THE SHINING PATH OF PERU: DEFEATED OR ALIVE?

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ABSTRACT

This study concerns the Shining Path of Peru and its relationship with the emergent democratic government during the presidencies of Belaunde, Garcia and Fujimori. This thesis was to collected pertinent evidence that can help the reader to understand the rise and fall of the Shining Path in Peru, providing the proper facts that support its defeat by the Fujimori presidency. The methodology used in this work relied on a comprehensive account of historical information of the economic, political and social situation in Peru during 1980s-1990s trying to explain how the Shining Path evolved from a regional organization to a highly organized insurgent group bringing Peru’s government to the brink of terror and generalized fear. Additionally, the study is based in the analyses of Fujimori’s new policies dealing with terrorism and his controversial self-coup of 1992 leading with the capture of Shining Path’s leader Abimael Guzman. Fujimori’s new approaches for old problems policies successfully defeated the serious terrorist threat that the Shining Path represented for the Peruvian government proving that the Shining Path no longer represents a security concern for the Peruvian government. However, the author recommends the implementation of a consistent national reconciliation plan that will serve as a unifying mechanism to
overcome the potential drivers of conflict such as economic exclusion, social injustice and repression against the vast majority of Indigenous people in Peru. Furthermore, the execution of diverse social programs that can mitigate the drivers of conflict must be addressed accordingly by the current administration in order to avoid the development of new reactionary movements in the years to come.
This thesis work is dedicated to all the victims of the terrorist violence in Peru, especially to those assassinated in the Peruvian highlands of Ayacucho.

Many thanks to my Peruvian family, friends, classmates and professors for the constant encouragement and support during this venture.

Edgar Malone
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INTRODUCTION

The terrorist tragedy, which the Peruvian government and its people confronted from the 1980s until its dramatic suppression after the events of 1992, is the main focus of this thesis work. The Shining Path, Peru’s bloodiest terrorist organization in recent years, is the main element in this thesis work in which political and military actors played a critical role in the development of terrorism experience in the land of the Incas.

The methodology used in this thesis is based on a comprehensive review of several historical events as well as the analysis of different economic indicators trying to assess and compare the trends during the governments of three Peruvian presidents: Fernando Belaunde, Alan Garcia, and Alberto Fujimori. The study of the counterinsurgency efforts, along with the analysis of the economic and political circumstances during the rise and fall of Shining Path, is presented in this piece of work, as it is crucial to the understanding of this Maoist terrorist group. Additionally, the study of the Shining Path’s origins, modus operandi, ideological doctrine and its repercussions in the Peruvian society are also part of this thesis work, where the decisive leadership role of Abimael Guzman as the Shining Path’s mastermind was essential in the mobilization and consolidation of Peru’s brutal terrorist organization.

The terrorism phenomenon has transformed by adopting an amorphous configuration in which its definition and conceptualization is subject to constant
debate by diverse opinions and points of view. The terrorism threat also represents a global security concern in which the international community, led by the United States, is working together to mitigate and understand the causes and motivations of terrorist insurgency around the world. The complex dynamics of the causes and origins of terrorism, along with its varying contextual scenarios are vital in a comprehensible conceptualization of terrorism.

Defining terrorism can be challenging because for some people terrorism is defined as criminal violence seeking political change. Conversely, for others terrorism is “the revolution from below” where violent actions are necessary to overcome oppression or injustice. The first chapter of this thesis work mainly focuses on the terrorism phenomenon based on it is complex definitions depending on several variables and according to the constant changes in the economic, social and political trends in the world. Additionally, the analysis and comparison of the diverse ideas of Bruce Hoffman, Omar Malik and the US government are relevant in trying to unveil this complex subject. Hoffman’s contribution, which tries to define the terrorism menace, is based on a political perspective in which the terrorism phenomenon is understood as the struggle for power seeking change with serious political implications in any given social structure.

In the Shining Path case, Hoffman’s definition fits into this concept because Shining Path launched its popular war against the Peruvian government
seeking political transformation for diverse reasons including economic oppression, social injustice and the government’s lack of implementation with social programs that could assist the basic needs of its citizens. The comparison of the several views on terrorism is critical in order to acquire an unbiased approach trying to portray the terrorist wave in the world. However, the complexity of terrorism in a globalized world has been subject to transformations according to its intricate contextual meaning, opening a gap for a consensual definition.

The second chapter focuses on the nuts and bolts of this thesis work. The Shining Path of Peru is presented in this part of this historical work, where its origins, roots, ideology and reign of terror threatened the emergent democratic nation of Peru in early 1980s. The origins of this Maoist terrorist group in Peru can be founded in the impoverished and forgotten department of Ayacucho, where a handful of local intellectuals organized and ignited the spirit of rebellion against the government due to the lack of social inclusion and economic depression to which most marginal areas in Peru have been subject for many decades. Moreover, the ethnic-class mechanics in the Peruvian society is another key element in the study of the causes and origins of Shining Path’s popular war due to the fragmented social stratification, where the indigenous people were associated with the poor and bad while the wealthy and good are clearly linked with people of white-Caucasian features. Furthermore, the assessment of the role
of Shining Path’s leader, Abimael Guzman, is highly important in this section due to his ideology and its symbolic meaning for Shining Path militants. The body and soul of Shining Path is represented in Abimael, where the portrayal of a strong and charismatic figure was critical in the development of a highly organized insurgent group that mobilized and capitalized on the frustration of the people in the Peruvian highlands, leading with the formation of this terrorist group.

The economic, political and social status quo during the rise and suppression of Shining Path is presented in chapter three. I consider the study of the economic and political situation during the presidencies of Belaunde, Garcia, and Fujimori is extremely significant in unveiling how life was in Peru during 1980s-1990s. Personally, I am extremely invested in this chapter because I lived in Peru during these tragic times where fear, terror and a collective paranoia assaulted Peru’s capital, opening one of the darkest episodes in Peruvian history. The car bombings, cold blooded murders, assassinations of political figures, power outages, scarcity of food, and astronomic inflation indicators were the daily highlights in my neighborhood’s newspaper stand. These memories have inspired me to come out with a different perspective of how life was in Peru during the massive terrorist violence that Shining Path imposed on the Peruvian society.

However, I placed special emphasis on the political polarization that the government of Peru had to deal with during these bad years where the lack of
political compromises and party alliances were necessary to achieve governability. Furthermore, a succinct account of the major flaws and accomplishments during the terrorist experience from an economic, political and security perspective is presented in this part of the thesis.

Confronting Shining Path was a daunting task at which the governments of Belaunde and Garcia failed miserably. The counterinsurgency implementation to face the terrorist threat in Peru was poorly developed due to the lack of understanding in the dynamics, modus operandi and the inappropriate role of the military-police forces dealing with the terrorist violence that Shining Path exploited. The massive military repression imposed by Belaunde and Garcia created more fear and violence in which the indigenous peasantry was severely affected. The final chapter of this work addresses and evaluates the counterinsurgency policies implemented by the three presidents. It is evident that the failed approaches of Belaunde and Garcia did not mitigate, nor halt the terrorist activities in Peru but increased the sense of rebellion against the government. In addition, the military repression against the marginal populace and the heterodox economic policies that Garcia implemented during his government are presented in this section.

On the other hand, the role of Alberto Fujimori is also highly relevant to the relationship between the Shining Path and the Peruvian government. The Fujimori factor is mentioned in great detail in the two last chapters of this work
because Fujimori’s presidency has contributed enormously to Peru’s economic stabilization and the suppression of Shining Path. However, “the man who saved Peru” from the terrorist threat has been subject to criticism especially within the international community. The dissolution of Congress and several constitutional amendments promoted after his self-coup in 1992 marked the beginning of his authoritarian yet effective government addressing the chaotic economic situation and confronting the terrorist violence accordingly. Fujimori’s new approaches to old problems in Peru along with the new political dynamics allowed him to rule with an iron fist and successfully suppress the terrorist problem, leading to the stabilization and reconstruction of the country.

Conclusions and recommendations are saved for the end in which a summary with the major ideas and key concepts of this work are emphasized, recapping the most important topics covered in this thesis work. Addressing the question of whether Shining Path has been defeated or still represents a threat in Peru, the former is the most appropriate answer to this question in which the incidence of terrorist activities have been decreased after 1992. The Shining Path in Peru was defeated by a strong and controversial man that emerged as the antithesis of the failed traditional political establishment in Lima, setting the basis of a stable and progressive government in which Fujimori’s leadership and visionary style were necessary to confront Peru’s issues.
In September 2010, Alan Garcia Perez, who managed to once again be elected president in spite of his failures in the 1980s, commented to CNN (Espanol) that Shining Path no longer represents a security threat to the government of Peru. “Shining Path is history in Peru and the recent violent incidents in the South are only remaining vestiges of this brutal terrorist organization”. The current situation in Peru has been improved after the suppression of Shining Path and the stabilization of the economy, which is considered a big step in the process. However, this only represents the beginning of the lengthy consolidation process through which this underdeveloped country is confronting. Lastly, the appropriate state’s policies and the implementation of many economic and social programs that can contribute to the betterment of living conditions and economic opportunities for its people are the major challenges that Peru will have to face in order to achieve social contentment and in this way move forward towards a better future for all.
CHAPTER I
DEFINING TERRORISM

Recently the terrorism phenomenon has been evolving from regional organizations to highly organized international institutions. Defining terrorism has been a matter of research and study from several scholars, governments and even private institutions. Terrorism is not easy to define since it represents a series of complex issues that have been transforming according to the new social, political and economic trends in the world. The complexity of this problem ignites many sensitive problems including ethnic disputes, religious differences, social injustices or political oppression. On the other hand defining terrorism may be influenced according to certain particular interests in any given government or entity. This chapter will outline several definitions of terrorism while depicting a broader understanding of this global problem.

It is important for the purpose of our study to understand terrorism from a central prospective where the use of violence as a means to an end is the essential method that terrorists use to advance their agenda. Furthermore, defining terrorism will be helpful in the understanding and the study of this social movement and the threat it represents to international security.
Lastly, the major social, political and religious causes and trends of terrorism as an international problem will be addressed as well as providing examples that support its origins.

What is terrorism?

The diverse definitions of terrorism depend greatly on the context, period of time, and the perception of the individual or group who is trying to define the concept. However, there are some tangible characteristics that clearly identify terrorism such as violent killings designed to elicit fear and produce deep emotional effects. Cruelty and extreme use of violence are only a few examples that terrorist organizations employ to promote their goals.

According to Bruce Hoffman, terrorism is the most widely accepted term that describes a contemporary definition with powerful political implications. It is also associated with power, struggle of power, and the pursuit of power to achieve political change. Hoffman adds that the threat of violence serves as a catalytic force to advance the political agenda of terrorist organizations. The use of violence is vital in terrorist attacks because it creates a psychological effect in society. Fear, terror, and sense of insecurity among society are the distressing results that terrorist groups exploit to advance their goals.

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Omar Malik identifies terrorism with three major elements to be considered.\(^2\) Malik argues that the atrocity of terrorist actions is the first element that is purposely calculated in order to create the desired devastating outcome among its target. “The brutality of terrorist attacks is a major attribute that terrorists groups utilize trying to mobilize and gain media exposure. While terrorists might consider the use of force and violence a regrettable feature of life, they recognize that it remains a feature.”

The extreme violent actions that terrorists employ have a primary objective, which is the capture of public attention associated with a disturbing message. The beheading of US citizens in Iraq by members of al Qaeda in 2004 is a good example of cruel assassinations that captured international commotion.

The second element in Malik’s approach is the terrorization where the idea of instilling fear becomes the central goal. Malik agrees that many authorities trace the origin of the term terrorism back to the terreur of the French revolution where control by the inculcation of terror (terrorization) was indeed the chosen methodology. During the French revolution terror and terrorism actions had positive connotations because it was supported by the people, and ultimately overthrew the monarchic rule in France.

Additionally, Malik denotes that the “kill one and frighten ten thousand” principle has been a critical tenet in many terrorist campaigns. Violent terrorist attacks are designed with the desired result in mind of producing terrorization, which is intended to be used as a weapon in the terrorist’s fight against the social order. Moreover, the “kill one and frighten ten thousand” principle is a clear example of how terrorization plays an important psychological effect. Cruel actions planned and committed by terrorists demonstrate mastery at manipulating social dynamics. The terrorist’s approach exploits the usage of extreme violence so as to cause tremendous psychological impact in society and create diverse reactions from all segments of society and the international community.

The third element in Malik’s concept of terrorism is the pejorative connotation that may have negative implications when terrorist groups strike violently killing innocent people. Conversely, these negative implications on terrorism can vary from one social context to another. For some people terrorism is justified because it represents a legitimate action that the oppressed use to fight against what they consider unjust.

Using the previous context, the action of one’s enemies might be viewed as terrorism where as a similar action by one friends would not be considered terrorism. For example, the United States might condemn
assassination of a democratic politician, whereas the assassination of a Saddam Hussein or a Milosevic might well be applauded. ³ “A double standard of morality condemning violent terrorist actions applies to liberal states that openly oppose violent actions but at the same time they support many armed conflicts around the world.” Malik provides an example of this particular case when in 1999 the atrocities in East Timor were a reminder that the encouragement offered by some liberal states to Indonesia’s 1975 invasion and the UK’s continuing sales of arms could be considered reprehensible.

The weapons trade during this massive invasion represented a decadent precedent in the UK foreign policy due to its unethical connotations. The UK indirectly supported this massive genocide in East Timor by supplying the Indonesian government with weapons that created more violence and human loss of life in this region. These violations of human rights and indiscriminate use of force against this emergent nation in Asia was criticized openly because of the double standard implications and was generally seen as being.

The former US Senator Jeremiah Denton defined terrorism in his Anti-Terrorism Act of 1984 as the use of force or violence against any person or property in violation of the criminal laws of the United States or any state,

³ Ibid., 11.
territory, possession, or district, with the intent to intimidate, coerce, or influence a government or person in furtherance of any political ideological objective. This definition has political connotations because of its contextual meaning where violence and the struggle for power are the central points that describe the position of the US government regarding terrorism. Additionally, this definition outlines the importance of the American national security condemning terrorist attacks especially within the United States.

On the other hand, some nations' definitions of terrorism differ dramatically from the American point of view because terrorism is viewed as the weapon of the oppressed, fighting for liberty and independence. "For some aligned nations acts of violence and other repressive acts by colonial, racist, and alien regimes against people struggling for their liberation justify actions that would be considered terrorism by America. Furthermore aligned nations see a greater threat from acts of violence committed by individuals or groups of individuals which endanger or take innocent human lives or jeopardize fundamental freedoms or affect the inalienable right to self-determination and freedom from colonial racist regimes." 4 The aligned nation's definition of terrorism denounces colonialist ambitions that many western countries have in regions such as Africa and Asia where the

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exploitation of the inhabitants and the natural resources are the most important interests.

Analyzing the aligned nation's position regarding terrorism they consider that terrorist actions are perpetrated by colonial nations that are trying to impose their racist and unjust government and to deny the people their self-determination rights. This particular definition of terrorism is alleged by many people due to the oppression and exploitation that colonialist nations imposed in these lands. Additionally, this trend legitimizes the resistance of people against invasion, oppression and foreign domination perpetrated by colonial states.

Defining terrorism is complex task due to its intricate connotations and changing contextual scenarios. Terrorism is survival for some and criminal activities for others. This creates a dilemma as to whether terrorism can be justified with legitimate grounds. Hoffman agrees that countries such as Israel, Kenya or Cyprus for example, owe their independence in part to nationalist political movement that utilized terrorism against colonial powers. During this period the appellation of “freedom fighters” came into fashion as a result of the political legitimacy that the international community accorded to struggles for national liberation and self-determination.
In the United States defining terrorism has been the subject of several interpretations and trends that varies according to the main mission of the defining agency. For example the US Department of State agrees, “No definition of terrorism has gained universal acceptance. However, the term terrorism means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.” This definition adds the noncombatant element, which establishes the difference between military and civilian targets. The protection of American citizens and any other sign of American interests abroad is the main goal under the State Department definition.

On the other hand the US Department of Defense defines terrorism as “the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological in nature.” Additionally, the US Department of Homeland Security defines terrorism as “any activity that involves an act that is dangerous to human life or potentially destructive of a critical infrastructure or key resource.” The definition of terrorism according to three major US government institutions differs according to the specific mission of each agency. However, the definition that covers a broader concept is from the Department of Defense where fear, violence, and coercion are the major tools that terrorism implement to achieve its goals.
The definition of terrorism for three major US government agencies has become problematic due to each agency’s particular goals and objectives even when they are under the same political apparatus. Experts and other long-established scholars in the field are equally incapable of reaching a consensus.\(^5\) It is unfeasible to come out with a homogeneous definition of terrorism due to variable situations, interests, and analysis. The concept of terrorism had become so elastic that there seemed to be virtually no limit to what could be described as terrorism.\(^6\) Nevertheless, terrorism can be identified as violent actions to achieve political changes in the status quo in any given society.

Religious freedom, ethnic disputes, economic oppression, social injustices are only a few causes that people use to embrace terrorism. Bruce Hoffman argues that “terrorism is ineluctably political in goals and motives and uses extreme violent techniques to have a deep psychological repercussion beyond the target as designed to create power where there is none or to consolidate power where there is very little. The publicity generated by the terrorist violence seeks to obtain leverage, influence, and the support they need to secure political change on either local or an international scale.”

Terrorism is conducted by highly organized groups or by motivated individuals inspired by pre-existing terrorist ideologies, sub-national groups, or


non-state entities. It is not surprising that the varying definitions of terrorism in modern times along with the new social, economic, and political trends in a globalized world would lead to heterogeneous definitions according to the contextual position. Nevertheless, the extreme violence, fear, terror, and the struggle of power will remain as the signature elements of terrorism in the future.

**Terrorism: Causes, ideas, and trends**

The pursuit of happiness is a human aspiration and when threaten by other entities, social unrest could unchain violent events that could cause the lost of human life. The causes of terrorism in the world vary depending on the motivations and objectives that terrorist groups may pursue. Some of the causes of the origins of terrorism in the world include religious differences, ethnic disputes, separatist grounds, economic oppression, or social injustice. In this part of the study the causes of terrorism will be divided in two major areas: social-economic and political-religious grounds. The origins of terrorism are unlimited due to its complex nature but we will focus our study from a fundamental prospective in order to have a better understanding of the problem.

“Political and economic inequalities as well as social alienation are risk factors for the emergence of terrorism. Moreover, religion can exacerbate the problem, as it can be used to legitimize the use of violence to
redress these political and socioeconomic disputes.” 7 Richardson argues that political and economic instability can create the ideal environment for terrorism organization due to the constant social struggle and volatile government apparatus. The instable political conditions and negative economic indicators in Peru during the 1980’s through 1990’s lead to the formation of Shining Path opening to the most violent struggle for over two decades in this South American country.

According to Gordon McCormick the collapse of the modern economy and the slow radicalization of Peruvian politics and SL represent serious challenges for the Peruvian government in recent times. Depressing economic indicators such as negative economic growth, hyperinflation, and the depletion of the foreign market stock were the major issues that the Peruvian government faced in its current times. 8 The devastating economic trends and the unstable political atmosphere in Peru contributed to the formation of Shining Path which terror, killings, and fear were the major elements in this armed struggle.

On the other hand, “religious terrorism has increased its frequency, scale of violence, and global reach. The old ideologies of class conflict, anti-

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colonial liberation, and secular nationalism have been challenged by a new vigorous infusion of sectarian ideologies. Furthermore, grassroots extremist support for religious violence has been most widespread among populations living in repressive societies that do not permit demands for reform or other expressions of dissent."  

Social injustice and repression of people are common causes that contribute the formation of terrorist organizations in the world. Shining Path’s struggle against extreme social inequality and poverty proves that economic exclusion plays a critical role in the study of the causes and origins of terrorism.

In contrast, religious terrorism is fueled by personal beliefs based on a mystic system where the driving force serves as a motivation to their cause. However, social exclusion is also another component that religious terrorism views as a legitimate motive to raise arms against the current status quo. Jihadi Islamic fundamentalists are a clear example of religious terrorism in the Middle East, since these terrorists groups use their Islamic faith to legitimate their violent actions against what they consider a threat to their particular religious principles.

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9 Gus Martin, Understanding Terrorism (California: Sage, 2003), 186.
This chapter outlined the major trends of the concept of terrorism in the world where the lack of a consistent classification created numerous theories trying to explain this phenomenon. Additionally, the causes and origins of terrorism are diverse and include social exclusion and religious oppression. The Shining Path, an extremist terrorist organization in Peru, will be analyzed in the next chapters unveiling the origins and causes of their resistance against the vulnerable emergent democratic government in Peru.
CHAPTER II
THE SHINING PATH

Terrorism as a global threat has established its roots and is spreading its branches worldwide. Terrorist groups exist throughout globe: ETA in Europe, the Japanese red army in Asia, al Qaeda in the Middle East, the FARC in Colombia, Shining Path (Sendero) in Peru. While each organization is an independent entity, in each case, the promotion of their political agenda plays a vital role in their attempt to advance their objectives. Additionally, while there is no doubt that there are multiple motivations that cause the escalation of violence in these terrorist groups, the common denominator to all terrorist groups is the use of extreme violence in order to create a sense of terror and fear in society.

This chapter will introduce the Shining Path, Peru’s most extreme and violent terrorist organizations which killed thousands of people during 1980s-1990s and placed Peru’s government on the brink of collapse and generalized massive chaos.

The study of Shining Path has been the subject of interest to many international and Peruvian scholars for several decades. A considerable amount of literature has been devoted to attempting to depict and analyze the origins of this Maoist terrorist group in Peru. Shining Path is a fundamental player in modern Peruvian history, and its study is critical in the understanding of the complex social and political structures in Peru. Shining Path has its roots as a
violent terrorist group in the highlands of the Peru. This stark, isolated geography allowed peasant communities working in collaboration with local intellectuals such as college professors and students to organize the masses of indigenous people.

The promotion of communist and socialist ideologies that promised to lead to a new social order where peasant communities would have same opportunities as people from urban areas in Lima was one of the major ideas in Shining Path’s early mobilization of the highlands. Accordingly, the ethnic-class dynamic is a vital element in the study of Shining Path. Most scholars agree that the social inequality and extreme economic disparities are seen as the major causes in the raise of Shining Path from an armed rebel group to an organized national movement. Moreover, the impoverished and chaotic economic system in Peru, along with the instable government institutions, allowed Shining Path to expand and mobilize people from the countryside to the city.

A succinct and comprehensive historical background of the Peruvian society during 1980’s and 1990’s will be addressed in this chapter, as it is important in the understanding and the analyses of the roots and origins of this terrorist organization in Peru. Abimael Guzman biographical information, ideological doctrine, and leadership role as Shining Path’s mastermind will be introduced in the last section of this chapter. Moreover, the cult of personality and the extreme ideological adherence to Mao and Mariategui are two main
elements in Guzman’s ideological origins that transformed Shining Path into the most extremist and violent organization in Peru during recent times.

In the last part of this chapter there will be a summary of the major ideas that will be useful in the understanding of the early stages of formation of this rebel group in the Peruvian Andes.

**Origins and history**

Peru is a South American nation with vast natural resources, enormous historical legacy, and with several issues that has undermined its consolidation as emergent democratic nation in the region. The origins of this Andean nation are dated from the Inca’s civilization through the Spanish colonial rule. While, independence from Spain in 1821 ushered Peru into the modern world, remnants from colonization continued play an important role in shaping Peruvian history. The colonial system in Peru lasted for over 300 hundred years and played a troublesome and influential role in its consolidation as an independent nation where the major sources of production and wealth were owned by a handful of people with Spanish ancestry. The roots and origins of Shining Path are found in the countryside of the Peruvian highlands where peasant communities and provincial people contributed to a central position in the origins and initial organizational stages of Shining Path’s foundation.

Shining Path was born in the Andean department of Ayacucho, which is one of the nation’s poorest and most forgotten regions. Ayacucho is located in
the southern highlands of Peru where the levels of poverty and education are one of the lowest in the whole nation. “Many local people escaped Ayacucho looking for education and leaving behind oppression from the landowners. Their desire for education was so great that, unlike other Andean departments, the principal social movement in Ayacucho between 1960 and 1980 was not for land but in defense of free education.”

Ayacucho represents the symbolic sanctuary of Shining Path due to its meaningful connotations with the initial stages of mobilization and the foundation of the ideological thought of this terrorist organization in Peru. The extreme poverty and the lack of government support to the marginal areas in the Peruvian highlands made Ayacucho the ideal region for the establishment of the organization and foundation of Shining Path.

The department of Ayacucho lies in a fertile valley on the eastern slopes of the Andean Cordillera Occidental of Peru. “It was founded in 1539 by the conquistador Francisco Pizarro and called Huamanga until 1825. Its present name comes from the surrounding plain of Ayacucho (a Quechua word meaning corner of the dead), where revolutionaries defeated royalist forces in 1824 and secured Peru’s independence from Spain. Many colonial buildings survive in the city. The seat of an archbishopric, it has a 17th-century cathedral and many

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churches and is known for its Holy Week celebrations. The National University of San Cristóbal de Huamanga (founded 1677, closed 1886, reopened 1959) is located there. The city’s economy is based on agriculture and light manufactures, including textiles, pottery, leather goods, and filigree ware. Ayacucho can be reached by highway from Lima, Huancayo, and Cuzco, as well as by air.”

Ayacucho has a rich cultural heritage due to its extensive historical background including colonial times, wars of independence, and recently the rise of Shining Path. Diverse cultural manifestations such as folklore, handcraft works, and massive religious celebrations are part of Ayacucho’s spirit for many centuries. These popular expressions are legitimate ways to demonstrate Ayacucho’s cultural influence and historical legacy.

Steve Stern concurs that Ayacucho was the birthplace of Shining Path, noted mainly for the confluence of an extremely impoverish indigenous peasantry in the countryside and a politically effervescent university culture in the region’s small capital city. In addition, Stern argues that the rise of Shining Path seemed as an expression of isolation and peculiarity due to odd political trajectories, proclamations, and utopias. This might mark the

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2 Encyclopædia Britannica. 2010, s.v. “Ayacucho”
political world of educated mestizos (mixed indigenous) and Andean Indians in faraway, backward highland provinces.\(^3\)

The educated elite of mestizos and several college professors of indigenous descendent can be linked with the origins of Shining Path in the remote highlands of Ayacucho. These intellectuals were familiar with current world events such as the Maoist revolution in China or the communist experience in the Soviet Union, which served as the inspiration and motivation to create a similar situation in Peru. Socialism and communism were seen as an alternate form of government that could end extreme social inequality and injustice against the indigenous peasant populations in Peru.

The foundation of Shining Path as a terrorist organization has been the subject of study from different perspectives and for several scholars that are attempting to understand the mechanics, motivations, and ideological bases in their struggle for power. The Maoist revolution in China, Carlos Mariategui’s book about the Peruvian reality, and the socialist thought of Carl Marx and Lenin were only few sources of inspiration that allowed Shining Path leaders to establish its ideological position and engage its revolution in Peru.

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Lewis Taylor provides a remarkable approach on the ideological roots of Shining Path. He analyzes Carlos Mariategui’s thought in his book *Seven Interpretative Essays on Peruvian Reality* as a comprehensible study of social and economic history in Peru from the Inca’s empire until modern times. According to Taylor, Mariategui drew a number of important political conclusions from his analysis, such as that the elite class in Peru was incapable of solving several issues that affected indigenous people and the only solution to overcome this national problem was through a socialist alliance.

Taylor argues that while urban workers were the most class-conscious and the best-organized sector of the forces struggling for social change, they would play a disproportionate role during the first wave of Socialist Party activity. Their numerical weakness meant that the large and oppressed component of the population which was made up of rural proletarian peasants also needed to be mobilized in order to abolish Andean feudalism and semi-feudalism on the coast. Furthermore, in order to push through the national-bourgeois and the socialist revolutions, it was necessary to construct a worker-peasant alliance around a socialist model.4

The Mariategui’s doctrine and political views on the economic and social struggles within the Peruvian society enlightened Shining Path in the

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formulation of its ideological roots promoting the imposition of a new political order where socialism and the proletariat participation are key elements in the transformation of the government.

The influence of the Maoist revolution in Shining Path’s ideological doctrine is evident due to its similar characteristics. The revolution from the countryside to the city is a common element in the foundation of Mao’s revolution as well as in Shining Path strategy. Taylor describes that China by the late 1920s had evolved from a feudal into a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. Its salient features included the maintenance of feudal oppression in the countryside and a weakly developed national capitalism, which had emerged at the turn of the century, along with the more dynamic growth of foreign-controlled ventures. The massive foreign influences in China led to the domination and oppression of the working class, which created the imperialist feudal landlord rule.

The Chinese revolution opposed foreign domination and denounced the corrupted government that created a semi-feudal state where the Chinese people were subject to oppression and exploitation by imperialistic interests. On the other hand a similar situation is perceived in Peru where the control of all means of production and wealth such as lands and political power were in control of the elite class in the capital Lima.
The problem of distribution of land and wealth were similar issues that affected both China and Peru that created the mobilization of masses to resolve the oppression and extreme inequality. The roots and origins of Shining Path’s ideology are found in Mariategui’s ideas and Mao’s revolution where a socialist form of government could end feudal oppression and foreign influence.

Peasant communities, the land problem

The Peruvian independence from Spain in 1821 left the country with numerous fertile agricultural lands throughout the country. Landholders of Spanish descent took over these lands and amassed fortunes, exploiting the peasants for centuries. The lack of a comprehensive land reform and the unwillingness of the political ruling class in Peru to deal with the land problem perpetuated the extreme economic inequality in the Peruvian society. Jose Carlos Mariategui addresses the land problem in Peru as a national problem because it endangers the economic and social development of the country.

Any treatment of the problem of the Indian-- written or verbal--that fails or refuses to recognize it as a socioeconomic problem is but a sterile, theoretical exercise destined to be completely discredited. Good faith is no justification. Almost all such treatments have served merely to mask or distort the reality of the problem. The socialist critic exposes and defines the problem because he looks for its causes in the country’s economy and not in its administrative, legal, or ecclesiastic machinery, its racial dualism or pluralism, or its cultural or moral conditions. The problem of the Indian is rooted in the land tenure system of our economy. Any attempt to solve it with administrative or police measures,
through education or by a road building program, is superficial and secondary as long as the feudalism of the gamonales continues to exist. Gamonalismo necessarily invalidates any law or regulation for the protection of the Indian. The hacienda owner, the latifundista, is a feudal lord. The written law is powerless against his authority, which is supported by custom and habit. Unpaid labor is illegal, yet unpaid and even forced labor survives in the latifundium. The judges, the sub prefect, the commissary, the teacher, the tax collector, all are in bondage to the landed estate. The law cannot prevail against the gamonales. Any official who insisted on applying it would be abandoned and sacrificed by the central government; here, the influences of Gamonalismo are all-powerful, acting directly or through parliament with equal effectiveness.5

According to Mariategui, the land problem is a sensitive issue that affects the majority of indigenous people in Peru. In addition, it creates social and economic exclusion due to the exploitation and oppression that the peasants are subject to by the landholders. The lack of solid government institutions to provide protection of the basic rights for the working class and peasants allowed the landholders to exploit the indigenous people, which created an unjust and unequal society.

Peasant communities are key elements in Shining Path organization and mobilization processes due to its particular characteristics. Florencia Mallon, provides a good example of the role of the peasant communities supporting Shining Path’s activities in the highlands. “The Peruvian left wing party has had a long tradition of defending the indigenous people since the 1960s, using a discourse which emphasized class struggle, capitalist exploitation, and proletarian resistance. This was only one in a long line of attempts to create a non-ethnic

popular political identity. Leaders who snubbed communal political systems placed indigenous communities once again in a subordinate position, even within a supposedly egalitarian movement. The peasant movements in 1970s and its critical rethinking by leftist militants and organizations were both an omen and a laboratory for Shining Path process of the 1980s.”

Mallon suggests that peasant communities and their struggle for land reforms formed part of the initial mobilizations for revolution and were capitalized upon and used to advance Shining Path’s agenda of trying to gain massive support from peasant communities. Additionally, the land problem and the oppression that indigenous peasantry were subjected to by the landholders is a critical element in the understanding the origins of Shining Path.

**Ethnic relations, poverty, social injustice**

In the process of unveiling and understanding the origins of Shining Path there are several arguments that triggered the rise of this extremist Peruvian organization. The ethnic-class relationship is a good exemplary of this trend. The chaotic economic conditions for the majority of Peruvian people were another key factor that contributed in the raising of Shining Path. Moreover, the lack of efficient and trustworthy government institutions such as the judiciary system or corruption in the police forces lead to a general sentiment of rebellion against the

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incompetent government. Additionally, corruption at all levels of government also contributed to the massive resentment towards the ruling political class.

“Peru is a multi-ethnic nation of 25 million - 49 percent are mestizo (mixed race), 14 percent are of European, African or Asian descent, and 36 percent are indigenous peoples who speak their native languages. However, Peru's large indigenous population suffers a serious situation of social, economic and cultural marginalization.”7 The Peruvian social structure is heterogeneous in which the majority is composed by large number of Indigenous and mixed people. This tendency also represents a fundamental key element in the study of the Peruvian society that contributed in the rise of Shining Path. The fragmented Peruvian society where bad and ugly are associated with indigenous people creates a sense of racism and discrimination against people with indigenous features.

On the other hand, a person with white or European features is linked with the good and has a positive connotation in the Peruvian society. The ethnic and class relationship is a crucial component in the study of the social-ethnic issues that Peruvian society represents. The marginalization of Indigenous people and the stigmatization created towards the Indigenous populace in Peru is another cause that led to the polarization of society where ethnic differences are the troublesome in the integration of the people in Peru.

Marisol De La Cadena argues that racial sentiments as meanings of values were a central part of the Peruvian cultural construction. Furthermore, she believes that Peruvian racial sentiments ended up mixing, in complex ways, a rejection of biological determinism with ideas of racial difference and legitimate hierarchies derived from them.\(^8\) It is evident that the Peruvian society was founded based on a well-marked social stratification. The racial social differences created the fragmentation between the wealthy and the poor, as well as with the Indigenous and the white people where the struggle of social classes unchained a resentment that polarized people from city versus the peasantry in the Andes.

The Peruvian society is racist to its very core according Simon Strong. He argues that for all the inter-marriage, the economic scale from riches to rags can be related with the skin color, with the whites being the richest and the Indians the poorest. The general idea in the majority of population such as the Indian peasants, small merchants, miners, industrial workers and street vendors is that they feel discriminated due to their ethnicity.\(^9\) Strong describes that the racial discrimination against the Indigenous people created a massive negative connotation against people of the highlands opening a social barrier between Indians and non-Indian people in the Peruvian community. This social


discrimination and the seclusion of the Indians contributed to the spirit of rebellion in the several peasant communities like in Ayacucho and Andahuaylas.

The Economic dynamics is a fundamental element in the social and political development of any given government, economic trends can set the bases of a stable and prosperous nation or either can lead to anarchy, chaos, and violence. The origins of Shining Path as a terrorist movement in Peru are associated with diverse issues in which poverty and the massive economic inequality was one of the major grounds. Extreme economic disparity between a handful of people and the vast majority of mestizo-Indigenous people created a national sentiment of revolution in which Shining Path leaders saw an opportunity to advance its goals to take the revolution from the countryside to the city.

According to Mani Nepal historically, “inequality and social discrimination have been the two most dominating problems of Peruvian society. At the beginning of the 1960s, Peru had one of the worst concentrations of wealth in South America. It was observed that 1 percent of the population controlled 19 percent of the national income; whereas bottom 20 percent of population received only 2.5 percent of the national income. The inequality was more persistent in the rural agrarian sector, where over 30 percent of farm families were landless while 700 or so called hacendados
(big land-lords) controlled one-third of country’s productive land and majority of the agricultural income.”

The extreme economic differences between people belonging to the upper and lower classes are ridiculously extravagant. One can see the living conditions between the rich and the poor are extremely unbalanced. This trend is evident in comparing two representative districts in Lima. On one hand is Villa El Salvador, a shantytown located in the Southside of Lima where dirt, misery, and hunger are part of the natural landscape on the streets. On the other hand Miraflores, a residential high-end district in Lima where people of white descent live comfortably and the settings are dramatically more favorable than in Villa El Salvador. One can see luxury cars, big houses, and domestic servants of indigenous features in Miraflores and in contrast dirty roads, piles of garbage, and malnutrition in its inhabitants are only few signs of extreme poverty in Peru. It is shocking how this extreme economic inequality has been part of the Peruvian society for so long. What emerged was a massive economic vacuum where the poor are subject to discrimination and social exclusion.

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Marcelina Huaman, a former Shining Path member and a poor peasant in the Peruvian highlands, joined this terrorist organization because she was subject to injustices and economic exclusion. “I decided to be a part of the Shining Path because there was so much injustice in the city and the country. Those who had much were unjust towards those who didn’t have anything. I wanted this to stop, so I contributed my life to that cause.” Several people in Peru especially those who were socially and economically excluded perceived Shining Path as an alternative to stop the social and economic deviation. Furthermore, the socialist and communist model during the cold war was seen as a light at the end of the tunnel for the less fortunate in the Peruvian society.

Gordon McCormick concurs that the concentration of political and economic power in the nation’s capital created a sentiment of rivalry between the coast and the marginal regions of the country. With the great majority of Peru’s political, social and economic elite, over three quarters of the country’s industrial activity, Peru’s only banking and financial center, the majority of its imports and exports, and most of Peru’s educational, social, and health services, Lima dominates the rest of the country.11 The limited government services to its people especially in the highlands of Peru ignited

11 Gordon McCormick, From the Sierra to the Cities: The Urban Campaign of Shining Path (Santa Monica, California: Rand Corporation 1992), 2.
negative sentiments against the central government in Lima, increasing a negative perception and weakening the credibility of the government. Consequently, all these negative events such as economic inequalities, social oppression, injustice, and the distrust in the government created the perfect scenario for the formation and creation of revolutionaries groups such as Shining Path.

Abimael Guzman Reynoso

Every well-organized terrorist organization requires two essential qualities for successful operations, leadership and command. Shining Path is no exception. Thousands of assassinations and disappearances of civilian and military personnel in Peru are attributed to Shining Path and its leader Abimael Guzman Reynoso A.K.A Gonzalo (comrade Gonzalo). Who is Abimael Guzman Reynoso? This question has been the subject of controversy while trying to portray the leader of Shining Path. Abimael Guzman is the equivalent to what Mao represents in China or what Lenin represented in the former Soviet Union.

Guzman Reynoso was born on December 3, 1934 in the coastal city of Arequipa where he joined the Peruvian Communist Party at the early age of 15. Guzman studied Marx and Lenin ideologies, understanding how the working class took over the streets and marched to protest against the government in regardless of their power. Abimael Guzman Reynoso “experienced college firsthand big
strikes, confrontations and debates between Apristas [a reactionary party in Peru] and Communists. On a later date at the University of Arequipa, he wrote his doctoral dissertations in philosophy on *The Kantian Theory of Space* and in law on *The State in the Bourgeois Democracy*. After graduation he moved to Ayacucho to teach in the schools there and became one of the leaders of the Party's Regional Committee. During the Chinese Cultural Revolution, Abimael Guzman traveled to China and witnessed the revolutionary transformation occurring there first hand. After an exhaustive research of Peruvian society, the Peruvian Communist Party led by Guzman, concluded that Mao’s strategy of surrounding the cities from the countryside was applicable to Peru, concluding that Mariategui’s thesis that Peru was a semi-feudal and semi-colonial society was still valid.”¹²

Guzman truly believed in the Chinese revolution and he planned the implementation of a similar uprising in Peru, leading to a socialist country where all the means of productions are handled by the government. The great influence of Marx, Mao, and Lenin’s ideological doctrines is evident in Abimael Guzman’s ideological foundation where an armed insurrection from the countryside to the capital would lead to the liberation and foundation of a new government with socialist components. The leadership and fanatical adherence to Shining Path and

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its popular were the major assets that Guzman brought into the organization, being considered as the founding father of this Maoist terrorist group.

**Ideology and modus operandi**

The ideological foundation of Shining Path as a rebel terrorist organization has been the subject of analyses and study by diverse groups in Peru and in the United States. Gustavo Gorriti, a respected Peruvian journalist and Gordon McCormick an American scholar have intensively researched and written about Shining Path. These two “senderologos” have contributed enormously to the understanding and study of this terrorist organization in Peru. Gorriti argues that “among Latin American revolutionary movements, the Shining Path insurgency stands out….Shining Path wages revolutionary war according to Maoist People’s war doctrine, preserves its orthodox course through regular Cultural Revolution purging rituals and maintains unity through a personality cult of enormous proportions.”

On the other hand McCormick considers that “the movement’s ideological base, its initial support, and its theory of victory were developed over the course of its first seven years….Ideologically, the movement was presented as a synthesis of the work of Mao and the native socialism of Jose Carlos Mariategui, a Peruvian intellectual who was responsible for the initial development of the left

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wing in 1928.”  

Gorriti and McCormick concur that the ideological formation of Shining Path was based on external set of ideas such as Mao and Mariategui’s thoughts. Abimael Guzman who was well familiarized in the Marxist-Maoist-Mariateguista doctrines capitalized these major ideological influences and put it in practice according to the Peruvian reality. Furthermore, the Chinese Cultural Revolution led by Mao and Mariategui’s essays on the Peruvian reality were the catalysts that ignited the ideological foundations of Shining Path where a popular armed insurrection from the highlands to Lima was the major goal in their agenda.

Shining Path is considered a highly ideological and doctrine oriented terrorist organization due to the radicalization and indoctrination of the ideas of its revolution. The movement’s indoctrination process started in boot camps where members trained physically and mentally in order to be prepared to carry out Shining Path’s mission.

The initial conception of Shining Path’s popular war was based on two battlefields: the first in the countryside, which was the most important, and the second one would take place in the capital city Lima. The systematic practice and implementation of innovative ways to fight against the government were decisive in Shining Path’s advancement and engagement in the war against the Peruvian government. There are four major elements in the modus operandi that Shining Path managed successfully to conduct its violent crimes. These elements

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included: guerrilla warfare, sabotage, selective killing, and propaganda-mobilization. Shining Path exploited these methods with dedication. This systematic methodology to spread the popular war destabilized the government and inspired terror in the population, which was a reliable ally in Shining Path’s war.

According to the Communist Party of Peru Congress of 1986 “the application of Marxism Leninism-Maoism to the concrete conditions of Peruvian society leads to the conclusion that revolutionary violence or violent revolution, the only way to seize state power and transform the world, must take the form of People's War and more specifically a peasant war led by the Communist Party of Peru as the representative of the proletariat, a war which develops as a single unit waged principally in the countryside and complementarily in cities, following the road of surrounding the cities from the countryside whose essence is the establishment of base areas, so that the democratic revolution, culminates in the establishment of People's Republic, a great victory which must be followed by continuing the revolution through socialism and cultural revolutions, under the dictatorship of the proletariat with the firm exercise of its class violence, until achieving, together with all humanity, glorious communism, the realm of true freedom.”

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Andreo Matias argues that the ideological thought of Shining Path was based on the foundation of a new man in society where the transformation of the cultural institutions is common trend in dominated societies of the third world. The struggle for liberation and recognition is particularly due to the misery and inhuman conditions that Indigenous people faced during the hectic economic-political situation in Peru. The minimum human needs such as alimentation, employment, health, education, and security were not provided by the government opening an enormous gap between the government’s authority and the people’s right to protest against the lack of government services. The radical transformation into a new society based on Shining Path’s ideological thought made this organization highly committed to its ideas and principles, which in turn led to massive violent attacks against government institutions.

After the formation and the foundation of Shining Path as a movement its strategy and mobilization were redefined where the capital Lima was the target. The next stage in Shining Path’s plans was overtaking the country’s capital using extreme violence. Car bombs, electric plants attacks, and assassinations of political leaders that openly denounced Shining Path’s actions were the preferred tactics. The bombing of a residential building in Tarata Miraflores and the bombing of the one the largest media broadcast companies in Peru (Channel 2) created a sense of terror and chaos in Lima. These two major attacks of Shining

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Path in the nation’s capital was a signal that the terrorist campaign has been successfully advanced to the city, being the last stage in Shining Path’s plan to overthrow the government.

The fear and terror of these attacks created a collective paranoia in all segments of society in Peru. The general perception of the population presented Shining Path as advancing and winning its war against the Peruvian government. The Lima bombings received national and international coverage. Even high government officials seemed pessimistic due to the psychological impact that these extreme violent attacks caused in the population.

The psychological war that Shining Path heavily relied on played a fundamental role in the terrorization and appeasement of civil and military society. The extreme violence employed by Shining Path such as dynamiting people, cold blooded murders, massive car bombings directed towards anything suggesting wealthy or capitalism created a general state of panic due to the great wave of terror in the city. “Shining Path’s metropolitan-based program has come to play a critical role in the movement’s current operating profile and long-term planning. The terrorist incursion in the capital may have recently increased at a faster rate than its rural campaign, which itself has grown every year since 1980.”17 The city of Lima was taken by the fear, terror, power outages and the imposition of martial law and the general insecurity became part of city’s landscape.

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The Peruvian Truth Commission reports that 25 people were killed and 155 were severely injured in only one car bombing in 1992. Additionally, between January and July 2002 the Truth Commission reports that 37 car bombings have been perpetrated only in the Lima metropolitan area, leaving 50 casualties. The bombings of Tarata and other massive car bombings that Lima experienced was Shining Path’s response against the capture of Abimael Guzman in 1992. The massive attacks in Tarata and channel 2 are considered the most brutal terrorist attacks in Peruvian history and people still remember the atrocities and bloodshed that Shining Path caused in Peru.

Additionally, Shining Path’s modus operandi of recruiting members included the massive forced recruitment in the highland villages. People that collaborated with Shining Path embarked in a journey without return because once one joined it was almost impossible to escape from the Shining Path’s ranks. Those members who did try to leave the movement usually were cruelty assassinated by other fellow members. This served to create a deterrence mechanism to discourage other from attempting to leave. “Shining Path’s rank and file membership is drawn from a cross section of Peru’s disposed, from poor highland peasants to the large mass of urban unemployed….Although Shining Path’s initial membership had been drawn from the teaching faculty and student body of the University of Huamanga, its influence within the university
community had waned during the early years of its rural campaign." As such, the recruitment of young college students in Lima and other impoverish areas in Peru was vital in the mobilization and promotion of Shining Path’s popular war.

Guzman planned “Shining Path violence to push the state into sudden ill-considered repression. In his always-baroque imagery, this meant crossing a river of blood to victory…. The guerrillas’ brutal campaign of murder as a means to power flourishes where other alternatives have vanished. Recently, the Shining Path won control several of neighbors’ associations in Lima’s poorest areas. Cadres march openly in Huaycan’s central avenue at night. Crowds of senderistas have carried out daytime actions in Villa El Salvador, another huge shantytown.” The progression of violent attacks from the countryside to the Peru’s capital transformed the status quo in Lima. The general perception of people demonstrated Shining Path taking over the city and the government’s failure to impede their advancement in Lima was inevitable. The extreme violence used by Shining Path changed the psychological atmosphere in the Peruvian population. It was unimaginable that the few isolated incidents in the early 1980s within Ayacucho would unchain an extreme terrorist organization, which would attempt to overthrow the emergent democratic Peruvian government.

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18 Ibid., 11.
Another aspect in Shining Path’s modus operandi was “the creation of a primary strategic objective to create an axis of Shining Path-controlled or-influenced areas alongside the Andes Mountains from north to south. This was achieved by late 1986. Concurrently, the Shining Path was active in Lima and in coastal areas.”  

The advancement of Shining Path to import its popular war to the city was a planned move where the geographic control of towns, villages and cities were critical in the slow transition attacking the Capital. “When the Shining Path enters a new area, it begins with a campaign of threats against the local authorities. The threats are very convincing because the Shining Path carries through with selective assassinations. It does not admit the right of other institutions or organizations to exist, be they of the state or of the local community. It insists on having all organizations under its own control. Its first objective, therefore, is to clear the field; that is, by murder and terror to clear the area of all possible.”

The rise of Shining during the early 1980s in Ayacucho was the beginning of a series of violent attacks and protests from the peasantry population against the undeveloped/inexistence government assistance in the highlands. The non-existence of basic government institutions and services justified the discontent of the indigenous population in rural areas of the country. Abimael Guzman, saw an

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opportunity to promote his ideas of socialism and communism during a considerable period of generalized political and economic crisis throughout the nation. Guzman’s leadership and role in the mobilization and promotion of Shining Path’s ideological thought was decisive in the consolidation of Shining Path as a highly organized terrorist group in Peru.

Additionally, the influence of Mao and Mariategui’s ideological thinking played a defining moment in Guzman’s philosophical foundation. This ultimately provided the ideological underpinnings from which Shining Path would take root in the Peruvian soil.

The extreme violence employed by Shining Path was critical in the promotion of the revolution due to its psychological repercussions to the nation. The fear and terror created by the car bombings and assassinations as well as the government’s ineffective response to the massive violence created a generalized state of insecurity in all levels of society. Furthermore, the political struggle and the chaotic economic situation facilitated Shining Path to operate freely on both the countryside and the metropolitan area in Lima.

The political and economic situation during 1980s and 1990s will be analyzed in the next chapter to assist in the clarification and understanding of the mechanics within the internal disputes and problems that the Peruvian government faced during the rise and decline of Shining Path.
CHAPTER III
THE PERUVIAN GOVERNMENT 1980s-1990s

The social, economic, and political apparatus of the government of Peru is highly relevant for unveiling the current trends and issues that affect this Andean nation in South America. The 300 year long Spanish colonial system’s centralization of the economic and political power in the country’s capital undermined the economic and social development of marginal areas such as the highlands and the Peruvian Amazonia. The constant struggle of power between the political elite and the military allowed several coup d'état (golpe de estado) that created anarchy and instability in society.

This chapter will present three major key actors in the Peruvian political life relevant to the examination of the Peruvian government during the rise of Shining Path. The accounts of Fernando Belaunde Terry’s government and its relationship with Shining Path will be presented in this portion of this work. The social, political and economic circumstances during Belaunde’s government are also covered in this part of the study. Additionally, the government of Alan Garcia Perez during 1985-1990 will be part of this section focusing on the economic collapse and its repercussion in the consolidation of Shining Path as an extreme terrorist group in Peru. Lastly, Alberto Fujimori’s government and his new approach towards suppressing Shining Path, his drastic economic measures and his infamous political behavior will be addressed. A comprehensive
historical background of the Peruvian political life and its relationship with the raise and downfall of Shining Path is portrayed in this section, which is necessary to acquire a broader understanding of this terrorist organization.

**Fernando Belaunde Terry: 1980-1985 (Second Term)**

After an intense electoral process trying to re-establish a democratic government in Peru, Belaunde won the presidential elections of May 1980. The Peruvian people were optimistic with the re-opening of the civilian government and it were eager to see new economic and social measures that might help the vast majority of people to overcome hunger, unemployment and the lack of basic social services. Belaunde’s populist rhetoric during his campaign was crucial in the election in which many promises and offerings were given to the electorate mobilizing grassroots movements from all over the country creating one of the most solid political organizations in Peru after the military coup of 1968. *Accion Popular* (Popular Action Party) was the political party that Belaunde founded winning the presidential election and re-establishing democracy in Peru.

However, several serious issues affected the Peruvian government when Belaunde took office in July 1980. The previous military government had nationalized foreign businesses such as oil companies and sugar factories and the returned of these assets became Belaunde’s first priority during the first one hundred days in office. Belaunde’s political willingness to re-establish democratic guarantees and the promotion of democratic institutions also formed
part of his plan. The symbolic but appropriate decision to return the confiscated private property to their owners was well received by the international community and sent out a positive message to the world of the new democratic government in Peru. Additionally, the previous military government also confiscated all media corporations. Belaunde returned the newspapers, TV broadcast stations, and radios to their original owners thereby restoring the liberty of expression after several years of military repression. However, Belaunde’s honeymoon lasted only a few months due to the massive economic deterioration and the political polarization in the congress centered on whether liberal economic measures should be applied in Peru in order to boost the major means of productions.

Another downfall during Belaunde’s first years of government was the initial mobilization and violent attacks of the so-called Shining Path. Isolated violent attacks to local and military authorities in Ayacucho during 1980-1982 were the beginning of a series of escalating terrorist attacks by Shining Path which the Belaunde’s administration overlooked, minimizing their meaning. The inappropriate approach to the Ayacucho’s violent attacks by the Belaunde government left this regional violent struggle free to unleash the massive mobilization of peasants, which would become the origin of Shining Path in the Andes.

According to Carol Wise, the Belaunde government promoted the reduction of state enterprise and the stimulation of private investment, in which
the latter included the offering of highly advantageous terms to foreign and local private capital to promote raw material exports. The extension of big lines of credit and tax benefits to private businesses allowed for small and big businesses to create new jobs for the people. Some of the president’s own initiatives were a direct throwback to his first term and the re-building approach including the investment in massive public works programs such as highways, health, housing, electricity, and agriculture.¹ The creation of the government public works office allowed the construction of major agriculture, communication and education infrastructures that improved the pauper conditions of the social services in the country.

On the other hand, the restoration of democracy in 1980 did not bring a sustained economic growth. Survival mechanisms for the Peruvian people in a galloping economic inflation allowed the creation of comedores populares (soup kitchens), which is considered the immediate response from the organized ordinary people in the shantytowns. During the 1980s there was a shift in the relationship between the political system and grassroots social organizations. Political parties made use of state resources to build low-cost ties with an extensive social network.² The use of state funds to implement social welfare


programs during Belaunde’s government mitigated the harsh conditions of the people. Nevertheless, these social welfare programs also served the government to advance its political influence within the electorate assuring continuous party support and affiliation.

“The economic collapse of the early 1980s, which continued the long-term cyclical decline begun in the late 1960s, brought into sharp focus the country’s social deterioration, particularly in the more isolated and backward regions of the Sierra. Underemployment and unemployment were rampant. Infant mortality rose to 120 per 1,000 births (230 in some remote areas); life expectancy for males dropped to 58 compared with 64 in neighboring Chile, average daily caloric intake fell below minimum United Nations Standards, upwards of 60 percent of children under the age of five were malnourished.”³

The rapid deteriorating economy and the political struggle allowed the impoverishment of the vast majority of people, especially in the shantytowns in Lima and the remote peasant communities in the Andes. Contemporary leftist publications were skeptical of Belaunde’s plans. The Nation reported that “While [there] will be less repression under Belaunde’s government it is unlikely that his administration will solve Peru’s innumerable problems starting from its economy

³ Global Security, “Shining Path and the Drug War”
including the foreign debt and the inflation. He claims that the nationalization of the private industry has delayed the industrial and social development and the return of the state-controlled industries would contribute to the activation of the major means of production in the government.”

The transition that Belaunde faced during his presidency from the military government to a democratic elected government was one of the major challenges that he faced during his administration. The lack of solid democratic institutions and the nationalization of major private industries by the previous military government damaged enormously the economic structures of this country leaving a negative economic prospect for his new government. He inherited a country with pessimistic economic indicators along with an implacable political opposition, unwilling to compromise on any of the issues facing Peru.

Shane Hunt argues that in recent decades Peru has lacked a consistent development model due, in part to the fact that the political life has been marked by the lack of definitive leadership. No political majority or political alliance has emerged that were dominant enough to establish order and move the political agenda. A political consensus that might form the basis for political dominance and consistent economic policy has been ruled out by the acuteness of a social

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conflict.\textsuperscript{5} The political life in Peru during Belaunde’s government was marked by a dynamic political participation from all the segments of the political spectrum. However, they could not reach consensus in most instances due to their political differences and personal interests. Additionally, Shane Hunt agrees that the lack of political dominance in the Peruvian political class was the cause of the disagreement and the unfavorable legislation towards the national problems. The lack of alliances and common ground between the political actors endangered the political compromise that was needed to pass laws that could benefit the people of Peru.

The Belaunde’s administration ineffective approach to the initial violent incidents in Ayacucho during 1980-82, the chaotic economic indicators and the agitated political struggle were only a few of the failings of the presidency. Worse still, Belaunde is blamed by many Peruvian historians as being responsible for the rise of Shining Path because he did not take proper actions to repel this terrorist group in its initial stages of formation. Additionally, Belaunde’s government failed to address properly the violent attacks in Ayacucho. Instead they chose to minimize these incidents by cataloguing them as isolated violent attacks, not knowing that these incidents were the initial signs of the formation and mobilization of Shining Path in the Peruvian Andes.

According to Oscar Canessa Chicoma, during Belaunde’s government several social issues such as the narcotraficking, and the formation of Shining Path were two major themes that Belaunde did not handle properly due to the lack of political leadership and the negation of Shining Path’s existence. The poor response to the violent events in Ayacucho by the security forces during Belaunde’s second term and the polarization of the political parties dealing in congress did not contribute to a viable solution to address Peru’s major issues. Political unrest, negative economic prospective and the lack of compromise between the civil society and the political class created an instable environment where poverty and the social discontent were the major elements within the people.

Alan García Perez: 1985-1990

In July 1985 a new president moved in to the presidential palace in Lima and an optimistic country led by a young charismatic president revived the spirit of millions of people in Peru. Social justice and better opportunities for the poor were the major political themes that Alan Garcia Perez exploited during his campaign and which elevated him to the presidency of Peru. Garcia, a talented and articulate political personality launched his presidency campaign espousing social reforms that would allow poor people to have better opportunities and re-build the whole government’s infrastructure to make changes in favor of the vast

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majority of Peruvian working class. He introduced several social welfare elements in its campaign in which served as political tool to gain electorate support.

Garcia captured more votes than his left-party competitor, the protest vote from the poor, votes from the shantytowns in Lima were crucial in Garcia’s victory. He was portrayed as the most brilliant member of recent generations, where his charisma, political style and eloquence were critical in the political campaign. Alan Garcia was a political star due to his innate persuasive capacity; he came out from the one of the most influential political parties in Peru (APRA), opening a new hope in the polarized political society in Lima. “During the first two years of the APRA government, the main proposal that emerged in relation to rural areas was the creation of geographic regions. These were designed to provide channels for the distribution of economic aid to marginal areas in the country. The idea was to promote a decentralization of the government’s functions in some areas and make the government institutions more helpful and less bureaucratic.”

The implementation of Garcia’s new government plan included major social reforms such as the creation of new geographic regions with independent


economic and political powers that was intended to liberate the concentration of economic resources in the coastal region, especially in Lima. This populist measure was well received by the majority of people because it represented a gigantic reform never made by any democratic government in the past. However, the poor development and implementation of the program created corruption and an inadequate social welfare distribution where only people affiliated with the government benefited.

Another polemic populist action that Garcia implemented was the nationalization of all private financial institutions in Peru. This economic measure was the igniter of a series of chaotic economic crisis where hyperinflation and the scarcity of food were the major outcomes of this heterodox fiscal policy. “President’s Garcia’s fateful decision in July 1987 to nationalize the private banking industry was in many ways, both politically and economically, a watershed in his government. In many ways nationalizing the banks proved to be political suicide, a mistake from which it proved impossible to recover due to its economic and political implications that the nationalization of the bank originated.”

After the nationalization of the bank in Peru the economic structures clashed and it created a sense of insecurity within the population, especially with the wealthy and within the business community. The international community

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9 Ibid., 121.
also raised its protest against these heterodox economic policies. Additionally, Garcia made clear that the Peruvian government would stop paying the external debt to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund until further notice. This failed economic strategy created an isolation environment in which international creditors rated Peru as instable country for investment, creating a negative country-risk for the funding of new investments in several development projects such as mining, agriculture, and fishing - Peru’s major industrial institutions.

The conflict that Garcia generated with his nationalization policy, created international incredibility with Peru’s government resulting in the denying the assistance of financial aid and funding for new projects that could have contributed to the reactivation of the major means of production in the country.

According to the Center for International Economic Growth and the Arthur Spitzer Institute for Hemispheric Development the Garcia’s government had virtually suspended the payment of its foreign debts and placed rigid controls on currency transactions. As a result the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund cut off all financial funding. The Garcia’s bank nationalization opened a new door for bribery, political expediency, and cronyism, not on sound economic judgments. No doubt ineffective government business had preferential
to funds while potential profitable businesses were starved of credit. The great repercussion of Garcia’s economic policies only caused a setback in the emergent Peruvian democracy, accelerating the massive impoverishment of its population where the hyperinflation and the scarcity of food led to an unforgettable episode in Peruvian history. Additionally, the negative image reflected to the world by Garcia’s policies was decisive in the denying of financial aid and other development assistance due to the chaotic and unstable situation that Garcia’s government originated.

Carol Wise states that despite Garcia’s intention reforming Peru’s corrupt public administration, the filtering of the APRA party into the state bureaucracy brought out the worst traits in both. With the APRA having taken over a sixty-year backlog of political power within the party, the spoils of office augmented the APRA’s clientelistic tendencies and caused internal conflicts for some key portfolio in the government. In addition, Carol Wise explains that internal disputes for many critical government positions during Garcia’s presidency undermined the party cohesion and the compromise in the policy making process. Moreover, the ‘hunger for power’ in Garcia’s party created political patronage

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due to the benefits that affiliated members were allowed. Jobs in the government and management positions in high and medium levels were granted to thousands of devoted APRA members. Economically speaking Peru during Garcia’s administration went under a chaotic recession compared with the aftermath of the war with Chile. The Brookings Institution reports that from 1985 to 1990, President Alan Garcia and his American Popular Revolutionary Alliance party implemented a series of pro-poor heterodox economic policies that resulted in hyperinflation and a 25% drop in GDP in 1988-89. The levels of poverty in Lima increased from 17% in 1985 to 54% in 1990. Per capita consumption fell by 50% on average and by more than 60% among the poorest of the poor. The poor also fared worst from violence: Guerrilla presence was strongest in poor rural areas and in Lima’s shantytowns, where police protection was minimal or nonexistent.¹²

Garcia’s attempts to change the Peruvian status quo left a country in ruins where the major production structures were destroyed by his heterodox social economic policies. Garcia’s initial motivation and good will to reform Peru into a

social democratic government fell short when hyperinflation, the increase of
terrorist violence, the international community condemnation and the suspension
of financial aid by the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund, put
García’s administration on the brink of generalized chaos. Moreover, the critical
economic situation that García sadly implemented during 1985-1990 perpetuated
the massive poverty in millions of Peruvian people especially in those in Lima’s
shantytown and the rural areas, contributing to the advancement of Shining Path.
In addition, as result of the economic depression a large number of wealthy and
educated people from urban areas in Lima left the country in search of new
horizons due to the uncertain future of the country after the disastrous presidency
of Alan García Pérez.

**Alberto Kenyo Fujimori: 1990-2000**

Five years of economic disaster and collective hysteria were the major
accounts of Alan García Pérez failed government. People in Peru saw their future
in a pessimistic way due to the enormous psychological trauma that
hyperinflation, nationalization of the banks, and the scarcity of food in the
markets and left the government of Alan García. The uncertainty and the distrust
in the “old political parties” allowed the rise of a new face in the Peruvian
political arena. García has proven that organized political parties in Peru were
not capable of tackling Peru’s major national issues such as poverty, terrorism,
education, health and a sustainable form of government that creates a society where the poor have better economic opportunities.

Failed attempts of Belaunde with Accion Popular and Alan Garcia with his APRA party in trying to address national issues only created a sense of disenchanting towards the traditional Peruvian political elite. The Peruvian electorate wanted real changes; People wanted to believe in someone that could lead Peru into the right direction and come out of the misery and the state of terror that Shining Path has implanted. The recognized writer Mario Vargas Llosa jumped into the political stage forming a new political movement called libertad (liberty). Vargas Llosa was the favored candidate to win the presidential elections due to his well-prepared plan to approach the anarchic situation when Garcia left office. Moreover, Vargas Llosa’s credentials as world class intellectual and leader were exploited during his political campaign, which predicted him as the next president of Peru. However, the changing Peruvian electorate saw in a college professor of Japanese origins the savior to the problems in Peru.

Alberto Kenyo Fujimori jumped into the political spectrum as an outsider and as agronomic engineer that could conduct the destinies of the unsolvable Peruvian situation due to his independent candidacy phrasing work, work, and more work. Fujimori’s Japanese origins also played an important role during his political campaign due to the positive connotation that Japanese people have in
the Peruvian society and the hard working connection between the Japanese communities in Lima. *El Chino* (the Chinese man) capitalized the discontent Peruvian people tired of promises and corruption from the traditional parties responded to talk of honesty, technology and jobs during his political campaign. The phenomenon Fujimori took the political establishment in Lima of Vargas Llosa off guard. Fujimori represented the antithesis of the political status quo in Peru; an ordinary man with almost no money who ran a presidential campaign with no formal governmental plan and yet defeated Vargas Llosa in one of Peru’s most celebrated elections during recent times.

For many political analysts, the 1990 elections and the Fujimori’s victory represented a dividing line between the chaos and the catastrophic government of Alan Garcia. It also represents a new era of stability and recuperation *vis a vi* the Garcia’s presidency.13 The new face of hope and salvation in Peru had evolved into a different prototype of politics where Fujimori’s lack of experience as politician and his Japanese ancestry were his major assets, becoming the president of Peru for over a decade.

The initial problem that Fujimori faced during his term was the lack of legislative majority in both the senate and the house of the representatives. This adverse situation impeded the passing of critical legislation that could lead to

major reforms in all levels of the state apparatus. “Fujimori was a political orphan in whom the absence of political allies in congress made more difficult mandate and pass critical pieces of legislation that would improve the current social and economic trends.” ¹⁴ The image that Fujimori reflected during the first years in office was crucial in the development of his government. He delegated and took charge of the government in his own hands appointing qualified people in his cabinet. Professional and nonpolitical personalities with high technical expertise assumed several ministries trying to address the different issues that the country was going through. Fujimori major economic reform came out a few months after he took office, announcing on live TV what came to be commonly known as the Fuji shock. “The shock program was more extreme than even the most orthodox IMF economist was recommending at the time. Plans for liberalization of the trading system and for privatization of several state industries were made for the near future. Overnight, Lima became a city that had, in the words of several observers, Bangladesh salaries with Tokyo prices.”¹⁵

The neoliberal economic policies that Fujimori used to reactivate the depressed Peruvian economy caused tremendous impact upon its population. The night Fujimori announced his new economic plan was a night that people in Peru

¹⁴ Ibid., 59

did not sleep well due to the shocking economic plan that Fujimori had in mind. “Overnight, prices of bread and milk tripled, the cost of noodles and newspapers quadrupled. And the price of cooking gas increased 25-fold. Within hours of Mr. Fujimori's televised announcement, hungry slum dwellers started sacking food markets. Police officers and soldiers, operating under a virtually nationwide state of emergency, moved quickly, arresting hundreds of people and killing four looters. Chaos on Friday at Lima's airport terminal as airline companies increased domestic airfares six-fold and charged the increase retroactively to passengers holding tickets purchased before Wednesday. Reflecting the new astronomic numbers of Peru's economy, a one-way ticket from Lima to the Andean tourist center of Cuzco has jumped from 4 million intis to 27.7 million intis.”

The traumatic economic plan that Fujimori launched to reactivate the decadent economy in Peru caused immediate reaction from the political opposition accusing Fujimori of deceiving the people. Fujimori’s resolution in taking the bull from the horns allowed his government to set up the bases of the recovery of the financial crisis in Peru, leading to a free trade market policy and the opening to renegotiate the foreign debt with the international institutions, a key issue that Fujimori inherited from Garcia.

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Alvaro Vargas Llosa, who is the son of former presidential candidate Mario Vargas Llosa believes that the shock therapy associated with the initial stages of monetary stabilization designed to stop inflation became part of the political demonology of the state and it was presented as a great conspiracy to wipe away 500,000 jobs, kill old people, crash the saving of the middle class, make the cost of public services unaffordable.17

The constant criticism from several right wing political parties represented a serious threat for Fujimori’s ambitions trying to pass legislation that allows the executive to carry out its plans in a larger scale. Knowing he faced an uncooperative and uncompromising congress, Fujimori made a controversial decision of shutting down the legislative body and declaring the state of emergency in the nation an episode in Peruvian history know as the *auto golpe* (self-coup) of Fujimori.

The self-coup that Fujimori initiated gave extraordinary powers to the president ruling by executive orders and also allowed the suspension of constitutional rights to the citizens, which created a sense of total insecurity in the nation. The *auto golpe* of 1992 gave Fujimori the necessary political power to rule with iron fist and launch his plan of major reforms that would lead to the reactivation and recovery of the economy in the country. However, Fujimori’s

auto golpe was the beginning of an obscure and criminal campaign against the political opposition leading to his perpetration of power for over ten years.

The coup of April 5, 1992, was executed in classic military style. Opposition party leaders were arrested. The offices of Lima’s major media channels were taken by troops and news coverage of the coup was censored.\textsuperscript{18}

The illegitimate democratic ways that Fujimori conducted many of his political actions were catalogued as criminal and currently he is facing criminal charges due to illegal events that were discovered after the release of several video recordings as evidence of the illicit activities led by Fujimori’s main advisor, Vladimiro Montesinos.

Fujimori’s top advisor played a vital role in Fujimori’s successful seize of power due to Montesinos’ familiarity and expertise in military affairs. He entered into Fujimori’s sphere of influence as a legal counsel that would defend him from several accusations from political adversaries. Moreover, Montesinos accessed direct contact with Fujimori when he advised the president that a terrorist group wanted to kill him. This established a symbiotic relationship between the two that ended up with the discovery of a systematic ring of fraud, corruption and bribery in high levels of the government including broadcasting media owners as well as social personalities in Lima.

The Fujimori-Montesinos team bribed the owners of the major massive media channels and newspapers in Lima with millions of dollars in exchange for a positive campaign towards Fujimori’s government. They paid the newspapers and TV channels owners’ vast sums of cash in order to stop the publication of denunciations of the wrong doing of the government. This gave Fujimori credibility and a positive image for the government. No one knew of this illegal state sponsored plan until the discovery of the smoking gun of the crime: *Los Vladivideos* (Montesinos’ video tapes)

Montesinos recorded every bribery transaction and kept it to use as an extortion tool in case the other party did not comply with the agreement of promoting a positive image of Fujimori’s government in the newspapers, TV and radio. The mastermind of all these criminal activities is attributed to Montesinos for which he was convicted for several criminal charges after Fujimori’s exile to Japan. He is currently imprisoned in Peru.

On the other hand, assessing the Fujimori’s presidency it is fair to recognize several accomplishments that his government achieved in a short period of time. Comparing economic recovery and the improvement of social services attributed to Fujimori with his antecessor Garcia. “By the end of Fujimori’s first term the economy rules of the game had been radically transformed. Fujimori promoted the partnership of private business with the government; this
remarkable alliance must be understood as Fujimori’s own pragmatism as well as the institutional strengthening and internal reform that occurred within Peruvian businesses community during the early 1990s. The Fujimori’s policy towards modernization of key state institutions must also be factored in here, as this provided the private business with unprecedented guaranties in the way of private property right and consistent public policy.”  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GDP Per capita Indicators in Peru from 1980-1999 (USD)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belaunde Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garcia Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fujimori First Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,207</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fujimori Second Term</td>
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<tr>
<td>2,242</td>
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Table 1. Summarizes GDP Per capita Indicators in Peru from 1980-1999 showing its lowest variable in 1988. However, a dramatic increase in 1994 and 1997 during Fujimori’s government shows the economic improvement after the implementation of neoliberal policies. 
Source: World Bank

Table 2. Summarizes the GDP growth indicators in Peru from 1980-1999. The declining economy along with negative indicators during Belaunde and Garcia’s governments are evidence of the failed heterodox economic policies. On the other hand, Fujimori’s neoliberal Fuji shock in 1990 marked a negative precedent for the economy but it recovered progressively recording 12.8 GDP growth in 1994. Source: World Bank.

An optimistic economic prospect leading to the control of hyperinflation, the improvement of GDP indicators and the development of many social services including health, and education have been the major contributions during Fujimori’s government. “The economic liberalization as implemented in Peru has been in many respects a positive change from the miserable record of the 1980s. The start of the recovery in 1993 probably owned as much to end of any serious
revolutionary threat from Shining Path as it did to the new economic strategy, but
the latter contributed to set the stage and sustain recovery….The success in
bringing down inflation, restoring control of public finances, and carrying through
free markets programs….The social side of the new economic orientation has
improved considerably, after a dismal start in 1990-1992. The incidence of
poverty decreased from 1991-1994, still poverty remains higher than it was a
quarter century ago. This strategy has been more helpful than harmful but it
seems inappropriate to cope the scale of Peru’s problems.”

Fujimori asserted economic approaches trying to stabilize and set the
proper conditions to create a sustainable and an efficient government have
impacted positively the government in Peru. However, Fujimori’s most
celebrated achievement was the capture of the leader of Shining Path in 1992.
After intense intelligence and security investigations led by Fujimori and the
police forces Abimael Guzman was arrested in a suburban city in Lima creating
national and international attention. The capture of the leader of Shining Path
during Fujimori’s government gave El Chino the status of national hero and
statesman in which consequently led to the diminish and suppression of Shining
Path’s terrorist campaign ending the terror and fear episode in Peru.

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20 John Sheahan. Searching for a Better Society The Peruvian Economy from 1950
The Fujimori legacy is a mixture of achievements as well as a handful of controversial political decisions that created an authoritarian government allowing the president to control the congress and manipulate the government institutions securing his presidency for several years. In contrast, it is evident that Fujimori’s successful strategy suppressing Shining Path, brought stability leading with the improvement in the economy and the reactivation of government’s apparatus, opening a new era in the modern Peruvian government.
CHAPTER IV

THE SHINING PATH AND THE PERUVIAN GOVERNMENT

The Peruvian government from Belaunde’s second term until Fujimori’s new approach of combating terrorism led to the capture of Abimael Guzman in 1992, faced over ten years of violence and insecurity that Shining Path created with its popular war. More than a decade of uninterrupted terrorist violence in Peru along with economic and political struggles left this nation with an uncertain future in which the wounds of the traumatic terrorist violence created by Shining Path is part of the history of this emergent democratic nation.

The enormous economic, social, and psychological repercussions that Shining Path’s popular war originated with the transition from the chaotic and violent terrorist records are part of the Peruvian idiosyncrasy in which the reconstruction and national reconciliation are key elements to overcome the terrorist tragedy.

The major issue that the government of Peru faced during the 1980s and 1990s besides the chaotic economy and political struggles was the terrorist threat originated by Shining Path. The lack of secure conditions and the obsolete counterinsurgency plans to face the massive wave of terror perpetrated by terrorist insurgents, perpetuated the misery and caused the killings of thousands of Indigenous peasants in the Peruvian highlands.
This chapter addresses the relationship between Shining Path and the Peruvian government focusing in the counterinsurgency and national security strategies employed during 1980s and Fujimori’s government. Additionally, the analyses and evaluation of the counterterrorist policies employed by Fujimori leading with the suppression and capture of Shining Path’s leader is mentioned in this work.

**Belaunde and García’s ineffective counterinsurgency plans**

The government’s counterinsurgency plans dealing with Shining Path during 1980s was reactive rather than proactive in which the ineffective counterinsurgency efforts to suppress Shining Path’s initial stages of mobilization in Ayacucho led to an escalated and aggressive counterterrorist plan imposed by Belaunde and García’s administrations.

The Belaunde government declared a constitutional state of emergency in Ayacucho in which the emergency zone concept is applied as a response to the Shining Path’s threat to national security. Creating an emergency zone suspends basic personal rights such as the right to assembly, travel, and inviolability of residence. Forces operating within the emergency zone may search and arrest without warrant and serve as the sole governing body of the region.1 After December 1982, Belaunde attempted an exclusively repressive strategy that was totally at odds with democratic principles. He believed that the counterinsurgency

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efforts of the late 1960 in which a massive military operation along with a repressive state sponsored policies would be effective again in 1980s. Belaunde perceived Shining Path as mere delinquents whose primary support was among foreign interests.²

On the other hand, Garcia’s counterinsurgency plan included a military program designed to protect key political figures, insulate local populations from guerrilla influence, and engage Shining Path cells in the field and the development of an economic program designed to stimulate rural investment to raise the local living conditions in the population.³

The Garcia administration approach towards the aggressive Shining Path’s insurgency created repression and violation of human rights in highlands, which the international community openly condemned. The absence of a comprehensive counter terrorist plan triggered the arbitrary killing of peasants, more or less randomly, increasing fear and terror in the Andean communities. The credibility of military started to fall into deep decline.⁴ The military’s counterinsurgency response against Shining Path’s excessive violent attacks unleashed massacres and extrajudicial killings by security forces in which


Garcia’s government unconditionally supported deploying large military forces to several areas of emergency.

Alan Garcia, came to office promising social change and a comprehensible counterinsurgency plan in which the development and support of the military forces was critical in the fight against Shining Path. However, the military operations fighting insurgency in the highlands created more violence in which the killings of peasants and the abuse of power by the military did not mitigate the terrorist incursions in Peru. Therefore the oppression and abuse by the military forces to the indigenous peasants in the highlands augmented the sense of rebellion against the government leading to a massive support from the peasantry towards Shining Path insurgency.

The US congress foreign affairs committee in 1992 reported that the unsuccessful counterinsurgency programs in Peru has proven that military-police forces failed fighting Shining Path and the massive repression by military forces towards the peasantry have created more violence in rural areas in which indigenous people were severely affected.

Finally, the Peruvian security establishment would prove to be an ineffective and unreliable ally in any joint program to defeat Sendero. As demonstrated by their performance over the last 12 years, the armed forces and the police are not up to the task of containing the guerrillas. The military, which at this stage in the conflict must serve as the principal weapon in the government’s arsenal against SL, has not yet grasped the nature of the challenges it faces, shows little appreciation for the principles of counterinsurgency, and appears to be institutionally incapable of devising and implementing a coherent national strategy to halt SL’s advance and reclaim what they have lost. These problems have been compounded by profound deficiencies in the areas of tactical-level leadership, training, intelligence, command support; serious continuing rivalry
between the police and the military; and a persistent record of indiscriminate action against rural populations. Military actions in the latter case stem, not simply, from the frustrations associated with fighting and enemy that one cannot often see, but a belief that popular terror, in and of itself is a recipe of success.\(^5\)

The Peruvian counterinsurgency effort has relied almost exclusively on fielding a military response. Despite the importance that was accorded to this problem in principle, little effort appears to have been made to address the underlying political and social elements of the insurgency.\(^6\) The failure of the military counterinsurgency imposed by Belaunde and Garcia during 1980s contributed to the consolidation and advancement of Shining Path from the countryside to the cities. Additionally, the lack of sustainable economic and social programs along with the military oppression helped Shining Path in its war against the government.

The Garcia’s promise to provide a developmentalist approach faded almost as quickly as it had emerged. For all the emphasis of economic development the Peruvian government did not provide the resources that would be have needed to improve the economy of the southern highlands in any significant way.\(^7\) Despite of the efforts and the inappropriate counterinsurgency plans during Belaunde and Garcia’s government, Shining Path advanced its

\(^5\) “The Threat of the Shining Path to Democracy in Peru” (Hearings presented before the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives One Hundred Second Congress Second Session, March 11-12, 1992), 13.

\(^6\) Ibid., 33.

popular war towards the city in which the killings of many political figures were
the major targets during Shining Path’s reign of terror. Moreover, the extreme
violent and the cruel executions perpetrated by Shining Path created a general
terror in the Peruvian population that led to a massive psychological trauma that
still is remembered in the Peruvian society.

**Fujimori counterinsurgency strategy**

The controversial political strategies that allowed Fujimori to have control
of all powers of the state contributed to the security improvement in the country
during the tragic terrorist violence in Peru since 1980s. Fujimori’s self-coup
d'état in 1992 changed the political dynamics and created an authoritarian strong
government in which the implementation of effective and aggressive
counterinsurgency plans were critical in the fight to stop the advancement of
Shining Path into the city.

“The Fujimori’s approach dealing with the rampant terrorist insurgency
after the palace coup in April 1992 introduced robust counterinsurgency measures
designed to reverse the prevailing unfavorable balance of forces between the
government’s security apparatus and the guerrilla warfare of Shining Path.”\(^8\) The
determination of Fujimori’s government to effectively fight Shining Path resulted
in the creation of intelligible security and military actions to counterattack the
terrorist events, especially in Lima. A joint task force between the Peruvian

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armed forces, the national police and the intelligence bureau facilitated an extensive investigation leading to the capture of Shining Path’s leader.

The Fujimori regime removed several unscrupulous judges from the emergency areas, transferred in better-trained functionaries, streamlined the ministries and tried to get key officials to work in a coordinated and open manner. Additionally, Fujimori’s strategy using the military forces as a defining instrument to overcome Shining Path’s influence in the rural peasantry was critical in the demobilization of the guerilla warfare in the country.

Another attribute to Fujimori’s counterinsurgency plan was the better understating of the Shining Path’s mechanics and modus operandi. Furthermore, the importance of winning the heart and minds of the peasants in the highlands was critical in Fujimori’s anti-terrorist policies. The image of the military forces evolved from an abusive and corrupt organization to a protective power in defending and safeguarding the communities from the violent terrorist attacks. The formation of self-defense groups composed by local peasants to defend themselves against Shining Path’s attacks was an innovative counterinsurgency measure that Fujimori promoted during his successful campaign fighting the terrorist insurgency in Peru.

On the other hand, “Fujimori’s controversial tactics in the war on terror included the imposition of hooded judge’s ruling from behind one-way mirrors,

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9 Ibid., 173.
undisclosed military tribunals, and the alleged use of torture and death squads.

These extreme measures brought optimistic results, leading to the severe disruption of the two deadliest revolutionary groups such as the Shining Path. In contrast, these victories came at a severe cost by growing corruption scandals and a systematic abuse of power for political ambitions.”¹⁰ The extreme and contentious measures that Fujimori promoted after his self-coup in April 1992 are considered as a “necessary evil” to halt the tremendous terrorist violence perpetrated by Shining Path. “The fact that Peruvians of all social classes approved Fujimori’s dismantling of Peru’s version of democracy does not make them anti-democratic…He did not kill democracy in Peru. Fujimori has removed a democratic mask, a locally unpopular disguise rejected by almost every Peruvian.”¹¹

Fujimori legitimized his government due to the massive popular support in which his political, economic, and counterinsurgency procedures seemed to be working effectively. The “artificial democratic establishment” that Fujimori overthrow gained massive popular support by all sectors of the Peruvian society giving momentum and served as a lawful justification due to the state of emergency that terrorist insurrection caused to the country.


Conversely, little scholarship research has been focused in the negative connotations of many controversial reforms were launched after Fujimori’s *auto golpe*. The dissolution of congress and the imposition of an authoritarian government gave Fujimori extraordinary powers to rule against all odds but at the same time brought positive outcomes in the fight against terrorism and the economic disaster. According to Jo-Marie Burt the extreme violence of the 1980s created the scenario in which many Peruvians were capable to give up citizenship and other rights to an extremely authoritarian regime in exchange for order and security. The Fujimori regime ably exploited this reordering of social meanings to create consensus for its authoritarian state-building project.\(^{12}\)

The *quo pro quo* dynamics facilitated Fujimori’s perpetuation in power in which an authoritarian government was required to overcome terrorism, corruption and the chaotic economy. In addition, Fujimori’s leadership and iron fist style dealing with the economy, corruption and terrorism became a necessity in the nation opening a new era in the modern Peruvian society.

Comparing the counterinsurgency policies during 1980s versus Fujimori’s strategies it is evident that the inconsistent and retaliatory anti-terrorist efforts implemented by Belaunde and Garcia only brought more violence in which the majority of victims were innocent indigenous peasants. The unprofessional military and police forces deployed to the emergency areas abused and killed

indiscriminately resulting in the failure of the counterinsurgency plans implemented in the 1980s.

Additionally, after Fujimori’s dissolution of the congress and the suspension of the constitutional order in Peru, the dynamics of the counterinsurgency changed drastically in which the determination and a planned intelligence/military/police operation led by Fujimori allowed the capture of Shining Path’s mastermind, initiating the demobilization process of the guerrilla warfare in Peru.

Nevertheless, according to the Peruvian Truth Commission more than 69,000 died or disappeared in the internal conflict between the Shining Path and the security forces in which three out of every four victims were the impoverished inhabitants of the highlands, most of them native Quechua-speakers.13 This report spreads the blames to Belaunde, Garcia and Fujimori governments in which the Belaunde and Garcia’s administrations bear responsibility for the state’s inadequate response to the violence. However, Fujimori’s regime is criminally responsible for the death squads and extra-judicial killings during his aggressive counterinsurgency plan.14

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Putting in prospective the accounts of the counterinsurgency efforts versus Shining Path’s massive terrorist actions in Peru from the 1980s until 1992 the latter successfully advanced and promoted its popular war from the countryside to the city, proving that the counterinsurgency strategies implemented by Belaunde and Garcia did not bring positive outcomes, but rather massive repression to peasant indigenous communities in the Andes.

Notwithstanding authoritarian rule, unconstitutional regime or corrupted government, Fujimori’s counterinsurgency approach along with the neoliberal economic policies applied in Peru in 1990s contributed to the stabilization and improvement in country. Opinions polls conducted in 1995 ranked “the defeat of terrorism” as the second most important reason for reelecting Fujimori and by the end of the decade the government’s victory over the insurgency was ranked first. The massive support that Fujimori received after ten years of government simply can be interpreted in a problem-solution context in which the effective and innovative Fujimori’s leadership solving and tackling Peru’s major issues was decisive in the continuing electorate support from the Peruvian people.

The Shining Path without Abimael

The capture of Abimael Guzman in 1992 represented a symbolic victory in the counterinsurgency efforts although it created optimism and it marked the beginning of a new era in Peru. The improvement of economic indicators, the re-

establishment of the constitutional order with the opening of a new elected congress and the substantial decrease of terrorist activities were Fujimori’s major achievements as President of Peru.

Analyzing the data provided by the Global Terrorism Database on the number of terrorist incidents in Peru from 1980-2000 it is evident that terrorist actions have been progressively increasing from Belaunde and Garcia’s administrations whereas a dramatic reduction of terrorist activities is shown after 1992 year that Shining Path’s leader was captured.¹⁶

During Belaunde’s government (1980-1984) the number of terrorist incidents reached 1691 in which a progressive and escalated terrorist violence was the trend, reaching over 120 terrorist incidents in July 1984. (Table 3)

On the other hand, Garcia’s government from 1985-1989 shows a severe increase of terrorist incidents where 2533 terrorist incidents were perpetrated and it represents an increase of 50% of terrorist incidents in comparison with the previous government. (Table 4) Conversely, in the analysis of the terrorist incidence during Fujimori’s government a dramatic diminish of terrorist actions is well marked and a new declining trend is clearly evident after 1992 when Abimael Guzman Shining Path’s leader was put in jail. Over a period of ten years

from 1990-2000 only 1783 terrorist incidents were reported which represents an overwhelming success in Fujimori’s counterinsurgency plans. (Table 5)

**Number of Incidents (1691) over time 1980-1984 Belaunde’s Government**

Table 3 Incidence of Terrorists Attacks in Peru 1980-1984

Source: Global Terrorism Database
Table 4. Incidence of Terrorist Attacks in Peru 1985-1989

Source: Global Terrorism Database
Number of Incidents over time (1783) 1990-2000 Fujimori’s Government

Table 5. Incidence of Terrorist Attacks 1990-2000

Source: Global Terrorism Database
The study and analyses of data regarding the incidence of terrorist activities in Peru for over twenty years supports categorically that efficient counterinsurgency implementation and the development of functional economic policies matters. However, the Peruvian experience has shown that terrorism is a major threat and it undermines the efforts of stabilization and development in emergent democracies in the world. The failed economic and counterinsurgency strategies employed by Belaunde and Garcia allowed Shining Path to consolidated its war against the government in which repression and the declaration of the state of emergency violated basic civil rights especially to those in the highlands.

Furthermore, the implementations of tangible economic policies along with the execution of comprehensible social reforms are key elements in the transformation in a country where terrorism and dreadful politics put Peru in the brink of civil war.
CONCLUSIONS

The terrorism phenomenon during modern time has been transforming from regional organizations to international groups in which the usage of extreme violent attacks cause commotion, creating fear and terror in society. Defining terrorism is complex due to its changing connotations and its different prospective depending on who is doing the defining. For some terrorism is defined simply as criminal activities seeking political changes within a social structure. For others terrorism is the weapon of the weak and the oppressed seeking changes for their causes. Shining Path justifies their terrorist actions as legitimate due to the exclusion and oppression that the indigenous peasantry has been subject to for so many years.

The complexity of terrorism in a globalized world is subject to constant changes due to the evolving economic, social and political trends in the world. This makes it difficult to come to consensus on a definition. However, the usage of extreme violence to create terror and anxiety are the means that terrorist groups ably exploit in order to advance their agenda.

The discriminatory and exclusionary trends justified the popular war that Shining Path launched against the Peruvian government in 1980s. In Shining Path’s eyes violent attacks against the government are not terrorist actions, they see these violent actions as legitimate ways to protest against an abusive and a
worthless government incapable of providing the basic needs to the majority of poor people in the country.

The Shining Path emerged in response to the polarized and ineffective government in which the lack of basic social services and government institutions in marginal areas created a sense of rebellion against the government. The general discontent and distrust from people in the Peruvian highlands towards the government augmented the social frustration that the educated elites of indigenous background capitalized upon, organizing and instigating a massive popular rebellion against the government. While several internal issues have undermined Peru’s democratic consolidation since the re-establishment of a democratic government in 1980, the extreme social-economic inequality has been the product of the improper balance and administration of the national resources.

The land problem in Peru was an issue that benefited a handful of Hispanic descended people creating a semi-feudal system in which the peasants worked for little and were subject to oppression for several decades. The ethnic-class dynamics is another key element in the study of Shining Path due to the discriminatory attitude towards people from the highlands. In Peru, the social discrimination and exclusion to those with Indigenous features have been part of its idiosyncrasy since time immemorial. The indigenous people in Peru are subject to discrimination and oppression due to stereotypical beliefs in which the indigenous people are portrayed as dirty, vulgar, uneducated, and savage.
heterogeneous Peruvian society where the vast majority of people with indigenous background versus the minority of people with white/European ancestry also ignited the discontent of the masses opening an opportunity in Shining Path’s ambitions due to the discrimination and repression to which they are subjected.

The Shining Path of Peru successfully took its popular war from the countryside to the city due to its effective organization and mobilization in which the leadership of Abimael Guzman was critical in the progression of events that led to violent attacks in the capital. Moreover, the ideological doctrine of Shining Path was based on a socialist-communist thought in which the Mao’s Chinese revolution and Carlos Mariategui’s land problem played an influential role in the formation of the ideological frame of this terrorist group in Peru.

The political fragmentation and the lack of national consensus between the executive, the legislative and civil society undermined the progression of the necessary measures to overcome several issues such as the economy, terrorism, corruption and the general discontent of the people. Alas Fernando Belaunde assumed the presidency in 1980 finding a country where the main means of productions and government infrastructure capacity were ruined due to the previous military governments.

The democratic transition that Belaunde faced in 1980 was the major challenge during his presidency in which negative economic indicators and the emergent terrorist movements are marked as the biggest issues that new
democracy in Peru had to deal with. Additionally, the Belaunde administration failed to effectively address the chaotic economy and underestimated the rising violent manifestations in Ayacucho, cataloguing them instead as “isolated incidents.” Belaunde’s lack of a clear and comprehensible state sponsored plans, along with the political unwillingness in congress, severely undermined the creation of a national consensus that could address effectively either the terrorism or the economy.

The massive wave of military repression that the government of Alan Garcia implemented to face the terrorism problem was poorly developed. The unprofessional military forces of Peru indiscriminately killed the impoverish peasant populations in the Peruvian highlands creating more violence and increasing the sentiment of rebellion within the indigenous people. Moreover, the heterodox economic policies that Garcia implemented during his government perpetuated the economic crisis and the expansion of Shining Path in the whole nation.

The populist Garcia’s approach to dealing with the financial institutions, the reform in the police forces and the implementation of the regionalization brought instability and corruption leaving Peru with an uncertain future. Astronomical hyperinflation numbers, scarcity of public services and food, corruption in the highest levels of government, massive extrajudicial killings and a negative international image were the major outcomes of the five years of
Garcia’s presidency. However, in 2006 Alan Garcia was elected president of Peru for second time setting an unprecedented record in Peru history.

The Shining Path represented a serious threat to the government of Peru but few people understood clearly what were the origins, motivations and mechanics of this terrorist movement. Likewise, few people could imagine that against all odds and breaking the thick line of the traditional political establishment in Peru, Alberto Fujimori would become president in 1990, bringing a new approach to old problems in a country where corruption, hunger, terrorism, political polarization and hopelessness were major burdens.

The most significant accomplishment of the Fujimori government and its approach to dealing with Peru’s major issues, especially the terrorist threat, was the demobilization and substantial decrease of terrorist activities in Peru after 1992. However, Fujimori’s “anti-democratic” decisions, such as the dissolution of congress and the suspension of the constitutional order, created controversy both domestically and within the international community. Fujimori justified his polemic decisions due to the massive popular support from people of all social classes.

The massive popular support legitimized Fujimori’s controversial decisions, due to his reformist approach in the state and within the social institutions, creating a close relationship between the government and the people. Moreover, Fujimori’s tactful implementation of the appropriate economic policies
to overcome the negative financial situation in Peru set up the bases of a stable economy and created the proper conditions to re-establish businesses with international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, key allies in the future development of the country.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Putting into perspective the governments of Belaunde, García and Fujimori in economic, counterinsurgency and governability terms, the latter has succeeded in mitigating and stabilizing the chaotic and insecure situation in Peru, opening a new episode with an optimistic outlook for the decades to come. The terrorism threat in Peru has vanished from the shantytowns in Lima. The car bombings and the power outages are history and Abimael Guzman remains in jail. This, however, is only the beginning in the consolidation of “the truth democracy” where its people have economic inclusion, where people have access to basic government services such as education, health, security, and where people’s dream for a better future can become a reality.

The Shining Path of Peru and its violent terrorist campaign that killed over 69,000 people will be remembered as the bloodiest insurgency group in Peruvian history. At the same time it will serve as a reminder of how ineffective and failed government’s approaches can lead to chaos, anarchy, and political polarization as the major issues in recent Peruvian history.

However, the spirit of rebellion against the government will remain the weapon the oppressed use against social injustice in Peru. It is the government’s duty to create the necessary conditions to overcome several problems that this Andean nation is currently facing and in this way avoid the formation of new violent organizations such as the Shining Path.
The government’s role in terms of economy, internal-external security and social development must take the lead and implement programs according to the needs of the people and according to what is best for the country. It is the government’s responsibility to create the necessary mechanisms to overcome many social problems that Peru is currently confronting.

Although, economic indicators are very optimistic and the political situation is stable, the Garcia administration is not doing enough to face the extreme poverty and the unemployment problem. During my last visit to Peru in May 2010, I visited Villa El Salvador, which is one of the largest shantytowns in Lima and where the extreme poverty conditions in its people still represents a major challenge for the Peruvian government. People feel that even after the terrorist threat has gone, the betterment of the living conditions is unreal and the government’s rhetoric portraying social improvement is a political travesty.

The Garcia administration should take seriously the importance of the government’s responsibility to address these social problems, providing viable solutions that can mitigate the extreme poverty and the unemployment problem.

The negative experience that Shining Path represented should bring together all bloods in the country in which a reliable national reconciliation is necessary to begin a new episode to face the current issues, building a prosperous and secure country for the future generations.
Lastly, the harmful terrorist experience should serve as a life lesson for this country, which engendered a conciliatory and supportive triumvirate of government, politics, and civil society that is necessary if Peru is to confront the new challenges of a globalized world where the spirit of Shining Path will be forever present.
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