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THIS DOES NOT PRETEND to be a story of the twenty years of political violence in Peru that left more than thirty thousand dead and \$25 billion in damages but is instead a critical analysis of the actors involved in this revolutionary war process and the strategic successes and mistakes that led to the war's conclusion. Primarily, the conflict involved Sendero Luminoso (SL, or Shining Path), the smaller Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru (MRTA), and the Peruvian state. Both insurgent and state forces made serious and decisive mistakes during the conflict. But in the end the former were defeated because they committed more mistakes than the state forces and also because the latter, almost a decade after the beginning of the armed struggle on May 17, 1980, developed a different and more or less efficient counterinsurgency strategy than they had devised previously.

The strategic defeat of SL and MRTA would not have been possible without the critical participation of the rural civil population, which forged an alliance with the security forces as part of that new approach in the late 1980s. This was, of course, the organization of



self-defense committees (or *rondas campesinas*), which in the end broke Sendero's strategic backbone.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Peru was on the brink of collapse. The existence of the state, the survival of the nation, and the stability of a region were at stake. A small, ruthless, but organized and dedicated revolutionary organization almost destroyed the country. How did this happen? Why was the response so ineffectual until 1988–89? Carlos Tapia, a Peruvian counterinsurgency expert, says that in only a few instances in Latin American history has there been a case in which frivolity, inaction, or covert conciliation in the face of terrorist subversion took a country to the edge of collapse. Also there have been few cases in which one can find so many mistakes committed by politicians and military leaders who had the responsibility for fighting the subversion and who facilitated its expansion and development over several years.¹

From the beginning of the insurgency, both the civilian and military leaders failed to understand the real nature of the threat as a revolutionary war machine whose main objectives were political, although the primary symptoms felt were the military actions of the Ejército Guerrillero del Pueblo (EGP, or Popular Guerrilla Army), the armed branch of the SL. Sendero leader Abimael Guzmán structured the SL as an iceberg: the EGP acted on the surface, but the most important action took place under it.² The Peruvian security establishment failed to understand that this insurgency was different from the one that took place in 1965, which was easily infiltrated and destroyed. Consequently, it required a new counterinsurgency approach.³ As this essay will demonstrate, Sendero also managed to wage a very efficient asymmetrical war that provoked and made the state's initial response late, disproportionate, flawed, and counterproductive.

AN ATYPICAL INSURGENCY

Wars, conventional and unconventional, are never fought in the same way. In 1965, Peru suffered an insurgency inspired by the doctrine and strategy of Che Guevara, the Latin American revolutionary. The intention of the insurgents was to mobilize, organize, and lead the peasants to an armed uprising. The problem was that they

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lacked the organizational structure, ideological coherence, material means, and intelligence concerning the sociopolitical environment to perform that kind of task. As indicated previously, the insurgents were easily infiltrated and were promptly destroyed by the security forces. Che Guevara became a legend but not an example.⁴ From the early stage in the organization of the armed party to conduct revolutionary warfare against the Peruvian state and society, Guzmán kept in mind the mistakes committed in 1965. He then set about creating a war machine within the framework of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. According to the American counterinsurgency specialist William Ratcliff, Shining Path is one of the most unusual guerrilla organizations in Latin American history. Maoist parties have existed in the Western Hemisphere since the early 1960s, but no Maoist guerrilla force has ever caused as much unrest and destruction as this originally provincial group from the Andes.⁵

SL strategy also differed from traditional theoretical and experiential frameworks because the interplay of variables in Peru contradicted the existing scholarly theories of revolution developed during the Cold War. According to some of these theories, political exclusion was a key impetus to revolution. In the case of Peru, however, political exclusion was not a key factor. Rather, between 1980 and 1991, elections in Peru were fair and the electoral process was inclusive. Marxist parties participated in the political process, electoral and otherwise. Whereas the Marxist Frente Farabundo Martí (FMLN) participants in El Salvador frequently cited political exclusion as the main reason for their decision to join the movement, participants in Shining Path did not say that political exclusion caused them to join that organization.⁶ It was not pure serendipity but cold reasoning that led Guzmán to choose the proper political and strategic moment for the Inicio de la Lucha Armada (ILA, or Beginning of the Armed Struggle). “Silvia,” a Sendero member interviewed by American political scientist Robin Kirk, pointed out that Guzmán’s genius resided in his ability to choose the moment for his political project.⁷ The declaration of war was issued with the Chuschi attack of May 17, 1980, one day before the elections that were to mark Peru’s return to democracy after twelve years of military rule (1968–80). The candidates included the center-leftist Armando Villanueva of the Aprista Party and Fernando Belaúnde Terry, the very person who had been overthrown by the military in



1968. Belaúnde Terry won in a landslide and began the transition to democracy, coming to power on July 28, 1980.

The Sendero leader knew that there was going to be great distrust between the government and the military. This was especially true in the case of Belaúnde Terry, who thought that the intelligence he was receiving about an insurgency was a ruse to allow the military to retain some degree of power. In reality, the military did not pay much attention to what it regarded as a minor insurrection, certainly no worse than the uprising that had occurred in 1965. What the military could not imagine was that Guzmán's plan for the ILA would fully exploit the mistakes in organization, tactics, security, and mobility that were committed by the 1965 insurgents. Sendero insurgency was atypical and could not be found in the classical standards and manuals of counterinsurgency. Silvia was right. The political environment was ideal for Guzmán: the civil and military authorities distrusted each other and lacked exact knowledge of the real nature of the threat. Some of these problems would continue during Alan García's administration (1985–90).⁸

ORGANIZATION OF THE SHINING PATH

Guzmán created a very closed, secretive organization, described by British expert J. Bowyer Bell as one hidden within a *protective ecosystem*, an underground that both protects and punishes.⁹ Joining the Shining Path had elements of a rite of initiation into a religious sect or, worse, an armed sect of true believers driven by what Bell calls *the dream*.¹⁰ These elements were not only the source of the energy driving the armed struggle, but they also largely determined the dynamic of that struggle.

Few security or military analysts study or understand the sociological phenomenon of true believers or their dreams. All movements that opt for the armed struggle are shaped and circumscribed in large part by the need to turn a dream into reality. Rebels have great dreams, and Sendero was no exception. Its dream was transcendental and commanding, with promises of salvation and redemption. It offered an end to grievances and a future appropriate to a new reality. Never was the absolute dream impure for the true believer. Others may find flaws outside the organization, but the rebels see none.¹¹

But besides the dream Guzmán needed a different kind of revolutionary organization. Peruvian anthropologist Carlos Iván Degregori says that most classic guerrilla groups clearly underestimate the role of bureaucratic organization in the making of their movements and in shaping society in general. Guzmán represented the culmination of a shift from romanticism to calculation. He built an authoritative organization and converted it, by its own definition, into a war machine. He coldly planned for mass death because the triumph of the revolution would cost a million deaths, as he said in a televised appearance days after his capture on September 24, 1992.¹²

Although *revolutionary organization* is seldom defined, for many scholars the term includes the organization's ideology, strategy, structure, and leadership. In one model, American political scientists Raj Desai and Harry Eckstein emphasize the importance of visionary and innovative ideas that are advanced with zeal as well as of a combat party that can make fervor efficient—that is, identify where the party is likely to gain adherents, mobilize and retain members, identify friends and enemies, and plot a plausible path to power.¹³ Guzmán's recognition of the need for such an organization was also caused by the fact that terrorist and guerrilla groups have an organizational momentum that works in their favor in the face of government countermeasures. Guerrillas tend to plan well in advance, conduct detailed reconnaissances, and have the forces deployed for operations of prolonged and enhanced activity. Guerrillas are engaged in a war of attrition, and only after time and multiple demonstrations of countermeasures will they give ground.¹⁴ Sir Robert Thompson, one of Britain's main counterinsurgency strategists, says that the individual in a threatened society could have been attracted during the first phase by the original cause—the dream. But in the second phase there will be much less attraction, and the individual will be most influenced by the efficiency of the revolutionary organization and the tensions that revolutionary war creates.¹⁵ The March 2, 1982, Sendero assault on the Huamanga prison—located in Huamanga, the capital city of Ayacucho—freed dozens of imprisoned guerrillas, provided a great attraction, and resulted in many new recruits. With this spectacular military action, SL proved that it was not an “armchair” revolutionary organization but a real and efficient one. From that date, it was seen as com-



pletely different from previous revolutionary organizations and the static rhetoric of the Peruvian Left.

When insurgents can demonstrate relative military and organizational achievements, their chances for gaining support increase, especially if the government is inept, lethargic, and incompetent. This concept, advanced by the U.S. National Defense University's Bard E. O'Neill, may sound trite, but it is a truism that people generally gravitate toward the side perceived to be winning.¹⁶ Unfortunately, the Peruvian state was inept, lethargic, and incompetent.

The Sendero developed a rigorous system of internal discipline that ensured its growing success in the first years of the war. Each new candidate for membership submitted entirely to the party's authority, writing out the fullest possible self-criticism and waiting humbly for the party's judgment of it. Again and again, recalls the journalist John Simpson, "I was to notice a certain look about Shining Path's true believers: a calmness, a total certainty which came from the complete relinquishment of personal ideas, ambitions and feelings, and a wholehearted acceptance of Gonzalo's—Guzmán's *nom de guerre*—thinking."¹⁷

There was a dream, there was an organization, and also there was a revolutionary elite. Michael Radu, a scholar at Philadelphia's Foreign Policy Research Institute and one of America's leading counterinsurgency experts, defines *revolutionary elite* as the group of individuals who have political, military, or ideological control over decision making within revolutionary movements. *Revolution* is summarily defined as a political, economic, ideological, and social project, not necessarily fulfilled but at least characterized by one overall goal: the radical restructuring of the entire society, from the distribution of wealth and property to the level of individual mentalities. Revolutionary elites are ideologically aware, decision-making, revolutionary professionals.¹⁸

Sendero reflected one of the most important features of Maoism: the dependence upon a highly charismatic and unchallenged leader. From the start, Guzmán built up his personality cult. After he went underground, his megalomania and his pro-Maoist and pro-Stalinist ideological bias permitted him to transform his already unchallenged control over Sendero into a godlike, mythical omnipresence.¹⁹ When men with such a makeup are either perceived to have supernatural qualities or manifest impressive speaking

skills and a dynamic, forceful personality, they frequently are able to motivate others to join their cause through their example and persuasiveness, as was the case with Guzmán.²⁰

One of his maxims was: “strategic centralization, tactical decentralization.” No decision was made without his consent at the strategic level. Before his capture, American scholars William and Sandra Hazleton mentioned that analysts agreed that he was the chief architect of a very hierarchical and bureaucratic party that was, at the same time, decentralized to a considerable degree. This meant that long-range strategic planning and major political decisions were made by the national leadership but implementation was generally left in the hands of the regional zone commanders and sector and local cells.²¹ In the end, as Boston University’s terrorism expert David Scott Palmer says, one of the factors limiting Sendero was its dependence on a single leader. This is one reason why Guzmán’s organization began to crumble almost immediately after his capture on September 12, 1992.²²

The Rand Corporation’s Gordon McCormick correctly described the importance of Guzmán as the force behind the scene. In retrospect, it can be said that Guzmán carefully cultivated an image of genius and omnipresence among his followers, who often appeared to be as enamored of the man and his image as of the goals and objectives of the organization. Authority and control within Sendero, in this respect, appeared to hinge on some variant of what has been termed by Ann Ruth Willner as “the charismatic leader-follower relationship.” Such a relationship is based on four elements.

The group leader, in this case Guzmán, is believed to possess a unique vision of the future and superhuman qualities.

Group followers unquestionably accept the leader’s views, statements, and judgment.

They comply with his orders and directives without question.

They give the leader unqualified devotion.

McCormick continues by saying that, although this relationship can be subject to a breakdown over time, when it is operative it results in a unique bond between the leader of an organization and its rank and file membership. The leader under this condition is much



more than the mere head of the group. For a period of time, at least, he commands absolute authority and is regarded as a historic figure by his followers, who assume the role of disciples. A relationship of this nature will result in close group unity. It will also tend to limit the role of the organization's secondary or midlevel leadership, whose principal role in the eyes of the membership will be to serve as a link between the leader and those who are sent out to do his or her bidding.²³

That is why when Alberto Fujimori took office as president of Peru in 1990 he decided that the two pillars of his government would be international economic and financial reassertion and a counterinsurgency strategy at every level of government rather than just a focus on military aspects. But his main weapon would be the intelligence that allowed him to target the leaders of Sendero through the combined efforts of the National Directorate against Terrorism (DINCOTE) and the National Intelligence Service (SIN). He knew that the key to the strategic defeat of Sendero was to behead the organization, that is, to capture Guzmán. As mentioned previously, this strategic objective was spectacularly achieved on September 12, 1992; after that, the organization crumpled like a house of cards.

THE GOALS OF SENDERO LUMINOSO

As a political and military organization, SL had from the beginning a single goal: to take over the national government of Peru by applying an adaptation of Mao's strategy to surround the cities from the countryside. Thompson reminds us that in revolutionary war the aim is always political. As Mao stated: "Politics is war without bloodshed: war is politics with bloodshed."²⁴

According to Robin Kirk, Guzmán's plans responded to a revolutionary ideal that did not envision a reformed Peru but rather a destroyed Peru, thus extirpating every last vestige of capitalism from Peruvian soil.²⁵ For Gerónimo Inca, Sendero's first stage (democratic revolution) was to take power through a prolonged or unitary people's war, by which war was conceived as a combined assault. Again, Mao's strategy of dominating the countryside and then encircling the cities was at the heart of Guzmán's plan.²⁶ This

prolonged war had three components: strategic defense, strategic equilibrium, and strategic offensive. The plan was for the military arm, now called the Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL, or Popular Liberation Army), to establish the República Popular del Perú, or People's Republic of Peru. It is interesting to note that when Sendero began its people's war the objective was to establish a República Popular de Nueva Democracia, or People's Republic of New Democracy.²⁷ This change, according to Peruvian expert Carlos Tapia, indicates that Sendero's initial philosophy of struggle was poorly conceived and had abstract and ideological political objectives not well understood by the peasant masses.²⁸ Thus, Guzmán adapted his rhetoric and developed a new plan more acceptable to his target constituency.

STRATEGY OF THE SENDERO LUMINOSO

Sendero's revolutionary warfare was the embodiment of the Maoist definition: a form of warfare that enables a small, ruthless minority to gain control by force over the people of a country and thereby to seize power by violent and unconstitutional means.²⁹ French military analyst Col. Georges Bonnet has advanced the following equation to explain revolutionary warfare:

$$RW = G + P,$$

where RW stands for revolutionary war, G stands for guerrilla tactics, and P stands for political and psychological activities. Bonnet and other French military analysts concluded that in revolutionary war the military tactics of the guerrilla are secondary to the central strategic objectives of destroying the legitimacy of the target government through the establishment of a counterideology and counterinstitutions. Thus, it was the objectives sought, and the central importance placed on political warfare and psychological operations in achieving them, that differentiated revolutionary war from other forms of irregular combat. Mao Zedong was the first person to systematically apply this formula.³⁰

Prior to 1990, Peruvian civilian and military authorities missed the most important point of Guzmán's movement. As a result, they



countered Sendero only in the military aspects of its actions and did not seek to affect what was below the surface of the Peruvian revolutionary reality. Thus, Peruvian government forces militarized what from the start should have been a mainly political approach to containing the insurgents.

Sendero's main strategy was the use of terrorism in the countryside. As British counterinsurgency expert Sir Richard Clutterbuck points out, rural populations are psychologically very vulnerable to terrorism. Ancient China's military thinker Sun-Tzu encapsulated the concept as "kill one, frighten ten thousand." When terrorists prowl through villages at night or jump out of the bushes when people are at work in the fields, the rural population feels very insecure and far more isolated than someone who is enveloped in the bustle of a city or shanty town.³¹ American counterterrorism expert Ernst Halperin describes terror against civilians as a necessary and inevitable component of guerrilla warfare. In order to survive, the guerrillas must eliminate popular support for the opposing side in the contested area. Therefore, guerrilla warfare is first and foremost warfare against the civilian supporters of the opposing side. Harassment of enemy forces is only a secondary objective.³² For Bard E. O'Neill, insurgent terrorism is purposeful rather than mindless violence because terrorists seek to achieve specific short-, mid-, and long-term goals.³³

According to American counterinsurgency experts Michael Radu and Vladimir Tismaneanu, the guerrillas never lost sight of their ultimate aim, which was not only to replace the existing government but to destroy its base of support and to introduce already defined revolutionary changes to control the populace.³⁴ Sendero's terrorist actions were directed mainly at civilian authorities outside of the cities, seeking to displace and destroy the state in the hinterland as part of a strategy of creating a political vacuum.³⁵ A secondary purpose was to obtain popular support by demonstrating the government's weakness.

According to O'Neill, an insurgent's success depends in large part on two factors: the target of terror and the length of the campaigns. However, as Kirk says, prolonging and intensifying terrorism may be counterproductive because it can disrupt traditional lifestyles, as happened with Sendero's first actions against peasant fairs and market participation, which ignored the mercantile and

cultural needs of the inhabitants.³⁶ In O'Neill's opinion, failure to replace terrorism with more effective military operations can create the impression that the insurgents have lost the initiative and their chances of success are remote. Even worse, as terrorism continues there is a danger that it will become indiscriminate, and the insurgents can end up alienating potential domestic and international support.³⁷

As general governor of Algeria in 1957, Jacques Soustelle noted: "Terror is a psychological weapon of unbelievable power. Confronting bodies with severed throats and the grimacing, mutilated faces of the victims, all capacity for resistance ceases. Nonetheless, terrorism is not an efficient type of warfare. The revolutionaries cannot gain permanent support of a population by force. Terror may drive people into supporting the administration if the governing authorities can offer them security. Smart terrorists will dispense such violence sparingly to avoid this adverse reaction."³⁸ Apparently, Guzmán was not one of the smart ones, for his use of terror as a main weapon favored Sendero's expansion only in the midterm. The violence provided the backdrop against which the popular armed organizations (*rondas*) were created in the countryside and cities that would later be the basis for Sendero's strategic defeat. The sixteen massacres of twelve persons or more between December 1987 and February 1992 are evidence that Guzmán did not change his strategic approach to terrorism.³⁹ In other words, for twelve years Sendero never could make the qualitative leap toward its main objective of taking power but instead relied only on terrorism in and of itself.

One dramatic but illustrative case of Guzmán's strategy is the way SL treated the Asháninka people in the central jungle. It created concentration camps where the natives were forced to work for the party under subhuman conditions and endure privations, including corporal punishment and death for disobedience and flight. The majority of the natives rescued by the Asháninka *rondas* and the armed forces showed symptoms of critical malnourishment.⁴⁰ More than two thousand people, including *colonos* (Peruvians who had migrated to rural areas) and Asháninka prisoners, died over the course of Sendero's presence in the Ene River valley. They were either assassinated or died from malnutrition and disease resulting from the inhumane conditions to which

they had been subjected. In August 1994, several mass graves were discovered.⁴¹

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STATE VACILLATION, LOST TIME, AND AGGRAVATION OF THE SITUATION

Peruvian counterinsurgency experts Carlos Iván Degregori and Carlos Rivera wrote that in the countryside just before the involvement of the armed forces in the war against Sendero (December 1982) there were signs of discontent between the peasants and the insurgents. In one case, nine journalists in the Quechua community of Uchuraccay were killed in January 1983, according to a commission headed by the writer Mario Vargas Llosa. The reporters were traveling to investigate a villagers' rebellion against Sendero in the neighboring village of Huaychao. Inside the Peruvian armed forces there is now acknowledgment of the grave error represented by the indiscriminate repression that they conducted, as for years it lessened the perception of Sendero's own propensity for violence. Due to this state use of violence, Sendero was viewed as the lesser evil until the second half of the 1980s.⁴² The armed forces fell into the trap of repression because of Guzmán's strategy of forcing a repressive state response that would alienate the populace and make it more receptive to his message, says David S. Palmer. This popular reaction should not be interpreted as support for Sendero; it was primarily a reaction against the terrorism of the government.⁴³

Related to Sendero's use of terrorism came the discussion in the first years of the war on how to classify and cope with the violent organization. In 1990, Peruvian journalist Santiago Pedraglio argued that it was a grave error to consider SL as a mainly military force. This error, which goes hand in hand with proposals for a military solution, undervalues Sendero's strength because it minimizes its political impact on sectors of the population and reduces the problem to a surgical matter or at best a psychosocial one. For Pedraglio, SL is not only a military organization but one of the most important political parties that has ever existed in the country. This does not contradict the fact that SL is a militarized group prepared for war, but it is primarily a party, an organizational and ideological entity with a project for the country.⁴⁴

ASYMMETRIC WARFARE EFFICIENTLY WAGED AGAINST A SUPPOSEDLY STRONG STATE

In 1980, Peru supposedly was a strong country. The military government that had ruled since 1968 had enlarged the size and scope of the state apparatus. Notwithstanding, Guzmán noted that despite that strength both Peruvian society and the state were disorganized at the time. That is why he always referred to the government as a big elephant that could easily be trapped in the mud. The problem in Peru was the lack of an effective government throughout the country. The military government increased the size of the bureaucracy, but it remained concentrated in the coastal departments, especially in Lima.⁴⁵

Due to the perception of threat and traditional geopolitical preconceptions, the Peruvian armed forces grew to become one of the most powerful military establishments for conventional warfare in Latin America. It was organized, trained, and deployed to fight a potential war against Chile and Ecuador. Billions of dollars were spent purchasing weapons systems in Europe, mainly from the Soviet Union. Peru had the ability to wage a two-front external war, but it had no domestic concerns because the military had taken power and, remembering the traumatic events of 1965 as a product of injustice and poverty, began a political and social revolution that it believed would prevent any future insurgency. The military government was promptly infiltrated by all kinds of leftists. The regime of President Juan Velasco began what he called the Peruvian Revolution, which would improve the country's status in South America and serve as an example of a third option for a noncapitalist and noncommunist government.

The Peruvian Left skillfully infiltrated the state structure, including organizations that Velasco created, such as the National System for Support of Social Mobilization (SINAMOS), a gigantic bureaucratic entity that on paper was to channel the social demands of the population but in fact frustrated such efforts as the land reform of 1969. This was a result of the extreme ideological treatment given to all aspects of Peruvian life. Velasco reinvigorated the Confederación General de Trabajadores del Perú (CGTP, or General Confederation of Peruvian Workers), a labor structure controlled by the pro-Soviet Peruvian Communist Party, to oppose the labor organization



efforts of the rival Aprista Party. He did not realize that he was creating monsters everywhere, which (indirectly) included SL. Guzmán and his followers were camouflaged as another radical group because being progressive was the mood. At one stage, he worked in SINAMOS, which gave him and his cadres the opportunity to know their enemy's organization from within, especially its weakest parts.⁴⁶

The centralized Peruvian state that was attacked in 1980 gave the impression of strength, but in reality it was structurally very weak. American political scientist Philip Mauceri thinks, however, that a centralized state is not synonymous with a powerful state and argues that Sendero's rapid growth in the 1980s and early 1990s was directly related to limits in the state's organizational capacities and influence in society. The SL organization followed the classic Maoist model used by many other groups in Peru, but it was far more successful in taking advantage of the state's weakest points.⁴⁷ Paraphrasing American colonel Charles Dunlap Jr., we can say that Sendero may have perceived vulnerable asymmetries in what the Peruvian state viewed as its virtues, that is, a huge bureaucratic apparatus, but one centralized and not identified with the people of the hinterland and powerful armed forces perfectly suited to wage a conventional war.⁴⁸ Low-intensity conflict is a more subtle and complex kind of challenge than those to which most governments and armed forces are accustomed, and SL knew this.⁴⁹ According to American counterterrorism expert Neil Livingstone, from a military perspective, the chief problem faced by major Western powers in fighting terrorism is that of dealing out small amounts of force. Western arsenals are structured to fight big wars, as was the case in Peru, not counterinsurgency operations. As a consequence, in recent years there has been a tendency to employ these weapons to strike back at terrorists, which can be compared to using a sledgehammer to kill a bothersome fly.⁵⁰

Guerrillas often frustrate regular military forces, as the United States and the Soviet Union found out in Vietnam and Afghanistan and Russia is now learning in Chechnya. Heavy firepower and large unit maneuvers are irrelevant, not cost effective, and sometimes counterproductive.⁵¹ The use of conventional armed forces in counterinsurgency operations almost always leads to huge collateral damage; conventional forces always engage in excesses that harm

the civilian population. Peru was no exception. The armed forces forgot Sir Robert Thompson's accurate words: "It's all very well having bombers, masses of helicopters, tremendous firepower, but none of these will eliminate a Communist cell in a high school which is producing fifty recruits a year for the insurgent movement."⁵²

Moreover, in 1980 it was hard to believe that a handful of fanatic followers of Mao, armed with (in Guzmán's words) "humble dynamite," would have a chance against the solid, modernized army Velasco had built to fight a conventional war against Chile or Ecuador.⁵³ In retrospect, the tactical lesson in this case was that the lowest of low-tech weapons used with panache by skilled and disciplined combatants on their home turf can be brutally effective.⁵⁴

Sendero prepared itself to wage asymmetrical warfare, which in Defense Intelligence Agency analyst Paul F. Herman's words is "a set of operational practices aimed at negating advantages and exploiting vulnerabilities rather than engaging in traditional force-on-force engagements. The incentive to engage in asymmetric warfare is usually greatest for the weaker party in defense against a stronger foe. Asymmetric concepts and moves seek to use the physical environment and military capabilities in ways that are atypical and presumably unanticipated by more established militaries, thus catching them off-balance and unprepared."⁵⁵

Shining Path simply did not fit into the classical standards and manuals of counterinsurgency, so it became unconventional and atypical even within the realm of unconventional warfare. The Peruvian armed forces felt frustrated and responded with violent intervention in Ayacucho, which only favored Sendero and prompted its expansion to other departments throughout the country.

A COUNTERPRODUCTIVE AND MISTAKEN STATE RESPONSE

When Sendero's actions began to mount, President Belaunde put the police in charge of the operations in Ayacucho and referred to the insurgents as cattle rustlers and delinquents.⁵⁶ Belaunde's approach to insurgency was the same in 1965 and 1980. In 1965, he announced that sensational reports could harm the credit of the country. There were armed groups, but the police could control the situation. There could be no guerrillas where there is a demo-



cratic government.⁵⁷ It took him fifteen days to order the military to mount operations against the insurgents. Against Sendero, he waited twenty-nine months before calling on the armed forces in December 1982.

It was *too late*, and the reaction would prove to be *too much*. Belaunde's decision to call on the armed forces was motivated by the total defeat of the current police forces (a unified national police was not created until 1988) to which the military overreacted between 1983 and 1984 with a body-counting approach. Apparently the military had no knowledge of the British experience in Malaya, where, faced with an equally powerful Maoist insurgency, the colonial authorities never went so far as to claim enemy casualties based on statistical probabilities, as later became the misleading practice of the U.S. military in Vietnam.⁵⁸ The United States' involvement in Vietnam was another experience that the Peruvian military should have studied. By 1983, the toll in Peru was very high, with 1,486 deaths, and it was even higher, with another 2,651 deaths, in 1984.

With assassinations or threats, Sendero managed to eliminate several local mayors, governors, and lieutenant governors in remote rural districts. Although it is true that many small police posts were attacked in those remote places, the great majority of the almost five hundred posts were deactivated as a preventive measure. In this way, the power vacuum that existed at the moment when Sendero was trying to settle down strategically in the rural zones was not the product of victories achieved in military confrontations but rather, as in soccer, the product of default.⁵⁹ Thus, the Peruvian state ceded power and further debilitated the traditionally weak positions it had in the hinterland. The British example in Malaya consisted of an opposite policy, one that placed greater emphasis on government: "government," Thompson said, "that not only functioned, but was seen to function, so that the births, marriages and deaths still get registered."⁶⁰

Peruvians forgot that of all the variables that have a bearing on the process and outcome of insurgencies none is more important than government response. O'Neill asserts that governments can control their own destinies, largely because they are normally in an advantageous position during the incipient stages of violence because of their higher degree of political institutionalization and

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their control of the instruments of coercion by the police and military. Also, O'Neill continues, when a government misunderstands the type of insurgent movement it is facing, it can blind itself to policy options that could end the insurgency at a lower cost.⁶¹

A key point to be addressed when evaluating a counterinsurgency program is how well the government knows its enemy. As self-evident as this may seem, historical and contemporary data reveal instances in which governments have misdirected policies because they misunderstood or falsely portrayed the goals, techniques, strategies, and accomplishments of their opponents. Whatever the reasons (inflexibility, sloppy thinking, ignorance, biases, bureaucratic imperatives, or a psychological aversion to acknowledging one's own weaknesses), the outcome is flawed, costly, and sometimes fatal. To begin with, it is important to find out whether the authorities have made a conscious effort to identify the type of insurgency with which they are dealing by carefully examining all information at their disposal—statements, publications, and internal documents of the insurgents as well as intelligence from human and electronic sources, if it is available. Failure to do this can lead to false pictures of the adversary. It is a matter of taking into account Clausewitz's advice: "The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgement that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish the kind of war on which they are embarking, neither mistaking it for nor trying to turn it into something that is alien to its nature. That is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive."⁶²

"The governing power," says American counterinsurgency expert John McCuen, "must take a careful estimate of the situation, evolve realistic long-term plans, and commit sufficient resources in time to regain the initiative."⁶³ Instead of coping with it politically and psychologically, the Peruvian government took a purely militaristic approach to the problem, forgetting that if political and psychological warfare plays an important role in revolutionary insurgency the same can be said for counterinsurgency strategy. The objectives of such a strategy include denying the insurgents access to the population, establishing and maintaining government legitimacy, mobilizing the population, and delegitimizing the insurgents and those governments that support them.⁶⁴ In militarizing the war, the Peruvian government went against the logic of this kind of war-



fare. Sir Henry Gurney, the high commissioner in Malaya, decided that on no account must the armed forces have control over the conduct of the war. This, he argued, was a war of political ideologies. He believed that what was needed was armed support for a political war, not political support for an army war.⁶⁵

In Peru, the problem was thought to be purely military. Belaunde and García failed to see it in its real dimension: as a political problem. Paradoxically, as Mauceri says, the increased political role of the armed forces acquired over the coming years resulted more from civilian pressures than the military's appetite for a return to power. At the end of military rule, the Peruvian armed forces were demoralized, divided, and intent on restoring their shattered unity by depoliticizing the institutions. However, civilian officials openly encouraged the military to increase its role in counterinsurgency planning and operations.⁶⁶

These were the same civilian officials who were offended when military and police officers talked about the existence of guerrillas in Peru in late 1980 and early 1981. Law 24150, the Law of the Politico-Military Commands, allowed the armed forces to coordinate the public and private sectors in the zones declared to be in a state of emergency and gave them administrative control over local authorities and rights to propose political measures to the executive branch.⁶⁷

Lacking political objectives and a counterinsurgency strategy, the armed forces occupied Ayacucho as if it were enemy territory. Military leaders did not have in mind that in such cases the objective of the security forces is to regain control of the population and not just to occupy terrain. The purpose of territorial consolidation must be to establish contact with the people, says McCuen, in order to protect them, not to treat them like presumed terrorists and thus alienate their support.⁶⁸ Most of the populace consisted of frightened peasants in need of protection. In Clutterbuck's opinion, there is a myth that the winning side always has the support of the people. In practice, 80 percent of the people do not want to get involved with either side for fear of retribution by the other side against themselves or their families. They prefer to see and hear nothing. Usually, 10 percent at most will actively support the guerrillas (although more may be coerced by terror into doing so), and 10 percent at most will actively support the police, army, and local government, often encouraged by incentives and rewards.⁶⁹

In Peru, such incentives and rewards were established as late as mid-1992. In Malaya, big money was the simplest way to tempt informers to talk. The results were immediate. British general Harold Briggs wisely stated that the people matter, they are vital, but you can't expect support from people you can't protect.⁷⁰ For him, security was the vital ingredient, for security leads to confidence, confidence leads to better information, better information leads to greater security force success, and greater success leads to more security.⁷¹

Security must be apparent, effective, and stable so that the people recognize its existence, can depend upon it, and will be confident of the future.⁷² So the primary task of the security forces in rural guerrilla conflict is to build up the rural community's confidence in its own security and the inevitable defeat of the guerrillas. With this sense of security, they will cooperate by giving information to the military, thus serving as an intelligence force multiplier.⁷³

Again following with the successful Malayan experience, it was a matter in Peru of *winning the hearts and minds of the people*. In most instances, a combination of diplomacy, medical assistance, and acts of kindness is sufficient to win over the people, who probably have little love for the revolutionary intruders anyway. But this cannot be done without giving them a permanent sense of security. In Indochina, during the Red River delta operations, the local people, who had twice seen French occupation, also saw them depart twice and leave the inhabitants at the mercy of the Vietminh. They became hostile to further French clearing operations.⁷⁴ In Ayacucho, the troops provided only sporadic protection. Thus, the terrorists returned frequently, inflicting reprisals on the villagers.

The Peruvian security establishment also forgot that since the prime purpose of destabilization is to break the rule of law, the first essential element in countering terrorism is to ensure that soldiers, police, intelligence officers, and others claiming to support the government themselves act within the law.⁷⁵ In other words, the insurgent uses police repression as a tool to win popular support by catalyzing the population and intensifying counterterrorist operations, a tactic that further alienates the authorities from the local population. The insurgents try to provoke arbitrary and indiscriminate government reprisals, calculating that this will increase local resentment against the government, which they hope to convert into support for their insurrectionist cause.



The success of such insurgent ploys depends on the nature of the government's response and the social groups involved. Excessive violence by military and police units and government-sponsored vigilantes (death squads) is generally recognized as a factor accounting for increased support for insurgents.⁷⁶ When repressive measures are left almost entirely in the hands of military or police forces without adequate civilian control working for an eventual political solution, there will be an excess of force and brutality. In the end, the population may be controlled but it will not be won.⁷⁷ Jean Vaujor, director of the Sûreté (the French security service) during the war in Algeria, correctly asserted: "To send tank units, to destroy villages, to bombard certain zones, this is no longer the fine comb; it is using a sledgehammer to kill fleas. And what is much more serious, it is to encourage the young, and sometimes the less young, to join in the maquis (as the French guerrillas were known in World War II)."⁷⁸ As will be seen later, it is a matter of not committing regular forces to this kind of war. For Washington's Center for Strategic and International Studies scholar Edward Luttwak, low-intensity conflicts cannot be won solely through the application of mass firepower. They require more subtle tactics and special forms of politico-military expertise: low-intensity-conflict wars are all different (e.g., compare the 1965 Peruvian insurgency to that of 1980), and each requires an ad hoc set of operational procedures. Thus, a key task for forces seeking to suppress terrorists or insurgents is to develop one-place/one-time adaptive doctrines and methods.⁷⁹

The troops that were sent to Ayacucho in late 1982 were not only conventional, but they were not informed of their mission's purpose. What McCuen calls "the counter revolutionary troops and militia" should be carefully indoctrinated so that they will realize that their ultimate objective is not to destroy the revolutionary forces but to mobilize the population in support of the government.⁸⁰ If they fail to do this, they will lose just as surely as if they were defeated by the superior mobility and firepower of an opposing army. This indoctrination has to be part of an overall counterinsurgency strategy that did not exist in Peru until 1991–92 as a product of President Alberto Fujimori's determination to defeat the Sendero and the MRTA, which focused on a strategy and plan based on the use of good intelligence. Fighting without good intelligence consists at best of mindless campaigns of destruction conducted in

the hope that indiscriminate damage to the opponent's arms and body will affect vital but unknown pressure points.⁸¹ No state can protect the population from guerrilla warfare without good intelligence.⁸² But the creation of an intelligence system and building up the flow of information through it are long and arduous processes.⁸³

In sum, when massive numbers of troops entered Ayacucho they should have followed a plan. The Briggs Plan in Malaya was no magic wand but a coherent plan with a painstaking eye for detail, hard work, application, and professionalism instead of grand gestures and sweeping strategic maneuvers.⁸⁴ Besides, apart from a few legal norms (such as the Peruvian counterterrorist law or the law of the politico-military commands), the security forces lacked a general legal framework in which to confront the insurgents. The dismal situation originated in the reluctance of the legislative branch to enter into a serious discussion about political violence and was compounded by the failure to establish firm bases or integrate political and military strategies.⁸⁵ Fujimori would use this issue in April 1992 as one of his reasons for closing the Congress.

A FAILED INSURGENCY

During its first years, Sendero achieved a certain degree of popular support in Ayacucho. In September 1982, some ten thousand people attended the burial of Edith Lagos, the Sendero leader who boldly directed the assault on the Huamanga Prison in March of that year. Because of the nature of Shining Path, many analysts did not like to acknowledge the evidence of popular support for the movement, despite the evidence.⁸⁶ But Sendero acted with precision because of the information it received from various segments of the population, what the Vietminh called "the popular antennae." This flow of information resulted from its excellent organization. In describing this phenomenon, Peruvian journalist Gustavo Gorriti wrote in March 1990: "In the history of guerrilla insurrections, there are few, indeed if any, in which the factor of political will, supported by exhaustive planning, has been so preponderant. If this is a war of apparatuses, SL will win because it is more efficient, better organized and has better intelligence."⁸⁷

For O'Neill, there are two types of popular support: passive and



active. Passive support comes from individuals who quietly sympathize with the insurgents but are unwilling to provide material assistance. Although at first glance passive supporters may seem inconsequential, at minimum they are not apt to betray or otherwise impede the insurgents. This is important because a key aspect of counterinsurgency strategy for government units combating elusive terrorists and guerrillas is to acquire information from such people. Thus, passive support is a valuable commodity for insurgents. Active support is the most important kind of support the people can render to the insurgents.⁸⁸

The Peruvian state was lucky that most of Sendero's popular support never became active. Why was this? One of the answers is the chronic terrorism inflicted upon the population. The SL allegedly was looking for support, but the reality is deeper. Some analysts saw a certain degree of racism in Abimael Guzmán, such as when he referred to the people in remote jungle villages as *chutos* (*sallqas*, in the Quechua language of the highlands, means "dirty," "savage," or "pagan"). For Guzmán, these people were not equals but masses to be commanded to overflow, flood, and inundate the enemy on demand. They were less a human force than a natural phenomenon to be pooled, directed, and worked once the dam of revolution had been erected.⁸⁹ Sendero simply tried to gain support through violent coercion.

Painstaking efforts to acquire support by relying on various combinations of techniques other than coercion can be rapidly undermined by actions that victimize the population. Mao recognized this and clearly articulated it in a code of conduct for dealing with the people. Guzmán deviated from Mao's admonitions, and in the end this kind of conduct backfired against him.⁹⁰

According to American scholar Timothy Lomperis,

The essential error of SL is that it had picked the wrong Mao for its ideological beacon. Rather than the pragmatic young Mao bent on power from the Yanan caves, Guzmán fixed on the radical old Mao bent by his fanaticism into the self-destructive purge of the Cultural Revolution in the hands of his overzealous confederates, his wife and the Gang of Four radicals. Guzmán's error has been to eschew a united front approach and confine his movement to the radicals of his carefully nurtured cells. This made it difficult for him to broaden the base of his insurgency, and it has left him without allies in the far

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more competitive political terrain of the cities. In fact, this urban myopia led to his capture.⁹¹

In another view, American counterinsurgency expert Thomas Marks notes correctly:

Reality, especially as concerns Maoist insurgency, lies in the relationship between the mechanisms of grievance-driven recruitment, infrastructure and terror and the manner in which these change over time in their relative importance in the maintenance of the insurgent movement. Maoist insurgency has become increasingly divorced from the masses it purports to serve. Few cases illustrate this as well as does Sendero Luminoso.⁹²

Through rural and urban terror, Sendero pushed the government to the brink of collapse. Shortly before Guzmán's capture, journalist John Simpson spoke with a former minister, who impressively said: "In a few months' time this country will have no government. It will have collapsed. And the SL will be the only force capable of governing. It will be like Year Zero in Cambodia."⁹³ Most government officials and middle-class people were profoundly depressed by the state of the country, and a disturbing number seemed to agree that SL was close to victory.

Only in retrospect did it seem obvious that Sendero had lost the war between 1989 and 1992, despite appearances to the contrary.⁹⁴ In those years, the profound alienation of peasants crystallized as organized resistance to Sendero's politics, facilitated by a certain rapprochement between the military and the peasants.

A NEW STRATEGIC APPROACH AND THE DEFEAT OF THE INSURGENTS

Why was SL defeated, despite all its seeming advantages? From the perspective of peasant society, the armed forces followed a positive trajectory: while SL became more distant from peasant society, the military forged closer ties with it. As Sendero grew more external to peasant society, the armed forces became more internal to the population. The armed forces did not seek total control of everyday life. To be sure, the obligatory weekly visits to the peas-



ants' commands, the marches, and the attention paid to the visiting army patrols were inconvenient for the peasants. But the armed forces did not otherwise interfere in the daily life of the population and certainly did not exercise the level of control imposed by Sendero. Sendero, on the other hand, grew more distant from the peasants, causing a change in popular support from pragmatic acceptance to resistant adaptation and finally to overt rebellion.⁹⁵

Paradoxically, the increasing role of the military was favored by the same weakness of the state presence in the hinterland that favored Sendero's expansion. In other words, the military presence became the only real presence of the state in the countryside, although that was not the military's mission. This issue stimulated a discussion about how to cope with the insurgency.⁹⁶ In Mauceri's opinion, one of the most important problems the military confronted between 1983 and 1986 was a lack of consensus over the basic approach to counterinsurgency.⁹⁷ Within the Peruvian armed forces, this is known as the struggle between the French and British schools of counterinsurgency. The British school focused more on the nonmilitary aspects of counterinsurgency. The French school gave more importance to the military steps needed to defeat an insurgency. In 1984, General Adrián Huamán tried a version of the British approach as commander in chief in Ayacucho, but his efforts clashed with Belaunde's general philosophy of governance. He was promptly replaced and posted to Mexico as military attaché. But by the late 1980s one could say that the British approach was winning. The Peruvian nongovernmental organization Instituto de Defensa Legal said:

Nevertheless, without basic changes in the political matrix of the countersubversive strategy, in 1989 a search for a more regional counterinsurgency approach emerged to overcome obstacles to achieving support and action from the population. The more relevant examples are those of generals Howard Rodríguez in Ayacucho and Alberto Arciniega in the Huallaga River valley. In both cases, the countersubversive strategy was blended with a political strategy in an attempt to win the support of the civil society through its recognition of the military as a valid representative of the state.⁹⁸

This proved to be a new and innovative approach to combating Sendero.⁹⁹

Informally, midlevel officers began to change their approach toward the population, helping, protecting, and organizing it, creating the *rondas*. In 1976, these self-defense groups were created in Cajamarca and Piura to fight cattle rustlers. But in the late 1980s they were redesigned and armed by the military to fight Sendero. They not only created serious tactical and (in the end) strategic problems for Sendero, but they became a great source of intelligence. Many of these sources were villagers who had escaped Shining Path's control. For example, Friar Mariano Gagnon, a priest who protected the Asháninkas from SL in the Ene River valley, wrote:

I was awash in a sea of information. Some of the new arrivals had, at great risk, escaped from the terrorists, and as they told their stories, the climate of panic increased. From what I could gather, a large number of native families had been conscripted into terrorist ranks. The community of Camantavesti was completely taken over, as well as other settlements along the Ene and its tributaries. The escapees were a mine of military intelligence, and I somehow had to get their information back to the authorities.¹⁰⁰

Francisco Reyes, a Peruvian sociologist, says: "The *rondas* have plucked out the 'thousand eyes and ears of Guzmán's men,' and what is more they have infiltrated their enemy's territory with their own eyes and ears. They move like fish in water, because they do not wear uniforms and have learned to move unseen, becoming part of the environment and extending their espionage system."¹⁰¹ For Tapia, in the confrontations with the *rondas* the EGP columns not only suffered important military setbacks but for the first time confronted armed peasants of their own region. At the same time, a significant number of members of Sendero's and MRTA's local forces realized that their struggle was wrong, and they defected, becoming repentants long before the Repentance Law was passed.¹⁰² This law, similar to the one the British applied in Malaya, allowed thousands of Sendero and MRTA cadres to defect and give all kinds of information to the government about their leaders and organization.

According to Peruvian anthropologist Nelson Manrique, the *rondas* represent a reaction to Sendero's myopic inflexibility and planned use of mass violence. By the beginning of the 1990s, more than thirty-five hundred villages in the departments of Apurímac, Ayacucho, Huancavelica, and Junín had organized *rondas* to fight



Sendero. Despite the assassination of hundreds of members, or *ronderos*, the alliance of the peasants and the military pushed the Maoists almost completely out of such former strongholds.¹⁰³

The Peruvian armed forces' process of change was similar to that of the French in Algeria. There the excesses directed against the population were caused as much by frustration as by the inability to tell friend from foe. The excesses occurred long before adoption of the French strategy of 1956–57. This strategy was developed as an alternative to repressive military and police actions, which obviously were not working. Fundamental to the concept is winning popular support rather than alienating the people.¹⁰⁴ It was a *doctrinal reaction* to the initial flawed approach that materialized on August 9, 1989, when the armed forces adopted a new counterinsurgency manual, which replaced American strategic planning documents.

In Peru, the first example of serious change was probably in Puno, where the army distributed its forces with discretion and caution, without committing the repressive excesses of the Ayacucho campaign and with an astute use of intelligence and civic action.¹⁰⁵ A veteran journalist in Ayacucho discussed this change with Robin Kirk, stating that as a strategy it left much to be desired but at least the soldiers could see the advantages of getting the peasants on their side and had devoted time and energy to the committees (the *rondas*). Sendero's trained soldiers were still out there, but their ability to move and find support in the countryside had eroded dramatically. Among other things, the journalist pointed out that before the exodus tapered off there had been a sense, fragile but persistent, that the worst of the war was in the past.¹⁰⁶

The achievements of the *ronderos* in establishing a precarious social peace, a winding down of political violence, and a rebirth of civil society created a consciousness that they had won the war despite the inadequacies of the military and the state.¹⁰⁷ Peasants and *comuneros* (people from the villages) were citizen-warriors who had led the nation from the abyss, not hapless victims and marginals rescued by military patrons. Degregori wrote in 1996:

The peasants are proud of having won the war. They are proud of being better combatants than the military. Proud, but at the same time prudent, claiming for the presence of the state for the

reconstruction of their villages and claiming for the military protection, more like some kind of rear guard, than as an umbrella: a last line of defense.¹⁰⁸

The strategic defeat of Sendero could have been achieved before 1992 if the Peruvian state had developed a different counterinsurgency strategy during the previous decade. But why did success not come earlier? Probably one good reason is the military leader's lack of knowledge of successful historical counterinsurgency experiences and something as simple and dramatic as the lack of foreign language skills. Many books were published about Malaya, Algeria, Vietnam, and so on, but these were mainly in English. Peruvian military strategists simply could not read them. Thus, their learning process was painful, bloody, and entirely avoidable.

WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN DONE?

During the first stages of Peruvian insurgency, a comprehensive and politically oriented strategy should have been developed, one that included the following seven concepts.

1. *Intelligence.* The immediate centralization and unification of all intelligence efforts, as was done by Fujimori in his first administration (1990–95), was required to win the war.

2. *Laws.* The proper legal framework that could have given the security forces the legal support to break down the insurgents' organization was required to create an environment of law and order to preempt Sendero's reason for existence. Fujimori provided that legal framework after his much-criticized closing of the Congress on April 5, 1992.

3. *Indoctrination of the forces that were being sent to Ayacucho.* Special forces should have been the primary forces deployed. Although they have important applications in both conventional and unconventional wars, special forces operations are the most useful.¹⁰⁹ They can play a selective role in the actions, for which other army units are neither suited nor trained, because sometimes special operations, more than paramilitary ones, can be described as parapolitical.¹¹⁰ That is why special forces' use of violence is selective.¹¹¹ These kinds of forces can achieve success by reducing the



asymmetry between the opposing forces and altering their manner of operation. For example, full security in what had been the U.S. frontier sometimes came at the price of approximating the Indians' own tactics, as army general George Crook did in his war against the Apaches in the 1880s. In the Philippines, U.S. forces were effective, especially with the Moros, because they adapted to the way war was waged by their enemy.¹¹²

Although small detachments should establish operational bases, they should not be garrisoned in posts but rather should be continuously nomadic, using whirlwind-type tactics. That is, the detachments should keep constantly on the move within their assigned zones—attacking, ambushing, patrolling, searching, establishing an intelligence system, and, perhaps most importantly, contacting and assisting the people. In the words of French general Raoul Salan, “These units create a constantly insecure climate for the adversary.”¹¹³ In Algeria, the *commandos noir* of French general Jacques de Bollardi re, lightly equipped semiguerrilla detachments, lived like nomads with the Muslim population. Contrary to the sadly accepted norm in the army, they pledged themselves to regard every Muslim as a friend and not a suspect, except when proved to the contrary. With this policy of never shooting first, they were often involved in situations of high risk as well as being viewed with some suspicion by the conventional authorities. These units ruthlessly hunted down the hunter.¹¹⁴

In Malaya, the Special Air Service (SAS) did incredible work, forcing the communists to face another guerrilla army, one that was perfectly willing to confront them on their own terms.¹¹⁵ On many occasions, the SAS patrols forced the guerrillas to the jungle fringes and into ambushes by the infantry battalions and the police. These strategies made the interior unsafe for the enemy through a long-term presence and the winning over of the aborigines.¹¹⁶ Only special forces in Ayacucho could have adapted, adjusted, and compromised as needed to cope with the unfamiliar modes of resistance.¹¹⁷

4. *Prisoners.* Mao reportedly made the following comment when talking to Ferhat Abbas during the Algerian rebel chief's 1960 visit to China: “Instead of killing them, convert them to your way of thinking.”¹¹⁸ The British in Malaya called them surrendered enemy personnel (SEPs). With their help, it was possible to develop an increasingly detailed picture of the insurgents' order of battle, who

the important leaders were, what their strengths and weaknesses were, which units they commanded, and where they operated.¹¹⁹ In the words of Thompson, "The main basis of a successful psychological warfare campaign will depend on a clear and precise government surrender policy towards the insurgents. Such policy has three main aims: first, to encourage insurgent surrenders; second, to sow dissention between insurgent rank-and-file and their leaders; and third, to create an image of government both to the insurgents and the population which is both firm and efficient but at the same time just and generous."¹²⁰

That policy was officially nonexistent in Peru until the May 1992 Repentance Law (no. 25499). The only successful infiltration action by the security forces in the first years was that of army captain José Colina, who, disguised as a French leftist (he spoke French), infiltrated Sendero in 1982. Two years later he was killed by an army patrol in Ayacucho after he was captured alive as part of a guerrilla column. He died before gaining the total confidence of Sendero's leadership.¹²¹

5. *Political warfare.* Peru could have affected Sendero's organization through the use of political warfare. In its purest form, a political party of radical bent like Shining Path is simply a political warfare capability looking for a permanent geographic home. As practitioners of political warfare, its members are themselves most vulnerable when it is conducted against them.¹²² Their cadre and support structure are targets for political and psychological operations. Certain areas are especially ripe for exploitation: the ideological and political system of the insurgent organization, the central organizational infrastructure, and the support apparatus. Based on up-to-date intelligence, a variety of operations could be directed against each of these targets, including deception, psychological warfare, and activities meant to influence local or national politics. In each of these activities, it is important to adhere to the most basic principle of strategy, the identification of the appropriate vulnerabilities.¹²³ Political warfare seeks to demoralize the terrorists and their supporters. It yields more defectors, the flow of information becomes a flood, and the whole movement begins to crumble.¹²⁴

6. *Mobilization.* If the insurgents consider mobilizing the masses as a scientific and fundamental principle of revolutionary



warfare, it follows that for the governing authorities to win they not only must defeat the revolutionaries' attempts to mobilize the people, but they must mobilize the people themselves.¹²⁵ In other words, the government seeks to limit the terrorists' efforts more than the activities of the population: to do less than an adversary is to invite failure. The counterrevolutionary strategist should recognize that the decisive element in a revolutionary war is that the great majority of the population is normally neutral and initially uncommitted to either side. Of course, his or her other objective must be to mobilize this majority so that it supports the governing power.

7. *A new kind of state.* One of the reasons for Sendero's growth was the absence of the state in the hinterland, a severe problem that Colombia, for example, is facing now in its war against the guerrillas of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). The Peruvian security forces could have easily prevented Sendero expansion by merely staying in the area. Peru should have provided a state presence that was motivated, honest, and efficient—one identified with the population it was supposed to serve and protect.

POSTSCRIPT

ANOTHER FACE OF GLOBALIZATION arrived the hard way for Peru and the Latin American countries when New York City and Washington, D.C., were attacked in such a devastating way on September 11: global terror. The realization is that a new kind of war has begun, one in which there are no clear boundaries and open battlefields, one with ruthless and faceless enemies who in the name of lesser gods will use any available means to achieve their ends.

The impact was felt almost instantly after the attacks in the form, among other things, of the contraction of the worldwide tourism market. For Peru, one of the main macroeconomic bases for its 2001–6 development program was supposed to be attracting more foreign tourists.

Also, remembering the 1992 and 1994 attacks in Argentina against Jewish targets, there came the realization that something similar could happen on Peruvian soil: attacks against American,

Israeli, British, or any moderate Arab country's interests but with the casualties being mostly Peruvians, especially if weapons of mass destruction are used.

The potential use of weapons of mass destruction complicates everything for several reasons.

1. Our intelligence communities lack the training, equipment, and language skills required to meet the threat of these extraregional terrorists. Apart from a June 1988 joint Mossad and Peruvian counterterrorist unit—DINCOTE—operation that captured a cell of Abu Nidal terrorists and the late November 2001 capture of a group of alleged Pakistani terrorists in southern Peru, we Peruvians lack experience.
2. The security system in our airports is not technologically advanced, and its personnel are not trained to detect biological or chemical agents. Worse is the condition of both equipment and personnel in the border posts.
3. Our regional armed forces have not developed any biological or chemical weapons. Thus, they lack the equipment and training to cope with such an eventuality. In the summer of 1991, Peru suffered the equivalent of a biological attack: a cholera outbreak. On that occasion, our precarious health system performed heroically and the effects of the outbreak were diminished relatively rapidly. Today, it would be impossible to cope with a massive biological or chemical attack. We would face the 1991 problems in an exponentially increased way.
4. Al Qaeda may try to establish some kind of cooperative link with regional terrorist groups such as the Colombian FARC or the Peruvian Sendero Luminoso. With these groups, Osama bin Laden has something in common: the drug business. Poppy crops, and consequently heroin traffic, are increasing in Peru and Colombia. Basque and Irish terrorists have been captured in Colombia on training missions. Why wouldn't bin Laden try to expand his worldwide terrorist web in this region?

If we Peruvians and Latin Americans agree that twenty-first-century terrorism is decentralized, transnational, and willing to use any means at its disposal anywhere in the world, we have also to realize that it is a global threat that knows no boundaries; therefore, the response also has to be transnational.

To meet the terrorist challenge with success, I propose the following measures.



1. Create subregional centers of intelligence—Southern Cone countries, Andean countries, and Central American and Caribbean countries—choosing central headquarters and allocating specialized personnel from the intelligence services of the respective countries.
2. Increase the bilateral and multilateral exchange of intelligence.
3. Get advisory help in the form of training, language skills, and new intelligence technologies from countries like the United States, Great Britain, and Israel.
4. Reformulate the tasks and structures of the regional intelligence services so that they will be able to collect information on extraregional terrorists and perform joint intelligence operations against an unfamiliar, decentralized, and more technologically advanced foe. For the latter, the advisers of Spain and France would be very important because of the expertise they have in joint operations against the Basque terrorists.
5. Allocate the proper budgetary resources to increase and improve the abilities of health systems to face a biological or chemical crisis.
6. Make concrete the spirit of the September 12, 2001, Lima Declaration, which was formulated during the General Assembly of the Organization of American States, in the form of a regional counterterrorist convention.
7. Reformulate the 1947 Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Support to adapt it to current circumstances, which are very different from the conditions of the Cold War that created it.
8. Establish strategic complementary agreements between regional armed forces so that they can increase levels of mutual confidence and intelligence-sharing and share the expertise in asymmetrical situations.

Latin American peoples have to realize that the tragedies of New York City and Washington, D.C., mark the beginning of a new kind of war: a global one against terrorism, one in which anybody can be a victim. On September 11, the victims were innocent citizens living in those cities. Tomorrow the victims could be innocent citizens living in any Latin American city.