

Insurgencies and National Security in Mexico (1993 - 2003): Political Frontiers, Myth
and Hegemony, the Role of the EZLN

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To my mother, Margarita Chiprés and my children, Aura Elvira and Pedro Salvador. To my son José Salvador and my brother Pedro Felipe

To the memory of Professor Manuel Buendía, assassinated on 30 May 1984

To all those who believe

Abstract

This thesis contributes to our understanding of Mexican political history from 1993 to 2003, arguing that a detailed account of the nature and evolution of security discourse during this period should form a key part of any such understanding. It relies on general discourse-theoretic tools and considerable first-hand participant-observation accounts and interviews conducted by the author himself, in order to suggest that the nature and evolution of Mexican security discourse is best understood as a function of the specific *interaction* between security and insurgency actors, rather than as a function merely of the vested interests or ideologies of these actors.

The thesis comprises five chapters, each of which will tackle an aspect of the central object of my research, namely, the evolving political frontier constructed through the interaction between insurgent and national security actors. After reviewing the main literature relevant to this topic and laying the theoretical foundations for the subsequent analysis (Chapter 1) I argue that, given the uniqueness of the Mexican context (specified in the Introduction), this political frontier was established in 1994 through the dynamic exchange between the EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation) and representatives of the regime (Chapter 2). Here I advance my main hypothesis, which questions an overly romanticized and positive rendition of the EZLN's role since its emergence in 1994, widespread in the literature, qualifying significantly its supposedly progressive impact. I argue, instead, that the post 1994 political and social stability was largely a result of the Mexican regime's successful adaptation to the new situation by mobilizing elements in the pre 1994 national security discourse in a novel way. In this view, the regime has effectively, though by no means always intentionally or through competence, outmanoeuvred the EZLN by setting up the latter as a *standard* against which to judge insurgency movements in general as legitimate or illegitimate. In support of this hypothesis, I examine in detail not simply the interaction between these central characters, but also their individual and collective response to, and interaction with, key movements and events: the emergence of the EPR (Popular Revolutionary Army) in 1996 (Chapter 3), the CGH (General Council of Strike) student movement in the context of the strike at UNAM (the National Autonomous University of Mexico) in 2000 (Chapter 4), and the Zapatista March of 2001 (Chapter 5).

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List of acronyms

CCRI-CG: Revolutionary Clandestine Indigenous Committee -General Command (Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena-Comandancia General)

CENEVAL: National Council of (EXAMS) Evaluation (Consejo Nacional de Evaluación)

CEU: University Student Council (Consejo Estudiantil Universitario)

CGH: National Council of Strike (Consejo Nacional de Huelga)

CISEN: National Security Investigation Centre (Centro de Investigación y Seguridad Nacional)

CNTE: National Coordination of Education Workers (Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación)

COCOPA: Commission on Concordance and Pacification (Comisión de Concordia y Pacificación)

EPR: Popular revolutionary Army (Ejército Popular Revolucionario)

ERPI: Revolutionary Army of the Insurgent People (Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo Insurgente)

EZLN: Zapatista Army of National Liberation (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional)

FLN: National Liberation Forces (Fuerzas de Liberación Nacional)

FAC-MLN: Wide Front for the Construction of the National Liberation Movement (Frente Amplio para la Construcción del Movimiento de Liberación Nacional)

FZLN: Zapatista Front for National Liberación (Frente Zapatista de Liberación Nacional)

INAP: National Institute of Public Administration (Instituto Nacional de Administración Pública)

NAFTA: North American Free Trade Agreement (Tratado de Libre Comercio de América del Norte)

OCSS: Southern Sierra Peasants Organisation (Organización Campesina de la Sierra del Sur)

PAN: National Action Party (Partido Acción Nacional)

PFP: Federal Preventive Police (Policía Federal Preventiva)

PRI: Revolutionary Institutional Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional)

PRD: Revolutionary Democratic Party (Partido de la Revolución Democrática)

Procup-Pdlp: Clandestine Workers' Revolutionary Party Union of the People-Party of the Poor (Partido Revolucionario Obrero Clandestino Unión del Pueblo-Partido de los Pobres)

RGP: General Regulations of Payments (Reglamento General de Pagos, UNAM)

SEDENA: Secretariat of National defence (Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional)

Segob: Secretariat of Governance / Ministry of Interior (Secretaría de Gobernación)

UNAM: National Autonomous University of Mexico (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México)

Uprisings strengthen regimes that they do not overthrow.

Victor Hugo, father of the French Republic

Later, that man *that has a God inside and whose name is Marcos* handed the Mexican flag to Rosario Ibarra...¹

Elena Poniatowska in referring to the EZLN's leader during the National Democratic Convention organized by the EZLN in August 1994

What is different about our movement, the *Zapatista*, is not the long-term process but the idea that the movement parts *from the consciousness*, not ours, but people's.²

Fernando Yáñez, *Comandante Germán* - founder of the FLN and the EZLN - the so called *hermano mayor* by Rafael Guillén, *Subcomandante Marcos*.

The EZLN did not cause the reorganisation of the security of the State but it certainly catalysed it after January 1994.³

Jorge Tello Peón, former general director of the Investigation and National Security Centre (CISEN) and undersecretary of the Interior in 2000

Those who live are those who fight.

Victor Hugo, again, protector of those revolutionaries who failed

¹ *La Jornada*, 16 August 1994. Poniatowska is one of the most relevant writers in Mexico and Ibarra is a central organizer of the search for the *desaparecidos* linked to the repression against guerrillas during the 1970s. My emphasis. The favourable predisposition within segments of the liberal left in relation to the EZLN's leader reached the point of total absence of the criticism characteristic of the left. Poniatowska's comment is also revealing of the perception of *Marcos* as a political actor with whom it was worthwhile to unconditionally identify with.

² *La Jornada*, 20 January 2003. My emphasis.

³ My interview, 18 March 2003.