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Trends. Political Action, Security, and, Isolation: Zapatista Dilemma

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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.

In today's many worlds, implementors of a successful political action may need to become more like a cancer hopelessly pervading a political regime than a discrete external threat. Unfortunately, this suggests an aftermath in which the fruits of victory can only be spoiled. (See Bowker, A., et al. (1998). A structural and functional analysis of a two-dimensional model of social isolation. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 44, 447-463; Byrd, K.R., & Briner, W.E. (1999). Fighting, nonagonistic social behavior, and exploration in isolation-reared rats. *Aggressive Behavior*, 25, 211-223; Haller, J., & Halasz, J. (1999). Mild social stress abolishes the effects of isolation on anxiety and chlordiazepoxide reactivity. *Psychopharmacology*, 144, 311-315; Hol, T., et al. (1999). Isolation during the play period in infancy decreases adult social interactions in rats. *Behavioural Brain Research*, 100, 91-97; Preston, J. (August 31, 1999). Road dispute revives Zapatista fight. *The New York Times*, p. A8.) (Keywords: Mexico, Political Isolation, Security, Zapatistas.)