón indigenous groups that served as the main source of the rebellion receive little government funding and were economically self-sufficient, although barely. Indeed, they are very poor. In a tragic sense, their poverty meant that the rebels had less to lose. Indeed, the Zapatistas have often described their rebellion as a choice between a dignified death fighting in defiance of their enemies versus a silent surrender to death from disease and famine.[33]

Given some of the limitations outlined above, what may be said about the relevance of the Zapatista communications experience for other indigenous resistance movements? EZLN scholar Neil Harvey poses the fundamental political question for any

analysis that, in the interests of justice, seeks to learn from the Zapatista uprising: "[H]ow do oppressed groups create spaces for not only contesting their material conditions but also the political and cultural discourses that reproduce their subordination?"[34] This thesis suggests that the Zapatista communications experience might supply an answer to that question and, as part of that suggestion, provides a generalized model of action that strips the Zapatista experience of its particular and potentially limiting factors. The model's elements, each of which will be discussed further in turn, are:

1. Self-consciously construct an identity of resistance;
2. Develop communications infrastructure;
3. Develop effective spokespersons;
4. Maintain media and public interest;
5. Clearly frame the adversary and the objective;
6. Nationalize and internationalize the conflict;
7. Meet community needs;
8. Avoid message manipulation and cooptation;
9. Beware "perception management" by adversary.

1. Self-Consciously Construct an Identity of Resistance

One important lesson is the powerful impact of a communications strategy rooted in a historical context. This lesson closely corresponds with Alfred's concept of self-conscious traditionalism, which was explained in Chapter One. An excellent example self-conscious traditionalism can be found in the Zapatistas' rejection of the *caciquismo*

tradition that was unpopular with many indigenous peoples, as previously discussed in Chapter Three. The Zapatistas' promotion and practice of more populist forms of governance remain true to Alfred's demand for the selective adaptation of indigenous political tradition to modern contexts. The "leading by obeying" ethic of governance represents radical change for many indigenous communities in Chiapas where *caciquismo* had become firmly entrenched in local politics. However, the Zapatistas broke with the "authoritarian" control of *caciques* in indigenous communities, while also resisting the Mexican state's authoritarianism in a "political system that coopted their interests through a modern, hierarchical system of power."[35] EZLN strategies also reflect Alfred's thoughts at a broader level. There are, according to Alfred, three elements of indigenous resistance mobilization: the identification of the source of the suffering; the building of a movement; and the mobilization of that movement to attack the source.[36] First, the EZLN clearly identified its enemy and the source of indigenous suffering: the State-Party PRI regime and its neoliberal economic policies. Second, the EZLN drew upon Mayan and Mexican history to send out a message that resonated with disparate groups of people – for instance, with the *campesinos* for whom Article 27 had represented hope that he or she would someday benefit from the *ejidos* (communal land holdings), and with the indigenous peoples who had been marginalized for centuries by non-indigenous governments. Third, the Zapatistas found the courage to rise up and attack the causes of their suffering. Therefore, the EZLN is a clear example of the kind of indigenous social movements that Alfred identifies as necessary for decolonization to occur.

2. Develop Communications Infrastructure

A communications infrastructure has both technological and social components. Access to computers, the Internet, fax machines, telephones and other more specialized information technology items are obviously useful. However, these elements are not nearly as critical as connections between people. The EZLN began its rebellion with very little technology (a newspaper, hand-written communiqués, and a captured radio station) but channeled their messages effectively by working with the mainstream media and NGOs. The EZLN has been particularly effective with a pen and paper to write its communiqués, so access to modern communications equipment and techniques remains important but is not a necessary precondition for effective communications.[37] Therefore, indigenous groups would benefit from strategic communications planning that seeks out and maintains connections with journalists, social activists, and other indigenous or issue-oriented organizations that share similar goals. Organizational work such as the establishment of local NGOs is important for connecting to larger transnational ones that could quickly expand support and increase awareness in order to launch "swarming" attacks (see Chapter Four).[38]

It is also critical that indigenous peoples support media pluralism and foster an indigenous controlled media free from state controls. Although there is more worldwide media diversity now than in 1994, it obviously remains possible to "obstruct international media coverage of local conflicts."[39] The Zapatistas emphasized the importance of independent media in their negotiations with the Mexican government with two specific demands in article 8 of the San Andres Accords. It is imperative that all indigenous

peoples follow the Zapatistas' lead by seeking access to modern media technologies in order to protect their distinct cultures, languages, and epistemologies.[40]

It is more difficult to draw conclusions on the internal communications and structure of the EZLN. The organization does operate as an army with sentries and an extensive security system to prevent outsiders, including journalists, from learning the exact location of their military redoubts in the Lacandón jungle.[41] From an indigenous perspective, however, obvious strengths include the use of several Mayan dialects amongst the EZLN's high command, the CCRI-CG, and the presence of women leaders therein (see Chapter Three).[42] Moreover, the broad command structure that is based on "leading by obeying" rather than hierarchy is more cooperative and consistent with many traditional forms of indigenous organization.[43] One observer has noted the structural similarity between the EZLN and the Internet; that each is a "non-hierarchical network, a horizontal organization with a hybrid identity, hidden behind masks [or usernames]."[44] The EZLN communication strategy also "resembles the Internet....[insofar as] Zapatistas open spaces for free discussion of controversial issues, organizing open forums, conventions, national and international gatherings, all with a free-form methodology where all have equal rights to express themselves."[45] Other indigenous organizations may choose to adopt a similar organizational structure that is flexible, non-hierarchical, and reflective of an indigenous identity.

3. Develop Effective Spokespersons

Indigenous nations require effective ambassadors to help develop and maintain contact with the outside world: "People who can shape ideas, translate, and create language will be essential to the process of decolonization."[46] Ideally, these ambassadors or spokespeople will help indigenous organizations or movements to achieve international prominence.[47] It has long been an indigenous custom for governing councils to designate a particular spokesperson and the importance of trained communications specialists continues to grow.[48] Castells describes these communications experts as symbolic actors he names *Prophets.*

> *[Prophets]... are symbolic personalities whose role is not that of charismatic leaders, or of shrewd strategists, but to give face (or a mask) to a symbolic insurgency, so that they speak on behalf of the insurgents. Thus, voiceless insurgents have a voice, and their identity may enter the realm of symbolic struggles, and stand a chance of seizing power – in people's minds. This is, of course, the case of Subcommandante Marcos, Mexico's Zapatista leader...[Prophets] declare the path, affirm the values, and act as symbol sender, becoming a symbol in themselves, so that the message is inseparable from the messenger. Historical transitions, often operated in the midst of crumbling institutions and exhausted political forms, have always been a time for prophets. And it should be even more so in the transition to the Information Age, that is, a social structure organized around information flows and symbol manipulation.*[49]

The EZLN chose Marcos for this role because of his fluency in Spanish, notwithstanding his substantial language skills in English and French. However, his other communications skills and abilities are evidence that Marcos's value as a spokesperson would be difficult to overestimate.

> *Someone has to head this utterly stringent and vital arena of war, for in today's world it is not just about words...[but] the primary arena for manufacturing ideology and public sentiment. The war of words is backed up by the entire machinery of the media which cynical politics employs not simply to leave people*

> *ignorant about Chiapas but, more perniciously, to produce image distortions and dissemination of false information. Such an arena is not easily combated by indigenous peoples who simply lack resources to generate images that reflect their way of life and their aspirations.*[50]

In order to ensure the rebellion's longevity, many rebels were trained to handle leadership and media relations roles in case the rebel leaders failed to survive the Mexican army's reprisals for the 1994 uprising.

> *[W]e thought that the first string of leaders would be killed in the first days of combat. We thought that all of us leading the troops would die – me, the other officers, and the members of the committees. So we had to prepare the second string of military leaders and committee members as replacements, and this second string had to be hidden away.*[51]

Notwithstanding the violent context of the uprising, leadership and communications skills development is invaluable for an organization's effective deployment of a communications strategy.[52] Fortunately, future indigenous resistance organizations can solicit certain NGOs for communications capacity-building courses.[53]

4. Maintain Media & Public Interest

The myopia of the international media means that attention is rarely paid to issues and events unless they have "clear relevance, major importance, or huge death tolls."[54] Furthermore, the sensationalist media's fickleness means that it only covers "the uprising, but not the revolutionizing process."[55] Be that as it may, it is imperative that indigenous resistance movements "maintain and extend public attention and concern because that's the principal protection that a popular movement has against destruction."[56] However, there is a great deal of competition between worthy causes for the media attention,

financial aid, and other resources that they require. In other words, it is critical that indigenous social movements be capable of repackaging and reinventing themselves in order to sustain interest and remain in the public spotlight. The Zapatistas have maintained their popularity with an "eclectic discourse spiced with humor and a surprising array of references to pop culture, contemporary writers, and world news."[57] Popularity, however, can wane, a point that was forcefully driven home to the EZLN when the PRI presidential candidate, Luis Donaldo Colosio, was assassinated in 1994. Chiapas was displaced from the country's political and media radar, which meant that "an army that had been living on its press notices since January 1st had finally been victimized by a moving news front."[58]

Drawing media attention and international support requires a framing of the local conflict in a manner that universalizes and broadens its significance to outsiders.[59] "The message – the story and its symbolism – may get modified and broadened beyond its original meaning in the conflict zone, in order to appeal better to audiences abroad."[60] Another important factor here is unity. Stark contrasts between right and wrong are most clearly articulated when "internal dissent" is absent.[61] Because indigenous peoples have generally eschewed coercion, attempts to stifle dissent would be antithetical to the project of building a strong and legitimate indigenous movement. However, indigenous strategists must be aware that visibility of internal dissent should be limited if their tactics include attracting international and transnational support. Also to be limited or avoided entirely are media events that grab the public's attention but distract from the message the movement is seeking to convey.[62]

One of the unfortunate conclusions drawn from an analysis of the EZLN uprising is that the movement would not have generated anywhere near as much attention if not for the drama of war. The Zapatistas had organized and then peacefully protested for years but to no avail; indeed, the international community often pays scant attention to "domestic demonstrations" until violence occurs.[63] As Marcos stated during the uprising, it was not until the Indians armed themselves that they received any respect.[64] The Mexican intellectual, Jorge Castañeda, wrote that "arms were simply necessary to gain attention and shake the complacency of a political establishment that had long ignored the social injustices faced by indigenous people."[65] In his analysis of the uprising, Ward Churchill paraphrased Che Guevara by calling for "two, three, *many* Chiapas revolts" for indigenous liberation.[66]

However, the Zapatistas' calibration of "their use of force, avoiding civilian casualties and courting the press," demonstrates the ideal of a moderated approach, one that utilizes controlled and symbolic violence as part of an effective communications strategy, rather than the wanton violence of Mexico's EPR or Peru's Shining Path guerrilla movements.[67] In any event, it is apparent that large-scale military action is highly unlikely in areas where indigenous peoples do not make up a sizable portion of the population. Furthermore, Alfred observes that "attacking the state with physical force" or "seeking peace by unpeaceful means" is unlikely to achieve what indigenous peoples are seeking.[68]

The Zapatistas' fired one shot across the bow of the Mexican state to get its attention, but since that time, the EZLN has made every effort to convey non-violently the immorality of Mexico's subjugation of the indigenous nations within its borders.

This effort was probably a prudent one, since the potential to exacerbate preexisting stereotypes of Indian savagery makes the use of violence a "double-edged sword" for indigenous nations.[69] As such, future indigenous social movements must carefully weigh the enormous potential costs that even symbolic forms of violence may exact before staging a Zapatista-inspired uprising.

5. Clearly Frame the Adversary and the Objective

The EZLN has clearly articulated both its adversary and its agenda since 1994. The Zapatistas define themselves as part of a movement in rebellion against what they describe as unjust and illegal federal and state governments. For example, the EZLN has criticized neo-liberal economic policies that hurt workers and *campesinos*, and they have attacked racism, sexism, and other forms of systemic intolerance that discriminate against marginalized people in Mexican society. The common thread that binds these diverse causes together is the EZLN's opposition to all forms of injustice, with assimilation, corruption, electoral fraud, patriarchy, privatization, and unfair trade practices representing all but a few examples of Zapatista targets.

Bob observes that the EZLN has been very effective at framing its opponents in terms understandable to audiences outside Chiapas.[70] During the 1995 invasion, Marcos's communiqué clearly identified who was to blame for the resumption of violence.

> *It was not the EZLN who feigned political willingness while preparing a military attack and betrayal. It was the government.*
> *It was not the EZLN who detained and tortured civilians. It was the government.*
> *It was not the EZLN who murdered. It was the government.*

> *It was not the EZLN who bombed and razed communities. It was the government.*
> *It was not the EZLN who raped indigenous women. It was the government.*
> *It was not the EZLN who robbed and plundered the campesinos. It was the government.*
> *It was not the EZLN who betrayed the will of an entire nation to find a political solution to the conflict. It was the government.*[71]

When local *campesinos* were hurt by the collapse of coffee and corn prices when tariffs against cheap imports were removed, complaining about these local symptoms of neo-liberal economic policies was unlikely to catch fire with national, let alone international, audiences. The EZLN therefore had to present its grievances in a manner with which national and international audiences could identify. The Zapatistas have achieved this end by both continuing its criticism of the Mexican government's policies *and* networking with organizations from around the world, organizations that have seen the harm wrought by similar policies in other countries and that therefore empathize with the Zapatistas. Thus, by going after an enemy that is identifiable to people elsewhere, the EZLN has made it possible to connect with a broad network of allies.

6. Nationalize and Internationalize the Conflict

A lesson related to that of framing one's adversary and objective is the need to nationalize and internationalize a cause. The EZLN is somewhat unusual in this respect because the rebels have been reluctant to work with international organizations such as the United Nations (UN). This reluctance may be explained by the fact that the EZLN is seeking internal rather than external self-determination, and are therefore not looking to secede from the Mexican state.[72] The EZLN has repeatedly stressed that they want justice, not independence, from Mexico.[73] This EZLN commitment to internal self-

determination may be useful in other contexts where many potential sympathizers recoil at the idea of their country being "balkanized" by new indigenous micro-states. In other words, an indigenous communications strategy may be most effective if it couples wider demands for political reform with its own political objectives. In Canada, for example, the contributions of Aboriginal veterans in foreign wars could be emphasized to convey an indigenous commitment to a just relationship with other Canadians without necessarily compromising self-determination as the ultimate goal.

Although some disparage pan-indigenism as a colonial construct, it is crucial that indigenous peoples take a unifying approach. Alfred recognizes the inherent risks involved with pitching too large a tent for indigenous organizations, but he argues nonetheless that a pan-indigenous movement could complement local indigenous nationalism by fostering intellectual and political development.[74] The EZLN is not only a pan-Mayan but a pan-indigenous movement that even recognizes "Mestizos as one of several indigenous ethnic groups of which their rank-and-file are composed."[75] By drawing supporters from every continent and from across a broad ideological spectrum from communist to anarchist, to demonstrate that unity in the face of adversity can overcome ethnic and sectarian divisions, the EZLN proves its inclusivity, and thereby avoids the ostracism of the EPR at the international level. Even the FZLN's decision to ban political party members from its ranks, and its subsequent uninspiring expansion, are proof of the problems that can arise when a movement is too rigid and exclusive. Moreover, a unifying approach is in itself a reflection of indigenous political traditions because the essence of those traditions is autonomous coexistence that constantly seeks balance and harmony.[76] Within the limitations circumscribed by Alfred, indigenous

resistance movements would likely be most effective if they cast a wide net when seeking out potential allies and recruits.[77]

7. Meet Community Needs

The EZLN was very effective at meeting community needs in Chiapas. The offering of social services in areas neglected by the state and federal governments created bonds of loyalty between local inhabitants and the growing rebel army. A member of the Emiliano Zapata Campesino Organization (OCEZ) stated that "the EZLN's more sophisticated weapons" are the "social work" they provide to communities.[78]

> *What motivates [Zapatistas] isn't the arms, what wins them the respect of the government isn't weapons, it's the work that the compañeros have been doing for many years in this region, the consciousness-raising...They're fighting in order to avoid a war.*[79]

The EZLN could never compete with state resources available to the governing PRI, but it nonetheless provided various services to indigenous and *campesino* communities. Birth control, immunization, and other health initiatives were undertaken. Language and literacy education were offered in remote locations where government teachers refused to go. The Zapatistas' education plans even included a multilingual Zapatista high school and university that would offer classes in English and Japanese.[80] Other Zapatista community-outreach initiatives included self-defense training to protect the poor in their land disputes with ranchers and their hired paramilitaries; adoption of indigenous languages and customs in order to make the movement meaningful for its participants; and, campaigning against arranged marriages and drafting the Revolutionary

Women's Law, a document that served to establish the EZLN as a progressive voice of change within Mexican society for the rights of women, and particularly, the rights of indigenous women. If future indigenous resistance movements hope to win popular support, providing tangible benefits to their communities might therefore play an important part of the organizing and recruiting processes.

8. Avoid Message Manipulation & Cooptation

The CCRI-CG has rejected private dialogue with the Mexican government in favour of open negotiations through public meetings and the mass media. The EZLN refusal to participate in closed negotiations with the Mexican government is an exemplary solution to the political angst reflected in the growing lack of faith in politicians amongst the citizens of nation-states around the world. If the EZLN remains true to this policy, then cooptation of the leadership by way of elite accommodation will remain virtually impossible. This determination to prevent cooptation is embedded in Zapatista communications and political processes. Examples include the use of masks to prevent protagonism; the Zapatista slogan "For us nothing, for everyone everything"; and the reliance on community consultation for the approval of any agreement is a model of participatory democracy. There are other benefits to avoiding closed negotiations with governments as well. For instance, public negotiations may dispel the rumours and innuendo that can divide an indigenous movement's support base.

Another related method of avoiding message manipulation is the Zapatista reliance on alternative media, especially via the Internet, to spin its side of the story.

Also effective for circumventing government or media censorship was the Zapatistas' requirement that newspapers print the full texts of their communiqués. Such measures made it more difficult for the Mexican government to portray the EZLN or its demands in a negative light.

Finally, all objectives and demands must be as clear as possible in order to limit the damage of the inevitable propaganda backlash of opponents. It would be wise to emulate the Zapatistas' shaping of their message in a way that resonated with many disparate peoples and groups. Indeed, by presenting the alienation and frustration of Mexico's indigenous communities in a way in which others could empathize and identify with them, the EZLN built alliances with other marginalized groups, ones that are essential to the viability of future indigenous resistance movements.[81] An open and accessible communications strategy should therefore: (1) avoid secret negotiations in order to prevent cooptation or manipulation by the mass media or political adversaries; and (2) foster alliance building to prevent premature demise.

9. Beware Perception Management by Adversary

"Intellectual dishonesty is one of the essential elements of colonialism" and the Mexican federal government's dishonesty has been evident since the signing of the San Andrés Accords.[82] In 1996, the Zapatista and government negotiators had reached a compromise agreement with the understanding that the president would send the Accords to Congress for ratification and implementation. In reality, however, the Mexican government used the negotiations to buy time, hoping that interest in the EZLN would subside while the

Mexican military tightened the noose around pro-Zapatista communities in Chiapas. The mere appearance of peaceful negotiations with the rebels was all that mattered to the government, whose priority was to hold back the firestorms of protest that previous military attempts to crush the EZLN had sparked in January, 1994, and February, 1995.

Indigenous social movements must be aware of this kind of "perception management" by their communications adversaries. The Mexican government's record on the fulfillment of its promises to indigenous peoples has shown marginal improvement since Fox became president in 2000. Nonetheless, none of the Zapatistas' three core demands have been met for the resumption of negotiations: release of Zapatista prisoners; military withdrawal from Zapatista territory; and implementation of the San Andrés Accords. The EZLN's refusal to allow photographers to record the signing of the Accords in 1996 is a remarkable example of the lengths to which indigenous peoples must go to protect themselves from becoming pawns in nation-state governments' domestic and international propaganda.

Postscript

What we need desperately now are transitional structures, concepts, and mythologies to provide a means of translating ideas and values...to survive... [External] recognition ...can only come through political action as a defensive weapon of protection.

Any future coalition of groups for change must adopt Indian formats...This can only be possible by creation of new mythologies internal to each group in a manner similar to contemporary tribal understandings of the history of the people...

Vine Deloria, Jr., 1970.[83]

The prescience of Vine Deloria's remarks, written almost 25 years before the Chiapas rebellion, are epitomised in the Zapatista Army of National Liberation movement. A remarkable communications campaign enabled the EZLN to almost single-handedly spark a new national dialogue on indigenous rights in Mexico. Powerful indigenous and Mexican symbols were appropriated and incorporated into the Zapatista discourse and combined with entirely new symbols to build an indigenous nationalism that nonetheless secured non-indigenous support. The Zapatistas successfully thwarted the Mexican government's containment strategy by linking up with other social and political movements in order to help keep their struggle in the media spotlight. The rebels clearly saw an armed insurrection as their best option to attract attention to the plight of the *indígena* and the *campesino*. Indeed, a rebellion provided the necessary opening to promote their political and cultural symbols, by way of a sophisticated media and public relations blitz, to create a network of allies around the world.

Indigenous peoples in Canada and the United States can learn a great deal from the EZLN. A powerful example is Marcos's assertion that "[d]ignity cannot be studied; you live it or it dies."[84] Such words challenge us as indigenous peoples to find ways of making the knowledge we acquire in the academy meaningful to our communities. We would also do well to heed the new Zapatista slogan, "No one will do it for us," when we think about the enormous obstacles facing us on the road to decolonization. The Zapatista communications experience may help guide us past a few of them.

Endnotes

[1] The polarization of "pro-Zapatista and pro-PRI factions" has frequently led to violence and the proliferation of paramilitaries that are linked to the government. Another consequence has been the

increase in expulsions which have swelled the ranks of refugees in the government-maintained camps. These refugees later return "under the auspices of the military to 'repopulate' communities abandoned by the EZLN following the February 1995 offensive...[i]t is for this reason that control of municipal government has become such a contentious issue." Harvey, 230-1.

[2] Ibid., 229.

[3] Simon, 12.

[4] Gómez, 90.

[5] Avila, 109.

[6] Nash (1997), 44.

[7] Ibid., 57.

[8] SAIIC, 119.

[9] Stavenhagen, 86.

[10] The three current Zapatista demands are met: (1) ratification of the San Andrés Accords; (2) the release of all Zapatista political prisoners; and (3) the demilitarization of seven specific Zapatista communities in Chiapas. Julio Aranda, Julio César López, and Isaín Mandujano, "Marcos va ganando la partida," *El Proceso*, No. 1263, 14 January 2001, 33.

[11] For example, the first release of Zapatista prisoners on December 30th, 2000, was witnessed by 50 reporters who were flown in on a government jet. Ibid., 33. Although some military positions have been abandoned, Fox has refused to withdraw all his troops in the Zapatista zone because of concerns with drug trafficking. Ibid., 34.

[12] The Mexican government actively encouraged the formation of citizens' self-defence groups that were opposed to the EZLN. These paramilitary groups, such as Peace and Justice and the White Guards, were useful as an armed militia movement to support the Mexican Army. However, their lack of discipline and training meant that they were primarily useful as evidence that Chiapanecos were not united behind the EZLN. Furthermore, the paramilitaries could engage in intimidation campaigns against the EZLN and its supporters without a direct link to the Army of the government. Nonetheless, many of these paramilitary groups received training from the military as well as other benefits, including cash, land, and farming tools, from the Mexican and Chiapas governments.
Ross (2000), 47.

[13] Medea Benjamin, 61.

[14] Ross (2000), 192-3.

[15] Ibid., 185. An interesting but intellectually intimidating description of Marcos's "politics of poetic resistance" is found in Huntington, 58-80. Huntington argues that the EZLN's employment of poetry is an "imperative if not preeminent" part of the Zapatista struggle. Ibid., 66.

[16] Ross (2000), 184; and Bob, 42. David Ronfeldt et al. agree that the "EPR has displayed some cleverness at information operations. An example lies in the invitations and bus tickets for journalists to arrive at a particular time and place where, unbeknownst to each other, they expected to conduct interview with EPR leaders but instead found themselves witnessing an EPR attack on a government building." Ronfeldt et al, 94.

[17] Ross (2000), 193.

[18] Ibid., 196.

[19] Bob, 42.

[20] Ibid., 37.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Alfred also discusses the dangers of confusing the need for solidarity between different social movements and the risk of coercing cohesion for the sake of unity. Alfred, 87-8.

[24] Ronfeldt et al., 57.

[25] This is particularly true when the issue is of human or peoples' rights. The NATO intervention in Kosovo is a contentious exception. Bob, 44.

[26] Ibid., 44.

[27] Ronfeldt et al. identify three parts to this containment strategy: "a military prong to keep the EZLN in the conflict zone, while avoiding combat and improving the army's human-rights behavior; a political prong to keep the dialogue and its agenda from becoming national in scope, and to regain control of information; and an economic prong to offer resources and mount programs that would appeal to some of the local

population's needs. The strategy was also designed to let the Zapatistas talk (and let them know that there was no alternative to talking), while working gradually to diminish international attention to the EZLN and whittle down its demands." Ronfeldt et al., 81.
[28] Ibid., 100.
[29] Ibid., 127.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Lynn Stephen, *¡Zapata Lives! Histories and Cultural Politics in Southern Mexico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 42.
[32] Alfred, 25.
[33] For two of the most famous examples, see Marcos's "Dying in Order to Live", 17; and "Who Should Ask for Pardon and Who Can Grant It?", 38-39; Ponce de León.
[34] Harvey, 11.
[35] Huntington, 74-5.
[36] "There are three prerequisites for recovery: awareness of the pain's source, conscious withdrawal from an isolated, unfocused state of rage, and development of a supportive community and the courage to begin attacking the causes of discontent and deprivation." Alfred, 35.
[37] The "Zapatistas' seemingly sophisticated use of the Internet has been more a result of their appeal to a core group of supporters than a cause of their international backing." Ibid., 44.
[38] Ronfeldt et al., 117.
[39] Bob, 38.
[40] "[L]os pueblos indígenas de América deben seguir insistiendo en apropriarse de sus propios espacios en los medios...Así, dentro de la aldea mundial, podrán mantener su identidad: su cultura, su lengua y su pensamiento diferente." Avila, 111.
[41] Petrich, 49-51.
[42] Díaz, 149.
[43] The EZLN does reflect Alfred's criterion for self-conscious traditional communications in government: "There is an open and extensive network of communication among community members, and for government institutions have clearly established channels by which information is made available to people." For a discussion of other characteristics of an indigenous governance system, see Alfred, 82.
[44] Martinez-Torres, 352.
[45] She continues her comparison by noting that the Zapatistas' organization "resembles the open spaces on the Internet for free discussion of controversial issues, such as conferences, chat rooms, and listservs, which also use a free-form methodology where all have equal right to express themselves." Ibid. Castells has also illustrated this point. He suggests that social movements are now networked and decentered forms of organizations and are the "producers, and distributors, of cultural codes." Castells, 362.
[46] Alfred, 82.
[47] "Even when known abroad only through media images, such leaders can make a host of abstract issues seem personal and concrete, thus multiplying a movement's potential support." Bob, 42.
[48] Vine Deloria Jr., as quoted in Alfred, 67.
[49] Castells, 361.
[50] Huntington, 75-6.
[51] Marcos laughed when he recounted that the great surprise of the rebellion was that he and the others leading it were not immediately killed. Medea Benjamin, 65.
[52] Clifford Bob asks "What transforms insurgent leaders into international icons?" Bob lists several factors: eloquence, energy, courage, and determination which together combine to provide a "charismatic mystique." Other "pedestrian factors" include foreign language fluency, "especially English; an understanding of Western protest traditions; familiarity with the international political vogue; and expertise in media and NGO relations- all these factors are essential to giving leaders the chance to display their more ineffable qualities." Bob, 42.
[53] Two examples are: (1) the "week-long media and diplomacy training sessions...replete with role plays and mock interviews" available through the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization in the Hague; and (2) a "two-year Advocacy Bridge Program, which aims to 'increase the skills of local activists to amplify their issues of concern globally' and to 'facilitate their access to international agenda-setting venues' through the International Human Rights Law Group in Washington, D.C. Ibid., 43.

[54] Ibid.
[55] Nash (1997), 43.
[56] Noam Chomsky, *Latin America from colonization to globalization* (Melbourne, Australia: Ocean Press, 1999), 101.
[57] Gómez, 90-1.
[58] Fearing the government would use Colosio's assassination as justification for ending the truce and attacking EZLN positions, the CCRI-CG condemned the assassination as "cowardly" and hinted that his murder had been arranged because he had not taken a harder line against the rebels. The gunman who was arrested at the scene confessed that he had killed Colosio to focus attention on Chiapas. However, the EZLN quickly denied any involvement in the murder. Marcos suggested that the Zapatistas would have done a better job of protecting Colosio. Ross (2000), 63-4.
[59] Bob, 41.
[60] Ronfeldt et al., 123.
[61] Bob, 44.
[62] Vine Deloria Jr. warned that "media coverage of American Indian activism would turn political struggle into a circus in which activists with the most spectacular rhetoric would be the focus of attention." Warrior, 89.
[63] Bob, 40.
[64] Ross (2000), 21.
[65] Harvey, 10.
[66] Churchill, 155.
[67] Bob, 40.
[68] Alfred, 144.
[69] Valaskakis 112.
[70] Bob, 41.
[71] Subcommandante Insurgente Marcos, "The Retreat is Making Us Almost Scratch the Sky," Ponce de León, 227.
[72] Internal self-determination refers to a measure of political autonomy within the existing state structure whereas external self-determination would be the creation of a separate nation-state. These terms are used in the same manner as they are employed by Gudmundur Alfredsson in his article "The Right of Self-Determination and Indigenous Peoples," in *Modern Law of Self-Determination,* Editor Christian Tomuschat (London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1993), 41-54.
[73] Paul Knox, "Zapatista rebels play to the people," in *The Globe and Mail,* 26 February 2001, A1, 9.
[74] Alfred, 87-8.
[75] Martinez-Torres observes that the EZLN are "[r]unning contrary to a global trend toward ethnic conflict" because it is "inclusive rather than exclusive." Martinez-Torres, 350.
[76] Alfred writes that it is the role of a leader to "unify the people and work cooperatively" and to eliminate factions that prevent unity. Alfred, xxii.
[77] Ibid., 87-8.
[78] Vivian Newdick, "Interview: Emiliano Zapata Campesino Organization," Katzenberger, 137-8.
[79] Ibid., 138.
[80] However, the state government threatened to immediately close the school should it be opened to students. Ross (2000), 288-9.
[81] De Angelis, 22.
[82] Alfred, 83.
[83] Vine Deloria Jr, *We Talk, You Listen* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1970), 30-2.
[84] Subcommandante Insurgente Marcos, "Dignity Cannot Be Studied; You Live It or It Dies," Ponce de León, 269.

REFERENCES

Aczel, Audrey M. "A Communications Analysis of the Chiapas Uprising: Marcos' Publicity Campaign on the Internet," MA Thesis, McGill University, July 1997.

Alfred, Taiaiake. *Peace Power Righteousness: an indigenous manifesto*. Don Mills, Ont.: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Aranda, Julio, Julio César López, and Isaín Mandujano, "Marcos va ganando la partida." In *El Proceso*, No. 1263, 14 January 2001, 32-5.

Avila, Raúl. "Lenguaje, medios e identidad nacional." In *Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe*, June 1998, 105-12.

Battiste, Marie & James Youngblood Henderson. *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge*. Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2000.

Benjamin, Thomas. *A Rich Land A Poor People – Politics and Society in Modern Chiapas*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989.

Bob, Clifford. "Merchants of Morality." In *Foreign Policy*, March/April 2002, 37-45.

Brysk, Alison. *From Tribal Village to Global Village – Indian Rights and International Relations in Latin America*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.

Castells, Manuel. *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture – Volume II: The Power of Identity*. Massachussets: Blackwell, 1997.

Chomsky, Noam. *The Chomsky Reader*. New York: Pantheon, 1987.

———. *Latin America from colonization to globalization*. Melbourne, Australia: Ocean Press, 1999.

Collier, George A. *Basta! Land and the Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas*. Monroe, Oregon: Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1994.

Cosío Villegas, Daniel and Ignacio Bernal, Alejandra Moreno Toscano, Luis González, Eduardo Blanquel and Lorenzo Meyer. *Historia Mínima de México*. México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 1998.

Curran, James & Myung-Jin Park (Editors). *De-Westernizing Media Studies*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

De Angelis, Massimo. "Globalization, New Internationalism and the Zapatistas." In *Capital and Class*, No. 70, Spring 2000, 9-35.

Deloria, Vine Jr. *We Talk, You Listen*. New York: Dell Publishing, 1970.

Díaz Polanco, Hector. *Indigenous Peoples in Latin America – The Quest for Self-Determination*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview, 1997.

Dunbar Ortiz, Roxanne. *Indians of the Americas – Human Rights and Self-Determination*. Brooklyn, NY: Praeger, 1984.

Editorial Collective. *¡Zapatistas! Documents of the New Mexican Revolution*. Brooklyn, New York: Autonomedia, 1994.

González Casanova, Pablo. "Causes of the Rebellion in Chiapas." In *Identities*, Vol. 3, October 1996, 269-90.

González, Rosa M. (Editor). *Media and democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1996.

Harrison, Lawrence E. *The Pan-American Dream*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997.

Harvey, Neil. *The Chiapas Rebellion – The Struggle for Land and Democracy*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998.

Havemann, Paul. *Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Australia, Canada, & New Zealand*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Hayden, Tom (Editor). *The Zapatista Reader*. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press/Nation Books, 2002.

Hinojosa, Juan José. "Fox y Marcos: la guerra de la mercadotecnia." In *El Proceso*, No. 1263, 14 January 2001, 42-3.

Huntington, Patricia. "Challenging the Colonial Contact: The Zapatistas' Insurgent Imagination." In *Rethinking Marxism* Volume 12, Number 3, Fall 2000, 58-80.

Katzenberger, Elaine (Editor). *First World, Ha Ha Ha! The Zapatista Challenge*. San Francisco: City Light Books, 1995.

Knox, Paul. "Chiapas divided over rebels." In *The Globe and Mail*, 24 February 2001, A17.

———. "Insurgency pauses for a close-up." In *The Globe and Mail*, 25 February 2001, A1, 9.

———. "Zapatista rebels play to the people." In *The Globe and Mail*, 26 February 2001, A1, 9.

Knudson, Jerry W. "Rebellion in Chiapas: Insurrection by Internet and public relations." In *Media, Culture & Society*, Vol. 20, No. 3, July 1998, 507-18.

Krauze, Enrique. *Mexico – Biography of Power: A History of Modern Mexico, 1810-1996*. New York: First HarperPerennial, 1998.

Leedy, Paul D. *Practical Research: Planning and Design 5th Edition*. Toronto: Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1993.

Lindau, Juan D. & Curtis Cook (Editors). *Aboriginal Rights and Self-Government*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000.

Martinez-Torres, Maria Elena. "Civil Society, the Internet, and the Zapatistas." In *Peace Review* Volume 13, Number 3 (2001), 347-55.

Nancoo, Stephen E. and Robert S. Nancoo (Editors). *The Mass Media and Canadian Diversity*. Mississauga, Ont.: Canadian Educators' Press, 1997.

Nash, June. *The Explosion of Communities*. Copenhagen: International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs, 1995.

———. *Mayan Visions – The Quest for Autonomy in an Age of Globalization*. New York: Routledge, 2001.

———. "Press Reports on the Chiapas Uprising: Towards a Transnationalized Communication." In *Journal of Latin American Anthropology*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1997, 42-75.

Neuman, W. Laurence. *Social Research Methods – Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Toronto: Allyn & Bacon, 1994.

Pérez López-Portillo, Raúl. *Chiapas México Desconocido*. Madrid: Silex, 2000.

Ponce de León, Juana (Editor). *Our Word is Our Weapon – Selected Writings*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001.

Rash, Wayne Jr. *Politics on the Nets – Wiring the Political Process*. New York: W.H. Freeman, 1997.

Ronfeldt, David, John Arquilla, Graham E. Fuller, and Melissa Fuller. *The Zapatista Social Netwar in Mexico*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Arroyo Center, 1998.

Ross, John (Editor) *Shadows of Tender Fury: The Letters and Communiqués of Subcommandante Marcos and the Zapatista Army of National Liberation.* New York: Monthly Review Press, 1995.

———. *The War Against Oblivion: The Zapatista Chronicles.* Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2000.

Siegel, Arthur. *Politics and the Media in Canada.* Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, Ltd, 1996.

Simon, Joel. "Mexico's Virtual Guerrillas." In *Mother Jones*, Vol. 20, Number 4, July 1995, 12.

Stephen, Lynn. "The Zapatista Opening: The Movement for Indigenous Autonomy and State Discourses on Indigenous Rights in Mexico, 1970-1996." In *Journal of Latin American Anthropology,* Vol. 2, No. 2, 1997, 2-41.

———. *¡Zapata Lives! Histories and Cultural Politics in Southern Mexico.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Suchlicki, Jaime. *Mexico – From Montezuma to NAFTA, Chiapas, and Beyond.* Washington: Brassey's Inc., 1996.

Titley, E. Brian. *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada.* Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986.

Todaro, Michael P. *Economic Development.* Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 2000.

Tolouse, Chris and Timothy W. Luke (Editors). *Politics of Cyberspace.* New York and London: Routledge, 1998.

Tomuschat, Christian (Editor). *Modern Law of Self-Determination.* London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1993.

Tuhiwai Smith, Linda. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research & Indigenous Peoples.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.

Valenzuela Arce, José Manuel. "The Zapatista Army of National Liberation and the Demands of the Mexican People." In *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power,* Vol. (1-2), October 1996, 253-60.

Van Cott, Donna Lee (Editor). Indigenous Peoples and Democracy in Latin America. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995.

Warnock, John. *The Other Mexico – The North American Triangle Completed.* Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1995.

Warrior, Robert Allen. *Tribal Secrets – Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1995.

Weiner, Tim. "Mexico Ending Coziness For Press and Powerful." In *The New York Times*, Sunday, October 29, 2000: Section 1, 12.

Wolfwood, Terry. "Who is Ramona? The transformation of a street vendor into a revolutionary leader." In *Briarpatch*, Volume 26, Number 9, November 1997, 22-3.

Wood, Darrin. "Net Wars." In *Index on Censorship*, Vol. 24, No. 3, May 1995, 22-3.

Websites

Alfred, Taiaiake. "Why Play the White Man's Game?" in *Windspeaker*, October, 1999. http://www.ammsa.com/windspeaker/windguest99.html#anchor244490

CCRI-CG. *Response to Fox's Indian Rights & Culture Law*, April 29, 2001. http://www.ezln.org/documentos/2001/ezln010429b.es.htm

CCRI-CG. *EZLN Communiqué Regarding Elections*, June 19th, 2000. http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/2000/ccri_elections_june.html

CCRI-CG, *Fifth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle*, July 1, 1998. http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/ccri_5_dec_lj_july98.html

Gallegos, Elena. *Subcommandante Marcos Interview: 15 years since the formation of the EZLN* – November 16th and 17th, 2000. http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/1998/inter_marcos_nov98.html

Marcos, Subcommandante Insurgente. *Above and Below: Masks and Silences.* http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/marcos_masks_july98.html

San Andrés Accords. http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/san_andres.html

VITA

Surname: Pitawanakwat   Given Names: Brock Thorbjorn

Place of Birth: Peace River, Alberta, Canada

Educational Institutions Attended:

University of Victoria	2000-2002
University of Regina	1997-2000
Universidad Autonoma de Chiapas	1999
Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC)	1994-1997

Degrees Awarded:

B.A. (Distinction)	University of Regina	2000
Indian Communication Arts Certificate	SIFC	1997

Honours and Awards:

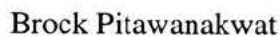
University of Victoria Graduate Fellowship	2000-2002
SIFC Valedictorian & Alumni Award	2000 (Spring)
Academic Achievement Scholarship	1997, 1999
Dean's List	1997, 1999-2000

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENSE

I hereby grant the right to lend my thesis to users of the University of Victoria Library, and to make single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the Library of any other university, or similar institution, on its behalf or for one of its users. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by me or a member of the University expressly designated by me. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain by the University of Victoria or anyone shall not be allowed without my express written permission.

Title of Thesis:

The Mirror of Dignity: Zapatista Communications & Indigenous Resistance

Author 

Brock Pitawanakwat

August 22, 2002

Note: This license is separate and distinct from the non-exclusive license for the National Library of Canada.