

IDEOLOGIES AND CONFLICT IN THE POST-COLD WAR:
AFGHANISTAN, D.R. CONGO, COLOMBIA

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ABSTRACT

JUAN E. UGARRIZA: Ideologies and Conflict in the post-Cold War:
Afghanistan, D.R. Congo, Colombia
(Under the direction of John Chasteen)

Ideology played an extensive role in the post-Cold War insurgencies examined here (the Taliban Movement, in Afghanistan; the Parti pour la Révolution des Peuples, in the Democratic Republic of Congo; and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, in Colombia) beyond the discursive level. Ideology served the rhetorical purpose of legitimizing armed struggles, but it also proved crucial to determine the insurgent organizations' internal structures and their apparatus of power in territories under their control, to shape their governmental policies, and to provide strategic and tactical gains in the battlefield.

To my mother.

For us, our ideology is everything.
And we believe that it is better to die for something
than to live for nothing.

Taliban diplomat, March 2001

Let's stop talking about democracy and elections.
We are creating a new State built upon new values.

Laurent Désiré Kabila, 1997

We are Marxist-Leninists. We are for the socialist revolution
on a world level that progresses toward communism.

Member of FARC's Bolivarian Youth, January 2004

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- PRP: Parti pour la Révolution des Peuples
(People's Revolutionary Party)
- FAP: Forces Armées Populaires
(People's Armed Forces)
- ADFL: Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-Zaïre
(Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Congo-Zaire Liberation)
- MLC: Mouvement de Libération du Congo
(Congo's Liberation Movement)
- RCD: Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie
(Congolese Rally for Democracy)
- FARC: Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia
(Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)
- FARC-EP: Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejercito del Pueblo
(Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

What is the role of ideologies in post-cold war internal armed conflicts? Have economic motivations completely sidelined ideological and political motivations? The absence of a deeper understanding of the role of ideologies in the post-Cold War has undermined the ability of scholars to explain coherently the dynamics of contemporary armed conflicts. This highly problematic shortcoming of scholarly research affects negatively the chances of success of international and governmental conflict resolution policies based upon it, as it leaves unaddressed a key component of modern insurgencies. This paper will demonstrate that ideologies play not only an important but fundamental role in explaining the dynamics of contemporary armed conflicts, though I do not claim this is the case of every armed insurrection. While authors like Francis Fukuyama and Paul Collier have greatly influenced the understandings of post-Cold War conflict by minimizing the role of ideology, I present evidence from three major societal conflicts pointing in the opposite direction.

Since the eighteenth century, the term 'ideology' has been used in different contexts to denote different meanings. One of the most synthetic definitions given by modern Political Science explains it as "the project of creating social perfection by managing society"¹ Philosopher Thomas Sowell suggests that ideologies are theories based on visions, which are one's sense or feeling of how the world works, and that these visions can be of equality,

¹ Kenneth Minogue, "Ideology After the Collapse of Communism," *Political Studies*, vol. 41, Special Issue, 1993, 7-8.

power, justice and other sub categories.² While these two definitions greatly contribute to the understanding of what an ideology is, this paper will use the term in a more sociological way, as a set of beliefs distinguished by a specific logic of relations between insiders and outsiders.

³ As a result, ideologies are considered here to be primarily cultural systems that maybe influenced or shaped by power and economic relations.

Ideology needs to be contrasted with the concept of identity. Mary Kaldor explains that “identity politics is about labels –and the right to political power and personal security on the basis of those labels”.⁴ Ideologies create and re-create these labels by making use of myths (collections of stories that become their emotional core⁵) and using them to convey to the masses a sense of belonging to a “chosen” group.⁶

While the two Cold War ideologies –liberal democracy and communism– did not primarily rely on identity politics, post-Cold War political projects have more explicitly manipulated identity and cultural differences. “The politicization of cultural differences,” explains Thomas Meyer, “has proved to be a universal instant recipe that is forever useful in stirring up public opinion which can then be converted in votes or approval wherever there are powers that seek to rule”.⁷ As a result, the creation and re-creation of political identities

² Thomas Sowell, *A Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles*, (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 3-8.

³ Minogue, 7-8.

⁴ Mary Kaldor, Robin Luckham, “Global Transformations and New Conflicts,” *Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Bulletin*, vol. 32 no. 2, 2001, 56.

⁵ Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 12.

⁶ Hartmund Elsenhans, foreword in Thomas Meyer, *Identity Mania: Fundamentalisms and the Politicization of Cultural Differences*, (London: Zed Books, 2001), xxi.

⁷ Thomas Meyer, *Identity Mania: Fundamentalisms and the Politicization of Cultural Differences*, (London: Zed Books, 2001), 12.

since the 1990s has been a constant of political ideologies,⁸ which also merge politics, economics, social relations, and ethics in such a way that they become a comprehensive interpretation of culture, through the implementation of ideological projects, culture itself is molded, changed and interpreted.⁹

Between 1989 and 1991, with the collapse of the Soviet bloc, scholars began to think that ideologies may have become a thing of the past. After defeating monarchy, fascism and communism, wrote Francis Fukuyama famously in 1989, “liberal democracy may constitute the “end point of mankind’s ideological evolution”¹⁰ Fukuyama described the collapse of the communist utopia as a global coming back to senses, asserting that “the collapse of Marxist ideology in the late 1980s reflected, in a sense, the achievement of a higher level of rationality on the part of those who lived in such societies, and their realization that rational universal recognition could be had only in a liberal social order.”¹¹ Fukuyama, not seeing any other global-reach ideology to compete with liberal democracy, declared it the solitary winner of history’s ideological struggles, not considering the multiple local projects that would emerge throughout the decade more than localized phenomena doomed to pass. Fukuyama himself acknowledged the existence of localized (or regional) alternative projects to liberal democracy. “It is true”, he said, “that Islam constitutes a systematic and coherent ideology, just like liberalism and communism, with its own code of morality and doctrine of political and social justice”. However, its supposed lack of appeal outside a particular region

⁸ Ronaldo Munck, “Deconstructing Terror: Insurgency, Repression and Peace,” in *Postmodern Insurgencies*, Ronaldo Munck, Purnaka L. De Silva eds. (New York: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000), 4-5.

⁹ Jonathan Hearn, *Rethinking Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 170-200.

¹⁰ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, (New York: Free Press, 2006), xi.

¹¹ Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, 205.

led Fukuyama to dismiss Islam as a credible alternative to the global-applicable liberal-democracy model¹².

For some critics, the idea of end of ideologies, prophesized since the 1960s and heralded by Fukuyama in 1989, became in itself “an expression of the ideology of the time and place where it arose”.¹³ Globalization of liberal democracy, in terms of Ulrich Beck, constituted “another attempt at exporting Western modernization beyond its spatial and temporal confines”.¹⁴ Refuting Fukuyama, Susan Willett says that “the shift in preference for neo-liberal policies is ideologically motivated, rather than being determined by the efficacy of one model of development over another. Ideological fervor, spurred on by the triumphalism associated with the end of the Cold War, has in effect blinkered the dominant global institutions to the actual and prolonged effects of neo-liberal reform on the economic performance and security situation in the poorer parts of the world”.¹⁵ A main argument challenges his rationale about the absence of global-reach ideological competition in the post-Cold War, alleging that liberal democracy has still not yet assured a total conquest of human politics. “Instead of the grand (global) revolutionary projects of the past”, explain Kenneth Minogue, “we now have a set of overlapping fragments of revelation which cooperate with each other in social transformation”¹⁶. Manifestations of political Islam,

¹² Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, 45.

¹³ Alasdair McIntyre, *Against the Self-Images of the Age* (London: Duckworth, 1971), 5.

¹⁴ Ulrich Beck, *What is Globalisation?*, (Malden: Polity Press, 2000), cited in François Debrix, “Tricky Business: Challenging Risk Theory and its Vision of a Better Global Future,” in *Confronting Globalization: Humanity, Justice and the Renewal of Politics*, Patrick Hayden, Chamsy el-Ojeili eds. (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 90-96; see also Frederick Cooper, “What is the Concept of Globalization Good for? An African Historian’s Perspective,” *African Affairs, Royal African Society*, vol. 100, 189-213.

¹⁵ Susan Willett, “Insecurity, Conflict and the New Global Disorder,” *Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Bulletin*, vol. 32 no. 2, 2001, 37.

¹⁶ Minogue, 4.

nationalism or neo-fascism that sprung up in the 1990s would be reflections of the newly shattered ideological world in which history, understood as humankind's ideological struggle, has definitively not come to an end yet.¹⁷

For some scholars, the spread of Fukuyama's "triumphant ideology" and its clash with local ideological alternatives emerged or revitalized in the 1990s had a direct impact as well on the eruption or prolongation of armed conflicts around the world. Far from quelling people's desire to fight, the spread of liberal-democratic ideals along with the globalization of economies created new political and economic motivations for conflict. Standing for one of the most common interpretations of economic-roots theories of conflict, Susan Willett points to liberal internationalism as "one of the major structural causes of current patterns of violence and conflict," due to "the general failure of neo-liberal policies underpinning the current phase of globalization, to deliver more equitable patterns of development to large parts of the world."¹⁸ She sees local alternative ideologies, in turn, not as structural causes of conflict, which she identifies as "political, social and economic elements, such as the failure to meet basic human needs, population pressure, distributional injustice, the depletion of natural resources, environmental degradation and ethnic tensions." Rather, according to her, alternative ideologies are "accelerating" or "triggering" factors, grouped with other triggers such as the abuse of political and military power, proliferation of small arms, and struggle for natural resources.¹⁹

¹⁷ Bruce Cumings, "Time of Illusion: Post-Cold War Visions of the World," in *Cold War Triumphalism*, (New York: The New Press, 2004), 87.

¹⁸ Willett, 36.

¹⁹ Willett, 36.

In general, the global discredit of ideologies as a useful category to account for war in the post-Cold War led some researchers to find new explanations for why armed conflict did persist into the 1990s, particularly the economic motivations for war.²⁰ Among the most influential academic works aimed at describing the nature of armed conflicts in the 1990s is that conducted in Oxford by Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler. As a result of their statistical analysis, they concluded that 79 major conflicts between 1960 and 1999 could be explained in terms of greed and grievance: in other words, conflict surged when financial opportunities to build a rebel organization –geography, lootable natural resources, donations- existed, in a context of inequality, deprivation and/or ethnic-religious divisions.²¹ While this work has shed important light on the understanding of post-Cold War conflict, it has led to a dangerous underestimation of political and cultural dimensions of insurgencies. “Motivations for rebellion,” wrote Collier, “generally matter less than the conditions that make a rebellion financially and militarily viable.”²² Combining concepts derived from political science, sociology, anthropology, psychology and history, and drawing from previous works from the 1980s, theories such as Symbolic Politics, Identity Politics and Manipulative Elites have contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of modern armed conflict, each of them

²⁰ See Valpy Fitzgerald, “The International Political Economy of Conflict in Poor Countries,” in F. Stewart, Valpy Fitzgerald and Associates, *War and Underdevelopment*, (Oxford University Press: 2001), 204-224; also Karen Ballentine, “Beyond Greed and Grievance: Reconsidering the Economic Dynamics of Armed Conflict,” in *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict*, Karen Ballentine and Jake Sherman eds. (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers 2003), 259-284; and Murshed, S. Masoob, “Globalization, Marginalization and Conflict,” in *Globalization, Poverty and Conflict*, Max Spoor ed. (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004), 67-80.

²¹ Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, “Greed and Grievance in Civil War,” *Oxford Economic Papers*, vol. 56 no. 4, 20 Ago. 2004, 563-595; Internet, available at <http://oep.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/56/4/563>; Accessed on 9 Jan. 2006. An earlier version including data of 166 countries was published by World Bank, [Development and Comp Systems](http://www.wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2000/06/17/000094946_00060205420011/Rendered/PDF/multi_page.pdf) 0409007, EconWPA; Internet, available at www.wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2000/06/17/000094946_00060205420011/Rendered/PDF/multi_page.pdf; Accessed on 11 Jan. 2006.

²² Paul Collier, “The Market for Civil War,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 136, May-Jun 2003, 40-45.

stressing on the importance of symbols, identities and leadership.²³ However, these narrow categories of analysis have prevented the mentioned theories from providing a more solid and comprehensive account of the dynamics of war.

This paper assumes that the economic-roots theories of conflict do not provide a full description of the dynamics of contemporary armed conflicts, and that Symbolic, Identity Politics and Manipulative Elites approaches, though they explain partial processes, fall short of providing a comprehensive complement to an economic emphasis. Authors like Karen Ballentine have suggested that, besides the existence of economic incentives, political and ideological goals have played a crucial role in the persistence of armed conflicts since 1991²⁴; while Nancy S. Love has explicitly conferred on ideology three concrete roles in contemporary war: to legitimize political systems, to help socialize individuals, and to mobilize people.²⁵ Building on their theoretical contributions, I analyze three sample cases in the search for evidence of the concrete role of ideologies in contemporary armed conflicts, and in order to test the concept of ideology as a broader, more useful category than identity, symbols, myths or leadership, all ultimately encompassed in it.

The great influence exerted by contemporary economic approaches to explain armed conflicts and the absence of a systematized effort to collect and interpret evidence that supports the crucial role of ideologies together undermine the understanding of insurgencies as political phenomena, not only limiting scholarly explanatory power but narrowing the

²³ Miles Hewstone, Ed Cairns, "Social Psychology and Intergroup Conflict," in *Ethnopolitical Warfare* (American Psychological Association), 319-342; Anthony Oberschall, "Conflict and Peacemaking in Divided Societies," in *Peace Making and Post Conflict Reconstruction*, Bruno Coppeters, Pierre Du Toit, Anthony Oberschall eds. (to be published in 2007); Stuart Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic Wars*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 5-8.

²⁴ Ballentine, 259-281.

²⁵ Nancy S. Love, *Understanding Dogmas & Dreams*, second ed., (Washington D.C.: CQ Press, 2006), 8.

options for a peaceful resolution that could put an end to the suffering of millions. Ignoring the importance of ideological warfare impedes a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena of armed insurgencies in the 1990s and reinforces an incomplete view that in turn undermines the chances of finding a realistic approach to put an end to the human tragedy of war. Assessing the crucial impact ideologies have in prolonging and fueling violent conflict is the only realistic course of action, not only to understand the nature of internal warfare since 1989, but to devise formulas aimed at quelling them.

The existence and importance of ideology as a hardcore essential component in post-Cold War insurgencies can be demonstrated by an analysis of evidence collected on three sample cases, dispersed geographically and culturally, and affected by structural violence and organized insurgencies all throughout the post-Cold War to the present. An analysis of internal documents, communiqués, public statements and interviews with insurgent organizations in the 1990s Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (former Zaire) and Colombia demonstrates that, in spite of a worldwide discredit of ideologically-motivated conflicts, their success in holding on to an ideological core made them viable as political actors, independently from the existence of economic and military considerations. Their ideological core, this paper shows, is far from being a monolithic dogma. The capability of these insurgent organizations to make ideology malleable and adaptable constitutes an explanation of their durability. Evidence indicates that ideology effectively guides crucial decision-making processes of the insurgencies' leadership studied, which invested a significant amount of effort and resources to develop an ideological discourse aimed at their internal, national and international audiences.

The first chapter of this paper is dedicated to examining the main characteristics of ideological discourses in the post-Cold War. First, I will show how the cases described provide solid evidence of consistent advancement of political agendas and projects by the insurgent groups. The production of political texts, their level of refinement, the complexity of their argumentation, and their concern to systematically educate the ranks contradict some academic interpretations that minimize the ideological content of insurgencies in the post-Cold War era. The persistence of a political discourse, I will argue, demands a new understanding of insurgencies not only as socio-economic and military phenomena but also as moral responses to conflictive contexts, to which the insurgents intend to offer alternative –even if questionable- responses.

But what is different in the 1990s from the models of insurgency prevalent during the Cold War? The crisis spread over revolutionary insurgencies all over the world after the end of the communist experiment in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union between 1989 and 1991 put an end to many protracted armed struggles. But warfare stubbornly persisted in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Colombia, among other countries. Their insurgencies would have not survived long had they stuck to old Cold War models of ideological confrontation, and hence in the first chapter I will explain how the insurgencies there managed to survive as historical projects adapting their ideological stances during the 1990 and beyond the threshold of the twenty-first century by re-creating a more flexible and adaptable set of nationalistic, religious and socialist discourses.

The existence of reinvigorated discourse, however, does not represent by itself solid evidence of real political commitment. How relevant is the ideological discourse in the insurgents' tactics and strategy? In the second chapter, I assess the relative importance of

their ideological component in insurgent action. I will show how the insurgents' organic structure and political agenda are mainly determined by a doctrines associated with ideological principles rather than economic or autocratic interests. The insurgents' commitment to particular forms of the State, economy and legal order demonstrates revolutionary zealotry emerging from the leadership, and flowing down to the ranks, challenging the notion of contemporary rebels as being merely economically driven.

But if ideology only provides a long term vision (agenda) and an organizational template, it may well become simply a background justification for their military plans, and the need to achieve practical economic and military gains would reduce the political dimension to a discursive level. I will demonstrate how ideological discourses are aimed to produce both tactical and strategic gains. The hardcore indoctrination of guerrillas in a particular religious school (in the Afghan case) or socialist models (in the Congo and Colombia) served to maintain internal cohesion and discipline, while nationalism played a crucial role in providing these organizations with a vehicle through which to convey their political stances to national populations. At an international level, in turn, the studied insurgencies demonstrated their ability to create international linkages that not only reinforced and informed their own ideological orientation, but also generated practical and tangible support for their subversive campaigns.

In addition, insurgencies in the post-Cold War made their own ideological doctrines much more flexible, sticking to basic core values (e.g. social justice, purity), but adapting their specific political agendas to changing contexts. Nationalism adds an identitarian and emotional component to armed struggles previously rationalized as a morally justified opposition to a particular state of things. Precisely due to its emotional character, nationalism

needs to be revisited and reinvigorated constantly, in order to prolong its effectiveness in the context of protracted wars. But the ultimate force behind nationalism in the cases presented here is the rational commitment to the advancement of political-military agenda rather than economic greed or opportunity.

CHAPTER II

IDEOLOGICAL DISCOURSES IN THE POST-COLD WAR

This paper will show how ideological confrontation, far from disappearing, adapted and survived in the post-Cold War era. During the second half of the twentieth-century, the worldwide ideological confrontation between liberal-democratic and socialist blocs created a context of validation of armed confrontation on the basis of legitimate clashing political visions. As a result, the advancement of an ideological discourse became a useful strategy for armed organizations in the search for a rationale to pursue their political-military plans. Throughout the Cold War period, before 1989, ideological discourses provided local insurgent groups with a place in a global-scale confrontation and a primary standard of differentiation from other types of organized violence. In the post-Cold War era, the demise of this overarching global framework of bipolar political confrontation undermined the logic of armed insurgencies everywhere and raised questions about the explanatory power of ideology in violent insurrections. Active insurgencies in the 1990s, however, did not renounce basic ideological commitments and demonstrated flexibility in adapting their discourses to the changing contexts of the late twentieth and early twentieth-first centuries. The sample cases analyzed here provide evidence that highlights the continuity of politically-motivated ideological platforms in armed insurgencies after 1989. This chapter will first

demonstrate how armed insurgencies in Afghanistan (Taliban, 1994-present)²⁶, D.R. Congo (L.D. Kabila, 1964-2001)²⁷ and Colombia (FARC, 1964-present) have consistently advanced an ideological discourse since their inception; secondly, it will show how, during the first decade of the post-Cold War era, marked by the absence of a global reference of ideological confrontation, these discourses experimented a process of re-creation and adaptation to changing circumstances.

Francis Fukuyama predicted in 1989 that no other global-reach ideology would stand to compete against liberal democracy in the post-Cold War. However, he acknowledged the potential of two locally-based phenomena to challenge it at local level: fundamentalism and nationalism.²⁸ In the twentieth-first century, some scholars have acknowledged the potential of nationalism and religious doctrines as ‘organizing ideologies’ in post-Cold war politics, while political agendas like human rights and environmental protection fall into a lower ideological category of the post-Soviet order.²⁹ Added to Nationalism and religious Fundamentalism, and in defiance of theoretical interpretations of revolutionary socialism as an unrealistic option after the demise of the Soviet bloc, strong evidence demonstrates the high levels of commitment towards socialist utopias among insurgent groups in countries such as Colombia, Congo, Nepal, Spain, Venezuela, Ecuador, Mexico or Iraq. The re-emergence of revolutionary socialism as a credible ideology can be explained by a

²⁶ The Taliban took over the Afghan capital in 1996 and formed a national government, mostly not recognized internationally, until 2001.

²⁷ After founding the Parti pour la Révolution des Peuples (PRP), Laurent Désiré Kabila led guerrilla warfare against the government of Mobutu Sese Seko until 1997, when he established a national government, though Congolese internal warfare continued even after his death in 2001.

²⁸ Francis Fukuyama, “Have We Reached the End of History?,” Rand Library Collection, Feb. 1989, 17.

²⁹ Andrea K. Riener, “Semi-Periphery States During the Post-Cold War Era: Theory Meets Practice,” *Aris Security Studies*, vol. 5, (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2002), 97-98.

fundamental change undertaken by socialist dogmas after 1991. Not only have they gained in flexibility to adapt to the new world context, but they have successfully combined with nationalism.

This research suggests that armed conflicts since the 1990s are cross-cut by three major ideologies: nationalism, socialism and religious fundamentalism, in versions characterized by flexibility and adaptability. In this chapter, I first analyze the case of Afghanistan, to argue that the Taliban Movement founded in 1994, which has been fighting a civil war until the present day, created, expanded and adapted an indigenous ideology that combined Nationalism and religious Fundamentalism. Second, I examine the Democratic Republic of Congo (former Zaire) and the insurgency led by Laurent Désiré Kabila since the 1960s, particularly his military victory in the 1990s and his rule until 2001, to show how a careful historical examination demonstrates Kabila's lifetime commitment to a socialist ideology, long after the chances of undertaking a national socialist revolution waned in former Zaire. And finally I examine the Colombian case, particularly the four decade insurgency of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), their apparently anachronistic fidelity to Marxism-Leninism, and their own post-Cold War make-over as nationalist liberators.

Afghanistan: Building the Nation of the Pure

As an organic movement, the Taliban dates back to 1994, but many of its founders took part in the nationalist liberation war against the Soviet Union, which started in 1979. Back then, their primary political identity mixed anti-communism and various forms of political Islam. Out of this ideological past, its founders created in the 1990s a nationalist

movement whose discourse adapted and became more sophisticated as time passed and military victories increasingly replaced the existing political structures with Taliban rule. This section will show not only how the fundamentalist Taliban leaders built a nationalist discourse to wage a guerrilla campaign in the early 1990s, but also how their ideological flexibility led them to incorporate jihadist and revolutionary elements in order to adapt to growing international hostility towards them after 1998.

Before the Taliban Movement's foundation in 1994, the basic nationalistic values of the Afghan resistance against the Soviet invasion's veterans were the identification with Islamic faith in general and the opposition to communism, the latter understood by them as an immoral foreign creed. According to a publication produced by the Taliban's office in New York, "Afghanistan's Jihad against communism and foreign occupation began under the banner of Islam. It was on the basis of the teachings of Islam that a small, ill-equipped nation succeeded in defeating a Super Power that seemed well-positioned to dominate the world."³⁰ The future Taliban leaders, who according to the Movement's mythology were at the time "students of Islamic teachings," played a role in mobilizing, planning, and directing the war against the Soviets. "This role was not new to the Afghan history," explains a Taliban document. "In the past, whenever a foreign power invaded Afghanistan and threatened freedom and independence of the Afghans, the Islamic students (taliban) left their schools or madrassas (Islamic schools) to fight at the head of the Afghan armies. With the Soviets gone in disgrace, and their puppets defeated, the taliban perceived their task accomplished, and soon returned back in large numbers to their madrassas, to take up their search for knowledge and spiritual advancement. The period described above that lasted from 1978 to 1992, can be

³⁰ "A Reminding Glimpse of the Islamic Jihad," Taliban New York Office; Internet, available at <http://web.archive.org/web/19981206235857/www.taliban.com/jihad.htm>; Accessed on 3 Oct. 2006. Also, Nematollah Nojumi, "The Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan," (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 180.

called the first phase of the taliban mission in serving their faith, their people, and their country.”³¹ The strong anti-communism of these religious students had let them galvanize political support among the populace and other militants against the invaders until 1992. But since then, with the installation of a post-communist government, it was corruption, ineffectiveness and the moral decadence brought about by the post-Soviet civil war that motivated the foundation of an alternative political project.³²

Although along with anti-communism Afghanistan’s nationalism was identified historically with the Islamic faith, the country has historically been religiously diverse, and the particular religious identity of the Taliban is a matter of scholarly discussion. Researchers have branded them with such terms as extremists, fundamentalists and neo-fundamentalists.³³ Sociologist Olivier Roy defines Islamism as a political interpretation of Islam whose political visions are not primarily based on interpretations of religious texts, but a mixture of scientific schools at the university level and state-run madrassas, usually sponsored by modern governments in the twentieth century. Fundamentalism, which he prefers to call Traditionalism, rejects scholar interpretations and modern adaptations of traditional Islamic texts.³⁴ Evidence shows that from the very beginning the core value that defined the Movement and differentiated it from other Afghan factions was its pursuit of a particular version of Islamic purity that other groups did not offer and that characterized its own version of religious traditionalism. The Taliban actively rejected the brand of extremists and

³¹ “A Reminding Glimpse of the Islamic Jihad,” internet source cited above.

³² “Hostilities and Ineffectiveness of the Leaders,” Taliban New York Office; Internet, available at <http://web.archive.org/web/19981206235857/www.taleban.com/hostil.htm>; Accessed on 9 Oct. 2006.

³³ Martin Ewans, *Afghanistan: A Short Story of Its People and Politics*, (New York: Perennial/Harper Collins Publishers, 2002), 263.

³⁴ Nabi Misdaq, *Afghanistan: Political Frailty and Foreign Interference*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 146.

considered its members moderates.³⁵ “We were fighting against Muslims who had gone wrong,” explained the mullah Mohammed Omar, top leader of the Taliban, shortly after the taking over Kabul in 1996.³⁶ As a guerrilla movement, the Taliban installed temporary rules over conquered territories with the goal of forcing a purification of the society, so that later on a new government could be restored. Omar himself, his driver explains, claimed legitimacy by posing as “a symbol of purity.”³⁷

The Taliban built its ideology around fundamentalist values and nationalism, but with time it expanded and refined its nationalist discourse in order to use it as a tool aimed at reuniting a fragmented and threatened country, promoting tribal political customs and anti-foreign rhetoric. From its inception, the Movement claimed to answer a call made not only by God but by the people.³⁸ In the early stages of its campaign, the Taliban’s idea of nation was more a projection of tribal experiences than anything else. But it explicitly engaged in a process of nation building, initially defined by a fight against foreign corrupt influences. In fact, the nationalist idea of “purifying” the nation from alien interference was as important as its self-imposed religious duty of purifying Islam in Afghanistan. A Taliban spokesman told the press in October 1994 that they believed in the formation of a national council of tribes, known as Loya Jirga, to accord peace to the country, while they concentrated on eliminating the Wahabbi and Salafi influence in the region. These two interpretations of Islam were

³⁵ Mullah Omar, quoted in “Interview with Mullah Omar-transcript,” *BBC News Online*, 15 Nov. 2001; Internet, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1657368.stm; Accessed on 12 Oct. 2006.

³⁶ Mullah Omar, in interview with Pakistan journalist Yosufzai, quoted in John F. Burns, “How Afghan Stern’s Rulers Took Hold,” *The New York Times*, 31 Dec. 96, Page. A1.

³⁷ Thomas Evan, “Mullah Omar, Off the Record,” *Newsweek*, 21 Jan. 2002, 26-28. Amalendu Misra, *Afghanistan: The Labyrinth of Violence*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 77-78.

³⁸ Mullah Omar, quoted in Jane McCartney, “The Mysterious Mullah Behind the Taliban,” *Reuters*, 21 Nov. 2001; Internet, available at http://freemasonrywatch.org/mullah_omar.html; Accessed on 17 Oct. 2006.

disliked by most of Afghans precisely as foreign creeds.³⁹ By November 1994, Omar's political project went national, as the Taliban announced intentions of taking the whole country in the name of Islam.⁴⁰ Afghan ruin, the Movement's discourses explained, started in 1979 as a product of betrayal to both the Islam and the nation, while the civil war after Soviet withdrawal was provoked by the "non-Islamic and anti-national behavior"⁴¹ of Afghan warlords.

Corrupting foreign influences, according to the Taliban, increasingly came not only from Western countries but also from regional powers (and allies) like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, and from declared enemies like Iran. Unwanted Wahabbi influences came from the Saudis, the main internal enemy was identified as the "Persian-speaking government in Kabul"⁴² supported by Iran, and the Pakistanis seemed too eager to intervene in Afghan affairs. The Taliban's nationalistic stances were on the rise at the same time some commentators started to suggest the movement had been a creation of Pakistan to protect political and trade interests. "Many people have claimed us as 'theirs'," said Mullah Omar, "now they say we are working for the Americans. We never said anything about these claims, but our objective is our country and Islam, we are in nobody's pay. I am the leader of this movement and I have not met with any Pakistani or American officials."⁴³ Anti-Pakistani

³⁹ "New Fighting and New Forces in Kandahar," U.S. Consulate (Peshawar) Cable, 3 Nov. 1994; Internet, available at www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB97/tal1.pdf; Accessed on 23 Oct. 2006. Also, Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 85.

⁴⁰ Sreedar, "The Taliban Factor in the Ongoing Afghan Civil War," in *Afghanistan: Government and Politics*, Veriner Grover ed. (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications PVT Ltd., 2000), 260.

⁴¹ Sreedar, 260.

⁴² Sreedar, 260. The Taliban, like 90 percent of Afghans, was made mainly of pashtu-speaking people, while the official Afghan government was led by Persian-speakers, particularly then President Mohammed Rabbani and Defense Minister Mohammed Shah Massoud.

comments were not rare among the Taliban, since “Afghans are proud people who do not like the Pakistanis always trying to run things and place the Afghans on a lower level.”⁴⁴

As the war advanced, the tribal Taliban incorporated more and more elements into its discourse. That helped it to forge an idea of national unity, identifying itself with one of the less disputed symbols of Afghan unity: the memory of the national hero and Father of the Nation (Baba), Ahmed Shah Durrani. “The rehabilitation of Ahmed Shah Durrani’s mausoleum and sprucing up an inner city monument to martyrs of the jihad show that the Taliban have some civic and national awareness,”⁴⁵ commented the U.S. embassy in Pakistan in a secret memo. The prominence of Durrani in Taliban’s nationalist discourses became consistent in time, and by 1998 the Movement had renamed Kabul’s main square from the narrowly tribal “Pashtunistan square” to a more national inclusive name: “Ahmed Shah Baba square.”⁴⁶

Durrani was not the only symbol used by the Taliban to promote its nationalistic project. Under Taliban rule, starting in 1996, the national flag was redesigned to bear an Islamic kalmia, the first pillar of Islam that claims the oneness of God, written in green, on an immaculate white background, sealing the newly regained unity of the Afghans under Islam and nation. The Afghan map, as presented by the new government in Kabul, depicted not an abstract religious community but a territorial body clearly defined by national frontiers. “The

⁴³ Misdaq, 180-181.

⁴⁴ “Finally, A Talkative Talib: Origins and Membership of the Religious Students,” U.S. Embassy (Islamabad) Cable, 20 Feb. 1995; Internet, available at ww.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB97/tal8.pdf; Accessed on 28 Oct. 2006.

⁴⁵ “Scene Setter for Your Visit to Islamabad: Afghan Angle.” U.S. Embassy (Islamabad) Cable, 16 Jan. 1997; Internet, available at ww.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB97/tal21.pdf; Accessed on 28 Oct. 2006.

⁴⁶ *Historical Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions and Insurgencies*, second ed. (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2005), lxxii.

Taliban took five months to capture one province but then six provinces fell to us in only ten days,” commented Omar in clear recognition of the historical political-administrative borders of the country. “Now we are in control of 22 provinces including Kabul. Inshallah (God willing) the whole of Afghanistan will fall into our hands.”⁴⁷ In the years to come, the Taliban revived mass concentrations in the Kabul stadium to celebrate the Afghan independence from the British rule, as it was used in times before the civil war, playing with a national sentiment that appealed to all ethnic groups: Pashtuns, Uzbeks, Tajiks and Hazaras as well.⁴⁸

The Taliban’s ideological discourses became more important as the military gains forced the Movement to assume governmental duties. As part of a process of ideological refinement, the Taliban engaged in sophisticated propaganda. One of the most significant mythological stories about the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan illustrates the intertwining of religious and nationalist symbols in its discourse: On April 13, 1996, right after his forces took over Kabul and overthrew the first post-Soviet government, the Mullah Omar asked the keeper of a temple in Kandahar permission to see the kherqa, reputedly a piece of the Prophet Mohammed’s cloak. The kherqa had been trusted in the eighteenth-century to the Afghan hero and Father of the Afghan Nation, Ahmed Shah Durrani. After his death, it was kept in a mausoleum right next to his tomb. A gathering of 1,500 mullahs, a congregation not seen for 60 years, had now been organized. Omar went out of the temple with the cloak, and reaching the top of one of the city’s main mosques, showed it to an ecstatic crowd, with his hands slid into its sleeves. The crowd of mullahs started to shout “Amir-al Muminin!,” (“Commander of

⁴⁷ Victoria Schofield, *Afghan Frontier: Feuding and Fighting in Central Asia*, (London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2003), 338.

⁴⁸ Kathy Ganon, *I is for Infidel*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2005). Annexed middle pages.

the Faithful”). Thereafter, Omar pursued the conquest of the rest of Afghanistan as his personal legitimate duty.⁴⁹

Taliban’s radicalization

In the same way the Taliban’s ideological discourse evolved from religious ethics and anti-communism to a religious nationalism in the mid 1990s, it reflected a gradual political radicalization towards revolutionary anti-western ideas, as Omar’s men were repeatedly denied by the international community of the aid and recognition they craved to rebuild their war-devastated country and to establish a purified Islamic emirate. Between 1995 and 1998, the Taliban had tried to establish cooperative relations with the Western powers and the international community. In 1995 the Taliban showed support for the United Nations attempts to broker a peace deal among the Afghan factions⁵⁰ and, as the U.S. embassy to Pakistan asserted, its members “appeared well-disposed towards the United States and said they would welcome future visits.”⁵¹ In the words of a member, the Movement had decided to contact the U.S. since it was “an important and unbiased friend,”⁵² and it even opened a diplomatic office in New York. The moderation of the Taliban’s foreign policy even prompted it to present the country internationally not as an emirate (as it was declared by

⁴⁹ Norimitsu Onishi, “A Tale of the Mullah and Muhammad's Amazing Cloak,” *New York Times*, Section B, Page. 1, 19 Dec. 2001; also in *Historical Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions and Insurgencies*, Ixix. And Kathy Ganon, 42.

⁵⁰ “The Taliban: What We’ve Heard,” U.S. Embassy (Islamabad) Cable, 26 Jan. 1995; Internet, available at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB97/tal6.pdf>; Accessed on 1 Nov. 2006.

⁵¹ “Meeting With the Taliban in Kandahar: More Questions than Answers,” U.S. Embassy (Islamabad) Cable, 15 Feb. 1995; Internet, available at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB97/tal7.pdf>; Accessed on 3 Nov. 2006.

⁵² “Finally, A Talkative Talib: Origins and Membership of the Religious Students,” internet source cited above.

Omar in 1996), but simply as the Islamic State of Afghanistan.⁵³ But as years passed, the Taliban felt the financial and political pressures derived from the international denunciation of its widespread violations of human rights, even though it had effectively enforced one of the U.N.-backed international demands: the total ban of opium production. While moderate Taliban members gained some battles in their efforts to comply with international demands, the more fundamentalist within the leadership did not see many incentives to relax their tight grip on Afghan society. A journalist who met Omar tried to understand the reasons why the Taliban did not give up on Western demands such as granting more freedoms to women. “If we allow our women not to observe Islamic rules, would the Christian west be pleased with us?” asked Omar. “I said ‘no’. He then said ‘if we water down our Islamic way of life a little, would that please the West? I said ‘not necessarily.’ He then said ‘why should we change our Islamic way of life, if it does not even please the West?’”⁵⁴

The attacks launched by the Saudi terrorist Osama Bin Laden against the U.S. on September 11, 2001, further strained relations between the Taliban and the international community, when the former refused to extradite Bin Laden to the U.S. The new international context forced the Taliban to transform its policy and discourse to prepare itself for confrontation instead of outreach. “America is very strong,” acknowledged Omar days before the imminent U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. “Even if it were twice as strong or twice that, it could not be strong enough to defeat us. We are confident that no one can harm us if God is with us.” And in the same message, revolutionary Islamic ideas seemed to mark the Taliban’s turn towards the international jihadism: “America controls the governments of the

⁵³ See some public statements available at <http://web.archive.org/web/19981206235857/www.taleban.com/comment.htm>; Accessed on 5 Nov. 2006.

⁵⁴ Mirdaq, 235-236.

Islamic countries. The people ask to follow Islam, but the governments do not listen because they are in the grip of the United States.”⁵⁵

When it returned to guerrilla warfare, the Taliban’s fundamentalist-nationalist discourse seemed to be downplayed by the newly incorporated revolutionary consciousness. “The current situation in Afghanistan is related to a bigger cause - that is the destruction of America,” explained Omar to the BBC. “The plan is going ahead and, God willing, it is being implemented. But it is a huge task, which is beyond the will and comprehension of human beings. If God's help is with us, this will happen within a short period of time; keep in mind this prediction.”⁵⁶ A report of the U.N. Secretary General to the Security Council on December 2001 explicitly referred to Mullah Mohammed Omar’s decrees and statements, highlighting the fact that they had evolved “from concern with just Afghan issues to notably greater support for a global jihad, as promoted by Bin Laden.”⁵⁷ In 2002, Omar sustained the intensity of his rhetoric: “The battle [in Afghanistan] has [just] started, its fire has been kindled and it will engulf the White House, seat of injustice and tyranny. [The United States] launched a war against Islam and Muslims without any legitimate justification, and I am confident that God [will grant Muslims] victory.”⁵⁸ That year, besides officially declaring a holy war against the U.S. and calling on all Muslims to fight on his side,⁵⁹ Omar linked his war with those of other Islamic guerrillas. “I tell my brethren in Palestine: be patient and

⁵⁵ Mullah Omar, quoted in “Mullah Omar-In his Own Words,” *The Guardian*, 26 Sep. 2001; Internet, available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,3604,558076,00.html>; Accessed on 8 Nov. 2006.

⁵⁶ Mullah Omar, quoted in “Interview With Mullah Omar-Transcript,” internet source cited above.

⁵⁷ “The Situation in Afghanistan and Its Implications for International Peace and Security,” Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council, S/2001/1157, 6 Dec. 2001; Internet, available at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N01/677/41/PDF/N0167741.pdf>; Accessed on 10 Nov. 2006.

⁵⁸ Mullah Omar, quoted in “Mullah Omar ‘Gives Interview’,” *BBC News Online*, 17 May. 2002; Internet, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1993137.stm; Accessed on 13 Nov. 2006.

⁵⁹ *Historical Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions and Insurgencies*, lxxxii.

continue your blessed struggle,” he said. “We did not forget you. We are still healing another wound in the Muslim nation, which is the occupation of our land by the Americans. Your battle and ours are one and the same.”⁶⁰ Researchers pointed out that as a guerrilla force, the Taliban entered an alliance with radical elements such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (former nemesis and fundamentalist Afghan warlord) and Al Qaeda, pushing for more radicalization among the Taliban and putting “more stress on ideology.”⁶¹ As an observer put it in 2005, Afghanistan was a battlefield of nationalistic and religious propaganda war.⁶² By the summer 2006, Omar claimed to have large territories in southern Afghanistan back under his control. In a recorded message, he defiantly asserted that “my government has collapsed but I am still here and my army is still intact and we are resisting our enemies inside Afghanistan.” Threatening the new U.S.-supported government in Afghanistan, he warned: “Don't forget what happened to the Russian army in Afghanistan. You cannot impose the ideas of foreigners in the country of pure Muslims.”

In the 1980s, when many of the future Taliban leaders fought alongside other mujahideen against communists and Soviet troops, anti-communism and Islamic doctrines served as catalysts to develop a sense of national unity around the ideals of pushing back the “atheists” and invaders of Afghan soil. In the early 1990s, the Taliban organized itself around a new discourse that offered to purify the Islamic practices in Afghanistan and to fight back against corrupt Muslims. These ideals, based on a fundamentalist religious ethic, were quickly projected into a nationalistic project that advanced and grew more consistent along

⁶⁰ Mullah Omar, quoted in “Mullah Omar: US in Afghanistan Doomed,” *Associated Press*, 17 May. 2002; Internet, available at http://www.werismyki.com/artcls/us_doomed.html; Accessed on 13 Nov. 2006.

⁶¹ Gilles Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending: Afghanistan: 1979 to the Present*, (London: Hurst & Company, 2005), 339.

⁶² Dorronsoro, 272-311.

with the Taliban's military gains. Finally in the late 1990s, the Taliban adapted its ideological discourse, which up to then had focused on the internal enemy, to position the Movement in strategic opposition to the United States and in alliance with anti-Western jihadist and revolutionary elements.

So far, I have shown how the Taliban defined itself with a nationalist-fundamentalist ideology built upon the core value of purity. The next section will explore the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo, where Laurent Désiré Kabila led a revolutionary struggle that lasted four decades, in which he consistently advanced a nationalistic discourse inspired by the Soviet and Chinese communist models.

D.R. Congo: Vision of an African China

Laurent Désiré Kabila was born in Congo while it was a Belgian colonial territory, studied political philosophy in France, was enrolled in the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, and returned to his native land, the secessionist Katanga, turned in 1960 into a province of the newly independent Republic of Congo. From there he took a revolutionary path that led him through North Korea, East Germany, Yugoslavia, China and back to a country soon renamed Zaire.⁶³ Even though he was a heavily indoctrinated and committed communist, one of his major lifetime obsessions was to create a coherent sense of nation for his countrymen. This section will provide evidence of Kabila's life-time commitment to nationalist and socialist ideals, and will explain how he applied them to his own revolutionary organization and the administration of a reduced socialist enclave in Southeastern Zaire, even when little hope of insurgent victory was in sight.

⁶³ Robert B. Edgerton, *The Troubled Heart of Africa*, (New York: St. Martin Press, 2002), 226; also *Historical Dictionary of Democratic Republic of the Congo*, F. Scott Bob bed. (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 1999), 211.

During a revolutionary period covering the years from 1964 to the late 1980s, the core of Kabila's ideological discourse combined his admiration to the Chinese-style socialism with and outright opposition to Zairian dictator Mobutu Sese Seko and his nationalist campaign known as Authenticité (Authenticity). Kabila's ability to adapt his socialist-nationalist discourse in the early post-Cold War, stressing his nationalist anti-Mobutist component and downplaying his socialist rhetoric, enabled him to galvanize nationwide support as the leader of an armed insurrection that put him in power in 1996, when his truly ideological commitment to socialism became once again overt. So far, Kabila's recognition as a truly committed revolutionary socialist in the 1990s and up to 2001 has been historically contested, as many scholars have assumed he never was deeply committed to ideology. Some authors conclude that he actually retired from his revolutionary career by the late 1960s and dedicated himself full-time to cross border trading of gold and ivory.⁶⁴ Such scholars interpret his socialist-nationalist discourse after 1996 as an opportunistic move to favor his economic and power ambitions. In order to support the argument that Kabila had been a truly committed socialist, this section will examine his credentials as revolutionary in the period from 1964 to 1996.

Although in the late 1960s most armed insurgencies had been discredited in the Democratic Republic of Congo, then known as Zaire, as relevant political forces in the country, due to their almost complete military defeat by Mobutu's army, Kabila persisted in the construction of a Soviet-and-Maoist-inspired society. Back then, a young Laurent Kabila found himself at the head of a small armed socialist group known as the Parti pour la Révolution des Peuples (PRP), founded four years before to engage in low intensity guerrilla

⁶⁴ Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo From Leopold to Kabila: A People's History*, (London: Zed Books, 2002), 135; also Kevin C. Dunn, "A Survival Guide to Kinshasa: Lessons of the Father, Passed Down to the Son," in *The African Stakes of the Congo War*, John F. Clark ed. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 54.

warfare against Mobutu's government. Since 1967, this group had established itself in the Sud Kivu province, north of his homeland, between the towns of Fizi and Baraka, where they established an autonomous rule financed, among other sources, by illegal trade across the border with Tanzania. The nature of his rule in the Fizi-Baraka area is a matter of discussion. Some historians conclude that at that point Kabila had decided to drop his revolutionary commitment, which in any case had never been very great,⁶⁵ and turned to self-enrichment. On the contrary, Marxist historian Ludo Martens argues that in 1967 Kabila had just returned from a period of political-military training in China, returning to his country as a renewed revolutionary, more committed than ever to create a Marxism-inspired society. "The Kabila that returns in Kivu in October 1967 is a man completely transformed by his six months of political-military training in China".⁶⁶ According to his account, Kabila met a warm reception in the Fizi area precisely "because of its political speech".⁶⁷ Citing a witness of those years, he explains that "Kabila and his men came without money, but they had clear and right political ideas"⁶⁸ In October 1967, Kabila officially launched his socialist republic.⁶⁹

Descriptions offered by scholars and members of Kabila's mini-State in southeastern Zaire provide evidence that he tried to create a Chinese-style society, and not merely an authoritarian economically-driven regime. Kabila's detractors throw these claims into doubt

⁶⁵ Argentinean revolutionary Che Guevara's disapproving comments about Kabila in 1965 are shown as evidence of his poor revolutionary spirit.

⁶⁶ Ludo Martens, "La Grande Biographie Imaginaire de Laurent Désiré Kabila," 28 Mar. 2004; Internet, available at http://www.deboutcongolais.info/actualite5/art_319.htm; Accessed on 18 Nov. 2006.

⁶⁷ Martens, internet source cited above.

⁶⁸ Martens, internet source cited above.

⁶⁹ Osita G. Afoaku, "Explaining the Failure of Democracy in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Autocracy and Dissent in an Ambivalent World," *African Studies* (Lewinston), vol. 76, 2005, 127.

on the basis of evidence showing that the economic base of the mini-State was the cross-border illegal trade in gold, ivory, leopard skins and timber to be sold in neighboring Tanzania and Burundi, and concluding that these activities should have provided him with considerable wealth. Sifa Maanya, Kabila's wife and mother of Joseph (later successor to his father as D.R. Congo's president), describes the contrary: a desperate economic situation that pushed them towards illegal activities, even the kidnapping of three Stanford students, for survival's sake.⁷⁰ But even though her account may not be accurate, and the rebels could have been economically well-off, evidence shows that the Fizi State was a political experiment modeled after Maoist examples that privileged the leader's grip. In the complex political structure created by Kabila, he was regarded as "Founder and President of the PRP, President of the Republic, Supreme Commander of People's Armed Forces, President of the National Assembly, Head of the Department of Foreign Affairs as well as President of the Revolutionary Military Commission".⁷¹ The PRP set an independent administration, while an armed wing, the Forces Armées Populaires (FAP), continued to attack governmental positions, extort from the local population, and protect the illegal trade activities that financed Kabila's mini-state.⁷² The rule over the Fizi and Baraka population was, theoretically, in the hands of a Revolutionary Civil Administration led by another party member, Malaka Baudouin. From the beginning, the PRP implemented a comprehensive plan of military, social and economic indoctrination for his men and newly recruited members of

⁷⁰ Afoaku, 128; also "Mama Sifa, la Mère du Président Joseph Kabila, Parle de Son Fils," *The Evening* (Belgium) 5 Jun. 2006; Internet, available at <http://www.digitalcongo.net/article/34236>; Accessed on 13 Oct. 2006; on the famous kidnapping case, see Brian C. Aronstam, "Out of Africa," *Stanford magazine*, Jul/Aug 1998; Internet, available at http://www.stanfordalumni.org/news/magazine/1998/julaug/articles/out_of_africa/out_of_africa.html; Accessed on 15 Oct. 2006.

⁷¹ Afoaku, 127.

⁷² *Historical Dictionary of Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 212.

the PRP.⁷³ According to Sifa Maanya's description of their life in the late 1960s: "we held meetings with people of our class, and explained them why it was necessary to fight this dictatorship which crushed the peasants. In the maquis, we practiced further education, each one was to follow training in political courses, but also to learn how to read and write. The political sessions themselves were given in seven days, and then those who had been re-educated were sent to other villages to teach in their turn."⁷⁴

The political nature of Kabila's experiment was not merely complementary to its economic activities, as he devoted a great effort to political-military activities aimed at sparking a national revolution. Far from being isolated in the remote Congolese mountains, Kabila counted on valuable contacts with other guerrilla leaders in the region such as Uganda's Yoweri Museveni and Rwanda's Paul Kagame,⁷⁵ who became presidents of their respective countries later on. In Belgium, Kabila established close relations with the Marxist scholar and politician Ludo Martens, who in November 1979 invited him to speak to the Maoist Workers Party of Belgium, today renamed PVDA-PTB.⁷⁶ Along with his political work in the Fizi area and abroad, Kabila prepared military operations. Between 1984 and 1985, his mini-State's armed forces, the FAP, escalated their operations and briefly seized the port of Moba, before being driven off by Mobutu's army.⁷⁷ Kabila's gamble resulted in failure. Instead of sparking a wave of resistance against the government it attracted official military pressure that led the mini-State to a collapse in around 1988.

⁷³ Afoaku, 127.

⁷⁴ "Mama Sifa, la Mère du Président Joseph Kabila, Parle de Son Fils," internet source cited above.

⁷⁵ Afoaku, 134.

⁷⁶ "Ludo Martens : 3.500.000 Morts au Congo, un Génocide dans l'Indifférence Totale. Pourquoi?," *Digital Congo*, 9 May. 2001; Internet, available at <http://www.digitalcongo.net/article/1928>; Accessed on 17 Nov. 2006.

⁷⁷ *Historical Dictionary of Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 212.

Evidence has shown so far that between 1964 and the late 1980s Kabila consistently advanced a political project of national reach to build a socialist State on the Chinese model. Between 1989 and 1991, with the fall of the communist regimes in the Soviet-bloc, an ideological crisis spread among revolutionary insurgencies worldwide, and Kabila's reduced group was no exception. However, at the end of this section I will show how his socialist discourse was toned down in the early 1990s as his nationalist anti-Mobutist identity remained at the forefront, and how that discourse helped him to galvanize political and military support that resuscitated his revolutionary plans. Evidence suggests that he succeeded in projecting himself as a credible nationalist anti-Mobutist leader to head the various armed rebellions that erupted against the government in the 1990s. Once in power, however, he turned back to his hardcore socialist discourse.

The 1991 political process opened by Mobutu's regime, which was weakened after political and economic support from Western countries receded at the end of the Cold War, re-ignited Kabila's hopes of a national armed revolution. In July 1992, Kabila's PRP convened a National Conference in Madrid to delineate a post-Mobutu government,⁷⁸ arguing the need for an arms-driven change. In 1993, Kabila reaffirmed that "only an external revolution against the mobutist political tradition will liberate us all."⁷⁹ Perceived failures in the political transition process initiated and controlled by Mobutu encouraged other factions to take up arms to overthrow Mobutu as well. With the support of neighboring countries, such as Rwanda and Uganda, that foresaw economic and political opportunities of

⁷⁸ Ludo Martens, "Extraits du Livre: 'Kabila et la Révolution Congolaise' de Ludo Martens," *Digital Congo*, 30 Apr. 2003; Internet, available at <http://www.digitalcongo.net/article/12458>; Accessed on 20 Nov. 2006.

⁷⁹ Laurent Kabila, speech of 24 Dec. 1993, cited in Mani Junior Kisui, "Le Système Criminel Mobutiste," Bureau d'Étude pour le Congo (BEC), reproduced in *Debut Congolais*; Internet, available at http://www.deboutcongolais.info/actualite5/art_304.html; Accessed on 10 Nov. 2006.

a regime change, Kabila's and three other rebel forces joined in 1995 an umbrella organization called Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-Zaïre (AFDL), based on the common nationalist impulse to overthrow Mobutu. Some researchers have questioned the political coherence of the ADFL, and suggested that its creation was merely a cover for a Rwandan invasion, pointing to the fact that it was created in October 1996, in Sud Kivu, nearly two months after Rwanda had already sent troops into Zaire.⁸⁰ The view of the ADFL as a foreign creation was reinforced by a famous interview given by then Rwandan vice-president Paul Kagame to *The Washington Post*, in July 9, 1997, in which he took credit for starting the rebellion against Mobutu.⁸¹ Supporters of this argument insist that contrary to Kabila's claims of preparing a military campaign since 1995, he "was summoned to a rebellion in motion he declared to lead".⁸²

But independently of the origins and political incoherence of the 1996 rebellion, Kabila succeeded in presenting the ADFL as an indigenous movement fighting a corrupted dictatorship. His nationalist and anti-Mobutist past served as credentials to allow him to present himself as its leader.⁸³ "Zairians began to accept Kabila due to his rhetorical claims of historical legitimacy as rebel leader, their own desire to be 'liberated', and the dawning realization that Mobutu's days were numbered," wrote a commentator.⁸⁴ Throughout his revolutionary career, Kabila stressed his past as a combatant under nationalist and socialist figures Patrice Lumumba and Pierre Mulele to project himself as their anti-Mobutist heir.

⁸⁰ Nzongola-Ntalaja, 225.

⁸¹ John Pomfret, "Rwandans Led Revolt in Congo," *The Washington Post*, 9 Jul. 1997, Page. A1.

⁸² *War and Peace in Zaire/Congo: Analyzing and Evaluating Intervention 1996-1997*, Howard Adelman and Govind C. Rao eds. (Asmara: Africa World Press Inc., 2004), 66-67.

⁸³ Kevin C. Dunn, *Imagining the Congo*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 142.

⁸⁴ Dunn, "A Survival Guide to Kinshasa," 56.

“Lumumbism is doctrine, while Mulelism is a force,” was the usual re-interpretation of these historical leaders by Kabilist authors who since the 1980s have pointed to Kabila as a continuer of the epic of national liberation.⁸⁵ This discourse proved effective to justify his leadership within the ADFL and later as head of the country.⁸⁶ By 1996, the widespread hatred of Mobutu’s rule helped to galvanize the fragmented armed opposition that, besides a change of government, did not share a common vision of a post-Mobutu nation. Some ADFL fighters, a researcher says, “thought they were fighting for the overthrow of capitalism, some for the survival of Zaire’s Tutsi community, some for the end of Mobutu.”⁸⁷ Popular support for the rebellion grew as people foresaw an end to the horrors and abuses of Mobutu’s regime.⁸⁸ The ADFL was not marked by its coherence. Disunion and internal rebellions led Mai Mai warriors to end up attacking Tutsi soldiers, and many gave themselves over to looting and violence as they headed towards Kinshasa.⁸⁹ Since October 1996, starting its armed uprising in Sud Kivu initially to protect the Banyamulenge population from the Hutu’s militias, the ADFL required only eight months to take control of the country.⁹⁰ It was a war Mobutu’s Zairians soldiers seemed unwilling to fight. Researcher Michela Wrong says “it

⁸⁵ Ludo Martens, “Pierre Mulele ou la Seconde Vie de Patrice Lumumba,” (Antwerp: Éditions EPO, 1985); reproduced in *Debut Congolaise*; Internet, available at <http://www.deboutcongolais.info/Pierre%20Mulele-complet.htm>; Accessed on 18 Oct. 2006.

⁸⁶ Laurent D. Kabila, “Hommage à Patrice Emery Lumumba,” discourse of the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo reproduced in *Agence Congolaise de Presse*, 19 Jan. 1998; Internet, available at <http://web.archive.org/web/19980509054129/rdcongo.org/frames/acp/archives/Official4.html>; Accessed on 18 Oct. 2006.

⁸⁷ Michela Wrong, *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kutz: Living on the Brink of Disaster in Mobutu’s Congo*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2000), 251.

⁸⁸ Afoaku, 138; Edgar O’Ballance, *The Congo Zaire Experience, 1960-98*, (London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 2000), 176.

⁸⁹ O’Ballance, 168.

⁹⁰ O’Ballance, 175.

became clear this was a war in which very little actual fighting was going on.”⁹¹ With the direct support of Rwanda and Uganda, and complacency from France and the U.S.,⁹² the ADFL campaign convinced the Zairians that the Mobutu’s years had come to an end, and as a result, as both critics and scholars acknowledged, Kabila’s popularity soared.⁹³ Human rights abuses and massacres were ignored by his foreign backers, while he argued that such a war of liberation required sacrifices and killings.⁹⁴ The triumphal entrance of Kabila to Kinshasa on May 20, 1997, after Mobutu’s escape, signaled the end of an armed struggle and the beginning of a revolutionary process that Kabila’s main allies in the ADFL’s leadership may not have foreseen.

In 1996, using a Marxist analysis, Kabila explained his military victory as an uprising of an oppressed population. A local scholar explains that “After decades of suffering, deprivation, the denial of their human and political rights, the plunder of their resources, the Congolese people had risen up in arms to win to their victory over Mobutu dictatorship.”⁹⁵ After military victory, as Mao taught, purification of the country’s new leadership should follow to ensure that the revolution would go on. Every anti-Mobutist was invited to join, but every counter-revolutionary had to be purged immediately. As a result, Kabila’s first policies intended to transform the nationalist ADFL into a truly vanguard party, in Lenin’s tradition,

⁹¹ Wrong, 252.

⁹² Dunn, “A Survival Guide to Kinshasa,” 58-59.

⁹³ *Crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Peace and Security Series* no. 3, Mwesiga Baregu ed., (Harare: Sapes Books, 1999), 54.

⁹⁴ “Le President Kabila N'entend Pas Transiger Sur La Souverainete Nationale,” *Agence Congolais de Presse*, 27 Oct. 1997; Internet, available at <http://web.archive.org/web/19980509054142/rdcongo.org/frames/acp/archives/Sepcial2.html>; Accessed on 22 Nov. 2006.

⁹⁵ Laurent Kabila, cited in “Statement Of The Democratic Republic Of The Congo Concerning Investigation Of Human Rights Violations In The Congo,” 14 Oct. 1997; Internet, available at <http://web.archive.org/web/19980509045253/rdcongo.org/frames/speech.html>; Accessed on 24 Nov. 2006.

one that should lead the country towards socialism and the creation of a regional superpower: an African China. Therefore, a violent period of political repression accompanied the Kabila's early rule. "Continuers of the Second Republic," Kabila explained, "had to be ejected from leading posts of the movement to save the democratic revolution."⁹⁶ A Maoist-Stalinist model of state, centered in a supreme leader, had been conceived and implemented by Kabila since his Fizi years, and since 1996 would be replicated at national level.

A loose but effective national liberation discourse enabled the ADFL to rally the military and popular support necessary to overthrow Mobutu's regime. But in Kabila's mind nationalism was only the emotional component of a core ideology to which he had been committed for more than forty years. While his effectiveness as revolutionary has been historically put into question, and his 1996 victory explained as a result of his opportunism, the consistency of his ideological discourse kept alive his insurgent ideals long after the end of the Cold War, up to his death in 2001.

In this chapter, I have shown how the Taliban's vision of a pure Islamic society and Kabila's dream of turning his country into an African China were mixed in both cases with an emotionally compelling nationalist discourse to successfully rally support and give armed insurgents a sense of mission. In the last section, I will present the case of the Marxist-Leninist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), whose socialist discourse from the 1960s increasingly incorporated nationalist elements in order to help it to survive the ideological crisis brought by the end of the Soviet Union and the new international context of the post-Cold War.

⁹⁶ Laurent Kabila, "Démocratiser la Société Congolaise à Partir de la Base," speech of President Kabila to the Congress of the Committees of the Popular Power, on Apr. 21, 1999; Internet, available at <http://www.deboutcongolais.info/discours2-CPP.htm>; Accessed on 28 Nov.2006.

Colombia: From Revolution to Re-Foundational Epic

After 1991, scholars and researchers of the Colombian internal armed conflict, which dates from at least 1964, have tended to dismiss traces of a truly socialist commitment within the leadership of the main guerrilla group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP), even suggesting its slow degradation towards a rent-seeking criminal organization.⁹⁷ Authors like Román D. Ortiz have argued that given the general discredit of Marxist-Leninist discourses in the post-Cold War, the FARC's discourse has focused since then on promising not a socialist state but a "good government," "sidelining any dogma that promises the achievement of some utopia, and giving way to a purely pragmatic strategy for gaining power."⁹⁸ Contrary to these interpretations of the FARC as an almost de-ideologized guerilla group, I will present evidence of first how the FARC consistently advanced a political-military socialist project across the 1990s based on socialist and Marxist-Leninist principles. To do so, it made use of a nationalist and pan-regionalist discourse based on the national independence hero Simón Bolívar.

After the demise of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the Soviet Union in 1991, the FARC's Marxist-Leninist discourse challenged those opinions regarding it as obsolete. Interviewed by an Argentinean leftist organization, a FARC spokesman acknowledged the ideological crisis brought by the end of the Soviet Union. "The fall of the [Berlin] wall wasn't a defeat for communism or socialism, but a defeat for a type of socialist model. At that moment we were left politically isolated, because of that, we were branded as dinosaurs and

⁹⁷ See Alexandra Guáqueta, "The Colombian Conflict: Political and Economic Dimensions," in *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict*, 73-106; also, Alfredo Rangel, *Colombia: Guerra en el Fin de Siglo*, Universidad de Los Andes, (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo editores, 1998); and Boris Salazar and Maria del Pilar Castillo, *La Hora de los Dinosaurios*, Colección Sociedad y Economía, no 1, (Bogotá: CEREC, CIDSE, 2001), 83-84.

⁹⁸ Román D. Ortiz, "Insurgent Strategies in the Post-Cold War: The Case of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, vol. 25 no. 2, March/April, 2002, 131.

that sort of thing. Today, time and facts prove us right. Socialism is more vigorous than ever, and this is the only real choice humankind has.”⁹⁹ At the end of the twentieth century, Marxist analysis continued to be applied, and the FARC continued to explain the Colombian armed conflict as a product of the “class struggle” and its existence as an expression of the “proletariat class’ interests.”¹⁰⁰ Explicitly, the FARC considered the post-Cold War era a time in which an ideological confrontation was still being fought, denouncing ‘neo-liberal ideologies’ for trying to “erase the question of class struggle” and “deny the existence of imperialism.”¹⁰¹

The FARC leadership explained that “bourgeois ideologues and the mass media at the service of big capital” engaged since the fall of the Soviet Union in a campaign to erode revolutionary struggle by convincing people that armed revolution was not feasible and there was no alternative to capitalism. The military, it said, wanted to win the war “from the desks and through the media.”¹⁰² Far from considering it an isolationist path, the FARC insisted on socialism as a live ideology with a place in the post-Cold War world. Proudly, an indoctrinated young guerrilla denied the demise of worldwide socialism: “We are Marxist-Leninists. This implies that we are internationalists first of all. We are for the socialist revolution on a world level that progresses toward communism.”¹⁰³ For the FARC’s

⁹⁹ Javier Calderón, “Trabajamos Mirando Hacia la Toma del Poder,” interview by Ariel Ogando and Carina Borgogno, in *Latinoamérica Lucha*, ed. Ariel Ogando (Jujuy, Argentina: Ediciones Wayruro, 1998), 20.

¹⁰⁰ “Entrevista al Comandante Raúl Reyes, Miembro del Secretariado Nacional de las FARC-EP,” Ospaal, 3 Nov. 2005; Internet, available at <http://www.ospaal.org>; Accessed on 28 Feb. 2006.

¹⁰¹ Ricardo G. “Entrevista al Comandante Ricardo G.,” interview by Miguel Urbano Rodríguez, *Avante!* (Lisbon), Mar. 2004; Internet, available at <http://redresistencia.org.netzwerk-resistencia.ch/red2/entrevistas/0804entrevistaricardog.htm>; Accessed on 26 Feb. 2006.

¹⁰² Rafael Reyes, “Estamos Construyendo un Nuevo Poder,” interview by Red Resistencia, 1 Mar. 2003; Internet, available at http://www.lahaine.org/internacional/estamos_poder.htm; Accessed on 18 Jan. 2006.

leadership, socialism is more than feasible; the new set of economic and political opportunities brought about by the globalization process, instead of suffocating their revolution, “has been bringing possibilities for that transition closer.”¹⁰⁴

But in spite of its re-invigorated commitment to socialism since the 1990s, the FARC’s discourse has made great efforts to distance itself from socialist political models prevalent in the Cold War years, while its proposed alternative remains diffuse, flexible and adaptable. In its words, a “Colombian style socialism” will supposedly draw on various models.¹⁰⁵ But so far it remains a system “yet to be decided,” one dependent “on which social sectors will accompany us in this process towards taking power”.¹⁰⁶ But defining itself as a Marxist-Leninist organization, the FARC has made particular efforts to detach itself from the Soviet example and, presumably, the Soviet fate. According to its discourse, socialism did not fail there: the Soviet leadership failed because it was not ideologically flexible enough. “One of the greatest problems faced by socialism in the USSR was that the theory became dogma,” explained a FARC spokeswoman. “Lenin’s writings on the organization of the party were misinterpreted, leading many communist parties to become dictatorial, bureaucratic or corrupt. These leaders misinterpreted support for the people as state paternalism, which meant that in the end no-one valued what they had. This generated numerous problems, like

¹⁰³ “Entrevista a un Integrante del PCCC,” FARC documents, Jan. 2004; translation by Nathalie Hrizi re-published as “Young People Have the Potential for Rebellion,” in *Socialism and Liberation magazine*; Internet, available at <http://socialismandliberation.org/mag/index.php?aid=87>; Accessed 13 Jan. 2006.

¹⁰⁴ Ricardo G., internet source cited above.

¹⁰⁵ Ricardo G., internet source cited above.

¹⁰⁶ Eduardo Soto-Trillo, “Voces sin Voz,” (Bogota: Intermedio editores, 2001), 58.

