The Shining Path: An Important Resource for Terrorism Studies

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Abstract

This paper demonstrates the importance of the Shining Path (SP) for terrorism studies based on two approaches. First, we evaluate the most recent literature on the organization's insurgency in Peru, which began in 1980. Second, we explore the place of the Shining Path within terrorism studies by examining the main databases, bibliographies, encyclopedias, and dictionaries available to researchers. We discuss the consequences of this survey for our understanding of the definitions and functions of terrorism. These are relevant for understanding its present manifestations and for implementing counterterrorism strategies.

Keywords: Peru, Shining Path, terrorism

Sendero Luminoso: un recurso importante para los estudios sobre terrorismo

Resumen

Este documento demuestra la importancia de Sendero Luminoso (SL) para los estudios de terrorismo basados en dos enfoques. Primero, evaluamos la literatura más reciente sobre la insurgencia de la organización en Perú, que comenzó en 1980. Segundo, exploramos el lugar de Sendero Luminoso dentro de los estudios sobre te-

rrorismo examinando las principales bases de datos, bibliografías, enciclopedias y diccionarios disponibles para los investigadores. Discutimos las consecuencias de esta encuesta para nuestra comprensión de las definiciones y funciones del terrorismo. Estos son relevantes para comprender sus manifestaciones actuales y para implementar estrategias de lucha contra el terrorismo.

Palabras clave: Perú, Sendero Luminoso, terrorismo

光辉道路：一项用于恐怖主义研究的重要资源

摘要

本文基于两个方法证明了光辉道路（SP）对于恐怖主义研究的重要性。第一，我们评价了有关该组织从1980年开始在秘鲁发起的暴动的最新文献。第二，我们通过分析可获取的主要数据库、参考书目、百科资料、字典，探究光辉道路在恐怖主义研究中的位置。我们探讨了这项调查对我们理解恐怖主义定义及其功能所产生的结果。这些结果有助于理解恐怖主义的现有表现形式，有助于执行反恐战略。

关键词：秘鲁，光辉道路（Shining Path），恐怖主义

For many observers who do not specialize in Latin America, the Peruvian organization Shining Path might seem a distant, exotic phenomenon—one that is more relevant to history than the present day. But this impression is false, for at least two reasons. These two reasons justify research into the Shining Path, not just for comparative purposes but also in order to gain a better understanding of the use of terrorism in relation (or not) to an insurgency. This research may illuminate our understanding of the current situation in Europe.

First, the Shining Path did not completely disappear following 1992 and the capture of its leader, Abimael Guzmán. While heavily weakened in military terms and ideologically divided, it underwent a series of changes in two more or less complementary directions. One involved increasing hybridization through drug trafficking—a strategy that was both mercenary and entrepreneurial. The other involved a foray into the Peruvian political system, in an attempt to benefit from constitutional guarantees in force at the time.

Second, with enough hindsight, we can use the case of the Shining Path to examine the role of terrorism when it is (or is not) part of an insurgent dynamic, as well as the human cost of such terrorism. Between 1980 and the mid-1990s,

the Shining Path pursued a strategy that sought to spark a civil war. Its death toll during this period was around 35,000—an extremely high number, comparable, for example, to that of the Sri Lankan LTTE or the Columbian FARC. In a second, post-insurgency phase, the movement fractured into a number of groups that carried out bombings, selective assassinations, ambushes, hostage-takings, and so on. The death toll from these was far more modest, of the order of a few dozen per year. Over the long term, however, they presented a nuisance, with numbers comparable to those of failed insurgent groups like ETA (around 900 deaths), the Red Brigades (around 360 deaths), the RAF/Baader-Meinhof Group (57 deaths), Action Directe (12 deaths), or the FLQ in Quebec (1 death).

A contextual, geopolitical approach to terrorism allows us to better understand what determines why some organizations that use this form of political violence are more deadly than others and opens up avenues of thought that are very relevant to current situations. In particular, we can enrich quantitative works like that of Asal and Rethemeyer (2008), whose conclusions are difficult to generalize due to the lack of reliable data.

First and foremost, however, the Shining Path—which began a "people's war" in Peru in 1980, and whose military and political avatars still exist today—is a remarkable case study in terrorism. There are several reasons for this. First, the movement's origins date back to the 1960s, when the Sino-Soviet split led to a clash within international communism between two very different strategic horizons. One, taken by Russia, was founded on the ideal of peaceful coexistence. The other was inspired by Maoist doctrines, including the idea that war could be used to impose communism locally and/or globally. The *Partido Comunista del Perú-Sendero Luminoso* emerged in the poor, isolated Andean region of Ayacucho. Its leader was Abimael Guzmán, a former philosophy professor at the local university, who came to be known as Presidente Gonzalo. It resulted from a series of splits and purges, and its insurgent practices broke sharply (and violently) with other groups on the Peruvian left, particularly the Maoist movement (Navarro 2010). The model of the "people's war," which combined rigid Maoist orthodoxy with hints of Andean messianism, also differed from the various Latin American adaptations of the Castro (or *foco*) model, associated with Che Guevara, theorized at the time by Régis Debray (1967). By 1980, the Castro model had shown itself to be practically ineffective, whether in the form of rural guerrilla warfare (Peru in 1965, Bolivia in 1967, etc.) or urban guerrilla warfare (Tupamaros, the ERP in Argentina, etc.)[1] Through the exceptional historical depth it offers, the Shining Path provides a valuable opportunity for terrorism studies, since, over the course of several decades, it made use of multiple forms of insurgent action, both violent

1 For primarily polemical reasons, such insurgencies have often been labelled "terrorist" (see, for instance, Butler 1976). As we will see, by conflating them with guerrilla warfare, the distinctive character of the genuine terrorist actions carried out by these organizations is diluted. This created a lasting obstacle to properly understanding such actions.

and non-violent. These included the consolidation of various organizations, original forms of propaganda (including theater and slogans painted on walls), and both rural and urban guerrilla actions. Most interestingly for our purposes, it also used terrorism, in moments and places that it is our task to study. Furthermore, the experience that the Peruvian state and society accumulated in fighting the insurgency—particularly involving rural self-defense strategies (the *rondas campesinas*)—should be integrated into any geostrategic study attempting to understand such events in all their complexity.

When approaching these events and the associated literature, it is essential to begin with a focused field of study. Here, we are specifically interested in terrorism—that is, a technique of political violence that groups (or even individuals) use in moments and places that it is our task to understand based on situational data and given operational constraints. To do so, we must therefore first propose a definition of terrorism—to be added to the hundreds already in circulation (Schmid 2013: 39–157). Formulating such a definition is essential if we are to clarify our topic as precisely as possible. We claim here that *terrorism consists in the realization (and/or threat) of acts of war, intended to transmit an emotionally impactful message to an audience beyond the immediate victims of the violent action* (Dory 2017b).

While there is no need here for a detailed commentary on this definition and its theoretical implications, we note that, beyond its communicational dimension (which also applies to psychological warfare), our focus here is on the identity of the victims. This may be *personal*, such as when a king, president, or other individual is specifically targeted. In such cases, they are typically the victim of a political assassination. *Functional* identity (related to functions in the state apparatus, subversive organizations, the police, the army, etc.) involves victims who are undifferentiated but who belong to particular categories of the population—typically the armed forces in the case of rural or urban guerrilla warfare. Finally, *vector* identity refers to the ability of particular categories of a population (based on criteria such as ethnicity, age, and so on) to best convey, through the spectacle of their victimization, the message that the attackers wish to send to particular audiences (for example, the victims of the Bataclan attacks in Paris in 2015, or those of the attack on Tarata Street on July 16, 1992, when the Shining Path set off two car bombs in an upper-class residential area of Lima). Such actions best characterize terrorism in what we may call its "purest" form, as a technique of political violence.

A scientific definition like this is of course different from the polemical and political designation of "terrorism" and "terrorists" as vile, cowardly, barbaric, and bloodthirsty—as our absolute enemies, whoever they are and (increasingly) whatever they do. It also differs from legal approaches, which aim to define such acts in terms of how they might be prosecuted, and which differ considerably from one country to another.

These considerations have some consequences that are fundamental to any rigorous work on terrorism in general and on the Shining Path (hereafter SP) in particular. Firstly, despite what the literature often implies, terms like "political violence," "insurgency," "guerrilla warfare," and "terrorism" are not interchangeable. Each refers to something quite different. Secondly, designating an organization as "terrorist" always requires at least two complementary levels of analysis: one that takes into account the political and polemical issues related to this designation, and which has to do with the semantic struggles within a real-world conflict; and one related to the actual use of terrorism by the organization in question, for whom such action almost always features within a far larger repertoire of violent and non-violent political action, including propaganda, recruitment, financing, the creation of legal organizations, and guerrilla warfare. Without such distinctions, we run the risk of a sort of tautological attribution, attaching the label "terrorist" to any and all activities by those organizations designated as "terrorist"—typically on the basis of political criteria. This leads to a disastrous intellectual and practical impasse.

Finally, we can clearly see why, from this point of view, any scientific approach to terrorism must resolve around the questions of why, where, and when an organization (usually with insurgent ambitions) uses terrorism. What are the immediate and/or long-term results of this? And in what ways does it change the geopolitical and geostrategic situation in which all the actors involved in the conflict are engaged?

From this point of view, studying the SP and the associated literature is clearly valuable for terrorism studies. This requires a critical distance from discourses that limit themselves exclusively to this issue, which has led to a "Senderology" that is too often self-referential.[2] It also requires us to identify any potentially generalizable advances that research into the SP produces. This will allow us to formulate working hypotheses that enable a better understanding of terrorism in all its complexity, potentially leading to valid policy proposals to combat, not "terrorism"—because a word is not an enemy—, but the organizations, networks, and groups that use this form of political violence.

We now turn to recent works on the SP, using the criteria discussed above to put them into perspective.

Some Recent Contributions (of Varying Quality) to Our Understanding of the Shining Path

Research into organizations that use terrorism has produced a body of monographic works, offering materials of highly varying quality. This includes simple disinformation for the benefit of various interests, sensationalized

2 Similarly, "jihadology" is currently a thriving field. Its most visible representatives in the media typically describe themselves as terrorism experts, even though their contribution to the field (beyond providing valuable contextual references) is slim (Dory 2017a).

reporting, and—fortunately—some robust studies with valuable contributions. Unfortunately, both the disorganization that currently reigns in terrorism studies and the objective difficulties involved—both linguistic and practical, given the conditions of secrecy and clandestinity surrounding our object of study—have led to extreme diversity in methodologies. This makes it difficult to compare what we know about different organizations. But this should not stop us from drawing careful generalizations, as long as their empirical foundations are closely examined.

Concretely, it may be argued that any research into a so-called terrorist organization should be constructed around three main axes. The first is a firm grasp of its *history*, including the analysis of the geopolitical situation (internal and external) within which the organization emerged, the stages of its formation, the development of its ideology, its recruitment, and its relationships with other groups, including alliances, rivalries, and clashes. Historical research also requires us to examine the way in which the organization constructs its repertoire of political action (violent and/or non-violent) and to establish the role of terrorist action within this repertoire—where "terrorism" is not a derogatory exogenous description but designates the deliberate choice of a violent technique that meets the criteria described above.

Next, the *geographical characteristics* of the organization should be examined, using at least two complementary lines of inquiry. The first involves the spatial distribution of specifically terrorist actions, particularly in terms of a rural/urban divide, while taking into account the geographical characteristics (physical and human) of the territories involved. The second involves the location(s) of the organization, network, or wider movement, including its sanctuaries, support bases, zones of operation, the paths along which flows (of people, orders, weapons, money, etc.) circulate, and the at least approximate configuration of its underground network (including hiding places, accommodation, and contacts). The study of an organization like the SP, which has mostly been defeated, can clearly offer researchers far more information on the matter than that of groups that are still active.

The third and final dimension is one that is too often neglected: the systems and strategies used by the state to tackle the organization, understood as *counterterrorist and/or counterinsurgency policies*. Here, we must take into consideration the prevailing doctrines (generally stated in handbooks, access to which may be more or less restricted), legislation (such as repentance laws), the forces involved (army, police, intelligence, unconventional groups, and so on), and, if possible, any indicators of these policies' effectiveness.

As well as these three dimensions, which are essential for building a corpus of material for rigorous comparative research, another exercise can teach us a great deal: the evaluation of the role and status of the organization within the field of terrorism studies, which can be understood as a body of research (it can hardly be

called a discipline) whose conditions of production (in civil and military research centers, private and not-so-private businesses, and, more rarely, in universities) are often dependent on implicit political requirements.[3] We should take into account first and foremost databases, bibliographies, encyclopedias, and dictionaries, and potentially also anthologies, handbooks, and histories of terrorism.

Using this analytical framework, we can now assess some recent publications on the SP, not in general terms, but in terms of their value for understanding terrorism—that is, by relating them to the major works that provide, in some sense, a baseline for specialized research on the question.

Most recent contributions have looked at *the history of the Shining Path*. In particular, these include a new attempt at a general overview (Ríos and Sánchez 2018), which offers only a few novel contributions, in spite of the considerable number of sources and texts now accessible. To understand its scope, we can use the following periodization of the SP's history, at least as a working hypothesis:

1. *1960s–May 17, 1980*. Ideological and organizational construction of the SP.

2. *May 17, 1980–end of 1982*. Partial takeover of the rural Andes, centered on the Ayacucho region, through attacks on the (few) police stations in the area, and the selective assassination of local state officials and common law criminals. The Peruvian state, which was in the midst of a democratic transition, underestimated the insurgency. The police were tasked with repressing it but proved ill-equipped and poorly motivated. To a large extent, attempts to terrorize them succeeded.

3. *1983–mid-1980s*. The intervention of the army. Its approach was inadequate, and its practices sometimes amounted to state terrorism. The SP expanded toward the northern Andes, urban centers, and the coca/cocaine-producing zones of the Upper Huallaga Valley (a zone of *ceja de monte* in the eastern Andes, whose valleys are part of the Amazon system).

4. *1985–September 12, 1992*. The SP gradually loses influence in rural Andean regions, primarily because of peasant resistance. To a large extent, this involved the establishment of *rondas campesinas* with the support of the army, which was beginning to adopt counterinsurgency practices better suited to the nature of the conflict and the physical and human geography of the regions. At the same time, the SP's strategy of encircling cities by occupying the surrounding countryside led to an increase in its terrorist actions in cities, and especially in Lima. This period ended with the capture of Abimael Guzmán on September 12, 1992.

3 For an overview of English-language terrorism studies, see Schmid (2013). Studies in English far outweigh those in any other language in terms of volume.

5. *1992–2000*. Most SP combatants are captured or surrender, and the remainder of the movement fractures. The SP withdraws to the coca/cocaine-producing areas of the Upper Huallaga Valley and the VRAEM (*Valle de los Ríos Apurímac, Ene y Mantaro*). In 2000, the Fujimori presidency comes to an end.

6. *2000–present day*. Armed groups, derived to varying degrees from the SP, maintain a presence in areas heavily involved in drug trafficking. The MOVADEF (*Movimiento por la Amnistía y los Derechos Fundamentales*; Movement for Amnesty and Fundamental Rights) is created in 2009, with the intent to integrate the SP project into the Peruvian political system—unsuccessfully, for the moment.

This periodization allows us to better identify the contributions of the recent literature, which we evaluate primarily in relation to the groundbreaking works of McCormick (1987), Harmon (1992), and Palmer (1995), all of which laid the foundation for research into the role and functions of terrorism in the SP's practices. Ríos and Sánchez (2018) offer useful insights into the SP's origins, which will be particularly appreciated by non-specialists, but they neglect any deeper examination of the Maoist movement in Peru at the time—which was skillfully studied by Navarro (2010). Furthermore, they do not take sufficient account of the importance of revolutionary voluntarism of the SP's leadership, something well described by Palmer (2017). But it is clearly on the two most recent periods (roughly from 1992 onward) that the book sheds timely new light. It is particularly illuminating regarding MOVADEF, information about which is also available in Santillán (2017) and Salazar and Tamara (2011). All of these works reveal the SP's tactical flexibility, which enabled it to assume discourses and institutional forms adapted to the changing circumstances, while keeping intact the initial project, which was based on Marxism-Leninism-Maoism-*Gonzalo thought*. An article by Holmes (2015) also offers a useful factual approach to the period 2001–10. (Incidentally, Holmes' article displays the typical conceptual confusion between terrorism, guerrilla warfare, subversive violence, and/or civil war.)

In the background to this research, Strong's investigative reporting (1992) remains useful for understanding the political and social circumstances of the time. Similarly, the illuminating but theoretically flimsy monograph by Kirk (1993) offers an insight into the (considerable) role that women played in the SP. The article by Ron (2001) is far from a scientific study, but it helps somewhat to formulate the question of how the SP selected the targets of its violence—a topic that deserves closer study, looking at the places and moments of the insurgency.

The *geographical dimension* of the SP, which is crucial for understanding the organization, its actions, and the distinctive features of the insurgency it launched, has received little attention. This is in spite of a number of important contributions

that have laid the groundwork for a valuable reflection on the topic—one which, unfortunately, has not yet led to the construction of a problematic giving rise to a critical body of knowledge.

There are three main complementary approaches to the geography of terrorism: a) the spatial distribution of terrorist acts; b) the spatial characteristics of terrorist organizations, groups, and/or networks (or, more precisely, those that employ terrorist actions); c) the geographical analysis (both physical and human) of the territories used by various organizations to plan, prepare, and carry out terrorist acts. In addition to these three main elements, we add the geopolitical study of issues related to terrorism and debates around designating certain (localized) organizations as "terrorist."

The beginning of geographical research into the SP was marked by a remarkable article by Kent (1993), who demonstrated the expansion of the organization's zones of action by mapping the gradual establishment of areas under a state of emergency (i.e., those under military authority). Kent approached the spatial expansion of the SP both in terms of its own strategy (encircling and strangling cities by gaining control of the countryside) and the constraints imposed by Peru's varied geography. But his study has not (yet) been followed up by any research into the distribution of terrorist acts differentiated according to their methods (assassinations, bombings, sabotage, etc.) and their aims (selective assassination, propaganda, provocation of enemies or competitors, intimidation, and so on). Nonetheless, a number of works have contributed to geographical research on the SP, including that of Koc-Menard (2007), which tries to understand regional variations in SP control between 1980 and 1995 as a function of relative deprivation, the presence of competing political organizations, the local availability of funding, and the varying capabilities of counterinsurgency forces. Holmes (2015) uses a similar methodological approach to examine the conditions in two areas (Upper Huallaga Valley and the VRAEM) where surviving factions of the SP were active between 2001 and 2010, interacting closely with various actors involved in drug trafficking.

There are also a number of works squarely within the geography of terrorism that examine the split between the SP's rural and urban activities. While dated, the study by McCormick (1992) remains an essential point of reference, offering the foundations for a structured approach to the changing functions of the use of terrorism relative to the sites and stages of a process of insurgency. This issue—also the topic of an interesting work by Degregori (1991)—received further attention in the first half of the 1990s, with monographs focusing in particular on Ayacucho (Isbell 1994), Andahuaylas (Berg 1994), and the Upper Huallaga Valley (Gonzales 1994). The last of these regions closely resembles the Chapare, in Bolivia (Dory and Roux 1998), another coca/cocaine-producing region. The Chapare was home in the same period to political-syndicalist movements that had substantial poten-

tial for insurgency but that (with the exception of a few episodes) never turned to terrorism. Instead, using resources from drug trafficking and aid from NGOs, and thanks to the opening of the Bolivian political system, the leader of the *cocalero* movement, Evo Morales, won the presidency by legal means in 2005. We are not dealing here with a link between political organizations that use terrorism and drug-trafficking actors, as in Peru, but with the penetration of drug-trafficking actors into the very heart of the state. In any case, we need a deeper comparison between Peru and Bolivia—something that has already been sketched out by Toranzo Roca (1990)—if we are to do away with simplistic explanations attributing the causes of terrorism to poverty, frustration, "discrimination," or an absent state.[4]

Two studies on the urban aspects of SP propaganda, recruitment, and violence (particularly terrorist violence) deserve special attention. The first (Smith 1994) examines the industrial district of Ate Vitarte, strategically located to the east of the city of Lima, on the central road connecting the capital to the Andes, on which it relies for food, water, and electricity. As with Villa El Salvador—the subject of a remarkable study by Burt (1999)—it formed part of what the SP called the "iron belt" of shantytowns surrounding Lima, which was used to physically and politically suffocate the seat of central power by implementing the geostrategic principles of the Maoist "protracted people's war." The primary value of these works, beyond the local insight they provide, is the understanding they offer of the concrete mechanisms by which the SP infiltrated social fabrics that had been weakened by demographic growth, the economic crisis of the late 1980s, and above all the internal conflicts and divisions of the legal left, whose passive complicity, whether the result of blindness or opportunism, fostered the development of the SP, whose ultimate goals of "justice," "liberation," and so on were not incompatible with their own. This last point highlights the complexity of analyzing the political *breeding ground* (in this case, the parties and organizations of the Peruvian left), the potentially violent *movement* (initially Maoist, and also to a certain degree Guevarist once the MRTA took up arms[5]), and that section of the SP that would make up the *active core* that turned to terrorism. It also demonstrates the often-neglected role of local micropolitics, which heavily determine both the level of terrorist violence and its aims, which change depending on the receptivity of internal and/or external audiences. In this regard, Burt's excellent study of Villa El Salvador (a *barriada, or district,* south of Lima) is particularly illuminating. Her approach is based on a firm understanding of terrorism as part of a broader register of both violent and non-violent political action, located within an evolving geopolitical situation that must be understood at different levels (in this case, the local, the regional, and the national).[6]

4 Thorp et al. (2006) show the limits of explaining "political violence" using comparisons based on the historical dimension of ethnic movements.

5 The *Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru* (Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement), founded in 1982, turned to violence in 1984. It is famous for a large-scale hostage incident at the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima, which lasted from December 17, 1996, to April 22, 1997.

6 On the SP's penetration of Villa El Salvador, see the excellent film by Alberto Durant (1998), *Coraje* (available on YouTube).

The counterinsurgency has attracted fewer studies, but there are a number of excellent analytical works whose scope often goes beyond the Peruvian case. Several criteria can be used to distinguish between the successive phases of the state's response to the SP. Particularly important are the nature of the forces involved and the counterinsurgency/counterterrorist doctrines applied.

1. *A first phase (1980–82)* in which the new elected civilian government underestimated the insurgency (describing them as "criminals," "cattle thieves," etc.), and unsuccessfully tasked various police units with suppressing it.

2. *Beginning in late 1982*, the army intervened. Its approach was often brutal and indiscriminate (particularly as a result of poor intelligence), sometimes amounting to state (counter)terrorism. This helped the SP's recruitment. It was successful in some ways, however, including the largely spontaneous emergence of peasant self-defense mechanisms (the famous *rondas campesinas*), which radically changed the nature of the conflict.

3. *Toward the end of the 1980s*, the army learned some difficult lessons from the counterinsurgency, having initially been prepared only for conventional warfare. The period was punctuated by numerous scandals related to massacres, and led gradually to a change in approach, which came to emphasize protecting the population and turning them into allies in the fight against the SP.[7] At the same time, the intelligence services were rationalized and professionalized, enabling a more selective repression of the movement, and leading, most importantly, to the capture of Abimael Guzmán on September 12, 1992.

4. *Beginning in 1992*, the SP declined rapidly. Its withdrawal toward coca/cocaine-producing zones during the second half of the 1990s defined the broad shape of Peru's counterterrorist approach. So too did the amnesty law of May 1992, which gave the intelligence services valuable (although not always reliable) information. The country was characterized by institutional instability, which grew after 2000 and the end of Fujimori's presidency.

The development of Peru's counterinsurgency strategy cannot be isolated from the development of the SP itself, something too many researchers tend to forget. One useful approach to the topic is offered by Taylor (2017), who sheds light on current developments in drug-producing zones where more or less "orthodox" SP-derived groups still survive, and who offers a good critical overview of the earlier phases of the conflict. This follows on from another essential text by Taylor (1998), covering the period from 1980 to 1996. These texts can be supplemented by the overview by Bolívar (2002), written from the informed viewpoint of a spe-

7 Yaworsky (2009) describes a little-known attempt at psychological operations, which began in 1988 with the collaboration of the US Army.

cialist in Peru, and by the article by Burgoyne (2010), a member of the US Army, who widens the scope of the analysis by situating it within the "War on Terror" that has been in vogue since 2001. Starn (1993) gathers accounts from participants directly involved in the *rondas campesinas*, providing a first-hand perspective of this complex self-defense phenomenon, which was primarily carried out by peasants, and which, broadly speaking, has not yet been integrated into counterinsurgency doctrines. Degregori's monograph (1999) on the *rondas* in the Ayacucho region demonstrates the major role they played in the defeat of the SP in the south central region of the Andes, even before Guzmán's capture in 1992.[8]

The Place of the Shining Path in Terrorism Studies

As we have seen, research into the SP over the last three decades has produced a body of work of varying robustness. Nonetheless, it is rich in lessons for any researcher attempting to approach terrorism by analyzing the diversity of its manifestations.

It is interesting, then, to examine the place that the SP occupies in the field (we hesitate to call it a discipline) of terrorism studies.[9] To do so, we offer a rapid overview of three resources that should be indispensable for any specialized research into terrorism: databases, bibliographies, and reference works (directories, encyclopedias, and dictionaries).

Databases. We are not interested here in the history of these databases, which came into existence around 1968, or in the range of topics they cover. (They were initially limited to "international" terrorism, eventually becoming more general.) But we cannot ignore the conditions of their production, and particularly their dependence on open, primarily journalistic sources, or the fact that they are funded by bodies linked, to varying degrees, to states and governments (primarily the United States, Israel, and, to a lesser extent, the United Kingdom) engaged in (often selective) combats against entities defined as "terrorist" on the basis of criteria that, as we have seen, are often more polemical than scientific.[10] Given all of this, it is interesting to examine the SP's place within some of the most important databases that have offered empirical material for countless research works published since the last third of the twentieth century. We make no claim to be exhaustive, something that would go beyond the scope of the present text, and we will limit ourselves to a few observations that will be enough to a useful insight.

8 This important point lies at the center of an interpretative debate on the place of the *rondas* in the SP's defeat. An echo of this can be found in the fascinating account given by one of its leaders, Elena Yparraguirre, recorded in prison by Zapata (2016).

9 For a rapid overview of the current state of terrorism studies, see Schuurman (2018).

10 For an initial overview of the range of available databases and their advantages and drawbacks, see Schmid (2013, 294–340) and Bowie (2017).

For *international terrorism, we use two sources*: Mickolus et al. (1989a; 1989b), which provided the material for the ITERATE database (International Terrorism: Attributes of Terrorist Events) for the period 1980–87; and the RAND database (Gardela and Hoffman 1988) for 1987, which will serve as a trial year.

- Mickolus et al. contains 38 actions attributed to the SP between 1980 and 1987 (including 6 in 1987). Because they were "international," the main function of these incidents was to gain publicity. They consisted of attacks (typically using bombs or dynamite) against foreign embassies and businesses, with little or no loss of life. In the profile that emerges, the SP is grouped with other "anti-imperialist" organizations like the MRTA. This offers nothing to specify what is distinctive about the SP, as only a very small portion of its activity is noted.

- RAND also reports 6 actions for 1987, of which only 3 are shared with Mickolus et al. This fact offers a small-scale illustration of the persistent problems of selectivity, completeness, and homogeneity in the databases used as the empirical basis for much terrorism research.

For *terrorism in general*, we consult Cline (1982), which offers a chronology for 1981, including about 20 incidents in Peru from September onward. This source is particularly revealing of the uncertainty about attributing incidents from the very beginning of the insurgency to the SP. These nonetheless reveal the beginnings of its rise to power.

The most comprehensive, easily accessible general database is certainly the GTD (Global Terrorism Database), which is produced by the START (Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism) consortium and hosted at the University of Maryland. It has close ties to the US government.[11] An advanced query (on June 23, 2018) using the most restrictive criteria (excluding all ambiguous cases and failed attacks) offers the following results:

- Between 1980 and 2016, 3,920 incidents were listed across all categories. The overwhelming majority of these occurred between 1980 and 1994.

- For 1987, our test year, there are 464 acts identified as terrorist. Among these, 55% were bomb/dynamite attacks (N=258), 21% were armed attacks (typically guerrilla attacks targeting the police and/or army), and 15% were assassinations (of civilians, civil servants, elected representatives, police officers, soldiers, and so on). There are only a few entries in the other categories (hostage-takings, attacks on infrastructure), which may be surprising, given the importance of sabotage, particularly of electrical infrastructure, to the SP's activity.

11 This is easily accessible, and at no cost, at www.start.umd.edu.

We can evaluate the START data comparatively, using a chronology produced by a Peruvian non-governmental research center for the period 1980–88 (DESCO 1989: 65–249). This offers some surprises. DESCO records only 108 incidents for 1987: less than a quarter of the number given by START. However, the description of the incidents is sufficiently precise[12] for us to discriminate between:

- Terrorist actions: 62 cases (57.5%).
- Guerrilla actions: 11 cases (10%).
- Mixed terrorist-guerrilla actions: 15 cases (14%).
- MRTA actions: 7 cases (6.5%).
- Others: 13 cases (12%).

Such analysis has a clear value when we are trying specifically to study the role and functions of terrorist actions, in that it distinguishes them from other activities in the SP's repertoire of action. Furthermore, it allows us to raise questions about the consistency of databases like that of START on matters of terrorism. These databases offer little descriptive information to distinguish clearly between, for instance, guerrilla warfare and terrorism, or to understand the different functions of terrorist actions in relation to the situation motivating them.

To go a little further, we can use an even smaller subsample: the incidents recorded for a random month. For July 1987, the databases report the following:

- START: 43 incidents, of which 7 (16%) related to guerrilla warfare and 36 (84%) to terrorism.
- DESCO: 5 incidents, all terrorist.

For the same month, Mickolus et al. reported no international terrorist incidents, and RAND reported only one. Even more striking, however, is the discrepancy between the data offered by START and DESCO, which undoubtedly has various causes. Of the 5 cases in DESCO, only 1 is also found in START, which gives a different number of deaths (3 in START and 4 in DESCO) and a one-day difference in date. Such discrepancies in the data, which are not limited to the SP, should encourage a great deal of prudence when using the statistics about "terrorism" from these sources (also distorted by the small numbers involved). The case of the SP leads us to a more general problem about "terrorism" databases, the main elements of which are discussed in the very useful article by Sheehan (2012).

12 The criteria used are: (a) *Terrorist actions*: explosions intended to create publicity, assassinations of civilians (particularly peasants) and authorities with the aim of intimidation, sabotage of infrastructure, etc.; (b) *Guerrilla actions*: assassinations and armed attacks against military and police (often in order to gain control of land); (c) *Mixed terrorist-guerrilla actions*: assassinations and attacks on members of *rondas campesinas* and other self-defense bodies organized in part by the army; (d) *MRTA actions*, used here as contextual data; (e) *Others*: information on arrests, escapes, denunciations, propaganda activities, etc.

Bibliographies on terrorism allow us to assess the importance accorded to an organization by the (partially) scientific community dedicated to terrorism studies. Their thematically selective and almost exclusively English-speaking nature limits their value for studying the SP. Nonetheless, they demonstrate that the SP is relatively marginal within terrorism studies. Taking into account only those bibliographies published since 1980,[13] we note that the SP has a substantial presence in Lakos (1986), with 14 entries (out of 5,622); meanwhile, Ontiveros (1986), published in the same year, does not mention the SP at all. Over the next two decades, we find a few scattered references to the SP: Mickolus and Flemming (1988) include 5 entries on the SP, out of 81 entries on Latin America; Babkina (1998) contains 3 entries; Forest et al. (2006) contains only 1 entry exclusively on the SP, among 5 entries on Peru. This brief examination of the bibliographies gives the impression that the SP has been treated primarily as an exotic phenomenon. Scholars had to know of its existence, but it did not deserve more detailed research outside the (very small) circle of "Senderologists." This is particularly the case because the SP was never seen as a genuine threat to the security of the United States and/or Israel, and its insurgency was therefore seen as an internal problem for Peru. To better appreciate the role of the SP in the development of scientific reflection and research on terrorism, we should look at other sources that complement these bibliographies.

Directories of (so-called) terrorist groups are primarily meant to be indicative and descriptive, but it is not always possible to clearly identify the reasons for including a given organization in these lists. We may omit the list of foreign terrorist organizations established by the United States Department of State since 1997, where the political/polemical criteria are evident. The question arises frequently for the directories of Janke (1983) and Rosie (1987), and in the remarkable catch-all list in chapter 6 of Schmid (2013: 341–442), which supposedly contains somewhere between 3,900 (p. 344) and over 6,400 names (p. 341). In concrete terms, should we simply recognize the fact that an organization—in this case, the SP—has been labelled "terrorist," for whatever reasons, and to provide the corresponding reference? Or do we need to justify this inclusion, by demonstrating and explaining the group's use of terrorism, either exclusively (which is very rare) or as a technique of political violence used in certain circumstances that we must then describe? The second approach is the only one that would make these tools genuinely indispensable for terrorism research, but it does not seem to have been given serious consideration. In the case of the SP, Janke (p. 505), as well as mentioning its Maoist origins, describes its different modes of operation, but without distinguish-

13 Bibliographies focused specifically on terrorism began to appear in the 1970s, and particularly after 1975, primarily as internal administrative documents responding to the needs of various branches of the US government. The first academic works appeared in 1980. A series of volumes followed, of varying scope and quality, until 2006. From 2007, in order to deal with the vast quantity of specialist and non-specialist literature, thematic bibliographic updates have been published periodically in *Perspectives on Terrorism* (online journal).

ing clearly between its guerrilla and terrorist activity. For his part, Rosie (1987) dispenses with the SP in a dozen lines of commonplaces. Ashley (2012) offers a more detailed historical treatment, but without justifying the terrorist character of certain SP actions that do not summarize all their activities.

Similar observations can be made about *dictionaries* on terrorism. As in encyclopedias, these typically contain an entry on "terrorism"; if we look beyond their prevailing conceptual instability, these should enable us to assess the criteria used in selecting the material. Anderson and Sloan (2002) is among the most used dictionaries. Despite some factual errors, the SP receives a solid historical treatment—albeit one that makes little mention of ... terrorism. Thackrah (2004) does not give the SP an entry of its own, instead offering a factual treatment in the article "Peru." Wright-Neville (2010) contains a thin historical overview of no theoretical substance. Banegas's Spanish-language dictionary (2004: 515–18) contains a more detailed overview of the history and strategy of the SP, but does not describe what about it warrants the label of terrorism.

Finally, *encyclopedias* should be among the specialist reference works that are most able to provide conceptual and theoretical contributions. These are, after all, encyclopedias on *terrorism*, rather than works on violence, guerrilla warfare, or revolutions (which exist elsewhere). Once again, however, the results are disappointing. Although Crenshaw and Pimlott (1997) present good historical and strategic information about both the SP's insurgency and the Peruvian state's counterinsurgency, (discussed in two separate articles), once again, the question of what is distinctive about terrorism—a question we believe to be central—is hardly broached. There is almost nothing to say about the entry on the SP in Combs and Slann (2007), which focuses primarily on ideological generalities. This is in contrast with the excellent analysis by Baud (2009: 1030–40), which genuinely focuses on terrorism. The section on the SP in Martin (2011), which primarily offers a historical summary, constantly confuses guerrilla warfare and terrorism. Similar remarks could be made about Chalk, 2013, vol. 2), which contains an unsatisfying entry on the SP.

This rapid overview of the representation of the SP in some of the main resources available to terrorism studies researchers confirms the marginal presence of this organization within the field, which has been heavily dominated since its inception by incidents related to the Middle East and, since the turn of the century, by jihadist Islamism. The result has been an unfortunate narrowing in recent decades of the empirical domain used for theoretical reflections on terrorism. This has significant practical consequences, particularly regarding the difficulty of integrating terrorism within the processes of insurgency in which it often participates.

Conclusion

Rather than attempting to undertake a general overview of the SP or the literature dedicated it, this article has emphasized three main points.

Firstly, we have demonstrated the current state of specialist research into the SP, whose importance for terrorism studies, and particularly for understanding the role of terrorism within the sequential logic of an insurgency (Dory 2017b), is underappreciated. This is unfortunate from a scientific point of view, and difficult to understand—that is, until we recognize how dependent terrorism studies (and its international influence) still is on a polemical dimension dictated by the global geopolitical situation (which has shifted, principally, from the Cold War to the post-2001 "War on Terror"), and especially that in the Middle East. In this context, the SP never presented a "global" danger. While the SP has a heavy handicap in terms of polemical, media, and scientific visibility, it is far from insignificant. On the contrary, having been responsible for at least 35,000 deaths between 1980 and 2000—among the 70,000 who died during the insurgency it launched—,[14] the SP is undoubtedly one of the deadliest groups to have used insurgent terrorism in history. For almost two decades, its actions had a vast impact on the political, economic, and social life of an entire country, and caused substantial concern among its immediate neighbors, especially Bolivia. Lessons from this period should be taken seriously by researchers, particularly those interested in a scientific reflection on the uses and functions of terrorism. This leads us to the following point.

Secondly, as demonstrated above, the attentive analysis of the SP's use of terrorism—via different methods depending on the time and place—highlights an insurgency that is certainly original but that can easily be integrated into a comparative study, which should enable a deepening and a broadening of the general framework of terrorism studies. The case of the SP offers researchers a vast body of data on a) the conditions under which a heavily ideological political organization turns to violence[15]; b) the structure, organization, and leadership methods of a group engaged in a "protracted people's war"; c) the relationship between an active terrorist core and a movement (in this case, Peruvian Maoism), a breeding ground (the various parties, associations, and NGOs of the Peruvian left), and a demographic potential (the general population viewed according to different ethnic, geographical, economic, and other variables); d) the typology of terrorist acts and their respective functions in variable contexts (particularly urban/rural);

14 These figures come from the final report (2003) of the *Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación* (Truth and Reconciliation Commission), established in 2001. Its methodology, ideological biases, and conclusions were all bitterly debated. Our use of the figures is purely indicative, aiming to give an idea of the scale of the impact of the SP's actions. The organization was far more lethal than most of the so-called terrorist organizations that currently draw all the attention among politicians and in the media.

15 This theme was initially explored by Weinberg (1991) in particular, who made explicit reference to the SP.

e) the differing effectiveness of the counterinsurgency responses implemented by the Peruvian state over the course of the successive phases of their confrontation with the SP; f) the causes and modalities of the SP's collapse after 1992; g) the SP's relationship with drug trafficking before and after 1992, and so on.

The least that can be said is that, for the moment, the lessons that can be drawn from studying the SP have been very much neglected by scientific research specialized on terrorism. On the one hand, the result of this is a persistent difficulty in understanding why other similarly ideological organizations rooted in Islamist movements and backgrounds turn to terrorism. The role of this recourse to terrorism within an insurgency should be closely studied. On the other hand, a better understanding of phenomena like the SP would likely prevent many "discoveries" on terrorism by "jihadologists" from being seen to involve unprecedented realities that can only be compared with one another, in a recurrent self-referential logic. This is not to diminish the importance of research into Islamism. But it should be situated in its proper place—which is not necessarily terrorism studies, a field with its own domain and conditions of production.[16]

Thirdly, and following on from the previous considerations, the careful analysis of the SP is likely to help to build genuine expertise on terrorism.[17] This would go beyond its immediate manifestations (over the last two decades in Europe, for instance) and would use a larger basis of empirical knowledge to interpret—and potentially integrate into a sequential logic—series of events that appear as both "weak signals" (mostly involving petty crime) and very strong ones (successful attacks).

Some paths forward for such an approach are suggested by the article by Englund and Stohl (2016). This is despite the limitations to their attempt to offer a broad comparison of the SP and Islamic State, rather than to try to understand the role of terrorism in their respective registers of action. It is through sustained research in this latter direction that we will have the best opportunity of achieving a scientific understanding of terrorism and constructing firm hypotheses about its future manifestations. From this perspective, the immense empirical resource that the SP represents should finally be used.

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16 For further remarks on this point, see our review of Mathieu Guidère's *Atlas du terrorisme islamiste* (Dory 2017a).

17 On the concept of expertise and the conditions under which it is valid, see Raufer (2012: 204–7).

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