

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

Juan E. Ugarriza

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Global History  
in the Department of History

Chapel Hill  
2007

Approved by

Advisor: John Chasteen

Reader: David Griffiths

Reader: Anthony Oberschall

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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*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It would have been impossible to undertake this work without counting on the wisdom, patience and smiles provided by John Charles Chasteen throughout this adventurous process. Meanwhile, the spiritual force that pushed ahead this project stood next to me for days and nights, even when papers and books kept us physically apart at times: thanks, Maria Isabel.

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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-Ejército 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”<sup>1</sup> 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,

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Minogue, “Ideology After the Collapse of Communism,” *Political Studies*, vol. 41, Special Issue, 1993, 7-8.

power, justice and other sub categories.<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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”.<sup>4</sup> Ideologies create and re-create these labels by making use of myths (collections of stories that become their emotional core<sup>5</sup>) and using them to convey to the masses a sense of belonging to a “chosen” group.<sup>6</sup>

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”.<sup>7</sup> As a result, the creation and re-creation of political identities

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

<sup>3</sup> Minogue, 7-8.

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

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

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

<sup>7</sup> 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,<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup>

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”<sup>10</sup> 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.”<sup>11</sup> 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

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<sup>8</sup> 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.

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

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

<sup>11</sup> 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 model<sup>12</sup>.

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”.<sup>13</sup> Globalization of liberal democracy, in terms of Ulrich Beck, constituted “another attempt at exporting Western modernization beyond its spatial and temporal confines”.<sup>14</sup> 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”.<sup>15</sup> 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”<sup>16</sup>. Manifestations of political Islam,

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<sup>12</sup> Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, 45.

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

<sup>14</sup> 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.

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

<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup>

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."<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup>

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

<sup>18</sup> Willett, 36.

<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup> 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.”<sup>22</sup> 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

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<sup>20</sup> 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.

<sup>21</sup> 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* 0409007, EconWPA; Internet, available at [www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSCContentServer/WDSP/IB/2000/06/17/000094946\\_00060205420011/Rendered/PDF/multi\\_page.pdf](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSCContentServer/WDSP/IB/2000/06/17/000094946_00060205420011/Rendered/PDF/multi_page.pdf); Accessed on 11 Jan. 2006.

<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup> 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 1991<sup>24</sup>; 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.<sup>25</sup> 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

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<sup>23</sup> 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 Coppieters, 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.

<sup>24</sup> Ballentine, 259-281.

<sup>25</sup> 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)<sup>26</sup>, D.R. Congo (L.D. Kabila, 1964-2001)<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup> 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.<sup>29</sup> 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

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

<sup>27</sup> 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.

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

<sup>29</sup> Andrea K. Rienner, “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."<sup>30</sup> 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

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<sup>30</sup> "A Reminding Glimpse of the Islamic Jihad," Taliban New York Office; Internet, available at <http://web.archive.org/web/19981206235857/www.taleban.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.”<sup>31</sup> 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.<sup>32</sup>

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.<sup>33</sup> 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.<sup>34</sup> 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

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

<sup>32</sup> “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.

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

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



considered its members moderates.<sup>35</sup> “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.<sup>36</sup> 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.”<sup>37</sup>

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.<sup>38</sup> 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

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<sup>35</sup> 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](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1657368.stm); Accessed on 12 Oct. 2006.

<sup>36</sup> 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.

<sup>37</sup> 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.

<sup>38</sup> Mullah Omar, quoted in Jane McCartney, “The Mysterious Mullah Behind the Taliban,” *Reuters*, 21 Nov. 2001; Internet, available at [http://freemasonryrywatch.org/mullah\\_omar.html](http://freemasonryrywatch.org/mullah_omar.html); Accessed on 17 Oct. 2006.

disliked by most of Afghans precisely as foreign creeds.<sup>39</sup> By November 1994, Omar's political project went national, as the Taliban announced intentions of taking the whole country in the name of Islam.<sup>40</sup> 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"<sup>41</sup> 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"<sup>42</sup> 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."<sup>43</sup> Anti-Pakistani

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<sup>39</sup> "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](http://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.

<sup>40</sup> 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.

<sup>41</sup> Sreedar, 260.

<sup>42</sup> 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.”<sup>44</sup>

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,”<sup>45</sup> 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.”<sup>46</sup>

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

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<sup>43</sup> Misdaq, 180-181.

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

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

<sup>46</sup> *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.”<sup>47</sup> 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.<sup>48</sup>

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

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

<sup>48</sup> Kathy Ganan, *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.<sup>49</sup>

### *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 factions<sup>50</sup> 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.”<sup>51</sup> In the words of a member, the Movement had decided to contact the U.S. since it was “an important and unbiased friend,”<sup>52</sup> 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

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<sup>49</sup> 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, lxix. And Kathy Ganon, 42.

<sup>50</sup> “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.

<sup>51</sup> “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.

<sup>52</sup> “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.<sup>53</sup> 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?’”<sup>54</sup>

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

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

<sup>54</sup> Misdaq, 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.”<sup>55</sup>

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.”<sup>56</sup> 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.”<sup>57</sup> 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.”<sup>58</sup> That year, besides officially declaring a holy war against the U.S. and calling on all Muslims to fight on his side,<sup>59</sup> Omar linked his war with those of other Islamic guerrillas. “I tell my brethren in Palestine: be patient and

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<sup>55</sup> 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.

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

<sup>57</sup> “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.

<sup>58</sup> 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](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1993137.stm); Accessed on 13 Nov. 2006.

<sup>59</sup> *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.”<sup>60</sup> 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.”<sup>61</sup> As an observer put it in 2005, Afghanistan was a battlefield of nationalistic and religious propaganda war.<sup>62</sup> 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

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<sup>60</sup> 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](http://www.werismyki.com/artcls/us_doomed.html); Accessed on 13 Nov. 2006.

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

<sup>62</sup> 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.<sup>63</sup> 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.

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<sup>63</sup> 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.<sup>64</sup> 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

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<sup>64</sup> 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,<sup>65</sup> 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".<sup>66</sup> According to his account, Kabila met a warm reception in the Fizi area precisely "because of its political speech".<sup>67</sup> Citing a witness of those years, he explains that "Kabila and his men came without money, but they had clear and right political ideas".<sup>68</sup> In October 1967, Kabila officially launched his socialist republic.<sup>69</sup>

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

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

<sup>66</sup> Ludo Martens, "La Grande Biographie Imaginaire de Laurent Désiré Kabila," 28 Mar. 2004; Internet, available at [http://www.deboutcongolais.info/actualite5/art\\_319.htm](http://www.deboutcongolais.info/actualite5/art_319.htm); Accessed on 18 Nov. 2006.

<sup>67</sup> Martens, internet source cited above.

<sup>68</sup> Martens, internet source cited above.

<sup>69</sup> 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.<sup>70</sup> 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".<sup>71</sup> 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.<sup>72</sup> 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

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<sup>70</sup> 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](http://www.stanfordalumni.org/news/magazine/1998/julaug/articles/out_of_africa/out_of_africa.html); Accessed on 15 Oct. 2006.

<sup>71</sup> Afoaku, 127.

<sup>72</sup> *Historical Dictionary of Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 212.

the PRP.<sup>73</sup> 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."<sup>74</sup>

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,<sup>75</sup> who became presidents of their respective countries later on. In Belgium, Kabila established closed 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.<sup>76</sup> 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.<sup>77</sup> 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.

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<sup>73</sup> Afoaku, 127.

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

<sup>75</sup> Afoaku, 134.

<sup>76</sup> "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.

<sup>77</sup> *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,<sup>78</sup> 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."<sup>79</sup> 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

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<sup>78</sup> 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.

<sup>79</sup> 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](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.<sup>80</sup> 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.<sup>81</sup> 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".<sup>82</sup>

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.<sup>83</sup> "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.<sup>84</sup> 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.

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<sup>80</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, 225.

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

<sup>82</sup> *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.

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

<sup>84</sup> 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.<sup>85</sup> This discourse proved effective to justify his leadership within the ADFL and later as head of the country.<sup>86</sup> 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.”<sup>87</sup> Popular support for the rebellion grew as people foresaw an end to the horrors and abuses of Mobutu’s regime.<sup>88</sup> 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.<sup>89</sup> 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.<sup>90</sup> It was a war Mobutu’s Zairians soldiers seemed unwilling to fight. Researcher Michela Wrong says “it

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<sup>85</sup> 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.

<sup>86</sup> 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.

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

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

<sup>89</sup> O’Ballance, 168.

<sup>90</sup> O’Ballance, 175.



became clear this was a war in which very little actual fighting was going on.”<sup>91</sup> With the direct support of Rwanda and Uganda, and complacency from France and the U.S.,<sup>92</sup> 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.<sup>93</sup> Human rights abuses and massacres were ignored by his foreign backers, while he argued that such a war of liberation required sacrifices and killings.<sup>94</sup> 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.”<sup>95</sup> 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,

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<sup>91</sup> Wrong, 252.

<sup>92</sup> Dunn, “A Survival Guide to Kinshasa,” 58-59.

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

<sup>94</sup> “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.

<sup>95</sup> 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."<sup>96</sup> 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.

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<sup>96</sup> 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.<sup>97</sup> 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."<sup>98</sup> 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

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<sup>97</sup> 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.

<sup>98</sup> 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.”<sup>99</sup> 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.”<sup>100</sup> 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.”<sup>101</sup>

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.”<sup>102</sup> 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.”<sup>103</sup> For the FARC’s

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<sup>99</sup> 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 Wayruru, 1998), 20.

<sup>100</sup> “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.

<sup>101</sup> 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.

<sup>102</sup> 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](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.”<sup>104</sup>

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.<sup>105</sup> 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”.<sup>106</sup> 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

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<sup>103</sup> “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.

<sup>104</sup> Ricardo G., internet source cited above.

<sup>105</sup> Ricardo G., internet source cited above.

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

poor production and distribution of domestic goods and ignoring the wishes of the population. And it did not work.”<sup>107</sup>

Distancing itself from failed communist experiments forced the FARC to rely on principles rather than on commitments to a particular form of State, social justice being its core principle. The FARC’s socialist principles are encompassed in its “Guerrilla Fighters’ Agrarian Program,” which dates from the Cold War years, and the ‘Ten-point Platform’ approved in the VIII FARC-EP’s Conference of 1993, re-adjusted in 2000 and in the IX Conference of 2007.<sup>108</sup> But none of these describe a radically new State structure. In fact, in the 1990s the FARC did not propose to install a full Leninist or Stalinist model, but constitutional-level changes making the Congress unicameral or democratizing the judiciary branch.<sup>109</sup> A concrete reform would be agreed after a peace settlement with the Colombian State and the establishment of “a government of national convergence and a government of national reconstruction and reconciliation” that would discuss FARC’s proposals.<sup>110</sup>

The FARC’s post Cold War Socialism is characterized by a redefinition of the role of the State and a strategic opposition to economic imperialism. Since 1993, the FARC has explicitly proposed that “the State must be the main owner and administrator in the strategic sectors: energy, communications, public services, roads, ports and natural resources.”<sup>111</sup> The FARC’s proposed State would control some key sectors of the economy not directly linked

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<sup>107</sup> Olga Marín, “Colombia: The FARC Speaks Out,” interview by Allen Jennings, *Links*, issue 11, January/April 1999; Internet, available at [http://www.dsp.org.au/links/back/issue11/11\\_FARC.pdf](http://www.dsp.org.au/links/back/issue11/11_FARC.pdf); Accessed on 16 Feb. 2006.

<sup>108</sup> Reyes, internet source cited above.

<sup>109</sup> “Plataforma para un Gobierno de Reconstrucción y Reconciliación Nacional,” FARC documents, 3 Apr. 1993, reproduced in Pedro Lanoso, “Comentarios sobre la Plataforma,” *Revista Nueva Colombia*, no 1; Internet, available at [www.movimiento-bolivariano.org/](http://www.movimiento-bolivariano.org/); Accessed on 19 Feb. 2006.

<sup>110</sup> Reyes, internet source cited above.

<sup>111</sup> “Plataforma para un Gobierno de Reconstrucción y Reconciliación Nacional,” internet source cited above.

with production,<sup>112</sup> and would assume basic welfare responsibilities such as providing “health, housing, education and drinkable water,” and the execution of “an agrarian policy directed against the large estate and the colonial remnants in some sectors of our countryside.”<sup>113</sup> Unlike the Soviet case, according to one FARC spokeswoman, the State should oversee fundamental strategies but not control production, “because this ends up with control over everything and then nothing works.”<sup>114</sup> The anti-imperialist component of FARC’s socialism is reflected in the State’s duties to restrict the participation of foreign firms in the exploitation of natural and biological resources, to renounce the “un-payable” external debt, and to turn Colombia into a more self-sufficient food producer, in order reduce dependency on those who control the international markets and exert “imperialism.”<sup>115</sup> Socialism should not isolate the Colombian economy from the rest of the world. “We are not opposed to international trade. We are opposed, though, to international exploitation, which is called ‘trade,’”<sup>116</sup> explained spokesman Marcos Calarcá.

The FARC’s ideological discourse in the late 1980s and early 1990s was designed to revitalize the group’s identity around Marxist-Leninist and other socialist principles, as an expression of a core value: social justice. However, the need to adapt its ideological platform to a decade of global skepticism towards revolutionary socialism pushed the FARC to use more prominently a nationalist element previously underdeveloped in its discourse. After

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<sup>112</sup> “Ponencia del Lanzamiento del Movimiento Bolivariano,” FARC documents, Bolivarian Movement, 29 Apr. 2000; Internet, available at <http://www.ciponline.org/colombia/00011Bolivariano.htm>; Accessed on 15 Feb. 2006.

<sup>113</sup> “Ponencia del Lanzamiento del Movimiento Bolivariano,” internet source cited above.

<sup>114</sup> Marín, internet source cited above.

<sup>115</sup> Marcos Calarcá, “Colombia: The FARC Speaks Out,” internet source cited above.

<sup>116</sup> Calarcá, internet source cited above.

1993, the FARC redefined the vision it had of itself, not denying Marxist-Leninist principles, but adding our Liberator Simon Bolivar's thought, and all the Latin American revolutionary thought."<sup>117</sup> Making use of the figure of historical hero Simón Bolívar, revered in five countries as a major leader during the successful independence wars from Spain between 1810 and 1830, the FARC opted for decisively integrating a nationalist element to its socialist revolution. "We have never denied we are a Marxist-Leninist organization," said a FARC leader in 2004. "In the FARC, a squadron is composed of 12 men or women, and that's a cell of the Communist Party, and there we educate our combatants in all Marxist-Leninist thought. We believe that position is far from outdated. Besides, we added Bolivarian thought to Marxism, because we think Bolivar has a lot to do in Latin America."<sup>118</sup>

The FARC's Bolivarianism in the post-Cold War period served not to place the organization historically in times of crisis, but also to connect with the anti-imperialist movement that sprang-up around the globe in the 1990s. The figure of Simón Bolívar had undergone a particular re-creation by Marxist authors since the 1920s, and the FARC, as well as other insurgent groups in Colombia and Venezuela, made use of it during the twentieth-century to position their revolution in a historical perspective. In the 1990s Bolívar became a crucial ideological element that defined the FARC's identity. The Bolívar recreated by the FARC is a popular hero, and his war, an inconclusive bourgeois anti-colonial revolution. Represented as the antithesis of other Colombian aristocratic leaders such as Francisco de Paula Santander, Bolívar has been reconfigured as a class-conscious bourgeois who understood the unjust colonial economic system of production as a legitimate motive for

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<sup>117</sup> Reyes, internet source cited above.

<sup>118</sup> Ricardo G., internet source cited above.



insurrection.<sup>119</sup> On an international level, Bolívar is a useful face to show, because socialist Latin Americans consider him a champion of anti-imperialism, underlining his distrust of (and downplaying his admiration for) the United States model. “Against imperialism, for the fatherland! Against the oligarchy, for the people! Long live the Bolivarian Movement for the New Colombia!”<sup>120</sup> FARC’s documents often concluded after 1997. According to Raúl Reyes, one of FARC’s top leaders, “the FARC is a political-military organization, of Marxist-Leninist inception, fed by the emancipatory, anti-imperialist, integrationist and libertarian thought of the Liberator Simón Bolívar.”<sup>121</sup> The FARC used the “anti-imperialist” Bolívar to click with anti-globalization movements that sprang up in the 1990 all over the world, arguing that Colombia was a victim of U.S. imperialism, particularly of U.S. aid to the Colombian government’s military forces, which were directed against the FARC.<sup>122</sup> The guerilla group’s international messages called for world solidarity based on the common anti-imperialist platform, reaching out to the Iraqi and Palestinian peoples in the Middle East; Africans, Asians and Europeans in general; and particularly Cubans, Venezuelans, Brazilians, Bolivians, Ecuadorians, Salvadorians, Peruvians, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Argentineans and Chileans in Latin America.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> José Grigulevich, “Simón Bolívar: Vida, Lucha y Lugar en la Historia,” in *Simón Bolívar en el Pensamiento Soviético Contemporáneo*, Nelson Barroleta ed. (Mérida: Editorial Venezolana C.A., 1984), 19-73.

<sup>120</sup> Jesús Santritch, “Movimiento Bolivariano por la Nueva Colombia: Tres Años de Lucha,” *Revista Nueva Colombia*, no 1; Internet, available at [www.movimiento-bolivariano.org/](http://www.movimiento-bolivariano.org/); Accessed on 19 Feb. 2006.

<sup>121</sup> “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.

<sup>122</sup> “¡Clinton Go Home!” FARC documents, Central Staff Secretariat, 23 Aug. 2000; Internet, available at <http://six.swix.ch/FARCEp/Comunicados/2000/clinton.html>; Accessed on 19 Feb. 2006.

<sup>123</sup> “Saludo de Año Nuevo a los Gobiernos y Pueblos del Mundo,” FARC documents, International Commission, Dec. 2003/Jan. 2004; Internet, available at [http://www.FARCEp.org/novedades/comunicados/sec2004/diciembre\\_enero\\_2004.php](http://www.FARCEp.org/novedades/comunicados/sec2004/diciembre_enero_2004.php); Accessed on 17 Feb. 2006.

With its reinvigorated Marxist-Leninist commitment, the FARC has demonstrated a consistent ideological effort to complement its military and logistical concerns and has adapted to a post-Cold War scenario by deploying nationalist Bolivarianism. After three decades of trying to attract supporters to its socialist agenda, the FARC reacted to its political isolation after 1991 by calling on regional solidarity and national support from groups and individuals not necessarily attracted to Soviet-style socialism, but willing to contribute to a diffuse anti-imperialist agenda.

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In sum, insurgencies in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Colombia consistently advanced ideological discourses, recreated according to the changing contexts of the post-Cold War. Ideologies played a major role in the identity and strategy of armed insurgencies prolonged throughout the 1990s and into the early twentieth-first century. Among post-Cold War ideologies, three seem to play the most relevant role along armed insurgencies: religious fundamentalism, nationalism and socialism, though they differ from their Cold War versions in their capacity to be mixed and adapted, unconstrained by theoretical frameworks. However, I will argue that ideologies play more than simply a discursive and rhetoric role; they are a decisive component of the rebels' political-military effort. In the second chapter, I will examine how each of the insurgent organizations cited in this paper put into practice its ideological precepts at the organizational level, and how its strategies were guided by ideological principles.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE TANGIBLE EFFECTS OF IDEOLOGIES

The consistent advancement of an ideologically-driven discourse throughout long periods of time, as evidenced in the first chapter, suggests the existence of a relevant political component within the examined insurgent organizations, which marks a difference with other types of organized violence. Rebel discourses show a great degree of flexibility and adaptability, reaching out to various groups and changing as political contexts evolve. This chapter will elaborate on the function of ideologies within the overall insurgent strategy, beyond a rhetorical-discursive level, and on the tangible strategic and tactical results the insurgents seek to obtain through ideological warfare.

First, this chapter will demonstrate how ideologies affect the organic structure of the rebel forces and heavily influence their political decisions. Far from considering ideological discourse as a non-central component aimed at adding some political gains to their core war strategy -particularly to legitimize their violent means-, the insurgencies here examined take the political implications of their discourse very seriously. As a result, both the bureaucratic distribution of power within their organizations and the political structures they create to establish control over the communities under their influence are modeled after ideological patterns. Secondly, this chapter will provide evidence that suggests the effectiveness of ideological tools for the achievement of concrete shorter term tactical results.

Not only do ideologies determine the rebels' structures and strategic agenda for the long run; they also serve short-term tactical purposes that let the insurgents sustain or escalate their wars. In other words, the subject of this chapter is insurgent ideology in practice.

### **The Taliban's Revival of the Past**

In Afghanistan, the Taliban's nationalist-fundamentalist ideology served it in military terms to create an army characterized by superior discipline when compared to those of the other Afghan factions in the civil war, thereby gaining the respect of the masses. Ideology provided a model of indigenous State structure and a government style that enforced the Taliban's values in Afghanistan's day life. The Taliban's inability to put an end to the Afghan civil war, I will argue, can be blamed on an internal contradiction within its nationalist project.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban Movement organized itself initially as a purifying force aimed at restoring the peace and security that Afghan warlords had not been able to provide after the end of their nationalist war against the Soviets in 1989. There is no scholarly consensus, though, on how much the Taliban's indoctrination must be regarded as the source of its discipline or popularity. The Taliban's origins and motivations have been explained in less-than-idealistic terms by outsiders, exposing its use of large sums of money to bribe and buy off warlords.<sup>124</sup> Transport mafias, it has been said, aided and encouraged the Taliban to defeat the onerous illegal tax collectors imposed by warlords on the country's main roads.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Kamal Matinuddin, *The Taliban Phenomenon: Afghanistan 1994-1997*, (Oxford, 1999), in Willem Vogelsang, *The Afghans*, (Oxford, 2002), 222-3.

<sup>125</sup> Angelo Rasanayagam, *Afghanistan: A Modern History*, (London: I.B. Taurus, 2003), 182.

And at its inception, the Taliban was accused of receiving logistical and financial support from Pakistan's intelligence services and the Jamiat-i-Ulema-i-Islam political party, as well as from Saudi donors and even indirectly from the United States.<sup>126</sup> But even if the Taliban made use of money's power of persuasion, that does not explain the popular welcome of its rule. Its ideology, if not fully convincing, had to be at least acceptable to the masses.<sup>127</sup> Given the impossibility of keeping military forces all over the country to control population, insurgents had to rely on popular submission in order to control newly conquered territories. "They are not in a position to station Taliban soldiers in every village in the country", wrote a commentator. "They could only take a place with the cooperation of the local people".<sup>128</sup> And at the height of its power, the Taliban conquered around 90 percent of the country.

The rapid rate of growth of the Taliban movement between 1994 and 1996 and the lack of resistance from people falling under its control are direct consequences of its success in conveying a credible political message. The message was that the Taliban was different from other warring factions and was truly committed to enforce Islamic ethical behaviors. According to U.S. sources in 1994 Pakistan, the Taliban "appear to enjoy the open admiration of most Afghans for taking action against extortionist party commanders and unresponsive party leadership. A number of Afghan political opportunists and has-beens are flocking to the Taliban in hopes of resuscitating moribund political careers. The strong support the Taliban receive from the Afghan people reflects popular frustration with the party

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<sup>126</sup> Rasanayagam, 181; also Amalendu Misra, *Afghanistan: The Labyrinth of Violence*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 66; Matinuddin, 222-3; and Anthony Davis, "How the Taliban Became a Military Force," in *Fundamentalism Reborn*, William Maley ed. (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 2002), 56.

<sup>127</sup> Abdul Sattar, "Jihad to Civil War," in *Afghanistan: Past, Present & Future*, Institute of Regional Studies (Islamabad: PanGraphics, 1997), 479.

<sup>128</sup> Nabi Misdaq, *Afghanistan: Political Frailty and Foreign Interference*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 188.

leaders and a strong desire for peace and stability”.<sup>129</sup> Politically, the guerrilla force quickly arose among the Afghan population as a credible alternative force of order, as opposed to selfish and uncontrolled troops. Omar presented himself as a real alternative to the power-hungry and ruthless warlords. Even though many people resented the strict legal codes implemented by the Taliban, most were happy to see its members’ discipline and restraint, compared to the pillage, destruction and rape to which other local militias had accustomed them.<sup>130</sup> The Taliban’s strict codes prohibited fighters from looting, although exceptions occurred. Overall, it was clear that the Taliban fighters were subject to the strictest discipline<sup>131</sup> and definitively appeared “orderly and much more disciplined than the other Afghan factions.”<sup>132</sup> An American witness to the Taliban takeover of Herat in 1996 characterized its troops, which he estimated at between 3,000-4,000, as “extremely well behaved. The Taliban appeared to have plenty of money, and insisted on paying for their purchases, which were not lavish: mostly grapes, watermelons and bread. They politely refused offers of hospitality from the Herati merchants, saying that they had orders to take only what they paid for.” He noted that the Taliban members did not act as ‘occupiers’ and suggested that the Taliban discipline “derived from draconian justice imposed by their leaders.”<sup>133</sup> On the contrary, at early stages of the Herati battle, local troops were

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<sup>129</sup> “The Taliban-Who Knows what the Movement Means,” U.S. Embassy (Islamabad) Cable, 28 Nov. 1994; Internet, available at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB97/tal3.pdf>; Accessed on 28 Nov. 2006.

<sup>130</sup> John F. Burns, “An Afghan Village, Destroyed at the Hands of Men who Vowed Peace,” *The New York Times*, 27 Oct. 1996, Page. 5; also *Historical Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions and Insurgencies*, 26; Matinuddin, 222-3; Misdaq, 178; and Sattar, 478.

<sup>131</sup> Rasanayagam, 194.

<sup>132</sup> “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.

<sup>133</sup> “The Taliban: What We’ve Heard,” internet source cited above.

emboldened by their initial success against the Taliban and poured “in the search of loot”.<sup>134</sup> In a matter of days, the Taliban finally returned to oust them. A 1997 report in the British *Daily Telegraph* pictured the popular embracing of the Taliban: “One reason the Taliban swept through two-thirds of Afghanistan so quickly is that they did not pillage. Refugees from areas seized by Ahmed Shah Massoud’s forces<sup>135</sup> have confirmed their reputation as robbers and looters. An old man who fled his home in the city of Charikar spat in disgust. ‘They did not even leave one needle in our homes. If the Taliban comes again, I will even obey their donkey’... The prospect of liberation by Ahmed Shah Massoud has not filled the people of Kabul with joy. A significant number would rather remain under the yoke of the Taliban, simply because, as the single strongest force in the country they represent the best chance for peace.”<sup>136</sup>

In military terms, the Taliban discipline translated into a more consistent willingness to sacrifice, not only for the sake of the movement itself, but for the ideological implications. Since 1984, madrassas offered both ideological and military training to hundreds of young boys who supplied the Islamist fronts.<sup>137</sup> And during the 1990s, prospective Taliban recruits were trained to be part of a political-religious project in which they were basically offered glory and battlefield martyrdom. The ideological training in the madrassas was intrinsically linked with the military. “Most of these young students felt obligated to continue the path of

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<sup>134</sup> “Eyewitness to the Fall of Heart Says Taliban are Winning Hearts and Minds – For Now,” U.S. Embassy (Islamabad) Cable, 18 Feb. 1996; Internet, available at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB97/tal12.pdf>, Accessed on 28 Nov. 2006.

<sup>135</sup> Ahmed Shah Massoud was minister of Defense of the fragile Afghan Government since 1992, after being a reputed pashjiri mujahideen against the Soviets. Since the Taliban takeover of Kabul, he became the most important leader of the anti-Taliban resistance.

<sup>136</sup> Misdaq, 189.

<sup>137</sup> Rasanayagam, 177-178.

those martyred in the war. At the school, attendance in the armed struggle had also been preached as a religious duty. Thus, these students received military training when they were in religious services for the local mujahideen groups in Afghanistan. In this regard, the military training became a regular part of the curriculum of these religious schools”.<sup>138</sup> In the words of a young Taliban fighter about the battle for Kabul in 1996, “we plunge ourselves wave after wave until we have humbled the enemy”<sup>139</sup>.

### *The National Project*

While the Taliban’s indoctrination into values of purity and order provided it with tactical gains of recruitment and popular acceptance, its growingly nationalist discourse enabled it to build a credible political vision that ensured the transition of the organization from tribal force to national government. But some scholars do not agree that the Taliban had a political ideology. Others have even refused to talk about a Taliban State, alleging that they did not address any State function beyond the monopoly of violence.<sup>140</sup> But in fact, the Taliban not only developed a nationalist discourse as it evolved from a tribal movement into a national liberation guerrilla group. It also instituted a political system based on its own recreation of the Afghan past, which traditionally merged religious and other practices as sources of political order.

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<sup>138</sup> Nematollah Nojumi, “The Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan,” (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 123.

<sup>139</sup> 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), 262.

<sup>140</sup> “The Taliban-Who Knows What the Movement Means,” internet source cited above; also Olivier Roy, “Has Islamism a future in Afghanistan?,” in *Fundamentalism Reborn*, 210; Rasanayagam, 203; and Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 93.



The Taliban's vision of the State that emerged from its nationalist-fundamentalist ideology meant literally a return to the past, to the historical traditions, particularly to the Afghanistan of Ahmed Shah Durrani in the seventeenth-century. Since the birth of the Afghan nation in the 1700s, it had been ruled mainly by a succession of "amirs", a religious title conceded to the head of government in a particular territory or "dawlat". The amirs are technically protectors of individual sections of a great unity, the Ummah, which is led by caliphs.<sup>141</sup> This cosmology made Islam compatible with the emergence of a limited territorial unity called Afghanistan, which has been regarded as a nation by the Afghan people since the eighteenth century. Under that logic, in October 1997 the Taliban, which had ousted the Kabul government of Burhanuddin Rabbani the previous year, renamed the country from Islamic State of Afghanistan to Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.<sup>142</sup> Tribal pashtu values and styles of government that could be traced back to Ahmed Shah Durrani, the Father of the Nation, guided Mullah Omar's rule. The leader of the Taliban, entitled "Commander of the Faithful" since 1996, used to leave his heavily guarded compound and showy vehicle caravan to get on a cheap motorcycle and mix with the common folks to learn of their problems, and in no few cases, provide them with needed military or civil hardware. "He wanted to know their problems, to see if they were being treated well by the Taliban," revealed Omar's driver Qari Saheb.<sup>143</sup> Precisely his effort at micromanagement of daily life, as opposed to macro projects appropriate for a State administrator, clearly show the imprint of tribal and religious

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<sup>141</sup> Misdaq, 31.

<sup>142</sup> "Afghan Turmoil," *Reuters*, 27 Oct. 1997; Internet, available at [http://www.alertnet.org/db/crisisprofiles/AF\\_REC.htm?v=timeline](http://www.alertnet.org/db/crisisprofiles/AF_REC.htm?v=timeline); Accessed on 18 Oct. 2006.

<sup>143</sup> Thomas Evan, "Mullah Omar, Off the Record," *Newsweek*, 21 Jan. 2002, 26-28. Also Juan R.I. Cole, "The Taliban, Women, and the Hegelian Private Sphere," New School for Social Research, Gale Group; Internet, available at [http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m2267/is\\_3\\_70/ai\\_110737778/pg\\_4](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2267/is_3_70/ai_110737778/pg_4); Accessed on 18 Oct. 2006.

values of pashtu religious students.<sup>144</sup> During his rule, Durrani established a government whose main body was a council of nine Afghan chiefs “who shared the responsibility of decisions but left all real authority with the young king”.<sup>145</sup> Following that model, Omar’s Taliban initially created a provisional authority based on an eight-member Kandahari High Shura (council) and a 22-member lower shura, composed of religious students (maulavis and mullahs), with Omar as the ultimate authority. The shuras used to summon tribal elders, ulema, military commanders and governors to coordinate important decisions. Later on, after ousting the previous regime, the Taliban’s State became more complex and in 1999 Omar ordered the formation of “hundreds of Islamic councils to supervise judicial and administrative affairs in the provinces”.<sup>146</sup>

While the Taliban’s nationalism reorganized the State according to a tribal-historical tradition inspired by the Durrani rule, the style of government was informed by the Prophet Mohammed’s reign of the seventh-century. As “Commander of the Faithful,” Mullah Omar convinced himself that the Taliban would return Afghanistan to a golden era of pious society. He viewed his own role as that of rightful successor to the Prophet in Afghan lands, a role reinforced with symbols like his personal use of perfume believed to be the same as Mohammed’s.<sup>147</sup> In spite of its rebuilding efforts, the Taliban government made clear that

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<sup>144</sup> William Maley, “Interpreting the Taliban,” in *Fundamentalism Reborn*, 20.

<sup>145</sup> *Historical Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions and Insurgencies*, 1.

<sup>146</sup> “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](http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB97/tal8.pdf); Accessed on 28 Oct. 2006; “Afghanistan: Taliban Convene Ulema, Iran and Bin Laden,” U.S. Department of State (Washington) Cable, 25 Sep. 1998; Internet, available at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB97/tal27.pdf>; Accessed on 26 Oct. 2006; also “Afghanistan: Taliban Official Says that Relations with Russia and Iran ‘Tense’,” U.S. Embassy (Islamabad) Cable, 29 Sep. 1997; Internet, available at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB97/tal18.pdf>; Accessed on 27 Oct. 2006; Rasanayagam, 192-196; and *Historical Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions and Insurgencies*, lxxiii.

material progress would come second in importance of spiritual progress; Its rejection to mass consumer society and its Department of Prevention of Vice and Promotion of Virtue corresponded to its own definition of development.<sup>148</sup> Given its zeal for doctrinal purity, and contrary to the general perception, the Taliban, as a students' movement, placed great importance on general education. Its members wanted to reinstate a carefully redesigned educational system when they could guarantee it would be free from what they considered corrupting influences.<sup>149</sup> Before they could institute a formal system of education, the Taliban relied on the practices of Mohammed's empire, available to them through Muslim written tradition. In addition, Taliban officers revived public executions as an exemplary measure to educate society in virtue. "Thirty-thousand men and boys poured into the dilapidated Olympic sports stadium in Kabul, capital of Afghanistan. Street hawkers peddled nuts, biscuits and tea to the waiting crowd. The scheduled entertainment? They were there to see a young woman, Sohaila, receive 100 lashes, and to watch two thieves have their right hands amputated. Sohaila had been arrested for walking with a man who was not a relative, a sufficient crime for her to be found guilty of adultery. Since she was single, the crime was punishable by flogging; had she been married, she would have been publicly stoned to death."<sup>150</sup> In Kandahar, on February 28, 1998, three men accused of sodomy who were sentenced to die were put against a wall, and then a bulldozer tore it down over them. One

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<sup>147</sup> Evan, 26-28.; also Cole, internet source cited above.

<sup>148</sup> M.J. Gohari, *The Taliban, Ascent to Power*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 57.

<sup>149</sup> "Accomplishment of the Taliban Islamic Movement and its Aims," Taliban New York Office; Internet, available at <http://web.archive.org/web/19981206235857/www.taleban.com/moveaims.htm>; Accessed on 27 Oct. 2006; also "Facts and realities under the Taliban administration," New York Office; Internet, available at <http://web.archive.org/web/19981206235857/www.taleban.com/comment.htm>; Accessed on 26 Oct. 2006; and Nabi Misdaq, 190.

<sup>150</sup> Jan Goodwin, "Buried Alive: Afghan Women Under the Taliban," *On the Issues Summer*, vol. 7 no. 3, 1998; Internet, available at <http://www.echonyc.com/~onissues/su98goodwin.html>; Accessed on 27 Oct. 2006.

man reportedly survived and was set free. This “bizarre and labor-intensive form of execution” was attended by Omar, to whom was attributed the punishment that a contemporary of Prophet Mohammed recommended for this crime.<sup>151</sup>

The logic of the Taliban government is not only evidence of its commitment to a Fundamentalist ideology but also of its nationalist project, since it is not possible to understand the Taliban’s particular interpretation of a “pure” Islamic society without acknowledging the way tribal customs historically shaped it. The acceptance of mullahs and ulama as legitimate legal arbiters, the harsh punishments for adultery and the right to vengeance of the offended are more related to Afghan tradition than to Islamic faith.<sup>152</sup> Repression of women and imposition of a strict dress code are not merely religious but also nationalist expressions of the Taliban project; the use of the burqa, particularly, is not an Islamic costume but an Afghan tradition imported from India. The enforcing of the burqa, besides the Islamic veil, corresponded not only to logic of purity but also to local values.<sup>153</sup> According to the Taliban, “Islam and Afghan tradition attach the greatest importance to the honor and safety of women in the society,” and covering women’s faces “is a measure that is undertaken for the simple reason of protecting the honor, dignity, and personal safety of the women in Afghanistan”.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Goodwin, internet source cited above; also *Historical Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions and Insurgencies*, lxxii.

<sup>152</sup> Martin Ewans, *Afghanistan: A Short Story of Its People and Politics*, (New York: Perennial/Harper Collins Publishers, 2002), 266; see also Asta Olesen, *Islam and Politics in Afghanistan*, (Richmond: Curzon Press Ltd, 1995).

<sup>153</sup> Nancy Hatch Dupree, “Afghan Women under the Taliban,” in *Fundamentalism Reborn*, 152-153; Misdaq, 191; and Jon Lee Anderson, *The Lion’s Grave: Dispatches from Afghanistan*, (New York: Grove Press, 2002), 50-51.

<sup>154</sup> “Accomplishment of the Taliban Islamic Movement and its Aims,” internet source cited above.

Nationalism, defined not only as an expression of tribal customs but as a rejection of foreign influences, gained ground among the Taliban, while the group's core value, purity, was expressed not only in religious but nationalist terms. Some scholars explain Taliban rule as a rejection of Western lifestyles, and consider it "above all an anti-modernist movement."<sup>155</sup> However, its ideology was intended to protect the nation from foreign corrupting influences, not to wage a political war against the modern world.<sup>156</sup> As a western ideology, Communism not only represented for many Afghans a painful memory of a brutal invasion but an immoral influence within their society. As a result, once in power, the Taliban's first wave of rage was unleashed against social modernization, mass education, gender equality, women's liberties, aesthetic male standards (wear mustachios rather than beards), and the public abuse of whiskey, vodka and drugs associated with the "corrupt" communist rule. The leaders who installed such "corruption" paid with their lives.<sup>157</sup> As soon as the Taliban entered Kabul in September 27, 1996, they raided the United Nations compound where the last communist president, Mohammed Najibullah, had been confined by the Rabbani government since 1992, executed him along with his brother and two more ex communist officials, and then displayed their corpses hanging from a pole in the streets of Kabul. The same day, it announced to the populace the establishment of an Islamic State in Afghanistan<sup>158</sup>. Along with communist heritage and influence, the Taliban aimed to get rid of all pernicious western influences. It asked students and working women to stay home, made

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<sup>155</sup> Ewans, 269-270; also Misra, 70; and William Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 232.

<sup>156</sup> Roy, 210.

<sup>157</sup> Eric S Margolis, *War at the Top of the World*, (New York: Routledge, 2000), 49-50.

<sup>158</sup> Ewans, 260; also *Historical Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions and Insurgencies*, plxx.

them wear the purdah, or destroyed cinemas where western movies were projected.<sup>159</sup> Radio Sha'ria once announced the arrest and condemnation of 28 people for having given young men a Leonardo Di Caprio haircut. The Taliban had issued a fatwa or decree of death against Leonardo Di Caprio and his co-star, Kate Winslet, should they ever come to Afghanistan, because they appeared in a movie said to celebrate love out of wedlock.<sup>160</sup> And one way of understanding the reluctance of the Taliban government to push ahead with a national program of education is its true horror of an existing education system still influenced by a 'corrupt' past, and its incapability of directing its efforts toward rewriting Afghan history in the middle of a civil war.<sup>161</sup>

The Taliban's nationalism faced an internal contradiction in regard to its conception of Afghan territoriality: while it made concrete efforts to reunite what was considered the historically Afghan territory with all its ethnic populations, at times it seemed to reach out the pashtu population across the Pakistani border. The Taliban government established in 1996 even refused to recognize the contested Afghan-Pakistani border, and doing so fueled hopes of nationalists, who for centuries had dreamed of a pashtun nation called Pashtunistan.<sup>162</sup> This tendency to equate national identity with the aspiration of a particular ethnic group undermined the Taliban's capacity to reach out other ethnic groups. In order to placate the minorities' fears of pashtunization, the Taliban opted to include, and even over-represent,

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<sup>159</sup> Sreedar, 262.

<sup>160</sup> Latifa, *Visage Vole: Avoir Vingt Ans a Kaboul*, (Paris: Anne Carrière, 2001), 204-205.

<sup>161</sup> Rakesh Sinha, "The Taliban as I Saw It," in *Taliban and the Afghan Turmoil*, (New Delhi: Himalayan Books, 1997), 45.

<sup>162</sup> "Pakistan [Excised] On Afghanistan, HUA, Bin Laden," U.S. Embassy. (Islamabad) Cable, February 27, 1997; Internet, available at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB97/talib2.pdf>; Accessed on 18 Oct. 2006; also "Finally, A Talkative Talib: Origins and Membership of the Religious Students," internet source cited above; Rashid, 187; and Ewans, 147-148.

minorities in the governing councils known as shuras.<sup>163</sup> Although widely seen in 1994 as a movement of “nationalists and pashtuns”,<sup>164</sup> the Taliban invited other ethnicities to join its national campaign “as long as they do not engage in ‘anti-afghan’ politics” like autonomist claims.<sup>165</sup> But the fact that the most prominent leaders of the opposition to the Taliban and their supporters were Tajiks, Panshjis and Uzbeks, made these ethnic groups victims of the Taliban’s campaign to reunify the country. Although ethnic hatred was used to prompt military operations and massacres against the rebel hazaras, the open warfare between Taliban and them was always described by the former in nationalist terms.<sup>166</sup>

### *Radicalization Phase*

The Taliban’s ideology emerged in the early 1990s out of the core value of purity and a strict rejection of corrupting foreign influences. But after 1998, when the western world seemed to reject the Taliban’s style of rule, the Movement’s response was to radicalize its nationalist puritanical policies. Later in 2001, when confrontation with the U.S. looked inevitable, it decided to incorporate the pan-Islamic revolutionary ideals. The Taliban’s realization of the impossibility of forging friendly relations with the West and finding a place in the West-ridden international order, had as a result a radicalizing effect. By adoption of the revolutionary ideals of Osama Bin Laden, the Taliban redefined itself as an antagonist to the West, and particularly the U.S.

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<sup>163</sup> Misdaq, 190.

<sup>164</sup> “The Taliban-Who Knows What the Movement Means,” internet source cited above.

<sup>165</sup> “The Taliban: What We’ve Heard,” internet source cited above.

<sup>166</sup> “Afghanistan: Demarche to Taliban on New Bin Laden Threat,” U.S. Embassy (Islamabad) Cable, 14 Sep. 14, 1998; Internet, available at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB134/Doc%206.pdf>; Accessed on 19 Oct. 2006.

The ideological transformation of the Taliban into a revolutionary movement brought about tangible changes in its day-to-day policies. Between 1998 and 2001, the Afghans were bombarded by a series of decrees aimed at instructing the population on the pure forms of Islamic life, and harsh punishment of trespassers. From the summer 1998, all girls in schools were sent home, the Taliban engaged in systematic destruction of television sets, and people were permanently tested on their knowledge of Islam and forbidden to converse with non-Muslims. They even established a code of punishments for not reciting Muslim prayers correctly five times daily. By 2000, men without beards were prohibited from working. The next year a complete ban on the internet was imposed. A second decree banning friendship with infidels was pushed ahead. The conversion to Christianity, encouraged by some foreign humanitarian workers, was to be punished with death. A campaign to destroy public statues was started. Later, foreigners were banned from drinking alcohol, eating pork, listening to loud music, or even being in contact with members of the opposite sex.<sup>167</sup> The Taliban's anti-communist stance hardened in 1998 with Omar's cancellation of amnesties given to former communists.<sup>168</sup> That same year anti-Hindu decrees were published. The Deobandi, Indian in origin, rejected any links to Hindu influence,<sup>169</sup> so the Taliban decided to force Hindus living in Afghanistan to wear yellow marks.<sup>170</sup> Three years later, the measure was reinforced, and a ban against Hindi women wearing the Afghan burqa was enforced, but the widespread international (and some internal) condemnation made the Taliban reverse this nationalist

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<sup>167</sup> *Historical Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions and Insurgencies*, lxxii-lxxvi.

<sup>168</sup> *Historical Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions and Insurgencies* lxxii.

<sup>169</sup> Rasanayagam, 177-178.

<sup>170</sup> *Historical Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions and Insurgencies*, lxxii.



discriminatory practice. International pressures delayed a trial against Christian workers accused of converting Muslims, as well.<sup>171</sup>

A different manifestation of the Taliban's radicalization came by 1999, when it became clear that international jihadist Osama Bin Laden exerted direct influence on the Movement and Omar himself. In spite of the 1999 and 2000 decrees released by the Taliban leader ordering the protection of the giant Buddhist Bamiyan statues as Afghan cultural heritage, he made a surprising u-turn six months later, and ordered their destruction as a corrupting un-Islamic influence. The journalist Kathy Ganon believes she found an explanation: "The final decision was up to Mullah Omar, who sought Bin Laden's direction. Bin Laden said 'destroy them.' It drove an irreparable wedge between the Taliban and the rest of the world. And it ensured that the Taliban belonged exclusively to Al Qaeda and Pakistan."<sup>172</sup>

The overthrow of the Taliban government in 2001 by the U.S. invasion, however, did not mean the end of the group's ideologically motivated armed struggle. Started as a guerrilla movement, the Taliban Movement became ruler of an Islamic State for five years and then waged a new insurgency against a new set of enemies. Since then, rhetoric and ideological warfare are as heated as ever. The imprint left by the Taliban's nationalist and fundamentalist ideology did not fade away after the fall of its government. Scholars reminded in 2002 that "support for its ethos and beliefs still lingers."<sup>173</sup> The enduring popularity of the Taliban in southern Afghanistan let it survive the 2001 U.S. military invasion. In 2007 it could still rely

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<sup>171</sup> *Historical Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions and Insurgencies*, lxxvi.

<sup>172</sup> Kathy Ganon, *I is for Infidel*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), 78-80.

<sup>173</sup> For the Taliban's comeback, see Jason Straziuso, "Insurgent Activity Rising in Afghanistan," *Associated Press*, 13 Nov. 2006; Internet, available at [http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20061112/ap\\_on\\_re\\_as/afghanistan\\_7](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20061112/ap_on_re_as/afghanistan_7); Accessed on 18 Oct. 2006; also Ewans, 262.

not only on merely military prowess but also on the support of those committed to the version of Islam espoused by the Taliban.<sup>174</sup> Its newly acquired jihadist revolutionary conscience bore it some fruits in terms of providing a logic for a renewed armed push and helping it to build alliances with forces such as Al Qaeda Hekmatyar's militias. As a result, insurgent attacks in Afghanistan against U.S. supporters in the post-Taliban regime multiplied four-fold between 2001 and 2006, leading to the death of 3,700 people in the first ten months in 2006, at a rate of 600 attacks per month. Taliban's ideas and cosmology had successfully adapted and survived.

### *Conclusions*

For seven years (1994-2001) the Taliban developed a powerful ideology fed principally by nationalistic and fundamentalist (or traditionalist) conceptions that not only helped it to take over power and grip it, but later survive again as an insurgency, incorporating jihadist and revolutionary elements into its struggle. Starting from a tribal-pashtun and Traditionalist view of ideal society, the Taliban successfully rallied support to wage a war against the ineffectiveness and perceived corruption of the ruling Islamist government. The undeniable popularity of the Movement, that promised to bring security and purity to Afghanistan, let it conclude a bloody but relatively swift campaign that overthrew the besieged government. The rigid indoctrination received by many Taliban combatants in the religious schools was a crucial factor in creating a cohesive military unit, while the further refining of a nationalist-fundamentalist ideology gave coherence to the process of mass conscription and building of political alliances that let it take over most of the country. The systematic re-creation of Afghan identity, and the appeal to religious and nationalist

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<sup>174</sup> Misra, 173.

myths and symbols not only re-affirmed the Taliban's grip on Afghan society but let it project a vision of nation and state that materialized between 1996 and 2001. The Afghan identity and popular perception of the nation, which was severely damaged and fragmented after 16 years of civil conflict, motivated the Taliban to re-create the sources of Afghan identity as it waged its military campaign. Reviving the myth of a national origin in Ahmed Shah Durrani's rule, and appealing to the foundational principles of Islam, the Taliban proposed a total re-foundation of the Afghan society. The tribal pashtun laws and customs served as the basis for a process of national reconstruction based on five pillars: territorial sovereignty, multi-ethnicity, Sunni Deobandi principles, anti-communism and anti-western cultural influence. The Taliban's nationalist and fundamentalist ideology gave birth to a particular political structure, the Islamic emirate of Afghanistan, which had its legal, historical and moral basis in the foundational myths of the Afghan nation and Islam itself. The re-establishment of an Islamic structure of government inspired by Mohammed's seventh century empire, legitimized by a revalidation of the nation's first government in the eighteenth century, and fused with tribal laws, created a society centered in purity as the main indicator of development, and a promise of material improvement once the ongoing civil conflict was won. The Taliban's rejection of western cultural patterns did not mean a strategic confrontation. On the contrary, its government engaged in a series of diplomatic efforts aimed at gaining a place to the Taliban's emirate in the international community. The slow harmonization of Taliban's views and international demands, which started on topics of illegal drugs production and human rights issues, came to a stop because of international pressure to hand over the Saudi terrorist Osama Bin Laden. The world's rejection of the Taliban's government pushed its leadership towards a more ideological radicalization, which

ended up in its strategic alliance with the global jihadist movement inspired by Bin Laden and the incorporation of a revolutionary discourse into its nationalist and fundamentalist ideology.

The Taliban obtained specific military tactical gains out of the strict ideological indoctrination given to its members, and turned its nationalist and fundamentalist ideals into physical structures of power that enforced its values and shaped Afghan society, especially after 1996. Its ideological adaptation from strategic engagement with the West to outright confrontation with the U.S. provided it with a renewed sense of mission, once it returned to guerilla warfare. In the next section, I will show how Laurent Kabila effectively turned his socialist ideology into a Maoist-inspired State and redefined Congolese identity to save his project from a massive military push to oust him.

### **Kabila's Maoist State**

Laurent Kabila sustained a low-intensity war against Mobutu's regime between 1964 and 1996, until he became the president of the renamed Democratic Republic of Congo. Defying those who saw in him a regular warlord whose loyalties lay exclusively with loot and economic interest, Kabila pushed full-throttle to turn his country into a Maoist State that would become the greatest power on the continent, like an African China. He used all the power invested in him to design a national indoctrination campaign aimed at ensuring the survival of his communist experiment in the long run. Nationalism, as a complementary discourse, had proved to be key to his military victory against the Mobutu regime in 1996, and in 1998 it enabled his government to survive a cruel war that seemed poised to crush his political project in his early stages.

In the 1990s, nationalism served Kabila's purpose of supporting a core ideological cause: the construction of a super-power modeled after Chinese Socialism. His ideological commitment to that project was reflected in his tangible effort to reorganize the Congolese State to resemble more Maoist structures. "We decided to take the People's Republic of China like model for our country," his government announced in 1997. "We do not refuse co-operation with other countries, in particular those of the Occident. We simply decided to privilege this co-operation with China."<sup>175</sup> From 1997 to 1998, Kabila developed a series of concrete political transformations that reflected his socialist promises of creating a new type of society. "We are not going on with the preceding regime," he answered when asked for elections, "but creating a new state built on new values."<sup>176</sup> A new power structure centered on Kabila as supreme leader, and the widespread cult of personality he promoted, presenting himself as "Builder and Father of the Nation", have been cited as evidence of Kabila's egocentrism and craving for power, although this corresponded to a model similar to Stalin's Soviet Union and Mao's China.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Sakombi Inongo, cited in "Conference De Presse Du Chef De L'etat Du Mercredi 24 Decembre," *Agence Congolais de Presse*, 26 Dec. 1997; Internet, available at <http://web.archive.org/web/19980509054115/http://rdcongo.org/frames/acp/archives/Official.html>; Accessed on 19 Oct. 2006.

<sup>176</sup> 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), 60.

<sup>177</sup> Laurent Kabila, "Communication du Président de la République à l'Occasion de la Clôture du Séminaire-Atelier des Candidats Cadres du Service National," *Monthly Magazine of Connection & Information of the National Service*, Year 1 No. 2, 15 Mar. 1998; Internet, available at [http://web.archive.org/web/19980509045845/http://rdcongo.org/frames/acp/sn02\\_14.html](http://web.archive.org/web/19980509045845/http://rdcongo.org/frames/acp/sn02_14.html); Accessed on 20 Oct. 2006; also Inongo, cited in "Conference De Presse Du Chef De L'etat Du Mercredi 24 Decembre," internet source cited above; also "Le SN, ses Symboles et ses Signes Distinctifs," *Monthly Magazine of Connection & Information of the National Service (Kinshasa)*, year 1, no. 2, 1998; Internet, available at [http://web.archive.org/web/19980509050226/rdcongo.org/frames/acp/sn02\\_21.html](http://web.archive.org/web/19980509050226/rdcongo.org/frames/acp/sn02_21.html); Accessed on 20 Oct. 2006; and "Face aux Réalités de la Guerre, Kabila a Raison," *Digital Congo*, 15 Nov. 2000; Internet, available at <http://www.digitalcongo.net/article/290>; Accessed on 19 Oct. 2006.

One concrete example of power reorganization along Leninist principles was the creation of a myriad of organizations known as the *Comités du Pouvoir Populaire*, CPP (Committees of Popular Power), which were grouped at the local level in Councils and at regional level in Assemblies. The CPP were described by Kabila as “the executive body of the State assumed by the people,”<sup>178</sup> and in a simple way, “governments of the street.”<sup>179</sup> The Committees would monitor schools, neighborhoods and workplaces to both defend the revolutionary process (and the central government itself) and effectively administer power at the local level on behalf of it.<sup>180</sup>

The reorganization of State power has been interpreted by critics as evidence of Kabila’s intentions to create an unchecked autocratic government and satisfy his power and economic ambition. However, Kabila’s ambition went beyond merely rule: he wanted to transform Congolese society. Evidence of this is his plan to indoctrinate Congolese youth with socialist and nationalist values. To guarantee that his revolutionary plans would survive in the long term, Kabila designed a plan to train Congolese youth for military defense and economic production. This plan, which explicitly intended “to train the Congolese man ideologically” and “to inculcate the true love for the Fatherland in every Congolese,”<sup>181</sup> was rendered in the newly created National Service, through which youth would be indoctrinated economically and politically, as “the builders of the Fatherland” and the forgers of “the unit

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<sup>178</sup> Laurent Kabila, “Démocratiser la Société Congolaise à Partir de la Base,” speech 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.

<sup>179</sup> Laurent Kabila, “Créez Partout des Comités du Pouvoir Populaire,” speech of President Kabila to the Palate of the People, on Jan. 21, 1999; Internet, available at <http://www.deboutcongolais.info/discours1-cpp.htm>; Accessed on 20 Oct. 2006.

<sup>180</sup> Kabila, “Créez Partout des Comités du Pouvoir Populaire,” internet source cited above.

<sup>181</sup> “Conference De Presse Du Chef De L'etat Du Mercredi 24 Decembre,” internet source cited above..

and the national cohesion.”<sup>182</sup> The National Service truly became an obsession.<sup>183</sup> At the early stage of the program in 1998, around 6,600 young builders were targeted for indoctrination.<sup>184</sup> Distrustful of his own generation, Kabila saw Congolese youth “more dynamic, stronger, more resistant and also more malleable, prompt to change, and therefore more educatable’.”<sup>185</sup> As a result of the indoctrination process, the youths would “carry in their material luggage the case of the builder, and in their psychic luggage the spirit of the patriot, nationalist, resolutely decided to engage and gain the battle of development.”<sup>186</sup>

Kabila’s commitment to Maoism was reflected in his major economic policies too. Seven months after being sworn in as president, Laurent Kabila explained in detail the structure of the new Congolese state and the major policies to be undertaken by it. Since the economy would be controlled by the state, he announced the development of triennial plans through which he expected to see “multiplied by ten the productivity of the rural worker, whose working tools will necessarily undergo modernization,” as the Chinese had done since the late 1970s. As early as 1997, Kabila’s government declared a State priority the “promotion of domestic economy instead of the [export-led] economy of the Second

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<sup>182</sup> Laurent Kabila, “Discours Du Presiden De la Republique Democratique Du Congo,” 31 Dec. 1997; Internet, available at <http://web.archive.org/web/19980509054121/rdcongo.org/frames/acp/archives/Official3.html>; Accessed on 20 Oct. 2006. Also Kabila, cited in “Le Service National Et La Bataille Du Developpement,” *Monthly Magazine of Connection & Information of the National Service (Kinshasa)*, year 1, no. 2, 1998. 18; Internet, available at [http://web.archive.org/web/19980509050213/rdcongo.org/frames/acp/sn02\\_18.html](http://web.archive.org/web/19980509050213/rdcongo.org/frames/acp/sn02_18.html); Accessed on 19 Oct. 2006.

<sup>183</sup> “Le Service National Et La Bataille Du Developpement,” internet source cited above.

<sup>184</sup> “Le Service National: Reve Ou Realite,” *Monthly Magazine of Connection & Information of the National Service*, Year 1, no. 2, 15 Mar. 1998; reproduced at [http://web.archive.org/web/19980509050111/rdcongo.org/frames/acp/sn02\\_01.html](http://web.archive.org/web/19980509050111/rdcongo.org/frames/acp/sn02_01.html); Accessed on 20 Oct. 2006.

<sup>185</sup> “Le Service National Et La Bataille Du Developpement,” internet source cited above.

<sup>186</sup> Kalume Numbi Denis, “In Extenso, le Discours du Commandant SN, le Rapport Synthèse et le Discours du Chef de l’Etat,” *Monthly Magazine of Connection & Information of the National Service*, Year 1, no. 2, 15 Mar. 1998; Internet, available at [http://web.archive.org/web/19980509045845/http://rdcongo.org/frames/acp/sn02\\_05.html](http://web.archive.org/web/19980509045845/http://rdcongo.org/frames/acp/sn02_05.html); Accessed on 21 Oct. 2006.

Republic, in order to produce the full blooming and true prosperity of the Congolese.”<sup>187</sup> To lead the economic conversion, Kabila relied on the youth, conscripted for military-economic purposes through the newly created National Service.<sup>188</sup> Kabila himself handed over recently acquired machinery for agro-industry to underscore its importance.<sup>189</sup> Heavy industrialization, as in the Soviet and Chinese models, lay at the core of Kabila’s economic development project. “Where is our heavy industry? It is the mission of the State of the people, the mission of these people organized in Committees of the Popular Power to create a strong economy to make us respected. Because today, it is difficult to support the efforts of the war with this economy that only exists to give pleasure to those who adulterate. Therefore, we have the mission of creating a national industry. You want to have tanks, armoured tanks? But we can produce them ourselves, the facilities exist in certain factories. When we seized power, it was just to do that”.<sup>190</sup>

Less than one year into his mandate, by November 1997, polls suggested the popular euphoria following Mobutu’s overthrow had waned, and Kabila’s government was very unpopular.<sup>191</sup> When the crisis exploded in the form of armed rebellion, in August 1998, Kabila made use once more of a nationalist discourse to galvanize support, this time adding an ethnic component not present in his previous discourses. In August of that year, a Tutsi

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<sup>187</sup> “Conference De Presse Du Chef De L’etat Du Mercredi 24 Decembre,” internet source cited above.

<sup>188</sup> J.P. Kanangila Mwamba, “Chef de l’Etat Donne le ‘Go’ pour Kaniama-Kasese,” *Monthly Magazine of Connection & Information of the National Service (Kinshasa)*, year 1 no. 2, 1998; Internet, available at [http://web.archive.org/web/19980509050220/rdcongo.org/frames/acp/sn02\\_20.html](http://web.archive.org/web/19980509050220/rdcongo.org/frames/acp/sn02_20.html); Accessed on 21 Oct. 2006.

<sup>189</sup> Irung Kawang, “Manifestation Du Coup D’envoie La Bataille Pour Le Developpement A Lubumbashi,” *Monthly Magazine of Connection & Information of the National Service*, Year 1 no. 2, 15 Mar. 1998; Internet, available at [http://web.archive.org/web/19980509045845/http://rdcongo.org/frames/acp/sn02\\_16.html](http://web.archive.org/web/19980509045845/http://rdcongo.org/frames/acp/sn02_16.html); Accessed on 21 Oct. 2006.

<sup>190</sup> Kabila, “Créez partout des Comités du Pouvoir Populaire,” internet source cited above.

<sup>191</sup> Dunn, “A Survival Guide to Kinshasa,” 61; also Osita Afoaku, “Congo’s Rebels,” in *The African Stakes of the Congo War*, John F. Clark ed. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 112; and O’Ballance, 181.



rebellion erupted in the East: an armed organization known as the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD) supported the Tutsi-related Banyamulenge uprising, and, with Rwandan backing, started a national campaign to remove Kabila from power. Kabila's response was to appeal to nationalism, successfully turning what seemed to be an internal conflict into a patriotic war of national defense. Insightful literature explains the economic motivations for the Ugandan-Rwandan invasion of the D.R. Congo in 1998, and the Zimbabwean-Namibian-Angolan intervention to save Kabila, which led the United Nations to define this war as an economic-driven conflict.<sup>192</sup> The human cost has marked this conflict as one of the bloodiest in human history. The International Rescue Committee calculated 2.5 million deaths from August 1998 and April 2001 caused by the war, of which only 350,000 were due to direct acts of violence. The rest were due to illnesses, disease, starvation and crime derived from the humanitarian catastrophe. Forty percent of the victims were women and children.<sup>193</sup> In a broader account, the Worldwatch Institute estimated 3.8 million deaths in Congo from 1998 to 2005. It estimated that even then 31,000 civilians continued to die each month.<sup>194</sup>

However, under a real threat of being overthrown and seeing his political project derailed, Kabila appealed to nationalism, incorporating publicly for the first time an ethnic component to his warmaking, calling on the Congolese to expel all foreigners and branding

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<sup>192</sup> "Final Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo," United Nations document S/2002/1146, Oct. 2002; also Dani W. Nabudere, "Africa's First World War: Mineral Wealth, Conflicts and War in the Great Lakes Region," African Association of Political Science (Pretoria), *Occasional Papers Series*, vol. 8 no. 1, 2004.

<sup>193</sup> "Mortality Study, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Executive summary," International Rescue Committee, Feb-Apr 2001; Internet, available at <http://www.mindfully.org/Reform/Mortality-Study-DR-Congo.htm>; Accessed on 20 Oct. 2006; further statistics published by Reliefweb in <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/AllDocsByUNID/d78f00d4dd00c57bc12568f9004b7d1d>; Accessed on 20 Oct. 2006.

<sup>194</sup> Michael Renner, "Conflict and Peace Trends," in *Vital Signs 2005*, (New York: The Worldwatch Institute, 2005), 74-75.

all Tutsi as such.<sup>195</sup> As a result, since August 1998, Kabila's ethnicized nationalism made an anti-French and anti-Tutsi sentiment take over Kinshasa.<sup>196</sup> Only two days after the (Tutsi-related) Banyamulenge rebellion started, a ministerial order spread through the capital: shoot "any foreign troops in the capital."<sup>197</sup> The Banyamulenge's initial demands to be allowed to create an autonomous region in the mineral-rich border with Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania made Kabila's war call to maintain national unity more credible. It was reinforced by the Rwandan Tutsi claims of sovereignty over North Kivu as part of the old Kingdom of Rwanda.<sup>198</sup> The ethnicization of the conflict sharpened as soon as several Tutsi ministers deserted Kabila's government and joined the rebels,<sup>199</sup> bringing a dramatic escalation of government propaganda. According to the *Financial Times* and *The Guardian*, Kabila issued a statement on Congolese radio encouraging the use of "a machete, a spear, an arrow, a hoe, spades, rakes, nails, truncheons, electric irons, barbed wire... to kill the Rwandan Tutsi."<sup>200</sup> The ethnicization of the conflict gave the Tutsi-led Ugandan government a good reason to join the war and support a newly created rebel faction in northern Congo, the Mouvement de Libération du Congo (MLC), led by the businessman Jean-Pierre Bemba. The answer in Kinshasa was provided by paramilitary units: the systematic targeting and killing of Tutsi

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<sup>195</sup> Dunn, "A Survival Guide to Kinshasa," 62.

<sup>196</sup> O'Ballance, 182

<sup>197</sup> O'Ballance, 179.

<sup>198</sup> O'Ballance, 180.

<sup>199</sup> O'Ballance, 180.

<sup>200</sup> Kevin C. Dunn, *Imagining the Congo*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 155.; also Dunn, "A Survival Guide to Kinshasa," 67.

population,<sup>201</sup> while Kabila insisted his government was fighting an ‘invasion, not a rebellion.’<sup>202</sup>

Although Kabila’s heavy hand was eventually supported militarily by external allies, a skillful use of nationalist discourse proved to be a key factor in turning the tide against the rebels, who seemed poised for victory at the beginning of the conflict.<sup>203</sup> The war provided him with somebody to blame for his government’s economic shortcomings. In spite of the persistence of the very same problems that had made Kabila an unpopular ruler -poor economic performance, corruption, oppression- his popularity steadily and quickly rose as the conflict spread.<sup>204</sup> “It is to drive out this nightmare of dismemberment of our nation, that I invite you, young women and men of the democratic Congo, with an even more active fight and resistance, without mercy, against our enemies, until the day comes when we completely recover the territorial integrity, national independence, and international sovereignty of our country,” Kabila said in his 2001 New Year’s speech. “To reach this noble and legitimate objective, the Democratic Republic of Congo needs to maintain its internal cohesion, without the least crack.”<sup>205</sup> He portrayed the rebels as foreigners’ puppets and anti-patriots, and called upon not-Tutsi Congolese to fight “the anti-patriotic behavior of those of the Congolese who had chosen to diabolize the government of their own country.”<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> O’Ballance, 180.

<sup>202</sup> O’Ballance, 185.

<sup>203</sup> Afoaku, “Explaining the Failure of Democracy in the Democratic Republic of Congo,” 158.

<sup>204</sup> Dunn, “A Survival Guide to Kinshasa,” 66.

<sup>205</sup> Laurent Kabila, “Testament Laissé au Peuple Congolais,” speech of President Kabila at the time of New Year’s day 2001; Internet, available at [http://www.deboutcongolais.info/actualite4/art\\_195.html](http://www.deboutcongolais.info/actualite4/art_195.html); Accessed on 20 Oct. 2006.

<sup>206</sup> Kabila, “Testament Laissé au Peuple Congolais,” internet source cited above.

Kabila's true commitment to organize the Congo as a socialist State and the skillful use of a nationalist ideology left a durable imprint on his country, even after his assassination in 2001. His followers, both moderates and radicals, use him as a symbol of three simultaneous struggles: against imperialism, for pan-Africanism, and for national unification. The most common myth for Kabila is that of symbol of national unity, in which his socialist ideas are downplayed in favor of his nationalist postures.<sup>207</sup> Among moderates, Kabila's legacy is one of leadership. "Like that of Lumumba, his example of resistance and intransigence will inspire other Congolese. In the next forty years, another Lumumba and another Kabila will emerge to clear the road of the enemies of the Congolese people, in order to build a free, strong and prosper nation in the middle of the continent, one able to give impulse to the development of Central Africa, and why not, all Africa."<sup>208</sup> Among his most radical followers, Kabila's ideological discourse had the potential to feed new insurgencies. New organizations like the "Coordination of the Forces Lumumbistes, Mulelistes and Kabilistes" explicitly invited to defend Kabila's legacy and drive the counter-revolutionary forces out "like dogs."<sup>209</sup> In order to eliminate the counter-revolutionary forces, they declared

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<sup>207</sup> "On ne tue pas une Idée," *Digital Congo*, 10 Jan. 2001; Internet, available at <http://www.digitalcongo.net/article/742>; Accessed on 20 Oct. 2006; also Sakombi Inongo, "Message du Gouvernement de Salut Public à l'Occasion du Décès du Président de la République Laurent-Désiré Kabila," *Digital Congo*, 19 Jan. 2001; Internet, available at <http://www.digitalcongo.net/article/745>; Accessed on 20 Oct. 2006; and "Même Mort, Kabila Reste Vivant," *Digital Congo*, 19 Jan. 2001; Internet, available at <http://www.digitalcongo.net/article/746>; Accessed on 20 Oct. 2006.

<sup>208</sup> "Qui a tué Laurent-Désiré Kabila?," *Digital Congo*, 26 Jan. 2001; Internet, available at <http://www.digitalcongo.net/article/791>; Accessed on 20 Oct. 2006.

<sup>209</sup> "Déclaration de la Coordination des Forces Nationalistes Révolutionnaires à l'Occasion de l'An 1 de l'Accord Global, 17 Décembre 2002 - 2003," Coordination of the Revolutionary Nationalist Forces/Lumumba-Mulele-Kabila, 17 Dec. 2003; Internet, available at [http://www.deboutcongolais.info/declaration\\_5.html](http://www.deboutcongolais.info/declaration_5.html); Accessed on 20 Oct. 2006.

themselves ready to reconstitute the political and paramilitary forces established by Kabila.<sup>210</sup> War against Rwanda was expected, denounced or even promoted by these groups.<sup>211</sup>

### *Conclusions*

Laurent Kabila's revolutionary life combined a series of motivations the most important one being his genuine desire to establish a China-inspired socialist State, for which purpose he rallied his countrymen's support by refining and making use of a nationalist discourse. Kabila's ideological formation in many socialist countries, particularly Maoist China, and his life as a revolutionary companion of mythical figures such as Patrice Lumumba and Pierre Mulele, turned him into a loyal Maoist willing to spend his life on a revolution that was to make Congo a regional power and the ideological center for African, and even global, socialism. In order to construct such a state, Kabila made use of identity politics and embarked on a project of redefining the Congolese nation in terms of opposition to the previous regime's national discourse, while ethnicity only came to prominence after 1998, when Kabila actively branded Tutsis as foreigners. While a common depiction of his career as revolutionary from the 1960s to the early 1990s projected the negative image of a lascivious, undisciplined, authoritarian and greedy figure, due to his active engagement in illegal cross-border trade at that time, evidence demonstrates that he never ceased to be a committed revolutionary, heavily influenced by Mao's ideas. As the years passed he developed a vision of State that he put into practice after 1997. His 1996 insurgency

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<sup>210</sup> "Déclaration de la Coordination des Forces Nationalistes Révolutionnaires à l'Occasion de l'An 1 de l'Accord Global, 17 Décembre 2002 - 2003," internet source cited above.

<sup>211</sup> "Déclaration de la Coordination des Forces Nationalistes Révolutionnaires à l'Occasion de l'An 1 de l'Accord Global, 17 Décembre 2002 - 2003," internet source cited above; also "Déclaration du 30 Juin 2003," Coordination of the Forces Lumumbistes, Mulelistes and Kabilistes, 30 Jun. 2003; Internet, available at [http://www.deboutcongolais.info/declaration\\_4.html](http://www.deboutcongolais.info/declaration_4.html); Accessed on 19 Oct. 2006.

campaign demonstrated how Maoist principles of prolonged popular war were put into practice, and Maoist revolutionary principles such as depuration of ranks and democratization via local committees were reflected clearly in his government. This structure of State and the government that he established reveal that his project went further than a mere desire to hold power. He had an ideological commitment to transform Congolese society, even foreseeing that it would take more than one generation. The foreign invasion in 1998 provided Kabila with an opportunity to radicalize his nationalist stances and to dismiss the internal opposition as agents of imperialism and foreign aggressors. The cruel war that extended officially until 2002 (but whose spin-offs continued afterwards) ended with a humanitarian catastrophe for the Congolese population, but a political gain for a previously weakened Kabila, who consolidated his image as defender of the nation. Before the end of hostilities, Kabila was murdered and succeeded by his son, who dramatically shifted the official strategy to a more cooperative relation with the U.S. and Europe, and internal political opening. Since his assassination in 2001, the Congolese State and a variety of political, paramilitary and civil organizations have worked to preserve, recreate and promote Kabila's historical legacy in different versions, as a nationalist, pan-African and revolutionary inspirer. Finally, his enshrinement as part of a sacred trio of national heroes (next to Lumumba and Mulele) has encouraged radicals to believe ways of armed revolution are not closed yet, and are therefore ideologically prepared to wage a new insurgency if the opportunity arises.

Both the Taliban and the Kabilist forces demonstrated their commitment towards ideological causes, obtained concrete benefits at the organizational and military levels, and dramatically transformed their societies with them. In the last section, dedicated to

Colombia's FARC, I will provide evidence that demonstrates how ideology is one of the key factors that helps to explain the insurgents' existence after more than four decades of fighting, surviving the great crisis of revolutionary movements in the early 1990s.

### **FARC's Bolivarian Marxism**

The FARC has used ideology in the post-Cold War era as an instrument to achieve concrete strategic goals on three levels: internal, national and international. First, I will show how the FARC has submerged its members in a process of consistent indoctrination; since the end of the Cold War, the FARC's fast-paced enlargement put at risk the group's cohesiveness around political goals and a central political command, and therefore its Socialist-Bolivarian ideological discourse became a crucial unifying instrument. Second, I will explain how, by associating its socialist political agenda with Bolivarian ideals, the FARC expects to ease the resistance among the Colombian people to see the group as a credible alternative to power, at a time when it has started to develop a plan for local governance in territories under its control. Finally, I will argue that the FARC has used ideology to build regional alliances with radical and leftist groups not necessarily attracted to rigid Marxist-Leninist conceptions. International Bolivarianism, while a flexible and adaptable ideology, implies a tacit recognition of legitimacy of armed struggle, an option the FARC was willing to support beyond the Colombian borders.

The reinvention of history is a recurrent feature among the twentieth-century guerrilla movements' pursuit of strengthening identity and internal cohesion.<sup>212</sup> In the FARC's case, its rapid growth during the post-Cold War, in terms of manpower, and its lucrative economic

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<sup>212</sup> Mario Aguilera Peña, "La Memoria y los Héroes Guerrilleros," *Análisis Político* (Bogotá), no. 49, IEPRI-Universidad Nacional de Colombia, May-Aug 2003, 4.

activities derived from warfare, have put it at risk as a cohesive organization bound together around well-defined political goals. From that perspective, the use of a strong ideological message merging a historically renewed Bolívar and a reinvigorated Communist doctrine is more relevant in the post-Cold War period than ever before, in order to keep the troops united under a central political command. The group's historical enlargement and that projected after 1997 posed a two-fold threat to the organization's internal cohesion. First, the successful financial effort made by the FARC to sustain such a large constituency is based on a decentralized system, allowing every front and bloc independently to collect income from all kind of legal and illegal sources.<sup>213</sup> And second, the political motivations to join the armed struggle were being consistently undermined as communism was disregarded as a valid political model in the post-Cold War era, pushing the illegal combatants to set new objectives for war, such as profitability. The FARC took this threat very seriously. As one of its instructors put it: "With the fall of the Soviet Union, the bourgeois ideologists and the great capital's mass media have tried to weaken the revolutionary struggle... The fight in that field is very unequal since we can't count on the media or the resources they have available. Our organization is now making a great effort to fight back on that front."<sup>214</sup> The FARC recognizes its guerrillas are constantly exposed to "psychological operations" launched by governmental forces aimed at making them give up their socialist war and considers this a major threat to their war strategic plan.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Alexandra Guáqueta, "The Colombian Conflict: Political and Economic Dimensions," in *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict, The Political Economy of Armed Conflict*, Karen Ballentine and Jake Sherman eds. (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers 2003), 73-106.

<sup>214</sup> 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](http://www.lahaine.org/internacional/estamos_poder.htm); Accessed on 18 Jan. 2006.

<sup>215</sup> Reyes, internet source cited above.



Is it possible to demonstrate that the FARC has been consciously using ideological indoctrination to prevent fragmentation among its constituents? The rapid rate of recruitment of the FARC and its involvement in financially buoyant activities became a threat to the organization's internal cohesion and monolithic commitment towards revolution. Starting from a few hundreds in the 1960s, its manpower increased at a dramatic rate, reaching one or two thousand members at the beginning of the 1980s, and then to twelve to fifteen thousand combatants spread over sixty war fronts in the late 1990s.<sup>216</sup> Far from having stopped, in 1997, the guerrilla group decided to engage in a program that would double its manpower to thirty thousand fighters spread among one hundred war fronts.<sup>217</sup> With an annual income equivalent to one to two percent of the Colombian GDP,<sup>218</sup> the FARC constituted the richest, largest and best-equipped guerrilla group in Latin America at the end of the 1990s. In 1998, a FARC spokesperson explained the importance of their recruits' political formation before any military engagement: "The young person goes through a whole period of political-military, cultural and ideological formation. The first thing he learns is why we fight. We let him know the Guerrilla's Agrarian Program, the Platform for a Government of National Reconstruction and Reconciliation which is the Bolivarian Movement for the New Colombia's program. Once that stage is accomplished, we could say that he is ready to be

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<sup>216</sup> Alfredo Rangel, *Guerra insurgente: Conflictos en Malasia, Perú, Filipinas, El Salvador y Colombia*, (Bogotá: Intermedio editores, 2001), 383.

<sup>217</sup> Alfredo Rangel, *Colombia: Guerra en el Fin de Siglo*, Universidad de Los Andes, (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo editores, 1998), 183.

<sup>218</sup> "Estimación de los Ingresos y Egresos de las FARC Durante 2003 Basados en Información de Inteligencia Recolectada por las Agencias del Estado," Junta de Inteligencia Conjunta, document published by Ministerio de Defensa Nacional (Bogotá), 24 Feb. 2005; Internet, available at [http://alpha.mindefensa.gov.co/descargas/Documentos\\_Home/Finanzas%20de%20las%20FARC.pdf](http://alpha.mindefensa.gov.co/descargas/Documentos_Home/Finanzas%20de%20las%20FARC.pdf); Accessed 12 Mar. 2006.

part of the mass of our troops.”<sup>219</sup> But further than this basic ideological instruction, the importance given by the FARC to the ideological commitment of its members is expressed clearly in the creation of Colombia’s Clandestine Communist Party and the systematic introduction of a Bolivarian mythology that reinvents the guerrilla group’s identity as a historical actor.

Modeled after Lenin’s doctrine, the FARC created in the late 1990s the Clandestine Colombian Communist Party (PCCC), which ensured the indoctrination of the FARC’s rank and file in Marxist-Leninist thought. As the FARC’s founder, Manuel Marulanda, put it, “we are, above all, communists.”<sup>220</sup> Following Leninist doctrine, the clandestine PCCC functioned as a vanguard party, not a mass-conscription organization, and was limited to those FARC’s members who were engaged full time in the armed uprising. “The squadron is the basic military unit, but in our organization each squadron is at the same time a political cell,” explained a FARC trainer. “The communist cell is for us vital in importance, because there we manage the quotidian facts of life, especially that which has to do with the cadres’ formation. It is in the cell where the combatant develops his political capacity. In the cell, the guerrilla fighter must study the all documents of our conferences, from the Central Staff Plenary, those of political actualization, etc. It is there, in the cell, where we educate ourselves in revolutionary ideas”.<sup>221</sup> The pertinence of a vanguard party is explained by a member of the Colombian Clandestine Communist Party by the need to confront bourgeois ideologies. In his words, the bourgeoisie is ‘conscious that in Colombia there is a ripening of

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<sup>219</sup> Reyes, Internet source cited above.

<sup>220</sup> Manuel Marulanda, “Entrevista a Manuel Marulanda Velez,” interview by FARC-EP; Internet, available at [http://six.swix.ch/FARCEP/Entrevistas/Entrevista\\_manuel\\_marulanda.htm](http://six.swix.ch/FARCEP/Entrevistas/Entrevista_manuel_marulanda.htm); Accessed 17 Feb. 2006.

<sup>221</sup> Reyes, internet source cited above.

the confrontation between social classes. They know that there are revolutionary political and military organizations that not only have the capacity to take over power, but have the capacity to build socialism, to drive the conception of new society.”<sup>222</sup> Being a FARC combatant, and being part of its military structure, implies being part of the PCCC. And being a PCCC member means to embrace Marxist-Leninist doctrine. A member of the PCCC explained the party had “open positions for those youth who, in their process of ideological and political formation, move toward identifying themselves with Marxism-Leninism and with the FARC-Ep’s insurrectional project to take power for the people and through the people”.<sup>223</sup>

Complementing the indoctrination in socialist revolution, the FARC aimed to reinforce its members’ loyalty by adding a nationalist sentiment to its struggle, by making use of the historical figure of Simón Bolívar. Young members raised in the “post-ideological era”, after the end of the Cold War, were presumably harder to indoctrinate. But potential recruits found it easier to grasp and defend the vague and simple Bolivarian discourse than the more complex Marxism-Leninism. As one young university student demonstrated when asked about the organization's ideological base: “We are Leninists because our organization practices the Leninist principles of democratic centralism, criticism, self-criticism, and well, others. I am not expert in matters of Marxism-Leninism, but all guerrillas know what is fundamental about it. And we follow the Bolivarian thought. We carry Bolívar in our soul and heart. We are like Bolívar. Each guerrilla represents Bolívar because we fight for equality, fraternity, we are anti-imperialists. In practical terms, we want to continue the

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<sup>222</sup> “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.

<sup>223</sup> “Entrevista a un Integrante del PCCC,” internet source cited above.

Bolivarian epic; we want to finish what Bolívar did not do”.<sup>224</sup> In its recruitment strategy for young people, Bolívar came first and Marx followed.<sup>225</sup> Cultural productions such as songs and poems played a crucial role in easing anti-ideological prejudices.<sup>226</sup>

### *Bolivarian Masses*

Besides playing a major role in guaranteeing internal cohesion by adding an emotional component to the rationalist Marxist-Leninist dogma, the FARC’s Bolivarian nationalism served two strategic purposes. First, it developed a more flexible and appealing discourse aimed at reaching out the Colombian masses, which in Leninist theory should accompany the armed insurrection led by the vanguard party (the PCCC).<sup>227</sup> Second, it allowed the Colombian people to see the group as a credible alternative power in a time when the FARC had started to develop a plan for local governance in territories under its control. The FARC’s war strategy explicitly aimed at instituting a network of political institutions to keep control of territorial gains by ruling them. “We have been building a party before taking over power. We have been building government, because in many areas the real government is the FARC,” explained a FARC spokesman “and we have been building the basis of a new

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<sup>224</sup> “Entrevista a un Integrante del PCCC,” internet source cited above.

<sup>225</sup> “Entrevista a un Integrante del PCCC,” internet source cited above.

<sup>226</sup> About the FARC’s songs, see Lucas Iguarán, “Entrevista a Lucas Iguarán,” interview by Red Resistencia; Internet, available at <http://redresistencia.org.netzwerk-resistencia.ch/red2/entrevistas/1407entrevistaalucasigauran.htm>; Accessed 17 Feb. 2006; also poetry can be found in “Poesía del movimiento,” *Resistencia Edición Internacional*, no. 31; Internet, available at [http://FARCEp.org/resistencia/internacional/?issue=31&section=8&article=cultura&article\\_id=0](http://FARCEp.org/resistencia/internacional/?issue=31&section=8&article=cultura&article_id=0); Accessed 17 Feb. 2006; see also Yurani, “Mujer guerrillera,” *Resistencia Edición Internacional*, no. 31; Internet, available at [http://FARCEp.org/resistencia/internacional/?issue=31&section=8&article=cultura&article\\_id=0](http://FARCEp.org/resistencia/internacional/?issue=31&section=8&article=cultura&article_id=0); Accessed 17 Feb. 2006.

<sup>227</sup> Olga Marín, “Colombia: The FARC Speaks Out,” interview by Allen Jennings, *Links*, issue 11, January/April 1999; Internet, available at [http://www.dsp.org.au/links/back/issue11/11\\_FARC.pdf](http://www.dsp.org.au/links/back/issue11/11_FARC.pdf); Accessed on 16 Feb. 2006.

State in many parts within the nation's borders."<sup>228</sup> Given that logic, the FARC has been building structures of parallel government at the local level, using both political skills and violence to weaken the hand of official authorities in the territories under their control or influence.<sup>229</sup> They called these structures "New Power."<sup>230</sup> The New Power would be hierarchically connected to a higher governmental body of "12 Colombians, representatives of all regions in the country and all sectors that identify with the Ten-point Platform for the New Colombia."<sup>231</sup> But the FARC's unprecedented military advance after 1996<sup>232</sup> did not have a positive effect on the general public's perceptions of the insurgents. The perceived ruthless violence exerted by the FARC, not only in these attacks but in its restless strategy of extortions and kidnappings, created an image of a strong but criminalized, dehumanized, blackmailing gang which, besides, was linked to drug trafficking. Even for leftist observers, the FARC was definitively losing the battle for public opinion.<sup>233</sup> In 1997, the FARC's Central General Staff decided to create the Bolivarian Movement, a mass-conscription party that saw its most outstanding moment in 2000 with its public launching with open fanfare. The Movement's target was those Colombians not fond of Marxism but willing to join a

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<sup>228</sup> Ricardo G. "Entrevista al Comandante Ricardo G.," interview by Miguel Urbano Rodríguez, *Avante!* (Lisbon), Mar. 2004; Internet, available at <http://redresistencia.org.netwerk-resistencia.ch/red2/entrevistas/0804entrevistaricardog.htm>; Accessed on 26 Feb. 2006.

<sup>229</sup> 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.

<sup>230</sup> Reyes, Internet source cited above.

<sup>231</sup> Untitled, FARC communiqué signed by its International Commission, Apr. 2003, published in *Lospobresdelatierra.org*; Internet, available at [www.geocities.com/lospobresdelatierra/nuestramerica/FARC0403.html](http://www.geocities.com/lospobresdelatierra/nuestramerica/FARC0403.html); Accessed 17 Jan. 2006.

<sup>232</sup> About the FARC's watershed military operations between 1996 and 1997, see Dick Emanuelsson, "Así Fue la Toma Guerrillera de la Base Militar de Las Delicias," in *Las Verdaderas Intenciones de las FARC*, Corporación Observatorio para la Paz ed. (Bogotá: Intermedio, 1999), 135.

<sup>233</sup> Marta Harnecker, "Las Guerrillas Avanzan en Colombia," in *América Latina: Tarea Estratégica*, 21 Aug. 2001; Internet, available at <http://www.rebelion.org/izquierda/harnFARC071001.htm>; Accessed 17 Jun. 2006

radical political change; since “not everybody who wants change in Colombia, who wants a new Colombia, a different country, agrees with communism or are Marxist-Leninists,” explained a Communist Party member.<sup>234</sup> The FARC counted on the PCCC and a broader Bolivarian Movement to attract these fence-sitters. The Bolivarian Movement, and offshoots like the Bolivarian Youth Movement, instructed its membership with “the thought of Simón Bolívar as its guide, while in their ideological development, its members grow closer to Marxism-Leninism as an important tool to guide the people’s struggle.”<sup>235</sup> To approach the heterogeneous Colombian political spectrum, the FARC aimed to create a nationalistic link with the masses and penetrate their local political structures. According to the FARC, the broad Bolivarian Movement’s bases were “millions of Colombians linked to clandestine cores, of a variety of forms such as circles, meetings, workshops, clubs, associations, councils, galladas, parches, barras, work tables, mingas, brotherhoods, committees and every shape their members adopt”.<sup>236</sup>

### *Bolivarian spirit and the FARC’s international war*

The FARC’s ideological flexibility and its incorporation of a nationalist-Bolivarian discourse provided the organization with an opportunity to connect with a multifaceted international network of post-Cold War political organizations not prone to back a rigid Marxist-Leninist agenda but supportive of anti-globalization and anti-imperialist values compatible with the leftist interpretation of the historical Bolívar conveyed by the guerrillas.

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<sup>234</sup> “Entrevista a un Integrante del PCCC,” internet source cited above.

<sup>235</sup> “Entrevista a un Integrante del PCCC,” internet source cited above.

<sup>236</sup> “El Pueblo no Puede Seguir Disperso,” FARC document, Mar. 2000; Internet, available at <http://alainet.org/docs/785.html>; Accessed 15 Feb. 2006.

And beyond providing the FARC with this international anti-imperialist political platform, Bolivarianism enabled it to build a network of political, military and logistical support to internationalize its armed struggle, as it advanced a strategy of regional expansion.

As an agrarian communist insurgency and internationally branded a terrorist organization by the U.S. and the European Union (after 2001), the FARC could have been politically isolated in the post-Cold war international arena. But the 1990s anti-globalization network of non-governmental organizations became a powerful potential source of international legitimacy that helped the FARC to break its political isolation. While illegal trade networks inserted the FARC into international markets, Bolívar gave them a global audience.<sup>237</sup> Anti-globalization slogans such as "another world is possible" became part of the FARC's rhetoric,<sup>238</sup> and Bolívar was placed at the head of the movement On the continent: "We make ourselves participants in the anti-capitalist movement expressed through mobilizations in Seattle, Quebec, Genoa and Porto Alegre, and the struggle of progressive, democratic and revolutionary movements in Latin America and the world that are looking for a new international order with social justice," declared the FARC's Central Staff. "We make the call to unity against capitalism and its imperialist policies, in defense of national sovereignty and the rescue of the libertarian ideas of the great universal thinkers championed in America by the Liberator, Simón Bolívar."<sup>239</sup>

Beside opening a new international political platform, the FARC's Bolivarian discourse furthered its strategic goal of promoting armed revolutions on the continent,

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<sup>237</sup> "Saludo de Año Nuevo a los Gobiernos y Pueblos del Mundo," FARC document, International Commission.

<sup>238</sup> "Carta Abierta de las FARC a los Gobiernos y Pueblos del Mundo, Especialmente de Europa, Asia, África y América Latina," FARC document, International Commission, 21 Feb. 2005; Internet, available at [http://www.FARCEp.org/novedades/comunicados/ci2005/diciembre\\_30b.php](http://www.FARCEp.org/novedades/comunicados/ci2005/diciembre_30b.php); Accessed on 17 Feb. 2006.

<sup>239</sup> "EE.UU. y el Proceso de Paz en Colombia," FARC documents, Central General Staff, 5 Nov. 2001; Internet, available at <http://six.swix.ch/FARCEp/Comunicados/2001/nov0501.html>; Accessed on 17 Feb. 2006.

helping to make its own struggle more robust. Concretely, the FARC participated in the creation of two international organizations through which its war message could be conveyed: the Congreso Bolivariano de los Pueblos (the Bolivarian Congress of Peoples) and the Coordinadora Continental Bolivariana (Bolivarian Continental Coordination). Both entities encompassed left wing political parties and movements in open defiance of a global economic system shaped by free trade and the United States' economic dominance. On one hand, the Bolivarian Congress of Peoples proposed political action based on the concept of resistance.<sup>240</sup> On the other, the Bolivarian Continental Coordination regarded politics as just one of many legitimate means of resistance: not only did it confer legitimacy upon violent methods, but it also suggested their use as part of an integral strategy to bring structural changes.<sup>241</sup> The Bolivarian Continental Coordination was clearly an effort by leftist groups, especially radical ones, to coordinate their actions in the field, and not merely at the discursive level. The Coordination's governing body signals as part of its main task the creation of diverse forms of organizations in each country of Latin America and the Caribbean, and the establishment of Bolivarian Internationalist Brigades composed of sympathizers from elsewhere. Besides Latin American groups, the Coordination declared the presence of delegations from Spain (some of the Basque country), Italy, Denmark, France, Switzerland, Turkey and Greece for the 2004 first meeting in Caracas.<sup>242</sup> In 2003, the

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<sup>240</sup> "Una Espada Recorre el Continente," *Resistencia Edición Internacional*, no. 32; Internet, available at [http://www.FARCEP.ch/resistencia/internacional/?issue=32&section=1&article=contenido17&article\\_id=16](http://www.FARCEP.ch/resistencia/internacional/?issue=32&section=1&article=contenido17&article_id=16); Accessed on 17 Feb. 2006.

<sup>241</sup> "Mesa ideológica-Política," Coordinadora Continental Bolivariana, document issued by the First Bolivarian Congress, 11 Aug. 2005; Internet, available at <http://www.conBolívar.org/conbol/institucional/cong-ccb/ideologica.htm>; Accessed on 17 Feb. 2006.

<sup>242</sup> "Estructuración de la Coordinadora Continental Bolivariana", Coordinadora Continental Bolivariana, constitutive document: Internet, available at <http://www.conBolívar.org/conbol/institucional/doc-consti.html>; Accessed on 15 Jan. 2006.



FARC's top commander, Manuel Marulanda, was made honorary president of the Coordination, in a shared position with at least nine other representatives, including radical leaders who had taken part in violent uprisings in the past, such as Bolivian Felipe Quispe Huanca and the representative of Peru's Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru (Revolutionary Movement Tupac Amaru), Victor Polay Campos.<sup>243</sup>

The FARC's concrete efforts to spread armed revolutions over the continent could not be considered more than ambitious plans if there were not evidence of their impact. But there is. In 2003, a British journalist source quoted Carlos, a member of FARC's Bolivarian Movement in Lima, describing its presence not only in that country, but also in most of South America. "There is a core group of 20 members of the Bolivarian Movement working here. We also have cells in Argentina, Venezuela, Ecuador, Chile and Bolivia", he said.<sup>244</sup> The international press reported growing linkages between the FARC and newly formed radical formations in Ecuador such as the Ejército de Liberación Alfarista.<sup>245</sup> In that country, the first years of the twenty-first century saw the emergence of a series of political movements, at least two of them as legal parties, inspired by Bolivarian ideals. An Ecuadorian ex-presidential candidate quoted by *Diario El Universo* commented that "it would be necessary to know each of them, since there could be Bolivarian groups comprised of either outlaws or

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<sup>243</sup> "Todas las Batallas de los Pueblos: Contra el Imperialismo," *Agencia Bolivariana de Prensa*; Internet, available at <http://www.abpnoticias.com/secciones/nuestra-america/mex-congccb.htm>; Accessed on 10 Mar. 2006.

<sup>244</sup> "Shining Path Back as FARC Exports Terror," *Telegraph Newspaper Online*, no. 13 Sep. 2003; Internet, available at <http://telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2003/09/13/wFARC13.xml>; Accessed on 17 Feb. 2006.

<sup>245</sup> "Intel report: Venezuela Training Ecuador Rebels," *Agence France-Presse*, reprinted in *World Tribune*, no. 25, Oct. 2005; Internet, available at [http://www.worldtribune.com/worldtribune/WTARC/2005/la\\_venezuela\\_10\\_25.html](http://www.worldtribune.com/worldtribune/WTARC/2005/la_venezuela_10_25.html); Accessed on 20 Jan. 2006.

saints”.<sup>246</sup> In Peru, a FARC member identified as El Flaco told the BBC press group in Lima about his organization’s activities in that country. He was quoted as saying that “there are many of us here from the Bolivarian Movement. We are recruiting Peruvians for the revolution and now have almost 1,000 former members of the Shining Path.”<sup>247</sup> Independently of the accuracy of such affirmations, he confirmed the nature of the FARC’s presence in the neighboring country, on the basis of a Bolivarian tie. The Venezuelan government, which has ruled since 1998, has declared itself Bolivarian, and has repeatedly refused to condemn the FARC’s armed insurrection and support the Colombian elected authorities, although it has avoided explicit endorsement of the guerrillas. Bolivarianism has helped the FARC to establish an ideological link with the Venezuelan government that would have been harder to create had they presented themselves merely as a Marxist-Leninist group.<sup>248</sup> As the FARC explains, it had established its Bolivarian character “so we can build and underline the Colombo-Venezuelan common history and that of the five republics liberated by Bolívar”.<sup>249</sup> The U.S., singled out by Bolivarianists as the major source of imperialism and the strategic enemy of their integrationist ambitions, slowly grew concerned in the first years of the twenty-first century about the real potential of the Bolivarian ideology to risk U.S. interest and influence in the region.<sup>250</sup> “Chavez supports us, and many

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<sup>246</sup> “Hay Nueve Movimientos 'Bolivarianos' en Ecuador,” *Diario El Universo*, no. 21, Aug. 2005; Internet available at <http://www.verisis.com/index.php?content=esp/200508211259>; Accessed on 18 Feb. 2006.

<sup>247</sup> Henry Scott-Stokes, “Quis Custodiet,” *Tokyo Weekender*, no. 13 Feb. 2006; Internet, available at <http://www.weekender.co.jp/new/040220/quis-fujimori.html>; Accessed on 15 Feb. 2006.

<sup>248</sup> Martín Guédez, “La Revolución Bolivariana: Teoría y Praxis Desde el Camino,” *Rebelión*, no. 14, Jan. 2006; Internet, available at <http://rebellion.org/noticia.php?id=25487>; Accessed on 15 Jan. 2006.

<sup>249</sup> Commander Ariel, “FARC: Queremos paz en la frontera”, interview by Carlos Machado, *La Razón* (Caracas), in *Nuestra Frontera es la Paz*, José Agustín Catalá ed. (Caracas: Ediciones Centauro, 1998), 99.

<sup>250</sup> James P. Lucier, “Excerpts from Santa Fe IV Report,” *Insight*, no. 6 Nov. 2000; Internet, available at [http://http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1571/is\\_41\\_16/ai\\_72328758](http://http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1571/is_41_16/ai_72328758); Accessed on 11 Mar. 2006. A

Ecuadorian military members, too”, a FARC guerrilla fighter claimed, while writing an article whose title paraphrased the Communist Manifesto’s introductory lines: “Bolívar’s specter haunts America, panic in the U.S.”<sup>251</sup>

### *Conclusions*

The end of the Cold War between 1989 and 1991 provoked an ideological crisis among the socialist and communist insurgencies in Colombia. The FARC, however, persisted in its revolutionary armed struggle and, after 1989, decided to reinvigorate its Marxist-Leninist commitment, incorporating a socialist vision of Bolívar. Ideology played a significant role in the FARC’s strategy in the post-Cold War period at internal, national and international levels. First, the rapid enlargement of the FARC during the post-Cold War era, in terms of manpower, and the lucrative economic activities derived from warfare, had put at risk the FARC as a cohesive organization bound together by established political goals. The use of a strong ideological message was more relevant in the post-Cold War era than previously, to keep the troops united around a central political command. Clearly inspired by Leninism, the FARC created in the mid 1990s a new organizational body called Colombia’s Clandestine Communist Party, of which every combatant should be member and which would be used as a major indoctrination apparatus and as a vanguard party of full-time revolutionaries. Second, the FARC expected to ease the reluctance of people in Colombia to see the group as a credible power alternative, among populations that were not strongly attracted by Marxism-Leninism, by identifying its political agenda with Bolivarian ideals in a

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FARC reference to the U.S. Santa Fe in Ricardo G. “Entrevista al Comandante Ricardo G.,” internet source cited above.

<sup>251</sup> Eduardo Soto-Trillo, 209-210.

time when it started to develop a plan for local governance in territories under its control. Another organizational body, the Bolivarian Movement, modeled as well along Leninist-structured lines, was created to complement the vanguard party's mission by reaching out to the Colombian masses and infiltrating their organizations at the local level, in the hope of stirring mass mobilizations to accompany its armed strategy. And third, the FARC's socialism, attached to Bolivarian nationalism, helped the FARC to build alliances with radical and leftist groups not necessarily persuaded by rigid Marxist-Leninist conceptions. Its renewed socialist vision, while a flexible and adaptable ideology, served as a platform upon which to build international legitimacy for armed struggles, and create networks of political-military supporters in the region.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, I have shown how the three insurgencies examined, Afghanistan's Taliban, D.R. Congo's Parti pour la Révolution des Peuples, and Colombia's FARC, consistently advanced an ideological discourse throughout the first decade of the post-Cold War era, which combined nationalism with either religious fundamentalism-traditionalism or else socialism-anti-liberalism, all in versions adapted to local needs and contexts. Post-Cold War ideologies, as has been shown, are characterized by their flexibility. In the Afghan and Colombian cases, core values –i.e. purity, social justice- guard the insurgent organization's identity, internal coherence and moral stance, while the nationalist discourse provide them with a vehicle to address the masses, a much larger and more heterogeneous political collective. In the Congolese case, nationalist and socialist discourses orbited around a vision, instead of a core value, that of building an African Super-power.

Ideology played an extensive role in the post-Cold War insurgencies examined here, beyond the discursive level. Ideology served the rhetorical purpose of legitimizing armed struggles. But it also proved crucial to determine the insurgent organization's internal structures and its apparatus of power in territories under its control, to shape their governmental policies, and to contribute to strategic and tactical gains on the battlefield.

At the organizational level, the Taliban Movement's nationalist-fundamentalist ideology materialized in specific State structures with historical models and a particular style

of government based on religious and tribal customs. In the D.R. Congo, Kabila built a series of structures that resembled a Maoist-style State and aimed at implementing long-term plans for societal change, while concentrating the ultimate power in himself as the “Father and Builder of the Nation.” In Colombia, the FARC created new Leninist political structures and activated a network of political-military cells in order to advance its insurgent war and implement a Soviet-style democracy in the territories under its control.

At both strategic and tactical levels, ideologies ensured these movements’ internal cohesion as political-military entities, turned discipline into military advantage, and mobilized national and international political, logistical and military support for their armed struggles. In the three cases examined, the insurgent groups crafted identities based on rational and emotional values that differentiated them from other armed actors, favored their recruitment efforts, discouraged resistance among populations under their influence, and facilitated outreach.

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If ideologies, as I have demonstrated, are a functional component of modern insurgencies and help to explain their reason for existence, why have they been so underestimated by scholarly research regarding armed conflicts in the post-Cold War period? Two factors can help to explain this phenomenon. First, the scholarly work focusing on economics has come up not only with a sound theory to explain the emergence and protraction of armed conflicts, but has also increasingly provided statistical evidence that demonstrates a co-relation between economic opportunities and insurgencies, downplaying

the need to account for the political and cultural dimensions. And second, other alternative theories that take into account the concept of ideology, such as Identity Politics, Manipulative Elites and Symbolic Politics, provide insightful explanations to the political dimension of conflicts, but nevertheless acknowledge nothing but a very narrow definition of ideology that discourages them from using it as a major category of analysis.

A narrow definition of ideologies, understood merely as the Cold War's capitalist liberal democracy or Marxist-inspired socialism, excludes elements such as myths, symbols, ethnicity, nation and religion that play along with its more rational component to constitute whole cultural systems, which clearly shape political settings. Defining ideology as a cultural system based on beliefs that govern social relations and create collective identities (nationalism being one manifestation of the latter) creates a category of analysis capable of explaining in detail the full role of culture in armed conflict. The ubiquity of ideologies in the post-Cold War era, as shown in this paper, demands their study taking this broader perspective, in order to reveal new understandings that the logic of economics or statistical evidence may not provide.

Moreover, it is interesting to see the way in which an ideology that fits into the traditionally more narrow definition of ideology, socialism, seems to be ignored in the post-Cold War period. The failure of a global-reach socialist ideological bloc between 1989 and 1991 has been interpreted as a failure as well of the localized smaller-scale socialist political (and sometimes military) projects that have demonstrated resilience enough to reach the twenty-first century and adapt to a more globalized world by creating international support networks bonded by ideological cores such as anti-imperialism. The existence of local political alternatives to liberal-democracy based on Islamic principles of diverse sort and the

worldwide use of nationalist discourses add to the evidence that ideological struggles are, in fact, still fought at local and regional levels, and that liberal-democracy continues to be heatedly challenged in much of the world.

The scholarly recognition that ideologies are a major functional component of some armed conflicts implies acknowledging the participants as political actors. Analyzing the existence and role of the ideological component of subversion is therefore a valuable tool to separate political insurgencies from other types of organized violence such as cartels, and rent-seeking criminal gangs.

The recognition of an ideological component in armed organizations opens new alternatives such as the opportunity to explore political solutions from a more informed perspective. Understanding armed conflicts not only as economic-driven systems but also as ideological struggles is therefore indispensable to conflict resolution. The underestimation of the insurgents' ideological incentives reduces the chances of success of any peace initiative. Acknowledging the importance of ideological warfare will encourage political strategies to complement, or sometimes replace, military operations. Resulting political gains may compensate, or even surpass, those obtained by force and have direct effect on the military developments.

But how to win an ideological battle? A straight answer would be “by fighting ideas instead of people.” Addressing those conflictive contexts that push people to look for political alternatives, sometimes by violent means, may help to prevent insurgencies from occurring. In that respect, effective communication strategies aimed at demonstrating the comparative benefits brought by one ideology over another may discourage the emergence of violent alternatives.



Philosopher Thomas Sowell's recipe to outlaw wars includes "a muting of militant rhetoric" and "a de-emphasis of nationalism or patriotism."<sup>252</sup> But the proved impossibility of escaping from ideological paradigms, even in the post-Cold War era, only leaves the hope of making a positive use of them.

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<sup>252</sup> Thomas Sowell, *A Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles*, (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 153.

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