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Isolation has positive and negative consequences for political action--such as that launched by the Zapatistas in the Mexican state of Chiapas. Isolation often minimizes security threats from one's adversaries, can increase social cohesion among one's compatriots, and helps protect one's way of life from contaminating influences. On the other hand, isolation can gradually induce a quasi-delusional divorce from reality that can lead to disastrous decision making. Moreover, technological innovations have seriously decreased the physical, communications, operations, and even personnel security benefits of isolation.

The negative consequences of isolation may be affecting the Zapatistas--especially top-level strategists such as Subcommander Marcos--in ongoing interactions with representatives and allies of the Mexican state and federal governments. His recent choice of goals promulgated through public diplomacy has seemed to suggest an individual whose intellectual capabilities, motivations, and even emotions are being shaped by reinforcement contingencies largely asynchronous with the political landscape of Mexico and potential international supporters.