



The Struggle Behind the Formation of Autonomous Communities: The Role of Zapatista Leadership in Non-Violent Social Change and Future Implications in Mexico

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ABSTRACT

On January 1st 1994, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), an indigenous armed organization, declared war on the Mexican Government, demanding fundamental social and political rights. This paper aims to analyze innumerable catalysts for the shift from armed rebellion to non-violent social change. Following their 1994 rebellion in Chiapas, Mexico, the EZLN faced a stalemate with the government. This research aims to explain the major factors that encouraged people of Chiapas, Mexico for an uprising, by highlighting interests and demands of indigenous people and as well as Mexican government's response to them. It also dives into different strategies and methods of non-violent Activism used by indigenous people with the help of Zapatista leadership. The research tends to highlight the importance of EZLN movement to be an eye-opening event for both the Mexican Government and the non-indigenous population as a realization of the alarming situation of the indigenous people in Chiapas, Mexico. Mexico, predominately being a democratic country has now been exposed to such autonomous communities as a potential threat for the government if this expansion continues. This paper is based on question that how the struggle of the indigenous people led to nonviolent Social Changes and formation of autonomous communities under self-governance. It will also explore its potential to sustain further in future and possibility of expansion of these autonomous communities to other parts of Mexico. The research is based mainly on secondary sources as a means of collection of data by consulting online books, articles and sources.



Background

In Latin America, Mexico has the highest indigenous population. According to the Human Rights Commission, 15% of the Mexico's total population, equivalent to 12.7 million people, identify as indigenous, speaking 62 languages (Godelmann, n.d.). Chiapas, the largest federal district in Mexico, is home to 1.1 million indigenous people, representing 27.2% of state's total population. Despite being one of the Mexico's richest regions in terms of natural resources, Chiapas, remains the second most marginalized state in the country (Godelmann, n.d.). Data from the Special Services for Peace reveals that half of the indigenous population in Chiapas has no income, while 42% earn no more than six dollars per day. Additionally, 70% of the population suffers from severe malnutrition. Historically, the indigenous communities in Chiapas have been denied fundamental human rights, including access to health care and education.

The Zapatista movement was primarily characterized by its focus on protecting the rights and aspirations of indigenous communities. The EZLN (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional) demanded an end to oppression and segregation on the bases of class system. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was a significant factor that exacerbated the situation, as the EZLN viewed it as the betrayal by the government (Godelmann, n.d.). This agreement favored large agrarian businesses, particularly those in Canada, and was perceived as an economic policy that oppressed the indigenous people of Chiapas. According to the Mexican commission for Indigenous Development, 67% of the Mexico's indigenous population is employed in the agricultural sector. This historical marginalization and systematic abuse of the indigenous population of Chiapas, combined with the NAFTA agreement, were the two primary catalysts for the Zapatista uprising (Godelmann, n.d.).

The EZLN movement was named "Zapatista" in honor of Emiliano Zapata, a key figure in the Mexican Revolution whose motto was "Land and Liberty". Zapata famously declared, "The land belongs who work it." The Zapatista movement began in 1994 under the leadership of a figure known as Marcos (a pseudonym), whose name symbolizes **Movement Armed Revolution Commander Bishop Samuel**. Marcos mobilized communities to fight for their basic rights, referring to the movement as a self-proclaimed rebellion (*Gahman - An Anti-Capitalist Moral Economy of the Rebel Peasant*, n.d.).

On January 21, 1994, the Zapatista launched an attack against governmental authorities, demanding the fundamental rights of the Mexico's indigenous population and the resignation of then-president Carlos Salina de Gortari (Godelmann, n.d.). They rallied support from other marginalized communities who were also deprived of fundamental human rights and began seizing government and official buildings.

The Conflict, though deeply complex, was eventually addressed through negotiations between the Zapatista leadership and the Mexican government., culminating in the San Andrés Accords in 1996. However, failed to fully implement the promised recognition of indigenous autonomy and fundamental rights (Godelmann, n.d.).

These developments led to renewed tensions between the two conflicting parties. Numerous attempts were made to implement the San Andrés Accords, including the proposed Cocopa Law, which has yet to gain legitimacy since 2001. In response, the Zapatista established autonomous communities where they govern and manage their own affairs. Prominent slogans displayed on posters in these communities include, "Here, the people are in charge" and "Here, the people govern and, the government follows."

Problem statement

The Zapatista movement, which emerged in Chiapas, Mexico has attracted various scholarly debates and attention regarding the role of its leadership in the formation of self-governing structures in the pursuit of social and political change. A complex interplay between Zapatista leadership and the development of self-governing structures is essential to understand the broader social impact of the movement beyond its current territories. A critical concern arises with the prospect of movement's ability of expansion, as such growth could pose significant political and administrative challenges to the Mexican state. Furthermore, a deep analysis of leadership's strategies, ideological foundations, and practical methods to pursue those, provide important insights into the movement's capacity to promote sustainable change, and its potential to go beyond the existing confines of Chiapas. Any such influence and expansion can create an environment that could likely heighten tensions between Zapatista (indigenous communities operating under Zapatista self-governing rule-based structures.

A closer examination of the contemporary Zapatista movement invites an inquiry into its potential for sustained longevity and its ability to expand its influence beyond its current geographic boundaries. Evaluating the movement's adaptability, organizational structure, and ideological coherence offers valuable insights into its capacity for continued relevance and effectiveness. Furthermore, analyzing the prospects for the movement's expansion across Mexico raises critical questions regarding its ability to engage diverse communities and drive broader societal transformations. By addressing these research questions, scholars can contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the Zapatista movement's leadership dynamics and its implications for grassroots activism and social change at both local and national levels.

Research Questions

- 1: What role did the leadership of Zapatista movement play in democratization, as well as in driving social and political changes in Chiapas, Mexico?
- 2: Does the Zapatista movement, today, have the potential for long-term sustainability and the capacity to expand its agenda to other areas of Mexico?

Literature Review

Struggle:

The Zapatista struggle primarily centers on securing the rights, autonomy, and self-determination of indigenous people in Chiapas, Mexico. As noted by Iker Reyes Godelman (2014), the Zapatista's movement emphasized fundamental rights such as the right to land, access to natural resources, and collective democracy.

The Zapatista movement adopted non-violent tactics, such as occupying government buildings and organizing peaceful protests across Mexico, to advance their cause. According to John Holloway (2002), the movement represents powerful form of resistance by rejecting traditional governmental structures, as demonstrated in case of Mexico, where Zapatista movement challenged the country's fragile democratic system.

Leadership

The leadership of the Zapatista movement is characterized by its non-violent, strategic, and technical approach to building a peaceful society. This leadership has fostered a general awareness among the Mexican population, encouraging the recognition of Mexico a multi-cultural and multi-

ethnic state. Xochitl described this as internal reaffirmation of cultural self-esteem (signifying pride in their collective identity) (Godelmann, n.d.).

Scholars such as Ana Dinerstein (2010) argue that Zapatista employ a form of “leaderlessness” empowering communities to make decisions collectively. Their leadership model includes a decentralized system of governance, where the regional leaders are gradually replaced by newly recruited young individuals. Richard Stahler-Sholk refers to this approach as a “war of position”, highlighting the movement’s expanding influence over societal institutions such as autonomous schools and self-sufficient hospitals (Stahler-Stolk, 2010).

Sustainability

The future of the autonomous communities led by Zapatistas remains uncertain, as indigenous population continues to face complex social and economic challenges despite their self-governance. However, Zapatistas have made significant progress in creating a kind of society they have long fought for.

As notable example of this transformative growth is the establishment of decentralized autonomous schools (Stahler-Stolk, 2010). The Zapatistas have developed institutions governed by local people, including community-level organizations, autonomous municipalities, regional centers known as *Caracoles*. These institutions, particularly in education and health-care sectors, aim to strengthen and empower their communities, fostering independence. By doing so, the Zapatistas demonstrates that their self-governed model is better suited to their needs than what the Mexican government can offer (Stahler-Stolk, 2010).

Research gap

Despite the ongoing struggle for self-governance in Chiapas, Mexico, Zapatistas have successfully established autonomous communities. The Zapatista agenda of social and political changes has drawn significant attention from other regions of the Mexico. The research aims to address the existing research gap by examining whether the movement holds the potential to expand its agenda of self-sufficiency to other parts of Mexico.

Methodology

This research primarily utilizes a qualitative approach, drawing upon a wide range of journals and articles. It critically examination Collier and Hoeffler’s greed and grievances theory to analyze various dimensions of the Zapatista movement. The study provides a Several factors influenced the choice of a qualitative approach. First, the public knowledge about the movement is limited. Second, conducting interviews with indigenous people of Chiapas was not feasible. Finally, the extensive body of literature on this non-violent resistance offered a rich source of information, enabling a fresh perspective on the subject. comprehensive framework for understanding the movement, delving into its multiple aspects in detail.

The research relies on diverse secondary sources for data collection, forming the foundational basis of the study. Data triangulation, integrating various sources such as research articles, websites, and theoretical frameworks, has been employed to validate the findings effectively. The adoption of data triangulation method ensures comprehensive and exploration of research questions and addresses research gap with a critical perspective on the subject of study. While this study primarily employs a qualitative method due to the abundance of existing literature, the research is organized thematically. Based on research questions, it is well organized in a thematic order to offer readers new insights into the movement in Mexico.

This research adopts a positivist epistemology and a realist ontology to explore the leadership and long-term sustainability of Zapatista movement. A positivist epistemology emphasizes the discovery of objective truth based on empirical evidences and systematic analysis. This aligns with the study's aim to evaluate movement's leadership, social and political changes, and movement's potential to expand by relying on measurable data and observable phenomenon.

A realist ontological stance underpins this study, assuming that an objective reality exists independently of individual perception. The Zapatista movement, its outcomes, and its sustainability are viewed as tangible phenomena influenced by historical, social, and political contexts. The stance enables the researcher to analyze the structural and social factors driving the movement's agenda and its future implications in Mexico.

Theoretical Framework

The Zapatista movement is fundamentally framed within the Greed and Grievances theory, which posits that conflict may arise due to prevailing economic deprivation or the pursuit of self-interest at the expenses of others. The greed of one party often leads to grievances or deprivation of another, making these two concepts inherently interconnected.

For generations, indigenous communities of Chiapas have endured the consequences of greed. Their lands, abundant in resources, have been exploited by external forces, leaving them dispossessed and marginalized. The Mexican government, driven by its pursuit of profit, signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)-a deal that promised prosperity for a privileged few but brought devastating consequences for the indigenous population.

On January 1, 1994, Zapatista rose in rebellion, not out of a desire for wealth but in response to profound injustice. While the government labels them greedy for demanding what is rightfully theirs, it is the true exploiters—those who have seized their resources and dignity for centuries—who embody greed. This research underscores these dynamics through the lens of *Greed and Grievances* theoretical framework.

Analysis

Zapatista movement began in 1994, coinciding with implementation of NAFTA. Although initially it employed guerrilla tactics, it evolved into a social movement aimed at establishing autonomous governance structures in Chiapas (Richard Stahler-Sholk, 2010). The Zapatista leadership prioritized grassroots developments in Chiapas, resisting both the Mexican government and the neoliberal framework. The movement gained the global recognition, symbolized the World Social Forums and their slogan "Another world is possible". Moving away from engagement with the Mexican government, they initiated self-governance efforts known as the "autonomy project" within the indigenous communities.

According to Paul coiler and Hoffler theory of greed, "Greed is about opportunities faced by rebel groups", which include financing, recruitment, and geography (Vinci, 2006). The EZLN movement benefited from financial resources, receiving donations and solidarity, from sympathetic individuals, organizations and communities. These contributions varied from financial aid to material support, including food. Clothing, and medical supplies, which contributed to the movement's success.

The Greed theory suggests that the lack of access to resources in multi-communal societies creates a perception of greed for natural resources, often leading to civil wars. Insurgents employ geographic strategies to address these grievances through non-violent means. Simultaneously, the Zapatista movement received support from various parts of the world including the U.S and

Europe, which expressed solidarity with the cause and organized fundraising for them (Vinci, 2006).

Collier and Hofler's (2004) empirical findings suggest that variables representing rebel opportunity or greed, similar to loot-seeking are the key factors in the onset of civil wars. The variables highlight how competition for resources and unmet needs lead to a conflict. The Zapatista movement represents the same dynamics, which was based on protection of rights of indigenous people. The movement was exacerbated by the widespread deprivation among the people, driven by the desire for control over natural resources, especially land. In addition, the fight for fundamental rights became center of gravity during their struggle. This resource-driven greed amplified the sense of injustice and inequality. Ultimately, the deprivation of natural resources and fundamental equality led to a strong push for rebellion (Godelmann, n.d.).

Zapatista leadership altered the state's role in controlling economic power, breaking away from traditional methods of state control over its people. As a result, the Mexican government became less effective in maintaining centralized authority, leading to decentralization of power within the country. Power shifted from rich people to common people of the Chiapas leading to establishment of autonomous communities.

The Zapatista, rather than seeking to overthrow the government, focused on transforming the society through a bottom-up approach. They rejected traditional revolutionary ideas and prioritized the creation of autonomous, self-governing communities that resisted Capitalism in Chiapas, Mexico. The Zapatista leadership redefined power structure, viewing it not as a tool for controlling the people, but as a means of ensuring justice. Their vision of power emphasized dignity, self-sufficiency, and community decision-making over closed-door governance, highlighting the importance of empowerment and self-governance at the local level.

Political Structure (leading by obeying)

Collective Democratic Structures

The Zapatista movement has become a leading voice of the indigenous people, creating a self-governing system in Chiapas Mexico. The main idea behind the creation of the self-governing institutions is to serve the people, and in their native language it's called "*mandar obedeciendo*," which means "to lead by obeying" (Brian, n.d.). In these communities, leaders are not like traditional and ordinary representatives. Rather, they are delegates chosen by the local community to carry out people's wishes.

The autonomous communities established by Zapatistas are organized horizontally, resembling networks that make their decisions through consensus (Brian, n.d.). In this system, authority and decision-making power lie with the community, not representatives. Leaders are accountable to the community, not to external authorities outside of the community. Decisions are made through discussion and agreement among community members. This ensures that the community, rather than individuals, holds power and responsibility.

Consensus building is the main characteristic of Zapatista autonomous communities, where everyone participates in the decision-making process through discussions, to reach out an argument. Instead of just one person or a small group deciding, the whole community works together to find a solution that everyone can agree with. The process can be slow and time-consuming, as to ensure everyone's participation, including the exchange of ideas and extensive discussions over issues. However, the objective is not to make quick decisions but to ensure that everyone is heard and included and the decision is fair and beneficial for the community as whole.

The governing structure of the Zapatista autonomous region consists of three key branches: autonomous community councils, the caracoles, and the “juntas de buen Gobierno” (Brian, n.d.). The councils are based in the communities, made of local members of the community, referred to as the base. The council elects a leader that represents their decision at the junta. Each autonomous municipal council elects eight representatives at the junta. These representatives operate on a rotating schedule, with two acting as spokespersons at a time. This structure ensures broad community participation and shared democratic system. It allows Zapatistas to maintain self-governance based on collective decision-making (Brian, n.d.).

The smallest branch, the comandancia, is made up of members of EZLN military structure. They serve as long as collective communities perceive that they are working in the community’s best interest. They can choose to step down or retire, or members of the collective communities can decide that military branch of government is no longer necessary and vote to have it disbanded (Hollinger, 2012).

Any proposed idea at higher level is first discussed with each community. Afterward, delegates bring back community’s opinion to municipal meeting. Zapatista leaders are chosen based on the traditional “cargos-an obligation” foundation of the governance, meaning an obligation to serve the community, and they do so without being paid (Hollinger, 2012). For the municipal council, representatives are elected through a democratic process. Through this democratic system, members-elect are held responsible for specific area and can be removed if they do not meet community’s interests. The creation of these democratic autonomous communities has helped strengthen the institutional and structural framework the Chiapas (Hollinger, 2012).

The autonomous communities work in cooperation with each other, the coexistence is the main factor of the Zapatista communities. Those who hold position in Municipality do not receive any salary rather helped by community members who ask their presence. Although their expenses should be paid by the communities through cooperation among the communities (Brian, n.d.).

The autonomous municipalities resolve local problems of coexistence, relations and exchanges between communities. The application of justice is based on customary law. For example, in cases of common crimes, the punishment imposed by the Autonomous Council is reparation of the damages: instead of punishment by jail or fines, a sentence is imposed of working for the community, or for the aggrieved family.

According to Sabrina Melenotte (2010), applying the notion of political governance to the practice of Zapatista autonomy allows for the inclusion of new actors in the analysis, and therefore, in the civil society. Governance is the system of rules and institutions that implies a reorganization of power and government (Ibidi 180). It fosters an idea of redefining power and emergence of new actors in political system, promoting inclusion of youth. This approach makes it possible to link contestation and political reconfigurations through the self-governance of civil society. Self-governance is the idea that people are capable of governing themselves outside the state order. Self-governance is the important characteristic of the Zapatista communities, which is playing very essential role in improving the standards of their lives.

Judicial System

Zapatista justice system has gained trust and legitimacy beyond movement’s supporters, its free of charge (Hollinger, 2012). It is conducted in indigenous language and is also known to be less corrupt or partial compared to government institutions. Rooted in community, the justice system in Zapatista communities is divided into three level: First level concerns issue among Zapatista supporters such as gossip, theft, or domestic disputes, which are resolved by elected authorities, or if necessary, by communal authorities, based on customary practice (Hollinger, 2012). When

resolving conflicts, authorities largely function as mediators, proposing solutions to the parties involved. If unresolved, cases go up to the next, Municipal level where they are dealt with by an elected Honor and Justice Commission.

Sentence most of the time involves community service or fine; jail sentences normally do not exceed several days. The highest level of justice, that of the Juntas de Buen Gobierno (JBG), deals with the cases that primarily non-Zapatistas or other political organizations usually dispute over land-as well as local governmental authorities. Non-Zapatistas seek out the justice only when they have conflict with Zapatistas members but also when they experience ill-treatment or unjust treatment from governmental officials (Godelmann, n.d.).

Production (Economy)

Building ‘A world where many worlds fit’ the Zapatistas strive to create a world where many worlds fit, emphasizing imagination, critical thought, and practical work. They reject the capitalist system, viewing it as oppressive to all-women, workers, children, and even nature (*Gahman - An Anti-Capitalist Moral Economy of the Rebel Peasant*, n.d.). They seek to build new, egalitarian social relations. They believe the capitalist system values profit over people’s well-being, elevating work that benefits corporations over community health. An education promoter highlights this contrast, explaining how the Zapatistas reject this system, focusing instead on indigenous world views, collective work, and mutual aid (*Gahman - An Anti-Capitalist Moral Economy of the Rebel Peasant*, n.d.).

The key aspect of this vision is “food sovereignty”. The Zapatistas used practices like seed saving, sharing harvest, avoiding chemicals, and incorporating farming into their education system. They see food sovereignty as wealth accumulation and private property (Ruiz, 2004).

Materially their food system is rejection of Capitalist markets that promotes only incorporates and oppress the people of the society. They reclaimed land taken during colonialism period now using it for farming techniques to sustain their autonomous communities (*Gahman - An Anti-Capitalist Moral Economy of the Rebel Peasant*, n.d.). An agro-ecology promoter has described how collective work, absent during the time of land owners, has now created a system where everyone contributes, whether adults, children, or elders. The Zapatista view their food system as a moral economy built on indigenous practices and concern for both people and nature. They refuse to privatize land or com-modify nature, creating a sustainable and autonomous system that strengthens their communities and connects them with their land (*Gahman - An Anti-Capitalist Moral Economy of the Rebel Peasant*, n.d.).

Social Structure

Building “A world where many worlds fit”

Collective work, Food sovereignty, and a moral economy

Education

The Zapatista education system is similar community-rooted. Autonomous schools are administered by the so-called “education promoters”-primarily local youth who teach in their own communities under the supervision of an education committed elected by local assembly (Baronnet, 2008). Since the launch of Zapatista autonomous education system, it has initiated multiple education training programs to prepare education promoters and develop their own curriculum in collaboration with solidarity groups, NGOs and volunteers from the outside, as well as in consultation with local population (Ruiz, 2004).

Today these autonomous communities have their own practitioners who train new promoters, those promoters and practitioners do not receive salaries but are often helped by community members in farming their cornfields (Ruiz, 2004).

The curriculum is designed in a such a way that it includes topics such as autonomy, history, and veterinary medicine etc. Classes are taught in both Spanish and indigenous languages as well with the emphasis on traditions and preservation of cultural norms and values.

The further effectively incorporate the practical application of the knowledge in their curriculum, Zapatista students are frequently educated outside the physical classrooms. (Baronnet, 2008). This is so that they can sharpen their planting and harvesting skills, through the use of organic, sustainable, and agro-ecological farming techniques, as well as learn indigenous and revolutionary history while being with the land. “Consequently, going to school” for Zapatista students is learning their new self-sufficient and self-governed system as well as their daily life techniques, which relate them to their lands (Ruiz, 2004). Moreover, Zapatistas have made a decision to eliminate the use of genetically modified organisms, chemical insecticides, herbicides, and pesticides in favor of utilizing biological deterrents and organic fertilizers (Vergara-Camus, 2007).

Given their education system is independent from the state, and because it's rooted in defending, protecting and preserving local indigenous traditions, languages, and ancestral lands, the Zapatista effectively practices decolonization in every aspect of their education, economy, and food system (Gahman - *An Anti-Capitalist Moral Economy of the Rebel Peasant*, n.d.). What Zapatistas reveal through their advances in sustainable farming and food sovereignty is that indigenous autonomy, place-based education, and a moral economy can flourish outside of the neoliberal policies and corporate agro-industrial complexes that currently dominate the global food system. What they have created is the world where anti-capitalist education not only fit, but thrive (Gahman - *An Anti-Capitalist Moral Economy of the Rebel Peasant*, n.d.).

Healthcare

Zapatistas have also developed their own healthcare system, although help non-Zapatistas is still used. Most of the communities have a healthcare specialist-a health promoters who receives training in both traditional and modern medical sciences Zapatista-organized regional medical centers for the better health care system in the autonomous communities (Ruiz, 2004). Most advanced medical facilities are available located in cross roads and some of the Municipal centers. The clinic in Oventic, is one of the most sophisticated: it provides regular basic surgery, dental, gynecological, and eye clinics; hosts a laboratory, an herbal workshop, a dozen bed for admissions, and is equipped with ambulances (Hollinger, 2012). Health coordinating committees, just like education ones, exists on each administrative level, which ensures participation of communities in administering autonomous health system.

Historical processes, like ripples from a pebble cast into a pond, have effects long after the key initiating events. The Zapatista movement has several layers that have had different degrees of salience at different points in time: the initial armed rebellion of January 1994, the new practices and institutions of autonomous governance in the indigenous communities of Chiapas, and the wider networks of national and international groups influenced by various aspects of Zapatista actions and organizing initiatives. While the initial guerrilla tactics were important, but the sustaining feature of this movement comes from its development into a sustained for social change and reform. The boundaries of social movements are fuzzier than specific organizations, so many of the impacts of Zapatismo extend to people and groups who would not label themselves Zapatistas at all. (Richard Stahler-Sholk, 2010).

Zapatista, instead of trying to seize a state's power through armed struggle, chaos or election, the Zapatista focuses on empowering marginalized people of the Chiapas, and linking up with other civil societies. Zapatista holds different political agenda that is aimed at strengthening the people themselves, who could lead the autonomous communities without being disturbed by any external influence. The movement moves away from traditional political parties and build on new identities, recognizing that people can belong multiple groups and act in various roles.

Zapatista claim and practice autonomy, meaning they create spaces where people can make their own decisions on the issues that affect them, rather than separating from the state or seeking permission from the government (*Gahman - An Anti-Capitalist Moral Economy of the Rebel Peasant*, n.d.). Another important factor is that Zapatista are experimenting with more participatory and less hierarchical ways of making decisions, trying to create a more inclusive form of politics.

At its core, the movement is supported by a strong collective identity in the indigenous communities that gave rise to it. However, this identity is not fixed. It evolves as the community responds to the changing political and economic conditions around them. Zapatistas also resist the state's attempts to control these communities as part of its neoliberal agenda (Stahler-Sholk, 2010).

The movement's sustainability and expansion also depend on solidarity from other excluded groups who, regardless of ethnicity, are fighting for the right to define their own priorities instead of having them imposed by the state or global market forces. Initially, the movement gained support from non-indigenous factions who were subsequently facing economic inequality and political suppression. For Zapatista, now, it's significant to hold the unity between Indigenous Zapatista and non-indigenous groups which would decide the strength and future implications of the movement (Stahler-Sholk, 2010).

As the Zapatista have built buildings like schools and hospital in their self-governed communities so it is essential for their movement to expand their ideology for strengthening their base. Zapatista leadership has built their own schools which advocate for the principles of self-governance. They have built such schools where they have recruited their own teacher from local society which are paid from local community. which Advocating for self-governance principles through educational campaigns can be met with the resistance from those who benefit from status quo. In regions where political and economic elites hold power, they may perceive Zapatista movement's message as a threat to their interests and authority.

As a result, they may actively undermine or discredit educational efforts, spreading misinformation or portraying Zapatistas as radicals or extremists (Stahler-Sholk, 2010). Additionally, reaching marginalized or remote communities with educational material or workshops can be challenging due to limited access to resources, infrastructure, and media. This can perpetuate existing disparities in knowledge and awareness, hindering efforts to mobilize support for self-governance.

Zapatista movement is known for its alliances, with other communities in Chiapas, struggling for the protection of their civil and political rights. While alliances with other movements and communities can amplify the Zapatista message, there are risks of ideological conflicts or co-optation. Not all grassroots movements or indigenous communities may share the Zapatista's vision of autonomy and self-governance. Some groups have divergent goals or strategies, leading to tensions or disagreements within the broader movement. Moreover, aligning with certain organizations or political factions could dilute the Zapatista movement's radical critique of centralized power structures, compromising its core principles in pursuit of short-term gains or political expediency (Stahler-Sholk, 2010).

Project of self-governance have already failed in these communities because the self-governance needs resources and there are no such resources (Hollinger, 2012). Piloting autonomous projects

to demonstrate the viability of self-governance may encounter logistical and administrative challenges. Implementing such projects require resources, expertise, and cooperation from local authorities, which may be reluctant to cede control or allocate funding to initiatives that challenges their authority. Scaling up successful projects to a national level would require overcoming bureaucratic hurdles and resistance from entrenched interests vested in maintaining centralized authority (Godelmann, n.d.). Moreover, sustainability of autonomous projects may be jeopardized by external pressure, such as economic sanctions or political repression, which undermine community resilience and self-sufficiency.

The movement's capacity is also impeded by other factors influenced by the Mexican government. These are the challenges posed by AMLO's government, AMLO's administration implements economic projects like Maya Train project and interoceanic corridor, which, despite claims for progress, threaten the environment and livelihoods of indigenous populations, including Zapatista (Stahler-Sholk, 2010). Maya train project cuts the forests and uses the land of indigenous people which is embedded in their ideology, while interoceanic corridor project employs international trade that threatens their self-sufficiency project of autonomous communities.

The Zapatista armed struggle and lack of state presence led to the weapon proliferation and normalization of arms in the region, creating a foundation for organized crime to infiltrate communities. With the rise of organized crime, Chiapas has seen increased violence, including drug trade, human trafficking, and other forms of exploitation. Corruption and crime are also growing factors in these communities. Municipal governments are often controlled by what Zapatistas call "legal assassins" and "disorganized" crime. Political positions are contested through violence rather than democratic proposals.

At the heart of the Zapatista Movement lies the indigenous communities of the Chiapas, Mexico. These communities have historically been marginalized and deprived, and it was the reason that Zapatista Movement emerged to address the fundamental rights of these communities (marginalization). According to the research the sustainability of the movement is not guaranteed, its sustainability depends upon various factors. First it relies on the continued commitment and engagement with the indigenous communities that form its core. As long as these indigenous communities maintain their collective identity and maintain peaceful relations with each other, and remain dedicated to the principle of self-governance, the movement will sustain longer.

The Zapatista have built alliances not only with Mexico but also internationally, with various social justice and indigenous movements. These alliances provide movement with greater, visibility, and resources. It is important for the movement to maintain the suitable relations with those organizations and movements. Its credibility will be questioned if they would not maintain relations, eventually the very strong movement will be dispersed in few seconds (Stahler-Sholk, 2010)

Conclusion

There is complexity in determination of Zapatista Movement and its leadership, their struggle is manifested through a non-violent means of movement. The struggle of Zapatistas was based on protection of fundamental rights of deprived and marginalized people of Chiapas, Mexico. Euphoric nature of the movement resulted social and political developments for the marginalized communities, yet they face several problems in their sustainability and expansion of the ideology.

The sustainability of the movement highly depends on the factors of engagement and commitment with other social movements and organizations. It is essential to maintain the alliances, built in the time of non-violent resistance, with harmony and sympathy, these alliances have provided the

movement with resources. And finally, Zapatista leaders are the crucial personalities in navigating the complex geopolitical situations in Chiapas, Mexico.

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