

Strategic Culture and the Failure of Command:  
The Peruvian Army Struggle Against Sendero Luminoso in the Highlands, 1980-89

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## **ABSTRACT**

**EZEKIEL MORENO: Strategic Culture and the Failure of Command: The Peruvian Army  
Struggle Against Sendero Luminoso in the Highlands, 1980-89  
(Under the direction of Miguel A. La Serna)**

This study assesses Peru's military history and strategic culture and argues that the armed forces' failure of command and control allowed violence to go unabated during the counterinsurgency struggle. From 1930-80 Peru developed a strategic culture that associated national defense with internal security, development, and popular support. The military's discourse and actions during this period were influenced by this vision of defense and it continued to shape military operations in the 1980s. Framed in this larger analysis, the accepted explanations for the violence, which often center on racism and the use of a scorched-earth strategy, are incomplete. The military's failure of command allowed units to operate autonomously and develop informal procedures predicated on fear, frustration, and social biases. Through military documents, publications, interviews, and speeches this study shows that the military's structural failure, command and control, allowed rampant violence to shape counterinsurgency operations.

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## INTRODUCTION

The May 1980 Peruvian presidential elections initiated a peaceful but tense transfer from military to civilian rule. Coinciding with this transition, Sendero Luminoso initiated its guerrilla insurgency in the remote highland town of Chuschi, Ayacucho the night before elections. Over the next three years, attacks by Sendero increased and gradually became a national security concern as the police force's counter-insurgency effort first intensified and ultimately proved ineffective. Unable to dominate the terrain due to the lack of transportation, personnel, and equipment, local government officials and police forces retreated and, in effect, surrendered terrain. The retreat of the state and Sendero's promise of equality and aggrandizement allowed the guerrilla group to establish support networks based on popular appeal and fear.<sup>1</sup> In the hopes of regaining control over the countryside, the Peruvian state charged the military with carrying out the counterinsurgency in December of 1982. When the armed forces entered the fray in January 1983 it may have already missed its target of opportunity for a quick end to the insurgency. The armed forces struggled to understand and contain the chaos as it took on a life of its own.

The period from 1983 to 1985 was perhaps the darkest of the conflict, with civilians suffering atrocities committed by both the military and Sendero Luminoso. The violations of human rights, however, continued throughout the decade as the violence engulfed the nation in a civil war that claimed the lives of some 69,000 people, many of them indigenous

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis Taylor, *Shining Path Guerrilla War in Peru's Northern Highlands, 1980-1997* (London: Liverpool University Press, 2006), 35.

peasants.<sup>2</sup> According to the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR) in 2003, the Peruvian state was responsible for nearly half of the deaths and disappearances. Scholars, politicians, and journalists have attributed the high number of casualties to a variety of factors: regionalism, racism, and a bloodthirsty counterinsurgency strategy. These explanations only tell part of the story, as they do not pay sufficient attention to the Peruvian military or strategic culture. Strategic culture refers to a set of ideas and beliefs that shape how a country perceives issues of national security and is shaped by factors such as culture, politics, institutional development, and history. Over time, countries develop norms and perspectives that influence behavior in both the near and long term with regards to national defense. Political scientists first introduced the concept of strategic culture in the 1970s to explain why countries fail to make rational choices in foreign policy and defense decisions. Military historians have used the term ‘way of war’ to describe a similar process in the conduct of war. It is only during the past two decades, however, that this scholarship has merged and found to be complimentary in that “a country’s way of war may be viewed as both a subset and product of its overall strategic culture.”<sup>3</sup>

Using Peru’s strategic culture as a point of departure, this study offers an alternative, or at least additive, explanation for the violence in the Peruvian highlands from 1980-89. Through secondary literature, army publications, internal documents, and interviews compiled by the CVR, I argue that the atrocities committed by soldiers do not reflect a doctrinal strategy on the part of the Peruvian armed forces. Rather, the excessive violence

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<sup>2</sup> Christine Hunefeldt, *A Brief History of Peru* (New York: Lexington Associates, 2004), 239; Mario Fumerton, *From Victims to Heroes: Peasants Counter-Rebellion and Civil War in Ayacucho, Peru, 1980-2000* (London: Rozenberg Press, 2003), 110–114.

<sup>3</sup> The following work provides an excellent summary of the strategic culture as understood by political scientist and historians. Lawrence Sondhaus, *Strategic Culture and Ways of War* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1–3.

resulted from a breakdown of command and control. As a result of this structural failure, soldiers and commanders on the ground were free to commit acts of indiscriminate violence that betrayed their historical approach to internal security.

This essay is broken into four sections. The first discusses the historiography on the Peruvian counterinsurgency. While the Peruvian civil war has generated a good deal of scholarship, studies of the military counterinsurgency are scarce. The few studies that have been done on the topic suggest that human rights violations were part and parcel of the military's counterinsurgency strategy. However, this approach does not consider the military's strategic culture in the years leading up to and including the 1980s political violence. It is with this in mind that the second section describes the evolution of a Peruvian military strategic culture in the decades leading up to insurgency. This was a period in which the military defined internal unrest as the greatest threat to national security. The only way to combat this threat, commanders argued, was to give the armed forces a more active role in national politics. Generals understood, however, that they would need popular support in order to maintain a sense of legitimacy. This strategic culture culminated in the military coup that placed the left-of-center rule of the Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces (GRFA) in power from 1968-1980. The third section focuses only on the army and traces the influence of strategic culture into the 1980s. The narrow approach is necessary because of the complexity of the state apparatus that engaged in counterinsurgency operations. Although the military was no longer leading the nation, the army continued to associate national defense with internal security and popular support. Seen in this light, a scorched-earth strategy sharply contradicted the Peruvian military's strategic culture. Why, then, did combat operations in the emergency zones stray from the military's inherited legacy

of populism and security? Section four addresses this question, demonstrating that the army's failure of command and inability to influence daily operations were at the heart of its strategic breakdown.

## CHAPTER 1

### HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

Relatively few studies have focused on the state's security forces (military, police, and intelligence community). There are two major explanations for this. The first has to do with the paucity in documentation, as the conflict is recent history and legal action is still pending in some situations. Moreover, several documents remain classified or restricted and have not yet been released to the general public. The second explanation is a lack of scholarly enthusiasm for the Peruvian military. Scholars have focused on understanding Sendero Luminoso, its origins, and other none state actors such as the *Rondas Campesinas*.<sup>4</sup> Considering the lack of documentation and the nature of the violence, this neglect is to be expected. What has resulted is an incomplete understanding of the conflict and military operations.

The few scholars who have focused on the state response, specifically the military, generally concentrate on the 1980s and rely on open sources such as speeches, training manuals, and media reports. The result is a narrative that traces strategy from below and fails to consider the military's institutional development or strategic culture. An early analysis of

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<sup>4</sup> The following works show the general trend in literature regarding the insurgency. The most significant works that include the military will be discussed directly. Cynthia McClintock, "Why Peasants Rebel: The Case of Peru's Sendero Luminoso," *World Politics* 37, no. 1 (1984): 48–84; David S. Palmer, "Rebellion in Rural Peru: The Origins and Evolution of Sendero Luminoso," *Comparative Politics* 18, no. 2 (1986): 127–146; Lewis Taylor, "Agrarian Unrest and Political Conflict in Puno, 1985-1987," *Bulletin Of Latin American Research* 6, no. 2 (1987): 135–162; Carlos I. Degregori, *Ayacucho 1969-1979: El Nacimiento de Sendero Luminoso* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1990); Orin Starn, "Maoism in the Andes: The Communist Party of Peru-Shining Path and the Refusal of History," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 27, no. 2 (1995): 399–421; Fumerton, *From Victims to Heroes*; Steve J. Stern, ed., *Shining and Other Paths: War and Society in Peru, 1980-1995* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).



the counterinsurgency struggle in Peru by sociologist Lewis Taylor contends that the military's approach in the early 1980s was inadequate in that it failed to address the social, political, and security requirements necessary to win the hearts and minds of the Peruvian peasantry. Carlos Tapia ultimately comes to the same conclusion after analyzing military changes in doctrine, manuals, and organizational leadership.<sup>5</sup> Others have been much more critical of the state's counterinsurgency effort. Nelson Manrique described it as follows:

The military implemented a counterinsurgency strategy based on the indiscriminate use of terror against the peasantry. This merciless campaign of repression, guided by the North American counterinsurgency doctrine absorbed by Peruvian military personnel in the schools of Fort Gulick and Panama, tried to isolate Shining Path by demonstrating that the army could exert even greater terror than the guerrillas.<sup>6</sup>

Manrique's is the harshest and most direct critique of the counterinsurgency strategy, but he is not alone. In 2006, Taylor described the state and military operations as follows:

An initial phase of indecisiveness and inaction (1980-1982) was followed by a bout of largely indiscriminate repression and bloodletting that alienated a considerable swathe of the civilian population (1983-1987). Confronted with an ill-devised and ineffective 'strategy', after 1989 the armed forces changed tack by reducing (although not eliminating) the level of state terrorism.<sup>7</sup>

Debroah Poole drew a similar conclusion, using the August 1985 massacre of 39 adults and 23 children in the highland village of Accomarca as an example. Lieutenant (Lt.) Terno Hurtado, the commander of the unit responsible for the massacre, declared, "I consider the decisions I took to be correct." He later stated, "You cannot trust a woman, an old person or

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<sup>5</sup> Lewis Taylor, "Counter-Insurgency, the PCP-Sendero Luminoso and the Civil War in Peru, 1980-1996," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 17, no. 1 (1998): 35-58; Carlos Tapia, *Las Fuerzas Armadas y Sendero Luminoso: Dos Estrategias y Un Final* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1997).

<sup>6</sup> Nelson Manrique, "The War for the Central Sierra," in *The Shining and Other Paths: War and Society in Peru, 1990-1995*, ed. Steve J. Stern (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 193. Interestingly, no substantial study has been conducted regarding what percentage of Peruvian officers attended school at Fort Gulick in the decades prior to the conflict and their position within the Peruvian army in the 1980s. Nor has any study addressed the training material as it relates to the Peruvian context, especially in a post-Vietnam period.

<sup>7</sup> Taylor, *Shining Path Guerrilla War in Peru's Northern Highlands, 1980-1997*, 38.

a child [because Sendero] begins to indoctrinate them when they are just two or three years old. Little by little, through trickery and punishment, they win them over to their cause.”<sup>8</sup> Facing the possibility of civilian legal action, high-ranking officers came to Lt. Hurtado’s defense, proclaiming him a national hero and demanded that he be tried in a military tribunal. In a military court, Lt. Hurtado was eventually sentenced to 10 days in prison and summarily removed from public view. For Poole and Manrique, Hurtado’s general lack of remorse, together with the unabated support provided by senior-leadership, confirmed his actions as representative of an institutional strategy at both the soldier and organizational level.

Poole’s assessment, however, does not give sufficient attention to civil-military relations. As discussed by Gorriti and other scholars, the transfer to a civilian government in 1980 ensured a degree of military autonomy.<sup>9</sup> It is this institutional self-preservation that arguably pushed military leaders to support Lt. Hurtado before the state. Once the army was responsible for prosecuting Lt. Hurtado, a man it championed a hero, it could not openly persecute him without losing face before the public and throughout the service. The troops, charged with carrying out the counterinsurgency and oblivious to the political maneuvering, could perceive such events as condoning the use of violence to achieve a desired effects.<sup>10</sup>

These analyses do not take into account the military’s institutional history prior to the insurgency. Some scholars have already begun unpacking this past with respect to Sendero Luminoso. Both Carlos Ivan Degregori and Jaymie Heilman explore the rise of Sendero

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<sup>8</sup> As quoted in Deborah Poole and Gerardo Renique, *Peru: Time of Fear* (London: Latin American Bureau, 1992), 8. Deborah Poole suggests that military support was due to politics but does not provide substantial information.

<sup>9</sup> Gustavo Gorriti, *The Shining Path: A History of the Millenarian War in Peru*, trans. Robert Kirk (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> Jo-Marie Burt, *Political Violence and the Authoritarian State in Peru: Silencing Civil Society* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 54–55. This section details some of the issues between military autonomy and state control.

Luminoso in the decades leading up to the conflict.<sup>11</sup> Degregori examines Ayacucho in the 1970s in order to identify the historical conditions that made it an ideal location for Sendero to take hold. Heilman's comparative study of two villages in Ayacucho examines changes in specific political and social issues over an entire century. The military, however, has not received such attention or analysis despite the availability of secondary sources on the Peruvian armed forces.<sup>12</sup> Jo-Marie Burt provides the best comprehensive approach of the state and the counterinsurgency. However, her focus is the "relationship between expanding political violence, a weakening of civil society, and a growing societal acceptance of authoritarianism" in Peru from 1980 to 2000.<sup>13</sup> The military in the early 1980s is an important part of her work, but not the primary focus. This study is intended to take the first step in a new direction and provide a fresh perspective in the study of the military response to Sendero Luminoso.

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<sup>11</sup> Degregori, *Ayacucho 1969-1979: El Nacimiento de Sendero Luminoso*; Jaymie Heilman, *Before the Shining Path: Politics in Rural Ayacucho, 1895-1980* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> The following works are clear example of some country specific studies of Peru and the military. Frederick Nunn, *Yesterday's Soldiers: European Military Professionalism in South America, 1890-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983); Daniel M. Masterson, *Militarism and Politics in Latin America: Peru from Sanchez Cerro to Sendero Luminoso* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1991); Dirk Kruijt, *Revolution By Decree: Peru, 1968-1975* (Amsterdam: Thela Publishers, 1994); Liisa L. North, *Civil-Military Relations in Argentina, Chile, and Peru*, Politics of Modernization Series 2 (Berkley: University of California Press, 1966); Liisa L. North and Tanya Kokovkin, *The Peruvian Revolution and the Officers in Power, 1967-1976* (Montreal: McGill University, 1981); Philip Mauceri, *State Under Siege: Development and Policy Making in Peru* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996).

<sup>13</sup> Burt, *Political Violence and the Authoritarian State in Peru*, 16.

## CHAPTER 2

### DEVELOPMENT OF A STRATEGIC CULTURE

The period from 1930-80 was essential in setting the political and military conditions of the Peruvian civil war. In the absence of a conventional foreign threat, the military focused on internal security and increasingly viewed itself as central to overcoming the political fragmentation that hindered national development. The military, however, seldom used force to achieve internal security. Instead, it sought to preempt revolution through populist programs and development. Thus, Peru developed a strategic culture that placed a primacy on internal security, development, and militarily lead reform. Internal security sought to curtail civil-unrest and the development of insurgencies. Development, more nuanced, sought social, economic, and industrial growth so as to improve the conditions of the Peruvian citizenry. Although not necessarily altruistic, the military undeniably sought to encourage popular investment in the state.

Peruvian history helped define national security in terms associated with social and economic development. This perspective was institutionalized in professional military schools such as the Center of Higher Military Studies (CAEM) in the 1950s. This, however, reflected a longer historical trend. The roots of the Peruvian military's strategic culture can be traced back to the 1930s. By then, the Peruvian military had undergone nearly three decades of institutional growth under foreign military missions and gradually distanced itself from politics. Yet, it simultaneously developed a militaristic approach to national issues. The armed forces developed a "propensity and willingness to apply solutions based on a

military ethos to social, economic, and political problems.”<sup>14</sup> The military spurred this militarism by framing the 1933 constitution, which defined its mission as follows: “The purpose of the armed forces is to secure the rights of the Republic, the fulfillment of the Constitution and the laws, and the preservation of public order.” This mandate allowed the armed forces to act independent of both civilian and political control when the military deemed it necessary. Working in tandem, militarism and this institutional independence shaped how the military viewed itself and national defense for the next 50 years. Lieutenant colonel (Lt. Col.) Luis Maria Sánchez-Cerro was a harbinger of this professional militarism. Confronted with economic decline, unemployment, and social unrest caused by the great depression, he led a *coup d’etat* in 1930 in order to provide direction amidst the bedlam. The preservation of public order was championed again in 1948 by General (Gen.) Manuel Odría and in 1962 under a short-lived Military Junta. In the months preceding the Junta, an army general at the Peruvian Superior War College stated that the constitution mandated that the military “confront all subversive and extremist forces which openly or covertly threaten the nation’s institutions and. . . intervene in all situations which endanger the stability of institutions and the ordered free and sovereign life of the republic.”<sup>15</sup> The statement clearly captures a more robust version of *rights of the Republic* and the *preservation of public order*. Such a view not only validated military intervention in 1948, but also charted the course for the future.

The discursive linking of public order and social improvement took root in the 1930s. This process was ushered in by the social and ideological threat posed by the Popular American Revolutionary Alliance (APRA). Founded in 1924, APRA directly challenged the

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<sup>14</sup> Nunn, *Yesterday’s soldiers*, 2.

<sup>15</sup> General Pérez Godoy as quoted in Masterson, *Militarism and Politics in Latina America*, 172.

existence of the republic by fomenting revolution through unions and populist politics. From the military's perspective, APRA and its revolutionary ideology threatened national security. Lieutenant colonel Sánchez-Cerro, again, helped set the stage for the military. On his way to winning the presidency in 1930, Lt. Col. Sánchez-Cerro instituted populist programs such as the abolishment of the *Conscripción Vial* (a form of conscripted Indian labor) and electoral restrictions in order to limit the political threat posed by APRA.<sup>16</sup> His victory, however, was violently contested by APRA and in 1933, a party member assassinated him. This act caused irreparable harm to APRA-military relations despite the fact that both sought to address popular concerns through social reform. Their political and social objectives were congruent but they differed in implementation. The Popular American Revolutionary Alliance sought revolution and the military wanted state lead reform.<sup>17</sup> It was in response to APRA and popular demands that in 1948 Gen. Odría led a coup and ascended to the presidency. Once in power, he moved to undermine APRA's political base. General Odría, much like the Junta in 1962, implemented pro-labor legislation, housing initiatives, and expanded employment through public work programs intended to connect the government with unions and individuals. These measures were intended to both weaken APRA's political support and appease social unrest.<sup>18</sup>

Helping to shape the military's institutional mission and focus was the armed forces itself. In addition to framing its mission in the 1933 constitution, in 1950 the military established the CAEM which pushed a vision of "national defense [that] included social and

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<sup>16</sup> Steve Stein, *Populism in Peru: The Emergence of the Masses and the Politics of Social Control* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), 61–62.

<sup>17</sup> Nunn, *Yesterday's Soldiers*, 174.

<sup>18</sup> Liisa L. North, "Ideological Orientation of Peru's Military Rulers," in *The Peruvian Experiment Reconsidered* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 246–247.

economic development as a mandatory component of national security.” Responsible for training senior officers for high level command, CAEM’s interpretation of national defense influenced military thought in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s.<sup>19</sup> This school and its mission are indicative of the growing trend within the officer corps that, since the 1930s, connected national defense with internal security. In fact, in the 1940s the officers regularly addressed the military’s modernizing mission and this gained traction with the establishment of CAEM.<sup>20</sup>

Development, however, was not limited to infrastructure and legislation. With mandatory military service, training was an avenue to improve the population and strengthen the nation. It provided education and basic vocational skills such as construction and maintenance that gave Peruvians an opportunity to improve their social standing. The soldier was “a permanent vehicle for Peru’s modernization,” but officers were cognizant of the risk posed by militarily trained civilians.<sup>21</sup> This was specifically true in reference to indigenous recruits and in 1960s, the army implemented measures to ensure they were treated well and made progress. As Daniel Masterson observes, this “demonstrated the army’s concern for their welfare as well as an anxiety regarding their future revolutionary potential.”<sup>22</sup>

The social question was not cast aside, but rather a reality that the military routinely attempted to address. For example, although the military junta in 1962 transferred authority back to civilians a year later, it addressed issues such as labor regulation and infrastructure

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<sup>19</sup> Masterson, *Militarism and Politics in Latina America*, 142.

<sup>20</sup> Masterson, *Militarism and Politics in Latina America*, 137–142; Abraham F. Lowenthal, “Peru’s Ambiguous Revolution,” in *The Peruvian Experiment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 29–31.

<sup>21</sup> General Edgardo Mercado Jarrín as quoted in Masterson, *Militarism and Politics in Latina America*, 162–163.

<sup>22</sup> Masterson, *Militarism and Politics in Latina America*, 164.

development. Strikes, peasant land seizures, and the emergence of the Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR) guerrilla group in 1964 made the need for national reform self-evident.

The interconnectedness of militarism, the constitutional mandate, and national defense developed a shared conviction, a strategic military culture, which led to unified military resolve in 1968 despite a divergence in the officers' political orientation.<sup>23</sup> On October 3, 1968, General Velasco declared in the closing remarks of the GRFA manifesto:

The Revolutionary Government, at one with the aspiration of the Peruvian people calls on them to struggle, together with the armed forces, to attain authentic social justice, dynamic national development and the reestablishment of the moral values which alone can guarantee the achievement of the highest destiny for our fatherland.<sup>24</sup>

Again, the Military associated national security with social justice and national development. Under Velasco (1968-75) the military Junta implemented programs intended to expedite modernization of the economy and ease social demands. In addition to the nationalization of foreign and national companies, it executed the most drastic land reform programs outside of Cuba.<sup>25</sup> Land reform directly countered social unrest that allowed insurgencies to develop, while newly created sugar cooperatives resolved labor disputes. Similarly, nationalization won popular support from the working class while the National System of Support and Social Mobilization (SINAMOS) attempted to connect government with labor organizations through state led programs.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> North and Kokovkin, *The Peruvian Revolution and the Officers in Power, 1967-1976*, 44. This work outlines the sharp political division among several prominent military officers during the military regime. Thus, ideological consensus and a military culture of obedience and unity explain why, despite personal political divisions, the military moved in unison with Velasco in 1968.

<sup>24</sup> As quoted in North and Kokovkin, *The Peruvian Revolution and the Officers in Power, 1967-1976*, 5–6.

<sup>25</sup> Masterson, *Militarism and Politics in Latina America*, 206–208.

<sup>26</sup> David P. Werlich, *Peru: A Short History* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), 300–304, 308–319.



By the 1970s, the military leaders perceived internal security as the greatest national concern. Force, although effective against the MIR in 1964, was not the solution according to some officers. General Jose Graham Hurtado, who served on Velasco's Advisory Committee, clearly articulated how MIR impacted the military's vision of national security. He said, "It was the guerrillas who rang the bell that awakened the military to the reality of the country" and helped the armed forces realize that the problem would not be solved with bullets.<sup>27</sup>

By 1975 the corporatist nature of the armed forces, which had unified military leadership despite political divisions, began to splinter as government policies proved ineffective. Amidst sharp economic decline and social unrest, in 1978 the military government took the first steps towards reestablishing civilian authority. This required forced changes to the military's strategic culture. Once the leaders of the nation, by 1980 the military was in full retreat and the primary threat redefined. It ostensibly focused on a traditional external state enemy, but internal security and its association with "hearts and minds" and development remained a central part of the army's discourse as it engaged Sendero Luminoso.

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<sup>27</sup> As quoted in North and Kokovkin, *The Peruvian Revolution and the Officers in Power, 1967-1976*, 42-43.

## CHAPTER 3

### CONTINUATION OF AN INHERITED LEGACY

The transfer to civilian authority in 1980 corresponded with a new constitutional mandate for the armed forces. The change was deliberate and intended to curtail the military's willingness to partake in domestic politics. Its new mission, to "guarantee the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of the Republic," sought an outwardly focused mission. Despite being forced to abandon its position as the nation's leader, the long-established strategic culture that associated national security with development persisted. As the civil war wreaked havoc on the nation, army discourse continued to view popular support and development as key to achieving internal security. This discursive continuity, however, is overshadowed by the army's use of force in the Peruvian central highlands from 1982 to 1985.

Military journals from the early 1980s, such as *Actualidad Militar* and *Revista Militar de Perú*, show that the army continued to view internal security as central to its mission. Their covers proudly display slogans such as: *Have Confidence in the Guardians of Independence, Sovereignty, and Integrity of the Nation* and *From the Coast, to the Mountains, to the Jungle: Always Ready to Prevail*.<sup>28</sup> These are but a couple of titles that allude to an inherited institutional legacy. The first calls on the nation to maintain faith in the army and echoes its new mission, while the second title specifically addresses the army's role

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<sup>28</sup> *Actualidad Militar* no. 269 (1981): Cover; *Revista Militar Del Perú* no. 766 (1981): Cover; *Actualidad Militar* no. 366 (1991): Cover.

throughout the country: the coast, the jungle, and the sierra. It is a clear reference to internal security.

The articles contained within also show that the army's vision of national defense and of itself continued to reflect the embedded strategic culture. A translated article that appeared in the in *La Revista Militar de Perú* in 1981, directly addressed the threat of terrorism within Peru. Although, the primary focus was to inform the reader of how terrorist organizations operate, it discussed internal security in the opening and closing remarks. In addition to asking readers if they believed terrorism to be a real threat to the nation, to the article states:

Our purpose has been to make you aware of the risks that our society is facing today...by working with the armed forces and counter terrorist police agencies we will develop our own defense by working honestly and morally for the progress of our country and we will not surrender to the tactics developed and used by terrorists.<sup>29</sup>

The message was clear: the army would not surrender to terrorism. For terrorism to succeed, the article highlights, it provoked governments to use excessive and uncontrolled violence so that the population would condemn the state. As stated above, the army was intent on not falling into the classic guerrilla trap. Terrorism was a struggle for popular support.

In 1982, Lt. Col. Teodoro Hidalgo Morey, later promoted to colonel, addressed the importance of winning popular support in an article entitled *Instruction and Training for the National Defense*.<sup>30</sup> In it, he described what the army was doing within the officer education system in order to ensure they were prepared to confront "any external threat or intervene in

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<sup>29</sup> DACA ESG, "El Terrorismo," *Revista Militar Del Perú* no. 766 (1981): 16.

<sup>30</sup> Teodoro H. Morey, "Instrucción Y Entrenamiento Para la Defensa Nacional," *Actualidad Militar* no. 283 (1982): 26–32.

counterinsurgency operations in any and all capacities.”<sup>31</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Morey declared that

The officer is not only responsible for making sure his unit is trained to execute combat missions, but also has to maintain a level of moral righteousness and build a cohesive group that is enthusiastic about doing their war time mission. It also has to partake in sports, cultural activities, and work to gain community support. These are just some of the tasks in which troops partake in daily.<sup>32</sup>

The two points of interest here are the notion of an elevated moral standard and the inclusion of community interaction as an essential aspect of training that unit commanders must work towards and foster. Such skills, in theory, are vital in counterinsurgency operations. For Morey, military training provided both officers and soldiers with an elevated moral righteousness that led to a greater sense of patriotism and the ability to overcome the physical challenges of combat. For the officers, this was not enough. Therefore, their professional development program also exposed them to “a broad vision of the social, economic, and cultural problems of the country and the world” so that they would be better prepared for combat.<sup>33</sup> This position reflects the CAEM’s definition of national defense and illustrates how it continued to shape the officer education system. Three months after the article’s publication the army was committed to the conflict in Ayacucho.

Even as the army engaged Sendero, a populist approach was evident. For example, in October of 1984, a period marked by abuses, an army intelligence group in Ayacucho distributed a document titled *The Key for Success in the Counterinsurgency War*, which focused on winning popular support.<sup>34</sup> It is important to note that this intelligence document,

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<sup>31</sup> Morey, “Instrucción Y Entrenamiento Para la Defensa Nacional,” 27.

<sup>32</sup> Morey, “Instrucción Y Entrenamiento Para la Defensa Nacional,” 28.

<sup>33</sup> Morey, “Instrucción Y Entrenamiento Para la Defensa Nacional,” 32.

along with several others, was intended for internal consumption. Marked secret, classified, or restricted, it is not rhetoric intended to appease the public, but rather a systematic counterinsurgency strategy that never fully materialized. Not only did *The Keys for Success in the Counterinsurgency War* describe victory as being beyond the grasp of military force, but asserted that the “primary objective for the security forces should be to win the confidence of the people.”<sup>35</sup> In order to gain support, it stated that the soldiers had to be prepared to fulfill civilian roles. In the neglected regions of the emergency-zone, it continued, “a mimeograph is much more useful than a machine gun,” and a “pediatrician is more important than a mortar-man.”<sup>36</sup> The fact that such a document was produced and intended for distribution indicates that this course of action was discussed and deemed relevant. This may not speak directly to a hearts and mind approach, but clearly notes that conventional operations would not resolve the conflict. This analysis mirrored what Lt. Col. Morey had argued in 1982. Lieutenant Colonel Morey concluded his article by suggesting that the army, despite having focused on conventional military operations, “is also *READY* to assist in the anti-terrorist struggle, when the president of the Republic decides it.”<sup>37</sup> Popular support was central to success in the article.

General Adrian Huamán is perhaps the best known advocate for a development approach. A speaker of Quechua who hailed from the province of Apurímac, Gen. Huamán embraced a developmental approach and the need to remedy social and economic problems.

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<sup>34</sup> AGRUP “Caceres,” “Llave Del Exito en La Guerra Contrasubversiva,” October 1984, Comisión Permanente del Historia Militar del Perú.

<sup>35</sup> AGRUP “Caceres,” “Llave Del Exito en La Guerra Contrasubversiva,” 2.

<sup>36</sup> AGRUP “Caceres,” “Llave Del Exito en La Guerra Contrasubversiva,” 3.

<sup>37</sup> emphasis in the original, Morey, “Instrucción Y Entrenamiento Para la Defensa Nacional,” 32.

Now a frail and unimposing man, in 1984 he was the senior officer in the emergency-zone and claimed:

The solution is not military, because if it were military I would resolve it in a question of minutes. If it were just questions of killing, Ayacucho would cease to exist in half an hour, so would Huancavelica...But this is not the solution. The problem is that we are talking about human beings, of forgotten communities that have protested for 160 years and no one has paid attention to their demands, and we are now facing the consequences of that situation.<sup>38</sup>

While in command, General Huamán gained popular support by capitalizing on his knowledge of local customs. Not only did his command of Quechua prove priceless but he also addressed basic needs such as hunger. General Huamán contended that in 1984 army helicopters were associated with the arrival of bread and food. During his abbreviated command, he made it a point to distribute '*pan*' (bread) because of its local importance. Everywhere he went, Gen. Huamán claimed, women and children flocked for *pan* and provided valuable information.<sup>39</sup> General Huamán's view surely disseminated through the ranks, much like that of Gen. Clemente Noel. General Noel was the first to command in the emergency zone in 1983 and described as adhering to a counterinsurgency approach similar to the 1970s military regimes in the Southern Cone. The result "was a massive violation of human rights that included torture, extrajudicial executions, and forced disappearances."<sup>40</sup> To a degree, Gen. Noel is credited for setting the tone of the conflict. Yet, Gen Huamán's position is dismissed as rhetoric and given little attention by scholars since he was dismissed by the president for criticizing the government's failure to focus on development. Interestingly, the removal of both generals by the president was supported by senior military

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<sup>38</sup> As quoted in Masterson, *Militarism and Politics in Latina America*, 283.

<sup>39</sup> "Interview General EP (R) Adrian Huaman," March 4, 2003, Comisión de La Verdad, Defensoría del Pueblo.

<sup>40</sup> Mauceri, *State under siege*, 137–138.

leaders for very opposite reasons. For senior leaders, the violence under Gen. Noel was unacceptable. Yet, Gen. Huamán's advocacy for the expansion of the military's functions in the emergency zone reminded them of the Velasco era, a role military leaders no longer wished to assume.<sup>41</sup>

Huamán's position was not unique. Morey arguably shared the same perspective and continued to serve during the 1980s. As the editor of *Actualidad Militar* during the early years of the conflict, Morey traveled throughout the emergency-zones and later worked with both the Ministry of Defense and War. His last operational assignment came in 1987, when he served as the second in command of the 31<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division in Alto Huallaga and retired in 1988. Morey's advancement in rank illustrates that his view on winning popular support remained present and influential, strategically and operationally, during the conflict.<sup>42</sup>

Morey and Huamán clearly illustrate the influence of strategic culture on an officer's approach to counterinsurgency training and operations. Their continued service show that this inherited institutional strategy towards internal security continued to influence discourse before and during the conflict. This population-centric approach is even more understandable given the political context in which the conflict developed. It took place amidst a democracy, with a relatively free press, and among international agencies able to assert pressure on the conduct of the war. For the army to embark upon a deliberate alternate path would have meant greater consequences for it as an institution.

Furthermore, by 1983 it had become evident to many in the military that Sendero did not enjoy popular support. Although army documents available from 1980-84 are scant, the

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<sup>41</sup> Burt, *Political Violence and the Authoritarian State in Peru*, 58–61.

<sup>42</sup> Teodoro H. Morey, *Sendero Luminoso: Subversión Y Contrsubversión, Historia Y Tragedia* (Lima: Quebecor World Peru S.A., 2004), 22–24.

army's senior leadership was aware of this fact. Media and government sources can help frame the army's situational awareness. For example, in February of 1983, just two months after the army was committed to the struggle, a U.S. Embassy message stated:

Sendero is also suffering from the consequences of its errors. Zealous dedication to armed struggle replaced a more cautious, long-term strategy of making friends and building alliances among the traditionally oppressed villages. In a few months Sendero used up much of the political capital in the countryside that it spent years accumulating.<sup>43</sup>

The assessment is based on reports provided by the Peruvian government and the local media. Another assessment stated that the military presence meant that the “coerced cooperation imposed on much of the rural population [was] breaking down in communities where government authority [had] returned.”<sup>44</sup> Although Gorriti has shown that Peruvian state agencies often failed to work together, it is unlikely that the information that led to the embassy's assessment went unnoticed by army leadership or operational planners.

This division between Sendero and the local populace was also evident in other forms. Just one month after the military took control of the counterinsurgency, villages clearly demonstrated their resistance to Sendero. On January 21, 1983, the villagers of Huaychao in Huanta province killed seven Senderistas. Unfortunately, this was followed five days later by the accidental killing of eight reporters who were attempting to confirm the story.<sup>45</sup> This event received significant media coverage throughout the country and was addressed in a U.S. embassy report.<sup>46</sup> In addition, there were several highland community

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<sup>43</sup> American Embassy Lima, Peru, *Report*, February 24, 1983.

<sup>44</sup> American Embassy Lima, Peru, *Report*, February 10, 1983. Repeatedly throughout these reports there are reference to open source media and the news as being a source of the information.

<sup>45</sup> Fumerton, *From Victims to Heroes*, 80.

<sup>46</sup> American Embassy Lima, Peru, *Report*, January 31, 1983.



petitions to the president in the early 1980s requesting military and police support. Of the six letters available, one was sent directly to the Ministry of War, while others had stamped seals from various offices to include the Ministry of Defense, War, and the President.<sup>47</sup> This clearly suggests a regular flow of information. Detailing the abuses and atrocities committed by Sendero in their letters, these communities openly sought assistance and accumulated several dozen signatures and fingerprint in a show of unity. In the district of San Juan de Seres, Ayacucho, the community went a step further and constructed barracks intended to house 80 soldiers.<sup>48</sup> Such a project surely exhausted local resources and attests to their precarious situation. The continual presence of local self-defense groups is just another example of localized resistance against Sendero that was present in the early 1980s.

For the latter half of the decade, scholars generally acknowledge that the military embraced a hearts and minds approach. This is evident in several army journals that display patriotic images of soldiers and civilians rendering honor to the Peruvian flag. This is especially true of the series *Commando en Acción*, which consistently showed high-ranking officers visiting civil-military projects throughout the country.<sup>49</sup> In addition, articles such as *The Armed Forces and Civil Defense: Working Together for Security* are clearly intended to illustrate both national development in the hinterlands as well as progress brought about by military action.<sup>50</sup> This shift, according to scholars, developed as a learned response. By the

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<sup>47</sup> Community Members, "Anexo de Cochisa," June 24, 1984; Community Members, "El Destacamento Permanente el Ejercito 'Los Cabitos' en el distrito de Sacaamarca-Fajarda-Ayacucho," February 12, 1984; Community Members, "Establecimiento Cuartel Destacamento 'Los Cabitos' en Huancasancos," n.d.; Community Members, "La Instalación de un destacamento permanente del 'Los Cabitos' No. 51 en Saccamarca V. Fajardo Ayacucho," March 3, 1984; Community Members, "Solicitamos ----cion de un Cuartel del Ejercito en la distrito de Chipas," June 22, 1984.

<sup>48</sup> Community Members, "San Juan de Seres," June 24, 1984.

<sup>49</sup> Comando en Acción, Oficina de Relaciones Públicas del Comando Conjunto de las Fuerzas Armadas, Lima.

mid-1980s, the use of brute force had proven ineffective and, as Orin Starn explains, there was a “recognized need to combine intimidation and persuasion in a so-called ‘integral’ strategy, including ‘sociopolitical’ and ‘civic action’ to build support among the peasantry.”<sup>51</sup> The long-developed Peruvian strategic culture emphasized development and popular engagement as key to internal security. The notion that this ‘sociopolitical’ and ‘civic action’ approach evolved as learned response after 1985, as suggested by scholars, is incomplete

Scholars have not identified the institutional connection between development and internal security because of the limited scope of studies and the army’s 1980s image management. First, the army dismissed Sendero Luminoso as a secondary concern and gave the impression that engaging Sendero would be like playing with amateurs.<sup>52</sup> Second, before being assigned to the conflict in 1983, the army had been retreating from its political role and focusing on its new constitutional mandate. It concentrated on external defense, specifically along the Peruvian-Ecuadorian border.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, military journals and the equipment build-up in the early 1980s demonstrated a focus on conventional military operations.<sup>54</sup> In fact, even Morey’s article, discussed above, is framed by images of conventional operations. Soldiers are shown training on jump towers, anti-tank tactics, and on both radio and

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<sup>50</sup> Carlos T. Ganoza, “Fuerzas Armadas y Defensa Civil: Trabajo Conjunto para la Seguridad,” *Comando en Acción* no. 12 (1995): 52–59.

<sup>51</sup> Orin Starn, “Villagers at Armes: War and Counterrevolution in the Central South Andes,” in *The Shining and Other Paths: War and Society in Peru, 1990-1995* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 237–238.

<sup>52</sup> Gorriti, *The Shining Path: A History of the Millenarian War in Peru*, 252.

<sup>53</sup> Masterson, *Militarism and Politics in Latina America*, 269–270.

<sup>54</sup> *Actualidad Militar*, Órgano Informativo del Ejercito, Ministerio de Guerra, Lima; *Revista Militar Del Perú*, Oficina de Relaciones Publicas del Ejercito, Ministerio de Guerra, Lima. These journal covers clearly show a primary concern for conventional operations

generator operations, but as discussed here, the content is very different. This focus on conventional operations remained the primary theme until the late 1980s.

In addition, when the military was committed to the conflict the violence increased. In Ayacucho alone, between 1982 and 1984 the number of deaths attributed to the conflict rose from approximately 200 to 2,500. It is because of the army's apparent focus on conventional operations and the increased death rate that scholars have generally conclude that the army pursued a failed doctrinal approach, the so-called scorched-earth strategy. Presented in larger historical context, however, this assertion is in need of revision. In the decades leading up the insurgency, the military had developed a strategic culture focused on internal security and consistently linked security to national development and popular support. Development would redistribute wealth and remedy the social unrest, the root of latent revolutionary fervor. For the military, addressing social discontent was essential to accomplishing the mission. Confronted with a political defeat in the late 1970s and a conventional threat, this historical perspective was quickly overshadowed. Army publications of the early 80s clearly show a focus on conventional war, a transition that conflicted with its inherited strategic culture. Journal articles, officers' comments and military documents show that winning popular support remained central, but the discontinuity between desired ends and operational focus caused doctrinal and operational uncertainty.

The military's use of excessive force during the counterinsurgency struggle against Sendero Luminoso is evident. Granted immunity, soldiers, police officers, and civilians provided detailed accounts to the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission of the atrocities and violations of civil liberties that they were familiar with, witnessed, or

committed. Such testimonies give accounts of detention without cause, kidnapping, and murder. This, however, does not necessarily constitute a doctrinal strategy. Approaching the same issue from the military perspective and its inherited legacy can provide a better understanding of events. The issue from within the army was its inability to maintain effective command and control at the operational level.

## CHAPTER 4

### DISCIPLINARY CONTROL AND THE PERPUTATION OF VIOLENCE

Dispersed across the arid, jagged, and poorly developed landscape of the Peruvian highlands, the army established several counterinsurgency bases, often in or near small towns or in isolated positions. The military used company size units of 150-200 soldiers to achieve this goal. To cover the greatest area, companies were subdivided into four platoon size elements, 40-60 soldiers, which were assigned specific areas of responsibility. Junior officers, a first or second lieutenant, were in charge of each base with a captain responsible for overall operations. These nodes were further subdivided into three patrol sections of 15-20 soldiers. At any one time, each base had one section on patrol, one preparing to go out, and another recovering from their 15-20 day security excursion.<sup>55</sup> The military's intent was to maintain an immediate presence and deter insurgent activity. The result, however, was much different. The bases were poorly manned and ill-equipped, and troops often moved to and from them at great risk to their personal safety. These strongholds were not always mutually supporting, and they were hindered by a lack of transportation because road networks only connected major towns. The communities most in need of military support were often only accessible by helicopter or on foot, with the assistance of local guides and pack animals. The high altitude, thin air, and steep terrain all worked against tight operational control. Maintaining command and control over daily operations and soldiers in

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<sup>55</sup> "Testimonio: 100223," February 2, 2002, Comisión de La Verdad, Defensoría del Pueblo.

such an environment was a daunting task. The term command and control refers to the leadership's ability, at multiple levels, to extend influence over operations. This is contingent on effective communication and transportation, especially in decentralized operations such as the ones executed in the Peruvian highlands during the 1980s. These structural problems allowed tactical events to develop autonomously and fostered an environment where soldiers and leaders allowed varying degrees of violence to go unchecked.

In the closing comments of his 1991 study of the Peruvian military, Daniel Masterson describes the problem as follows:

Soldiers and marines confronted by an elusive and highly dangerous enemy are clearly acting out of frustration in a war which has no rules. But the issue of whether human rights abuses are a result of the armed forces' leadership's decision to 'Argentine' the war or rather are the results of a poorly disciplined regional commanders acting on their own is not clear.<sup>56</sup>

Command and control was a central issue and of special interest to the army was the focus of a speech presented at the military academy in Chorrillos, Lima in the summer of 1989.

General Jose C. Sarmé, who served as the commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division in Ayacucho in 1985, delivered this key note address.<sup>57</sup> General Sarmé's speech was based on 112 investigations initiated during his service in the emergency-zone in 1985, which were broken down the type of violation (i.e. theft, abuse of authority, fraternization, or neglect).

Gen. Sarmé arrived at the following conclusion:

The personnel in the support units were not mentally or morally prepared to operate in isolated conditions of the antiterrorist bases, where it often is impossible to arrive on a regular basis in order to ensure control is effective.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Masterson, *Militarism and Politics in Latina America*, 283.

<sup>57</sup> Jose C. Sarmé, "Conferencia Sustentada en La Escuela Militar de Chorrillos, Sobre 'La Contrasubversion en el Peru de 1980-1988,'" June 1988, Comisión Permanente del Historia Militar del Perú.

Interestingly, his analysis made a sharp distinction between combat and support troops. Nonetheless, for Gen. Sarmé, a major problem for the army was the lack of moral resolve and effective control. Based on his experience from in 1985, Gen. Sarmé contended that the absence of leadership was detrimental to good order and discipline. Among soldiers, there were sixteen cases regarding the abuse of authority, eight related to non-disbursement of pay, and fifteen regarding negligence of one's duty. Speaking in 1989, Gen. Sarmé clearly saw the army struggling with the same exact issues and to extend his assertion to 1983 and 1984 would not be a stretch.

A Senderista ambush of an army patrol in 1990 is an excellent example of the issues faced by the army. On 11 July, an army column patrolled the region of San Alejandro despite having been directed to assume a defensive posture within the base.<sup>59</sup> In the initial report regarding the ambush, investigators stressed that the patrol not only violated direct orders, but that the soldiers failed to follow security measures. To make matters worse, the soldiers lacked radio communication, were wearing civilian clothes, and were operating outside their area of responsibility. Such blatant disregard for procedure and orders surely represents a more systematic problem with operational command and control.

Although Gen. Sarmé focused on disciplinary issues of a military nature, he acknowledged that these actions negatively impacted counterinsurgency operations.

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<sup>58</sup> Under Sarmé's command, there were 5,671 troops, consisting of 3,901 from the 2nd DI and 1,770 support troops. Respectively, they were responsible for 52 and 48 percent of investigations and therefore he argues that statistically, the support troops were responsible for the majority of the violations Sarmé, "Conferencia Sustentada en La Escuela Militar de Chorrillos, Sobre 'La Contrasubversion en el Peru de 1980-1988,'" 3.

<sup>59</sup> Novoa Gutiérrez, "Emboscada por DDSS a patrulla 'Super'," July 12, 1990, Comisión Permanente del Historia Militar del Perú.

Discipline lay at the heart of the problem. A marine serving in Ayacucho in 1984 described this systematic breakdown to the Truth Commission:

When we first arrived there was a degree of confusion. The Marine's operational plan stated that we were going to fight terrorism, through a presence-only approach, patrols were to be conducted only in a defensive posture, but little by little it started to transform into, as you would say, justice by our own hands and the abuses started.<sup>60</sup>

Informal rules and procedures of violence became accepted practice and were exacerbated by peers and leaders who justified their actions as a reality of war.

For example, when patrols came under attack in or near a village, they established their own informal rules. Reasoning that the village supported Sendero because the guerrillas were nearby, a soldier stated that "there was a rule within the patrol, where there was an engagement, that town would be destroyed."<sup>61</sup> Such perverse logic led to the acceptance of informal procedures and rules of behavior. The translated word for destroyed was *arrasaba*, which literally means to 'destroy' but can also be described as 'sweeping through' and possibly 'pillage'. The latter does not require a significant logical jump, as other soldiers testified that patrols often returned with goods such as radios.<sup>62</sup> This situation was worsened by the lack of pay and supplies and was identified by Gen. Sammé as a problem.

In addition to robbery, gang rapes called "*pichanear*" also occurred. Such actions are significant because they are of a nonmilitary nature and took place away from command supervision. Recognizing this behavior was not condoned by the chain of command, a soldier stated, "we did this while on patrol, it was not done at the command post."<sup>63</sup> Patrols

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<sup>60</sup> "Testimonio: 100223."

<sup>61</sup> "Testimonio: 100168," March 3, 2003, Comisión de La Verdad, Defensoría del Pueblo.

<sup>62</sup> "Testimonio: 100165," December 2, 2002, Comisión de La Verdad, Defensoría del Pueblo.

<sup>63</sup> "Testimonio: 100168."



are not led by the rank and file. Junior officers and senior enlisted men led these operations and were possibly involved, indifferent, or ignorant of such events.

Not all informal operating procedures, however, occurred away from the patrol bases or were hidden from leadership. Some units practiced a morbid ceremonial baptism when welcoming new soldiers. A soldier identified as Brujo, the Witch-Doctor, because he served as a medic, provided the details of one such event. Shortly after arriving to his unit, a formation was held and a bound terrorist suspect was brought before Brujo, who was instructed to kill him. This would mark his initiation into to the unit. When Brujo hesitated, the commanding officer, most likely a captain, swiftly moved to the front and set the standard by stabbing the bound man. This was reality in the emergency-zone according to Brujo. "At the moment, to be frank," he said, "I felt nothing, it was part of war and a normal event, I accepted the baptism and did I what was expected."<sup>64</sup> Such events occurred in other locations, although they are impossible to quantify. The mercy killings of fatally wounded enemy combatants is another example of the accepted violence, even if humanely justified.<sup>65</sup> Such acts desensitized soldiers to the violence that was part of their reality and not associated with military operations.

Another marine described the use of violence as being a measure of self-worth and praise.

When conducting interrogations in Huanta... One could not take it very easy on the suspect, because you would be considered worthless. For example, if someone knocked out a tooth, you had to knock out two, if you didn't then you were worthless.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> "Testimonio: 100088," January 3, 2002, Comisión de La Verdad, Defensoría del Pueblo; "Testimonio: 100168."

<sup>65</sup> "Testimonio: 100168."

<sup>66</sup> "Testimonio: 100223."

From the patrol to the base, leadership at multiple levels failed to enforce standards and discipline. This was a problem that leadership at the strategic level proved powerless to rectify. This inefficacy resulted in a simultaneous degradation of command, which allowed for rapes and theft at the unit level and also encouraged individuals to seek justice on their own terms.

The deterioration of command and control was also evident in the actions taken by leadership at the tactical level. For example, soldiers claimed that holding cells used to torture suspects were cleaned prior to the arrival of superior officers and civilian dignitaries. In some cases, the cells were dismantled completely and replaced by gardens and courtyards.<sup>67</sup> Such actions can have two very different interpretations. First, it can suggest a conspiracy between senior leadership and soldiers on the ground to conceal illegal activities. This interpretation overlooks the army's institutional development, even if not shared by all officers. Second, the dismantling of cells suggests autonomy and self-preservation by ground commanders. This hypothesis fits within the larger argument regarding the failure of command and control. Visits by leadership, especially those with civilian dignitaries, were surly announced and coordinated in advance. The concealment of irregularities by base commander to was in their own best professional interest. These small unit commanders were likely to have less than eight years in the army and were products of a strategic culture that was embattled by transformation and war.

Self-preservation and the need to show results was a real concern. In June 1989, the damage assessment after an engagement between a patrol and Senderistas was nineteen suspected terrorists detained and one enemy killed. In order to defend his combat losses,

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<sup>67</sup> "Testimonio: 100165"; "Testimonio: 100168."

described as a few soldiers, the base commander instructed his troops to kill the detainees and plant weapons on their bodies. Shortly after a general visited the base, the patrol returned to the village and scorched everything. When asked if the general gave the order, the soldier giving the account responded, “He doesn’t tell the commander in front of the whole world...the general simply takes him to a side and tells him.”<sup>68</sup> The details of the conversation will never be known. Nevertheless, this soldier’s perception suggests the blurring of authority and legitimacy.

The disregard for senior leadership was also vocal and direct. As stated by Gen. Sammé, some troops were not morally prepared to operate in isolation. A marine’s account, given to the CVR in 2003, of Cpt. Camión’s service in the emergency zone is an excellent example.<sup>69</sup> As a base commander in charge of approximately one hundred marines in 1984, Cpt. Camión undeniably shaped the operations around him. Already angry - or at least displeased - by his assignment to a region deemed chaotic, poorly equipped, and with limited opportunities for advancement, not much was needed to tilt his moral compass. When Cpt. Camión arrived to take command, the outgoing officer explained daily operations and security concerns both on and off the base. It was during this period that bad habits could be transmitted and or predilections reinforced. Having witnessed the execution of two suspects by the outgoing commander, there was little question for Cpt. Camión of how things were done. The day after assuming responsibility, a patrol returning with detainees asked for instruction, Cpt. Camion is said to have replied, “You still have to ask me for orders! You know exactly what you have to do and you still have to ask me for orders. Why have you

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<sup>68</sup> “Testimonio: 100168.”

<sup>69</sup> “Testimonio: 100223.”

come here then? Do you understand?”<sup>70</sup> It is no wonder that in 1989, Gen. Sammé would stress the importance of implementing effective transfer of authority procedures. Although one cannot assume that the Gen. Sammé was aware of such incidences, he clearly recognized its potential for perpetuating disciplinary and security problems.

After several successful attempts at avoiding service in the emergency-zone, Cpt. Camión finally took command of the region, much to his displeasure. A witness claimed that when holding suspects, Cpt. Camión would strike them and say, “it is your fault that I am here, I have a son, a father, and because of you I have to be over here.”<sup>71</sup> Captain. Camión’s resentment was evident to everyone below him and it set the behavioral standard. Later, after having come under suspicion for the use of excessive force and the possible disappearance of a civilian, Cpt. Camión railed against the leadership and was heard saying, “I have come here to fight, you don’t fight from an office.” Captain Camión’s mission was clear: “I was sent to fight and ordered to eliminate terrorists so I have to eliminate terrorists.” If his superiors wanted to criticize, according to Cpt. Camion, “they should come here, come here, and suffer just like we do.”<sup>72</sup> He challenged the authority of senior leadership in front of his soldiers and showed what actions were acceptable under his command. This is the understanding of the conflict that his troops embodied as they engaged in a counterinsurgency struggle where the enemy could not be differentiated from civilians. This ultimately helped set the conditions for the use of excess force and abuses.

The absence of control in an organization such as the military is suspect because discipline is a defining characteristic of the armed forces. Yet, the examples cited above

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<sup>70</sup> “Testimonio: 100223.”

<sup>71</sup> “Testimonio: 100223.”

<sup>72</sup> “Testimonio: 100223.”

clearly show a fundamental breakdown at the individual, patrol, and even forward base level. One of the major factors that helped shape this was a lack of transportation. For example, in the early 1980s there were only two helicopters available to support the counterinsurgency effort and the lack of mobility continued to be an issue throughout the decade.<sup>73</sup> Peru's economic collapse after 1985 further exacerbated the military's ability to acquire fuel, parts, and equipment as the conflict spread beyond Ayacucho. This forced soldiers to take undue risks in order to accomplish basic operational requirements not associated with combat. In 1988, after being denied aerial and additional vehicle support, a convoy consisting of just one truck conducted a logistics run to three bases in the vicinity of Tingo Maria. With food rations having been expended two days earlier, the movement was undoubtedly one of necessity, but it led to the deaths of thirteen soldiers in an ambush.<sup>74</sup>

Organized and structured towards a conventional fight, the army was not prepared for counter-insurgency operations in 1983. The failure of command and control resulted in the systematic break down of discipline and the acceptance of violence at multiple levels. While other factors, such as racism, regionalism, and inadequate training, were also important, they can only be understood within the context of the military's strategic culture. The failure of command and control takes into consideration the Army's inherited legacy, operational conditions, and individual agency, which helped perpetuate the violence at different points during the conflict.

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<sup>73</sup> Mauceri, *State under siege*, 139.

<sup>74</sup> "Da Cuenta de Emboscada sufrida por Vehículo Militar el 03 Julio 88 en la zona del Puene 'Ronda,'" July 5, 1988, Comisión Permanente del Historia Militar del Perú.

## CONCLUSION

Starting in the 1930s, the military gradually developed a strategic culture that centered on three key traits. First, aided by militarism and a constitutional mandate, the armed forces increasingly viewed itself as a national leader. Second, in the absence of a conventional threat, the military increasingly associated national defense with internal security. This position was given greater credence by national politics and the cold war. Third, the military understood socio-economic and national development as an integral aspect of internal security. Development would provide the wealth required to appease social demands and ultimately obtain popular support or at least investment in the state. These factors guided military action over several decades and culminated in the GRFA, but this strategic culture would not continue unchallenged.

The transfer to civilian authority in 1980 forced the military to redefine its national mission. It was no longer the leader and retreated. However, the legacy of this deeply engrained strategic culture continued to guide army operations as it engaged Sendero Luminoso in the Peruvian highlands. The focus on internal security, development, and popular support is evident in the army public and restricted discourse. Yet, when the army entered the fray, there is no doubt that the level violence increased and did not subside until the latter half of the 1980s. This, scholars contend, reflected a shift from a scorched-earth to a hearts and minds campaign. The assertion that the violence that characterized the civil war

in the Peruvian highlands derived from a doctrinal approach favoring scorched-earth neglects the army's strategic culture.

My argument is not that violence and excessive force was absent, but that it was not due to an articulated strategy. The violence seen during the early phase of the conflict can better described as a deviation from the army's strategic culture and resulted from the failure of command and control. Command and control, although ostensibly simple, goes a long way in explaining the violence. The army's inability to control operations at the tactical level allowed individuals, patrols, and units to operate with varying degrees of impunity and autonomy. This explanation accounts for individual agency and complicates the conventional narrative of the counterinsurgency. More important, it opens up possibilities for further research. For example, what role did troop demographics and forced conscription play during the counterinsurgency? If we find, for example, that the troops serving in the army were from same communities that the security forces terrorized, we might question conventional explanations that emphasize the role of racism in the counterinsurgency. Along the same lines, scholars would do well to compare and contrast the conduct of combatants across military and police branches. How, for example, did the actions of army soldiers compare to those of the navy, police, and Civil Guard? More importantly, which of these institutions was responsible for the most violence? To date, scholars, activists, journalists, and government officials continue to treat the Peruvian security forces as a monolithic institution that was responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of Peruvian citizens. And while this is true on a generic level, Peruvian civil society cannot begin to reconcile until it identifies which branch was the most problematic and why.

Ultimately, further study of the Peruvian security forces along any of these lines would help create a more nuanced image of the counterinsurgency. More important, such attention to the intricacies of the counterinsurgency can pressure the security forces to acknowledge their failures rather than seeing themselves as the subjects of national persecution.<sup>75</sup> This is a critical step not just for understanding the complexities of the Peruvian counterinsurgency, but for ensuring that Peru's violent history never repeats itself.

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<sup>75</sup> Asociación Defensores de la Democracia Contra el Terrorismo, "Los Promotores de la CVR en el Perú ¿Traficantes de lo DDHH?," August 2006, Comisión Permanente del Historia Militar del Perú; *Injusticias Contra Los Que Combatieron y Derrotaron a los Terroristas (1980-2000)* (Lima, 2007); *En Honor A la Verdad* (Lima: Comisión Permanente de Historia del Ejecito del Perú, 2010). The first document provides a brief biography of each member of the Truth Commission and ultimately concludes that their politics have shaped the result of the study. It goes on to provide factual errors regarding 16 people listed as disappeared or murdered in the report but have since been found alive. The book is a recent publication that provides the army's official account of the conflict serve to illustrate the armed forces resistance to the current.



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