

# Strategic Pacification in Chiapas



We have  
A great plan  
For subjugating  
Indians

...and  
'the Green'  
Also!

**[Chiapas: The Southeast in Two Winds] tells how the supreme government was affected by the poverty of the Indigenous peoples of Chiapas and endowed the area with hotels, prisons, barracks, and a military airport.**

**It also tells how the beast feeds on the blood of the people, as well as other miserable and unfortunate happenings.**

**Subcommander Marcos, August 1992**

**<http://www.ezln.org/SE-in-two-winds.html>**

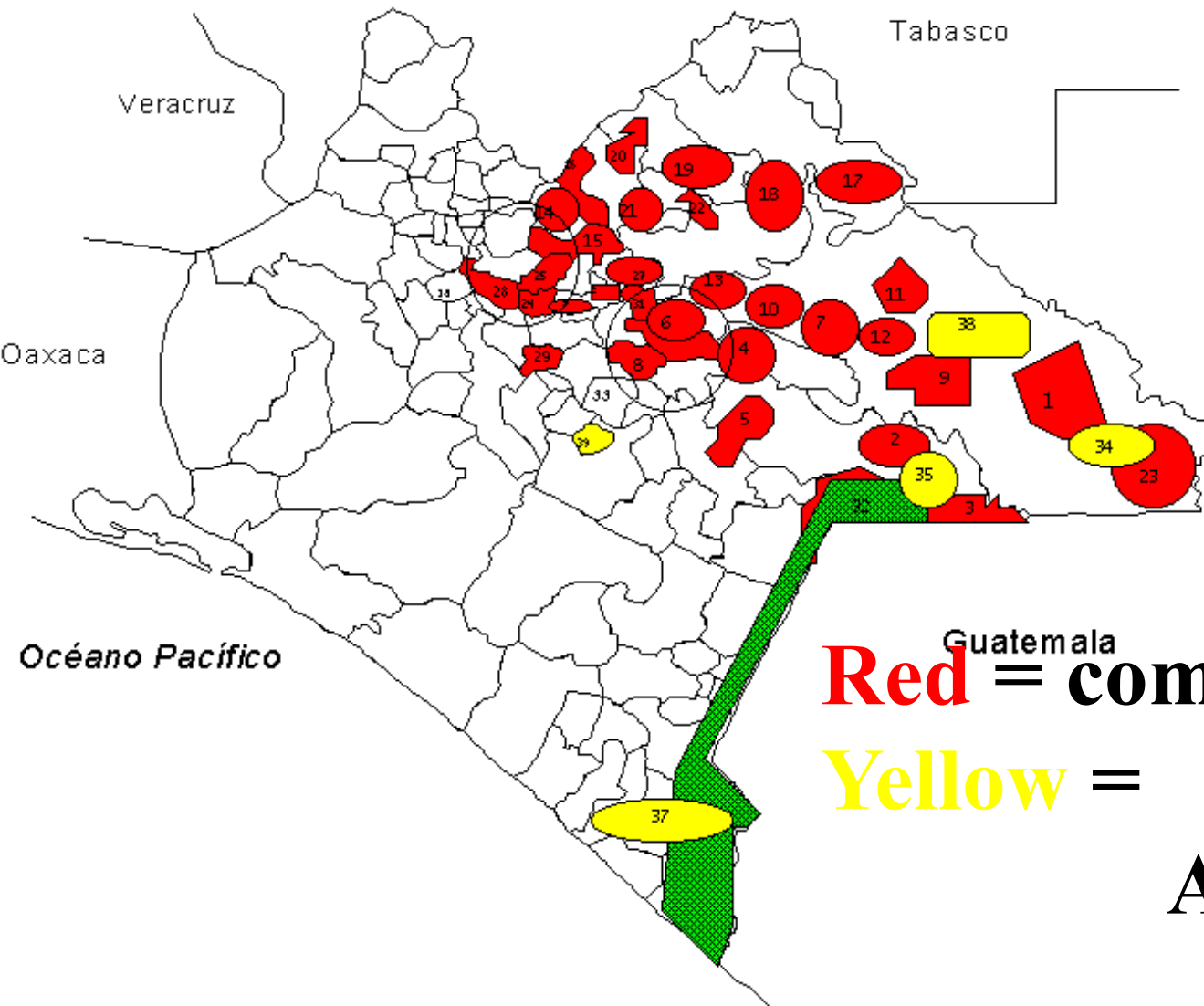
**Zapatista Autonomy versus  
Mexican Government Strategic Pacification**

# *Chiapanecan Strategies: Autonomy (Zapatistas)*



*Versus*

# Zapatista Autonomous Zones





**Zapatista Autonomy** challenges nation-state

i. Confronts state ideology of 'mestizaje'

(Mexican state legitimacy derives from  
fusion of Indian and Spanish traditions

ii. provides a popular challenge to ideological  
equation of **nation** and **state**

**Question: What is a nation?**

**What are 4<sup>th</sup> World Peoples?**

# **Autonomy envisions limits to private resource control**

- **revolutionary *¡Tierra y Libertad!* ideology**
- **communal property regimes common to southern Mexican indigenous communities**

**Autonomy thereby challenges economic neoliberalism**

**Provisions under consideration would:**

- **regulate capital investment and**
- **environmental impact**





**Practical  
Challenges**

**Poverty  
Literacy  
Health**

# **The deployment of autonomy as a popular strategy is controversial within the popular sector:**

## **2 problems:**

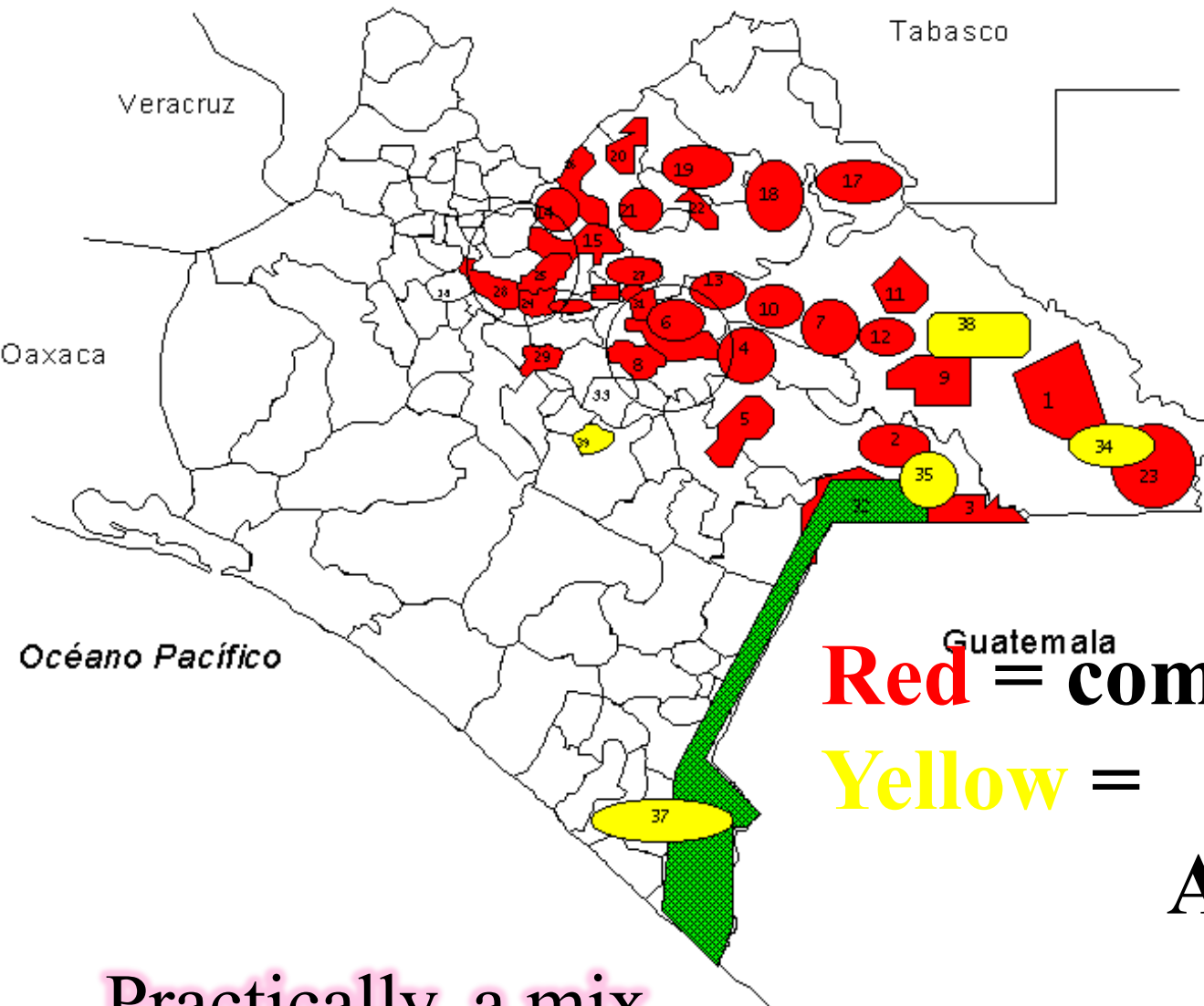
- 1. uneven distribution of land and resources within autonomous zones**  **Divides 'landed' communal indigenous groups against virtually landless indigenous communities**
- 2. exclusionary discourse of autonomy**  **Does celebrating indigenous uniqueness exclude poor peasants located within indigenous zones?**



If autonomy is not both **pluri-ethnic** *and* **regional**, it may reproduce existing state-community relations that divide indigenous communities and reproduce state-party fusion:  
The **Comunidad** Revolucionario **Institucional** (Jan Rus)



# Zapatista Autonomous Zones



Practically, a mix  
Has resolved many  
Problems...

Green =  
Autonomous Zone

# **Six Mexican State Counter-Strategies:** **Bureaucratization and Military Intervention**

## ***i. Bureaucratization:* define autonomy!**

**Government ‘autonomy’ language incorporated into an agreement with the Zapatistas would reject pluri-ethnicity and regionality: excluding non-indigenous groups from autonomy and limiting autonomies to the municipal (county) level**

*i.1: Bureaucratization of indigenous identity:* define indigenous peoples! government language would give the State bureaucratic authority to define who is a Mexican Indian.



According to the Mexican government initial regulation, Indians would:

1. Speak an indigenous language
2. Not earn a wage
3. Wear indigenous dress





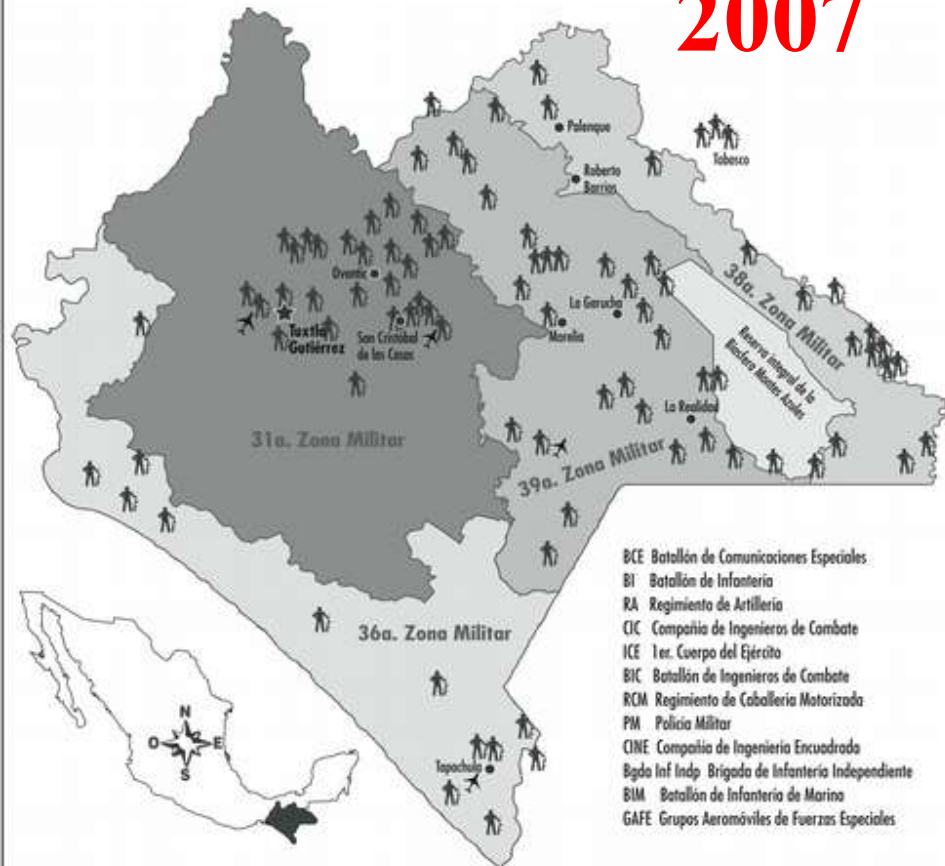
*ii. Infrastructure Development* undercuts autonomy by

- i. strategically placing roads and command posts in Zapatista autonomous zones and
- ii. slicing up the Lacandon jungle into militarily manageable segments

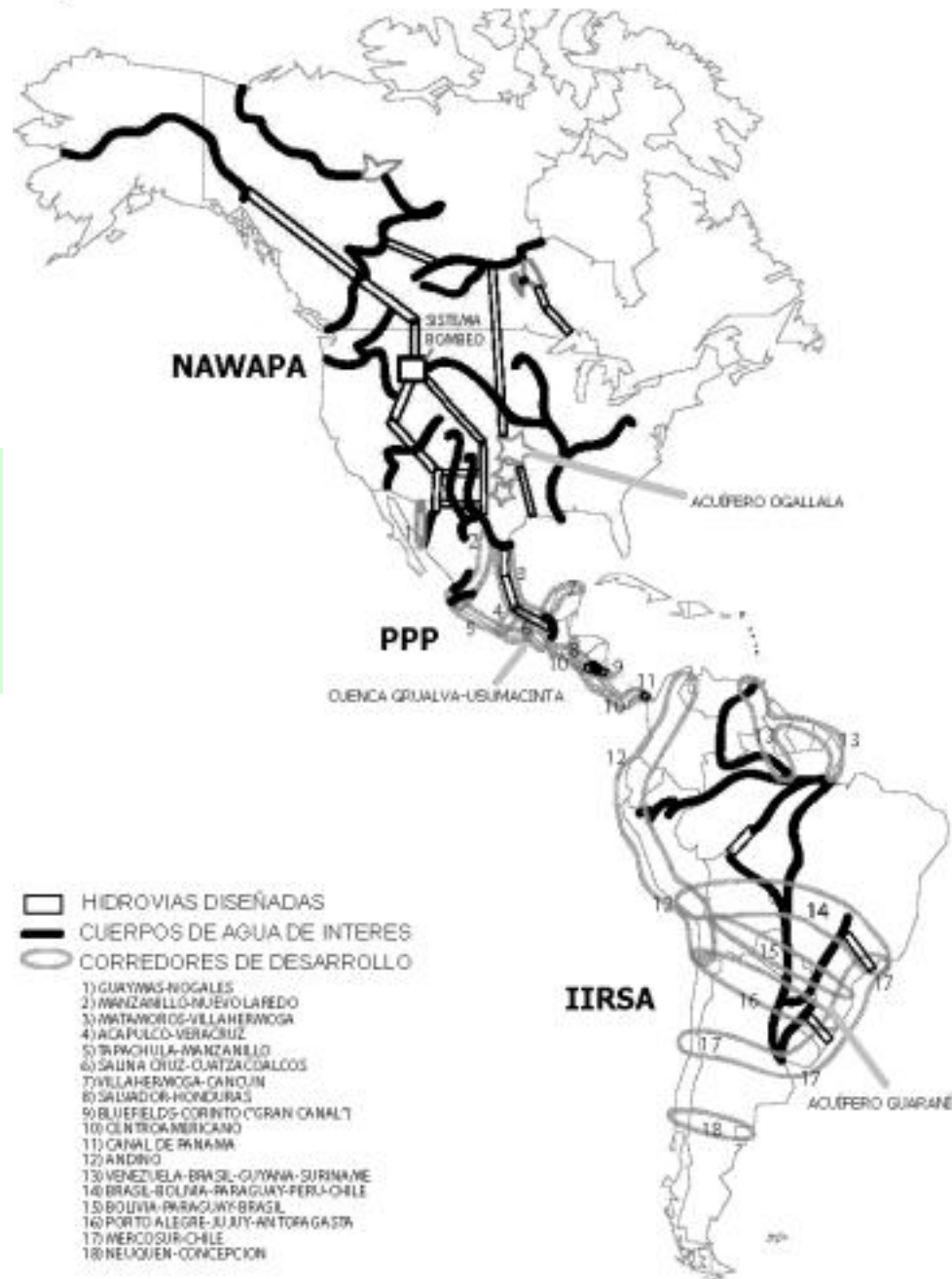


La ocupación militar en el territorio indígena de Chiapas

2007

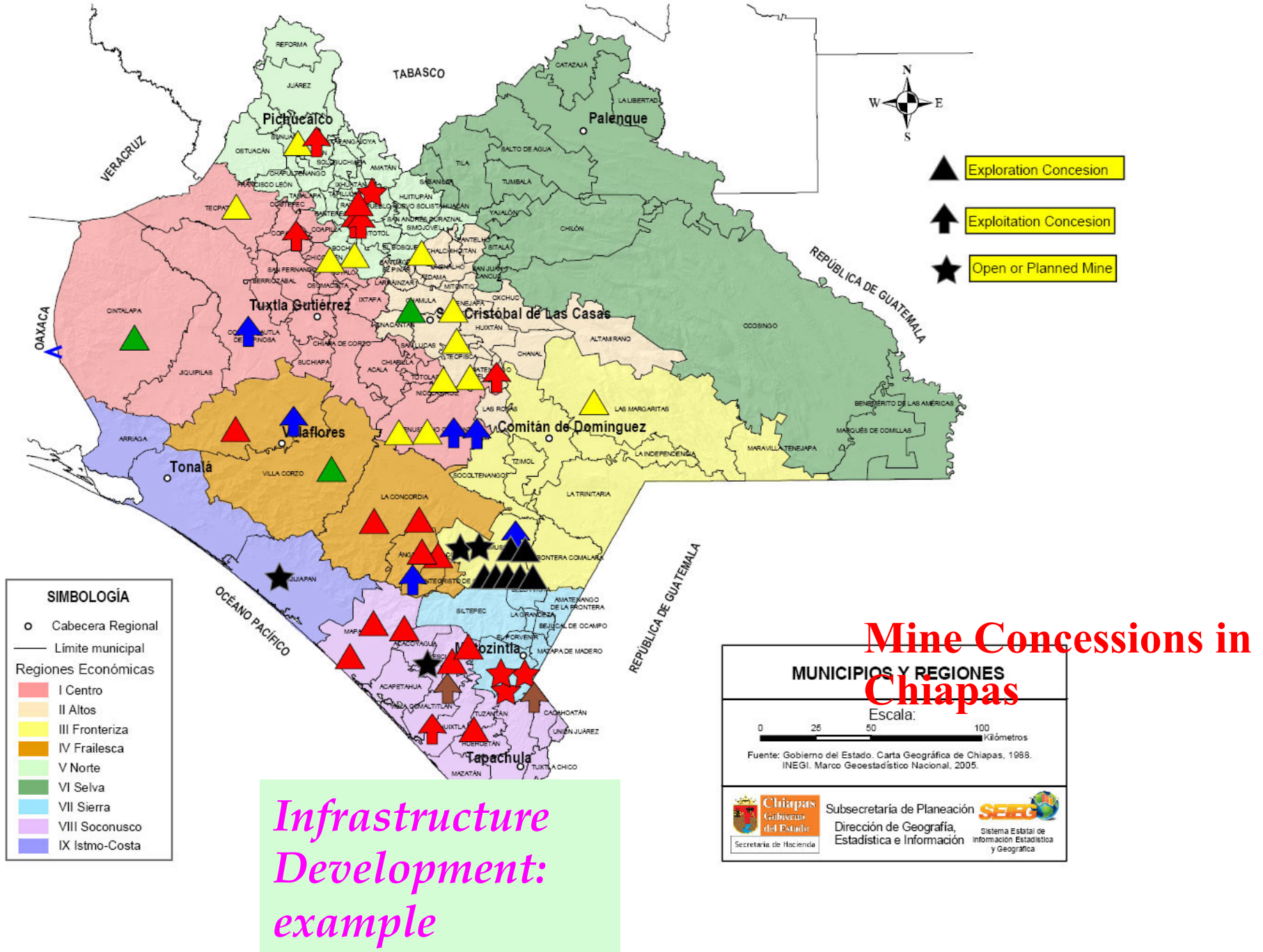


**Mapa 1 - MEGA PROYECTOS HÍDRICOS Y CORREDORES DE DESARROLLO**



*Infrastructure  
Development:  
example*

Contemporary  
development





## Chiapas

División municipal



Veracruz de  
Ignacio de  
la Llave

Oaxaca

Océano Pacífico

Tabasco

CHICHEN ITZÁ

PALENQUE

BOLÓN ASAY

CASCADAS DE  
AGUA AZUL

BACHAJÓN

SAN CRISTÓBAL  
DE LAS CASAS

TONINÁ

TUXTLA GUTIÉRREZ

MITZITÓN

MONTE AZULES

COMITÁN

Guatemala



TIKAL

0 25 50 100  
Kilómetros

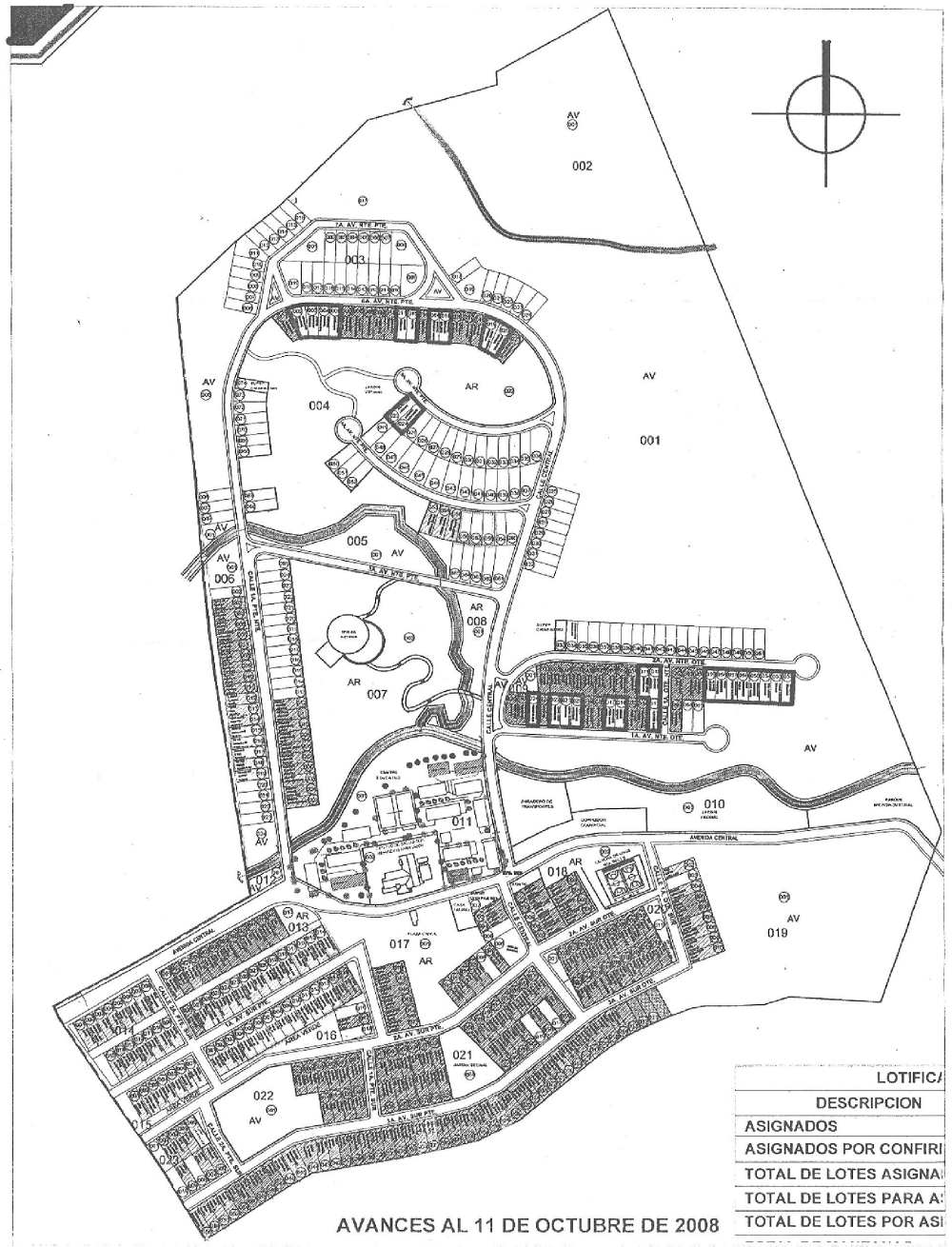
*Infrastructure  
Development:  
example*

Tourist Mega-Projects



# Contemporary development

## Infrastructure Development: example



LOTIFICA
DESCRIPCION
ASIGNADOS
ASIGNADOS POR CONFIRI
TOTAL DE LOTES ASIGNA
TOTAL DE LOTES PARA A
TOTAL DE LOTES POR ASI

### *iii. Mexican government standing army* in Chiapas

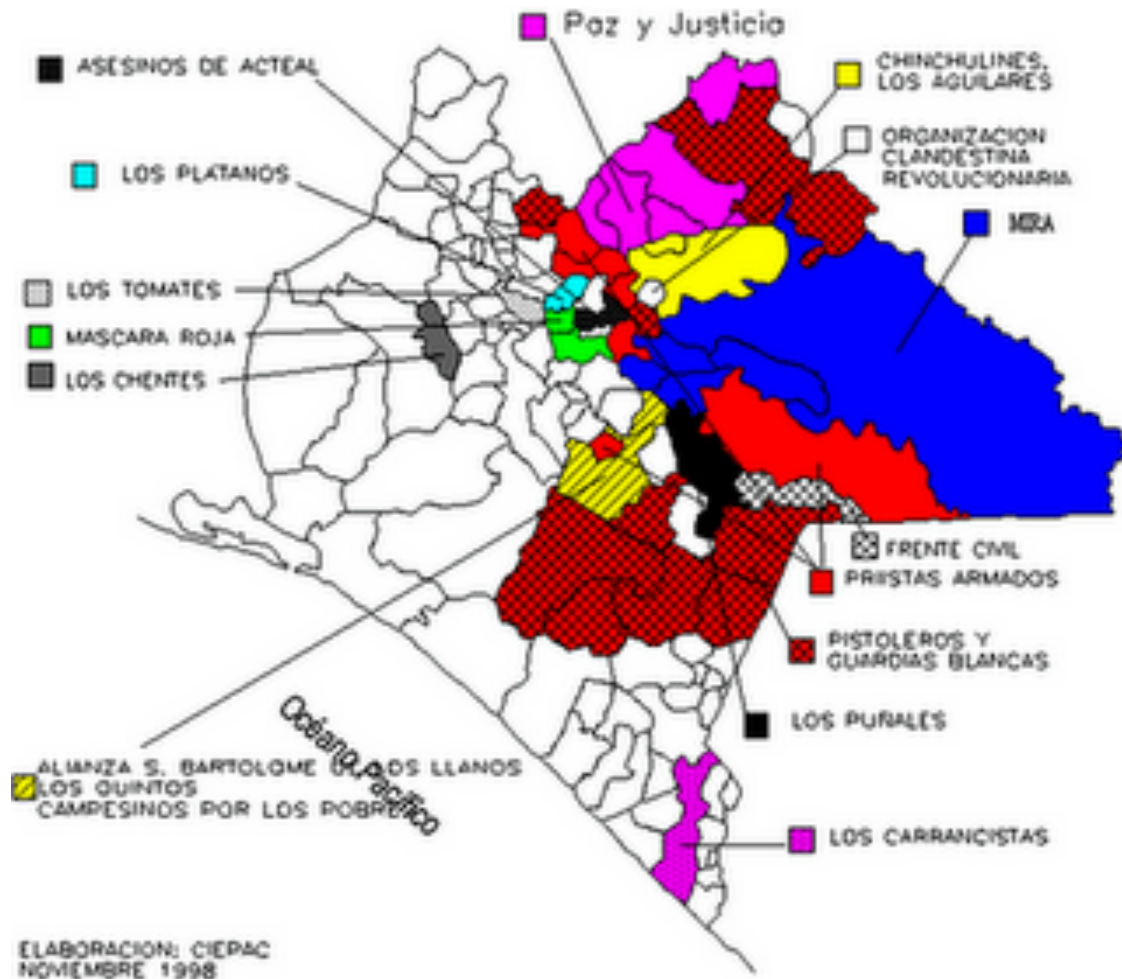
- i. 25,000 soldiers (Mexican government figures) and 60,000 (NGO figures)
- ii. national army troops replaced with elite *Gafe* rapid deployment units.



#### *iv. Paramilitarization* : Military *modus operandi*:

1. identify landless and impoverished non-Zapatista communities geographically situated at the intersection of Zapatista-controlled areas

2. Provide economic aid, development projects, and paramilitary training programs to develop them ‘paramilitary communities,’





**v. military-led *Rural Development* is development that binds rural Chiapanecos into social and market relations with military personnel and bases:**

- i. large-scale construction projects,**
- ii. roadway construction,**
- iii. thriving service industry in prostitution a third.**





**Military-led development – example:  
The military has become Mexico's  
newest rural development agency.  
researchers have identified  
institutional supports (development  
projects, grants-in-aid)**



# *(Mexican Government) Strategic-hamlet style Pacification*



***vi. Political gerrymandering*** creates a new political geography to match military development.

- i. Current long-standing municipio boundaries are redrawn to place military bases at the centers of 30 new municipios.**
- ii. Mexico's 1995 'New Federalist' initiative gave new fiscal authority to municipios: new municipal seats/military bases will be well situated to deny Zapatista communities financial resources**

# San Andrés accords versus the ‘Indigenous Law’ (*Ley Indígena*)

# Why not recognize the San Andrés accords?

- i. The settlement would provide indigenous peoples with autonomy and the right to self-determination
  - separate tribal courts
  - control over local economic development
- ii. Under the PRI/Zedillo administration, three groups were lined up against the Zapatistas
  - Traditional PRI caciques and ruling elites who depend on labor & electoral control to maintain themselves in power
    - a. electoral control: control of votes
    - b. labor control: cheap labor for landed estates
  - Mexican national capitalists who want access to Chiapas resources
  - International capitalistists who want to gain access and fear a resurgence of nationalist resource control ideology



iii. Under the new Fox/PAN administration the traditional cacique/PRI coalition has lost power, but Mexican and international capitalists still fear a loss of economic control

iv. At stake now are two very important issues

- Retiro de fuerzas militares: Troop withdrawal from Chiapas
- Negotiation of la Nueva Ley de Derechos Indigenas: the New Indian Rights Law
  - a. tribal courts
  - b. self-determination through local governance
  - c. who determines who an Indian is?