

Alternative Pathways to Peace and Development in Rural Chiapas, Mexico

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ABSTRACT

The concept of peacebuilding holds enormous importance for international relations, particularly in regions facing violent conflict and those recovering from such conflict. However, in order for peacebuilding to be a viable alternative to traditional peace operations, scholars and practitioners need to have a shared understanding of what peacebuilding is and what goals it hopes to achieve, in addition to fluid strategies for implementation. This dissertation seeks to identify strategies for building sustainable peace through sustainable community development and democratization. Using a qualitative metasynthesis of five ethnographies conducted in Chiapas Mexico, this dissertation develops mid-range theories, or strategies, for building peace in Chiapas and in regions experiencing low-intensity conflict more generally.

Acknowledgements

The tradition of the acknowledgements has become a device for more than simply saying thank you to editors, supporters, and readers. It is also a way of acknowledging intellectual and interpersonal sources of inspiration and growth. Those who have helped me in my own personal growth and inspiration have been numerous. First, I would like to thank my wife, Eva for her patience, understanding, persistent motivation, and finally for taking the time to carefully correct my overzealous use of commas and paragraph-long sentences. I would also like to thank my children, Noah and Maya. They have provided the inspiration to move forward in the darkest of times...especially in those times when I questioned why I was pursuing a Ph.D. My intellectual growth was inspired by my wife and enabled by a thoughtful and attentive committee. Dr. Joyce Rothschild paved the way for this research by introducing me to the methodology, and wisely suggesting at the beginning of the project that I would find the most useful clues for peacebuilding in the Zapatista community structures. While I was unsure of this at the time, it proved to be an insightful and accurate prediction on her part. Dr. Max Stephenson, Dr. Markus Schulz, and Dr. Ioannis Stivachtis were instrumental in the completion of this project. Each brought an area of expertise that informed my research and guided me toward a more concrete analysis of the situation. This project would not have been possible without the careful consideration and creative input of my committee. To each of you, I say "Thank you."

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The goals of peacebuilding are significant not only to the people involved in conflict, but also to the world in general. With increasing concern over the environment, natural resources, agriculture, and health in the 21st century, the world has witnessed increases in small wars that spill across borders and become transnational conflicts. Examples include several of the conflicts in Africa that began as inter-ethnic disputes over resources and unresolved social cleavages created by colonization, but spread to neighboring countries as refugees fled community-level violence and genocide. The low-intensity war in Chiapas reflects the global nature of many contemporary conflicts; the transnational solidarity network that formed during the course of the conflict has been the foundational case for the study of the concept of network warfare and netwars (Ronfeldt, Arquila et al. 1998; Arquila and Ronfeldt 2001). Arquila and Ronfeldt (1997) define netwar as “societal-level ideational conflicts waged in part through internetted modes of communication; [differentiating it from] cyberwar [which is fought] at the military level [of civilization] (27). While the centrality of the internet to the Zapatista experience is questionable (Schulz 2007, 130), it has become clear that human networks of Mexican and international activists and NGOs played a significant role in securing a cessation of violence following the uprising (Arquila and Ronfeldt 1997, Bob 2005, Schulz 2007), and it is these human networks that have been critical in the peace process.

Traditional approaches to peace focused on nation states and were designed for interventions in inter-state conflict; however, these approaches are inadequate for addressing the complex demands of intra-state civil conflict and network warfare. Fortunately, relatively recent developments in peace theories and supporting technology offer the potential for the promotion of peace that is conceived as pluriethnic cooperation built through mutual respect for cultures, religions, human rights, and dignity, as opposed to peacebuilding strategies that inadvertently promote structural violence or that seek peace through formal military intervention. In other words, the “alternative” approach is to build mutual respect and prevent conflict rather than intervening once violence starts; it involves seeking peace at the lowest levels of society and not simply with elite representatives of different groups.

This dissertation seeks to extend our understanding of successful peacebuilding strategies and structures that can promote the development of cooperation over competition, reconciliation and resilience over domination. The findings of this dissertation will be limited by the recent development of the Zapatista government and economic structures. That is, since the political and economic structures were only implemented in 2003, only limited information is available about how successful these structures have been at improving the lives of the *Chiapanecos*. This dissertation project engages ethnographies conducted in Chiapas between the 1960s and 2005 (published in 2007). Although it is impossible to predict with certainty whether or not the strategies identified will

work long-term, they offer insights into bottom-up peacebuilding techniques that can, in the meantime, promote democratic governance of the social, political, and economic processes necessary to build sustainable peace.

Peacebuilding, and for that matter, conflict, occurs at the intersection of economic, political, and social conditions, and with that understanding, the project employs an interdisciplinary approach. Beginning from a theoretical perspective of bottom-up peacebuilding as described by Hemmer and Garb, et al. (2006), the project undertakes a metasynthesis of five ethnographies conducted in southeastern Mexico, in order to investigate the relationships among conflict and peace, and democratization and development. The goal of the project is to develop a perspective on bottom-up peacebuilding that will be applicable to low-intensity intrastate conflicts, particularly complex conflicts where actors are difficult to categorize and/or indigenous rights play a critical role. For instance, in Chiapas, the actors involved in the conflict and the nature of the conflict have changed over time. The conflict has always involved the Mexican Government, but with the growth of populist parties in the state and federal government, the role of the federal and state governments in direct action against the Zapatistas and the EZLN has diminished. The military still plays a role in the conflict; however, it is unclear how much of this role is directed from the federal level.

The dissertation focuses on the conflict in Chiapas, which was selected for a number of reasons. First, it is a conflict that, at least in the eyes of some of the participants, has been underway for more than 500 years. Second, it was a

grassroots intrastate conflict that has devolved into a low-intensity conflict, which is characteristic of the nature of the most common active conflicts around the world. A final reason the Chiapas conflict is a useful case for analysis is the widespread academic interest in and engagement with the Mayan population in the region and with the Zapatistas¹ themselves. The conflict has captured the interest of academics, activists, and media outlets in many regions of the world. As such, an abundance of qualitative data presents a challenge of scale and requires a delimitative precision of scope to make this project manageable. At the same time, it allows development of a vivid picture of the people in Chiapas and the nature and course of the conflict.

The Zapatistas have worked closely with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and activists from all over the world to promote a democratic space for collective leadership, bottom-up development, and indigenous autonomy and self-determination. In essence, the Zapatistas are building upon the resilience of the *Indígenas* to build peaceful, resilient, and sustainable communities with comparatively limited resources. This fact also makes them a strong choice for this study, as many of the unique developments at the local level are in this case invaluable to broader questions of peacebuilding.

¹ The movement is named after Emiliano Zapata who has become a hero of the rural farmers and communities in the some of the poorest regions of the country. Zapata fought for land reforms that favored the peasants in the Mexican Revolution of 1910 until he was ambushed and killed in a carefully staged, feigned, defection of a colonel in the Mexican army in 1919. His movement fell apart and his and reforms were never fully realized.

Despite a significant presence of international and domestic NGOs and foreign aid agencies from around the world, there has been no formal international peacebuilding operation established in Chiapas that addresses the civil conflict between the *Indígenas*², the political and economic elites in Chiapas, and various components of the Mexican government; mediates peace negotiations; coordinates development; and helps to build resilient communities. Additionally, domestic peacebuilding efforts such as the Federal *Comisión de Concordia y Pacificación* (COCOPA- Commission for Agreement and Pacification) and the civil society *Comisión Nacional de Intermediación* (CONAI-National Commission of Mediation) “failed to bear lasting fruit” (Earle and Simonelli 2005, 95). In response, some of the Mayans have taken steps toward coordinating development and building autonomous sustainable communities, rather than accepting development programs that address not their needs but the needs and objectives of the government, *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), or NGOs and their donors.

The remainder of this chapter sets the scene for the project with a brief examination of the history of the Chiapas conflict and at peacebuilding in the region. The chapter concludes with an outline of the specific research questions addressed by the dissertation project.

² *Indígenas* is used in this dissertation as an identifier for the indigenous people of Mexico; in particular, it refers to the indigenous people in Chiapas.

A Brief History

I begin my description of the Zapatista experience with a brief discussion of the history of the Maya people. This will help to situate the Zapatistas as an indigenous movement that is the product of thousands of years of history.

The history of the Zapatista movement is long and bloody. They find their roots in the Mayan Culture, which has endured as a continuous Mayan linguistic agricultural group for over two-thousand years in Mesoamerica (Coe 2005). They flourished as a civilization: they developed mathematics and a written language; they had historical records, a common religion, astrology, and a hierarchical caste system within which communal property was held by familial groups (Webster 2002; Coe 2005). This came to a gradual end with the collapse of the classical Mayan civilization around 925 AD and the subsequent dispersion of the Maya into the jungles, where they maintained their agricultural heritage, but not on the same scale as before. The Mayan diaspora is blamed on many factors, including environmental degradation and social upheaval. By the time the Spanish arrived, the Maya were spread out across Mesoamerica and had no central authority to be conquered (Coe 2005).

The Spanish conquest of Mexico was marked by brutality, but it was met by resolved resistance in the lands of the Maya. The first Spanish conquistador in Mexico, Hernández de Cordoba, died at the hands of Mayan warriors in 1517. The last Mayan city, Tayasel that fell in 1697 to the Spanish conquest was on Lake Peten Itza in modern day Guatemala. The Maya of Mexico have repeatedly

staged uprisings against conquerors and subsequent elite landowners throughout post-conquest history. Neil Harvey (2005) provides a vivid picture of indigenous uprisings. The Tzeltal Revolt of 1712 was brutally suppressed to discourage future uprisings. Interethnic conflict was left unaddressed as *Indígenas* apparently complied to avoid additional punishment. The *Ladinos* had punished the *Indígenas* they captured by cutting their ears off (42). In the mid-1860's liberal and conservative factions of *Ladinos* were engaged in a conflict over who would control the indigenous labor and natural/agricultural resources in Chiapas. Tzeltal and Tzotzil Mayans rebelled as a result of increasing taxation by both the conservative and liberal factions of ladino elites (46). By 1870 the rebellion, which had as its goal local community autonomy over regional control, had been violently suppressed by Ladino militias (47). The period of the Mexican Revolution did not see significant indigenous uprising in Chiapas. The Ladino elites enacted the Servant Liberation law, which cancelled the debts of indentured servants, limited the length of the work-day, and obliged landowners to pay the campesinos. These concessions facilitated the landowners' ability to enlist the *Indígenas* in an army to fight off constitutionalist forces (Jung 2008, 92). More recently, land invasions in the latter half of the twentieth century have marked indigenous rebellion, at first organized by socialist activists, and later undertaken by various indigenous groups. These invasions have been based on legitimate petitions to land that were delayed for years, invasions aimed at wresting control of the most arable land from large landholders, and also

invasions orchestrated by corrupt individuals seeking profit. These invasions were also violently suppressed. For instance, the massacre at Golonchán in 1980 is notable. Landowners disguised as police accompanied by federal soldiers under the command of General Absolón Castellanos Domínguez fired on the Golonchán community of invaders for two hours. The barrage, which included cannon fire, left 12 dead and 18 wounded (Bobrow-Strain 2007, 105). While this is only a brief overview of the numerous indigenous uprisings, it demonstrates not only a long history of resistance, but also a long history of trying to reclaim lands that had been seized from them over time. Additionally, it demonstrates the history of violent suppression of rebellions and as such seems to justify the fear of repression that is shared amongst the Zapatista communities (Marcos 2007).

The Lacandon jungle was colonized during efforts at pacifying indigenous unrest without threatening the large landholdings of the Chiapas elites, and in an effort to relocate communities for the development of hydroelectric power. This period of colonization created a pluriethnic region of *Indígenas* in the jungle, which served as the location in which the *Ejercito Zapatista Liberacion Nacional*³ (EZLN) would build an indigenous army of thousands of *campesinos*⁴. The concentration of multiple ethnicities of *Indígenas* in the Lacandon jungle created an atmosphere in which Zapatistas would grow to prefer community and

³ The Zapatista National Liberation Army

⁴ A term that indicates a peasant without the designation of ethnicity

regional autonomy over autonomy based upon indigenous identity or ethnicity. (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001). The *Indígenas* in the Lacandon jungle live in communities that are vastly different from their ancestral lands, both ethnically and ecologically. When the EZLN makes the statement that they are the product of 500 years of oppression, they are demonstrating their shared identity to the world. For the Mayans in Chiapas, the resistance to the Spanish conquest never ended. The period of independence was marked by efforts at acculturation and oppression of indigenous identities as the *Creolo*⁵ conquerors retained the economic and political power in the region. Interestingly, these efforts at forced acculturation created a class of mestizos, persons of mixed *Creolo* and indigenous descent. The period of the revolution was marked by acculturation and oppression. The mestizos became the heirs to power after the revolution; again, the *Chiapaneco* elites retained their power and authority by adopting the rhetoric of the revolution, and their power was preserved by the state government through efforts to destabilize land redistribution in the state. The elites in Chiapas were holding the reins of government when the revolution occurred, and as agricultural producers, they were the backbone of the Mexican economy (Ross 1995; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007). Finally, in the neoliberal period, the *Indígenas* found themselves once again threatened by oppression and violence. The Mexican government worked carefully in the indigenous

⁵ In this dissertation this term is used, as it is by *Indígenas* in Chiapas, to indicate a person of non-indigenous European descent.

communities in an effort to co-opt their organizations, and has used violence and the persistent threat of violence to prevent the *Indígenas* from threatening the economic and political efforts of the Chiapas elites and the power of the PRI (Ross 1995; Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007; Speed, Castillo et al. 2008).

On January 1st, 1994, the primarily indigenous EZLN emerged from their jungle communities to foment revolution in Mexico. On the day that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) became active, this relatively unknown guerrilla group in Chiapas, Mexico, captured the attention of the world. It is no surprise that while discussing the military response to their uprising in 1994, the Zapatistas write in *The Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle* that they “were running and fighting, and fighting and running just like our ancestors had done, without ever surrendering or giving up or being defeated” (EZLN 1996). They had organized, trained, and outfitted like a secret whispered in the jungle for ten years. The EZLN argued that the NAFTA was detrimental to the already marginalized indigenous peoples because it would promote an increase in the concentration of power and resources into an increasingly smaller portion of the Mexican population and expose the small production farmers to open competition with the mechanized, mass production, corporate farms in the United States (Marcos 2007, 273).

The Mexican government, realizing that there was significant domestic and international support for the Zapatista movement, moved to contain its overt

military response in the early days of the uprising and entered into negotiations with the Zapatistas. In 1996, the Zapatistas and the Mexican government entered into a peace agreement called the San Andres Accords. Some of the provisions of these accords were to cement indigenous rights into the Mexican constitution and to take measures to reign in neoliberal policies that threatened the livelihood of indigenous communities across Mexico. These provisions were never realized (Ross 1995; Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007; Speed, Castillo et al. 2008). Instead, the Mexican legislature rejected the accords that had been negotiated between the Zapatistas and the federal government, and by 2001 had completely negated the accords and made an effort to exclude indigenous autonomy from Mexican politics (Marcos 2006). The government chose to pass a constitutional amendment that placed indigenous rights in the public domain by bringing indigenous people into the domain of public interest but not granting them collective rights. Additionally, it acknowledges the autonomy of indigenous communities at the local level but makes no concessions for regional governance. Finally, the accords grant the indigenous autonomous communities preferential access to natural resources located in their autonomous communities but does not grant collective rights over them. This watered down version of the San Andres Accords was a serious disappointment to indigenous rights activists. (Jung 2008, 192-3) They had been denied their right to govern their own communities and determine the course of their community's development

(Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005).

The Zapatista response was to enact the provisions of the San Andres Accords despite the congressional rejection. The result was the development of autonomous governing bodies and the subsequent launch of the “Other Campaign” in 2005, a political assault on status quo politics that helped to change the face of Mexican government.

While the Zapatistas did not see the realization of revolutionary politics sweeping the countryside in 1994, they experienced a growth in solidarity movements that provoked demonstrations against the military response across Mexico (Ross 1995; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005). Because of this response by a global and domestic civil society, and the media attention they gained, the Zapatistas were able to strengthen the indigenous rights movement by bringing it out of the jungles of Chiapas and making it, and themselves, available to a broader audience within Mexico and abroad (Ross 1995; Ronfeldt, Arquila et al. 1998; Arquila and Ronfeldt 2001; Schulz 2007).

The Zapatista movement has had a greater impact on the federal government than a traditional guerrilla organization would be able to achieve because of its collaboration with an international support network of indigenous rights, human rights, and other national and international activists (Ross 1995; Ronfeldt, Arquila et al. 1998; Arquila and Ronfeldt 2001; Nash 2001; Bob 2005; Schulz 2007; Munoz Ramirez 2008). One of the more important outcomes of this collaboration is the ability of the *Indígenas* to bring their claims, arguments, and

demands to a broader international audience. For instance, when the Mexican Supreme Court declined to rule on the procedural challenge to constitutional revisions that eliminated article 27, the *Indígenas* that brought the case took it to the International Labor Organization (ILO) under Convention 169 that guarantees indigenous rights, self-determination, and autonomy (Jung 2008, 189). Additionally, the Zapatistas benefitted from a domestic media support network (Bob 2005). Since the uprising, "indigenous rights have been placed squarely on the national agenda" (Bob 2005). The Mexican government is no longer able to ignore the needs of the indigenous peoples of Mexico as it had done for decades, and is limited in its capacity to oppress the *Indígenas* organizations and communities. This limitation of capacity for overt engagement with the rebels and their support networks has prompted the government to undertake a strategy of low-intensity conflict in the region, supported by the militarization and paramilitarization of the region and accompanied by counterinsurgency development that seeks to divide communities and erode local support networks for the indigenous organizations in Chiapas (Ross 1995; Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007; Speed, Castillo et al. 2008). The increase in violence along the northern border also increases the potential for Mexican government to increase pressure on the southern border (along which the Zapatista communities are numerous) in the name of fighting human and narcotics trafficking.

The Zapatista Experience

The historical link to each other and to the land upon which they have lived for millennia is exceptionally strong among the Zapatista communities. These links provide an interesting perspective on the conflict in Chiapas. First, a strong connection to the land helps to explain their passion regarding indigenous rights and land reform issues. Second, the history of oppression and resistance makes them professional activists in a sense. Five hundred years of resistance to an invading force is an exceptional experience for any culture to endure. While it has not been persistent uprising, it surely has been persistent resistance and resentment. While resistance is difficult to find historical evidence for, as it typically occurs in a hidden transcript (Scott 1990), the repeated indigenous rebellions and more recently, land invasions, serve as evidence of this resentment and resistance (Ross 1995; Nash 2001; Harvey 2005). This history makes the Zapatistas' community-building efforts amidst an indigenous uprising particularly interesting and complex. In fact, several aspects of the Zapatista experience set it apart.

The conflict in Chiapas has transformed from passive resistance, to violent revolution, then to an armed, but non-violent, resistance (the causes of these transformations are discussed in Chapter 4); this transformation has been crucial to subsequent developments in the region. Similarly, the role of the Mexican government has evolved over time. While the military is still involved in a protracted occupation of the Lacandon rainforest, it is not as pervasive as it was

before Vicente Fox took office (Martinez-Torres 2006, 108). While the Federal government had been involved in oppression and the destruction of Indigenous society in the past, at other times it has been a strong supporter of indigenous movements in Chiapas, at times standing as a guardian against the ruling local elites. In this conflict, there are no absolutes. The *Indígenas* are not all Zapatistas, the *Ladinos* are not all opposed to indigenous autonomy, and the government at all levels has both supporters and enemies of the Zapatistas serving in office.

Peacebuilding operations typically prioritize disarmament as the prerequisite for all other peacebuilding initiatives (Junne and Verkoren 2005). In the case of the Zapatistas, it seems that the strategy of disarmament (in the absence of a significant intervening force, and without the complete demilitarization of the region) would have undermined the possibility of peace and opened the door for the silencing of the Zapatistas' voice, and by extension the silencing of the voices of the communities they represent. Given that evidence of violence perpetrated against the civilian Mayan population is abundant throughout the history of Mexico, the indigenous people of Mexico have every reason to believe that if they disarmed they would be crushed and silenced by the Mexican government through the *Secretaria de la Defensa Nacional* (SEDENA), vigilantes, and mercenaries.

Furthermore, the *Indígenas* in Chiapas have a long and well-documented history of being violently oppressed, as the Mexican authorities and paramilitaries (sometimes covertly supported by authorities) have traditionally

employed deception, brutality, assassination, and rape as strategies for subjugating the indigenous population. The *Guardias Blancas* and *Chinchilunes* are PRI-aligned paramilitaries that carry out attacks on indigenous communities, establish checkpoints on roads leading through the indigenous communities, and are often found to be involved in official evictions and other official military actions (Ross 1995; Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007; Speed, Castillo et al. 2008). There are dozens of these paramilitaries and armed gangs in Chiapas, and their number and level of violence is increasing with the militarization of the region. In a communiqué dated January 18th, 1994, Subcommandante Marcos revealed the suspicion that if the EZLN disarmed, the *Indígenas* would suffer a distinctly violent response:

When an armed political force (like the Mexican Federal Government) asks another armed political force (like the one from the EZLN) to turn in their guns, that means, in political and military terms, a request for unconditional surrender. In exchange for this unconditional surrender, the federal government offers us the same as always: an adjustment of internal accounts, a package of declarations, some promises, and more bureaucratic dependency.

We are suspicious of the request “to lay down our weapons.” Mexican and Latin American history teaches us that those who turn in their arms, trusting the “forgiveness” of their pursuers, end up mutilated by some death squad or political faction or the government. Why shouldn’t we believe the same will happen here?

(Subcommandante Marcos 1995)

At the time of this statement, the Zapatistas were naively unaware that the violence they were experiencing would become localized by the federal

government's efforts to promote the goals of counterinsurgency and low-intensity conflict, which included the destruction of the EZLN and all indigenous organizations that refused to align with the PRI and the *Ladinos* that still dominated state politics. PRI-sanctioned violence has included the torture and murder by armed men of the indigenous leader Maximiliano Hernández in 1996, the murder by PRI-lista-aligned *campesinos* of a member of a peasant organization after an electoral dispute, and the torture, murder, or assassination of thousands of others in the region since 1994 (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Harvey 2005).

Consider also the January 1994 torture and disappearance of three *Indígenas* from the Morelia ejido outside of Altamirano described by John Ross (1995, 114-119). In the wake of the Zapatista rebellion the men of the town were assembled on a basketball court in the town center. The military left the men face down on the court for hours within earshot of the screams of men inside the local church being tortured with electrical lines attached to their scrotums and by dunking their faces in the baptismal. One soldier commented that the town was going to be full of orphans (114). Finally, three men, covered in blood, were escorted out of the church, placed in a military ambulance, and never seen again. The community reportedly found their bones, clothes, and false teeth in a nearby pit used to dispose of animal carcasses. The military and government took great pains to prevent the identification of the bodies; one federal pathologist claimed that the bones had been in the pit for three years. The military repeatedly seized

the bones at a checkpoint outside of town as independent pathologists attempted to get them out of the community and to a lab in efforts determine the identity and cause of death of the men to whom the bones belonged.

Paramilitary violence in Chiapas became more visible to the world with the massacre in Acteal in 1997. The massacre of Acteal was carried out by the “Red Mask” paramilitary organization. The victims were members of an autonomous community in Chenalhó. The PRI-aligned *Indígenas* in the town center were aggravated because the community elected a mayor from the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), but he was prevented from taking office by the PRI elites. The PRI paramilitary began attacking the PRD supporters when they decided to declare an autonomous community, seating Avendaño, the elected mayor, in a parallel government. Eventually the group had to flee town and went to a neighboring *ejido* (a state-sanctioned communal farm). On December 22, 1997, while the PRD supporters prayed in church, the Red Masks attacked and killed forty-five of the unarmed *Indígenas*, thirty-six of whom were women and children. They “ripped open the bellies of four pregnant women and chopped up the embryos with their machetes” (Nash 2001). The mayor of Chanalhó had distributed the weapons to the group, and the Mexican military had conducted their training, which included viewings of pornographic videos (Nash 2001). During the three hours of torture and murder, the Mexican military stationed at the edge of town did nothing to intervene (Jung 2008). The brutality of this massacre sent chills throughout the region. Thousand of Zapatistas fled

their homes and communities, fearing more attacks and massacres (Earle and Simonelli 2005).

The campaign of terror was fully engaged. The *Ladinos'* fear of the *Indígenas* army, the EZLN, was diminishing with the presence of massive numbers of troops that allowed the paramilitaries to operate with impunity. While the perpetrators at the local level of this massacre were charged with their crimes, the inquiry stopped locally and refused to acknowledge that the murderers were a paramilitary group supported by the PRI. Nonetheless, human rights groups in the region were able to make these larger connections and now live in the same fear as the Zapatistas (Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005)

Thus, the fact that the Zapatistas remain armed, although they refuse to use their weapons even in the face of overt and covert provocation (Weinberg 2000), has allowed their communities to maintain some sense of security in the face of ongoing threats from paramilitary violence, assassinations, and military oppression. Conversely, though, it provides the Mexican government with the opportunity to cast them as revolutionary guerillas akin to the narco-guerilla groups that were common in Latin America in the latter half of the twentieth century.

The Zapatistas shadowed the 2005 presidential campaign with events aimed at raising awareness of the corruption involved in Mexican politics and providing an alternative perspective for governance in a campaign called *La Otra*

Campaña (Marcos 2006). The Other Campaign did not field its own candidate for president, nor did it endorse any of the standing candidates. Rather, it raised awareness of the political process and informed voters that there were valid reasons for questioning the electoral process.

The Zapatistas represent a post-modern revolutionary force, introducing a bottom-up form of democratization that reconfigures state power from within through the mobilization of a community and from without through participation in a global civil society. The power transformation perpetuated by the Zapatistas has affected both Mexican domestic and foreign policy and, even more significantly for the purposes of this project, has far-reaching implications for sustainable peacebuilding.

The Zapatista experience is unique both because of the internal organization of the Zapatista communities and because of the connection to an armed insurgency group, the EZLN. In the autonomous communities, there is a markedly horizontal structure in which the collectively democratic communities hold power, and the EZLN, the armed branch of the Zapatista movement, is controlled by the autonomous communities, and does not act without their guidance.

From the beginning, the EZLN framed themselves as the representatives of the oppressed, but not as the vanguard that needed power to protect them. In other words, although they had every opportunity to take power and form a guerilla government, placing loyal municipalities under their control, the EZLN

did not do so. Instead, they requested protection under the Geneva conventions and set up local elections, so the people of the communities they “liberated” would be able to hold free and fair elections and choose their leadership amongst themselves. This was unique in and of itself. And, despite a continued identity as an oppressed indigenous people, the Zapatistas fought not for an autonomous state, but for local autonomy of the development process in their communities, a return on the proceeds for the natural resources being extracted from the region, and a place within Mexican society of dignity and respect (Marcos 1995). The concept of autonomy is negotiated at the local level and as a result is different in each region. In the Lacandon jungle, it reflects a pluriethnic community that makes development decisions and governs itself. The Zapatistas sought to have their autonomy formalized in the San Andres Accords, which would have established indigenous autonomy as a level of the Mexican government. With the abandonment of the San Andres Accords by the federal Government in 2002, the Zapatistas established their communities independent of the government. The result is that they have developed a shadow government that ironically runs alongside other shadow governments established by disenchanted candidates for office in the official Mexican government. Nonetheless, the autonomous communities seek control over the flow of natural resources such as timber, oil, and agricultural products extracted from the region. They are very careful to maintain a Mexican nationalist identity as *Indígenas* as to avoid the argument that they seek independence. In a way the Zapatistas are aware that as a part of

Mexico, Chiapas will be better off than attempting to take on the global world alone. The Zapatistas have learned through their coffee cooperatives that economies of scale offer not only increased access to the world, but also a level of security in difficult times. Additionally, it seems that any claim for independence will erode their critically important relationship with Mexican civil society, which seeks to bring the indigenous identity into Mexico, not further exclude it, or acculturate it.

At first, the EZLN sought a revolution that would sweep across Mexico and replace the Mexican government with a newly elected one that would rise from mass elections amongst individual communities. They sought to change the paradigm of governance in Mexico; they sought democracy with free and open elections, land reform, and the abandonment of neoliberal economic policies that further marginalized an already marginalized indigenous population in Mexico. These goals were different from the socialist movements in Latin America that preceded them. The Zapatistas were not the vanguard of the oppressed; they were, instead, the oppressed themselves, seeking dignity and respect (Schulz, 2007, 136).

Earle and Simonelli highlight a second unique characteristic of the Zapatistas' efforts at reconciliation, development, and democracy: the *Juntas de Buen Gobierno*. The *Junta* is a governing body that oversees development in the region. They coordinate aid efforts such that one community is not privileged over another. Their goal is to maintain equity in development of the region

rather than have fully developed municipal centers that attract the jealousy of other municipalities (Earle and Simonelli 2005). In other words, the autonomous government is to ensure an equitable process of development in which one community does not receive the lion's share of development in the region, while more remote or smaller communities have no development projects.

Additionally, autonomy over the projects also means that the community decides what development it needs through consensus. This was a response to the development efforts being concentrated on more urban communities, focused on aspects of the community that created divisions, like aid focused only on production processes involving women, or faith-based aid that only benefitted the converts and congregation of the specific religious organization, etc.

(Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005).

Upon realizing that, although revolution was not spreading throughout Mexico and the world, a civil society was rallying behind them in Mexico and abroad (Schulz 1998), the Zapatistas rethought their strategies and demands. They are continually re-framing themselves and their cause through Declarations and other publications, and these prolific writings are one of the aspects that make the Zapatistas' approach to community building unique. Indeed, volumes of books have been produced by the Zapatistas and their supporters that tell the story of the Zapatistas in the words of the Mayan peasants who make up both the Zapatista movement and the EZLN; many overlap, but all include something unique, an interview, a perspective, a story.

Another unusual aspect of the Chiapas conflict is the attention it received from domestic and international media in the early days of the uprising, due largely to timing in regards to the NAFTA. Clifford Bob (2005) suggests that this media attention was instrumental in the Zapatista's ability to reach a broad international support system. Indeed, the media provided the world with the initial exposure that eventually developed into a transnational solidarity network – which, in turn, spawned numerous anti-capitalist and anarchist movements around the world. International civil society responded so strongly, staging protests across Mexico and bringing thousands of people into the Federal District of Mexico City, that the Mexican government announced a unilateral cease fire after only 12 days of conflict (Bob 2005). Amidst protests to the military response in Mexico City and international pressure to end the conflict swiftly, civil society had mobilized to reign in the violence in the absence of an international peacekeeping force.

The NGO response was critical to the success of the Zapatistas, critical enough that the transnational solidarity network is considered by David Ronfeldt and John Arquilla of the RAND Corporation to constitute a level of combatant in the "Zapatista's Social Netwar" (Ronfeldt, Arquilla et al. 1998; Arquilla and Ronfeldt 2001). While NGOs quickly responded to the conflict, either in a support/solidarity role, or in a human rights observation role, there was no formal response to the Zapatistas from any of the major International Government Organizations (IGOs) like the United Nations during this time. In

all fairness, in 1994 it was uncommon for an IGO to enter a conflict without being invited by the established government, or a neighboring country experiencing a spill-over of violence from a conflict.

However, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was one International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO) that chose to respond, and it was critical in the official recognition of the Zapatistas as legal combatants and not simply another Latin American narco-guerilla organization. In response to the EZLN's call for the ICRC to intervene in the conflict, the Red Cross gained access to 70 Zapatista prisoners by January 18th, 1994. Despite this rapid response, access was restricted by the Mexican government's apparent distrust of the organization (Megevand 1995).

Peacebuilding in the region is not only unique in its situation; it is unique in its methods. The conflict was not designated a peacekeeping mission. The UN has never been directly involved in a peace operation in the region. The peacebuilding efforts that occur in Chiapas are a spontaneous response from civil society and other supporters from around the world. Within days of the uprising, the Mexican civil society was demonstrating in cities, demanding that the Mexican military and Zapatistas cease their violent activities and begin a dialogue for peace; within a few more days, that support to end the violence was global (Ross 1995; Zapatistas 1995; Nash 1997; Ramirez 1998; Leon 2001; Nash 2001; Rus, Hernandez Castillo et al. 2003; Vodovnik 2004; Marcos 2006; Mentinis 2006; Ross 2006; Pena-Vargas and Ruggiero 2007; Munoz Ramirez 2008). The

human rights organizations and activists, indigenous rights organizations and activists, and thousands of others claiming solidarity with the *Indígenas* descended upon the region and established permanent peace camps to protect the indigenous communities (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Harvey 2005). These organizations and activists spontaneously involved themselves as a peacebuilding force. Activists from around the world converged on the region to act as guardians of human rights, to promote peace negotiations, and to help improve the situation on the ground to make room for peace.

Under the protection of non-state actors in protective peace camps, the Zapatistas have practiced with an experiment in revolutionary democracy and development (Earle and Simonelli 2005). They chose voice over violence early in their open struggle for justice and have maintained that strategy throughout betrayals, violent attacks from paramilitaries working for land-holders, and even from other indigenous peoples in their communities. While this last may seem counter-intuitive, the reality is that some of the Mayans in the region are politically aligned with the PRI; others, in the hope that they will be better off in the long run, simply wish to move beyond resistance and accept the government aid that seeks to co-opt their struggle for rights and turn it into acquiescence. In other words, there are differing political, economic, and social capacities amongst the Mayans, and these shape responses to the Zapatistas' efforts.

The Mexican government uses strategic counter-insurgency aid to the region, in which they offer small forms of assistance to individuals in the region

in exchange for the renunciation of claims to autonomy in self governance and development. Because of this, the Zapatistas, as a group, refuse aid that comes with requirements for abandoning their cause or their moral perspective of the way life could and should be in Chiapas. Instead, the Zapatistas approach development and peacebuilding from the ground up, using very few resources and with the full participation of the community. Zapatista leaders do not go to meetings with the people to speak and persuade; they go to listen and be persuaded.

When a decision is to be made, the leadership, or more accurately the representatives, takes what they know of the situation to the people, and there is deliberation in a horizontally-organized collective of the entire community. Perhaps this is why there has been such a valuable adherence to the cease-fire agreement. It would be unacceptable for the EZLN to take military action without the approval of every Zapatista community, and that would require the approval of the entirety of the community's population (Earle and Simonelli 2005).

The *Indígenas* have a strong cultural identity that has survived centuries of efforts to acculturate them. They seek to revive aspects of this heritage in the autonomous communities (Earle and Simonelli 2005) through their collective form of governing. This, coupled with intellectual advice from activist academics and church officials, may be largely responsible for their ability to build cohesive resilient communities. That is, what has worked in Chiapas may

not be feasible in other places and times. However, it is also possible that this model could be effective in other communities experiencing protracted low-intensity conflict that results from ethnic divisions that manifest in significant economic inequality and oppression of peasant classes or indigenous peoples. The questions would then be how to facilitate this level of engagement on a larger scale, for example in a city the size of Sao Paulo, Brazil; how to ensure that the representatives of groups are indeed consulting with the population and acting on decisions made by the group, and how these strategies might be employed in conflicts where there are numerous non-state and state actors. An additional, and significant, challenge would be how to convince the governments and IGOs, particularly the World Trade Organization (WTO) and International Monetary Fund (IMF), that certain agricultural and land reforms, autonomous zones, and the indigenous control of resources, although far from neoliberal, might be the best course of action for the reconciliation of conflict, assuming that is what the outcomes of reconciliation agreements would include (among many other things).

The modern day emphasis of the Zapatistas on developing collectivist democracy as an alternative development strategy is rooted in their historical communal property practices in the Mayan region of Chiapas. Rothschild (2000) has argued that while the desire for self-determination, especially at the level of community, is ancient, specific trends in a post-modern, globalizing world are pushing the desire for more voice, equality, and community to the fore.

Similarly, I will argue in this dissertation that while the cultural roots of communal land run deep amongst the Mayans in Chiapas the current pressures of the global market, forcing the indigenous people to compete globally, have made their search for a more regional and more cooperative economic approach all the more urgent for their survival.

The Zapatistas do this despite opposition from the Mexican government, despite the frustrations of the civil society that is there to help them, and despite limited capacities for independent development. Unfortunately, the civil conflict is still ongoing and is likely to escalate as civil unrest on the border escalates. Peacebuilding efforts will not result in peace until reconciliation occurs between the Zapatistas, the Mexican government, and the non-Zapatista people of Chiapas. Short of this level of connection and reconciliation, the existing negative peace and the threat of crisis will continue to loom over the region. For that reason, this project explores avenues for reconciliation that cross social, cultural, economic, and political boundaries.

Research Questions

The preceding explanation of the Zapatista movement's historical foundation, characteristics, and goals is essential to any discussion of what their efforts at building resilient communities can contribute to larger peacebuilding efforts. First, they bring an indigenous perspective that is well-documented in their own words and the words of others. Second, and perhaps more

importantly, they bring models of collective governance that may help in a reconciliation process. Finally, the Zapatistas bring an alternative model of development to the table; this alternative model is founded in community-level control of the entire development process. This community-level sustainable development provides a foundation for the construction of peace by limiting the conditions that contribute to the economic causes of the war.

Through a metasyntesis of a carefully selected sample of ethnographies that characterize the Zapatista conflict and peacebuilding efforts, this dissertation project attempts to contribute to the broader cumulative knowledge of conflict management, sustainable development, and democratization. The overall goal of the project is to investigate the strategies and structures that can promote the development of cooperation over competition, reconciliation, and resilience over domination. Three main research questions will be engaged in this project:

- What are the political, economic, social, and military causes and sustainers of the conflict in Chiapas?
- What economic strategies have the *Indígenas* developed to support the autonomous communities; do these strategies depend on the continuation of war or on developmental aid?
- What aspects of the *Indígenas* conception and implementation of democracy and development might be useful tools for building peaceful, resilient, and sustainable communities?

The related literature from conflict, peace, development, and democracy will be discussed with a constant eye toward overlapping conceptual frameworks and practical strategies. Each review of the literature – the first on

conflict and peace, and the second on development and democracy – will be followed by an examination of the situation in Chiapas, Mexico, through the lenses of five ethnographies conducted in the region between the 1960s and 2005; the metasynthesis of these ethnographies will be organized according to the same categories that characterize the literature reviews. The ethnographies were chosen for their quality, comprehensiveness, and ability to inform the research questions.

The metasynthesis will be used to assess the conflict in Chiapas in an effort to identify strategies for building bottom-up sustainable peace. This is the key theoretical and empirical contribution of this dissertation. Just as the project overall explores the possibilities of placing the prospect and responsibility for peace in the hands of the people on the ground and not solely in the hands of government or an IGO, the research design itself relies indirectly on the people on the ground. That is, instead of beginning with a theory of peacebuilding and applying it to the conflict, the project begins with the conflict to develop the theory. Within this approach lies the potential for the discovery of new strategies for peacebuilding.

Chapter 2

Research Design

Research Questions

In an effort to better understand bottom-up peacebuilding activities, this project investigates efforts at bottom-up development, community building, and democratization through the lenses of five ethnographies conducted in Chiapas. More specifically, the project's goal is to identify the causes and sustainers of the conflict in an effort to identify pathways to peace in the region. The relationship between bottom-up democratization, bottom-up development, and community resilience will be considered in the context of the low-intensity conflict in Chiapas. The project will attempt to address several research questions in an effort to investigate these relationships and deepen our understanding of the praxis of peacebuilding:

- What are the political, economic, social, and military causes and sustainers of the conflict in Chiapas?
 - external/international
 - characteristics of the state
 - characteristics of society and individual orientations
- What economic strategies have the *Indígenas* developed to support the autonomous communities; do these strategies depend on the continuation of war or on developmental aid?
 - What are the capacities and vulnerabilities of the *Chiapanecos*
 - How can the capacity of the *Chiapanecos* be fostered in an effort to promote community resilience.

- What capacity do the *Chiapanecos* possess that can be useful in building reconciliation and cooperation amongst the communities.
- What aspects of the *Indígenas* conception and implementation of democracy might be useful tools for building peaceful, resilient, and sustainable communities?
 - How might these governing structures be made more inclusive in an effort to promote reconciliation and pluriethnic governance.
- Are there any conditions revealed in the metasynthesis that would seem to indicate they would promote sustainable peace in the region. (This final question will be considered throughout the metasynthesis chapters and formally discussed in the conclusion.)

As Roland Paris notes, “Contributors to [the peace operations] literature have focused primarily on practical, policy-related issues...rather than building bridges between the study of peace operations and larger theoretical debates in the discipline” (Paris 2000). Building these bridges allows us to map theory onto practice and vice versa, in turn enabling us to formulate better strategies for peacebuilding. Although theoretical approaches offer a “macro” look at peace operations and their implications for international relations, examples of efforts to build the foundations of peace serve as “micro approaches to the study of peace operations, [which] can help to identify circumstances [and strategies] in which peace missions are more or less likely to succeed” (Paris 2000, 29).

My goal in this project is to build some of the bridges to which Paris refers—that is, to acquire a better understanding of the connections between development, democratization, community resilience, and peacebuilding through an examination of community and economy building undertaken in the

conflict zone in Chiapas Mexico. In order to examine these connections, I rely on a qualitative metasynthesis research design. As a result, the research findings will be based upon a holistic picture of the conflict and its root causes/sustainers, which in turn will help to provide a more thorough mapping of the theories onto practice in Chiapas, Mexico.

Philosophical Assumptions

Several philosophical assumptions shape qualitative research design and methods. These include, as Creswell et al. (2007) suggest, “ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical, and methodological assumptions” (15). The methodological assumptions are discussed throughout this chapter; here I discuss the remaining assumptions that have shaped the research design for this project.

Ontological Assumptions

Ontological assumptions are the level at which the researcher makes assumptions about the nature of knowledge, questions about how it is constructed and understood. Ontological questions regarding the nature of reality have been debated since before the days of Plato’s *Allegory of the Cave*, and will be debated into the foreseeable future. However, they seem a good starting point for this discussion. This research project begins with the philosophical stance that reality is observable, for the simple reason that research must continue to improve human understanding despite questions of whether or not

what we observe is truly reality. If reality has been constructed through previous speech acts and knowledge claims, then it follows that improving on existing knowledge is an important undertaking. Operating under the assumption that reality is observable allows for the construction of new knowledge on the foundation of the old. It has been the tradition of knowledge construction since the beginning of the persistent debates over the nature of existence and knowledge, and the human understanding of both.

While reality may be assumed to be observable, the true uncertainty lies in the interpretation of those observations. Many people may observe a single event and there will be a high probability that each will interpret the event differently; even those who interpret the event similarly may report the event differently. Humans are only able to interpret reality through physical filters. For instance, we see through eyes that limit our vision to certain spectrums. Just as these physical filters limit our perception of reality, so do experiential and cultural filters. Thus, we must strive to conduct observational research through as transparent and reflective a process as possible.

Epistemological Assumptions

The second assumption upon which this research project is based is that there may be bias in the interpretation of observations reported by researchers who conducted the primary research to be engaged in this project. Additionally, it is assumed that there is potential bias in the reports themselves. The reports have passed through the observer's filters before and during reporting. This

creates a situation in which the findings reported are thrice removed from the actual event. There has been considerable debate over the “crisis of representation” in the social sciences, and the debate will most likely persist. On the surface, this may appear to jeopardize the legitimacy of the research. However, the project seeks to mitigate this problem in two ways. First, the ethnographies reviewed in the project are considered within the context of an expansive body of literature that reports events and conditions across the scope of the conflict in Chiapas. Second, and perhaps even more critically, the project engages reports conducted by numerous researchers, in order to minimize the impacts of their individual filters by granting voice to many different perspectives.

Additionally, the project relies upon one of the most crucial theoretical stances that inform the study of indigenous movements: critical theory. Interestingly, critical theory also serves as an indispensable perspective for peacebuilding theory, since one must be critical of the entirety of the structures of human relations in order to find imaginative solutions to intractable conflicts that result from a failure of the status quo.

Critical theorists argue that mere description of phenomena is inadequate, and many espouse a form of activist research wherein the goal is to critique and challenge the status quo to transform the human condition, and empower the under-privileged. Earle and Simonelli explain this perspective in their ethnographic report entitled *Uprising of Hope* (2005). Earle and Simonelli (2005)

are self-proclaimed activists who argue that “giving agency to those being studied” (11) is a “creative response to the colonial experience, of which anthropology was a part” (10). Earle and Simonelli present an image of the Zapatista experience that is at once a scholarly ethnography and an insider perspective that provides a depth and intimacy of understanding that could not be achieved except by having been “on the ground” from the beginning and having the trust of those who are being studied.

Many advocacy networks have similarly been informed by critical liberalism, which “argues for establishing the legitimacy of particular claims through the language of structural injustice rather than cultural difference, contestation over consensus as a source of liberal democratic authority, and the category of membership rights as a strategic alternative to collective and individual rights” (Jung 2008).

Academics taking a critical perspective in their research, particularly ethnographers, have highlighted structural violence as a covert instrument of oppression (Earle and Simonelli 2005). One of the earliest and most recognizable of the critical theorists involved with indigenous rights was Paulo Freire. Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000) is an excellent example of the critical approach to scholarship that has informed social inquiry and pedagogical practices for decades. Freire was unwilling to idly stand by and watch as the indigenous people of Brazil were oppressed and brutalized by physical and structural violence. Much like the colonial missionaries in Chiapas, he began to teach the

indigenous people. However, he did not teach them to assimilate and become civilized; he taught them to be critical thinkers and to retain their cultural heritage. His teaching methods still inform social entrepreneurs who seek to teach oppressed peoples to gain liberation through the *praxis* of their quest for it. In fact, *Subcommandante Insurgente* Marcos himself, consciously or otherwise, has followed some of Freire's teachings. He is believed to be Rafael Sebastián Guillén Vicente, a former university professor from Mexico City (Tree 2005) who allegedly went to the jungles of Chiapas to help the peasantry in Chiapas learn to be critical of the neoliberal policies that threaten them and to foment revolution.

Earle and Simonelli (2005) argue that taking a critical perspective enables them to use their methodological expertise to help the Zapatistas, and that by giving agency to the indigenous people, they have maintained methodological soundness and at the same time achieved a level of analysis that could not be attained by a silent, disengaged, observer. Rather than constructing an identity for the Zapatistas through their own cultural frames, Earle and Simonelli argue that they have helped the Zapatistas reveal their own identity as they perceive it themselves. This self-perception is far more important to reconciling differences than the perceptions of a disengaged researcher. While other's perceptions must be taken into account, it is necessary to discover and understand the self-identity of participants in a social research study, and this is particularly important in research projects intended to support peacebuilding initiatives.

Detractors of critical theory argue that by giving agency to those being studied, by allowing them to participate in the reporting as well as the study, the critical ethnographer “virtually erase[s] the role of training, expertise, theory, and methodology” (Gross and Plattner in Earle and Simonelli 2005, 11). The critical theorist response is that “giving agency to those to be “studied” as part of an equal partnership does not mean that [the researchers] cease doing those things that [they] are trained to do” (11). In other words, approaching the project as a partnership does not mean ignoring or discarding sound research methods; it simply means approaching the research/participant relationship with a different, arguably more egalitarian, philosophy that engenders trust and therefore may lead to greater understanding.

Axiological Assumptions

While the theoretical goal of this project is to understand the intersection of peacebuilding, development, democratization, and community resilience, the practical goal is to find ways in which structural violence can be reduced in an effort to reconcile the Chiapas conflict and bring about sustainable peace, and to learn which of those mitigation methods may be transferable to peacebuilding initiatives in other conflicts. Thus, the most important axiological assumption made in this research project is that the findings of this project, if adhered to, will improve peacebuilding efforts and will result in mitigating conflicts, saving lives, and improving the sustainability of peace and community resilience. Another key axiological assumption is that taking a critical theoretical perspective will

help to achieve these improvements by identifying vulnerabilities, capacities, and needs of the Chiapas communities, and to develop creative yet grounded strategies for reconciliation of the conflict in Chiapas that move beyond maintaining a tense negative peace and counterinsurgency.

Rhetorical Assumptions

This metasyntesis research project is essentially a dialogue with texts. The subjects are ultimately the human beings who live and die in Chiapas, Mexico, but their voices are fixed in time and filtered through researchers, editors, and myself. I discuss all of the filters in as much detail as possible in the analyses of the cases, but to obscure my presence by denying that "I decided", or "I chose to" is to deny that in the end, I am the primary filter in this research project. I have ideas, make decisions, critique, analyze, seek, and have hopes in this research process. Thus, it is appropriate to acknowledge when I have made decisions, conducted an analysis, had an idea, or have hope for something.

Additionally, this project documents the suffering of a community. It is a report of people who are, to this day, fighting, dying, and struggling. Whether they are soldiers, insurgents, the wealthy, the poor, mothers, fathers, grandparents, or children, they are suffering from conflict in their communities, and they are human. Because of this, I have used the words of the participants in the studies whenever possible. I have also tried to choose ethnographies that are critical even if they support the Zapatistas. By this I mean that they have reported the good and the bad, from more than one perspective. It matters little

if they, the researchers, agreed with an action or not; if it has been reported, it will offer insights into the different perspectives regarding the same event.

Methods

In order to address the theoretical and empirical questions outlined at the beginning of the chapter, this project will employ a qualitative metasynthesis (QMS) of ethnographies based on primary research in Chiapas and indigenous people in the immediately surrounding areas.

The QMS is a method for interpretive aggregation in which the findings of “carefully selected collection[s] of [primary] research studies” (Finlayson and Dixon) are systematically integrated in an effort to achieve a broader perspective than is possible within individual case studies. “[T]he end product of a qualitative metasynthesis is always an integration of research findings, as opposed to a comparison or critique of them” (Sandelowski and Barroso 2007, 199).

The strengths of QMS research, particularly in terms of this project, lie in its ability to build a more holistic picture of the observed world. Whereas a case study can reveal significant findings about a specific topic, in a defined geographic location, with specific conditions, QMS can draw out of related ethnographies common findings that reveal more in-depth and comprehensive information. QMS is also capable of easily traversing disciplinary boundaries by

allowing the research to understand economic, social, and political dimensions of participant's lives as reported in the ethnographies and case studies.

QMS is particularly useful in conflict and development research.

Researchers may be able to gain access to one group or another, but suspicions in conflict zones, or competition, could potentially pose a significant threat to the researcher who tries to cross socio-economic and geographical boundaries.

Metasynthesis allows for the consideration of opposing perspectives from various sources in an effort to synthesize these perspectives into one image with greater dimension. Finally, and perhaps most significantly for this project, QMS is a tool from which mid-range theories can be developed that have their "roots clearly grounded in the experiences and contexts of participants who contributed to the constituent studies" (Zimmer 2006, 317).

QMS is a multistage research design in which the approaches used will vary depending on the project goals, the desired end product, and "what the findings in the reports...allow in the way of interpretive treatment" (Sandelowski and Barroso 2007, 199). QMS has its historical roots in the health sciences. Nursing students began to synthesize the findings of various case studies in an effort to find macro solutions to health problems or to identify improved strategies for the treatment of health conditions. The strategy has found its way across a spectrum of social sciences that produce ethnographic data, from medical studies to sociological studies.

My application of QMS to questions of peacebuilding and development is the first such application. I was unable to identify a single text or project that utilized QMS design in an effort to identify strategies for mitigating conflict. This was surprising to me, because of the promise that QMS holds for identifying strategies that are based on better local knowledge than is available to many key decision-makers in the peace process. My goal is to utilize this design so that the cultural, historical, and organizational conditions that may allow for the development of a sustainable peace can be teased out of these five large ethnographic accounts, and so that others interested in building a just and sustained peace in adverse circumstances can use them too.

Initially, QMS begins with the same processes as any other research project: identification of theoretical perspectives, problems, and a body of literature from which conceptions and definitions are established. In this initial stage, the research project is conceived and boundaries are established. Goals are set, questions are identified, and a literature review is conducted. After this initial stage, the QMS takes on a unique form. First, a population of case studies and ethnographies must be defined and identified. This stage is critical to the outcome of the QMS. The population is determined by setting a temporal scope, geographic region, and qualifying criteria established by the scope of the research project and questions. Typically, the third stage of QMS will involve, with the use of an appraisal instrument, an appraisal of each case in the established population. In this stage, the sample is identified and the reasons for

the inclusion and exclusion of cases are documented. The fourth stage of the metasynthesis project is to enter into a dialogue with the cases and ethnographies with the help of the QMS questionnaire (Appendix A). The fifth stage is to “synthesize” the findings of the various studies into an overall picture. This stage brings a jigsaw puzzle to mind. By examining the findings of primary independent research that uses various theoretical lenses, geographical and temporal scopes, and varying contexts (the pieces), I can develop a more holistic and complete picture of the low-intensity conflict in Chiapas (the puzzle). It is from the synthesized findings that observations and recommendations are made. It is important to note that while this is a dialogue with a sample of texts, the analysis draws on other sources not included in the analysis for corroboration and fact checking. This effort to situate the analysis within a body of literature is critical to the external validity of the project.

The ideal QMS research design involves the identification and assessment of the entirety of case studies and ethnographies conducted on a particular topic, a rigid assessment instrument that is applied to the entirety of the population of cases, and a second reviewer for each step of the way (Sandelowski and Barroso 2007). In essence, the ideal QMS requires a team effort. The nature of this dissertation project has by necessity limited the application of QMS. For instance, one limiting factor to this research project is the lack of a second reviewer who would conduct exactly the same analyses. The redundancy is feasible for a conflict assessment, a collaborative research project, or a topic upon

which only a relatively small number of cases and ethnographies have been conducted. Unfortunately, having another colleague duplicate my research was not an option.

A second limitation is the exclusion of the assessment stage. The body of literature focused on the Mayans in Chiapas is so expansive that it was more beneficial to the project to target the cases chosen for their ability to speak specifically to the research questions and for their ability to provide a breadth of perspectives. This decision precluded the full use of an assessment instrument. However, critical components of the assessment have been incorporated into the QMS questionnaire itself.

A limiting factor of the QMS design more generally lies in its inclusion of studies that may use different methods and theoretical perspectives. However, this inclusion is simultaneously a strength, as it provides a depth to the QMS that is not possible in projects that are limited to only one approach. Additionally, it is the content of the ethnographic report – the findings – that is the subject of the analysis, not the methods or theoretical underpinnings, per se. Clearly, these shape the content, but the application of a spectrum of methods and perspectives to the same event actually allows for a type of triangulation. As Zimmer (2006) notes, however, it is essential to account for the differing theoretical and methodological perspectives in the analysis.

The Case Identification Process

The initial stage of the project entailed a detailed search process in which parameters were set and cases identified for the study (Sandelowski and Barroso 2007). Qualitative metasynthesis allows for the development of a large sample that is geographically and temporally diverse and one that has been reported from diverse perspectives. Additionally, QMS promotes the selection process through the proxy of the sampling method used in each ethnography. "[T]he pressure is not on the sociologist to 'know the whole field' or to have all the facts from a careful random sample [since] [h]is job is not to provide a perfect description of an area, but to develop a theory that accounts for much of the relevant behavior" (30).

In the initial stage of identifying cases, recall is valued over precision. Recall refers to "the percent of documents in the database that have been retrieved for a search" (35). Precision, in contrast, refers to the percentage of relevant documents within the search. The ideal goal of the QMS search is to achieve a high-recall search in which all of the documents on the topic have been retrieved. For instance, after extensive consultation with research librarians, it was determined that a search of the WorldCat database would provide the highest recall of book length ethnographies and case studies. Interestingly, the commercial website Amazon.com also proved to be invaluable in my search. As I identified literature and purchased the books that were unavailable from the Virginia Tech library, I found that the website's recommendations for additional

books were very useful in identifying related literature that was not included in research databases, thus improving recall.

While high precision would identify only similar and targeted cases, high-recall helps “to ensure an exhaustive search” (Sandelowski and Barroso 2007, 35). For instance, searching WorldCat for the keyword Chiapas, limited by books since 1910, returned 2418 documents. Once I began to look at the books that were returned, I realized that many government publications are listed in the WorldCat as books. I proceeded to further limit the results with additional search terms, but found that the search quickly became too narrow. A significant number of the cases identified using Virginia Tech’s library card catalogue and the “others who bought this also bought” list on Amazon were not returned in the WorldCat search. In the literature review process, I had already begun to identify potential cases for the project and only a subset of these was included in the search results. Ultimately, I decided to limit the number of cases and to choose them from the body of literature already identified in the literature review for the project. This decision was critical in allowing the project to move forward and in ensuring a manageable scope.

A survey of the 68 books I located on the Mayans in Mexico resulted in the identification of 29 case studies or ethnographies. Following the advice of my dissertation committee, I decided to use these 29 cases as the population and subsequently choose five key ethnographies from this population upon which I would conduct my analysis.

The five ethnographies were chosen based on a number of criteria. First, all five involved a substantial amount of time on the ground, for a total of more than three decades of ethnographic field research. Second, and perhaps most importantly, the cases cover a wide range of participants, and finally, the reports were comprehensive enough to produce a vivid picture of the political, social, and economic activities that enables the development of strategies for finding peace in the region. In an effort to maintain internal validity, I have included cases that concern Mesoamerican Mayan communities and individuals, but were not focused on the EZLN and the Zapatista communities. The goal of this inclusion is to help broaden the understanding of the conflict by including non-Zapatista *Indígenas* and *Ladinos*. Rather than confound the situation by comparing two dissimilar or similar cultures immersed in conflict and resolution processes (i.e. the FARC, HAMAS, Mondragons, etc.), I have chosen to compare the experiences of the autonomous communities with those of the general non-Zapatista population of Chiapas. The reason for this is twofold. First, I would like to know if there are any differences in experiences or perspectives between the Zapatista experience, the Mayan experience, and the non-indigenous experience in the region. Second, I would like to know if there is a cultural tendency toward autonomy and collective governance amongst the Mesoamerican Mayans or if this is unique to the Zapatista communities. My ability to achieve this goal is, of course, dependent upon the findings reported in the ethnographies included in the sample.

One ethnography is not considered to be more valuable than another in any way. Rather, the ethnographies are deemed to be equals in terms of rigorous research, factual reporting, and overall credibility. The ethnographies provide useful perspectives into the economic development, political activities, and include representative perspectives into the situation on the ground in Chiapas.

The five ethnographies are as follows:

- Bobrow-Strain, Aaron (2007). *Intimate Enemies: Landowners, Power, and Violence in Chiapas*. Aaron Bobrow-Strain has been conducting ethnographic research on the *Ladinos* in Chiapas since 1998 (nine years). His observations are critical to building a more holistic picture of the situation in Chiapas. Without his ethnographic contribution, this analysis would be decidedly one-sided. *Intimate Enemies* relates the stories of the *Ladinos* in Chilón. Many of the *Ladino* elites had lost their land in the 1994-98 land invasions, and Bobrow-strain skillfully shares their stories, experiences, and perspective in the context of the rebellion, economic change, and *Ladino-Indígena* relationships.
- Earle, D. and J. M. Simonelli (2005). *Uprising of Hope: Sharing the Zapatista Journey to Alternative Development*. Duncan Earle has been conducting ethnographic research on the *Indígenas* in Chiapas since 1979 (26 years). His 26 years of research in the region provide a deep understanding of the linkages between the historic Maya and their contemporary form. Jeanne Simonelli has been conducting ethnographic research in Chiapas since 1997 (eight years), and has a particular ability to build rapport with the men and women of the autonomous communities. Through the years Earle and Simonelli have earned a relationship of trust with the Zapatistas, a relationship that has provided them with the connections to conduct research within the autonomous communities. The strategy of informed consent through consultation with their subjects in the research process provides them with a powerful capability to relate the voices of the Zapatistas, not only in their own words, but also in the spirit of the *Indígenas* they encounter. *Uprising of Hope* is a discussion of their experiences with the Zapatistas efforts at development. While it is limited to the time leading up to the development of the *Caracoles* and *Juntas de Buen Gobierno*, they relate their experiences while the logistics of

alternative development were being wrestled with, and the relationship between the levels of Zapatista governance were still being negotiated.

- Harvey, Neil (2005 originally published in 1998) *The Chiapas Rebellion: The Struggle for Land and Democracy*. Harvey has been conducting research in Chiapas and Guatemala since 1961 (37 years). He originally came to Chiapas while following the migration of Guatemalan refugees into the region. The refugees were Mayans who fled genocide in Guatemala and settled in the Lacandon forest.
- Hernández Castillo, R Aida (2004). *Histories and Stories from Chiapas: Border identities in Southern Mexico*. Hernández Castillo has been doing ethnographic research in Chiapas since 1985 (19 years). She had the interesting experience of being in Sierra Madre on the day of the rebellion. While the community she was living with did not participate in the rebellion, she was provided the perspective of 'being there' when the news broke out in the community. Her book relates the perspectives of the Mam immigrants to the Sierra Madre region of Chiapas and their relationship with the Mexican government and their identity construction as Indigenous Mexicans within that relationship. Her ethnographic perspectives are critical to understanding the relationships among *Indígenas*, the Zapatistas and Mexican society.
- Nash, June (2001). *Mayan Visions: The quest for Autonomy in an age of Globalization*. Nash has been doing research in Chiapas since 1958 (43 years) and relates a powerful history of the *Indígenas* that reveals the intimate relationship among the Mayan past, the Mayan present, and Mayan desires for their future. Her particular focus on community has provided a deep understanding of the *Indígenas* conception of autonomy.

These ethnographers have spent a combined total of 142 years conducting ethnographic research on the *Chiapanecos* and provide a robust sample that would have been all but impossible for one person to achieve. Their ethnographies span decades of field research covering many different aspects of the situation in Chiapas. The number of cases to be included is sufficient to

conduct the QMS and ensure that the results are reasonably representative, while making the project feasible for a doctoral student conducting unfunded research.

Research Instrument

In a full scale application of the QMS, there are two research instruments. The first is an appraisal wherein each case is examined for a multitude of factors, including the theoretical perspective, adherence to research methods, connection between the method and the subject, and many other evaluative variables. In this stage, the cases are considered in isolation from each other as individual reports on the situation under review. The primary goal of this stage is to determine which of the reports in the population fit a set of criteria and will be included in the QMS. There are inclusionary and exclusionary parameters that help to limit the sample size and focus the inquiry. For the purpose of this project, this stage was largely unnecessary, as the cases included in the sample were identified in the literature review stage.

The second research instrument in a full-scale QMS is the questionnaire used for the actual analysis. The research instrument, much like the appraisal instrument, provides an analytical assessment of the findings and their relevance to the research parameters. The research instrument questions each case in a form of textual interrogation. The text of each case is examined for clues that may reveal answers to the questions engaged in the project.

Originally, I had considered adopting and modifying a number of possibilities for the research instrument. The first possibility was creating a conglomerate of different research instruments for my study; the second was adopting an established qualitative metasynthesis research instrument for my study, and the third involved using the *Qualitative Assessment Research Instrument* (QARI) software from the Joanna Briggs Institute. Each of the approaches has advantages and disadvantages. The first two scenarios would allow me to apply a foundation established by previous research to my own study. The disadvantage would be that I would also risk asking questions that are not relevant to my study or leaving out ones that could be crucial. In fact, I was unable to identify an existing instrument or combinations of instruments that would address each of my research questions. The third option was inappropriate in that the software was not suited for the design of this project.

My final decision was to develop a custom research instrument (see Appendix A) that asked questions pertinent to the goals and objectives of this project. While there was a little overlap between concepts in all of the appraisal instruments that I considered, the actual research instrument is unique to the research questions and goals of each project. As such, the research instrument was created with a careful consideration of the research questions and how best to find relevant information in the cases that are to be synthesized. In other words, a number of research questions were developed to answer the main questions and problems engaged in this dissertation.

Applying the Research Instrument

The next step of the project involves applying the research instrument to the cases under review. In this stage, the cases are considered in isolation from each other in an effort to reduce the bias of having additional information available. In other words, if I want to consider the work of one anthropologist which was criticized by another, I must try not to allow the biases of other researchers or my own to interfere with the objective application of the questionnaire. It is easier to place blame on and disregard text than it is to blame or disregard a person. For this reason, a precise research questionnaire is an integral and central component of the QMS. The analysis supported by the research instrument is more than simply a meta-narrative. Rather than surveying topics and methods, this is a dialogue with the text and the primary researcher. Indeed, at this stage it is not uncommon to find it necessary to contact the primary researcher to fill in blanks that were left out of the research report engaged in the sample (Sandelowski and Barroso 2007).

The final stage is synthesis of the findings of each case in the sample. This is not to be confused with the descriptive nature of meta-analysis in which quantitative findings are aggregated across cases, but rather a dialogic interpretative exercise in which the interpretations of the primary researcher are re-interpreted by the QMS researcher. Metasynthesis is a careful consideration of each case and an attempt to identify clues for the development of mid-range theories (Zimmer 2006).

Conclusion

Giving agency to those being studied, remaining critical of structures that promote structural violence, and tending toward active participation over passive observation is not only amenable to peacebuilding studies, but is also an important mobilizing factor in peacebuilding and indigenous advocacy. As such, I envision the theoretical value-added of my research to be multi-faceted and multi-level. I suspect that the strategies of the traditional power structures involved in the conflict were unsuccessful, largely because their intended objective was limited to a top-down effort aimed at counterinsurgency and development that would maintain existing power structures which were themselves a root cause of the uprising.

The constraints imposed by civil society on the Zapatistas and the traditional governing structures shifted the balance of power and, in turn, facilitated the Zapatistas' transformation from a guerilla group to a socio-politico movement with international support and impact. Most importantly, the shift in power opened the space for the indígenas in Mexico to begin to rebuild their Mayan identities, communities, and traditions that have been oppressed for centuries. More importantly, I hope to reveal ways in which bottom-up democratization and resilience development help to create a space for cooperation at the local level, which in turn may support the development of sustainable and resilient communities. Finally, I hope to develop strategies that

could be employed in the region that may begin the reconciliation and healing that must be undertaken to bring the region out of conflict.

Chapter 3

Conflict and Peace

Peacemaking is a way of life. Peace is never made; it is always in the making. Only citizens outside government can make peace for themselves and among themselves.

--Harold H. Saunders

In order for peacebuilding to be a viable supplement and/or alternative to traditional peacemaking and peacekeeping missions, scholars and practitioners need to have a shared understanding of what peacebuilding is and what goals it seeks to achieve. As Demurenko and Nikitin (1997) emphasize in their analytical review of peace operations, "...no single, strictly verified, coordinated terminology exists that describes peacekeeping operations." Ironically, their very statement illustrates the problem: Demurenko and Nikitin are referring to all peace operations by the term "peacekeeping," which does not accurately represent the realities of peace operations and low-intensity conflicts.

A shared understanding of peacebuilding, and, for that matter, of all forms of peace operations, facilitates the development of ideas and the implementation of those ideas. Without shared understanding, the discourse can easily descend into arguments over minutiae, precluding the building of potentially productive connections between political theory, international policy, and practical implementation. This chapter engages the literature on peace and conflict and explores the ways in which peace operations have been defined. The chapter seeks to establish a conceptual foundation for the peacebuilding

component of this dissertation; the next chapter examines the low-intensity conflict in Chiapas through the lenses of the five ethnographies.

Zartman (2007, 11) argues that “Epistemologically, an object does not exist until it has a name, and it cannot be the subject of meaningful communication until its name, with its attendant definition, has been broadly accepted.”

Defining concepts helps to build common understanding that is critical to “broadly accepted” shared understandings. Postmodernists and constructivists argue that what we see as reality is only an image constructed by interactions, histories, and perspectives. This understanding of reality makes the defining of concepts even more important for shared understanding. The next sections will define conflict and peace operations to ensure a mutual understanding.

Following the sections on theories of conflict and peace is a discussion of peace operations and peacebuilding as a theoretical perspective and a strategy for conflict resolution that attempts to prioritize reconciliation, rehabilitation, and development as imperatives in the peace process. This discussion sets the stage for a brief introduction to peacebuilding strategies that have been employed in Chiapas in the absence of an officially sanctioned international peace operation.

Conflict

The study of peace, and indeed the concept of peace, begins with war. David Barash notes that “it may seem perverse to begin our study of

“approaches to peace” by looking at the causes of war. But it can’t be helped” (Barash 2000). In fact, any holistic definition of peace must refer to conflict as an alternative state. Neither of the concepts could exist if it was not for the other, and as such any discussion of peace that does not refer to conflict and war would be incomplete.

I define the concept of warfare as any conflict between groups that involves strategic violence and other demonstrations of force. It includes conventional warfare between two sovereign nations, civil wars, and the Small Wars discussed in Colonel C. E. Callwell’s (1995) classic piece on wars fought between regular military and irregular troops. Additionally, modern warfare includes the low-intensity conflicts described by CSM James L. Gallagher (ret.) (1992), Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) warfare, and insurgency and counterinsurgency. More recently, it has come to include netwars (Ronfeldt, Arquila et al. 1998; Arquila and Ronfeldt 2001), wherein the mobilization of loosely connected networks, using cyberspace and other advanced communications to rapidly and efficiently mobilize irregular forces in remote locations, present a new complexity to the conduct and study of conflict and peace. This final form of warfare is a very recent development that has been facilitated by advances in information technology and the widespread global use of cyberspace (Ronfeldt, Arquila et al. 1998; Arquila and Ronfeldt 2001; Rattray 2001; Bob 2005).

The preceding list of types of wars helps to illustrate the difficulty of studying conflict, and the causes of conflict, as a broad generalized subject. Barash suggests that “‘War’ does not exist as a generality. There are instead individual wars, just as there are individual human beings” and as such “the causes for each war require detailed study” (2000, 5). However, despite the individuality of wars, there still remains enough overlap to identify similar cases, or groups, and categorize them. Categorizing conflict into identifiable types allows for a limited generalization of findings by these “detailed studies” of war. This is helpful for both those interested in the practice of war and for those interested in resolving conflict through peacebuilding efforts.

Of particular interest here are the concepts of small wars, insurgencies, and guerilla actions; I have intentionally excluded terrorism because it is an ill-defined emotionally charged description that historically has been abused. Additionally it describes, or should describe, the employment of a tactic of the intentional targeting of non-combatant civilians for violence and intimidation in an effort to persuade through fear. The commonality across these types of warfare is that they all involve some level of asymmetric capacities for war, and forces that hold no sovereign rights according to the Westphalian tradition⁶ of international order. “The Congress of Westphalia brought together for the first time in history all the major powers of an international system, and it was one of

⁶ In the Westphalian system nation-states hold territorial sovereignty, are free to decide their own form of governance, and enjoy protection from intervention in domestic affairs by another nation-state.

the treaties negotiated at the conclusion of the great wars of European civilization [that] served as the constitution of the state system" (Gilpin 1981, 36).

This system of international governance has grown to include every geographic hemisphere as a constituent and social sphere as a subject. NATO, the UN, the WTO, the IMF, the Worldbank, and numerous other international agreements/organizations that govern everything from development and trade, to the environment, to law enforcement and military capacities have grown out of the Westphalian system. Gilpin's observation still holds: "In every international system the dominant powers in the international hierarchy of power and prestige organize and control the processes of interactions among the elements of the system" (1981, 29) As such, it is no surprise that the Zapatistas, and many academics, see international agreements as extensions of American hegemony and instruments of neoliberal practices that threaten large swathes of societies (Hayden 2002; Paye 2007).

In the Westphalian system, groups of people who hold no legally recognized territorial sovereignty are given little to no institutional space for justice in the international system outside of their domestic governments. This creates an environment in which marginalized groups are left with little recourse when elites in their domestic public and private sectors take actions that do not represent their interests and further marginalize, isolate, and impoverish them. This is a factor that contributes to an atmosphere in which war becomes a viable option. The resulting type of war is a low-intensity conflict (LIC), "a politico-

military confrontation between contending states or groups” that is somewhere “below conventional war and above routine, peaceful competition” (1992, 3).

Using this definition, the situation in Chiapas would be designated an LIC. The Zapatistas argued that the NAFTA and the neoliberal reforms Mexico had to make in order to become a member of the NAFTA were a death sentence to the already impoverished indigenous and peasant farmers (Marcos 2006). The Mexican Government had marginalized the people of Chiapas for centuries and had taken actions that threatened to deepen the poverty in the region in the interests of the broader Mexican economy. They argued that they had no recourse but to take up arms if they wished to live as people with dignity (Marcos in Leon 2001).

By no means do I mean to perpetuate the term “low intensity conflict” as “a euphemism, dangerously misleading as to the death and misery it may produce” (Barash 2000). LICs are low-intensity from the perspective of threat to national security (in the case of the US perspective), formal military casualties, and the physical involvement of regular military forces and equipment. But, they are not low intensity in terms of the destructiveness of the conflict and structural violence or in terms of the violence and suffering imposed on combatants and non-combatants (Gallagher 1992; Barash 2000; Steed 2002). The term “low intensity conflict” encompasses the reality that there are not thousands of troops from opposing sides massed in a cohesive battlespace to conduct warfare with the support of navies, air forces, and other capacities for violence and resources

only available to nation-states and some multi-national corporations. In Chiapas, there are thousands of troops on the ground in the region, they are indeed containing the Zapatistas within their jungle communities, attempting to regulate the flow of aid and information in and out of the region, and are equipped with state-of-the-art military equipment. Part of this is due to the militarization of the war on drugs, but it is obvious that part of it is in response to the Zapatista presence in the region (Earle and Simonelli 2005). Despite the militarization, the Zapatistas and the Mexican government are not engaged in open combat, and thus the conflict remains low-intensity, with a high social and economic cost.

The sources of LICs lie in unaddressed historical conflicts, structural violence, and economic/political oppression. All three of these conditions exist in Chiapas. LICs occur, much as the conflict in Chiapas, as protracted and often intractable violence, in close proximity to non-combatant populations, using tactics that limit the use of heavily destructive responses such as overwhelming force, air superiority, or strategic remote combat technologies (missile/UAV strikes). Essentially, LICs have become more destructive to populations and less destructive to armies. LICs tend to be low-cost for insurgents and high-cost for counter-insurgents (Beckett 2001); this can serve to make a counter-insurgency so costly that it exacerbates the structural violence that was one of the root causes of a conflict. This conception of the term demonstrates the importance of finding ways to resolve low intensity conflicts and build lasting peace in regions experiencing LICs, or at risk for experiencing LICs.

Peace

Peace in its simplest conception is the absence of conflict. However, using this definition, it is unlikely that peace will ever be fully realized. An operationalized conception of peace could be the “absence of war,” but that definition falls short of creating a space for the prevention of war. It relegates peacebuilding to a reactive concept as opposed to a proactive concept. What is needed is a conceptualization that will promote the cessation of violence, bring an end to structural violence and political domination, and create avenues for democratic participation that includes the poorest members of society.

Arguably, it is a part of the natural process of life to have conflict; that said, war is not a biological process but rather a social invention (Mead 2001). Peace, as a goal, should be concerned with achieving the reconciliation of historical differences and building lasting conflict management and resolution strategies that prevent the future outbreak of violence. Zartman argues that “conflict resolution refers to removing the causes as well as the manifestations of a conflict between parties and eliminating the sources of incompatibility in their positions” and that “conflict management refers to eliminating the violent and violence-related means of pursuing the conflict, leaving it to be worked out on the purely political level. Conflict transformation means replacing conflict with positive relationships.” (Zartman 2007, 11).

In essence, conflict transformation seeks to create a positive peace, while conflict management promotes a negative peace in the hope that political

processes will develop the positive peace. The concept of positive peace was introduced by Galtung (2007), who argued that simply ending hostilities does not bring peace; instead the underlying structures that perpetuated the conflict must be addressed. In order to address these underlying structures they must be identified, and if possible, categorized in a way that will identify potential pathways to peace. Finally, strategies for reconciliation, redress, and development of economic, social, and political structures can be developed that promote peace rather than deepen the conflict. Following Galtung's example, my goal here is to focus on positive peace as a preferred outcome of any peace operation.

Peace Operations

According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (2005), since the mid-20th century the primary agent of international peace operations has been the United Nations, which has promoted and maintained peace through a myriad of strategies since its inception. The UN approach to peace operations typically involves both preventive diplomacy and negotiation (UNDP 2005). UN involvement has focused peacebuilding strategies on IGOs, and peace studies have subsequently focused on the strategies employed by IGOs. As such, peace operations are typically categorized into three main groups: peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding (Boutros-Ghali 1992). Each is not distinct, but builds on the others.

Generally, scholars and practitioners define peacemaking efforts as those which involve non-force or force methods, including combat actions, to “fortify political and diplomatic efforts to halt and settle a conflict” (Demurenko and Nikitin 1997). UN peacemaking efforts in the last twenty years have included El Salvador, Tajikistan, Sierra Leone, and Afghanistan, to name just a few, and arguments have been made that the UN’s peacemaking capacity needs to be strengthened given current and anticipated needs (UNDPA 2005).

Peacemaking operations that utilize force can be conducted by the UN or by individual countries intervening in the domestic affairs of another country. For example, although peacemaking more commonly involves the cessation of violence *before* negotiations begin, in Columbia, the federal government (with training and support from the U.S.) has adopted a strategy of asymmetrical violence against narco-guerilla groups (Beckett 2001), while simultaneously participating in negotiations without a cease fire. However, this strategy backfired and resulted in an escalation of violence (Unknown 2001).

Peacekeeping typically refers to military intervention that promotes a space for peacemaking. A peacekeeping force typically regulates the implementation of cease-fire agreements and at times monitors elections as countries undergo democratic transformation. Peacekeeping can thus be considered both a component of the peacemaking process and a peace operation in and of itself. Peacekeeping involves an outside third party that intercedes between opposing factions or parties in order to compel and/or enforce a cease

fire or other cessation of violence that will ultimately (one hopes) lead to peace. The resulting cessation of violence, however, can be characterized as a negative peace (Galtung 2007); it is enforced by a powerful military agent instead of through cooperation, compromise, and reconciliation.

A notable example of the potential risks of negative peace and its harmful consequences is the UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The UN entered the conflict with a “serious deficiency in local leaders’ willingness to support the peace, marginal international political will to take risks for peace, and equally little willingness to expend the necessary resources to create it” (Roessler and Prendergast 2006). The result was an enormous number of civilian casualties and the spread of violence to neighboring countries.

Although the traditional top-down peace operations of peacemaking and peacekeeping have certainly had successes as well as failures like those noted above, they are limited in their capacity to promote and maintain peace, mainly because they fail to address the underlying economic, political, and social root causes that brought about the conflict. Thus, they often fail to prevent the re-emergence of post-conflict violence and can actually foment additional violence due to resentment toward outside intervention (Talentino 2007). In short, peacemaking and peacekeeping in and of themselves are not sustainable.

Additionally, traditional peace operations were developed within a post-World War II environment, with interstate conflicts, conventional battlefields, internal models of financing, and professional soldiers still thought of as the

primary conditions of war. However, the end of the Cold War saw an escalation in a new form of warfare, often referred to in the literature as new wars, in which intrastate conflicts and external models of financing became far more common.

Modern conflicts are seldom fought on conventional battlefields by state-controlled armies; they often involve civilians, guerrillas, private armies, and criminal gangs and warlords, and they find significant international support (Malesevic 2008). This paradigmatic shift in warfare has limited the effectiveness of traditional peacemaking and peacekeeping because they cannot easily accommodate the fluidity of new wars. Additionally, the focus on economic, political, and military elites fails to negotiate the peace at other levels of society wherein lies the context of the conflict (Hemmer, Garb et al. 2005).

Peacebuilding seeks to address these shortcomings through a process of negotiation, compromise, and reconciliation, a process closely related to conflict transformation: "Peacebuilding refers to those conditions that will enhance the transition from a state of conflict to coexistence and thus contribute to sustainable peace" (Moshe 2001). It can be distinguished from traditional peace operations in several significant ways but, in the end, must also incorporate features from both peacemaking and peacekeeping in order to meet its objectives.

Peacebuilding in Theory

The concept of peacebuilding was brought to the forefront of international relations by Boutros Boutros- Ghali in 1992 (Boutros-Ghali 1992). Broadly defined, peacebuilding entails “those initiatives which foster and support sustainable structures and processes which strengthen the prospects for peaceful coexistences and decrease the likelihood of the outbreak, reoccurrence, or continuation, of violent conflict” (Bush 1998, 7). Similarly, Lederach defines peacebuilding as: “the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships” (quoted in David 2002, 20). Charles-Philippe David provides an exhaustive list of peacebuilding conceptions and concludes that there are three central elements to peacebuilding: rehabilitation and reconstruction, security related politico-socio-economic mechanisms to prevent relapse, and foreign intervention (David 2002).

Thus, peacebuilding is not simply the ending of hostilities, establishment of democratic institutions and free markets, and the provision of security, but rather an inclusive project that requires reconciliation, cooperation, and commitment from all parties. Scholars generally agree that peacebuilding includes both short and long-term objectives, which include addressing root causes of conflicts, and “foster[ing] the social, economic, and political institutions and attitudes that will prevent these conflicts from turning [returning] violent” (Doyle and Sambanis 2000, 779). Although these goals do distinguish peacebuilding from traditional peace operations, they are somewhat abstract.

However, a more tangible and precise definition has remained elusive, in part because of the differing characteristics of each individual conflict, the number of actors involved in peace operations, and the varying interpretations these actors bring to the concept (Haugerudbraaten 1998).

There tend to be three divergent conceptions of peacebuilding: that in which reconstruction efforts are focused upon state and market institutions (state-centric); that emerging from the peace studies field and the work of Johan Galtung, in which the focus is on conflict prevention and resolution below and above the state level; and finally, that laid out by a group of scholars who consider peacebuilding to be a term encompassing all peace operations (Call and Cook 2003).

The state-centric approach to peacebuilding is the most traditional of the three perspectives and is closely aligned with peacemaking and peacekeeping; it relies upon components of realist, neorealist, and neo-liberal theoretical foundations which essentially stipulate that peace is the absence of war, and that cooperation, integration, and interdependence will promote peace. Realists (e.g. Morgenthau) tend to focus on security, neorealists (e.g. Waltz) on a balance of power (Sargent 2007), and neoliberals (e.g. Keohane) on democratization and market liberalization. The overarching commonality is that each of the facets of peacebuilding originates with the state and relies upon the preservation of the status quo state, and therefore elite, power.

Samuel Huntington noted over a decade ago that, “While states remain the primary actors in world affairs, they also are suffering losses in sovereignty, function, and power” (Huntington 1996). Additionally, many international situations, peacebuilding situations in particular, require efforts that extend beyond the state (Waltz 1979) to a broader international society. In the international society, sovereign states collaborate to establish institutions that maintain a balance of power (Bull 1977). The institutions created – for example, the UN, the IMF, WorldBank, etc. – “symbolise the existence of an international society that is more than the sum of its members” and “moderate [members’] tendency to lose sight of common interests” (Bull 1977, 71). Finally, the neoliberal perspective places these institutions at the forefront of international relations, and as such makes them the primary catalyst for peace operations (Ruggie 1993; Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff 2001; Keohane 2005).

An alternative to the top-down state-centric conception of peacebuilding is multi-level peacebuilding, which begins with the notion that peacebuilding initiatives must operate at the local or community level as well as levels beyond the state itself (Call and Cook 2003; Hemmer, Garb et al. 2005; Lederach 2005; Zartman 2007; Call and Cousens 2008): in other words, they involve the participation of both the domestic and the global civil society. Peacebuilding “is made possible by changing structural relations, and ideological understandings, between and within nations” (Sargent 2007, 53). Unlike realism, this conceptualization does not treat the state as the sole perspective, but rather

considers sub-state, state, and supra-state actors as well. Unfortunately, in this model, sub-state actors have been engaged separately from state actors. The key supra-state actor in this model, is not limited to the UN or similar IGO, but rather casts a wider net that includes a global civil society that works in conjunction with these institutions. Without the participation of civil society; “The social-political dimension of peacebuilding is highly fragmented, permitting a concentration of power or oppressive relations” (Jeong 2005, 11).

An emphasis on the socio-political aspects of peacebuilding is central to the multi-level perspective. Successful peacebuilding relies not only on reconciliation among the actors but also on social rehabilitation. This involves the participation of community groups, including religious leaders, social workers, and educators (Jeong 2005), as well as the general public and the media (Wolfsfeld, Alimi et al. 2008). Social rehabilitation also depends upon building local capacities and enabling local ownership of the peace process (Wood 2001).

Another of the key points distinguishing the multi-level theoretical perspective from the state-centric approach is an emphasis on positive peace (Sargent 2007). According to Galtung (2007), traditional state-centric approaches can result in the absence of direct, structural, and cultural violence, but because of the methods used to bring it about, this absence equates to a negative peace. Positive peace, in contrast, results from successful efforts to address socio-economic inequalities and must produce an environment in which underlying

hostilities do not continue and grow (David 2002). Once peacebuilding efforts address the underlying root causes of the conflict, the peace becomes sustainable.

Paul Lederach's concept of the web approach to peacebuilding takes a step forward in the development of strategies for the construction of social connections that will support the peace process. This bottom-up approach conceives of peacebuilding as a web of connections through which reconciliation and recovery may be organized and conducted at the community level, as opposed to focusing on representative elites of community groups, states, and economic elites. This web approach to peacebuilding is made increasingly viable with advancements in communications infrastructure and computer networking. However, the focus need not be on technology, as many people in conflict zones often have little or no access to telecommunications and computer network infrastructure. Rather, the focus is on the interpersonal connections that exist on the local level and that may be employed to create a space for the construction of positive peace. Workplaces, families, communal farms, villages, hamlets, and rural areas have connections that bridge the lines of conflict; particularly in a region where conflict lines are extremely blurred, these connections will be useful in the peace process.

Sustainable peacebuilding must be concerned with all stages of the peace process and all levels of actors. This comprehensive perspective essentially combines the conceptions discussed above and introduces new components and strategies for peacebuilding. It allows for traditional peace operations as initial

steps in the peacebuilding process, with a more multi-level approach – peacebuilding in its purest form – as a third phase (De Soto and Castillo 1994). However, the three phases need not be sequential, but rather may – and should – overlap.

Rather than stipulating three distinct phases of peacebuilding, Doyle and Sambanis (2000) identify “lower order” and “higher order” peace operations; the former involve ending the conflict, while the latter involve democratic peacebuilding. Doyle and Sambanis posit that higher order peacebuilding is more successful in countries whose development levels are higher; however, a comprehensive perspective suggests that development is actually encouraged by those very higher order peacebuilding processes.

Central to the comprehensive perspective on peacebuilding is the notion that numerous facets – cessation of violence, political negotiations, economic rehabilitation (or in some cases development), and social-psychological-cultural reconciliation – must occur, not only within the political (often elite) sphere, but also within the general public. Much like in the multi-level approach, civil society is considered a key factor in the peace process, and within it resides the promise of reconciliation and rehabilitation necessary for sustainable peace; unfortunately, within it also resides the possibility of reverting back to violence. Nonetheless, comprehensive peacebuilding efforts must also engage civil society in the peace process as a catalyst for democratization, rehabilitation, and reconciliation.

The first facet of peacebuilding, cessation of violence, will often require the presence of a relatively neutral peacekeeping force that intervenes in a conflict to stop/prevent the escalation of violence and create a space for political peacemaking processes to bring about a cease-fire. As a traditional peace operation, its strategies are well-developed and remain an important component of the peace process. However thoroughly military peacekeeping operations have been developed, it is still important for peacekeeping forces to work closely with the general public and all parties involved in a conflict to build a functional level of trust between the peacekeepers, the actors involved in the conflict, and the general public.

The necessity for neutrality is often undermined at the beginning of international intervention, as intervening peacekeeping troops are seldom perceived as neutral. The nature of counter-insurgency and peacekeeping operations has been to give priority to established power structures in an effort to maintain a relative level of security for ground troops. This gives a perception (often not unfounded) that any efforts at reconciliation and rehabilitation undertaken by an intervening force will favor one actor over another. Most often, it will be perceived to be the socio-economic power elites who are given preference. Engaging with civil society early on cannot only help to mitigate this perception, but can also prevent the perception from becoming a reality.

Political negotiations, a second facet of the process, must involve all parties and should be as transparent as possible to prevent manipulation by

actors seeking to spoil the process in the hope of personal or political gain. This facet is perhaps the most difficult to manage. Media intervention can support or undermine the process at any and every stage; additionally intervention by other international actors (or in some cases private interests) can prevent agreements from being reached and cause a failure of the entire peacebuilding process.

One component of the political negotiations that is often overlooked in the literature is the inclusion of refugees who have fled the conflict zone. While they may not be directly involved in the conflict, and may not be combatants, they often represent the general public that must be willing to accept reconciliation and rehabilitation agreements. Additionally, agreements that do not permit the return of refugees to their homes will not only threaten the sustainability of peace in the conflict zone but also create potential for the spread of conflict to countries or regions hosting refugees.

Economic rehabilitation or development is another of the core facets. The difficulty in addressing this component is that in many conflicts, it is economic development efforts undertaken by political leadership that are one of the root causes of the conflict. Often economic liberalization (whether it is called globalization, trade liberalization, post-colonial dependency, or foreign imperialism) will promote the emergence of political/social/economic elites, and disenfranchised portions of the population may cite inequalities as legitimizing violence. International efforts to promote economic development may be viewed by disenfranchised groups (especially combatants) as disguised hegemonic

efforts to preserve or even promote elite power. In order to reduce this perception, it is important that economic efforts be synchronized with political efforts. This will require better cooperation, and a coordination of strategies, among the UN, WorldBank, IMF, international donors, global and domestic civil society, the actors in the conflict itself, and finally, the general public that has experienced domestic conflict.

Social, cultural, and psychological reconciliation is perhaps the most important component of peacebuilding and is the facet wherein the concept deviates most notably from traditional peace operations. Whereas peacekeeping operations seek to stop violence, and peacemaking operations seek to bring about peace agreements in the wake of peacekeeping operations, peacebuilding seeks to develop sustainable peace. In order to achieve a sustainable peace, efforts at reconciliation must include more than promises of change, apologies, and judicial proceedings to punish perpetrators of atrocities, and admissions of guilt from all sides. They must also address cultural causes of the conflict and the psychological (both group and individual) results of the conflict (Jeong 2005). This is a challenging process that requires significant commitment on the part of the international community, the actors, local media, civil society, and, again, the general public. The healing of a society requires compromise, sacrifice, and commitment from all stakeholders. Social, cultural, and psychological reconciliation efforts create a space in which this healing can begin. However, these efforts must be inclusive rather than exclusive. This is where Paul

Lederach's notion of bottom-up peacebuilding begins to fill the theoretical void between practice and theory.

Lederach pioneered the theory of "bottom-up peacebuilding" in 1994 (Hemmer, Garb et al. 2005). Lederach conceived of it as a method for attaining reconciliation and cooperation in conflict and post-conflict zones. It is particularly useful as a theoretical perspective because it bridges the entirety of a conflict and is not limited to a linear chain of events but rather a circular flow of events and conditions. Hemmer and Garb (2005) argue that "the study of peace negotiation is dominated by a simple, socially disembodied model of negotiation, focused on formal negotiation between high-level political or military leaders" (1). Whereas comprehensive peacebuilding begins to spread the focus of peacebuilding from elites to the general public, it tends to engage non-elites "unofficially and in private" (4). Bottom-up peacebuilding develops low-level (grassroots and local) participation in the peace process, through democratization, and can improve the success of reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts by improving cooperation between different levels of actors within a conflict (Hemmer, Garb et al. 2005).

Bottom-up peacebuilding is deeply concerned with grassroots democratization, which opens a space for cooperation amongst different levels within a society and changes the context within which peace is sought (Hemmer, Garb et al. 2005). However, it does not require the assumption that democracy builds peace, but rather that democracy builds a space for cooperative

relationships which can lead to peace. This perspective delimits democratization and distances bottom-up peacebuilding efforts from concepts of democratic peace theory and the latter's difficulty in identifying causal mechanisms (Hemmer, Garb et al. 2005).

It may be easiest to come to a peace agreement in a plural society with the fewest possible participants sitting at the table, but a sustainable peace must address the concerns of the whole society, and not be limited to only the largest and most vocal groups. It is from this bottom-up theoretical perspective that this research project begins.

The following chapter goes into a deeper consideration of the causes of the conflict, the sustainers of it, and seeks to identify pathways to peace exposed in the metasynthesis of the five ethnographies analyzed in this dissertation.

Chapter 4

Conflict and Peace in Chiapas

The job of the peacekeeper is to road map the conflict, draw up menus of navigable and safe pathways, and if necessary act as a guide, walking the parties through these pathways-Mark Plunkett

Although there have been no internationally sanctioned peacekeeping operations in Chiapas, the situation illustrates several potential peacebuilding activities. This chapter includes a metasynthesis of five ethnographies conducted in the Mayan region of Mexico; the chapter focuses specifically on the causes and sustainers of the conflict in Chiapas, and seeks to identify potential solutions to that conflict.

Each of the ethnographies synthesized relates a different perspective on the nature, purpose, and events of the ongoing low-intensity conflict in southeastern Mexico. Although the focus of this study has been on the activities of the Zapatistas in Chiapas, the analysis of these cases has revealed a complex network of loosely related, and sometimes oppositional, organizations – including but also in addition to the Zapatistas – that compete for resources, political power, and dignity. In the most general sense, the conflict in Chiapas may be characterized as a resource war with class and ethnic implications. Not a war that is fought between nations, but rather one that is fought between indigenous peoples (identified as *Indígenas*) with a strong historical link to the forests, mountains, and lowlands of southeastern Mexico; a class of landowners

and merchants who are identified by themselves and the *Indígenas* as *Ladinos*; outside antagonists; and finally, varying levels of the Mexican Government. Over time, the actors have changed. The Federal Government has become increasingly sympathetic to the cause of the *Indígenas*, this is due in part to the increasing presence of indigenous activists in federal positions. In a sense, the conflict has devolved. It is less of a conflict between an indigenous group and a state, but rather factions of *indígenas*, factions of government at various levels, and the remnants of a landed elite class. This localized nature of the conflict seems to suggest that the bottom-up approach to peacebuilding will be particularly useful in the region. It also suggests that negotiations at the highest levels of government with the Zapatistas will yield little in the way of lasting peace without the inclusion of other factions in the peace process. For instance, the PRIistas in the villages, the *indígenas* who seek various forms of autonomy, and the *Ladinos* and campesinos who do not align with either the PRI or the Zapatistas must be engaged for the peace process to bear fruit.

Individually, the ethnographies provide a rich history of the actions that these actors have taken over the past century, and the perspectives of the people of Chiapas at the local level. Taken together, these texts represent a first-hand account of the ethnographic picture of the past 50 years in Chiapas, and provide a detailed history of the experiences of *Chiapanecos* for the past 500 years. Nearly all of the researchers have spent decades conducting ethnographic research in the region, resulting in more than 140 years of ethnographic research and well

over 30 years of ethnographic field research (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007). While not all of the 140+ years of ethnographic research was directed solely at the Zapatistas, this figure represents the combined number of years since each researcher began conducting field research in Chiapas, despite not being actively involved in the Zapatista communities, the fact that they return repeatedly suggests that they remain mindful of the *Chiapanecos*, and most remain in contact with their contacts in Chiapas, even when they are not physically in the field.

The potential for understanding that results from adopting various perspectives and synthesizing decades of research is tremendous. This breadth and depth of understanding the situation in Chiapas are critical to identifying strategies that promote the community level political, social, and economic development, combined with cultural preservation, which is necessary to set the foundation for the construction of peace in the region.

Additionally, the picture that this chapter pieces together can serve not only to inform the development of peacebuilding strategies in the Chiapas region, but also as the foundation for the development of strategies for building peaceful and resilient communities in regions experiencing similar conflicts involving income disparity and structural violence.

The goal of this portion of the metasyntesis is to address the following questions:

- What factors have been identified that contributed to the escalation of the conflict to violence? More specifically, what are the political, economic, social, and military causes and sustainers of the conflict in Chiapas?
- What strategies were employed by the Mexican government and other traditional power structures involved in the Chiapas conflict, and have any of these been successful at promoting a peaceful resolution?
- Are there any conditions revealed in the analysis that would seem to indicate they would promote peace in the region

Beginning with the causes of the conflict, then sustainers, and finally pathways to peace, this chapter sets the stage for understanding the strategies and mechanisms that brought the region to open conflict, that prevent the people of the region from building peace, and other strategies that may bring the region out of conflict and into a peaceful cooperative coexistence. The chapter considers the conflict itself, and the perceptions of participants as related in the ethnographies. While economic conditions and organizations play a central role in the conflict, these perspectives will be discussed in greater detail in the chapters that follow.

Causes of the Conflict

It is challenging to separate the history of the *Indígenas* in Chiapas from the conflict within which they have been embroiled for centuries. It is evident from the ethnographies that the identity of the *Indígenas* in Chiapas has been shaped by centuries of conflict and oppression. However, it is also abundantly evident that there is not an umbrella identity for the *Indígenas*. The conflict is not

drawn solely on ethnic identity, but rather ethnic identity, economic and political class, religious affiliation, and ideologies of development and democracy.

Although racism plays a significant role in the conflict, one which is difficult to separate from economic factors, conflict lines are very difficult to draw in the region. *Ladinos*, *Indígenas*, NGOs, municipal governments, and even members of the state and federal government may be found aligned with organizations that seem counterintuitive. This could partly be explained by centuries of outside efforts to promote internal conflict amongst the *Indígenas*, partly by access to government programs, and also partly by religious influences in the region.

Similarly, while the conflict in Chiapas may be identified as an uprising, this terminology conceals the reality of the situation, because it has actually been a series of uprisings and suppressions over the course of history. The Zapatistas have staged an uprising that is but one of a number of resistance and rebellion efforts contained within the larger low-intensity conflict that has been ongoing for decades. The ethnographies indicate a much broader conflict, one that has lasted for centuries in varying forms of open warfare, oppression, rebellion, and resistance. A more precise description of the situation is that it is a low-intensity conflict with economic and ethnic components.

Converging Perspectives

First published in 1998, Neil Harvey's *The Chiapas Rebellion: the Struggle for Land and Democracy* is the earliest published ethnography in this metasynthesis.

Harvey has been doing ethnographic research in Chiapas since 1961 and provides a vivid picture of the formation of the conflict in his analysis.

According to Harvey, "For anthropologists with long experience in the field, the rebellion resulted from a combination of ecological crisis, lack of available productive land, the drying up of nonagricultural sources of income, the political and religious reorganization of indigenous communities since the 1960's, and the rearticulation of ethnic identities with emancipatory political discourses" (2005, 8). Harvey (2005) suggests that the breakdown of rural society under the pressure of economic crisis and neoliberal reforms combined with unresolved land distribution and rural poverty to create the conditions under which a rebellion could occur.

June Nash (2001) has observed the *Indígenas* in Chiapas over the past 50 years and notes that the actions of the government, *Ladinos*, activists (both religious and secular), and *Indígenas* coalesced into violence in 1994 in response to decades of attempts to acculturate the indigenous peoples of Mexico into a homogenized society and divide their organizations, and to poverty caused by the destruction of subsistence communities as resources are drawn into international markets. Nash argues that subsistence economies are able to respond to the "...real needs of people as opposed to the market demand for goods that is the bottom line of a self-regulating market" (16). She adds that subsistence communities are of critical importance in the contemporary world, as they provide a form of safety net for people, and that the destruction of these

cultures and economies threatens the destruction of alternative ways of organizing people and production that transcends markets.

Fortunately, Nash (2001) also observes that the sustainable development movement has begun to re-introduce local, culturally transmitted, knowledge about how to maximize production with self-sustaining agricultural practices. Despite this effort, subsistence economies, including those in Chiapas, are at significant risk around the world, as all forms of capital, including human and natural resources, have been or are being incorporated into the capitalist global marketplace.

Bobrow-Strain's (2007) observations of *Ladino* landowners in Chiapas provide yet another perspective on the causes of the violence. He notes that, early in the rebellion, reports were emerging that the Zapatistas had been organized by Fidel Castro, William Colby (former CIA Director), Catholic militants, narcotraffickers, and Nazi anthropologists who wanted Chiapas to become an independent state so that its natural resources would be more easily exploited. He argues that this conspiracy theory, and others like it, provided *Ladinos* with an explanation for "peasant uprisings without requiring any reference to decades of unequal power relations between peasants and landowners" (28). In other words, externalizing the causes of the conflict by blaming outside activists allowed the *Ladinos* to avoid accepting blame for the oppression and impoverishment of the *Indígenas* that prompted the rebellion.

However, Bobrow-Strain adds that upon returning to Chiapas in 2000, he found that *Ladino* explanations for the rebellion were “worldlier and ultimately more compelling” (28). He recalls a discussion with a landowner who explained that the rebellion was the result of “landowner’s exploitation, patterns of state formation, and the rise of ethnic consciousness among the *Indígenas*” (28). The landowner laid blame for the rebellion on Bishop Samuel Ruiz and his *Catequistas* for “... [giving] the *Indígenas* the idea that they should take over the land and the INI [for giving] them the money to buy the land [in the 1980’s]” (28).

Earle and Simonelli, who have been conducting anthropological research in Chiapas since 1979 and 1997, respectively, offer a perspective of the Zapatistas at the community level. They relate the experience of the *Indígenas* in Chiapas as one that supports the causes of conflict discussed above and share the experiences of communities in resistance to the neoliberalization of Chiapas’ economy. They characterize the conflict as the response of *Indígenas* to colonization and its subsequent mechanisms and structures of oppression, impoverishment, and predation that have intensified under neoliberal reforms in Mexico and abroad.

The five ethnographies, when considered as one body of knowledge, represent the conflict as one that demonstrates components of each of the four “clusters of causes” of conflict identified by Junne and Verloren (2005), who characterize the clusters “...depending on the level of social organization at which the root causes are situated: external/international, characteristics of the

state, characteristics of society, or individual orientations” (7). The following section discusses these clusters as they relate to the causes of conflict in Chiapas revealed in the ethnographies. Again, while the economy and related neoliberal reforms are a significant cause of the conflict that weave their way through each of these “clusters of causes,” they are discussed in Chapter 6.

External and International Causes

External and international causes of the conflict are clearly evident in the ethnographies. First, colonization initiated the conflict, and subsequent efforts to control the *Indígenas* have carried it through 500 years of dominance and resistance. Second, the institutionalization of racism against the *Indígenas* as subjects in need of civilizing and hegemonic control has created an atmosphere in which racism is casually accepted and can be used to legitimize the actions of both *Indígenas* and *Ladinos*. Finally, indigenous mobilization that occurred in the mid to late 20th century set the stage for and established the actors in the conflict, while establishing the networks that would allow the *Indígenas* to develop cohesive arguments against their oppression and organize across the region. Additionally, this activism connected the *Indígenas* to international networks that would prove to be invaluable after the rebellion. While other mobilizations occurred throughout the 500 year history of the conflict, it was not until the late 20th century that these indigenous mobilizations began to be based on indigenous ideology as opposed to ideologies based in other cultural contexts. This shift to founding resistance in the context of the Mayan culture gave rise to the

contemporary conflict. Nonetheless, “the remnants of colonial rule may have left social cleavages that are not yet overcome” (Junne and Verkoren 2005, 7). In Chiapas, this is abundantly clear.

Religious Mobilization of the Indígenas

One of the critical internal and international causes of the conflict is indigenous mobilization by religious organizations. The transformation from resistance to rebellion and back to resistance in 20th-century Chiapas began in earnest with the 1960 arrival of Bishop Samuel Ruiz, and the subsequent efforts of Mexican President Echeverría to reestablish the government’s claim to legitimacy after “repressive campaigns against popular, urban, and peasant movements, which peaked with the Tlatelolco massacre on October 2, 1968” (Hernández-Castillo 2001, 102).

Samuel Ruiz became a major player in the region as he established two diocesan schools in San Cristobal to train *Indígenas* as clergy in the church and as organizers of resistance to hegemonic control. Unfortunately, early in his mission, these so-called *Catequistas* “returned to their communities to work against the ancient beliefs and practices of their people” (Earle and Simonelli 2005, 79).

Ruiz was anticommunist and was against social revolution and vanguard politics; his diocese adopted strategies akin to the U.S. President John Kennedy’s Alliance for Progress (Harvey, 2005). This would have a significant impact on

the formation of indigenous resistance in the region. While Marxist revolutionaries had been organizing *Indígenas* around an ideology of vanguard politics, the *Indígenas* were wary of another hegemonic structure that might simply replace the existing oppressors with new ones. The Mayan culture places great importance on the community, whether this was learned in response to colonialism or is a pre-colonization cultural trait is of less importance than the fact that it is now a part of indigenous cultural identity in Chiapas (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007). This meant that the *Indígenas* would naturally develop a form of collective action that was distinctively their own. Borrowing from political ideologies, Mayan Cosmology, and other religious perspectives, the *Indígenas* developed a model of governance that is not Marxist, neomarxist, anarchist, or democratic; it is all and none, and it is best described as Zapatismo.

Ruiz and the *Catequistas* set the migration of Tzeltal-speaking *Indígenas* into the Lacandon Jungle into the context of the biblical story of Exodus. This frame proved to be of critical importance to the transition from resistance to rebellion. According to Earle and Simonelli (2005), the realization of rights was founded upon a theology in which “the Tzeltal were the elected, called to announce the new age, not just receive the message” (79). “The use of Exodus as a springboard for reflection made great sense in the context of increasing displacement and out-migration occurring in the indigenous communities of Chiapas” (79). In religion and political/ social mobilization, the *Indígenas* found

their “right to have rights” and also to have a voice in their own destiny (Harvey 2005).

In 1974, the *Indígenas*’ voice was finally given a platform from which to speak when Manuel Velasco Suarez, then governor of Chiapas, and Bishop Samuel Ruiz organized the First Indigenous Congress. “The Congress marked the first time that Chiapas Maya would be able to meet and speak out in a public conference...[and] be allowed to give their true testimony in public after 500 years of silence” (Earle and Simonelli 2005, 80). It was this realization of voice that provided the spark that would inspire the *Indígenas* to evolve from subjects of oppression to harbingers of revolution. The resulting indigenous organizations, which evolved out of indigenous leaders developing agendas that were independent of the PRI organizers, set the foundations for future consolidation of indigenous resistance efforts in the region.

According to Harvey (2005), the facilitating policy for the congress was “a rebirth of agrarian populism in Mexico” (Harvey 2005, 76). While Suarez was at odds with the Echeverría administration’s populist activities, he was compelled to organize the congress, and enlisted the aid of Ruiz to organize it. “The governor’s objective was to co-opt indigenous leaders into a new alliance with an expanding state apparatus that promised, in true populist style, to attend to the demands of the poor” (Harvey 2005, 91) However, Bobrow-Strain (2007) offers a different perspective. He suggests that the congress was conceived to be the “quincentennial celebration of the birth of Chiapas’s first bishop, Batolomé de

Las Casas” (120). Samuel Ruiz directed the congress to become a venue for indigenous communities to discuss their situation and develop plans which “raised the consciousness of an entire generation of indigenous lay leaders” (120).

The Mexican President Luis Echeverría was attempting to “regain popular support in the aftermath of the brutal repression of the 1968 student movement” (Harvey 2005, 76). Following his example, the governor of Chiapas was attempting to develop strategies that would address the rampant poverty in the region by supporting agricultural reform and promoting the collectivization of the *ejidos*, while protecting the *Ladino* elites in the PRI. Ironically, this effort at organizing the region’s *Indígenas* would promote the foundations for the Zapatista uprising.

While the Catholic religion had a significant influence in the region, it was not the only religious organization at work. Protestants were also engaging the *Indígenas* in their communities, and even made efforts to help develop religious communities in the region. Their efforts were aimed at eliminating the remnants of the traditional Mayan religion and practices from the population. They were invited by the Mexican Government as part of an effort to acculturate the *Indígenas* into Mexican society without maintaining any ties to their Mayan heritage (Hernández-Castillo 2001).

Hernández Castillo observed the Mam people in the Lacandon forest. Much like Harvey (2005), she studied the indigenous immigrants from

Guatemala who were fleeing genocide in their homeland. While there, she discovered that the Las Ceibas *ejido* was actually a colony of Jehovah's Witnesses. She notes that when she first arrived in the region, the *Indígenas* in the Las Ceibas *ejido* had already been westernized. Until recently, few of the residents identified with their Mayan heritage and even fewer used the Mam language. Hernández Castillo notes that, "The new transnational community plays an important part in the collective imagination of Las Ceibas inhabitants, as the main community with which they identify has ceased to be the 'Mam people' and has become instead the Jehovah's Witnesses" (97). They hold a "derogatory attitude toward the Chamula...a generic term the use to refer to all indigenous peoples from the Highlands...and Guatemalan indigenous people who do not know the Word of God and are not proficient in Spanish" (Hernández-Castillo 2001, 97). However, this sentiment must be understood in the context of socio-political relations in Chiapas.

During the 1960's, Chiapas was experiencing a significant increase in population, and suffered from environmental degradation in the form of land erosion. The communities began to expel *Indígenas* who had been converted to Protestantism. This was particularly so in the case of Chamula. It is understandable that there would be remaining resentment in the population, but this also serves as evidence of racism and religion creating conditions that contributed to the division of the indigenous population. The Protestant

converts were no longer traditionally ethnic, and therefore, the land shortage prompted them to be identified for expulsion (Nash 2001).

More recently, the Mam in Las Ceibas have begun to identify with their indigenous heritage, as government programs have begun to demonstrate an interest in valuing indigenous identity. Now the community promotes its religious message using the native Mam language. *Idiomistas*, a local term for *Indígenas* that speak the native Mam tongue, have become more common, and the language is no longer restricted to the privacy of the household (Hernández-Castillo 2001).

These observations demonstrate how religious influence in the region has both fueled divisions within the indigenous communities and united them. At the same time it provides a foundation for an indigenous identity that is able to choose cultural representations that will match the expectations of different observers. The result, according to Hernández-Castillo, is “the coexistence of multiple identities, recently theorized by postmodern anthropology., [and] reflected by testimonies of converts, who define themselves as ‘Mam, Presbyterian, and Mexican’” (Hernández-Castillo 2001, 233). On the surface, this may seem to represent progress in the region, as indigenous identity becomes more acceptable to the government; however, it also reveals the existence of the need to choose when to “be indigenous” and when to “be western.” In essence, it reflects continuing friction within Mexican society over the value of indigenous culture and practices, and continuing racism and religious intolerance. While

policies have changed significantly over the course of the conflict, particularly at the federal and state levels of government, the fact remains that, locally, the *Indígenas* are often criticized for their cultural traditions and belief systems.

Characteristics of the State

Junne and Verkoren argue that an oppressive state can give rise to resistance and separatist movements, while a weak state can give rise to paramilitaries and other sub-national groups. Mexico represents a paradox in this regard. State power is demonstrated in the region by a massive military buildup. Reportedly linked to terrorism and human/narcotics interdiction, this military force has become an oppressive presence in the region (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007). Simultaneously, Mexico demonstrates characteristics of a weak state, as landowners turn to sub-national groups for protection, such as paramilitaries, and *Indígenas* turn to the EZLN.

Another characteristic of the state that is a cause of the conflict in Chiapas are the efforts to pacify the *Indígenas* without recognizing their demands. Over time the structures and rhetoric of these pacification efforts have changed; however, the goal has remained the same: the preservation of the Chiapas elites and the power of the PRI – one such strategy of pacification was indigenismo.

Indigenismo

In the early 20th century, “Manuel Gamio, considered the father of Mexican indigenismo, called in his book, *Forjando Patria*, for a cultural homogenization of the country in order to construct a modern nation” (Hernández-Castillo 2001, 21). He argued that “Indigenous cultures were...aberrations of pre-Hispanic cultures, which, if not integrated into the national hybrid mestizo culture, were condemned to isolation and extreme poverty” (21). Gamio became the head of the *Dirección de Antropología y Poblaciones de la República* (DAPR), which later became the INI. Under Gamio’s leadership, the DAPR set as its goals “the preparation for racial fusion, for cultural integration, linguistic unification, and the economic balance of indigenous populations” as “the only way in which [the Mexican people] would form a coherent and well defined nationality and a real fatherland” (INI Treinta Años Después: Revisión Crítica [1918] 1978, 26 cited in Hernández-Castillo 2001, 21).

Nash suggests that “[j]ust as the ideology of liberalism served the *Creolo* elites rather than the Indians and *mestizos* following independence, so did the ideology of *indigenismo* serve what indigenous people call the *mestizocracia* – the hierarchy of elite *mestizos* – more than it did Indians after the 1910 Revolution” (Nash 2001, 56). In this sense, the revolutionary government in Mexico adopted racist values in its socialization of Mexico. By valuing mestizo culture over

indigenous and *Creolo* cultures, it established a legal basis for the oppression of indigenous cultures.

Indigenismo, contrary to what the word implies, was an attempt to eradicate the remnants of indigenous culture in Mexico. This would have profound effects on Mexican national identity, as it denied the right of *Indígenas* to practice their own culture, as such denying them the right to become full members of the Mexican society unless they accepted mestizo culture instead of the culture of their ancestors. This particular characteristic of the state, treating the *Indígenas* as subjects to be controlled either through cultural or economic manipulation, has fed into one of the most important causes of the conflict in Chiapas: racism as a characteristic of Mexican society.

Characteristics of Society

Junne and Verkoren (2005) suggest that “[e]thnic cleavages are a fertile feeding ground for rival nationalities” (7). The ethnic cleavages in Chiapas will prove to be a challenging component of the conflict to resolve. The ethnographies reveal that racism is engrained into the fabric of society in Chiapas. This racism manifests in many forms, but its entrenchment into society took a paternalistic trajectory.

Race in Chiapas

From the beginning of colonization through the Mexican Revolution in the early 20th century, efforts were made to bring the *Indígenas* of Chiapas into the

colonial enterprise. Beginning with the need to organize the *Indígenas* into productive units that could be exploited for agricultural projects, the Spanish colonial masters oppressed and dominated the *Indígenas* of Chiapas. While some of the Mayan tribes were never fully conquered through Military campaigns, the acculturation of the *Indígenas* succeeded where armies had failed. *Indígenas* identity was driven into the hidden transcript (Scott 1990), traditional religious practices, indigenous languages, traditional clothing, and traditional social structures were largely discouraged over the past 500 years (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007).

According to Hernández Castillo (2001), The Department of Social Action Culture and Indigenous Protection was created in 1934 to tackle the ‘social problem’ caused by the presence of *Indígenas* in Chiapas. She quotes the decree that established the agency in the State of Chiapas, which I have included here as it demonstrates the attitude of the early revolutionary government toward the *Indígenas*.

...the largest social problem which overwhelms and arrests the economic evolution of the State of Chiapas is the existence of great masses of indigenous people, which, amounting to 38 percent of our population, are a weight for the collective progress and the greatest obstacle against the coordination of all sectors of social life, which aims at the achievement of the constructive program of the revolution(Periodico oficial del Estado, April 18, 1934: 3 in Hernández-Castillo 2001, 25)

The agency worked to force the integration of the *Indígenas* into Mexican society. For instance, Hernández Castillo (2001) relates stories from Mam elders who claim that *Indígenas* who did not voluntarily surrender their traditional

clothing were threatened with burning. One particular elder relates an incident from his childhood in the 1930s, when he saw a Mam elder refuse to remove his traditional clothing. Police came to the town square, poured oil over him, and threatened to burn him if he did not remove his clothing, he complied...weeping (26).

Mestizaje was the fusion of *indígena* and *Creolo* that created a new race in Mexico – the mestizo. The revolutionary government institutionalized racism as it adopted policies to promote Mestizaje as the racial and cultural agenda of nation-building. This particular perspective was especially threatening to indigenous women, who became the vessel through which a new Mexican race would be born (Hernández-Castillo 2001). It will be difficult, but not insurmountable, to overcome a racial ideology that has been entrenched in the national identity.

However, the *Indígenas* have endured conditions of racism since the conquest of Chiapas began in 1524. The fact that these conditions have persisted explains the motivation for conflict, but not how the conflict evolved from low-intensity to open warfare. The critical difference lies in the latter part of Harvey's (2005) explanation of causes: "the rearticulation of ethnic identities with emancipatory political discourses" (8). The ethnic identity was re-articulated in the late twentieth century and was infused with a discourse of emancipation through exposure to outside forces, i.e. religious organizations, academic activists, and a growing domestic civil society which included indigenous social

movements. All five of the ethnographies confirm this explanation, either explicitly or through their discourse (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007).

The Spark that Ignites the Fire

The conditions described above provide significant reasons for the indigenous people of Chiapas to resist and rebel. The Indigenous Congress may have sparked a wildfire of indigenous organizing that followed complex patterns of inter-linked actors, including religious organizations, peasant organizers, agricultural organizations, indigenous and human rights organizations, and *ejidos* (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007). The indigenous organizations that crossed cultural and geographical boundaries were critical to the ability of the EZLN recruitment efforts. The organization was able to reach disparate communities that would have previously been separated by regional and cultural conflict. While these aspects of the region have not been entirely erased, as is evident from the previous discussion, there exist networks that penetrate deep into the jungle and across tribal and ethnic lines.

Putting aside the motivations of political and social activists in the region, it is apparent that outside forces played a critical role in planting the seeds and, in some cases nurturing the growth, of rebellion in the region. Indeed, *Subcommandante* Marcos is a university educated mestizo who had come to

Chiapas to participate in Marxist revolution. Two of the other five founding members of the EZLN were also Mestizos, and three were *Indígenas*. The initial vision of vanguard politics quickly faded as the ideology evolved into something new once it came into direct contact with the social structures and ideology of the Mayan *Indígenas* in Chiapas and a broader civil society and global solidarity network. (Henck 2007). Nonetheless, these outside influences would prove to be the bellows that fanned the embers of resistance into the flames of rebellion.

Obstacles to Peace

Taken together, the ethnographies offer a comprehensive understanding of the causes of the conflict in Chiapas. They also make abundantly clear that indigenous mobilization in the late twentieth century proved to be the catalyst for rebellion. The identification of the causes of the conflict offers significant insights into strategies that will promote peace. However, there are a number of factors that sustain the conflict and promote its continuation. Here, I detail these obstacles in an effort to identify strategies that can build an equitable, sustainable, peace in the region.

Low-intensity Warfare

The Chiapas region is engaged in a low-intensity war that involves the *Indígenas*, *Ladino* elites, and the Mexican government. The Mexican military has adopted strategies to isolate the insurgents. The goal is subverting support for reform efforts called for by the Zapatistas, eroding local physical support for the

Zapatistas, and dividing the population through counter-insurgency aid. While these strategies may be effective at achieving a tactical advantage, they will do little to promote a lasting peace, as the division of the population will result in new conflicts of interest that may lead to future outbreaks of violence. In fact, these strategies serve to exacerbate already problematic situations in Chiapas, including racism and economic and political inequality.

In Chiapas, the ruling elite have engaged in activities that include terrorism through paramilitaries, massacres, physical and sexual violence, destruction of crops that provide subsistence to the *Indígenas* families, and land seizures (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007). Many of these tactics are the precise activities that counter-insurgency is intended to curb. However, the counter-insurgency in Chiapas is often aimed at the victims of the violence rather than at the perpetrators. The Zapatistas and other indigenous groups have taken up arms in an effort to protect themselves, gain international attention, and to awaken the world to their plight (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Henck 2007). From the Zapatista perspective the persistence of the elites in the region at perpetrating violence toward the *Indígenas* prevents their disarmament (Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005). Even if the Mexican military were to guarantee that they would cease operations against the Zapatistas and other *Indígenas*, they cannot prevent paramilitary violence aimed at the *Indígenas* from the elite class in the current situation.

Thus far, the counter-insurgency strategies have resulted in increased paramilitary activity in the region, and much of it is supported by *Ladino* elites holding government positions, who use their positions of power to divert resources, weapons, and other material and political support for the paramilitaries (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007). Add to this the increasing presence of government troops in the region, who are reportedly responding in an effort to curb paramilitary actions and conflicts arising from divisions of the indigenous population, but have shown diffidence toward activities of paramilitary organizations (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007), and the situation is a tinder-box. The region appears to be heading for a renewal of large scale violence.

Despite Bobrow-Strains observation that the *Ladino* elites were not responding to the indigenous uprising as violently as they had in the past, the violence has been considerable and appears to be increasing with time (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007). The militarization of Chiapas occurred rapidly in the early to mid 1990's. Military actions have been timed with the growing and planting cycle. This timing interrupts the ability of the subsistence *Indígenas* ability to grow their milpa and bean crops. Food insecurity is a considerable risk to subsistence farmers and places them at the mercy of government programs that distribute food (Earle and Simonelli 2005). Additionally, leaders of indigenous organizations , as well as

human rights observers , are persistently threatened, assassinated, or tortured and killed by groups of men who may or may not be related to paramilitary or police organizations.

In a sense, the *Ladino* elites are legitimizing the government's military presence in the region by indirectly, or sometimes directly, promoting the activities of paramilitary forces, by creating new divisions amongst the *Indígenas*, and also by making daily life difficult in the region, which in turn itself causes increased instances of resistance (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007). The *Ladinos* fear an army of armed *Indígenas*. It was this fear, combined with the feeling of abandonment by the Mexican government, that contributed to the restrained *Ladino* response immediately following the 1994 land invasions (Bobrow-Strain 2007). However, the persistent low-intensity warfare model that the Mexican military has adopted seems to be eroding this fear, if the growing number of paramilitary groups and increased violence and racism in the region stand as indicators of *Ladino* confidence. Perhaps it is simply the result of increasing *Ladino* frustration with the slow progression of low-intensity conflict, as this form of warfare affects all the people of Chiapas in one way or another whether they are *Ladinos*, *Indígenas*, or foreign visitors. This analysis indicates that the region is not only experiencing a loss of innocence and respect, but also a loss of the rule of law.

Land Distribution

A second obstacle to peace involves land. The Mexican Revolution of 1910 had a different face in Chiapas than it did elsewhere in Mexico. Land distribution promised in the revolution was slow to arrive in Chiapas, and when it did, it was slow in its application. Through a guerilla campaign, the landowners in Chiapas halted the advance of the revolutionary forces, and successfully co-opted the post-revolutionary rhetoric. They “quickly and effectively reworked the logics and practices of post-revolutionary rule to further their privileged control over land and labor” (Bobrow-Strain 2007, 81). However, Bobrow-Strain adds that this adoption of the rhetoric of the revolution in an effort to preserve the *Ladino*'s hegemonic control of the region also exposed them “to the legitimating discourses of agrarian reform and social justice, and [they] increasingly found themselves forced to shore up their crumbling authority with substantial concessions to a peasantry also empowered by state practices” (Bobrow-Strain 2007, 81).

However, the *Ladino* elites were able to preserve their power and authority in the region through cooptation, coercion, and political manipulation (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007). This resulted in a situation in which the land reform efforts in Chiapas preserved the landed elite and encouraged *Indígenas* to colonize undeveloped land in the region. Thus, while the large *Ladino* farms were

preserved, a migrant labor force developed (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007).

Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution of 1917 provided three avenues for peasants to petition for land. First was as *pequeños propietarios*, or smallholders; second was as *comunidades agrarias*, or community agriculture, which was the land surrounding their communities that could be corporately held by the community; and third was as *ejidos*, which were corporately held agrarian colonies of unrelated *campesinos*. Unfortunately, petitions for land in Chiapas were frequently delayed or lost, and bribes were often required at each step in order to keep the petitions active (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007). This created an atmosphere in which *ejido* reform undertaken in preparation for NAFTA was particularly opposed in Chiapas. With thousands of *campesinos* waiting for title to their *ejidos* and *comunidades agrarias*, the reform left them with no hope.

The 1992 passage of the Agrarian Law eliminated land redistribution in Mexico. In an effort to promote security in the private property sector “the sections of article 27 that allowed for peasants to petition for land redistribution were deleted from the new law” (Harvey 2005, 187). Opponents of the law argued that privatizing *ejido* and *comunidad* land would expose *campesinos* to the risk of foreclosure as they sought credit based upon land as collateral. The law required a two-thirds majority for an *ejido* to be able to convert communally held land into private land that could be sold. This majority vote requirement,

proponents argued, protected *ejidos* from minority interests. However, the history of coercion and manipulation by authorities and private interests in Chiapas posed a significant risk to the *ejiditarios* (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007).

Earle and Simonelli (2005, 147-55) relate the experience of the Cerro Verde *ejido* with this reform. Cerro Verde is a village in which pro-Zapatistas and *PRIistas* occupied the same community. “That relative calm had prevailed [since 1994] in spite of the fact that part of the village of Cerro Verde was PRI and the rest pro-Zapatista was a small miracle” (147). The pro-Zapatista faction of the community had declared autonomy from the government. As such, they did not accept government aid, nor did they contribute to the labor required to acquire government projects. The “families in resistance” refused to contribute labor to the construction of government schools and clinics. The community had come to this agreement that they would not participate when the families declared autonomy in 1994. The autonomous members would contribute to the labor related to agriculture, which they argued was the mission of the *ejido*.

The *ejido* was governed by an assembly with rotating leadership, and the then-current PRI leadership was attempting to expel the autonomous members from the community. The pro-Zapatistas were opposed to the *PRIistas'* desire to privatize the *ejido*, to which the *PRIistas* responded by attempting to persuade the other members of the assembly to evict them from the group. The *PRIistas* based their reasons for expulsion on the refusal to participate in the construction

of government clinics and schools. The *ejiditarios* who were in resistance feared a violent response from the *PRIistas* and requested peace observers for the community. Ultimately, the volunteer Spanish peace observers may have been instrumental in preventing the conflict from escalating to a violent confrontation. Once the case was heard by a judge in the presence of the entire community, the *ejiditarios* who had initially signed a statement that the 'families in resistance' did not contribute their required labor would no longer confirm this claim.

The outcome of this localized conflict is best related in the words of the participant in the ethnography. Only four representatives went to court, as the rest feared they were going to be killed by the *PRIistas* at the Ejidal assembly meeting. Upon their arrival, the *ejidal* leadership "demanded that municipal police" remove the representatives (151):

"The judge said let them speak! He listened to our story, then to the charges of the commission, Rodrigo continued. "The PRIistas thought that they had good reason to put before the government to expel us, that we didn't contribute to labor on schools, health, and other official projects. The judge asked us why we didn't take PROCAMPO money or support the schools. And we said we had our own, and weren't interested in others.

"Then he asked the assembly if it was true that we didn't do our required work and no one agreed, even though they had signed a paper a month before. They had worked beside us for years. In the end, they couldn't lie. The ejido leaders were shocked. They lost control of the assembly."

"The judge, the PRI judge, ruled in our favor. He said that in an ejido, only issues related to agronomy required our participation, cleaning paths, repairing roads, attending meetings, contributing to the costs of sending representatives to the city on Ejidal business. After this pronouncement, we presented a document stating our willingness to keep working, and the judge said all was in order." (Earle and Simonelli 2005, 151)

There are two very interesting conclusions that may be drawn here. First, it seems evident that the PRI faction was able to coerce members of the assembly into signing a document that those members would then not confirm in front of the authority of the judge. This seems to indicate a certain respect for the rule of law among both PRI and autonomous *Indígenas* in the *ejido*. The resistance community sought protection under the Mexican legal system despite that system's continued control by PRI members. The second observation is that the judge ruled in favor of the autonomous community. Short of legalizing their autonomy in the community, the judge has at least legitimized it by indirectly recognizing it under the law.

For the residents of the *ejido* Vega Del Rosario, the new Agrarian law had a very different impact. The *ejido* had been waiting eight years for a decision to grant it a title to its communally held lands. In 1992, "[t]he rumor that land distribution had ended spread rapidly though the Sierra Madre" (Hernández-Castillo 2001). The elimination of land distribution meant that the *ejido* would not have its application approved. These changes in 1992 left many of the *campesinos* feeling betrayed and neglected. After years of trekking through mud to carry applications to urban centers and paying fees and bribes, the *campesinos* efforts were squashed at the Federal level. Disenchantment with the neoliberal reforms was growing enormously in the region.

Land reform in Chiapas was certainly hijacked by the *Ladino* elites, who used a number of tactics to preserve their authority and control over the region:

“violence, creative twisting of Mexican property law, and tapping of allies in municipal, state, and federal governments” (Bobrow-Strain 2007, 96). However, this does not mean that the *Ladino* elites were themselves immune to the reach of the revolution, and later, liberal reform.

The emphasis on liberal market development meant that landed elites were no longer the backbone of the Mexican economy. This left the landowners with little support from the federal government and exposed them to market forces beyond their control. Land invasions in the second half of the twentieth century left many of the *Ladinos* without land. As a result the *Ladinos* too have been striving to find their place in the new liberalized economy.

In Chilón, Bobrow-Strain observed a shift in *Ladino* strategies from landed production to the organization of commerce. Landowners have resituated themselves in the new economy of Chiapas in an effort to preserve their hegemonic position. By turning their focus to the commerce of agriculture as opposed to the production of it, in the words of Paco Vera, a former Chilón landowner who lost his land to the post-rebellion land invasions, they have positioned themselves “to live off what the *Indígenas* produce” (Bobrow-Strain 2007, 214). In fact, Bobrow-Strain argues that “a central conclusion of [his] book...[is that] the spaces of landed production in Chilón have been constantly formed and re-formed through social struggle, and this ongoing process of transformation lies at the heart of Landowners’ responses to agrarian conflict” (Bobrow-Strain 2007, 215-16).

Equitable land distribution in Chiapas is a critical condition for bringing about peace in the region. With land seizures, evictions, and invasions, attempts to abandoned organized distribution for the sake of the security of private property has failed. Additionally with landed production increasingly involving mining, timber, and power generation, ranching, and large-scale mono-cropping ecological risks are increasing. These risks are particularly threatening to subsistence farmers in the region, creating an even more desperate situation for rural *Indígenas* who are coming into contact with multi-national interests in the remote jungles, forests, and canyons of Chiapas.

Racism

A third significant sustainer of the conflict is racism, the roots of which run deep in Chiapas. From the beginning of colonialism, the *Indígenas* of Chiapas were organized into republics that were required to pay tribute to their *Creolo* conquerors. With the abolishment of tribute in the late 16th century the *Indígenas* were organized into pueblos that promoted a dominant class of *Creolos*, acculturated *Indígenas*, and mestizos who controlled resources and concentrated distinct populations of *Indígenas* into the pueblos (Nash 2001) “[B]y 1570 the indigenous Mayan population [in Chiapas] had fallen by at least 50 percent and, in some areas of the province, by 80 or 90 percent” (Harvey 2005, 38). These conditions persisted for centuries. The first Bishop of Mexico, Fray Bartolome de Las Casas, opposed *Creolos* who treated their *campesinos* as slaves, and he passed laws to protect them from predatory labor practices. However, the mission of

the priests in Mexico was to acculturate the *Indígenas*, to civilize them. The result was efforts to destroy traditional culture religion and replace it with Catholicism.

Racism was institutionalized in the wake of Mexican Revolution in the early 20th century. Those who took control of the Mexican government and economy in the wake of the revolution sought to embody the state of Mexico through *Mestizaje*: the blending of all cultures into one uniquely Mexican society. This effort forced indigenous identity further into the margins of Mexican society.

Earle and Simonelli (2005) note that “[r]acism is still prominent in much of Mexico. It derives some of its power from the failure to resolve the contradiction between the legitimacy of the pre-conquest peoples and their encounter with the ‘civilized’ Spanish Europeans, who sought legitimacy for their acts in religion and law” (14).

Conditions had improved for the *Indígenas* in the late twentieth century, with the indigenous organizing undertaken in Chiapas since the 1960’s raising awareness of the indigenous plight in the region. Nonetheless, the perception of the *Indígenas* persists among the *Ladinos* as “the real parasites, living off the natural bounty of land—land that was originally made productive through landowners’ sweat and sacrifice” (Bobrow-Strain 2007, 161). The landowners that Bobrow-Strain shared time with in Chilón leveled criticism at the *Indígenas* for not working the land for the creation of profit, but only enough to get what

they need at the time. Rather than participating in growth economics, the indígenas practice subsistence farming, not capital accumulation.

Government Activity

Finally, the Mexican government, which plays a role in each of the aspects discussed above, has little incentive to engage in a peace process with the Zapatistas. Additionally, its response is limited by the NAFTA; the government has little room for meeting the economic demands of the Zapatistas without risking a violation of the rules of its various trade agreements. Rather than engage in dialogue, the Mexican government has adopted a policy of containment. This containment policy is achieved through counter-insurgency aid that aims to demoralize the Zapatista support base by offering incentives to denounce the Zapatistas and development projects to PRI aligned *Indígenas*. Additionally, the government in Chiapas, which is largely in the hands of the PRI elites who have dominated and oppressed the *Indígenas* for the past century, uses federal policy and government positions to preserve support for the PRI, organize oppression of indigenous groups, and works to suppress revelations of atrocities.

The violence that is persistent in the region only fuels the conflict – creating new divisions in the *Chiapanecos* communities, and exacerbating existing cleavages. Additionally, the government has been unable, or unwilling, to honor agreements. For instance, the government has, in the past, refused to acknowledge Zapatista conditions for resuming talks, which, among other

things, included the establishment of a negotiating team with decision-making capacity and an end to the military persecution of the indigenous people in Chiapas, which became more intense with the negotiation and congressional/presidential defeat of the San Andres Peace Accords. When the Zapatistas have agreed to the peace accords, even if those agreements ignore many of their demands as the San Andres Accords had, the results are not realized (Ross 1995; Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Speed, Castillo et al. 2008).

An example is the development of a constitutional amendment on Indigenous rights, which ignored indigenous demands agreed upon between the federal government and the Zapatistas and instead established grounds to co-opt indigenous organizations (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005). This amendment was Zedillo's answer to the San Andres Accords which had been negotiated with the Zapatistas and their communities. Despite the accords falling short of the goals of the Zapatistas, it was accepted by the communities using a community level collective democratic decision-making process. It was struck down by Zedillo and the PRI controlled congress, who chose to define indigenous people as a public concern rather than recognize indigenous rights (Jung 2008). The Zapatistas were once again left in limbo (Earle and Simonelli 2005), they withdrew from the peace process as military and paramilitary violence toward the autonomous communities increased upon the defeat of the accords at the federal level.

Clues to Peacebuilding

As the literature and the metasynthesis begin to reveal, the conflict in Chiapas is complex and entrenched. The stakes are high, as multinational corporations, the Mexican federal government, *Chiapanecos* (both *Ladinos* and *Indígenas*), and NGOs compete for the abundant resources, legitimacy, authority, and power in the region. Nonetheless, the preceding analysis has identified the most significant causes and sustainers of the conflict. Here, I will consider potential pathways that may help the people of Chiapas find their way to peace. Peace cannot be imposed by the outside world, the federal government, the *Ladinos*, or the *Indígenas*. It must be constructed *poco a poco*, little by little, by the people who are trapped in the cycle of violence.

Paul Lederach (Lederach 2005) describes a web approach for peacebuilding. The key to this approach is the linkages between different actors in a conflict, what Lederach calls intersections. Utilizing these intersections to begin building horizontal and vertical relationships can help lead communities out of conflict. However, in order for these relationships to create the space for peace, there must be a simultaneous and obvious effort at seeking a reconciliation of the causes of the conflict. This may be achieved by expanding the concept of the local autonomous collective governance to include the entirety of the community, and not simply the Zapaitstas, or *indígenas*, will allow for a decision-making process akin to both the negotiated model of rule of law and the web approach for peacebuilding. This need not be a radical shift in the form and

function of the Mexican Government, although decision-making is slower, it results in a more just solution as a result of the negotiation to consensus component.

Finding Common Ground

The perspectives provided by the ethnographies reveal that the *Chiapanecos*—*Indígena* and *Ladino* alike—share a common feeling that they have lost control of their world. This, I believe, is the seed for peace in the region.

Bobrow-Strain (2007) reveals that he had “naively entertained the idea that by showing how neoliberal globalization created a crisis in the lives of both *Indígenas* and *Ladinos* in the countryside, [he] could reveal common ground between the two groups” but found that “Chilón's long history of racial antagonism, complex identities, and deeply sedimented layers of domination quickly dispelled this fantasy” (218). While his dismay over the situation is not unfounded, Bobrow-Strain succeeded in identifying something that is critical to the development of peace in the region. A persistent theme amongst the *Ladinos* with whom he spoke was a feeling that something had been lost: innocence, respect, control, etc. This sentiment caught my attention because it echoes the feelings of the *Indígenas*.

Throughout all of the ethnographies, the researchers revealed situations in which the *Indígenas* and landowners feel that something beyond their control is happening to them and their region (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007). Marcos' prolific writings

and Zapatista communiqués reflect these feelings of loss. Whether it is the loss of control, land, respect, culture, or innocence, the general feeling is that it is something alien to the region...from outside. The *Chiapanecos*, regardless of ethnic or cultural background, seek to find meaning and purpose amongst this feeling of loss in similar ways. They are trying to find a place of dignity for themselves and their children in a new economy and a changing world. While Bobrow-Strain doubted that his work would “bring landowners and indigenous peasants into a common political conversation” (218), he has helped to identify the seeds for understanding a potential common political discourse that will be very useful in the development of strategies for peace in the region. This common ground creates a space for helping the *Chiapanecos* find a shared understanding of the crisis they face as a state, not as *Indígenas* and *Ladinos*, but rather, as *Chiapanecos*.

Nonetheless, this discourse will not by itself bring about the changes that will address the obstacles to peace identified above. This will require concerted action by the federal government and a return to the rule of law, not one enforced by a military presence, but rather a “negotiated model” of the rule of law described by Mark Plunkett (Plunkett 2005, 89): “The negotiated model secures voluntary compliance by negotiating with local people to bring about fundamental shifts in population consciousness against tolerance for impunity for violence” (Plunkett 2005, 89). This model for returning the rule of law to

Chiapas allows for the parties share their own future while ensuring that transgressions against the rule of law will not go unpunished.

Addressing Racism

Related to the idea of finding common ground is the importance of reducing racial conflict. The analysis revealed that there is little effort on the part of the *Indígenas* or the *Ladinos* to engage each other in conversation about what is happening in Chiapas. Community level peaceful discussions, not official peace negotiations, but rather through meetings that allow each side to share their experiences and perspectives with each other in the presence of qualified negotiators, would begin the process of creating mutual understanding of the shared experience of conflict in Chiapas.

While social and political integration is a goal for the region, it can be achieved with respect for other cultures, and dignity for the individuals who will comprise this pluriethnic society of cultures. This may best be dealt with using a combination of strategies. First, reconciliation efforts that immerse members of opposing communities in workshops designed to share stories of experiences from opposing sides of similar events. Not in order to lay blame, but in an effort to constructively understand each other's perspectives.

Second, education amongst both the autonomous communities and the government communities must make an effort to explore opposing cultures in the classrooms of young children. Additionally, holding tolerance workshops amongst adults will help with religious and political conflict in the region.

Finally, campaigns to end intolerance should be undertaken at the federal level, particularly in the military, as well as the local. By sending a clear message that violence perpetrated due to political, religious, or ethnic intolerance will be prosecuted by federal authorities, regardless of the perpetrators and their proximity to the government, the Mexican government will be able to regain some of its legitimacy in the region.

Limiting Violence

The counter-insurgency and paramilitarization occurring in Chiapas has become entrenched in the communities. In a worst-case scenario, the paramilitaries and PRIistas could launch a concerted effort to violently evict all of the resistance communities, either with or without direct federal support, and the EZLN could respond with equal violence, driving the region into civil war. Even under less dire circumstances, the ongoing violence makes building a sustainable peace difficult, if not impossible.

If the seed for peace lies in finding common ground, the catalyst lies in the economic and organizational model of the autonomous communities that are protected by the EZLN. Most notably in terms of conflict, the communities are developing mechanisms for governance that may overcome the cycle of violence that has gripped the region. Lederach (2005) observes that “peacebuilding, like web-making, is the process of creating ‘complicated structures in an unpredictable environment.’ However, the key to such complexity is found once again in the art of simplicity” (84). He draws on the weaving techniques of orb

spiders to develop a strategy for building networks to build sustainable peace. Lederach suggests that a peacebuilder must understand the social geography of a conflict in order to identify “strategic anchor points that link different but necessarily interdependent constituencies, processes, and geographic localities” (Lederach 2005, 84). Additionally, the peacebuilder must diligently seek places to “build hubs where the cross-linking relational spaces connect the not-like-minded and not-like-situated. He adds that “like the star in a hub, the center holds, but it is not a centralized hub that controls. Nor is the center built on finding moderates on a political spectrum” (Lederach 2005, 85). Finally, he suggests that the peacebuilder must be flexible, and create platforms. “A platform represents the ongoing capacity to generate processes, ideas, and solutions...In peacebuilding, a platform is best understood in the idea of relational spaces, the ability to keep sets of people in creative interaction” (Lederach 2005, 85).

The Zapatista autonomous pluriethnic communities may serve as a model for constructing networks of networks, webs of peace, and could be a creative way for building the localized relationships that will not only promote the sustainability of peace, but also promote sustainable economic and political conditions. The communities provide a foundation for building both the bottom-up web approach developed by Lederach, and the negotiated model for returning to the rule of law developed by Mark Plunkett. Granted, the

communities are still in their infancy, and as such are constantly working out the ways in which autonomy and collective governance operate in reality.

Through their efforts as an armed military force, the EZLN claims to help create a space for peacemaking. In reality, the EZLN is a preventive paramilitary force protecting communities from the violence that has been perpetuated against them in the wake of past uprisings. However, in the present situation, one must consider the validity of their arguments that the *campesinos* would suffer from increased violence without the protection of the armed EZLN. By disarming, the EZLN would negate one of the most threatening challenges to their legitimacy: they would no longer be a guerilla force in any way, shape, or form. The persistence of the armed guerilla force is the last remaining visage of the movements Marxist/Maoist past.

However, Bobrow-Strain (2007) observed that two factors limited the violence of the *Ladino* response to the 1994-1998 land invasions. First, the *Ladinos* feared an indigenous army, and second, the landowners feared that the new political climate in Mexico would erode the impunity for a violent response. In light of the increasing paramilitarization of the region (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007; Speed, Castillo et al. 2008), the EZLN's position seems to be a reasonable defensive posture.

Typically, peacekeeping forces are expected to be objective third party observers of peace agreements (although military strategy and perceptions may

preclude the reality of this sentiment), not armed insurgents protecting a political movement. Unfortunately, the violence of the oppression of the *Indígenas* in Chiapas has been such that any efforts at disarmament will also have to include paramilitaries, and the demilitarization of the region. It cannot be expected that a community self-defense force should disarm when the perpetrators of human rights violations against them are not. It is evident throughout the literature that the political and economic elites organize paramilitary units. These groups work alongside military and police on evictions and use violence, torture, and assassination to oppress indigenous organizations (Ross 1995; Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007; Speed, Castillo et al. 2008).

Additionally, and as significantly, the EZLN is only one facet of the Zapatistas, and is not the only actor in the indigenous autonomy project; the more interesting aspect of the Zapatista movement is found in the political-economic branch, which works in conjunction with civil society to achieve social and political goals alongside economic development in the absence of a direct IGO intervening force. What the Zapatistas and the NGOs are doing in the region is independent of the international supporting structures that provide a safe haven for the construction of peaceful development.

True peacebuilding will not occur in the region until the federal government determines that the costs of continuing the conflict outweigh the profits of delaying resolution, profits that flow out of the state, and often out of

the country, due to the radical privatization of industries in Mexico and resource demands of Mexico's urban regions. NGO involvement may be able to prevent an escalation of overt violence, but without the Mexican State's involvement, the peacebuilding efforts will remain one-sided.

Conclusion

The Zapatista experience yields some significant enduring lessons for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. First, tying development to counter-insurgency goals in a low-intensity conflict will serve to deepen divisions, exacerbate intra-community conflict, and erode the legitimacy of the government in the eyes of the communities subjected to the violence. If the goal is to divide a population and isolate protagonists, as is the case in counterinsurgency strategies, then sustainable peace, which is built upon the networks of society, cannot be achieved (Lederach 2005). If, instead, the goal is sustainable peace, then networks of connections among communities must be fostered, not destroyed.

Second, the Zapatista's bottom-up leadership and horizontal organization mean that when agreements are made with the Zapatista communities, they will be acceptable to the largest portion of the community. This will go a long way toward building peace once the government begins to earnestly negotiate with the Zapatistas. Most importantly, it demonstrates that one capacity for reconciliation is already built into the Zapatista experience. Within the concept

of autonomous democratic development lies the potential for differing cultures to set the path of their communities in cooperation with each other as opposed to competition. Preserving the resilience and viability of the community over individual interests is a key component to bottom-up peace building. It requires participation, cooperation, collectivity, and consensus. This is a strategy that can be a tremendous help to reconciliation efforts as it provides a space for different ethnic groups to come together and work toward cooperation over competition.

Third, without the engagement of the Mexican government with the Zapatistas in an effort to find peace in the region, Mexico can never achieve sustainable positive peace, and open warfare will eventually erupt again. The government must to some extent relinquish hegemonic control, and must engage in open dialogue, honor agreements, resist the temptation to tie counter-insurgency efforts to concessions when they are made, and take an active role in reconciliation efforts. Likewise, the Zapatistas need to re-engage the Mexican government in peace negotiations and begin to think about how their autonomy can fit into the regional governance, instead of standing parallel to it, in a way that will bring them back into the broader Mexican society without threatening their cultural heritage or their ability to determine the course of development in their communities.

Time is critical in peacebuilding, and the time is ripe for a peacebuilding effort to begin in earnest on the part of the Mexican government and the Zapatistas; allowing the conflict to fester under structural violence, a tactical

standoff, and military occupation and paramilitary oppression will only harden the resolve of the *Indígenas* and promote the conditions for another revolutionary uprising. The current strategy of isolation and harassment on the part of the Mexican government and the Zapatista's operation of a shadow government is simply not sustainable

Chapter 5

Development and Democracy

Both relief and development programs should be more concerned with increasing local capacities and reducing vulnerabilities than with providing goods, services, or technical assistance. In fact goods, services, and technical assistance should be provided insofar as they support sustainable development by increasing local capacities and reducing local vulnerabilities. (Anderson and Woodrow 1998, 97)

The development of peace ultimately requires a deep consideration of the needs of the communities involved in the conflict, the discovery of the causes of the conflict, and strategies for alleviating these conditions (Duffield 2001; Arnson and Zartman 2005; Junne and Verkoren 2005). One aspect that has become an increasing concern for peacebuilders is the role of sustainable development in promoting sustainable peace (Duffield 2001; Arnson and Zartman 2005; Junne and Verkoren 2005). Following the argument that peace may be achieved through a combination of traditional peace operations, sustainable development, and democratization, this chapter contends that peacebuilding efforts will be improved by focusing on building resilient democratic communities in zones that are at risk for conflict, in full scale conflict, or in the disarmament, demobilization, and rehabilitation phase of conflict.

Sustainable development is the foundation of this chapter, and it serves as the umbrella under which the concept of community resilience is introduced into the realm of development and peacebuilding. “Resilience is defined as a systems’ capacity to absorb disturbance and re-organize into a fully functioning system. It includes not only a systems capacity to return to the state (or multiple states) that

existed before the disturbance, but also to advance the state through learning and adaptation” (Cutter, Barnes et al. 2008). Resilience can be a powerful goal in the process of development that will contribute not only to building sustainable peace, but also to preventing the outbreak of violent conflict. Community resilience as a development goal relies heavily upon a strong civil society and democracy, which as a whole become the foundation for the construction of sustainable peace.

Economic History

The economic history of the Chiapas region underscores the need for constructing resilient communities. The *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*⁷ (EZLN), through its de facto spokesperson Subcommandante Marcos and his communiqués/declarations, makes a number of claims about the historical causes of the Zapatista uprising in 1994, the state of the economy in Chiapas before and after 1994, and the actions/inactions of the Mexican government, foreign interests, *campesinos*, and the wealthy elites who have an interest in and/or influence over the region. The Zapatistas’ claims provide a foundational picture of the economic situation and of development efforts undertaken by the Mexican government, NGO's, and the indigenous communities themselves.

In order to understand the claims made by the Zapatistas, it is necessary to situate them within the context of Mexican political and economic history following independence from Spain, and within the economy of the Mayans in

⁷ This translates to the Zapatista Army of National Liberation.

Chiapas (in contrast with the Mayans of the Yucatan, who had much more contact with their Spanish conquerors). This historical foundation will include discussion of various policies adopted by the Mexican government, foreign intervention in the region, and other aspects of the situation that will help promote an understanding of the events and conditions that have been influential in cause of the conflict and the development of the existing economic structures in Chiapas.

During the Mexican Revolution of 1910-20 Emiliano Zapata, a revolutionary, was the voice of the poor. In fact, in contemporary Mexico he is a celebrated figure. Zapata fought to have the land that was owned by foreign interests returned to the Mexican nationals. He was a champion of the Mesoamerican indigenous people and was able to understand the importance of the Mayan relationship to the land, and as such he recognized that previous efforts at modernizing Mexico had marginalized a significant portion of the population. His specific goal was to have land and property rights, which had been seized by several presidential administrations attempting to attract foreign direct investment, returned to the farmers who had communally owned them. Even though Zapata was ambushed and assassinated by the pre-revolutionary Mexican Government, his ideals live on in the imaginations of the people for whom he was a champion.

Article 27 of the 1917 Mexican constitution granted indigenous people the right to have communal *ejidos*. The government was to seize foreign owned

lands and distribute them to the peasants around the country. At the same time, Article 27 also granted all subsoil mineral, oil, and water rights to the Mexican Government, and declared that all land must be owned by Mexican nationals, or by companies who would abide by Mexican laws and observe the subsoil rights of the Mexican Government. Unfortunately, this went un-enforced for decades, and Mexico continued to experience a draining of its resources, with few gains returned to the peasantry.

In Chiapas, this drain on resources is still ongoing; however, rather than being limited to foreign investors, the elite class and the Mexican government organize and validate the extraction of the *Chiapanecos'* resources while limiting resource use by the indigenous people. Further exacerbating the situation is the Mexican government's reluctance to re-invest in infrastructure and rural development in the region, favoring development projects that disproportionately benefit supporters of the PRI, who still maintain political control over Chiapas. This is important because it serves as an example of the political corruption described by the Zapatistas and their suspicion of foreign investment and federal government, issues that are as important today as they were in 1917.

The Mexican revolution and the revolutionary party did little to improve the conditions in Chiapas, despite efforts that the party claimed would protect the Mexican people from foreign incursion. In 1928, Lázaro Cárdenas expropriated seventeen foreign oil companies, and nationalized the oil industry

in Mexico, creating the national oil company called *Petróleos Mexicanos*. He was able to do so under the authority of Article 27. Known today as PEMEX, this national oil company has been powerful enough to avoid privatization attempts as recently as the 1990's (Kirkwood 2005).

Over the ensuing decades, the PRI cemented its power and maintained authoritarian control over the country. When the presidency of Miguel De La Madrid began at the end of 1982, he charged his administration with improving the moral fabric of Mexican society and reforming the judicial and legislative branches; he also sought to increase democratic opportunities in Mexico. Madrid built a group of advisors that became known as "technocrats," who were economists and political analysts educated in ivy league schools abroad (Kirkwood). Madrid cooperated with the IMF and adopted policies to achieve financial and macroeconomic stability. However, the country was still experiencing significant economic decline with the dropping price of oil, and Madrid accepted a bailout that prevented Mexico from defaulting on its loans. Madrid was required by the United States to restructure Mexico's public debt, thus enabling the Mexican government to retain the faith of the international lending community, at the expense of the rural and urban poor by eliminating many of the social equity policies that proved to be a fiscal drain on the federal government. This measure was felt particularly hard in Chiapas, as it experienced a decline in its construction industry and related services that resulted in the loss of thousands of jobs (Rus, Castillo et al. 2003).

In 1988, Carlos Salinas, a Harvard educated economist, was elected president of Mexico. He inherited a government that was in a state of disrepair and controversy. The PRI was accused of fixing the election and declaring Salinas the president when the opposition candidate, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, had actually won, but those claims were quickly disregarded. Salinas abandoned the land reforms set forth by Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution, claiming that the growth of commercial agriculture in Mexico was more important than the need to create a sense of equality among the Mexican peasantry. He decided that instead of distributing the land from the large corporate farms, he would give the peasants the right to sell the land they had once owned, or currently owned, to the corporate farms. This allowed large agricultural firms to purchase farmlands that were formerly held in communal *ejidos*. These provisions further endangered the campesino farmers in Chiapas, as many remained landless and others had to sell the land that they had held in the communal *ejidos* either because of pressure from local elites or out of economic necessity.

In essence, the constitutional revisions were preconditions to NAFTA. These land reforms exacerbated the already widespread urbanization. The rural poor were experiencing decreasing prices for crops, had already abandoned subsistence farming for export crops, and faced the expectation of increasing poverty as NAFTA opened their crippled agricultural industry to subsidized farm products from the United States. They began to move from rural Mexico into the more developed urban areas and the United States (Cornelius, Fitzgerald

et al. 2007). Salinas also sold off 85% of the nationalized industries, including the nationalized banking industry, but left PEMEX intact (Kirkwood). A nationalized oil industry was important to the economic situation in the 1980's, as oil played a major role in the Mexican government's ability to rebuild after the 1980's and 1990's economic crises; unfortunately, it was at the cost of the good will of the major oil producing state of Chiapas.

It is here, under the leadership of Salinas, that the crisis in Chiapas fully unfolded and became the impetus for revolution. Through his market reforms, Salinas had set the stage for increased poverty in Chiapas, and the *Chiapanecos* feared they would be further marginalized and isolated, and that their living conditions would only worsen. As Salinas and a select group of rich and powerful dignitaries celebrated the New Year and the inception of NAFTA in Mexico City, thousands of peasants marched over muddy trails to take control of several cities in Chiapas. Thus was the emergence of the Zapatistas from the Lacandon Jungle.

Current Economic Situation

The Zapatistas quickly evolved from a peasant rebellion into a social movement with global ties. The Zapatista goal is not to improve the lives of only those who are Zapatistas, but rather to improve the lives of all the indigenous people of Mexico and more broadly the lives of the poor in Mexico as a whole. It is the Zapatista's efforts that promoted an awareness of the electoral process

which enabled the first ever defeat of the PRI that will have the greatest impact on the Mexican political system. This institutional change, although it has not reached local level politics, may open the door for better transparency at local level elections. These externalized results will not be limited to the state of Chiapas alone.

Over time, the Zapatistas began to practice a form of dual power by which there exist two claims to authority in the region operating simultaneously. The official state government in Chiapas controls public expenditures. Following liberal economic theory, public expenditures in the region should result in improved infrastructure, which should in turn promote efficiency. Efficiency results in more time to spend on creative ventures, which drives further improvements in efficiency and diversification of the economy. This economic diversification should result in a more sustainable economy, improved living conditions, and better wages for the population as a whole. Unfortunately, this trickle-down effect has not worked in Chiapas, as the benefits stop wherever party loyalties end. This can be explained by the landowning elites' ability to maintain political and economic control over Chiapas since the Mexican Revolution (Bobrow-Strain 2007).

However, the institutional Mexican government is shadowed by the Zapatista autonomous government. The Mexican military is operating checkpoints and patrols within the autonomous zones, while paramilitary groups and Zapatistas maneuver around them. These checkpoints help to

monitor who is going into and coming out of the region, while also serving to help contain the EZLN within the zone. The Zapatistas have a government that is in control of some communities, while some of those who had claims to land remain in the regions and rely on the military and paramilitaries to attempt to retake, or prevent the settlement of, the lands that they held prior to the Zapatista uprising. This creates an atmosphere in which one portion of the population recognizes one authority while another segment recognizes another.

In Zapatista autonomous zones, prices and wages are established in a municipality by a price and salary board that includes representatives of the peasants, workers, business owners, farmers, ranchers, and the local *junta*. Their task is to set prices and salaries such that prices for necessity items do not exceed the salary of the lowest paid worker. They are also tasked with the distribution of pension benefits and disability/senior care, as they are the closest to the community and know best how to distribute these benefits.

Essentially, the Zapatistas have centralized all economic, political, and social dimensions of life in the autonomous zones into a decentralized collective democratic organism that has, as a key component, the rotation of authority, and has maintained itself since 2003. Only time will tell if it can withstand the waning interest of civil society and the ebbing tide of foreign aid. Their policy of denying aid from the Mexican government may work until the well of foreign aid dries up; if they choose to use federal aid it would require the abandonment of their autonomy. It is imperative that Zapatista communities deny hegemonic

aid, preconditioned with counter-insurgency goals, because it undermines solidarity and community-building efforts, stifles voices, and thus is counter-productive to a resilient community and a democratic society. Whereas the collective benefits members equally and builds solidarity, government programs more typically benefit individuals and promote competition. The question then becomes whether the Zapatistas will be able to build a sustainable economy that is equitable, inclusive, and fair without external inputs such as charitable donations, foreign aid (official and unofficial), and government support.

This is where cooperative development comes into play. One of the most important tasks of the *junta* is to ensure a fair and balanced distribution of development. This means that there is a realistic goal of a health clinic and school in each municipality; everyone has food to eat, shelter, and clothing. The autonomous community teachers and health care workers are not paid in wages, but rather in room, board (including clothing, shoes, and food), and travel. This could work to prevent the emergence of a power base comprised of professionals who could undermine the source of authority in the region, but it could also prevent the participation of all but inexperienced and/or under-trained professionals. As emigration from the region increases, it seems likely that the autonomous communities will have difficulty retaining all but the most committed of professionals; this situation will be important to observe as the communities mature. The various communities prepare members to serve in these roles as an effort to improve the resilience of the communities. They need

to ensure that the *Chiapanecos* are receiving health and educational benefits that reflect their cultural heritage while preparing their children to better participate in the determination of their own destinies.

The Zapatistas have developed a cooperative economic model through their autonomous communities. Surplus from subsistence farming is provided to the broader community for distribution in areas that have a shortage, or to create revenue for development (Earle and Simonelli 2005). Similarly, development is distributed based on what the community decides it needs; this is a communal effort that transcends a village, *ejido*, or municipality, and extends across diverse regions and ethnicities. This regional level form of cooperative development is a critical factor in the sustainability of development in the region. The intercommunity effort builds on the capacities and strengths of the community of communities, and as such presents a powerful force capable of overcoming significant crises. As Anderson and Woodrow (1998) suggest, the difference between a disaster victim and a survivor is the capacity of that person, or in this case, the community, to cope with the crisis.

One of the most basic and fundamental counter-insurgency strategies employed by governments faced with insurgency requires participants in development programs, or recipients of benefits, to renounce insurgent activities and affiliation with insurgent groups in order to maintain their qualified status. Similarly, international Fair Trade Organizations, those organizations that enable local growers and producers to get better access to foreign markets, often require

that the producer be a small family based producer, but not affiliated with any political organization, which has the same outcome as if it were imposed as an official counter-insurgency strategy by a state agency. Zapatista communities and cooperatives are not family-based, but rather pluriethnic and pluricultural, by this definition they are excluded from participation. Additionally, these communities are often *ejidos* which own communal land, again, not families. Finally, a family producer may be excluded from using some of the existing alternative fair trade economic structures if a relative was a member of the Zapatistas. This could explain why some of the cooperatives in the region, who hold the same values and goals of the Zapatistas, denounce the Zapatistas. It is a result of the divisive counter-insurgency and low-intensity conflict strategies employed by the government and elites in the region. These strategies hinder sustainable development in Chiapas.

Development

As the situation in Chiapas demonstrates, economic development plays a central role in conflict. And, indeed, the economy, or more accurately economic development, is one of the more persistent themes in the peacebuilding literature. The economy may be a major cause of a conflict and generally, it is a critical factor in the resolution, of conflicts around the world. Just as the impoverishment of a people or great income disparity can serve as a root cause

of a conflict, new economic opportunities can often lead to peace, or at least serve as a key element in seeking a sustainable, peaceful resolution to conflict.

Many development economists (Anderson and Woodrow 1998; Arnson and Zartman 2005; Junne and Verkoren 2005; Norton, Alwang et al. 2006) have noted that if a country attempts to move too quickly from a pre-industrial to an industrial capitalist economy, it will cause instability and will erode a population's capacity to withstand calamity, whether economic, political, or natural. This instability is caused by policies that attempt to re-distribute labor from rural farming to industrial employment. These policies can cause mass migration problems as farmers and rural migrant agricultural workers leave their communities to find work in urban centers, other regions of the state, or in foreign countries. In Mexico, the NAFTA left the smallholders vulnerable to competition with industrialized farmers whose farms may be less efficient per acre, but who have more acres to produce goods and rely on mechanical harvesting chemical pesticides, fertilizers, and monocropping, as opposed to the labor employed by smallholders who tend to have a lower ecological impact (Netting 1993). Ultimately, this process left Mexico with a large and growing class of displaced agricultural workers with few economic options.

Internal and external migration, which have been occurring in Mexico for decades, have caused infrastructure problems in the cities, as development planning cannot keep up with demands for housing (Cornelius, Fitzgerald et al. 2007). For instance, as a border city, Juarez experienced a significant increase in

internal migration after NAFTA. Rural migrant agricultural workers who had become unable to find work in the dwindling agricultural market liberalized trade agreements migrated north to work in factories. For Instance, Juarez experienced explosive growth and was ill-prepared for the urban sprawl; the result was a growth in shanty towns, environmental degradation, and explosive growth in crime that has crippled the city (Frumkin, Hernandez-Avila et al. 1995; Simmons and Vinas 1996; Coronado and Vargas 2001; Blackman, Blatz et al. 2003; Forster and Hamlyn 2005; Manley 2005; Pena, Fuentes et al. 2005). While neoliberal economists may tout economic transition as a natural evolution of a country, one which the industrialized nations experienced over a prolonged period, huge problems arise when governments and international agencies attempt to expedite the process through top down policies, such as trade agreements (Junne and Verkoren 2005).

Traditional top down strategies for economic development very often exclude the local knowledge, culture, traditions, and/or expertise necessary to create sustainable, fair, and free markets. For example, the traditional approach to post-conflict development (and to development intended to defuse potential conflicts) has been to take a market-centric approach that allows those who have the wherewithal to take control through privatization. But, while markets may represent people, they only represent the people who are able to participate in that market. As an example, it may be possible to gather market data on various factors of production, goods, and services in Chiapas, which would seem to give

us a picture of the health of the economy, identify inefficiencies in the supply chain, and identify policy recommendations that would improve these conditions. However, the recommendations would only serve to improve the conditions for the market, a relatively small number of producers, those who profit from the subsequent distribution chain, and perhaps for some of the consumers of those goods. The missing factor is the rural peasants who are unable to fully participate in those markets.

Heather Williams (2001) suggests that “‘Market transition’ as experienced by local communities and individuals is also quite different from its technical representation in charts and graphs, which indicates various adjustments in the economy as a whole” (23). She argues that for many people the free market is not simply a game in which there are winners and losers, as many economists may frame it; instead, it seems to be an unfair system by which those who already had economic power win more and those who did, not, lose more. Furthermore, it is a game which the losers did not choose to play. “In reality, crisis and rapid market transition affect populations unevenly and, for many, quite unfairly if historical relationships are taken into account” (Williams 2001, 23).

Dictating strategies and actions from the top down, historically with little regard for the social and environmental outcomes of those prescriptions, has resulted in increased income disparity, environmental degradation, and a lower quality of life for the poor around the world. This increased income disparity in

turn foments conditions ripe for the development of contention (Tarrow 1998; Aminzade, Goldstone et al. 2001; Tarrow 2005).

A different and, I argue, more fruitful, approach would be an anthropocentric consideration of the local and regional economy that places the market in the community and develops markets at the community level rather than the state. That is, a developmental approach that is bottom-up in nature and builds not only sustainable economies and markets, but also resilient communities that can withstand catastrophe (defined here as an event that outstrips a community's ability to cope alone), both human and natural.

Chiapas serves as an excellent case for exploring sustainable development and community resilience, because it is a conflict zone that is experiencing a negative and tenuous peace. As already discussed, Chiapas has been in a state of catastrophe for decades, if not centuries. It is not surprising that this region would experience political upheaval in the face of ongoing catastrophe and neglect, as the people watch the extraction of regional natural resources benefit a very small portion of the population (Ross 1995; Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Speed, Castillo et al. 2008). As Earle and Simonelli (2005) relate while discussing their meeting with the Caracole leaders in *La Realidad*, the stronghold of the EZLN, "The war for the hearts and minds of Chiapas had shifted from bullets to beans, from militarism to developmentalism" (260).

Community Resilience

Community resilience finds its roots in the physical sciences. Resilience refers to the “capacity of a material or system to return to equilibrium after a displacement” (Norris, Stevens et al. 2008, 127). This concept was later introduced into the life sciences and eventually began to find its way into the social sciences. While community resilience is becoming a more prominent goal in disaster management, the peacebuilding and development communities have been slow to identify its critical role in preventing the re-emergence of violent conflict; however, it must be noted that the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is beginning to consider community resilience as an integral part of the development process, as evidenced by the proliferation of UNDP projects that support community resilience efforts around the world (UNDP 2010).

The Centre for Community Enterprise defines a resilient community as one “that takes intentional action to enhance the personal and collective capacity of its citizens and institutions to respond to, and influence the course of social and economic change” (CFCE 2000). This is a fairly straightforward definition, but it neglects one important factor that has significant impact on a community – political change. Thus, a resilient community is one that can readily respond to economic, political, and social change.

Community resilience is of critical importance to the sustainability of a development project. However, it is often not a central consideration for IGOs,

governments, and NGOs, which often seek projects that meet specific criteria for funding. The potentially hegemonic nature of foreign aid, and sometimes even NGO assistance, requires that certain conditions be met for funding. Often, it is the poorest communities that are unable to acquire assistance because they lack the existing infrastructure, knowledge, and expertise required to secure a portion of the assistance available to impoverished communities. NGOs that rely on IGO donors to fund their efforts are limited in their efforts by project certification criteria and other limitations instituted by the funding agency. A potential strategy for building peace that the IGOs could adopt would be for them to establish regional, representative boards that operate much like the Zapatistas *Juntas* of Good Government, which entail universal participation from within the local community. These would certify qualifying projects based on local need and knowledge. Of critical importance to this would be the frequent rotation of locally elected representatives with stringent rules that prevent the development of elites who maintain an individual or group monopoly on the board. Such a structure is already in place within the autonomous regions in Chiapas.

Interestingly, the concept of universal participation and rotating leadership addresses considerable problems with post-conflict development. In a region where governance has been marked by corruption and oppression, the notion of a leadership that obeys and listens, as opposed to commands and dictates, is a welcome alternative to their past. It holds within it the key to

building relationships between communities and other levels of governance that will support sustainable and equitable development and peace.

Conclusion

Elements of the Zapatista situation have resonated with impoverished people and social entrepreneurs around the world (Bob 2005). The massive following that rallied behind them in the early days, and the anti-globalization movement that claims them as their inspiration, demonstrates the globalization of economic hardship. In other words, people around the world share some of the disenfranchisement with the neo-liberal agenda that has become symbolic of the Zapatista agenda.

The Zapatistas face a significant number of challenges, and the economic policies adopted by the Zapatistas will determine how successfully the communities can recover from crisis and build a sustainable economy in Chiapas. Of particular interest to this project is the success of the political and economic activities in the autonomous communities at being inclusive, open, democratic, and ultimately improving the lives of the people in Chiapas and not just a small group of participants. The result of exclusion may be the reproduction of elitism, where autonomous groups hold economic, political and social power over those who are not members. The development and democracy metasynthesis in the following chapter will explore this potential threat to the sustainability of the project. However, it seems that within the autonomous

communities there is cohesion, while within non-autonomous communities where pockets of *Indígenas* claim they are “a community in resistance,” the divisions become deep and often violent (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007)

Understanding the Zapatista motives for establishing the autonomous communities will be key to understanding the nature of the current situation. If the Zapatistas have taken control of the resource extraction industries, if they tax them, or if they have left them intact will reveal how dependent upon a war economy the Zapatistas have become (Arnson and Zartman 2005). If the latter is the case – that is, if they’ve left them intact – one could argue that the Zapatistas chose a strategy that would prevent additional federal oppression or foreign intervention. On the other hand, if the Zapatistas have seized control over or collect rents from legal natural resource extraction, then it will call into question the Zapatistas’ motives.

As Arnson and Zartman note (2005), one of the primary reasons an actor will avoid seeking peaceful resolution of a conflict is for that actor, in this case the Zapatistas, to be able to seize rents from natural resources. If the metanalysis reveals that the Zapatistas are profiting from organized licit or illicit resource extraction, then their credibility will be severely tarnished. Conversely, it can be argued that elites in Chiapas may prefer not to see a peaceful resolution because it could threaten their seizure of rents from natural resources in the region and political control. A more thorough understanding of

economic conditions amidst the continuing conflict will allow for a more grounded conception of what sustainable peace in the region might look like.

Finally, democratic participation is critical to the success of a community. Exclusionary practices threaten to undermine the credibility of a democracy and present a situation where the Zapatistas may run the risk of appearing to be a vanguard of the oppressed and by extension, another hierarchy in the decision-making process for development in the region. Carol Patemen (1970) argues that it requires local participation in democracy for people to learn how to participate in a representative democracy.

Development, democracy, and resilience are fundamental to the successful resolution of the conflict in Chiapas. Ultimately, the goal of sustainable peace in Chiapas requires the return of the parties involved to the negotiating table. However, certain criteria must be met prior to such an engagement. First, the negotiators must be given the authority to make binding agreements. Second, the indigenous people must be allowed the right to form communities that are self-governed. Third, the Zapatistas must acknowledge that they are a part of Mexico and begin to participate in Mexican democracy in an effort to improve it, as opposed to isolating themselves from it. Despite the shortcomings of democracy in Mexico, there have been slight, yet persistent, improvements to the democratic process. Until the Zapatistas begin to participate in the existing democratic process, their voice will continue to be muted by their isolation. They have already demonstrated their ability to

capture the interest of the world media and civil society. Perhaps this could be used to ensure fair elections.

The situation in Chiapas contains clues to bottom-up strategies that can promote sustainable development, democracy, and resilient communities. The analysis in the following chapter will seek out these clues in an effort to develop mid-range strategies for peacebuilding that will be effective in Chiapas, but that will also have broader implications for the resolution of civil conflict around the world.

Chapter 6

Development and Democracy in Chiapas

One could argue that virtually all of the recent transitions to peace—such as those in El Salvador and Ethiopia, as well as the earlier one in the Philippines—were driven largely by the pressure for change that was bubbling up from the grassroots (Lederach 1997).

This chapter engages the five ethnographies in an effort to identify strategies for democratization, development, and community resilience building that will promote the development of sustainable peace in the region. Taking community resilience as the goal of democracy and development allows for the construction of mid-range theories that will promote sustainable development in an effort to curb the destruction and violence associated with the low-intensity war in Chiapas. Additionally, as the global society is seeking new ways to preserve the Earth's ecosystem, sustainable, bottom-up development practices in Chiapas may contribute to our understanding of ways in which humans are able to sustain culture and society without the destruction of their environment.

This chapter synthesizes the five ethnographies in an effort to answer the following questions:

- What economic strategies have the *Indígenas* developed to support the autonomous communities; do these strategies depend on the continuation of war or on developmental aid?
- What aspects of the *Indígenas* conception and implementation of democracy might be useful tools for building peaceful, resilient, and sustainable communities?
- Are there any conditions revealed in the metasynthesis that would seem to indicate they would promote sustainable peace in the region.

Economic development efforts have contributed to the conflict in Chiapas in a number of ways. First, through counter-insurgency aid, the Mexican military and government have tied development to political, social, and cultural alignment in the region (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005). Second, well-intentioned aid organizations have exacerbated, accelerated, or created divisions within communities (Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005). Finally, faith-based development has created new fissures in communities in Chiapas (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001). Often following existing ethnic and cultural patterns, these efforts reinforce competition as opposed to promoting cooperation. Nonetheless, it is through economic development, including external aid, that the *Chiapanecos* will be able to find peace amongst themselves. That said, certain conditions must also prevail in order for this development to create a new ordering of the economy in Chiapas that will enable reconciliation.

Paul Lederach (2005) observed that when seeking ways to “transcend cycles of violence...and create genuine constructive change in and with the human community...[It is useful to look]...in the rough terrains and geographies of violent, protracted conflict...[because] people who face the worst situations of human degradation, violence, and abuse often see the challenge of genuine constructive change with piercing vision” (42). In this spirit, the efforts of the *Chiapanecos* to build a pluriethnic community and society in Chiapas will stand as this “piercing vision.” The ethnographies serve as the lenses in a

telescope, bringing that which is distant and complex into ever greater clarity with each lens that has been added. The hope is that these lenses can reveal pathways to peace.

The Chiapaneco Experience

Colonialism, independence, and the 1910 revolution had significant impacts in Chiapas. The *Indígenas* have been subjected to low intensity warfare for decades, if not centuries. The landed elites who enjoyed a prominent position in each of these endeavors feel betrayed in the new ordering of the economy in Chiapas and Mexico more broadly (Bobrow-Strain 2007). Even the *Ladinos* would not be recognizable as elites by U.S. standards. They have enjoyed a position of power and authority in Chiapas for generations, but as Bobrow-Strain observes, it was not always easy to tell the *Ladinos* from their indigenous neighbors based on appearances (Bobrow-Strain 2007). In the post-NAFTA world, the *Ladinos* are finding that a national shift from prioritizing agriculture to capital intensive industries has eroded their power and authority (Nash 2001; Bobrow-Strain 2007).

Economic conditions in the state are becoming increasingly more difficult for the agricultural industry, as it competes with a global network of agribusiness. Smallholder farming is at risk, and the *Ladinos* who once enjoyed hegemonic control over the communities around them live in fear of the *Indígenas* they once had a hand in terrorizing and manipulating. Land invasions

and violent evictions have threatened not only land security, but also human rights and food security in the region. Policy decisions at the federal level have changed the power dynamic in Chiapas. The cultures are not merging, and the ethnographies reveal a widening gap between the *Ladinos* and the *Indígenas* in the region. Although Zapatismo finds members from all classes, cultures, and religions, it is not as obvious that the communities are so harmonious. The merging of the global world, the *Chiapaneco* world, and the Mexican state continues to be problematic.

The *Chiapanecos*, including the distinct cultures of the *Indígenas*, *Ladinos*, and *Creolos*—have experienced protracted low-intensity conflict, an entrenched ethnic conflict, and a crisis of productive capacity (both for agribusiness and subsistence). In the Chiapas region, all suffer to some extent from the global economic crisis that is embodied in inequitable capacities at all levels, from the local to the global.

Capacities and Vulnerabilities for Development

Merging strategies for development in conflicted societies with strategies for development after a disaster provides a framework that can address the immediate needs of communities while seeking creative ways to fulfill those needs in a way that promotes community capacities and identifies vulnerabilities. Given this information, development strategies can then be

undertaken to address the vulnerabilities that are not already addressed by community capacities.

In an effort to better understand the economic aspects of the situation in Chiapas, I combine Junne's and Verkoren's (2005) conceptualization of *post-conflict* development with Anderson and Woodrow's (1998,) use of vulnerabilities and capacities analysis for *post-disaster* recovery and development. In postconflict development, several critical conditions must be met in the development effort. Six of these are particularly important to the conflict in Chiapas: security, reestablishing the rule of law, reconstructing infrastructure, educational reform, healthcare reform, and protection of the environment. Each of these conditions is addressed, as they relate to Chiapas, within the framework of capacities and vulnerabilities. While the situation in Chiapas is not one of recovery from conflict, but rather one that is in an ongoing conflict, Junne and Verkoren's approach to development is useful because it works to resolve some of the sources and sustainers of the conflict in Chiapas.

In post-disaster recovery and development, capacities and vulnerabilities can be grouped into three categories: physical and material, social and organizational, and motivational and attitudinal (1998). Considering the situation in Chiapas in the context of disaster recovery allows us to functionalize the economic and social recovery that must occur in order to bring about peace in the region.

The concept of capacity and vulnerabilities does not require, nor benefit from, the prescription of a set of principal needs. Rather, deriving the needs and vulnerabilities from the situation and the community, and determining the capacities of that community to cope, serves as a starting point for both disaster recovery and post-conflict development.

Physical and Material Capacities

While Chiapas has experienced a continual decline in capacity over the past century, the state is rich in natural resources and agriculturally viable land. The state produces much of the hydroelectricity for the nation, yet has very little local distributive capacity. The Mexican military has worked to build transportation capacity in the region; however, it has been focused on access for military rather than commerce (Hernández-Castillo 2001). Nonetheless, since the 1994 uprising, transportation capacity in parts of Chiapas with significant military presence has improved.

Labor

A second physical capacity in Chiapas is labor; the problem is engaging laborers in activities that promote community solidarity, encourage sustainable economic activities, whether subsistence or commercial, and preserve the ecological balance in the region. The diaspora (Hernández-Castillo 2001) of the *Indígenas* and emigration of *Ladinos* within and away from the region is increasing with time, as members of the rural communities migrate to urban

centers, other regions of Mexico, or internationally in search of jobs (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007). Like the transportation situation, the abundance of labor serves as both a capacity and vulnerability.

Sustainable Agriculture

An additional physical capacity that the *Chiapanecos* are attempting to revive is a relationship with their environment. Landed elites work the land to keep it productive with technological inputs, or convert it to pasture land. While this seems to have a significantly negative impact on the ecosystem (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005), it also demonstrates that they are willing to work hard to make their land produce. Strategies that would reduce their external costs of production while at the least maintaining current yields (or income) are welcome developments for commercial producers. *Ejidors* either use technological inputs or organic sustainable practices to produce their crops, and share the same motivation. Finally, subsistence farmers have a particular expertise in situating their crops within the environment in a way that preserves the forest, thus ensuring the sustainability of their food supply rather than maximizing annual yields. Additionally, the *Indígenas* have found creative ways to produce the necessities for daily life in the absence of markets.

The *Indígenas* of Chiapas have a strong tradition of subsistence agriculture. Despite centuries of efforts to limit their capacity to engage in subsistence

agriculture, first as *Creolo* colonists began to assimilate the *Indígenas* into productive commercial agriculture, then as *mestizos* continued this assimilation, and finally as liberal economic policies have endangered the remnants of the subsistence culture through the exploitation of natural resources, the *Indígenas* have persisted in their demand for land to support their families.

Many of the *Indígenas* of the Lacandon jungle have developed a “long-tested method of milpa cultivation, one that work[s] within the jungle context” (Earle and Simonelli 2005, 83). Earle and Simonelli argue that this local knowledge of sustainable agricultural practices was critical to the success of Lacandon *ejidos*. They cite Javier Vargas, “a Marist brother working with the Dominicans and past director of one of the catechist schools in San Cristóbal, [who] spent fourteen years observing and documenting conditions in twenty colonies [of the Lacandon jungle]” (Earle and Simonelli 2005, 81). Vargas argued that “optimum use of the jungle involved a locally rational division between traditional milpa and potentially commercial cultigens, household garden, pasture, and forest preserve, dispersed in a way that replicated the natural jungle” (Javier Vargas in Earle and Simonelli 2005, 82). According to Hernández Castillo (2001), “most of the autonomous municipalities have adopted the proposals of the agro-ecological peasant movement and express the need for sustainable growth that recovers traditional indigenous agriculture and organic agriculture; in this sense, they are against the agrochemical transnational

corporations, and they call for economic autonomy so that they can dispense with middlemen and control the means of production and marketing” (218-19).

The agro-ecological peasant movement is an effort led by indigenous organic farmers in Chiapas. It is intended to support “the inclusion of an agro-ecological perspective and the search for less destructive development alternatives” (Hernández-Castillo 2001). This demand was one of the results of the State Council of Indigenous and Peasant Organizations (CEOIC) that formed in late January 1994 (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Harvey 2005).

Indigenous Community Building

From the CEOIC grew the movement that would begin applying ten “Proposals from the Mam and Mochó Peoples to Strengthen the Autonomy of Indigenous Peoples” (FOCIES 1994 in Hernández-Castillo 2001, 212). The proposals, reproduced in Hernández Castillo (2001), stated the need for the following (212-13):

- The right to land, territory, and natural resources guaranteed by land security, and the desire to protect the earth and use the resources while preserving the ecology.
- Production to “yield abundant riches yet prevent the exploitation of humans or the environment.
- Commercialization to be controlled by the producers forming direct relations with buyers and a fair exchange that prioritizes organic farming practices.
- Autonomy in the use of credits for the agricultural process, and not seeds based on the condition of monocropping or pesticides.
- Housing that promotes health yet is respectful to the environment.

- Education that “respects and preserves traditional values and promotes the rescue of indigenous languages”
- Healthcare “in a way in which we can produce our healthy food and natural medicine. We want traditional medicine to be respected and traditional doctors to be recognized” (212).
- “Democracy, justice, and peace, based on respect for the dignity and culture of our people; and to promote a democratic future. We want to propose the community law to solve our problems, but not on the idea that we all have a good community tradition, but that we must create it” (212).
- Women’s rights: “seek for women the same rights of participation, dignity, and decision as for men” (213).
- The desire for a “broad organization through the common work, which can help us live together peacefully with other peoples and nature” (213).

These proposals reflect demands that are very similar to the six critical conditions for postconflict development identified by Junne and Verkoren (2005): security, reestablishment of the rule of law, reconstruction of infrastructure, educational reform, healthcare reform, and protection of the environment. The conditions in the proposals are designed to address development problems and also to lay the foundations for peaceful development. Additionally, they represent the basics of community building.

The physical and material capacities that the *Chiapanecos* retain are still significant. They provide the region with the means to become self-sufficient, preserve its ecology, and demonstrate the ability to and also provide the region with the ability to be self-sufficient in many ways. In short, these capacities are the foundation for community resilience in Chiapas. Perhaps the most crucial capacity that the people of Chiapas have on their side is that many of the

participants of the conflict are not only seeking peace, but are taking the measures required to build it.

Physical and Material Vulnerabilities

Not surprisingly, Chiapas also has a significant number of physical and material vulnerabilities, some of which overlap with the capacities discussed above.

Transportation Infrastructure

The limited network of transportation infrastructure in the region is a significant vulnerability for the people of Chiapas. Although transportation capacity in parts of Chiapas has improved, in other parts of the state the communities have found themselves in a position where their productive capacity goes to waste because they have no access to markets. One vivid example of this waste and isolation is related by Earle and Simonelli (2005). As they sit at dinner with a family in the Cerro Verde ejido, they learned that a DESMU project to provide the *ejido* with beehives had not created the intended results. The *ejiditaios* were able to produce 600 kilos of honey per harvest, yet it would crystallize in their barrels because they had no buyers and no way to get it to a market (142-43). Transportation and access to markets continues to be a problem, despite the roads that have been built for troop movements.

While this is a significant obstacle to development in the region, it is also a preserving force for the subsistence agriculture in the region. While the Mexican

government has reason to be interested in developing transportation infrastructure, it will be critical to involve the local communities in this endeavor. First and foremost, the communities have a clear idea of patterns of commerce in the region. These may not follow geologically preferred routes for roads, but nonetheless need to be considered as important routes to the people who will use the roads for local commerce. The state of Chiapas has the relatively unique opportunity to develop a transportation network that is designed around local human commerce rather than resource extraction, but this opportunity is being lost very quickly.

Communications and Utility Infrastructure

Another vulnerability shared by the *Chiapanecos* is a lack of physical communications and utility infrastructure. While some of the regions have access to internet, and there are powerful radio stations in the state, much of the region goes without electricity, potable water, phone, or internet communication capabilities (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007).

Weather Patterns and Natural Disasters

Additionally, the *Chiapanecos* are physically and materially vulnerable to the threat of weather patterns and related natural disasters, i.e. mudslides and floods. Because Chiapas is an agriculturally dependent region, weather can play a significant role in the ability of the *Chiapanecos* to survive in their jungle and

highland environment. Harvey (2005) and Hernández Castillo (2001) both observed that when the Lacandon forest had begun to be colonized by the *Indígenas*, as an INI attempt to distribute land without affecting *Ladino* estates, they faced the challenge of adapting their subsistence practices to fit their new environment. Earle and Simonelli relate the personal account of Don Miguel Santiz (2005, 41-8). According to Miguel, who was one of the founders of the Ojo de Aqua *ejido*, when they arrived in the jungle they would practice with different techniques and crops in an attempt to find the most sustainable practices. They discovered that when they applied fertilizer and less shade in an effort to improve coffee crop yields, as advised by the Mexican government, the plants would produce for about twelve years, or half as long as the traditionally shade-grown coffee plants. The *ejido* would try new technologies on small portions of their crops but would not risk their subsistence quantity to untested or high risk techniques.

Healthcare

An additional vulnerability, one which poses a significant health risk to the rural communities and the more rural *Indígenas* in particular, is the lack of a professional and skilled labor force. While the *Chiapanecos* have a skilled agricultural labor force, the availability of educators, medical practitioners, engineers, and other professional and skilled workers is limited. The autonomous communities have taken steps to improve this situation

independently of the government. Educators and health workers are trained in La Realidad and return to their communities to serve their needs.

Healthcare in Chiapas is an amalgamation of indigenous tradition and modern medical science. Often communities will seek assistance from different health providers for different issues. Traditional healers handle some illnesses; while western medicine is sought in other cases (Nash 2001, Harvey 2005). In Chiapas, western medicine is not always readily available to the rural communities in Chiapas, and even in town centers the pharmacies cannot be relied upon by everyone. For instance, Bobrow-Strain (2007, 196) cites an “anonymous landowner”:

We still see [the invaders here in town] and I want to strangle them when I see them. Some of them act like nothing happened and say “good morning Don ----,” but it’s very hard to forget what they did to us. Sometimes they even come in to the pharmacy to ask for medicine and I tell them, “we don’t have that,” even if we do.

While this was a landowner who had lost his land to the *Indígena* invaders, it still demonstrates a casual racism that limits the capacity of the *Indígenas* to participate in the economy and society. More importantly, it demonstrates a reason for the desire of the indigenous people to have their traditional doctors recognized and their medicine respected. In some cases, traditional medicine is their only option. Perhaps, more importantly, it is a cultural tradition that has survived the colonization of the region, although it has been fused with Catholicism in some ways, it is still indigenous tradition (Nash 2001; Harvey 2005). Another serious consideration is the fact that western

medicines are often derived from plant and animal species. Pharmaceutical companies scour the earth seeking new medicines in remote places. Traditional medicine seems to be a logical middle step in the search for pharmaceutical advances. The preservation of cultures of traditional medicine is, in this sense, critical to the scientific discovery of new substances that can improve resolve ongoing health issues around the world. Additionally, this perspective also assumes the preservation of the ecology, and that the traditional healers have a symbiotic relationship with their environment, and the wisdom of traditional uses of its plants.

Education

Ladinos and government aligned *Indígenas* send their children to government schools and to universities to gain their educations. The *Indígenas* who are aligned with the Zapatistas send their children to autonomous schools supported by the Zapatistas. Earle and Simonelli observed in the town of Cerro Verde, where the autonomous members of the ejido were granted autonomy by a PRI judge, that the children of the community who had claimed autonomy were able to read and write, while many of the children who attended government schools could not (Earle and Simonelli 2005). This dual capacity of the community is a vulnerability, in that it creates divisions and jealousy that threaten the fabric of the communal society.

Social and Organizational Capacities

The social and organizational capacity in Chiapas is significant. Perhaps the most critical of these capacities are the concept of autonomy and the democratic structures that are in place within the autonomous communities.

Autonomy

The indigenous communities are interconnected through a significant “spider-web of relationships” (Lederach 2005). The evolution of *campesino* organizations in Chiapas is a complex history of connections, betrayals, assassinations, cooptation, offshoots, and breakaway groups (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007).

The process that has played out time and again, as revealed in the ethnographies, is that a group would emerge to represent the *campesinos*, and the leadership would then be intimidated, threatened, beaten, tortured, assassinated, or co-opted by opposing factions, often the PRI or *Ladino* landowners, or the federal or state government (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007). This process is not isolated to one group or another. It seems to persist across types of organizations, whether agricultural, human rights, development, or indigenous rights. This explains the insistence on autonomy, democracy from the roots, leadership from the base, and leading by obeying philosophies that have begun to symbolize the Zapatista movement, but are also evident in many non-Zapatista indigenous communities

in Mexico (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005).

The Zapatistas strive to improve the structural, cultural, social situation in Chiapas through the development of autonomous communities. One form of this autonomy that seems to be particularly useful is in the development of the *Regiones Autónomas Periétnicas* (RAP-Pluriethnic Autonomous Regions). These communities were being formed in the Lacandon jungle before the Zapatista rebellion; however, the rebellion provided the political space for them to begin to operate as cohesive autonomous collective democracies. Hernández Castillo observes that the Zapatistas remain conscious of the threat of creating “another cultural fundamentalism” (Hernández-Castillo 2001). Instead, they attempt to create “a sense of community based on respect for difference” (Speed, Castillo et al. 2008, 240).

At the community level, peace in Chiapas is negotiated without an intervening force, without top-down peace accords, and unfortunately, without the full engagement of the Mexican government. This conception of autonomy, alternative development and markets, subsistence agriculture, and collective democracy come together in Zapatismo, a philosophy that I consider to be both a social and organizational capacity. It is a strategy and a philosophy, a prescription for eliminating the prescriptions of dominance, and finally, it is an anathema to domination of humans by markets.

Autonomy is the foundation upon which Zapatismo is built. However, it is not specifically a Zapatista ideology, but rather is an indigenous ideology that has been embodied in Zapatismo regardless of affiliation with the EZLN (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005). The source, I believe, of the tendency to identify autonomy as a Zapatista institution comes in part from the international platform that allows for their voice to be heard over other indigenous groups in Mexico, and in part by the counterinsurgency measures to divide the communities. That said, the EZLN has adopted the concept of autonomy as they make their demands to the state on behalf of the *campesinos* and *Indígenas* in Mexico, and as they structure their communities. According to June Nash (2001):

The autonomy that the Zapatistas seek is not the cosmetic autonomy of local rights, but a recognition of regional institutions to resolve agrarian conflicts peacefully and legally, to give men and women (who had always been excluded from the land reform of the 1910 revolution) access to land through the offices of an Agrarian Tribunal that would be funded adequately in order to purchase an expanded ejido. This would provide the material base for autonomy. (147)

In this description of the conception of autonomy, it is clear that the Zapatistas seek legal avenues for land redistribution that fall squarely within the Mexican state. This is a critical point of indigenous autonomy in Chiapas: the Zapatistas do not seek a state of their own within a state, but rather the ability to control the development process in their communities, and the means to fund this development effort. Earle and Simonelli (2005) reinforce this point:

Both the EZLN and Non-Zapatista civil society have struggled to define and implement alternative models of development and governance using administrative practice derived in part from indigenous customs. In theory,

for the poor of Chiapas, autonomy means local and regional control of governance, resource extraction, development processes and projects, education, and health care, in a system that runs largely independent from the official Mexican model. Entwined in this are attempts to build self-sufficiency and revitalize the economy. (8)

Hernández Castillo made a critical observation in her ethnographic research in Chiapas. She found that in regard to autonomy:

The positions within the indigenous movement are not homogenous either. Historical and regional differences have created different proposals: for the Lacandon rain forest colonizers, who came from different parts of the country and state, autonomy has to be multi-ethnic, while Sonora Yaquis demand the creation of a Yaqui autonomous region; as for Oaxaca indigenous peoples, they still seek communal autonomy. (Hernández-Castillo 2001, 218)

The picture of autonomy that is built from the ethnographies as a whole is one in which the claim for autonomy espoused by the *Indígenas* differs in form and function by region and experience (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005). Historical, economic, and political differences seem to be factors in the form and function of autonomous communities in Chiapas, as well as the level of success the PRIistas and the Mexican government have had in co-opting or oppressing indigenous organization at various stages. However, there are commonalities between them, most notably the goals of improving social, economic, and political dimensions of life for the *Indígenas* and *campesinos* in Chiapas. Additionally, the autonomous communities seek control over the development process in their communities. They wish to be the ones to make the decisions of what development projects they need, what timeframe these projects should involve, and how the projects

are implemented (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005).

While the demand for autonomy may on the surface seem to be counter-productive to peace, it is allowing the *Indígenas* to engage in the type of work that will help them to gain the dignity and community legitimacy that is imperative to a successful peace operation. Daly and Sarkin (2007) postulate that democracy is the best choice for communities recovering from violent conflict, adding that, as practiced in most countries, it is far from perfect. They observe that “democratic governance does not mean that problems will be solved, but it does mean that those in power are accountable, at least periodically and that the views and voices of society will be represented in both the long and short term” (Daly and Sarkin 2007, 220).

This view does not take into account democratic dictatorships where democratic representation applies only to elites and their supporters, as has been the case in Chiapas. In Chiapas, the electoral reforms are coming almost as slowly as the land redistribution of the 1917 Mexican Constitution (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Harvey 2005). The *Indígenas* seek to change this dynamic in their communities by advancing democracy to its limits. Collective decision-making processes that require consensus amongst all members of the community reflect a commitment to equal participation in governance.

Additionally, the autonomous communities in all their manifestations represent a commitment to the ability of a community to govern itself without

leaders (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Speed, Castillo et al. 2008). In the autonomous communities, all members of the community are leaders. They all participate in decision-making, and also serve in the rotating leadership positions designed to prevent oligarchy or co-optation.

Autonomy in the Zapatista communities is founded upon the idea that space be made in the Mexican government to recognize the government of the communities, and their governing structure. Not independence, but rather a recognition of local and regional government that is collectively democratic. This places authority and control over the development process with the people who live in the community or region being developed.

Rus, Castillo, et.al (2003) provide a detailed description of the Zapatista autonomous process in their book *Mayan Lives, Mayan Utopias*. They explain that the degree to which the Zapatista communities renounce the services of the Mexican government depends upon the success of the autonomous government in developing governing structures such as law enforcement and judiciary, tax collection, and civil registry procedures (208). In particular, one region – *Tierra y Libertad* – had been very successful in gaining autonomy prior to the development of the Pluriethnic Autonomous Regions in 2005. According to Arecli Burguete Cal y Mayor (2003), the region of *Tierra y Libertad* was an “outstanding example” of a successful autonomous government. During its dismantling by the Mexican military it was discovered that it had public offices,

meeting places, a civil registry office, a courthouse, and a jail (209). *Tierra y Libertad* was developed in the Lacandon rainforest; its seat of government was in the *ejido* Maparo Aguantita. This region had experienced significant immigration during the colonization of the rainforest in the 1970's and 80s. The region is inhabited by the Tojolabals, tzotzils, Ch'ols, Mams, mestizos, and Guatemalan and Kanjobal Mayans (Cal y Mayor 2003, Jung 2008). This ethnic melting pot would later become the location of the heart of the Zapatista experiment in collective democracy embodied in the *Caracoles* and *Juntas de buen Gobierno*.

Democratic Structures

The democratic structure supported by autonomy and demonstrated in the Pluriethnic Autonomous Regions established by the Zapatistas is a critical social and organizational capacity. It offers an avenue for peace in the region by beginning the reconciliation process through cooperation across class and culture. The collective form of democratic decision making in these communities overcomes a number of the vulnerabilities that the *Chiapanecos* face.

According to June Nash (2001) and Neil Harvey (2005), the communities in which they began ethnographic work in the 60's and 70's were group oriented. June Nash (2001) explains that communities were organized around municipal centers. The rural areas surrounding these centers were the responsibility of the urban center; often these urban centers were *Ladino*-dominated enterprises that were predatory on the rural communities surrounding them. The government in

these urban centers would sometimes force the rural *campesinos* to use their subsistence plots to grow commercial products. They would cheat the *campesinos* when they brought goods to market, and restricted the land distribution policies promised by the constitution of 1917 (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007). These municipal governments, which had once been cultural centers for the *Indígenas*, had been taken over by *Ladino* elites, and the *Indígenas* found themselves excluded from participation in the urban government. Democracy in Chiapas was not only one-party for 70 years, but was dominated by an ethnic and economic class. In response to this, the Mayan *campesinos* seek governance that is balanced and fair.

Harvey (2005) observes that “the novelty of the EZLN is...to be found in its political organization, strategy, and objectives, rather than in its social base or material conditions” (228). In the horizontal organization of the Zapatista community’s authority, responsibility for the accountability of leaders, and decision making power rests squarely in the community population, not through representatives, but through community negotiation to consensus.

According to Courtney Jung (2008), “The model of autonomous multiethnic regions locates self-government at the level of the region rather than the community” and would “entail a fourth level of government above the municipal level and the redrawing of regional and municipal boundaries” (171). She observes that the *Indígenas* in the Lacandon rainforest are living under a model of autonomous multiethnic regions.

Marcos describes the political organization and strategies of the *Juntas de buen Gobierno* in his book entitled *The Speed of Dreams*. In his monologue leading up to the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle (260-280) he describes how the EZLN has removed itself from the functioning of the communities. He adds that the living conditions in the communities have improved since the 1994 rebellion. Additionally, the Zapatistas are attempting to sever the umbilical cord of development aid that their communities have been dependent upon. The development of tax structures, subsistence communal farming with a commercial component and cooperative economic projects are all ways in which the autonomous communities are attempting to become self-sufficient. The *Indígenas* do not wish to remain dependent upon outside help. The entire goal of the movement is the self-sufficiency and self-determination of the people of Mexico, beginning in Chiapas. In order to achieve this goal, the communities are aware of the need to both diversify their economy and strengthen their access to markets. Only by demonstrating the successful implementation of a peaceful autonomous collective government and economic system will they be able to build and maintain its legitimacy as a part of the Mexican political system.

The governing structure of the Zapatista autonomous region is organized into three branches: local autonomous community councils, the *caracoles*, which serve as seats for the *juntas de Buen Gobierno*, and the *commandancia* (Earle and Simonelli 2005, 260-74, Speed 2008).

The branch of the autonomous government wherein authority for decision-making lies is the level of the autonomous councils. The councils are located within communities and are comprised of the entirety of the community. They are what the Zapatistas refer to as the Base. The councils elect leaders who represent their decisions, not them, at the *Juntas*. In 2007 there were thirty Zapatista Communities feeding delegates into five *Juntas* (Speed 2007).

Juntas function within a consensus system. Each autonomous municipal council elects eight people to serve as representatives to the Junta; the elected representatives are on a rotating schedule, with two serving as spokespersons at any given time. They cycle through in such a way that the post of representative is more important than the individual filling it. Decision-making is achieved through universal participation at the community level, and the representative's job is to relate decisions to the *junta*, rather than make decisions on behalf of those they represent. In the *juntas*, the two spokespersons join representatives from the other communities. The *juntas* themselves have a spokesperson who serves for two weeks, then spends ninety-eight days listening to the other seven council members (Earle and Simonelli 2005).

The *juntas* are an attempt by the Mayan peasants to build resilient communities that are collective and able to recover from calamity relatively quickly. The *juntas* are responsible for local governance and sustainable development. Through this process, they are intended to prevent the development of urban centers that neglects rural areas. The *juntas* manage

agrarian activities in a way that ensures the local availability of food through cooperative smallholder and subsistence farming projects aimed at food production with a surplus as opposed to commercial monocropping. Robert Netting (1993) found, in his analysis of the relationship between farm size and productivity per acre in agriculture around the world, that smallholder farming is more efficient at producing per acre yields than large farms. This finding alone suggests that promoting community development from the bottom up and decentralizing production of agricultural goods may not only increase production, but also promote much more resilient communities. A community that is able to produce its food locally, and provide for its needs based on local information, as opposed to administrative direction and prescription, will tend to be able to recover from calamity more quickly.

Earle and Simonelli (2005) postulate that this representative form and universal participation have a significant “interactive effect, as each hears the others and sees how they represent the whole” (261). They call this “evolutionary revolution,” as the rules and relationships are constantly negotiated as issues present themselves. Basically, the communities make no decision on a matter until it becomes an issue that must have a decision.

Essentially, the *juntas* have been charged with the important and challenging task of building upon the resilience of the *Indígenas* to build resilient communities, through sustainable development, autonomous governance, and collective democratic decision-making using little to no resources. The degree of

their success at this endeavor is central to the determination of whether localized decision-making in development matters is feasible as a more global peacebuilding and development strategy.

The smallest branch, the *comandancia*, is comprised of members of the EZLN military structure. They serve for as long as the collective communities perceive that they are working in the best interest of the community; they can decide to step down and retire, or the members of the collective communities can decide that the military branch of the government is no longer necessary and vote to have it disbanded. The *comandancia* are chosen by the ranks of the military arm, but are not decision-making entities; their role is to maintain the military and to mobilize that military if called upon by the collective communities (Marcos 2007). More significantly, they have the responsibility of serving as the official voice of the communities in the communication of community decisions, goals, and demands to the outside world. While the leadership in the *comandancia* does not rotate as often as the other tiers of governance, it is not a position of indefinite service.

The Zapatistas have organized their autonomous communities very horizontally. They more closely resemble networks of communities that base decision-making in community consensus. Leaders in the organization do not make decisions and inform the people of these decisions; rather decisions are made through consensus at the community level in the *juntas*, then through the elected leaders these community decisions are related to the *Caracoles*. This

process of consultation and consensus ultimately results in a collective decision making process for the entire group of communities. Leaders are more like messengers; they carry the decisions arrived at by the collective members of their home community to the community of communities, and back...and forth...until consensus is arrived at within the community and region. As Rothschild Whitt (1979) emphasizes in her model of collectivist democracy, the goal of these consensus-building processes and the rotation of leadership is to prevent the emergence of oligarchy, the possibility of leaders seizing effective control. This ultra-democratic form of governance is particularly aimed at reducing inequities amongst autonomous communities and ensuring that each individual and community continues to have a voice in the decisions that will affect their lives (Rothschild and Whitt, 1986).

Earle and Simonelli (2005) observed the interplay between the different levels of autonomous governance in Chiapas first-hand. As they sought both informed consent from Cerro Verde, and permission to conduct research in an autonomous community from the *consejo*, or municipality, they noted the numerous meetings and consultations that had to occur at each level of governance in order to come to consensus: "What was taking place in the meetings was the fine tuning of the daily details of autonomy, how it is "operationalized" as a concept in the face of the need for communication, compromise, and consensus" (164). One of the Zapatista representatives, named Luz (quoted in Earle and Simonelli 2005, 164), commented that:

"It's not easy at times here," she said. "We have to make sure we are doing things right on all levels. On the level of the pueblo...the community; on the level of the Consejo...the municipality; and on the level of the comandancia...the Zapatista leadership. We spend a lot of time talking."

This consensus seeking is an important component of the indigenous conception of democracy and development, which are closely intertwined in the autonomous communities. Development efforts are controlled by the *caracoles*, which operate much as the municipal centers of the *Indígenas* in the 1970's; however, at both of these levels of governance, there is a rotating leadership of community members.

The *caracoles* also serve as the judiciary in the communities. This form of community law is established and enforced by the community at large rather than a hierarchical structure, and works to prevent the domination of any one group through accountability to the broader organization and to the EZLN *comandancia*. The creation of the *caracoles* represented an attempt by the EZLN to distance the military organization from the Zapatista communities in peaceful resistance; however, preserving the authority of the *comandancia* seems to indicate that there is some remnant of vanguard politics, in which a small group ensures that the other levels of governance get along and maintain the mission. Nonetheless, the Zapatistas have embarked on a project that situates power and authority in the hands of the community.

The Zapatistas' most recent conception of democracy, embodied in the *caracoles* and *juntas*, is still in its infancy, and it is too soon to judge its success (Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005). However, the *caracoles* are

making an effort to create a political space where all voices are equal, development is determined, implemented, and maintained by the community, semi-subsistence agriculture is a goal, and men and women of all ethnicities participate in the consensus based decision making process. Within this democratic space lies the capacity to find a resolution to the conflict. Not because it is being done by the Zapatistas, per se, but because it is democratic, is concerned that development rests in the hands of the community and not government agencies, NGOs, or their donors and sponsors, and is inclusive rather than exclusive.

The Zapatista communities represent a democracy of people rather than an organization in the traditional sense. Provided these democratic structures persist, the Zapatistas represent an ideology of governance as opposed to a governing group. This gives them considerable legitimacy, as they are not a group that seeks to take power, but rather represents the complete divestment of power and authority to the local community. It is within this collective form of governance that the seeds for peace lie.

Autonomous Development

The pluriethnic autonomous structure discussed above places the responsibility for development in the hands of those being developed. This is a significant social and organizational capacity for a community, as it allows for community members, who have the most comprehensive understanding of their

needs, to make development decisions that will better address the community's vulnerabilities.

Previous to the creation of the *caracoles*, NGOs operated in the communities of their choice and aid was at times divisive rather than beneficial. In the communiqués published by the EZLN in 2003, *Subcomandante Marcos* describes some of the problems inherent in such a system:

In large part, there is a kind of handout even more concerning [than the aid typified in single red high heel shoe with no mate that was sent to "aid" the campesinos]. This is the approach of NGOs and international organizations that consists, broadly speaking, in that they decide what the communities need, without a thought towards consulting; imposing not just predetermined projects but also the time frame and form that they should take. Imagine the desperation of a community that needs drinking water and they are saddled with a library, those that need a school for their children and they are given a course in herb use. (Earle and Simonelli 2005, 252)

Earle and Simonelli offer a specific example of a development project directed at women in the region. Women are becoming a powerful force in the Zapatista movement, and the governing structures prioritize the value of women in culture, society, governance, and production. However, as the ethnographies reveal, western notions of feminist power are not fully transferable to the indigenous culture. The concept of *complementariedad* defies feminist notions of development that are geared toward the empowerment of women alone, at the exclusion of men (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005). Women have become increasingly empowered, but as part of the community, rather than juxtaposed to men. Women hold positions of power and authority equal to men in both the autonomous communities and the EZLN.

However, development efforts that require participation only by women are perplexing to the *Indígenas* communities. While discussing a DESMU project over dinner with some Zapatistas they had befriended, Earle and Simonelli learned about this confusion first-hand:

Carmen sighed. "It's not just that [the women's development NGO refusing to allow the women to control the money set aside for their beekeeping project and instead doling out the funds a little at a time] Working with the bees is not easy. The money came to the women, a women's cooperative. We took it of course. But we can't do all the work ourselves, just the women. We never have. We are a community. We need to work together, especially when there are groups of people working against us. Why do [development NGOs] want to divide us so?" (Earle and Simonelli 2005, 136)

This example again re-enforces the reasons that the Zapatista communities want autonomy over the development process. The NGOs restrict access to development funds, government agencies direct their development funds to the supporters of whichever political party holds the power and authority at the moment, and some development projects promote community divisions.

The *caracoles* bring a local level of oversight and control to the aid and subsequent development process. This control in turn ensures a modicum of equality and effectiveness. Additionally, the Zapatistas have instituted a 10 percent tax on any development aid that comes into the communities. The goal is to use the tax monies as a discretionary fund (Earle and Simonelli 2005). Establishing a tax on development aid arriving in the region is a beneficial endeavor that allows for development projects independent of developing agencies.

However, Earle and Simonelli (2005) do raise an important point about whether or not the Zapatista insistence on control of the development process at the *caracole* level may hinder external development efforts. NGOs that wish to conduct a development project in the autonomous communities would have to organize it through the *caracoles*. The NGO and donors would be unable to choose the site and specific development project; rather, in an ironic twist, the NGOs and donors may choose from a menu of areas of interest, such as education or healthcare, but the communities would ultimately decide together how best to use the development aid. This level of control, as well as the economic structure created by the tax on development aid, is only feasible if aid continues to arrive in the region. Thus, what is a capacity may also have the potential to become vulnerability, should it diminish external aid because of donors' lack of control over the development project.

In addition to the distribution of development aid, the autonomous regions' governing structures are responsible for the development of local and regional cooperatives that will promote the development of a self-sufficient economy. For example, the Zapatista communities have developed coffee cooperatives that employ a traditional (not ancient but modern tradition) agricultural crop that the *Indígenas* are intimately familiar with. Examples of these include the Yach'il Zapatista Cooperative and the Mut Vitz Cooperative. The Yach'il Zapatista Cooperative consists of about 680 members in five municipalities in the Lacandon rainforest. It produces approximately 130 tons of

coffee per year and markets it directly to the United States through an organization called Cooperative Coffees (Tangitalia.com).

The Mut Vitz Cooperative is a group of 1500 Tzotzil indigenous smallholders that includes six autonomous communities in the northern highlands (Tangitalia.com). According to Maria Elena Martinez-Torrez (2006), the Mut Vitz cooperative was able to join the fair trade market in 1999. The price per pound received was \$1.68; the local buyers in the region were paying \$1.24 per pound.

Another coffee cooperative is the Ixil Kix Lejal cooperative in the Municipality Ricardo Flores Magón. This cooperative is in direct marketing with the Project Café Para La Vida Digna, which sells memberships, and all profits are returned to the cooperative. According to the website for the organization (ZapatistaCoffee.com) profits include everything beyond what it costs to purchase the coffee (at a greater than fair-trade price), transport it, and roast, bag, and label it. The municipality has agreed to use all proceeds that it receives from the project to support its health clinic and school. Interestingly, while the larger Zapatista cooperatives boast 100% fair trade and organic certification, the smaller one promises that the principles of these certifications are being followed and that the land has never had pesticides used on it, but claims that the costs involved are a barrier to their ability to gain certification.

The coffee cooperatives have discovered that producing organic coffee and participating in fair trade markets is their key to success. The organic model

preserves the ecosystem, and the organic market provides buyers for this currently niche product (Martinez-Torres 2006, Harvey, 2005, 194). The fair trade movement provides access to markets that would be traditionally unavailable to the *campesinos* and prices that are locally unavailable (Jaffee 2007). The Zapatistas are bringing other local industries into the cooperative model of production. For instance, there are cooperatives that produce arts/crafts, textiles, and agricultural products such as honey and chickens (Harvey 2005, Eber and Kovic 2003, Earle and Simonelli 2007).

Based upon the ethnographies, it appears that the Zapatista movement is embodying a bottom-up, sustainable development and democratization process. The ethnographies suggest that the desire for autonomous control over the development process, the economy, the culture, and the political organization of communities is helping to build an individual capacity to cope through community. This capacity is a critical step toward building peace.

Social and Organizational Vulnerabilities

Although the social and organization capacities of the Chiapanecos will be invaluable to building peace in the region, there are significant vulnerabilities that reduce their potential.

Racism

The most obvious of the social vulnerabilities of the *Chiapaneco* communities is racism. "Divisions according to race, religion, ethnicity,

language, class, or caste can weaken the social fabric to such an extent that people are more vulnerable to crisis” (Junne and Verkoren 2005, 13). The ethnographies demonstrate that race, ethnicity, and class have been both a cause and sustainer of the conflict, and will be a critical vulnerability that must be overcome in order to build peaceful resilient communities.

For example, Bobrow-Strain (2007) observed that one of the more frequent complaints from *Ladinos* is that *campesino* “leaders channel significant state resources to their constituencies” (150). In Chilón, this favoritism resulted in the assault of PRD aligned *Indígenas* and the exile of a PRD Mayor by a PRI aligned Paramilitary called the Chinchulines. “The Chinchulines criticized the new administration’s channeling of resources to its supporters, and demanded the diversion of resources to their own members” (150).

The Chinchulines seized government offices, sent the mayor into exile, and attacked PRD land invaders. “As a result of these and other violent actions, including attacks on PRD land invaders, the Chinchulines won from the state a 200,000 peso credit for coffee cultivation and control over lucrative transportation concessions” (Bobrow-Strain 2007, 150). Interestingly, this was not, on the surface, racially motivated. However, a closer look at the situation reveals otherwise.

The Chinchulines are an indigenous paramilitary group; however, their alignment with the PRI at least raises the suspicion that its actions against the PRD were motivated by an effort by the PRIista elites (the *Ladinos*) to regain

power in the community. The attacks on PRD *campesinos* and the land invaders demonstrate that there was more at play here than a desire to replace the mayor. Additionally, the substantial reward for Chinchulines' actions, not the credit in particular but control of transportation in the community, provides them with the means to ensure the control of commerce. This suggests that the paramilitary is controlled by the PRI in Chilón. Throughout the history of Chiapas, enlisting indigenous paramilitaries has been a strategy of the ruling elite, who can then claim that it is *Indígenas* who fight *Indígenas*, which supports increased military and police presence in the region, and also provides a surface veneer that insulates the elites from claims of racist motivations and class dominance.

Violence

The most significant threat to the organizational and social capacity of the region is the violence and community divisions that are resulting from the low-intensity warfare and counterinsurgency being waged by the paramilitaries and by the Mexican military itself. The rule of law has been weakened.

Assassinations, beatings, disappearances, rapes, massacres, and arrests have been commonplace for decades (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007). The subjects of this low-intensity warfare are the *Indígenas* seeking reform, NGOs and civil society groups and individuals, and human rights observers. The perpetrators have been the Mexican military, Chiapas police, *Ladino* elites, indigenous paramilitaries

recruited and outfitted by the landowners and trained by members of the police and military, and indigenous groups in opposition, and those opposed to opposition groups (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007).

The *Chiapanecos* have a very integrated network of relationships that has resulted from 50 years of indigenous mobilizing and organizing into commercial and social groups, i.e. unions, political parties, and congresses, and *Ladino* organizing into political parties and agricultural groups, i.e. the PRI and cattleman's and agricultural associations (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007). These relationships and connections are being eroded as the communities are being divided. Rather than building upon the network relationships to promote peaceful resolution, the Mexican government is destroying them. This is causing the protraction of violence.

While the level of violence in the region supports the EZLN's claims that disarming would result in the annihilation of their communities, a concerted effort to return to the rule of law and demilitarize the entire region is in order. Aggressive prosecution of perpetrators of violence and their organizers and suppliers can be combined with significant efforts to curb corruption, through the rule of law and civic responsibility education to help reduce the violence and begin the process of the healing of the *Chiapanecos'* society. Building upon these

capacities, the *Chiapanecos* will be better equipped to cope with their significant social and organizational vulnerabilities.

Electoral Governance

Another significant organizational vulnerability is the Mexican government, more specifically the electoral governance system in the state of Chiapas. Through the PRI, the *Ladino* elites have entrenched themselves into positions of municipal, state, and federal government, including indigenous and agricultural institutions. *Indígenas* have found that aligning themselves with the PRI will get them preferential treatment by these institutions. In this situation, conflict lines are indeed drawn, pro-resistance or pro PRI. While other parties are making significant progress in elections since the 1994 uprising, elections remain tense, with results often contested.

June Nash (Nash 2001) was in Chiapas during the 1994 elections and made the following observation (267-8 footnote 5).

I attended the elections in Patihuitz and San Miguel in the Lacandón rain forest on August 12, 1994. Long lines of people waited for over two hours after the scheduled opening hour for the government trucks to arrive with the ballots. Many of the towns in the Lacandón territory lacked sufficient ballots, and people were beginning to give up in the late afternoon since their return journey took two hours. The people I interviewed in the line at San Miguel said that this was the first election ever held in their towns, and for women it was the first time they had voted anywhere.

Essentially, the electoral process in Chiapas has failed, yet another reason that the *Indígenas* are trying to create a democratic space in which they can determine their own needs, goals, and community structures independent of a

hegemonic political party, NGO, or government bureaucracy. However, the Zapatistas have spent many years teaching their members how to participate in democracy through their autonomous communities. They could conceivably take that knowledge to the official local polls and effect change through state governmental systems. Currently, they choose not to vote in official local elections. It is understandable that they are disenchanted by voter fraud and intimidation at the polls; however, a strong showing at the polls could be what the world needs to see so that it can help the Zapatistas turn the official Mexican electoral process into a tool for peaceful transition and negotiations.

Motivational and Attitudinal Capacities and Vulnerabilities

The social and organizational capacities and vulnerabilities discussed above are interwoven in the complex organizational web of Chiapas. Within the capacity of this web lie the relationships upon which peace can be built, provided that the relationships are not utterly destroyed by the low-intensity conflict that threatens any form of inter-relationship between opposing organizations and parties. The divisive nature of low intensity conflict and counterinsurgency strategies in Chiapas poses a critical threat to the possibility of peace in the state. However, the organization and mobilization of the *Indígenas* creates communities that feel empowered; this feeling of empowerment provides them with a critical motivational and attitudinal capacity.

Motivational and attitudinal capacities and vulnerabilities relate to the community's self perception and "its ability to deal effectively with its physical

and social/political environment” (Anderson and Woodrow 1998, 14).

Conversely, “a community is psychologically or motivationally vulnerable when people feel victimized, fatalistic, or dependant” (14). The *Chiapanecos* demonstrate these capacities and vulnerabilities simultaneously.

The ethnographies reveal that there seem to be two feelings that prevail in Chiapas. First, is the fatalistic feeling of oppression, dominance, dependency, and betrayal – motivational and attitudinal vulnerabilities? Second is a feeling of hope and dignity inspired by the positive rhetoric adopted by the Zapatistas – a motivational and attitudinal capacity. Unfortunately, the positive message has, to date, been one-sided. That is, it is aimed toward improving the lives of the *campesinos*, often with the implied exclusion of the *Ladinos*. The key will be to broaden the message of hope to be inclusive of all ethnicities and classes in Chiapas. In order to achieve the broadening of the pluriethnic solidarity sought by the Zapatistas, there must first be a return to the rule of law, which will help to prevent the continuation of aggression and open up spaces of accountability and responsibility. In order to shift the motivational and attitudinal forces into the productive generation of peaceful cooperation as opposed to violent confrontation, a significant amount of work must be performed in helping the *Chiapanecos* find the tolerance, empathy, and understanding that will fit their distinct cultures and cosmologies.

Pluriethnic Regions

The pluriethnic regions in Chiapas have been established as an effort to build capacity and sustainability in all three categories of post-disaster recovery: physical and material, social and organizational, and motivational and attitudinal. They address the physical capacity of communities by ensuring that development is distributed by need rather than donor interests. They address social vulnerabilities by organizing individuals into communities, and communities into regions, and regions into a political and social movement with national interests. And, they address the motivational and attitudinal vulnerabilities by providing a space for the voices of the entire community to be heard in a process of consensus. Importantly, they accomplish this not hierarchically, but through consensus, which provides a level of security from co-optation as the communities come into contact with powerful federal governments, multinational corporations, and international agencies. Finally, the pluriethnic nature of the communities demonstrates awareness that racism must end, and tolerance, not homogenization, must become a part of the fabric of the Mexican culture.

The pluriethnic perspective of the Zapatistas in the Lacandon jungle promoted the environment in which “the exchange of the experiences between indigenous and mestizo people from several regions of the state and country has allowed many global perspectives and political religious ideologies to coalesce into a political-military movement which evidenced how ‘neoliberal utopianism’

had failed” (Hernández-Castillo 2001, 206). The critique of neoliberal utopianism aside, the convergence of perspectives has created a movement that transcends Marxist guerrilla ideology, and creates hope in the minds of the people.

Meanwhile, the situation in Chiapas continues to inspire fear and uncertainty among the entities that propagate the oppression in the region that threatens escalation to full scale ethnic warfare. On the one hand, there is an elite apparatus that promotes division of communities and a rhetoric of fear. On the other hand, there is an organization that promotes democracy, cultural and economic autonomy, and the rhetoric of hope and dignity.

It seems obvious that the Zapatistas have the advantage in creating the capacity for building peace in Chiapas. The pluriethnic (and pluri-class) governing structures of the Zapatistas’ autonomous communities provide a platform within which equality and the prevention of oligarchy are integral building blocks. Upon this platform of horizontal governance, the critical democratic participation that will enable the peace process and development process to move forward can be built.

Conclusion

While efforts to develop a sustainable economic structure that is independent of the hegemonic structures of the state and federal government have been moving forward since the 1994 rebellion, there is still much work to be done. The metasynthesis of the five ethnographies demonstrates that the

Chiapanecos have a strong portfolio of capacities for overcoming the crisis in the state.

The democratization and economic development activities undertaken by the autonomous communities developed by the Zapatistas reflect the desire – and the capability – to overcome conflict through practices that serve the needs of the community, rather than the needs, desires, or goals of the developing agencies, the Mexican government, or international organizations. The autonomous communities are founded upon equality, liberty, dignity, and sustainability.

However, the *Chiapanecos* are at high risk from vulnerabilities stemming primarily from racism and violence within the state. Racism fuels the violence, and the violence legitimates the militarization of the state of Chiapas. The militarization in turn threatens production, commerce, tourism, and the ecology in the region. A return to the rule of law and the guarantee of security for all *Chiapanecos* is a critical requirement for the construction of peace. The cycle of violence must be broken in order to create the space in which the web of relationships in Chiapas – and Mexico more broadly – may be engaged in a concerted effort to build peace. Not a peace that is dictated from above, but rather one that is negotiated from below...from the people who live and die in Chiapas.

The federal government is very wary of the idea of autonomy in any region of Mexico and has raised the specter of secessionist motives. However,

there is no evidence that the Zapatistas wish to become secessionist. Rather, the communities in resistance are seeking an autonomous path to the development of culture, society, and community that will enable them to build an identity that is both indigenous and Mexican at the same time – an identity that values subsistence agriculture, sustainable forestry, and is a part of the Mexican political and economic system – one that is situated in communities where protestants, Catholics, *Indígenas*, and *mestizos* live out their lives in their own way, but as a part of a wider community, that is in turn a part of an even wider community (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007).

Additionally, the rhetoric of the Zapatistas has remained nationalistic. Even after the failure of the federal government to honor the San Andres Accords, the Zapatistas have maintained their nationalistic perspective. Despite the militarization of the region and the incidents of paramilitary violence, assassinations, and violent evictions of *campesinos* from land they took over in response to the abandonment of land reform in Chiapas, the Zapatistas maintain their position as a Mexican rebellion, not an indigenous uprising that prefaces an attempt at secession.

Instead of engaging in counter-insurgency against the indigenous peoples, the Mexican government would be better served by engaging the autonomous communities as potential avenues for sustainable development and peace in Mexico. For example, promoting the insurance that semi-subsistence farming

provides in the autonomous communities will improve their resilience in the face of economic crises. This in turn could enable economic recovery of the region while preserving the potential for domestic food production that can bolster the national economy in times of global economic crises. Smallholders who produce for subsistence and sell their surplus, or in the case of the autonomous communities, provide their surplus production to the broader community, create a cooperative that goes well beyond production and consumption cooperative models; rather it is a regional cooperative of communities. This means that some of the autonomy of the community is surrendered to the community of communities. However, resilience can be derived from this form of cooperative development; in times of crisis, the community of communities can come to the rescue of its members in crisis.

The Zapatistas have developed a cooperative economic structure that seeks to preserve ecological viability, prevent over-development of urban centers at the expense of rural *campesinos*, and support democratic mechanisms of governance that operate through consensus instead of hierarchy. While this structure may be challenging (though not impossible) to implement in a huge metropolitan area, it can certainly serve as a model for rural development and democratization not only in Chiapas, but also in other parts of Mexico and beyond. Additionally, it can contribute to the larger economic goals of the country and, even more importantly, it can contribute to the development of sustainable peace in areas experiencing low-intensity conflict.

Chapter 7

Pathways to Peace

When I began this research project, I had already familiarized myself with the economic conditions in Mexico. However, my first impressions of the situation in Chiapas were far from accurate, despite having read a number of sources on the conditions surrounding the region. I initially came to the project with the notion that the Zapatistas were a radical group of dispossessed peasants who opposed economic progress, but who were atypical of guerilla movements in Latin America. As I read further, however, I realized that the situation was far more complex, and that the Zapatistas are far more than the EZLN and a rebel group.

The five ethnographies on which my metasynthesis has been based reveal the intricacies of a conflict that spans centuries, one that has been particularly deadly in the past century, as efforts at forced acculturation have threatened the lives, bodies, and religion of the *Indígenas*. The ethnographies paint a vivid picture of the region being engaged in low-intensity warfare, with a paramilitary force that operates with impunity, a military occupation that promotes drugs, drinking, and prostitution in the indigenous communities (where alcohol is banned), and counterinsurgency development aid that is used to divide the communities and erode support for the Zapatista efforts. Less clear-cut but still visible are clues for transitioning from this level of violence to engagement in a peace process.

The Zapatista successes and failures make an important contribution to the conception of building peace from the bottom, sustainable development, and even human rights. The autonomous communities' efforts suggest strategies for building peace by promoting resilient communities through the establishment of collective democratic organisms that manage development, rehabilitation, and reconciliation.

Summary of Findings

The qualitative metasynthesis of ethnographic research examined the causes and sustainers of the conflict in Chiapas, the economic strategies developed by the *Indígenas* to support the autonomous communities, and the democratic governing structures of the *Indígenas* that might be useful tools for building resilience and peace.

The metasynthesis demonstrates that Chiapas has been undergoing a transformation of power that began with indigenous mobilization and was bolstered by economic and political reforms at the federal level. As the Mexican government began to institutionalize neoliberal economic policies while attempting to pacify and co-opt *Indígenas* in Chiapas, the agricultural sector began to lose its privileged position in Mexican society. This shift in national policy, in response to neoliberal reforms taken to win international loans to help with the recovery from the economic crises of the 1980's and again in the 1990's, threatened the power of the PRI in the state of Chiapas while its power was being contested across Mexico. The neoliberalization of the economic and

political arenas opened the door for the media and civil society, and the Zapatistas captured their attention.

While the EZLN was instrumental in bringing global attention to the low-intensity conflict in Chiapas, it was their choice of the inauguration of the NAFTA for their rebellion that gained them global attention. Rather than single-handedly transforming Mexican society, the Zapatista movement consolidated existing efforts and brought them into the view of a growing international network of civil society organizations, human rights advocates, and other activists. Additionally their message against the neo-liberalization rang clear in the midst of an economic crisis, severe inflation, and decreasing returns on agricultural products. In Mexico, the message was amplified by the adoption of the NAFTA, which would expose the Mexicans to increased vulnerability from global competition in traditionally protected markets and industries.

The shift in power dynamics that was occurring in the last half of the twentieth century in Mexico was clearly visible in the federal elections of 1994. *Indígenas* were voting in their communities for the first time ever (Nash 2001), women were voting, opposition candidates had begun to win municipal and state elections, and the eye of the media was on the poorest country to join the NAFTA. It was in this context that the Zapatista rebellion was able to create a space for the re-insertion of indigenous rights, autonomy, land distribution, and rural development into the Mexican political discourse (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005).

The Nature of the Conflict

The metasyntesis revealed a deeply rooted low intensity conflict that is at once a resource war over land, agricultural production and distribution, ecological preservation, and natural resource extraction; an ethnic conflict resulting from centuries of domination and oppression of *Indígenas* and *campesinos*; and also a local manifestation of a global network war against neoliberal imperialism that includes indigenous movements, human rights advocate, and anti-globalization movements (Ronfeldt, Arquila et al. 1998; Arquila and Ronfeldt 2001). I do not mean the imperialism of a nation, but rather, of capital accumulation and formation, international trade, and the assimilation of all resources (human, natural, and capital) into production – an empire that every nation of the world is now a subject of and complicit in.

Three main causes of the conflict emerged from my research: economic inequality, social-domination of indigenous cultures through repeated attempts at forced acculturation and the related oppressive racial relations, and the exclusion of *Indígenas* from political participation until they are needed to preserve the power of the *Chiapaneco* elites.

The social cleavages that have grown wider over the five centuries of colonial occupation and subsequent oppression by economic and political elites are a significant cause of the conflict. In Chiapas, these cleavages are exacerbated by severe economic, political and social inequality. The manifestation of these divisions, racism, is a critical factor as both a cause and sustainer of the conflict.

Having been institutionalized through colonialism, independence, and the revolution, racism will prove to be a challenge to overcome in the region.

Another cause of the conflict has been the oppressive nature of the Mexican government in Chiapas, and the related violence visited upon the indigenous communities and individuals. This oppression and violence was partly fueled by racism, and partly by the impunity with which the *Ladino* elites have maintained their power throughout the past century.

With over 10,000 troops in the Lacandon forest alone, and 70,000 in Chiapas (Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005) the militarization of the region illustrates the ongoing oppression of the *Indígenas* and *campesinos* by the government; meanwhile, the paramilitary violence that is normally associated with a weak government suggests that the tactical use of paramilitary violence is an unofficial policy of the Mexican military's low-intensity conflict.

The unfinished business of land re-distribution in Chiapas remains a significant obstacle to peace. Much of the conflict revolves around access to arable land. The *Indígenas* staged a series of land invasions in the last half of the twentieth century in protest to the slow progress of land re-distribution in the region and the nature of the land reforms adopted in the state.

Economic Strategies

The economic strategies of the Zapatistas include an internal focus on the sustainability of the community through semi-subsistence farming, equitable

distribution of development, and the collectivization of community resources in an effort that is very similar to a community-wide cooperative.

The *Chiapanecos* have a number of capacities for recovering from crisis and building peace. Among their physical and material capacities are labor, sustainable agriculture, and community building. At the same time, however, weaknesses in infrastructure, particularly in areas of transportation, communication, and utilities, interfere with economic development. Likewise, shortages of health and education professionals and facilities pose significant obstacles. Social and organizational vulnerabilities include racism, violence, and the existing electoral governance system in Chiapas and in Mexico more broadly. However, autonomous governance and development, as well as the democratic structure of the Zapatista autonomous communities, are powerful social and organizational capacities that enable sustainable development and hold the promise for peace.

It does not appear that any of the economic strategies or capacities are dependent upon the continuation of the conflict. Interestingly, while the metasyntesis provided no evidence that the Zapatista communities are benefitting from the protraction of conflict, it did suggest that the local *Ladino* smallholders are not profiting, either (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007). In fact, both the *Indígenas* and the *Ladinos* rely on developmental aid for agriculture, infrastructure, and community building.

Additionally, the metasynthesis resulted in a significant finding relating both to the nature of the conflict and to the capacity to build reconciliation and cooperation amongst the communities. The ethnographies reveal the existence of common ground among the distinct groups that comprise the *Chiapanecos*. Both the *Ladinos* and *Indígenas* feel that they have lost control. This common ground may provide opportunities to build a shared understanding of the situation and the experiences of the people involved.

Implementations of Democracy

Perhaps the single most important capacity of the Zapatistas is their implementation of autonomous democratic governing structures. The autonomous communities, and more specifically the concept of the pluriethnic autonomous communities, provide a valuable network that may be employed in the peacebuilding process as both a way to reach the base communities of the population in Chiapas and in the identification of peacebuilding strategies.

Additionally, these democratic structures may serve as the foundation for constructing the *Indígenas'* network for implementing the negotiated model for returning to the rule of law. The *caracoles* act as a distribution network for development aid and could be employed in efforts make the connections necessary to develop the web of relationships needed to build peace. The *juntas* act as the decision making branch of the Zapatistas. Because the *juntas* seek consensus of the entire community on any decision that must be made that will affect the community as a whole, they, too can serve as a powerful peacebuilding

tool. When the Zapatistas were involved in the peace negotiations in San Andres, the government representatives and NGOs involved were becoming frustrated because the leaders would not make a decision without seeking input and consensus from their communities. The agreements took months to negotiate because the representatives were not leaders, but rather spokespeople for the community (Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005). However, the result of the negotiation was that, when the accords were signed by the Zapatista representatives, the peace agreement had been negotiated with and accepted by the entire community. This building of consensus is critically important to sustainable peace efforts.

Constructing the Pathway to Peace

The obstacles to peace identified in the metasyntesis are significant, and the pathway to peace in Chiapas will unquestionably be a complex and difficult one to travel. Nonetheless, the human suffering, ecological degradation, and cultural crisis that are ongoing in the region warrant significant efforts to transform the Mexican society from conflicted to peaceful. The most critical conditions that must be met in order for this to occur include security, reestablishing the rule of law, and reconstructing infrastructure, including educational and healthcare reform. Each of these is crucial for post-conflict development.

The metasyntesis revealed that security in the region is all but non-existent. In ethnic conflict, unresolved ethnic tensions can fuel economic and political inequities and create an atmosphere that promotes violence and oppression. With the arming of an indigenous organization – the Zapatistas, came the increased militarization and paramilitarization of the region. This pits two ethnicities, or more accurately, ethnically aligned classes, against each other – the *Ladino* elites and their indigenous supporters against the *Indígenas* and their *Ladino* supporters.

The violence associated with the low-intensity conflict over the past 20 years has created an atmosphere of fear that leads to the growth of new violent groups. *Indígenas* fear paramilitaries, the military, federal representatives, state and local police and *Ladinos*. The *Ladinos* fear indigenous organizations, *campesino* organizations, indigenous paramilitaries, and opposition parties. This fear inhibits the construction of a plural society.

The situation requires a complete demilitarization of the region, including the aggressive prosecution of human rights violations and their facilitators. Additionally, the situation requires the recognition of the EZLN as a self-defense force, and engaging them, and the other paramilitaries in the region, in a disarmament, demobilization, and rehabilitation program. Prosecution and/or expulsion of weapons distributors and foreign paramilitaries in the region will also be a critical part of this demobilization. Finally, the complete disengagement of the military from the communities in Chiapas will be a critical

step in reducing the oppressive nature of the military presence. The Mexican military has demonstrated its inability to cope with a peacebuilding mission and its inexperience is evidenced through complicity in corruption and paramilitary violence.

Until security is provided for in the region, there will be little room for the construction of the pathway to peace. The solution to security will lie in the negotiated rule of law councils that must be developed and given the monopoly on the legitimate use of force:

The negotiation model for reestablishing the rule of law is a high-intensity, people centered activity. Nevertheless, it is low cost and low risk... it involves a process of direct and continuous negotiation and [rule of law] training by peacekeepers at the levels of (1) the great mass of the population; (2) military commanders, police, and local warlords (functionaries); and (3) central leadership (ruling factional elites). The negotiation model for the restoration of the [rule of law] is achieved by negotiating agreements with the host people using community consultation, public participation, stakeholder representation, mutual gains negotiation, alternative dispute resolution, Rapid Participatory Rule of Law (RPA) appraisal and Rule of Law participatory, Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation (RPAME). (Plunkett 2005, 89)

The RPA and RPAME are tools for understanding the social, economic, and cultural context of the peacebuilding project, and the development of a common understanding of the rule of law that is negotiated between the actors in the conflict. This negotiation model serves as the link between the Zapatista concept of pluriethnic autonomous communities and peacebuilding.

Building local governance is a critical step in providing for security and also for preparing the way for the rule of law. Electoral processes in Chiapas have become more transparent and less corrupt over the past decade, in part

because of the attention afforded Mexican elections by the transnational media and solidarity networks, and in part as an effort to demonstrate that the Mexican government is addressing corruption and oppression in Mexico.

However, in Chiapas, the PRI still retains significant political and social power. The opposition parties have made progress in the region at attaining local, state, and federal level appointments and elected positions; however, the low-intensity conflict involves the intimidation of these representatives of opposition parties regardless of affiliations with rebel groups. Essentially, anyone who promotes human and indigenous rights in Chiapas is labeled a Zapatista and subject to oppression (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005). In this atmosphere, it is particularly important to build local governance that is responsible to the people.

The autonomous governments constructed by the Zapatistas in the Lacandon forest serve as useful models for the development of rural, community-based local democracies. Additionally, the three tiered system of the autonomous governments enables the application of this form of democracy at the regional and state level as well. The key aspect of the Zapatista democracy is collective decision-making at the community level, meaning that the community seeks consensus on all decisions that will have an impact on the entire community. In the case of peacebuilding, this democratic structure provides a foundational level of governance that is truly bottom-up.

By adding the second tier, regional governance, the Zapatistas' approach becomes capable of building the networks of connections required to construct the web of relationships that is in turn necessary for building sustainable peace (Lederach 2005). However, time is critical in this conflict. The continuing violence and community division associated with the low-intensity conflict is eroding these networks where they already exist.

The third tier exists as the final level of governance, tasked with bringing decisions, goals, and demands of the community of communities to the outside world. It is the official voice of the Zapatistas, but that does not mean it is a ruling voice. This governing structure also provides a foundation for the rule of law. Essentially, the Zapatistas have developed a community based network that can support the negotiated model of the rule of law. As importantly, their model of collective governance facilitates the development of community-authored infrastructure.

Land redistribution is an essential requirement for the communities in Chiapas to build sustainable infrastructure that will promote resilience. The Mexican government has already devised a strategy for continuing land redistribution in Chiapas through the courts. However, one limiting factor to this strategy is that the courts are dominated by PRIistas. The current structure of land distribution is complicit in the counter-insurgency and low-intensity warfare, as it is used as a tool to assure *Indígenas* align themselves with the elite class in order to receive the full benefits of the redistribution effort (Hernández-

Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Bobrow-Strain 2007; Speed, Castillo et al. 2008). While the structure is already in place that could enable the restitution and reconciliation necessary to build peace in the region, its application is a tool that creates deeper divisions in the *Chiapanecos'* communities. Again, the negotiated model for the rule of law can be useful in the resolution of this obstacle.

Education and healthcare are two additional components of the infrastructure that are important to post-conflict development and sustainable communities. The educational system that is organized by the EZLN in the autonomous communities does not necessarily require a school – teachers teach in whatever space is available. However, the metasynthesis suggests that the education the children receive seems to be at least equivalent to that of the government program. The children in the autonomous educational system were able to read and write, while many of their government educated peers could not.

Healthcare is also provided by the EZLN; it is organized through the *caracoles*, who train healthcare workers to return to their communities. The communities also employ traditional healers in their medical treatment. This provides a cultural context and also preserves traditional medicine, which is in a close relationship with the ecology of the region and concerned with the preservation of that ecology. Although education and healthcare are provided by

the EZLN, the presence of more trained professionals in these fields would benefit the autonomous communities and support their sustainability.

The final critical piece of infrastructure development that the Zapatistas attempt to address is agriculture. They have turned their focus to preserving, if not reviving, sustainable agricultural practices in the context of subsistence and semi-subsistence farming. These practices work to preserve the ecological balance of the region, allowing them to grow a variety of food that is integrated into the different parts of the jungle (NAFTA 1992; Netting 1993; Norton, Alwang et al. 2006). For instance, coffee plants are situated in shade near other plants that limit parasites and provide the maximum amount of food production with the least amount of technical or non-labor inputs (Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Harvey 2005).

Although the region has a limited capacity in infrastructure, the EZLN, the Zapatistas, NGOs, and the Mexican government compete for the hearts and minds of the Chiapanecos through efforts at the development of increased capacity in infrastructure and economic power. Thus, development in Chiapas, as revealed in the ethnographies, has been used as a tool to divide and oppress opponents to the ruling elite. In its current form, it is an obstacle to peace. Rethinking the development strategies that the Mexican government has employed in Chiapas in a way that makes it more just and equitable, giving development authority directly to the community being developed, is one way of addressing this obstacle.

The collective communities of the Zapatistas also provide for the equitable distribution of development in regions experiencing conflict and its aftermath. The autonomy of the community in determining the form and function of development is critical in developing the stable and sustainable economic infrastructure that serves as a foundation for the construction of a resilient community. The autonomous communities are already working out the logistics of providing rapid distribution networks of aid, and at the same time establishing practices of sustainable development by giving priority to the long-term security of food production over short-term capital accumulation and growth.

This marriage of post-disaster relief and post-conflict development has been espoused by increasing numbers of academics in both fields (Galtung 1996; Anderson and Woodrow 1998; Arnson and Zartman 2005; Junne and Verkoren 2005; Lederach 2005). The strategies of both approaches may be integrated in an effort to base development in the community while simultaneously promoting sustainable development and peace through the construction of cooperative collective networks.

The Zapatistas may be characterized, in a very general sense, as peacebuilders. They are fully engaged in a collective effort to improve the structural, political, social, and cultural health of their communities. The problem is not with their strategies, but rather with the isolation within which these strategies are employed.

The clues for peacebuilding that were revealed in this ethnographic metasyntesis revolve around the evolution of autonomous collective democratic governance and development undertaken by the Zapatistas. While they are only one of many indigenous organizations, their efforts at creating the foundations for survival have resulted in the creation of the foundations for peace. Either knowingly or by sheer accident, the Zapatistas have begun to build the networks necessary for peace.

The one thing that remains is that these networks must come out of isolation and begin the process of reconciliation with the rest of the *Chiapanecos*. The *Indígenas*, *Ladinos*, foreigners, and organizations in Chiapas need a return of the rule of law and security that may not be achievable by the Mexican government alone. It may require an army of peaceful representatives who seek to help the people of Chiapas and Mexico more broadly build a sustainable peace for themselves. The third party intervening force in this conflict will most likely remain the civil society, which unfortunately seems to be losing interest over time. Many of the solidarity websites that existed at the beginning of my research have been taken down, or have not been updated in years; this could indicate that solidarity with the Zapatistas has dwindled, or it could be a product of the global war on terror that has targeted activists around the world as potential terrorists.

Peace in Chiapas is attainable. It will take a considerable amount of time and energy to build. While time may be running short in light of recent

developments in other parts of Mexico, the *Chiapanecos* do have an abundance of motivation. The employment of this motivation in peacebuilding and sustainable development will be a critical transformation for the people of the region, one that can work to build a cohesive, multicultural society that values human and civil rights, sustainable development, and peace.

Implications for Peacebuilding

IGOs and peacebuilders can potentially learn valuable lessons from the Chiapas conflict. First, and most obvious, is that tying development to conditions that could benefit one part of society over another can be as destructive as counter-insurgency aid that is intended to divide the community in an effort to erode support for an insurgent group. Often, counter-insurgency aid is biased towards the status quo and can lead to deeper entrenchment of the conflict. Groups rise up and use their voice to be heard; hegemonic aid is an attempt to silence that voice, while maintaining existing power structures and associated structural violence. This form of development is counterproductive to the construction of sustainable peace. A development process that builds peace must benefit all constituents.

Additionally, the traditional peacebuilding practice of working with elites, and elite representatives of the oppressed, although functionally practical, limits the space for reconciliation. However, the converse can also be true. That is, working only with the marginalized peoples can also limit the space for

reconciliation and a sustainable peace. For example, by engaging the Zapatistas, who represent not an organization seeking power, but rather a rethinking of the role of democracy in Mexican society, and by neglecting the *Ladino* and other indigenous elites, organizations run the risk of reinforcing the already tense ethnic relations in the region. A more productive and promising approach is to engage all levels of society, simultaneously and as equals.

Third, by restricting the access to the funds associated with development aid, and by dictating its form and direction, INGOs and NGOs providing development assistance can create new competitions within an oppressed community, especially when aid organizations work to build infrastructure in concentrated areas (Earle and Simonelli 2005). Instead, development funds must be made available for use by those in need, and the way in which the funds are used must be determined in large part by the recipients.

Finally, adopting the Zapatista's model of collective democratic action in times of conflict can give the broadest segment of the population a sense of agency in the decision process, and allows them to feel included – which helps with the reconciliation and peacebuilding process.

Each of these factors has the potential to significantly impact peacebuilding efforts in societies experiencing low intensity conflicts or insurgencies.

Limitations

Although the research presented here offers valuable insights for peacebuilding and development, it has limitations. The five ethnographies are limited in their discussions of the Zapatista governance and economic system devised in 2003. The publication dates limit coverage to events that transpired before 2005. In order to address this limitation, I examined alternative sources and included discussion of the cooperative development based on those sources. Unfortunately, there have been no in-depth publications focused on the Zapatista form of government or their economic structures, and even less discussion regarding the success of these developments.

Additionally, the nature of the conflict and political developments in Mexico makes a delineation of actors nearly impossible. As in many conflicts, the battlespace is very fluid. For example, rebel leaders have become congressional representatives and have infiltrated deep into the Mexican government over the past decade. The Mexican government is not a monolithic entity, but rather is a collection of individual actors. The reality is that in the hierarchical form of government that persists in Chiapas, the actions of individuals holding office reflect actions on the part of the government.

Finally, the form and function of autonomy is negotiated at the local level. With this in mind, it is not possible to generalize about autonomy across the region. My focus has been on the Zapatista conception of autonomy that is pluriethnic and includes a mandate to include non-indigenous people. For this

reason, I have made an effort to only include evidence that is related to developments in the Lacandon rainforest, as it is a multi-ethnic region that was colonized in an effort to relocate people from other parts of Mexico experiencing land shortages or the encroachment of development (i.e. hydro-electric power development).

These limitations demonstrate a need for extensive field research in Chiapas. Of critical importance is the investigation of the economic and governing structures in the Zapatista communities and an effort to quantify the success of development in the region.

Directions for Future Research

This project sought a depth of understanding that comes from synthesizing decades of ethnographic research that reflects the wisdom associated with the act of being in the community rather than the act of visiting it. This depth was the reason I chose to include only ethnographic reports that were based on more than one year of field research, and also ethnographic reports that focused on the community rather than on an individual level of experience. It would be beneficial to apply this research design to a larger sample in an effort to broaden the understanding of the situation.

Additionally, the inclusion of case studies based on shorter visits to Chiapas may provide a clearer picture of the day to day functions of the autonomous communities, the particular functioning of the efforts at community

controlled development, and finally, the broader experience of less geographically cohesive groups such as producer cooperatives. Each of these dimensions would improve the ability of peacebuilders to understand the conflict and help those involved.

The QMS approach was particularly useful in identifying the causes and sustainers of peace and also in identifying commonalities among disparate groups and organizations involved in the conflict. The various perspectives served to provide more dimension to the understanding of the situation, and in doing so, they also suggested some additional directions for research. For instance, the metasynthesis identified a common feeling of loss and fear that grips the *Chiapanecos* regardless of their alignment in the conflict. How might this common feeling be utilized to reconcile difference among the actors in the conflict? How might it serve as a rallying point for efforts to develop peace in the region?

Another area for inquiry grows from the fact that the democratic innovations put in place by the Zapatistas, specifically the *caracoles* and *juntas*, are too recent to be evaluated. Future research might document the successes and failure of these democratic structures in an attempt to identify sustainable approaches to building peaceful, resilient communities. As the governance is constantly evolving, it will be important for others who wish to employ this form of governance in the transition from conflict to peace to have some idea of the pitfalls, difficulties, and barriers to mutual understanding and compromise that

could undermine the system. For example, does the collective decision-making process break down in the face of dissension? Are the autonomous development strategies successful in achieving the equitable distribution of development projects, or do they ultimately reduce the amount of development aid available to the communities?

One key question that arises from this analysis is whether the *Chiapanecos* will be able to build a truly pluriethnic society that respects the individual, the society, the ecology, and the culture of diverse groups of people, or whether the autonomous communities will ultimately reinforce the divisions in Chiapas by strengthening the divide between *campesinos* and *Ladinos* in the region. The answer will be found only over time, through the continued investigation of the autonomous communities.

An additional and important area of future research focuses not on Chiapas, per se, but on the application of the findings of the metasynthesis – and the method itself – to building community resilience and peace in other parts of the world. For example, are the strategies employed by the Zapatistas culturally bound? Are they geographically transferrable? Can they be applied successfully in urban environments, or in areas with other types of conflict?

Conclusion

The metasynthesis cannot predict the future course of the conflict. The violence, in Chiapas and in other regions of Mexico, is escalating; in particular,

the increasing violence along the U.S.-Mexico border is forcing the Mexican government to be bolder in its police actions along *both* of its borders.

If the Zapatistas are unwilling to engage the government in peace negotiations, they will run the risk of their cause being swallowed by the conflict between the Mexican government and the narco-guerrilla cartels. The Mayans have demonstrated that they are a resilient people through the preservation of cultural links to their ancient heritage, and simply by the survival of indigenous communities in the face of occupation, oppression, and acculturation (Ross 1995; Hernández-Castillo 2001; Nash 2001; Earle and Simonelli 2005; Harvey 2005; Speed, Castillo et al. 2008).

Perhaps with the progression of democratic reform at the federal and state level in Mexico, the ruling elites will find their ability to oppress the indigenous people erode over time. However, the opposite situation seems to be evolving in Chiapas: violence is increasing, and the *Ladino* and PRI confidence that the government will not interfere with oppression short of massacre seems to be growing as well. It is very possible, and perhaps likely, that the *Indígenas* and *campesinos* will once again say “Ya Basta!”

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Appendix A

The following questionnaire is to be applied to each ethnography that is to be analyzed in a qualitative meta-synthesis research design focused on indigenous development and democratization amidst the conflict in Chiapas.

Characteristics of the report

Title of Document reviewed:

Author(s):

Full Citation of Document:

Dates of field research if given, if not, length of time spent in field:

Geographic locations of Participants:

Claims to theoretical and analytical perspectives:

Were any participants identified as Zapatistas?

Prepared By:

Keith Hollinger

Conflict and Peace

Actors identified as part of the Conflict:

Historical causes of the Conflict:

Indígenas claims to the causes of conflict:

***Ladino* claims to the causes of conflict:**

Government claims to the causes of the conflict:

Evidence of people benefitting from continued conflict:

Factors perceived to continue the conflict (respondents or Authors):

Factors contributing to the escalation of violence:

Record all incidents of violence or intimidation, the actors involved and any relevant information:

Activities of paramilitaries and other group violence:

Demands or expectations for reconciliation stated by Chiapanecos:

Activities of the Mexican Government:

Reconciliation with the Indígenas in Chiapas

Record all indications of disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation programs in Chiapas:

Strategies that were effective in curbing violence indicated in the report:

Record all indications of strategic counterinsurgency aid:

Claims of efforts to divide populations undermine community or individual reputations, or other efforts to weaken indigenous solidarity:

Activities of NGO's:

Activities of foreign commercial entities:

PRI response:

Non-Zapatista Indígenas response:

Zapatista response:

Zapatista Political campaigns:

Zapatista Proclamations and demands:

Zapatista Military Operations:

Internal conflict within the Zapatista Organization:

Record all references to negotiations that occurred, that were declined, or were canceled between the Zapatistas and the Mexican government:

Record any details about meetings were held between the Zapatistas and the Mexican government:

Democratization

In this section, record all references to democracy, democratization, Mexican democracy, Zapatista democracy, and any other community governance organizing.

Official democracy and elections in Chiapas

Electoral Fraud:

Intimidation:

Improvements in electoral processes:

Indígenas Democracy

Historical evolution of indigenous democratization:

Structure of autonomous communities:

Enforcement of revolutionary laws and other Zapatista conceptions of crime and punishment:

Attendees to the autonomous community meetings (this is to get an idea of who is participating):

Participation of women of governance in Chiapas: under both the traditional regime and the autonomous communities:

Evidence of inclusiveness, and/or exclusiveness of the Zapatista community in decision-making:

Demonstrate levels of openness to opposing views:

***Ladinos* participating in the autonomous community governance:**

Participation by other Indígenas in Zapatista governance:

Incidents of cooperation or conflict between the Mexican government and autonomous community governments:

Impacts of political action on people and communities:

Feelings of empowerment and self-determination amongst the Indígenas:

Respondent statements about safety and security, particularly for women and children:

The efforts of Mexican government at reconciliation and compromise with the Zapatistas:

Reconciliation and compromise with the non-Zapatista Indígenas and *Ladinos* that is independent of the government:

Legal battles involving autonomous communities and the Mexican government and or elites:

Community building in Chiapas:

Social movement activities:

Development

Please record all references to alternative and/or mainstream development strategies that have been useful for helping the autonomous communities to become self-sufficient and References these communities become dependent upon external NGO support in lieu of domestic government support.

Economic development strategies of the Mexican government:

Strategies of civil society:

Strategies of the Zapatistas:

Evidence of effectiveness of the strategies:

Differences, if any in experiences and perspectives in the Zapatistas in non-Zapatista Mayans and the non-indigenous people in the region:

Economic well-being of households (Zapatista and non-Zapatista):

Direct competition between autonomous and non- autonomous communities:

Autonomous Communities involvement in development

Indications of transformations power and authority:

Immigration

References to emigration of Chiapanecos (both Indígenas and *Ladinos*):

References to remittances:

References to immigration: