

# Radical Groups in Mexico Today

Gustavo Hiraes Morán

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Comments are welcome and should be directed to:

CSIS Americas Program

1800 K Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20006

Phone: (202) 775-3150

Fax: (202) 466-4739

E-mail: [lpinto@csis.org](mailto:lpinto@csis.org)

Web site: <http://www.csis.org/>

# Contents

<i>List of Acronyms</i> .....	iv
<i>Foreword</i> .....	v
Background .....	1
The Zapatista Army's Resurgence: Novel or Surprising?.....	2
Other Radical Guerrilla Groups in Mexico .....	4
The Common Thread among these Groups .....	5
Differences between the EZLN and the EPR .....	6
Origins of the EPR and the ERPI .....	8
Tactics and Strategy of the New Guerrillas.....	9
Parameters of the EZLN's Ideology and Politics .....	10
Parameters of the EPR's Ideology and Politics .....	11
Parameters of the ERPI's Ideology and Politics .....	12
Attitudes toward the New Government and the Democratic Opposition..	13
Radical Groups and the Terrorist Threat .....	15
The Impact of Radical Groups on the Nation.....	15
Conclusion.....	17
<i>About the Author</i> .....	19

## Acronyms

CNTE	National Coordinator of Educational Workers
COCOPA	Commission on Concordance and Pacification
EPR	Popular Revolutionary Army
ERPI	Insurgent Popular Revolutionary Army
ETA	Basque Fatherland and Freedom
EZLN	Zapatista Army for National Liberation
FAC-MLN	Broad Front to Build the National Liberation Movement
FARP	Revolutionary Armed Forces of the People
FLN	Forces of National Liberation
FZLN	Zapatista Front for National liberation
IFE	Federal Electoral Institute
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
OCSS	Southern Sierra Campesino Organization
PAN	National Action Party
PGR	Office of the Attorney General
PRD	Democratic Revolutionary Party
PRI	Institutional Revolution Party
PROCUP	Oaxaca's Clandestine Workers and Campesinos Popular Union
UNAM	National Autonomous University of Mexico

# Foreword

The release of this CSIS policy paper on “second generation” radical groups in Mexico is sure to spark a good deal of attention in Mexico, given both the sensitivity of the topic and the fact that the publication is being released by a Washington think tank known for its programs of study on Mexico.

The paper is not intended to be alarmist or sensational. Instead, it is intended as a prudent intellectual exercise aimed at ensuring that Mexico’s political class—policymakers, legislators, and political parties—is mindful that radical groups are part of Mexico’s political mosaic and could conceivably evolve into a more prevalent actor. This dynamic is one that would be sensible for the Washington policymaking community to bear in mind as well.

The purpose of this paper, therefore, is first to raise the awareness that there is a delicate balance in the evolving political transition that Vicente Fox’s 2000 presidential victory triggered and that the resurgence of radical group activity—in one form or another—should not be discounted. Second, the paper is intended to contribute to a more profound understanding of these groups, particularly given the many exceptional developments that Mexico has been experiencing in recent years.

In searching Mexico’s academic circles for someone to author a piece on contemporary radical groups, I was surprised to discover that no Mexican scholar has devoted much time to the study of the issue, particularly after the national and international media frenzy surrounding Subcomandante Marcos’s emergence waned. I then came across Gustavo Hiraes, someone who understands and identifies with the radical group mindset, having himself been a member of one of the groups that was predominant in the 1970s—the Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre. At the time of his involvement, Mr. Hiraes’s extremist views and underground activities cost him his freedom. He became a political prisoner. Hiraes has since devoted much of his time to analyzing Mexico’s present-day radical groups.

Many may question the CSIS Mexico Project’s sudden focus on Mexican radical groups. With the exception of recent pronouncements by the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (EZLN), the EZLN, the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR), the Insurgent Revolutionary Army of the People (ERPI), and other radical groups have been fairly tranquil. Nonetheless, various factors are in flux and could conceivably create the conditions likely to prompt the reenergizing of radical groups.

Some of these variables are explored below:

## vi Radical Groups in Mexico Today

- The gradual and incremental pace of democratic governance—and in some cases the out-and-out gridlock that has characterized Mexico since the onset of its democratic transition—provide radical groups with a new battle cry. Whereas before they almost exclusively called for the defeat of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), once alternation in power materialized in 2000 with Vicente Fox’s presidential election victory, that call became superfluous. Nonetheless, many of these groups continue to be disenchanted and may plead for either improved governance or, in some cases, an entirely different system of government.

In the case of the EZLN, Marcos has capitalized on this widespread sense of yearning for better government, with the release of the latest communiqué announcing the creation of five Good Government Councils (*Juntas de Buen Gobierno*). This restructuring was intended to impose a higher degree of order within the Zapatista communities, while at the same time creating the perception of better governance. The creation of the councils is a development that could conceivably come head-to-head with the more traditional forms of municipal government and could spark further tensions at the local level.

- Many of the structural changes that Mexico needs—such as fiscal and energy sector reforms—are likely to generate hostile reactions, be they in the form of verbal or communiqué type of opposition or a more physical and/or violent type of resistance. These reforms may exert an added strain on the marginalized constituencies of these radical groups (be it those living in poverty and/or indigenous segments of the population) or simply appeal to the “globophobic” bent of some of these groups.

Though resistance to these various reforms can initially be undertaken by some of the affected labor unions or social organizations—some of which have within them radical or fringe elements with ties to such radical groups as the EZLN, EPR or ERPI—there is the potential for escalation into more direct radical group involvement.

- The exceptionally low voter turnout in the July 6, 2003, mid-term elections (41.7 percent) opens up a flank for radical groups to cast doubt on the representativeness of Mexico’s legislature and therefore its legitimacy, ultimately bringing into question whether congress has the mandate to enact particular legislative measures—such as unpopular, yet indispensable, structural reforms.

The high level of voter abstention also raises the question as to whether political parties are increasingly being perceived as an ineffective means of political expression—a notion that has beset other nations in the hemisphere. If so, could a more unconventional or even more radical approach be seen as a viable alternative? It is important to keep in mind that radical militant groups have, in the past, introduced violence in Mexico, in varying degrees, as a form of political expression.

Voter turnout aside, the mid-term election outcome also handed the PRI an electoral boost that suggests that the party's legitimate recapture of the presidency is plausible. If so, how would radical groups react, especially since that party is seen by many members of such groups as their long-standing foe?

- Mexico's economic woes and its accompanying high unemployment—though part of a global economic trend—may cultivate fertile recruiting ground for radical groups. This may be exacerbated by the mounting criticisms—well beyond Mexico—over the distributive efficacy of the neoliberal economic model. NAFTA's purported adverse impact on Mexico's agricultural sector, at a time when the rural workforce is under stress, could be a catalyst to increased radical group membership.
- The Mexican left continues to be in disarray in terms of offering a well-organized and viable political option to those beyond Mexico City, leaving a vacuum that radical groups are keen to fill.
- The left-of-center Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) is under mounting pressure to undergo an ideological shift to the center, as a means to broaden its electoral base. This is thought to be a precondition if the popular Mexico City mayor, Andres Manuel López Obrador, or whoever the PRD presidential candidate may be, is to have a chance of being elected in the 2006 presidential election. This potential ideological shift to the center could conceivably alienate the more radical factions within the PRD—such as the Civicos and the Mobi—some members of which have ties to radical groups such as the EZLN, EPR, and ERPI. It will be worth following whether these party factions yield to the shift or whether they remain true to their ideology and break away from the PRD—in which case they could opt for a more radical form of political expression, one outside of the political party system.

It is only after reflecting on these fluid variables that one acquires an appreciation for the breadth and complexity of the changes sweeping through Mexico. While Mexico has accomplished much in the past decade, multiple challenges remain. Mexico's political class should not lose sight of the implications that the emergence and maturation of radical groups have had, and will continue to have, on Mexico's transition to democracy. They could help to consolidate democracy in Mexico, or alternatively, frustrate it.

Armand B. Peschard-Sverdrup  
*Director, CSIS Mexico Project*

# Radical Groups in Mexico Today

*Gustavo Hiraes Morán*

## Background

Since January 1, 1994, the day when the armed uprising of the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (EZLN) was announced, it has been evident that Mexico is facing a second generation of radical organizations. The first generation, dating back to the 1970s, consisted of armed groups made up mainly of students, rural classroom teachers, and *campesinos* (i.e., subsistence farmers and agricultural workers along with their families). This generation's choice to pursue armed struggle revealed a trio of influences: Cuba's experience, socialist ideology, and the outrage and indignation produced by the repression and crackdown on nonviolent avenues of political opposition unleashed under the governments of Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964–1970) and Luis Echeverría Álvarez (1970–1976).<sup>1</sup>

The political reforms and the 1978 amnesty for guerrilla militants promoted by Jesús Reyes Heróles, the one-time secretary of government under President José López Portillo (1976–1982), drew the curtain on Mexico's period of internal warfare (considered here to have begun roughly in 1968 and to have culminated 10 years later).<sup>2</sup> This is not to say that the amnesty put an end to armed struggle once and for all. In fact, a certain number of underground militants persevered; however, their impact was limited, and their numbers gradually dwindled until they virtually disappeared (save for those exceptions analyzed in this paper). The last bastions of the September 23 Communist League were either dissolved or liquidated in the early 1980s.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts of repression, such as the massacre at Tlatelolco on October 2, 1968, and the paramilitary attack against marchers on June 10, 1971, were decisive in the collective memory of the radical students of those years.

<sup>2</sup> The political reform under the auspices of Jesús Reyes Heróles allowed for the legalization in 1978 of the Mexican Communist Party (forerunner of the current Democratic Revolutionary Party), which participated in federal elections the following year and won 20 seats in the lower chamber. Since then, the nonviolent Marxist left has had permanent parliamentary representation in Mexico.



## 2 Radical Groups in Mexico Today

The appearance of the EZLN in the 1990s highlighted the persistence of guerrilla movements in Mexico. Indeed, the emergence of the EZLN showed precisely that radical, militant groups were capable of resurfacing in novel or surprising ways.

### **The Zapatista Army's Resurgence: Novel or Surprising?**

It is assumed, at least in theory, that the existence and eventual triumph of an armed movement depends on certain minimum conditions, including

- exacerbation of poverty and exploitation of a large part of the population;
- notable loss of legitimacy among ruling groups; and
- economic and political crises that at times lead to military coups d'état and concomitant proscriptions of broad-based organizations and political parties.

In short, an armed movement succeeds in the face of the abolition or suspension of the democratic legal framework, the resurgence of repression, and crises of governmental legitimacy. Thus, the most combative sectors of society become convinced that radical change is needed and that a “revolutionary solution” to oppression is both possible and necessary.

At the same time, a climate settles in—ideological, moral, and political in nature—that allows the option and methods of revolution to resolve the “large national issues” to be justified in the name of heroism, the myth of sacrifice, and the prestige of rebellion. This atmosphere leads to the conclusion that the so-called government of the bourgeoisie has wronged the people and that the revolutionaries must act on their behalf and accept the honored mantle of the savior to redress the wrongs that the government has perpetrated. Besides, armed movements have the advantage of effectiveness: the perception that the revolutionary road will be the most direct and least painful way to sever the Gordian knot that prevents the population's needs and aspirations from being satisfied.

When viewed in this light, does the appearance of the Zapatistas fulfill the set of conditions for the success of armed movements? Clearly, the emergence of the EZLN does not. If these conditions did not exist in 1970, they had much less bearing on the situation in Mexico in 1994. The EZLN did not emerge under particularly repressive conditions, not even in the southern state of Chiapas, where it was still widely assumed that the Mexican Revolution “had not arrived.”<sup>3</sup> Nor was there a distinct increase in poverty in the country, given President Carlos Salinas de Gortari's relative success in implementing the government's antipoverty solidarity program. Moreover, the government was not suffering from a loss of legitimacy, and public opinion did not even favor revolutionary options.

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<sup>3</sup> It should be made clear that the state government of Patrocinio González Garrido was indeed repressive, giving rise to many problems and protests, but not to the degree that would justify an insurrection. Besides, he had already left the government by January 1994.

Nevertheless, the EZLN had an impact for several reasons, particularly because it made its public appearance during a transition in the presidency, when internal contradictions were becoming acute and external resentments were mounting (such as the powerlessness of the opposition).<sup>4</sup> Some of these factors are explained at follows.

The emergence of the EZLN precipitated a rash of conflicts and encouraged the settling of old accounts. The phantoms that Carlos Salinas had worked so hard to put to rest now reappeared, including

- the electoral fraud of 1988 and the ensuing loss of governmental legitimacy;
- accusations of neoliberal privatization of certain industries;
- opposition to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in some sectors;
- reforms in the countryside; and
- changes in the nature of the relationship between the state and the Roman Catholic Church.

Thus, early on, the common perception was that the Zapatista rebellion had received support from *within* the system, from the hard-line stalwarts of the official party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), who were opposed to the structural reforms spearheaded by Salinas.

A second reason for the initial successes of the EZLN was the demand for justice for the indigenous people. This cause lit the collective imagination of a nation that was both proud of its past and its indigenous culture, at least at the mythical level, but also ashamed of the government's secular treatment of the heirs of this legacy. The public saw that these people, even in contemporary times, clearly led a marginalized existence in what had once been their own country.

Another factor was "Subcomandante" Marcos's talent for transforming an experience. He took a situation, which in the first few days seemed to be a Chiapas-style copy of the activities of the ideologically driven Central American guerrillas, then turned this experience into a movement that, although indigenously based and armed, was also "light"—that is, alternately pacifist, disposed toward dialogue, literary, and therefore a darling of the media.

Moreover, the appearance of the EZLN would appear to have given the green light to a series of disgraceful episodes that undercut the system:

- suspicions of terrorism;
- capital flight and general financial instability;

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<sup>4</sup> See Jorge G. Castañeda, *La Herencia* (The Legacy) (Mexico City: Ediciones Alfaguara, 1999).

## 4 Radical Groups in Mexico Today

- the assassination of the PRI presidential candidate, Luis D. Colosio;<sup>5</sup>
- kidnappings of major business leaders; and
- the assassination of José Francisco Ruiz Massieu.<sup>6</sup>

All these incidents culminated in a final uprising in December 1994 and January 1995, with the EZLN violently taking over 38 municipalities in Chiapas.

### Other Radical Guerrilla Groups in Mexico

#### The Popular Revolutionary Army

In the summer of 1996, just as the government of President Ernesto Zedillo was initiating negotiations with the EZLN to discuss its demands and reach a possible peace agreement, the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR) appeared on the scene. At an event commemorating the first anniversary of the slaughter at Aguas Blancas, in the state of Guerrero, attended by the former presidential candidate of the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD), Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas,<sup>7</sup> the EPR staged a huge, intricately choreographed deployment. At the demonstration, the underground group advocated armed struggle to overthrow the government and build socialism, although most of the political actors in attendance—first, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, then Secretary of Government Emilio Chauyffet (although he added the adjective “bloodthirsty”)—described the display as a “pantomime.” A few months later, on the eve of Ernesto Zedillo’s second state-of-the-union address, the EPR showed its logistical and tactical capabilities when it launched simultaneous attacks on members of the armed forces or law enforcement agencies in the states of Oaxaca, Guerrero, Mexico, and Puebla.

There are indications, however, that the People’s Revolutionary Army had to pay quite a high price for these actions. When the EPR withdrew, it left tracks that enabled the security forces to locate some of their sanctuaries (in the region of Los Loxicha in Oaxaca, for example). Thus, the government was able to isolate the group, cornering it in police actions and in political terms and eventually capturing several of its principal leaders, events that led to internal divisions within the EPR.

#### The Insurgent Popular Revolutionary Army

In June 1998, the self-styled Insurgent Popular Revolutionary Army (ERPI) surfaced in a skirmish between the Mexican army and a group of armed civilians at a place known as El Charco in the state of Guerrero. At first, it was thought that

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<sup>5</sup> In his first statement after his arrest, Colosio’s assassin, Mario Aburto, said that he had shot the candidate for the sake of “peace in Chiapas.”

<sup>6</sup> At the time of his death on September 28, 1994, this former brother-in-law of President Carlos Salinas was the leader of the PRI majority party in the Chamber of Deputies of the Mexican Congress.

<sup>7</sup> Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Solórzano is the main founder of the center-left PRD, its “moral leader,” and three-time presidential candidate. Moreover, he is the son of legendary Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas.

the civilians constituted a column of EPR combatants, but statements from captives arrested after that action indicated that this was a distinct group. It was soon learned that the ERPI was an offshoot of Guerrero's Party of the Poor, and some observers attributed the split to long-festering local differences between the states of Oaxaca and Guerrero.<sup>8</sup>

## The Common Thread among these Groups

Despite the number of differences among them, these groups have all emerged in the midst of—and in opposition to—changes that were taking place under the democratization ushered in with the political reform of Secretary of Government Reyes Heróles in 1978, who legalized the status of the Communist-born left and contributed to the governance of the country. At times, a group's appearance stepped up the process of democratization—such as when the EZLN, directly or indirectly, gave impetus to the political reform that passed in 1994, whose main accomplishment was to place control of the General Council of the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) under nonpartisan stewardship and remove it from the grasp of PRI functionaries and the president of the republic. At other times, the presence of these groups has set the process back—for example, many intellectuals were able to justify violence if, as in the case of the EZLN, it appeared to be “just.” It was revealing that the EZLN would break off peace negotiations with the federal government in summer 1996 as a result of the emergence of the EPR, which was pressing “from the left.”<sup>9</sup>

Another common characteristic was these groups' efforts to at least minimize, if not actively oppose, advances in democratic reform while, at the same time, using these changes and new opportunities for political participation for their own protection, as exemplified by the EZLN's reaction to the government's capture and prompt release in 1995 of Fernando Yáñez Muñoz, Commander “Germán” of the EZLN.<sup>10</sup> In general, it can be said without exaggeration that these groups, in the purest Leninist spirit, take advantage of democracy to protect themselves, but along the way they ceaselessly denigrate it, conspire against it, and try to undermine its foundations.

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<sup>8</sup> The EPR is linked more strongly by its roots to the Clandestine Workers and Campesinos Popular Union (PROCUP) of Oaxaca; the ERPI is closer to the remnants of the Party of the Poor, which was active in Guerrero under the legendary guerrilla leader Lucio Cabañas, who was killed in a clash with the Mexican army in December 1974.

<sup>9</sup> It should be recalled that Marcos first detached himself from the EPR, saying that the transition to democracy would not be made possible by guns and that the EPR would have to “earn its own legitimacy,” although later he became more radical and broke off talks with the federal government of San Andrés Larráinzar in September 1996.

<sup>10</sup> In October 1995, when military intelligence groups were following a weapons shipment headed for Mexico from Central America, they captured Fernando Yáñez Muñoz, also known as Commander Germán, one of the founders of the Forces of National Liberation (FLN), the EZLN's predecessor. The EZLN suspended its negotiations with the government, and the multiparty parliamentary delegation to the peace talks, the Commission on Concordance and Pacification (COCOPA), strongly pressured President Zedillo's government to release Yáñez, whom the EZLN did not even officially acknowledge as one of its members.

## 6 Radical Groups in Mexico Today

An additional trait common to these groups is their ability to spark hatred among right-wing and business groups in response to the radical armed groups' defiant and violent attitude. A more extreme example of this was the real, if geographically circumscribed, class struggle that the EZLN unleashed in Chiapas at the start of its uprising in 1994 with its policy of staging the "takeover of lands" belonging to small and mid-sized landholders.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, and just as important, the emergence of the EZLN and new radical groups has, in general, produced an effect that could only be considered desirable by those nihilists who subscribe to the premise that "the worse things are the better they become." Namely, these groups' activities have managed to transform the Mexican army into a bellicose actor (although the army's growing role in the counternarcotics battle has also made a significant contribution along these lines).

All these groups had their origins in the first generation of armed struggle, but they take care not to say so, even though they cannot wash away their old guerrilla roots.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, in one way or another, they have surfaced to revenge their erstwhile defeats: basically, and at the risk of oversimplification, the EZLN comes by way of the Forces of National Liberation (FLN); the EPR from Oaxaca's Clandestine Workers and Campesinos Popular Union (PROCUP); and the ERPI from Guerrero's Party of the Poor.

It is important to note that none of these groups openly embraces terrorist tactics. They particularly eschew attacks against civilian targets as a way of forcing the government to accept certain conditions. Even those elements that detonate explosives or materiel—an action that not all the groups take—avoid causing civilian casualties.

### Differences between the EZLN and the EPR

The first characteristic that distinguishes the two groups is political vocation. From the outset, Marcos defended political action (and took an ambiguous position regarding dialogue), a claim that contradicted his military orders to the EZLN to advance on Mexico City, to defeat the Mexican army, and to overthrow the "usurper" with the support of the Congress of the Union. Subsequently, the EZLN took part in the ephemeral "conversations in the cathedral" in San Cristóbal de las Casas in February 1994. Next, the group established a National Democratic Convention in Chiapas, which would seek to become a "double power" or a parallel power as the 1994 presidential elections approached. And in the end, Marcos asked for the presence of "civil society" at the peace negotiations that he found himself forced to accept after the Mexican army's troops advanced on the so-called Zapatista lands in February 1995.

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<sup>11</sup> Shortly after the armed clashes in Chiapas between the EZLN and government forces ended, there was a period of "land seizures" promoted by the Zapatistas but carried out enthusiastically by many other *campesino* organizations in Chiapas. This policy changed the map of agrarian land tenure in several regions in the state.

<sup>12</sup> See Marcos's homage to the founders of the Forces of National Liberation during the Zapatista tour (2001), particularly in Puebla.

In addition, the deep-rooted social network is unquestionably the EZLN's link to many indigenous communities in Chiapas—the famous “Zapatista zones” in the highlands and in the north of Chiapas, regions that the people imbue with an unprecedented sense of dignity and identity. Marcos is able to unite those who are dispersed and excluded, even if only to wage war against the government and the wealthy. Nevertheless, outside Chiapas, the EZLN lacks organizational ties with other communities and social organizations—either indigenous or other groups. The EZLN maintains alliances, but no one represents the group outside Chiapas.<sup>13</sup> The EPR and the ERPI's ties to communities are real but humiliating (even if only for reasons of security), and no social organization has any thought of forming an alliance with these groups.

Another distinction is the EZLN's ability to forge and maintain ties with parties, social organizations, and democratic personalities. Marcos became the sought-after interlocutor of parties, organizations, the media, and personalities, in particular, after the “conversations in the cathedral.”<sup>14</sup> Moreover, he developed a host of relations with groups of international activists, Italian “white monkeys,” Zapatista Europeans, and cultural and political noteworthies.

At the same time, Marcos was transformed into a media star, through which he could project political qualities. These include a keen sense of opportunity and novel political rhetoric, as when he asked “What do we have to be pardoned for?” after President Carlos Salinas, in a gesture meant to be magnanimous but one that ultimately turned out to be heavy handed, “pardoned” the armed insurgents; and a good sense of theatrics, with his histrionics and meticulously kept guerrilla wardrobe, bandoliers festooned with red shotgun cartridges, the pipe, the Ar-15 rifle, two watches, bandana, dark shirt, and, above all, the enigmatic black balaclava helmet.

Marcos speaks to the country and to the world, and he manages to make a substantial, if not a deep, impact. He has succeeded in being heard; a frequent explanation ventured in connection with the ongoing indulgence of many political and intellectual figures toward Marcos's excesses, tantrums, and absurdities is that “he has won them over.”

Marcos and the EZLN are Teflon-coated; their careless mistakes do not appear to stick to them. And these mistakes have been legion:

- Marcos's flagrant sectarianism in Chiapas;
- the expulsions of thousands of indigenous people who refused to join the neo-Zapatista movement;

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<sup>13</sup> The most stalwart ally of the EZLN outside of Chiapas is, without doubt, the so-called National Indigenous Congress, which had its moment in the limelight during the Zapatista Tour. Other less clear-cut alliances exist with sectors of the PRD and regional groups, to name a few.

<sup>14</sup> The first attempt at negotiations between the federal government and the EZLN took place in February-March 1994. Manuel Camacho Solís, the bishop of San Cristóbal, was the federal government's peace commissioner; Monsignor Samuel Ruiz was the “intermediary.”

## 8 Radical Groups in Mexico Today

- confrontations between communities over the creation of “autonomous municipalities”;
- their attempts to have other grassroots organizations submit to their hegemony;
- their continuous dressing down of political parties and other political actors;
- their vilification of such groups as the Broad Front to Build the National Liberation Movement (FAC-MLN);<sup>15</sup> and
- the absence of rational justification for many of the EZLN’s threats and splits as well as for their stubbornness and obstinacy.<sup>16</sup>

Marcos is the “legitimate interlocutor”; the others are saddled with impenetrable, shameful mystery; no one can say where they are from or whom they represent. In contrast, according to the Mexican and world press in those years, Marcos represents the “most noble” and glamorous of indigenous causes and essential grievances. He is visited by European intellectuals of the first rank and famous artists from the United States, among others.

### Origins of the EPR and the ERPI

The EPR and ERPI came from the underground, just as their forerunners from the PROCUP and the Party of the Poor did. The social origin of the EPR and ERPI is that of rural or semi-urban school teachers, *campesinos*, unemployed artisans, students at teachers’ colleges, and perpetual students from the nontraditional science and humanities high schools associated with the National Autonomous University (UNAM) in Mexico City, the agricultural university of Chapingo, and the Autonomous Universities of Guerrero and Oaxaca (the so-called red universities), among others. In the end, they are “unresigned losers,” who pursue underground militancy as a *modus operandi* and as a way to raise their social standing and even to find existential justification.

There are several reasons why the EPR and ERPI are said to come from a *double* underground. First, because they were born anonymous, they never needed to hide underground. No one realized that they were no longer in the glare of public attention. (The EZLN shares some of these characteristics, but not all of them. For example, in Chiapas it was obvious when the Zapatista rural cadres entered underground life in the early 1990s, although this was not the case with Marcos, who would seem to have entered the world fully formed.)

Second, these groups lack political ability, community roots, and a historical perspective. In addition, their theoretical understanding is poorly developed, and their dogmatism is rather naïve. Their Marxism is so elementary that, by

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<sup>15</sup> Marcos wanted the FAC-MLN to become the EZLN’s unarmed, above-ground social instrument, to be used to extend the EZLN’s influence and presence throughout the country.

<sup>16</sup> Marcos stated publicly that “not even a comma” of the COCOPA draft of the indigenous affairs legislation could be changed.

comparison, the old Soviet handbooks appear sophisticated. As a result, one concludes that their members are uncultured and removed from the intellectual circles of modern-day Mexico; their only calling card seems to be their decision to fight bad government with weapons in hand. (Members of the EPR and ERPI come from regions that are quite backward in economic, social, and cultural terms. With few exceptions, they do not have members with experience as public leaders, and they mull over the political-military defeats of their forerunners without understanding the causes or breaking the conditioning factors that led to them.<sup>17</sup>)

Marcos displayed a sense of timing even with the launching of the armed uprising, which took place on the same day that NAFTA took effect, thereby sending a strong symbolic message that the Indians of Mexico are the forgotten ones under NAFTA; whereas the EPR appears to simply take shots in the dark.

## Tactics and Strategy of the New Guerrillas

The new radicals understand that armed combat is not everything—that an ideological and theoretical struggle also exists. The creation of legal or “democratic” mass or popular fronts is an old tactic of left-wing guerrillas, one that imitates the democratic or popular fronts created by the Viet Cong in South Vietnam, to name just one example. In Mexico, the PROCUP-EPR has stood out for its attempts to create broad fronts or smoke-screen organizations. In the 1980s, it encouraged the activities of the National Democratic Front, which was led by Felipe Martínez Soriano, the former president of the Autonomous University of Oaxaca. It seemed as though PROCUP considered the mere bestowal of the name “democratic” sufficient reason for the government to remove any hint of suspicion or excuse for persecution of the party.

The EZLN, by contrast, has taken advantage of its semi-legal status by publicly creating organizations such as the Zapatista Front for National Liberation (FZLN) and the Broad Front to Build the National Liberation Movement, but with little success in either case. In fact, in some states, such as Guerrero, the EPR used the FAC-MLN as a cover organization. One of the reasons for the EZLN’s lack of success with the political ventures has been its anti-electoral radicalism. In addition, its position as the bearer of the banner of “national liberation” detracts from its political ambitions because no one seriously believes that Mexico is actually some sort of colony of the United States and therefore actually in need of national liberation.

Moreover, the underground organizations garner the support of—or at least maintain ties with—social organizations, communities, or regions where they can find support or empathy. This is the case of some groupings of the National Coordinator of Educational Workers (CNTE), the General Strike Council of UNAM, the Francisco Villa Popular Front, and the people belonging to the

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<sup>17</sup> For example, everything indicates that the main lesson the ERPI has learned from the experience of the Lucio Cabañas *Campesino* “Settlers of Justice” Brigade is not to deploy columns permanently in the mountains in order to avoid the “search and destroy” tactics of the army.



## 10 Radical Groups in Mexico Today

Atenco Land Grant (*Ejido*), who mounted a successful campaign opposing construction of the new airport in Mexico City on their lands. These are some of the best-known open expressions of radicalism in Mexico today. Given its social origins, the citizens' interest group known as Barzón would be more closely linked to the PRD.

In Guerrero alone, there are at least 10 or 12 micro regions where clear sympathy for armed protest is noticeable. As a matter of fact, in several of the micro regions, drugs are farmed and trafficked, and none has ever established links between the armed groups and the narcotics activities. Similar situations can be found in Oaxaca and even in Chiapas.

### Parameters of the EZLN's Ideology and Politics

Given its origins, the EZLN is indebted to the legacy of Cuba's experience. Mexico's National Liberation Forces (FLN) came together in 1969 in an attempt to imitate the Cuban experience of July 26, 1953, when Fidel Castro launched his revolution with an attack on the Moncada army barracks. As a matter of fact, for some time the group sought to receive training in Cuba, but all indications are that Cuban leaders did not trust the group and never granted it permission to undergo training there.

Subsequently, after many years of trial and error during which most of the group's founders died, the group took the name EZLN and abandoned the rural guerrilla cells (*foquismo*), but not armed struggle, as the cornerstone of its strategy. The group turned to a variation of the "prolonged popular war" strategy, which had originated in China and Vietnam. This variant is based on a combination of three phases: (1) accumulation of forces; (2) insurrection; and then (3) Vietnamese-type negotiation (that is, negotiating while continuing to engage in combat); except that, in the case of the EZLN, the correlation of political and military forces denied the group the ability to employ this particular tactic.

Despite its democratic proclamations in early 1994, the EZLN had approved the "revolutionary laws in the countryside" only days earlier, which were nothing more than a pale imitation of the Bolshevik policy against middle-class peasants in Russia or Maoist policies during the Cultural Revolution in China. In other words, beneath a political veneer of democracy, the group at its core continues to adhere to authoritarian, statist Marxism. In the eyes of the EZLN, private property is "theft."

The EZLN's contact with the country and the world at large since 1994 has come as a shock to the group's leaders. It cannot be said that they were not affected or that they have failed to change—albeit slowly—but the ideological and political core remains; that is, they defend the validity of "all forms of struggle"; the tactic of negotiating without making concessions or "giving in"; and the validity of distinguishing between "proven revolutionaries," on the one hand, and reform advocates, on the other. The EZLN respects other revolutionary

approaches (such as the EPR's) and does not disdain the "broad front" tactic (favored by West European Communist Parties during the Cold War).

Nevertheless, the ideological mantle that EZLN members currently feel most comfortable donning is the cloak of antiglobalization, which lends them a less orthodox air and has enabled them to link up with groups around the world who "sing the same tune." But exactly what does Marcos consider antiglobalization? Basically, notwithstanding all the gyrations, he views this stance as the current form of the anticapitalist struggle. As a result, it should be clear that the indigenous matters redressed by the EZLN are, in the end, merely an alibi and an ideological justification for a type of struggle that had already been chosen before even going to Chiapas in the late 1960s.

### Parameters of the EPR's Ideology and Politics

The Popular Revolutionary Army entered the public consciousness in an atmosphere that was conducive to justifying revolutionary violence, and the EPR's groundwork had already been laid by the EZLN and its apologists in the media. The EPR is not a variant of the EZLN, however. In contrast to the EZLN, the EPR does not enter into dialogues or negotiations, and it will not sit down to debate with its enemies. Rather, the EPR seeks to fight its adversaries on every available level, but principally militarily. It represents the hard-line or intransigent guerrillas, whereas the EZLN could be considered a domesticated or comfortable version of the EPR.

The EPR surfaced on June 28, 1996, but it dates back far earlier—to the 1970s, when under the name Union of the People, it would keep busy by setting off small military explosives in order to "frighten the bourgeoisie." That date was the first anniversary of the Aguas Blancas massacre, when the police forces of the local government of Rubén Figueroa Jr.<sup>18</sup>—in a region historically scarred and traumatized by the fight against subversives—hastened to shoot down a hostile but unarmed crowd of *campesinos* who were en route to take over the city hall in the town of Atoyac. Although ties between some of the leaders of that *campesino* group (the Southern Sierra Campesino Organization or OCSS) and the EPR have become evident to a certain degree, this in no way justifies the slaughter that took place.

The EPR has zealously tried to conceal its origins in PROCUP and in the Party of the Poor, well aware that those groups had a poor reputation among members of the Left and that the public's opinion of them was negative. PROCUP is remembered for kidnapping Arnoldo Martínez Verdugo, the former leader of the Mexican Communist Party, in 1985 and for murdering several former party members, such as Francisco Fierro Loza and the Cortez Meza brothers.

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<sup>18</sup> Son of Rubén Figueroa F., who had been kidnapped by the guerrilla Lucio Cabañas in 1974, rescued by the army, and subsequently became governor of Guerrero.

## Parameters of the ERPI's Ideology and Politics

The characteristics of the ERPI are the same as those of the EPR, with some variations, such as the following:

- ERPI members are armed insurgents fighting the government of the bourgeoisie;
- they defend the interests of the poor and the exploited; and
- they do not have confidence in electoral processes.

This group splintered off from the EPR, for two reasons: (1) the EPR's "lack of strategic vision" caused it to lose its base; and (2) after more than 30 years of armed struggle, the EPR's staunch support of a prolonged popular war had yielded few results.<sup>19</sup> The ERPI proposed, on the other hand, to merge prolonged popular war with "insurrectional warfare," because, according to the group's statement, "the people may rise up en masse at any time, and it is necessary to support these popular outbreaks." This statement was made in connection with the elections in July 2000, when, much to the ERPI's dismay, no social outbreak erupted. The ERPI's political strategy is to "update its theory, analyze the correlation of forces, and interpret the reality of Mexico and the world," which is equivalent to saying nothing. According to some observers' estimates, when the ERPI broke with the EPR, it took with it "60 percent of all the EPR's combatants and resources."<sup>20</sup>

In an interview aired on Canal 6 de Julio (Channel July 6)—a television station that is independent but close to the PRD—prior to the 2000 elections, two ERPI commanders were asked if it was possible to have a dialogue or negotiation with the government. Their answer was: "Dialogue for what? A deceitful dialogue? A dialogue aimed at locating and disarming us?" Another reason not to enter into a dialogue, according to the ERPI, is that "dialogue should be based on mutual respect and a balance of forces, [but] at this moment the state has an evident advantage over the armed insurgency...."<sup>21</sup>

On September 8, 1998, an ERPI command arrived at the scene of a campaign event of the PRD candidate for mayor of Acapulco, A. Zeferino Torreblanca. "We are with you," said a female guerrilla who took over the microphone. Torreblanca immediately voiced his rejection of armed struggle and disengaged himself from the guerrillas' presence. Shortly thereafter, the ERPI issued an apology for its appearance at the event. In general, like the EPR itself, the ERPI scorns the entire Mexican political class, whom it considers to be sellouts, and it only concedes the benefit of the doubt to "some currents within the PRD."<sup>22</sup> It is also unthinkable that these groups would lend support to political parties active in Mexico, because

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<sup>19</sup> *Proceso*, no. 1197, October 10, 1999.

<sup>20</sup> *Proceso*, no. 1225, April 23, 2000.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Recently, several *campesinos* were detained in municipalities of Guerrero's Costa Chica (Tecoanapa and Ayutla de los Libres) and accused of associating with armed groups. They were identified at the time as PRD activists (see *La Jornada*, May 23, 2003).

they consider themselves to be not just “armies” but revolutionary “parties” as well; for example, as is well known, the original name of the EPR was the Popular Revolutionary Army–Popular Democratic Revolutionary Party.

## **Attitudes toward the New Government and the Democratic Opposition**

During the 2000 election campaign, the EZLN remained cautious about the uncertain outcome. Once Vicente Fox’s victory and the PRI’s defeat were confirmed, the EZLN gave signals of a change in strategy. The group took Fox at his word when he promised to fix the conflict in Chiapas “in 15 minutes,” and it lodged three conditions for entering into a dialogue with the new government:

- withdrawal of the Mexican army from seven strategic positions;
- release of all Zapatista prisoners; and
- congressional approval of the Indigenous Affairs Act proposed by the Commission on Concordance and Pacification (COCOPA).<sup>23</sup>

President Fox did withdraw the Mexican army from the positions that had been requested and managed to release almost all the prisoners (except those in Querétaro). However, Fox failed to get Congress, let alone his own party (the conservative National Action Party or PAN) to approve COCOPA’s draft bill of the Indigenous Affairs Act without amendments, even after he had made it possible for Zapatista commanders, led by Marcos, to leave Chiapas and undertake a successful political tour of the southeastern and central areas of the country before they addressed the Congress itself.

Marcos and the Zapatista commanders, who were never very sure of President Fox’s true support for the passage of the COCOPA indigenous legislation, returned to Chiapas frustrated. Since then, the EZLN has displayed a cold, distant attitude toward the federal government, although the group has not broken the military truce.

By every indication, the EZLN has given up all hope of achieving anything of substance from the Fox administration. It may be that this stance will lead them to see a PRD victory at the polls in 2006 as their only chance for a positive political resolution. In fact, however, such an outcome is highly questionable, in light of the scathing criticism that Marcos has heaped on the PRD and, in particular, on Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who at the time this paper was prepared, was leading the pack of PRD candidates for his party’s nomination as presidential candidate. The incessant stream of defections of former PRI stalwarts to the PRD will not arouse Marcos’s enthusiasm for this party. Nevertheless, the EZLN may look sympathetically at a PRD electoral victory for one essential reason: the

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<sup>23</sup> COCOPA was and remains the multiparty body of the Congress of the Union (the national legislature) delegated by law with the responsibility to assist in achieving peace in Chiapas. In that capacity, in January 1997, COCOPA presented a draft bill on indigenous affairs that satisfied the Zapatista leadership, but the government of President Zedillo totally rejected the bill.

## 14 Radical Groups in Mexico Today

opportunity once again to put the indigenous affairs legislation before Congress for a vote, under the theory that it is the lesser of evils.

These points aside, it is evident that Marcos became disillusioned with Mexico's political class and intellectuals. The feeling is mutual: they are disillusioned with Marcos as well. Guadalupe Loaeza, a well-known author and sympathizer with leftist causes recently published the following statement:

“We all are Marcos, we all are Zapatistas,” we used to shout at demonstrations. But for quite some time since then things have changed. These days I not only do not know where Marcos is physically located, I fail to find him anywhere. Not in my latest dreams, and much less so among the indigenous peoples of Chiapas. It's true that every now and then I see that *La Jornada* newspaper will publish a piece supposedly signed by Subcommander Marcos, but his words are no longer encouraging to me; in fact, I've even gone so far as to question whether they come from his pen. The fact is they have left me feeling let down, particularly those statements, which were so unfortunate, that he made in connection with the ETA [Basque Fatherland and Freedom] and the Honorable Judge Garzón.”<sup>24</sup>

It would seem that the failure of the Zapatista tour was a decisive factor that led other underground groups to step up their attempts to distance themselves from the Fox administration—a development that Marcos had already foreseen. In an interview with Julio Scherer (founder of the Mexican political review, *Proceso*) during the Zapatista tour, the head of the EZLN said, “If we should fail on the route of dialogue, and we're referring to the EZLN and to Fox, the signal to the radical movements will be crystal clear, in terms of their position toward dialogue and negotiations, since this [dialogue] means to them rolling up the flags, it means selling out, it means betrayal...”<sup>25</sup>

On April 24, 2001, in Acapulco, Guerrero, while still enjoying the euphoria of his first few months in government, President Fox stated that “the guerrillas are finished in Mexico, we are now at peace, enjoying calm, now there is peace....” The guerrillas, who were “finished,” soon responded with an armed attack at a roadblock established by the law enforcement outfit of the Attorney General's Office (PGR) in the outskirts of Iguala, Guerrero, on May 31, 2001. Credit for the attack was claimed by an organization that, at that point, was unknown: the José María Morelos y Pavón National Guerrilla Coordinating Council, a group that was made up of the People's Revolutionary Villista Army (a reference to Francisco “Pancho” Villa, a major figure in the Mexican Revolution), the June 28 Justice Command, and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of the People (FARP).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Reforma*, May 6, 2003. Loaeza's reference is to recent writings in which Marcos scathingly attacked Spain's Judge Baltasar Garzón, while showing tolerance for the terrorist activities of the ETA Basque organization.

<sup>25</sup> *Proceso*, no. 1271, March 11, 2001.

<sup>26</sup> Little is known about the José María Morelos National Guerrilla Coordinating Council beyond its protracted name. The movements that compose it are all splinter factions of the Popular Revolutionary Army, and it is not clear how strategically important its current alliance may be, nor what its military capability is.

For its part, the EPR responded to Fox's statement by characterizing his administration as a "pro-imperialist dictatorship."

Nevertheless, the most revealing attack from the standpoint of the impact in the media was the one perpetrated by FARP on August 8, 2001, when the group set off several explosives at three branches of the BANAMEX bank, which had just been bought out by the U.S. giant, Citigroup Corporation. Even though the attack had occurred at night and there were no injuries, it gained attention in the political media and made it clear to the entire country that the honeymoon—one that the radical groups had supposedly extended to the government of democratic transition—was over.

## **Radical Groups and the Terrorist Threat**

The events described above clearly demonstrate that radical groups or movements have declared war on Vicente Fox. But what does this situation mean in terms of a terrorist threat? The radical movement's battle has very little to do with terrorism, because—and without underestimating the risks attached—Mexico's radical groups have not adopted terrorist tactics as such. And this statement must be made in the strongest possible terms.

The closest these groups have come to such tactics was an incident that broke out in January 1994: when fighting erupted in Chiapas, the EPR and other groups—in solidarity with the EZLN—ignited a powerful explosive in the Mexico City University Square and knocked out energy pylons in Puebla, among other places, but managed to avoid civilian casualties at all times.

Moreover, thus far, there has been no sign of any ties between these Mexican movements and foreign terrorist groups. In addition, Mexico's radical groups, in and of themselves, do not appear to constitute a real danger to national security because of several factors:

- their firepower is inconsequential;
- they lack political cohesion;
- they are confined to isolated hills and have no presence in such strategic national security sites as dams, refineries, hydroelectric plants, ports, airports, or borders; and
- they are under pressure from security forces.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that Mexico's radical organizations could not be a potential or real threat at some time in the future, if, for example, social or political conflicts were to give rise to traumatic events.

## **The Impact of Radical Groups on the Nation**

Because of radical groups' regional roots, it is fitting to ask how significant three particular states are to the radical movement in Mexico: Chiapas, Guerrero, and Oaxaca. First, from an economic and social standpoint, Chiapas, Guerrero, and

## 16 Radical Groups in Mexico Today

Oaxaca are noted for having the lowest indicators of social development, among them

- a low literacy rate;
- marginalization of a large segment of the population;
- diseases associated with underdevelopment;
- isolation and lack of communications;
- numerous agrarian conflicts;
- production consisting largely of raw materials and agricultural products;
- little industrial development; and
- a limited service sector.

The second characteristic these states share is their tradition of local strongmen and political and social violence. The third feature is that Chiapas, Guerrero, and Oaxaca all have been heavily penetrated by narcotics traffic and cultivation, with significant amounts of marijuana and opium poppies grown there, especially in the latter two states. A fourth trait is the extolled place that the tradition of insurgency and armed radicalism occupies in the collective imagination of the population. The fifth and final attribute that they share is geographic location—the three states are contiguous.

The recent history of Guerrero is illustrative. Beginning in the early 1960s, violent confrontations took place between the people and the authorities. The governments tended to confront social conflicts through the principle of authority and repression, in lieu of negotiation; indeed, the governors—Caballero Aburto, Abarca Calderón, Rubén Figueroa, and others—have gone down in Mexican history as agents of repression and corruption. The people of Guerrero also responded with violence, creating an environment for the emergence of such guerrilla leaders as Professors Genaro Vázquez and Lucio Cabañas.

Which other states offer the most propitious climate for the development of radical groups? Simply listing Morelos, Michoacán, Hidalgo, and the state of Mexico may be an oversimplification. But these states have the following traits in common:

- backwardness;
- the weight of the traditional local strongman hierarchy; and
- the tradition of insurgency, particularly in Morelos, with the experience of Florencio “Güero” Medrano in the 1970s as an example. More recent examples of insurgent-like tendencies include the mid-2002 uprising in the city of San Salvador Atenco in Mexico State objecting to the construction of a new international airport.

Which strategy can be used to neutralize these groups? The first requirement is to acknowledge that the above conditions could bring about a situation that can

have an adverse impact on national security and domestic peace. In other words, national government policies must address the socioeconomic problems in these areas. Thus, neutralizing these groups requires the formulation or expansion of public policies for social and economic development, including programs for fighting poverty, meeting basic nutritional needs, supporting small farmers, improving community health, providing education, building and improving rural roads, and ensuring community and municipal safety. Moreover, political intelligence is required; that is, knowledge of social issues and political operators at both the mid-level and micro levels in order to focus on and bring about a political resolution to inevitable conflicts.

Neutralizing radical groups also requires the continued use of army and military intelligence not just for combating subversive activities but also for counteracting the bands of narcotics traffickers in these areas. Much of the outcry against the militarization of the mountainous areas of Guerrero stems from the special interests of drug traffickers and armed groups, and it would be senseless to believe that the protest is based on anything else. At the same time, however, the Mexican army needs to extend respect for the human rights of the inhabitants of these regions. Violations of human rights continue to reverberate, even though many of the deeds that are brought up occurred several years ago, such as the 1998 El Charco slaughter in Guerrero.

An opposite question can be posed: What is the best way to relaunch these groups? Which government policies promote them? Undoubtedly, the government's negligence and expressions of disdain—such as Fox's statement that "in Mexico there are no longer any guerrillas"—help the cause of radical groups. Heavy-handed policies toward conflicts, in general, and the presence of radical groups in regions in conflict also serve to promote these groups elsewhere. Other factors that encourage the spread of radical groups include, but are not limited to

- indiscriminate and illegal repression;
- human rights violations, especially abuses suffered by entire communities;
- the perceived pettiness of social policies; and
- the strongman tradition of local fiefdoms, corporatism, and corruption.

Finally, it is important to recognize that the groups discussed in this paper do not constitute all the groups existing in Mexico today. The media have referred to 14 or 15 different groups, but the specific groups described herein are undoubtedly the most important and the only ones that have a history and significance of their own.

## Conclusion

What impact do radical groups have on the current political scene in Mexico? From the author's perspective, their impact is negligible; they count for very little and are more of a potential factor lurking in the wings than they are a true threat. When Marcos says that the radical groups will keep a close eye on what emerges



## 18 Radical Groups in Mexico Today

from the dealings between the EZLN and the government, he speaks as if the armed groups were decisive, or at least dangerous, actors. But they are not; their only capability is to provoke scandal, instill fear, or cause a nuisance.

Something left unsaid about these radical groups is that the arguments they employ for their own internal justification dovetail neatly with the positions of broad sectors of the legal opposition, the PRD, in particular. The change in the Mexican presidency led the PRD into an identity crisis over the soundness of its objectives: Is it still valid, for example, to struggle for a “democratic revolution” when the country is in the midst of a “democratic transition”? On the other hand, the groups bearing arms have been left confused by the fall from power of their historic adversary—that is, the PRI government. Moreover, even without their longtime enemy, these groups continue to be harassed by Mexico’s army and security forces.

Part of the collateral fallout from this situation is the alienation of those PRD members who harbor radical tendencies or sympathies with the guerrillas. The groups that once smiled upon these tendencies are now either retreating or reformulating their strategies. It is one thing to wink at armed radical opposition under PRI governments—that may be a legacy of the “dirty war” of the 1970s. But it is quite a different matter to maintain the same strategy when the country sees itself in a different light—as a nation that is making the transition to democracy. Above and beyond the shifting fortunes of the new government or the ballots that each party may garner in the next round of elections, this democratic legitimacy makes a dramatic difference.

## About the Author

Gustavo Adolfo Hiraless Morán was born in Mexicali, Baja California. He is a self-taught author and political analyst. For several years, he was a columnist with the newspapers *El Nacional* and *Uno más Uno* and an occasional contributor to the magazine *Nexos*. He has written several books of essays and research, *La Liga 23 de Septiembre, Orígenes y Naufragio* [The September 23 League, Origins and Ruin]; *El complot de Aburto* [The Aburto Conspiracy]; *Camino a Acteal* [Road to Acteal]; and *Chiapas, otra Mirada* [Chiapas, Another Look]; and an autobiographical novel, *Memoria de la Guerra de los Justos* [Memoir of the War of the Righteous]. He is currently doing research for a book on the disappeared in the period of Mexico's "dirty war." Morán was a political prisoner due to his underground activities during the 1960s. After receiving amnesty, he joined the Mexican Communist Party, where he became a member of its Policy Commission (Politburo). Thereafter, he was leader of the Unified Socialist Party of Mexico and of the Mexican Socialist Party (PSUM). While with PSUM he was editor in chief of the official party newspaper, the weekly *Así Es* [That's How It Is].

In public service, he was director of the Organization Area in the National Solidarity Program and coordinator of the Program for Mayors and County Commissioners at the National Solidarity Institute. He was an adviser to the secretary of government (interior), Dr. Jorge Carpizo, in 1994; adviser to the Executive Branch Delegation at the peace talks with the EZLN from 1995 to 1998; and adviser to President Ernesto Zedillo, in 1998 and 1999. Currently, he is an adviser to the chair of the National Commission for Human Rights, Dr. José Luis Soberanes Fernández.