

Forces of Fragmentation: Violence and the Crisis of the Peruvian State

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“The main subject [of my speech] is terrorism because it affects life, advances death, and wreaks destruction. I am sure that there are other issues that worry us- injustice, inflation, wages, foreign exchange. However, if we were free of the day-to-day dread of violence and death, we would be better able to deal with these problems”¹

- Alan García Pérez, state of the union speech given July 28, 1988.

¹ Pérez et al. 1988, p. 1.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The present paper is an inquiry as to what were the political processes set in motion in the Peruvian Andes when the insurgency led by the Communist Party of the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) of Peru took hold of the region. The particular puzzle that I wish to address is not the underlying factors that caused the surge of cancerous violence and generalized terror of the 1980s. What concerns us are the particular dynamics that leads a society to integrate and fragment, hold itself together or fall apart. Thus the title “forces of fragmentation.” In other words, what holds and divides a society? In answering this question, we will find out that although the notion of a society is a particularly nebulous one, the answer to the question is one that is based primarily on politics, or more precisely, political organization. Furthermore there is an instructive aspect to this inquiry: how can the case of the insurgency movement of the Sendero Luminoso in Peru instruct us, given its remarkable resolution?

Now, when I use the term society one must keep in mind that I am addressing a particular sphere of society that is far from exhaustive: individuals and their respective communities, which in the case of the Peruvian Andes, largely corresponded to the peasant communities sparsely distributed across the “sierra,” most particularly the department of Ayacucho. The choice of this particular department is justified by the fact that it was the birthplace of the Sendero and the one where violence was the most acute: according to the CVR (Truth and Reconciliation Committee commissioned by the Peruvian government) it was the one where the most deaths occurred during the period of 1980-2003. Furthermore, the transformations that occurred along this department, what is to be called the Centro-Sur Andino (Center-south of the Andes), are

especially relevant to the scope of analysis of this paper, which will seek to address the particular problem of fragmentation and integration of a society. The particular dynamics of violence, communal organization, armed intervention provide us with a case study rich in its implications and potential lessons.

What I shall endeavor to achieve is the conscious application of differing social theories as to the particular problem of “social order,” and how in the context of civil war it is maintained... or lost. In other words, I shall use an argument presented in *The Problem of Order* by Dennis H. Wrong, on specifically what unites and divides society, and how such forces of fragmentation and integration are central to any theory that wishes to address not only the particular dynamics that hold a society stable, but also what transforms it. Certainly, one must bear in mind that society is far from a unitary concept, needless to say, nor is it a notion impervious to polemic. Nevertheless, it is necessary to stress that in addressing this particular theoretical puzzle, the subject-matter only allows a certain degree of precision. In analyzing society, the foci of analysis shall be the Peruvian state, the peasant communities that populate the rural lands of the Andes, and the Sendero Luminoso guerrilla group. Hopefully that shall not detract from the main argument presented in the paper.

The following can be initially taken as its thesis: in the case of generalized violence in the Peruvian Andes, the exercise of generated violence, generated by the political actor Sendero Luminoso and the counter-revolutionary forces of the Peruvian army, first broke society apart and then brought it back together. Taken as it is, such an argument is perplexing. But I shall clarify it further.

The exercise of violence itself is not a force that only fragments society. The process of the “gale of creative destruction” as put forth by Joseph Schumpeter in *Capitalism, Socialism*

and Democracy, though appropriated from an economic perspective, proves remarkably insightful in describing the ambivalent role played by destructive violence in the conflict of the Sendero Luminoso. It stresses the transformative and generative aspect of organized violence. After all, in order to execute violence, especially in a large scale and for a prolonged period of time, it is necessary to have a remarkable degree of organization by the actors perpetrating violence. This is made clear by the significant degree of organization observed within insurgency movements, and the equally necessary degree of organization, discipline and structure of command necessary in the counter-insurgency movement.. This administrative structure – or more accurately – structure of command, is one that cannot operate within a fragmented society. Its first attempt is to eliminate the forces of dissension, and to bring the respective actors necessary under the discipline of a hierarchical structure of command that will operate in unity and consensus with a certain will, whether such consensus will be voluntarily or forcefully built.

It shall be argued that in the context of generalized violence and the lack of counter-insurgency capacity of the armed forces of Peru, the peasant communities, that had already available to them a significant degree of organizational cohesion, responded to the crisis by militarizing themselves, firstly on their own, later with the tacit consent and support of the Peruvian armed forces. The unexpected resilience of this military organizational capacity of the peasant communities, what later came to be called the *rondas campesinas* (peasant patrols) demonstrate the remarkable degree of integration that occurred within tightly bound peasant communities. In the context of fragmentation of Peruvian society in the Centro-Sur Andino, the reaction by this particular society was remarkable to the extent that such “rondas” were organized largely in the ambit of these particular communities and their allegiance to the armed forces, but not the state. By now, one should have understood that there are significant

similarities between the argument being framed in this section and a particular giant in European social thought: Thomas Hobbes.

In order to fully articulate the problematic with which I am engaging, therefore, I shall frame it thus: how, in the context of generalized violence, analogous but not identical to Hobbes' "war of all against all," was Peruvian society within the geographical space of the "sierra" able to reverse this situation, and achieve order? In other words, what were the particular forces of fragmentation (violence, and its effects) and the counter-acting forces of integration that collided, and how come the latter, if not absolute winner, ultimately came to prevail relative to the other? For the resolution of the condition of "war of all against all," as has been so often framed as being the particular problem in the establishment of any form of society, is not "natural". In order to pacify relations between individuals in a society or, more accurately in the case of Peru, the particular groups that were most active (the Sendero Luminoso, the Armed Forces, the Peasant Communities) within that particular time and locality, it is clear that the initial integrative force, the exercise of organized violence through the institution of *rondas campesinas*, that eventually came to resolve the conflict was that generated by the peasant communities themselves.

It is not surprising that a significant amount of literature has been dedicated to the problem of resolving civil strife as generated by insurrection movements such as the Sendero Luminoso. However, I believe that this paper can contribute to the existing literature in its attempt to synthesize what I identify as being the particular solution to the fragmentation of Peruvian society. While it has been argued before that the *rondas campesinas* played a prominent role in the solution of the crisis, a more elaborate argument as to how precisely these *rondas* transformed the socio-political landscape of these communities and transformed what

Theidon calls the “constellation of power” of the Peruvian Andes is a story far from exhausted.² It will be argued that as a response to the integration of these peasant communities, both the Sendero Luminoso and the Peruvian army saw themselves in the need to adjust to the changing reality and the relations of power. The Sendero became acutely aware of the necessity to break down such *rondas* but was ultimately unsuccessful; the Peruvian army, after overcoming initial suspicions, saw in them particularly valuable allies in the fight against the Sendero. The element of internal cleansing within the communities and therefore internal consolidation of the peasant community shall also be discussed.

Furthermore, the role played by such *rondas campesinas* highlighted not only the weakness of the Peruvian state par rapport its capacity to establish order by eliminating violence, but also what further became clearer as the crisis unfolded was that the process of crisis resolution was to be left in the hands of the armed forces and the peasant communities alone, eliminating the possibility of any form of democratic deliberation in the process. Indeed, from apathy and indifference in the period of 1980-82, the recently democratic Peruvian state came to relinquish complete control over the so-called “emergency zones” to the armed forces in December 1982. To say that the armed forces were under control and acted strictly under the orders of the Peruvian state is absurd. This was simply not the case. So what happened? This is the interesting dynamic: from the absence of the state in the Andes, came the incorporation of the primarily state function of the protection of the citizenry in the hands of tightly bound peasant communities organized around the existence of *rondas campesinas* and, indeed, made possible by such. Thus, what happens is that in response to the fragmentation of the state and society through violence, we observe the formation of so-called mini-states, highly organized peasant

² See Theidon (2006) and Degregori (1993, 1988), and Starn (1995)

communities disposing of a military institution to ensure its preservation from foes within Peru. It is not difficult to see that this could prove highly problematic to any national state.

It is also necessary here to emphasize the weakness of the Peruvian state, not only due to its lack of organizational penetration to the Peruvian Andes, but also as a result of the external debt crisis that erupted in 1982. A combination of rampant inflation, the necessity to pay interest payments on the debt, and the difficulty of access to credit were external constraints not only to the actions of the Peruvian state, but also its legitimacy par rapport its population. The Sendero was quite sensitive to that reality and did not fail to claim the Peruvian state to be a mere puppet of “imperialist powers,” an argument not uncommon along Latin American countries that faced themselves with the obligation to adopt austerity measures in order to access conditional loans from the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and the Paris Club. The economic instability generated as a result (and also as a cause for) the external debt crisis had a profound impact on both the Peruvian state’s legitimacy and also put great constraints on its budget. This inevitably had a negative impact in its ability to address the instability generated by the Sendero Luminoso

The cycle of violence and death generated by the antagonistic forces of both the Sendero Luminoso and the Peruvian army only stabilized when the mutual interdependence between the interests of the armed forces and the Andean peasant communities was explicitly articulated and effective action was taken in order for that crucial partnership between the army and its population to occur. Ultimately, the realization by the army that its effort alone would not resolve the crisis was indispensable, and contributed weapons and organizational tactics to the local peasants, it was able to effectively thwart efforts by the Sendero to establish independent polities of its own in the Andes. Peasant communities, while in their vast majority highly localized and isolated from one another, had already been long consolidated within their locality.

These communities, though not immune to change in a political or economic sense, were understandably highly averse to any form of violence threatening their survival. Given the necessity to protect their existence in the face of an antagonistic actor such as the Sendero, these communities began to actively seek the support of the armed forces based in the sierra. And this proved decisive. Yet inevitably, from the necessity of protection there came other problems regarding administrative issues, the execution of justice, the implementation of law: these are essentially political questions that were taken over by the armed forces and, more relevant to this paper, the *rondas*.

It is not a universal argument that can be generally applied to every particular locality within the Centro-Sur of the Peruvian Andes. As has been pointed out by other scholars, it is possible that the attention paid by the central government (sometimes in cooperation with the armed forces) of Peru to underprivileged communities through economic and political assistance could have played a role in resolving the crisis. Indeed, this is apparently what seems to be most emphasized in the literature on the Peruvian crisis of the Sendero Luminoso, which sees primarily in the widespread poverty and misery of the peasant communities a motive for their uprising, both the peasants' and the Sendero's.³ Yet the question of timing is crucial: while these areas were relatively poor and had lower income per capita as compared to other regions of Peru, it does not explain the particular timing of the crisis in 1980s. Furthermore, it is hardly necessary to say that one of the difficulties faced by such a position is that structural factors such as widespread poverty provide a favorable environment, but not the spark necessary to generate organized violence. Poverty, while providing us with the background landscape for the brutal war waged between the Sendero and Peruvian society, does not explain to us the rise of divisive

³ See Olarte (1991), Palmer (1986), or McClintock (1984)

violence nor its later resolution: to claim that the eradication of poverty is necessary to the elimination of violence is hardly a credible one and does not stand the test of empirical analysis.

As has often been noted before, violence directed against a common foe can be an extremely powerful generator of solidarity between different groups, in this context, between the peasantry and, from an external point of view, the army and the peasantry. This is not to say, however, that these interests aligned completely during the war nor were they completely aligned since the very beginning. There was a strong mistrust between the two that was only overcome after a long period of struggle. Mutual contempt and the indiscriminate killing of peasants by the armed forces were hardly conducive to any form of allegiance between these two unlikely allies. Nevertheless, the foundation for such alliance could have perhaps been laid before, with the military dictatorship of general Velasco in the late 1960s. A populist military dictator, he implemented the most ambitious program of land reform in South America, eliminating previous structures of the hacienda (large plots of lands owned by a few farmers) and redistributed it to these small peasant communities, which then became communities of small landowners. The time gap was sufficiently small for there to be some memory of these previous policies in the mind of the peasant communities.

The remarkable resilience of these peasant communities and their ability to organize themselves strategically in a context of war is admirable, and a story that certainly will resonate as we now observe the dramatic changes occurring in the region of the Peruvian Andes since the mid-1990's. Forces of integration, firstly military, but now expanding to other human activities, such as trade, education, migration and commerce are the engines of economic and political development in the region. What was once an isolated and forgotten emptiness in Peru is now an

intertwining hub of human activity. Thirty years ago this would have been unimaginable. How we got from there and then, to here and now, is the puzzle this paper seeks to solve.

In Chapter 2, I will formulate a theoretical framework with which to engage the problem of social order, taking two major thinkers as a starting point: Thomas Hobbes and Max Weber. We shall engage with the conception of sovereignty and how it relates to the exercise of violence, a relationship that will be central to understanding the argument of this paper.

Chapter 2

Social Order and Fragmentation

The solution to the problem of social order

In order to understand the central problem of the fragmentation of a society, it is necessary to highlight the particular dimensions which shall be analyzed in this paper. While there are limitations as to the breadth of analysis possible within the scope of this paper, I shall emphasize a few dimensions that I believe to be key in articulating the problem of fragmentation and its possible (if not certain) resolution.

The first one is one concerned with the political dimension of fragmentation and one that can only be understood appropriately when we engage with a satisfactory notion of the state. For the purposes of this paper, it is more relevant to deal with the state as primarily a social institution responsible for the establishment of order in society. Therefore, the purpose of the state is to pacify relations between the individuals (and social groups) it seeks to govern. Certainly, this is not an exhaustive definition, nor one that can satisfactorily provide us with a vast array of analytical tools, nevertheless it gives us the focus necessary to examine this paper's puzzle. It suffices to say, that given the focus of this initial section on conflict and its possible resolution, the variable with which we shall engage is primarily violence, its possibility and control by the state. To the extent that the state is capable of controlling violence it can successfully lay claim to integrity: in other words, to the extent that social groups can exercise violence against one another and, perhaps more importantly, against the state, it is clear that the state is fragmenting.

If we take Max Weber as our starting point, taking upon the definition of the modern state in his *Politics as a Vocation* we shall first engage with the notion of the state as seeking to obtain a monopoly of legitimate violence.⁴

For Max Weber, “the state is the form of human community that (successfully) lays claim to the monopoly of legitimate physical violence within a particular territory”⁵. It is important to note that, for Weber, violence is not the “normal or only means available to the state,” however it is the “means specific to the state.”⁶ Violence is an instrument of exercising power, where power is defined as “the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance.”⁷ Therefore, it becomes necessary to highlight the possibility of violence to be exercised by the state in order to ensure that the population engages in (or refrains from) the form of social action that the state wishes it to. This particular insight as to the instrumental purpose of violence is one that shall later be seen to be crucial as an organizing principle in society. Violence was highly valued by the Sendero, the armed forces, and later the peasant communities themselves (through the rondas) as a tool to organize society guided by a specific purpose.

Therefore, for Weber violence is not an end to the purposes of the state, but an instrument used in order to regulate and govern human action within the scope of its territory. Now, it is necessary to point out that for Weber, the state “lays claim,” and not merely exercises physical violence in order to govern individuals. It is important also to note that the notion of “legitimacy,” and “legitimate violence” are tightly bound within Weber’s theoretical framework, which gives a significant degree of flexibility and sophistication in his understanding of the claim to legitimate

⁴ Weber, pp. 2.

⁵ Ibid, p. 32

⁶ Ibid, p. 33

⁷ Ibid, p. 35

violence of the state. For Weber, the state is not monopolizing physical violence in a vacuum, but rather seeking to, from the standpoint of the society it is seeking to govern, legitimately lay claim to do so. In this sense, he is challenging the notion of a purely repressive state that is acting independently of the society it wishes to govern, standing over and above it, vertically imposing from top-to-bottom its particular laws and policies. There must be a significant degree of identification between the state's purposes and that of the society that it is seeking to control.

Now let us return to the notion of the modern state: it is for Weber a "human community." This aspect is particularly important, and one that has been remarkably neglected when the analytical focus is on the disciplinary instruments of the state and its use of violence, a strand that has benefited particularly from the insights of Michel Foucault's towering *Discipline and Punish*. Nevertheless, the notion of a "form of human community" is central to the analysis of this paper. It is important to note that the form of a community can be based on several things, whether it be a democratic assembly, a monarchical regime, an oligarchical despotism and so forth. But in the particular case of the crisis of the Sendero and the peasant communities, it shall be noted that instead of a traditional form of the state in the liberal tradition, democratically elected, we shall have a state that is basically the "ronda campesina," that is based on a significant degree on coercion and the enforcement of certain laws and regulations that are not put forth in deliberation. In other words, the Peruvian state is supplanted (or more appropriately, the absence of the Peruvian state is filled by) the military structure of the *ronda campesina*. We shall analyze this further later in the paper.

Now, given that the *ronda campesina* provides a "form of human community" analogous to the state, monopolizing legitimate violence over a particular territory, how was it generated? In this, perhaps the thinker that can provide us with the greatest insight is Thomas Hobbes in his

magnificent work *Leviathan*. Unfortunately, given the constraints of this paper, I will not engage to its fullest extent with the theoretical underpinnings of Hobbes' claim for the necessity of absolute power of the sovereign, or the particular (and brilliant) logic in his argument for the coeval rise of sovereignty and order. For the purposes of this paper, it is necessary to focus on the element of conflict resolution in Hobbes theoretical framework, one that understandably is not perfectly applicable to the case of Peru in the 1980s, but one which is illuminating. We shall engage with the notion that the state is established in order to resolve the war of all against all and avert its disastrous misery. In other words, for Hobbes the creation of a state is the solution to the problem of social order in the particular dimension of violence.

For Hobbes, the natural condition of mankind is a "warre, as is of every man, against every man." (185) Here it is important to note that Hobbes makes a strong claim that in the absence of any form of sovereignty, and given his particular assumptions on human nature (rational and endless maximization of self-interest, atomization, moral subjectivism) that individuals will engage with (or constantly have the possibility of) violence, and face the possibility of death. Life will be, indeed, nasty, brutish and short. However, this has not to be the context under which individual lives shall be perpetually effaced under an endless cycle of death and violence. The answer to the problem of how the cycle of violence shall be broken is one, for Hobbes, that is essentially political. The creation of a Leviathan is the solution to the problem of generalized violence, insofar as it permits the removal of conflict from the sphere of society by the absolute concentration of power in one particular sovereign. And for Hobbes, "the only way to erect such a Common Power...is, to conferre all their power and strength upon one Man, or upon one Assembly of men, that may reduce all their Wills, by plurality of voices, unto one Will." (227) This sovereign has the "Authoritie, given by him by every particular man in the Common-

Wealth, he hath the use of so much Power and Strength conferred on him.” (227) The purpose of this state is in particular to preserve the security and peace of the subjects, so much so, that if it is unable to do so, Hobbes concedes that the subjects are free to subject themselves to another sovereign who is capable of doing so.

The stress upon the protective element of the state is one that is particularly important in the context of generalized violence. Indeed, the notion of protection from violence and oppression is a central element in Hobbes’ theory. The following passage highlights this dynamic to its fullest extent: “Feare of oppression, disposeth a man to anticipate, or to seek ayd by society : for there is no other way by which a man can secure his life and liberty.”⁸ For Hobbes, one of the important elements in leading to the formation of any form of society is the fear of oppression, fear of the exercise of violence by more powerful individuals. This is intuitively obvious and in particular a dynamic that is prevalent in contexts of civil war such as the crisis of the Sendero in Peru. As the peasant communities became apprehensive of the oppression of either the armed forces or the Sendero, they sought to “seek ayd by society,” but in their case, such a society was already existing: the peasant community. This particular form of human community came together, often with neighboring communities, to organize itself around the principle of self-preservation and freedom of oppression, generating the highly militarized *rondas campesinas* in order to achieve these twin goals. Here the distinction between the state and the military power of a community seems to apparently collapse into one, but perhaps in the context of generalized war, such remarkable degree of cohesion between the two is inevitable.

It is important to note that some of the elements in Hobbes definition of the “common power” of the sovereign are indeed similar to those put forth by Weber. To confer all power and strength to the sovereign is effectively to grant it a monopoly over physical violence, insofar as it

⁸ Hobbes, pp. 163.

removes the possibility of conflict within the scope of society. However, this is not to say that these arguments are identical. For Hobbes, the natural condition of mankind is one of generalized war while Weber makes no claim towards that direction. For Hobbes, the existence of a sovereign, by definition, presupposes the monopoly of “power and strength” as conferred, already, by its subjects, yet Weber claims strictly that the state is seeking to direct human action by laying claim to the monopoly of legitimate violence. Thus, Weber does not articulate a teleological conception of the state as being instrumental to the resolution of the problem of social order: it is one but many of the possible manners through which a society is able to order itself.

In this paper, I shall argue that Weber’s understanding of legitimacy and the necessity for the state to “lay claim” upon the monopoly of legitimate violence are more accurate descriptions of the reality of conflict resolution in the case of Peru in the 1980s. However, it is also necessary to point out that in order for the state to acquire legitimacy, what may be involved is a limited, but nonetheless significant, abrogation of the monopoly and limited concession to the hands of the peasant communities of instruments of physical violence themselves. This, it shall be argued, is a necessary refinement of Weber’s definition of the modern state, most especially in contexts where the possibility of physical violence is directed against both the state and the community it is seeking to protect. Yet the real insight lies in Hobbes’ understanding of “fear of oppression” as leading individuals to seek refuge and aid in society. Violence, while divisive, is a remarkably strong force of integration, insofar as individuals in the context of war realize quite quickly that to live in isolation and separated from a tightly bound community is, to put it vulgarly, be a sitting duck, highly vulnerable to the attacks from an oppressive actor.

The response to the force of fragmentation of violence is either unity of forces or death. Here lies the ambiguous role of violence that lies particularly both in its execution (its *causa prima*) and its effect. The execution of violence demands a remarkable degree of cohesion within the particular group that is executing it, where internal violence between members is inadmissible, and in its consequence, leading the victims of violence to band together in order to seek protection in each other's communal organization. Thus, while violence is indeed divisive, it can also lay the foundations for a remarkable degree of integration, as well as being its product: and this is the particular paradox that this paper shall highlight by analyzing the *rondas campesinas* as precisely a phenomenon that expresses this particular logic. The insight that Hobbes presents is one that shall not be neglected, and it is indeed particularly illuminating in explaining the motivations and consequences of the formations of *rondas campesinas* in the crisis of the Sendero.

What is fragmentation?

When we engage with the concept of fragmentation in this paper, I have a very specific meaning in mind: it is the inability of the Peruvian state to address challenges to the integrity of its sovereignty over its territory. Now, unfortunately this definition dovetails into the concept of sovereignty, one that is quite complex and that if it is to be fully addressed, should require quite an extensive explanation. For the purposes of this paper, it suffices to say that sovereignty is to be understood as the capacity of the state to not only retain a monopoly over the use of legitimate physical violence – which is the minimum requirement for the establishment of sovereignty – but also its capacity to legislate and execute laws over the territory. Both Hobbes and Weber agree to

the extent to which they believe the exercise of violence to be one of the major instruments employed by the sovereign to exercise its sovereignty.

Thus, in this paper we shall engage with a notion of the state that is primarily concerned with the exercise of violence. It can be argued that it is a narrow-minded definition, one that does not correspond to the sentiments often harbored towards democracy and deliberation. Yet idealizations aside, it is difficult to understand how a state can be sovereign over its territory if it does not possess the instruments by which it is made itself to be obeyed. In other words, gratuitous violence is not our primary concern: what we are here to analyze in the notion of the state is its exercise of violence to execute a certain goal, whether it be a policy, defense of its territory and so forth. If we take upon ourselves this loose definition of the state as a “sovereign institution able to monopolize the exercise of violence,” after the Weberian tradition, we will see that the scenario which unfurled in the Peruvian Andes of the 1980s and 1990’s is one that witnessed the collapse of a national sovereign state, yet at the same time the formation of highly localized, mini-states, that monopolized the exercise of violence.

Now, to what extent Peru was fragmented and how the Peruvian state can come to be fragmented is a topic of hot contention. While some scholars emphasize the role of violence in generating fragmentation (See Veeken, 1993) others have argued for a more sophisticated view on fragmentation, one that hinges on the crucial notions of centralization and forces resistant or opposed to it, and how these forces interplay with one another (Skeldon, 1976; Keasinge, 1973). In this paper it shall be argued that instead of observing violence as a *causa prima* for fragmentation, we shall rather understand it as a symptom of, rather than a cause for, the fragmentation of a state’s sovereignty. In a sense, then, we are refining further the definitions of the state pushed forth by Max Weber and, in a sense, Thomas Hobbes’. As put forth by Li (2002):

As the central state's access to coercion diminishes, a power vacuum develops, providing an arena for vigorous anti-center movements, making the state extremely vulnerable not only to volatile revolutionary situations but also to direct or indirect foreign intervention.⁹

Li's assertion echoes those of Weber and Hobbes to a large extent. Both of these epic thinkers conceptualize the state (the first, specifically the modern state, the latter, his understanding of a state in general) primarily in terms of the eradication of violence in the sphere of relationships between private individuals, while preserving it in the execution of law, i.e. the relationship between state and individual. Certainly, gratuitous violence by the state is not in the forefront of their arguments: instead, the emphasis is on the execution of law by the "sword" as Hobbes puts it or the exercise of "power" as Weber frames it. However there remains the question as to how precisely violence is to be removed from the sphere of relationships between private individuals – or, more realistically – between groups or communities by the state. In other words, how shall a social contract even come to be agreed upon, or, as Hobbes himself admits it, how shall sovereignty be established by "acquisition," in the sense that one individual, more powerful than all others, comes to dominate all others?

The possibility of this second scenario can certainly not be dismissed. But such a particular formation of sovereignty is one that is unappealing for Hobbes, therefore his emphasis and priority to explain firstly the contractual element in the possibility of eradication of violence, where individuals, through the exercise of private reason, come to agree that it is for their best interest to relinquish their natural liberty and confer all their power and strength to a sovereign, in order to attain peace. The emphasis on "fear of death"¹⁰ is a crucial element within Hobbes' understanding of how sovereignty comes to be instituted, but then the question could be raised, as to why such individuals are violent in the first place? Indeed, what compels individuals to act

⁹ Li (2002), 147.

¹⁰Hobbes, 251.

in a violent manner against one another? Is it even plausible to believe that in the absence of a sovereign, violence rises forth: indeed, why shall we even need to believe that violence is a precondition for sovereignty?

This set of questions is not trivial. While the possibility of violence is one that is certainly present, as Hobbes himself emphasizes: to equate possibility with actuality is a vague and potentially misleading. If indeed, as Hobbes puts it “the nature of War, consisteth not in actual fighting; but in the known disposition thereto”¹¹ how shall we understand that the disposition to fight is often absent precisely in communities that do not obey an absolute sovereign that Hobbes pushes forth as the solution for the problem of social order? The theoretical problem I wish to highlight is that the mere possibility of violence and the fear of its possibility is not a sufficient explanation for the establishment of a sovereign. Nor is it acceptable to claim that violence preconditions the consolidation of sovereignty, or that the latter is the solution of the problem of violence. Indeed, unfortunately quite often, the sovereign itself is a major agent of violence.

And perhaps in this particular problematic in Hobbes’ theoretical framework we can return to the main argument of this paper, alluded to in the introduction: the necessity of organization in order to exercise violence. It is here that we may once again join ourselves to Hobbes and his theoretical understanding of the role of violence in the creation of a sovereign, but challenge him in the sense that it is no longer simply the existence of violence that poses a particular problem for the individual within the “natural condition of mankind,” but rather the existence of organized violence being executed by particular groups within a society.¹² And this is precisely the point: the process of conferring strength and power to a particular sovereign is one that predates the exercise of organized violence but, more than that, it is certainly plausible

¹¹ Hobbes, 186.

¹² Hobbes, 183.

that a society has already engaged in this form of factional conflict. Hobbes concedes to this possibility by engaging with the notion of instrumental power, one that concerns particularly the “what quality soever maketh a man beloved, or feared of many... because it is a means to have the assistance, and service of many.”¹³

The central notion of obedience, service of many is one that is particularly concerned with what holds certain individuals under the power of a particular man in Hobbes’ discussion of the natural condition of mankind. And the solution to the factional conflict he envisions is one in which the individual men bestow all their power and strength to a particular sovereign, that can dispose of it all to prevent conflicts from ensuing within the domain of the sovereign. This is precisely what occurs in the Peruvian Andean Communities located in the Center-South of the region, where we observe individual peasants dedicating their lives and energy to the active exercise of organized violence by not each one of them, but a particular institution denominated as the “ronda campesina.” To what extent can we claim that the “ronda” is a state shall be discussed later on when we analyze the formation of these particular institutions. Nevertheless in a preliminary statement we shall claim that these, taken in conjunction with the organized peasant communities they were to protect and transform, were indeed particular sovereigns within the local territory. In this sense, thus, Hobbes’ claim is vindicated: one particular response to the collapse of a society to generalized violence is the formation of a sovereign. However, it must be noted that it is not precisely the notion that Hobbes engages with, insofar as we do not observe the conflicting parties relinquishing themselves to a common sovereign. Instead, what we observe is that one of the parties of conflict, the peasant community, attempts to consolidate itself as a sovereign to ward off the Sendero Luminoso.

¹³ Hobbes, 151.

Therefore, it is necessary to engage with a far more refined understanding of violence, its relationship to the state and, particularly, to the territorially bound community over which the state wishes to establish its sovereignty through the exercise of violence. It is not sufficient to simply claim that violence predates the formation of the state, and the latter is formed precisely in order to resolve that. Furthermore, when we are to engage with the claim that the state is the only institution capable of removing violence from the relationships between individuals, making therefore indispensable the surrender of all “power and strength” to the sovereign, it is important to note what particular state we are engaging with. It is not simply a question of observing the particular institutions of the national state, national police force, national army and so forth: while these act as representatives (or representations) of national sovereign, a country’s political dimension is never truly reduced to national sovereignty. Indeed, what I shall seek to highlight is that in the case of particularly bound communities with strong conservative tendencies, such as was the case with the peasant communities in Peru, these become various states which engage actively in the exercise of organized violence to eradicate that being enacted by the Sendero. The absence and weakness of the Peruvian national state were conducive to that particular outcome.

But here then, it becomes a question of the degree to which the peasant communities became an actual state. We often tend to, in this modern era, to confuse the notion of state and nation, equating whatever serves to be the body representing the nation as being the state. But this is a modern notion, one that is ambiguous and unclear, and that when put into test in reality, is difficult to ascertain. As Hobbes himself argues, the potential for the formation of a state often revolves around the state’s ability to preserve the life of its subjects and protect them from oppression of one another. The answer to the problem of social order hinges upon the building of a consensus between peasant communities themselves and with the armed forces, the alignment

of their interests in the eradication of a common foe, a consensus that in and for itself is not enough to fully integrate these peasant communities to the larger national community, but that does nevertheless contribute significantly in the movement towards that.

Chapter 3

Sendero Luminoso and the Fragmentation of the Peruvian State

Fragmentation in the Andes: Political Isolation

As put forth by the Comisión de Verdad y Reconciliación (Commission for Truth and Reconciliation), established years after the resolution of the conflict of the Sendero to tell the “truth”, the peasant communities felt themselves “pueblos ajenos dentro del Perú”, foreign people (or villages) within Peru.¹⁴ This statement, from one of the pueblo(village) leaders of the Peruvian Andes, highlights an unfortunately prevalent notion among the peasant communities of the Peru that the state had largely abandoned them to their own fate, and that the struggle for survival in the 1980s was largely left to their own hands. This particular statement, though not true for every single case, holds for most of them, and the reasons for it are various.

We shall focus on this section particularly on the political isolation of these peasant communities, one that can only be properly understood as being historically conditioned by an adverse geography, and the negligence of the centers of political and economic activity in Peru concentrated in the country’s coastal strip towards active integration of the Andes within the larger political-economy. The isolation of such communities reflect the extent to which the presence of the Peruvian state was fragmented in the region of the Andes, insofar as each particular peasant community had only a very small degree of integration with the Peruvian state: representatives, such as mayor or judges were scarce or non-existent, and each community administered itself as mostly a self-contained unit of agricultural production and political administration.¹⁵

¹⁴ CVR, 156.

¹⁵ See Piel (1970) for a discussion of the origins of this isolation;

Firstly, the geographical isolation of the peasant communities in the Center-South region of the Peruvian Andes poses an enormous challenge for the political integration of these communities within a national larger community. The Peruvian Andes is a mountainous region largely desert, crisscrossed by steep mountains which make transportation a daunting task indeed. It is a colossal challenge to overcome the difficulties of connecting peasant communities, one that has not been particularly aided by the concentration of Peru's population along the coast line, a region commonly denominated the "Costa" or coastline. As put by Peter F. Klarén (1990):

Beyond Lima and the coastal strip lies another, largely Indian, world. One could almost say several other worlds, so great is the variation in climate and terrain as the land rises away from the coast. It is here in the Andean highlands that the bulk of the country's rural people, the 8.2 million Quechua-speaking and the 250,000 Aymara-speaking Indians and Mestizos, eke out a marginal living.¹⁶

The reference to other worlds in the passage cited above is not arbitrary. The reference to terrain and climates obfuscates the fact that these peasant communities, consisting principally of descendants of the Incans, speakers of the ancient Quechua language, formed largely self-contained worlds that did not integrate themselves significantly into a national community. Indeed, it is important to note that these communities, though not absolutely static and conservative, are not quite as progressive as the notion of "open peasant communities" pushed forth by Keasinge implies.¹⁷ Fundamentally these peasant communities, while indeed engaging with one another in small local markets, while participating occasionally in the process of

¹⁶ Klaren (1990), 27.

¹⁷ Keasinge, 1977.

elections, consisted mostly of autonomous communities, with their particular organizational structure largely autonomous from the control of the state.¹⁸

Now that we are starting to touch upon the distinctive features of the peasant communities, it will be useful to understand the particular organization of these societies. Firstly, it is important to note that these communities are composed of small farmers who own privately their land.¹⁹ Such plots of land are usually small, and as noted by Saleth (1991) they had existed prior to the movement towards the agrarian reform of 1969. Nevertheless, the latter did come to reinforce these existing tendencies in Peru's structure of agricultural production in the Andes. The surprisingly aggressive policy implemented by the military dictatorship of general Velasco, which sought primarily "the elimination of the traditional system of excessively large and small holdings."²⁰ Perhaps unsurprisingly, while the law enacting the agrarian reform did succeed in accomplishing the first goal – mainly through the active participation of the peasantry – it did not consolidate the small holdings into larger, commercially viable one. The reasons for these are various, but as pointed out by Guillet (1981) it was sufficient for the majority of these communities to remain with what had been relatively consolidated peasant economies based on small holding of land and which is based primarily on "household production."²¹ Perhaps the clearest and most famous articulation of the Andean peasant community and its social organization is put forth by Eric R. Wolf (1955). He states:

The distinctive characteristic of the corporate peasant community is that it represents a bounded social system with clear-cut limits, in relations to both outsiders and insiders. It has structural identity over time. Seen from the outside, the community as a whole carries on a series of activities and upholds certain "collective representations." Seen from within,

¹⁸ See Keasinge 1973, Theidon 2006, Smith 1992.

¹⁹ Saleth 1991.

²⁰ Ibid, 87.

²¹ Guillet 1981, p. 23.

it defines the rights and duties of its members and prescribes large segments of their behavior.²²

The emphasis of Wolf is largely upon the conservative aspect of the peasant community, its stress upon preservation in a relatively hostile geographical environment, as well as the internal regulation of the behavior of its members. While this notion of prescription of behavior is problematic, other authors have emphasized the prevalence of largely social forms of behavior regulation based on the central notions of reciprocity, or *ayni* and the prevalence of a community that is tightly bound by such links of kinship and cooperation.²³ Idealization of such a communal form of organization abound, as eloquently pointed out by Starn (1991). The tendencies towards the idealization of such communities in the culture of *Andeanismo* is a common trap, especially in cases where it stresses the atemporal aspect of them, as if no significant changes had taken place between the previous Inca communities that inhabited the region and the contemporary ones. Nevertheless, there is an element of truth, as always, in such constructions. The stress upon reciprocal ties of obligation and the primacy of the communal over particular interests which are potentially harmful to the community is what binds such societies together, and in this sense provide them with a sense of continuity.

Indeed, this is precisely what Geertz alludes to in the following statement: that there is a “continued persistence around the world of a great many well-bounded, self-centered, culturally distinctive peasant communities, we are bound to find studies of them continuing”²⁴ This particular conservative tendency is one of the elements contained within the isolation of the peasant communities, which may have been fostered by and possibly generated by it, in the Central and Southern regions of the Andes. Nevertheless, it is important to note that these

²² Wolf 1955, p. 456.

²³ Golte 1986, Guillet 1982, Hobsbawm 1969.

²⁴ Geertz 1961, p. 16

peasant communities correspond closely to what may be called an organized society, with reciprocal obligations established between particular peasants, as well as the notion of a public good embodied in the notion of *faena* or *republica*, which are public works performed by a group of peasants for the benefit of community, such as for instance the construction of a bridge or road. In this self-containment of these communities it is important to once more remind ourselves that this has derived largely from the particular geography that such communities inhabited, as pointed out by Golte and Cadena (1982). In other words, these were particularly strong social mechanisms that contributed to the internal cohesion and persistence of these communities.

Further contributing to the isolation of these self-contained, conservative communities was the relative neglect of the center of political and economic power in Peru, Lima and the surrounding coastal region. It is not surprising that the peasant communities living in this region felt little sense of allegiance to it. While efforts towards an agrarian revolution pushed forth by General Velasco in 1969 served to remove the previous structure of hacendados in the region, this in itself did not provide a sufficient incentive for, nor did it transform the peasant's consciousness to align them to the national government. The reasons for this are various, but as pointed out by Palmer (1986):

An early effort in 1970 and 1971 to reorganize [peasant] communities along "made in Lima" criteria failed after strenuous objections were raised by hundreds of Indian community leaders nationwide. For these the major change effected by central authorities was in name only: Indian communities became peasant communities. In effect, then, the agrarian reform brought little change to the communities of Ayacucho, and most that was attempted from the outside was negative and even counterproductive.²⁵

There, is furthermore, another dimension of isolation worth emphasizing. This dovetails with the Quechua word "wakcha" meaning either orphan or poverty. The point I wish to make is that the

²⁵ Palmer 1986, pp. 137.

poverty with which the peasant communities in the Andes were faced constituted a major aspect of their isolation: this one being economic. As pointed out by Taylor (1987) and Palmer (1986), these peasant communities, while indeed isolated and organized socially to a significant extent, faced a terrible degree of poverty and material scarcity. It is difficult to separate the notion of poverty from isolation, insofar as highly isolated communities face a very limited market and tend to sustain themselves with a self-subsistent economy. While there have been challenges to the notion of widespread poverty as being an irremovable feature of these communities, particularly in the work of Anthony Bebbington (1997, 2002) This was the case of the majority of peasant communities. Furthermore, it is necessary to stress that the physical separation between these peasant communities between themselves and the urban centers incipient in the Peruvian Andes prevented the formation of linkages between their markets, thus reducing the expansion of the productive capacities of the region. While there was a small degree of articulation between these different peasant communities and the urban centers, these were limited and did not provide a strong foundation for greater articulation with the national economy or even at the regional level.²⁶

The context of poverty also contributed to the sense in which these communities felt neglected by the central government, since it remained at best indifferent to their plight.²⁷ Thus what we observe in the case of the Peruvian communities is not only the absence of integration with the political and economic center of Peru, the Costa, but also at best a very weak form of integration between peasant communities themselves within the region of the Peruvian Andes, which was often fraught by dispute over scarce land resources, such as water or fertile lands.²⁸

²⁶ See Smith 1968 for a good discussion of the problems of regional integration.

²⁷ McClintock 1984.

²⁸ See Glave 1988 for a historical account of the different conflicts marking the relationship between different Andean communities.

While it is important to note that the physical barriers posed by the Andes were a strong impediment to any deeper form of integration by these communities, there was also some attempts to. Widespread poverty certainly did not provide a strong incentive for greater integration; however, the negligence of the Peruvian state par rapport the Peruvian Andes created (or rather, allowed for) a political vacuum in the region, one that was initially filled by the organization of Indian communities officially recognized by the Peruvian state in 1960. Keasinge points out, nevertheless, that:

By accepting communal land holdings as a valid, modern form of social and economic organization, the Peruvian government tacitly acknowledged their validity as a form of political organization, similar in many respects to the organization of agricultural cooperatives on the recently confiscated sugar plantations. Thus, the formation of the "Federation of Communities of the Department of la Libertad" may be viewed as a natural response to a favorable shift in power relations.²⁹

This statement, while perhaps too optimistic in the assumption that a simple recognition by the Peruvian state would lead to a strong political organization in the peasant communities, his point cannot be easily dismissed. Perhaps his greatest insight lies in pointing out that subsistence of the peasant corporate community, a strictly defined system of reciprocal obligations between commoners and subsistence farming did not operate within a vacuum. The introduction of change externally by the military regime under the leadership of Velasco served as a strong reminder that while these peasant communities were indeed politically and economically isolated, such isolation was not absolute. The preservation of autonomy and isolation was far more delicate than envisioned, and while indeed for the vast majority of the previous centuries these communities had indeed acted under a significant degree of isolation from the Peruvian state, this reality was not to remain so for long.

Keasinge points out that:

²⁹ Keasinge 1973.

Indigenous Communities can best be understood not by reference to forces and relationships internal to the community (although these, too, are important) but by an examination of the community's relationship to the external social environment. This relationship is best examined in light of a political analysis which turns on the structure of power relations.³⁰

This statement proves remarkably prescient in the light of the events in Peru in the 1980s that changed forever the political and social landscape of the Peruvian "sierra".

The Rise of the Sendero Luminoso

When the Sendero Luminoso first rose to prominence in the Peru's political landscape, there was little consideration given to it. Indeed, it first rose as a surprise, with Andean scholars who had dedicated a significant amount of their lifetime and energy to studying the peasant communities in the Andes taken aback by the sudden surge in violence.³¹ Yet why was it such a shock? In order to address this particular puzzle, we shall first seek to understand the causal mechanisms behind the rise of this movement. The reasons are various and certainly a list of them shall not be exhaustive.

Prior to its first political move, the Sendero Luminoso had remained largely under the protection of the secluded intellectual environment of the Universidad Nacional de San Cristóbal de Huamanga, from which it had come to recruit at a larger scale the members of its communist vanguard. These recruits were composed mostly of mestizo (mix between indigenous and white) young men who felt themselves inspired by the preaching of Maoism by the then professor Abimael Guzmán, latter to be called Comrade Gonzalo.³² There had developed around the image

³⁰ Keasinge 1973, pp. 50.

³¹ Starn 1991.

³² Degregori 1988, Desai and Eckstein 1990, Manwaring 1985.

of Guzmán a sect of small, highly organized and disciplined young individuals who swore allegiance to the cause of Marxism and Maoism in the revolutionary overthrow of the Peruvian state and the bourgeois class.³³ It was therefore an essentially radical group, one that had broken off from the more moderate parties of the Peruvian political landscape which included the APRA (Acción Popular), a formerly radical communist party that had legitimized itself within Peru's party system. The decision for that decisive break with the other leftist parties was one tightly linked to the argument of revisionism. While other leftist parties stressed collaboration with the existing political order and the moderation of their demands through institutionalized channels of democratic representation, Abimael Guzmán and his followers refused to accept such compromise.³⁴

It is important, at this point, to note that the origins of the Sendero are not located in the peasant communities of the Andes, nor were they developed in the rural countryside, rather developing in the capital of Ayacucho, the largest city within the department of Ayacucho in Peru. Now, to the extent to which the ideology of the Sendero conformed to that of a particular intellectual elite that is to lead and instruct the peasants to the Shining Path of the communist revolution, we can question to what extent is it truly a peasant rebellion, or whether it was a rebellion led by mestizo intellectuals and their highly organized mestizo students to effectively use the peasants as an instrument to their goal. This is precisely the point: to believe that tacit passiveness in regards to the actions of the Sendero, or the strategic exploitation of the situation generated by the Sendero to fulfill one's particular goals (seizure of a neighbor's land for instance) is analytically distinct from fully embracing the actions of the Sendero, in believing in its ideology as well. Indeed, it is a strange origin for a movement that generated so much tension

³³ Manwaring 1985, Degregori 1988.

³⁴ CVR 2004.

and violence, death and suffering in Peru: “ the students embraced the simplified Maoism taught by Sendero's founder, philosophy professor Abimael Guzman,” a doctrine that would have a profound impact on Peru’s political and economic trajectory for over a decade.³⁵

The decision to initiate its aggressive strategy of revolutionary people’s war began in 17 of March, 1980. On that day, in the town of Chuschi, in the department of Ayacucho, five members of the Sendero Luminoso invaded the place where they were storing the polls and ballots for the national election day and burned them. The move could have not been more symbolic. It represented the first act of contestation against the sovereignty of the Peruvian state. As put by the Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, such a course of action was chosen “... for its symbolic significance against the state and representative democracy, the attack on Chuschi was claimed by the PCP-SL (Partido Comunista del Sendero Luminoso) as the concretization and beginning of its people’s war.”³⁶

In order to understand this symbolic move, a certain understanding of the political context is necessary. Peru was organizing the following day, March 18, its first presidential election in seventeen years. It had been subject to the authoritarian rule of a military dictatorship in the previous seventeen years, a phenomenon unfortunately not uncommon in the Latin America of the 1970s and 1980s. But more importantly was the movement away from the military dictatorship to a representative democracy, in a democratization process often fraught with turmoil and instability.³⁷ Nevertheless, the Peruvian case was a particularly peaceful one, with the military voluntarily organizing a Constituent Assembly in 1977 to negotiate the transfer

³⁵ Fansworth 1988, p. 727.

³⁶ CVR, pp.29. “por su carga simbólica contra el Estado y la democracia representativa, el ataque de Chuschi fue reivindicado por el PCP-SL [Sendero Luminoso] como la concretización...y el inicio de su guerra popular.”

³⁷ See Karl 1990 for a discussion of the challenges of democratization, Haggard and Kaufman (1995) has an excellent discussion of the political economy of democratic transition.

of power away from the last general Morales Bermúdez.³⁸ The transition period lasted three years, at the end of which general elections were called and Fernando Belaúnde Terry rose to power as president. Thus we have a military government that is not particularly opposed to the process of democratization, voluntarily choosing to do so given the pressure over its economic mismanagement. Furthermore, it had combined, under the leadership of Velasco (1968-75) a curious mixture of populism in their policies, particularly in the implementation of South America's most aggressive agrarian reform program in 1969 that pushed forth the eradication of the hacendado system and sought to redistribute the lands thus dispossessed from the hacendados to the peasant communities that had depended on them.

The moment of transition was delicate, albeit planned for in the transitional period, and faced a significant challenge from a then unknown political actor. The leftist parties had long resigned themselves to coexist within the political system without the active exercise of radical violence, and indeed had struggled to delineate their own agenda under the umbrella of the leftist leaning military government of Velasco.³⁹ Furthermore, the leftist parties had been integrated largely to the political system of Peru without great opposition, since under the military government there was a strong flourishing of labor unions that unsurprisingly lent their support to them. It is in this context, of peaceful transition and leftist consolidation of legitimate political parties, that we must understand the shock generated by the Sendero Luminoso. At the center of political power, in the heart of Lima, there was little indication that there would be a violent uprising against the newly elected democratic government of Belaúnde. Furthermore, the

³⁸ Haggard and Kaufman (1995), p. 69.

³⁹ Silva and Yanez (1988)

Sendero was marginalized from other legitimate political parties, shunned due to its intransigent appeal to the exercise of violence.⁴⁰

Therefore, the attack on the Chuschi electoral ballots was largely dismissed as being a local incident, one whose repercussions understandably were not taken seriously. The attack of 18 March, 1980 was symbolic, nevertheless, since in it Abimael Guzmán, intellectual leader and head of the PCP-SL (Partido Comunista Peruano Sendero Luminoso) saw an opportunity to make his first move. As he stated in an interview:

Thus we concluded: bureaucratic capitalism had matured the revolution, the difficult decade of the 80s loomed, the crisis, a government by elections, etc; and everything presented a very favorable condition to begin the people's war... This what we had calculated, as well as the situation into which the new government found itself, that the military were leaving... and could not easily engage in conflict with us, nor could they immediately retake the lead of the State, because they had been eroded politically and lost prestige.⁴¹

It is important to highlight the opportunistic nature of the Sendero, as well as acknowledging the apparent limitations of the movement. While it claimed to mobilize a “guerra popular,” a people's war, it could never fully commit to the notion of mass mobilization. While it had dedicated itself to the violent overthrow of the Peruvian state, it sought to do so exclusively by forging an alliance with the peasant communities in the Peruvian Andes and did not attempt to mobilize the urban proletarians, instead limiting itself to the mobilization of cadres from the Peruvian peasantry or the metizos.⁴² However, it is important to note that the tactics of the Sendero was not capable of fully displacing the state wherever there was a strong presence of the military and it was therefore mostly concentrated on targeting the particular representatives of

⁴⁰ Degregori 1988.

⁴¹ “Abimael Guzman, interview to Sol Rojo. Así concluimos: el capitalismo burocrático había madurado la revolución, se presentaba la difícil década del 80, la crisis, un gobierno por elecciones, etc; y todo daba una coyuntura muy favorable para iniciar la guerra popular... Eso fue lo que calculamos, así como la situación en que entraba el nuevo gobierno, que los militares salían... y fácilmente no podrían asumir una lucha inmediata contra nosotros, ni podrían de inmediato retomar el timón del Estado, porque se habían desgastado políticamente y desprestigiado; eran hechos concretos, una realidad.

⁴² Degregori 1988, Manwaring 1995, Taylor 1987.

the state where it was particularly easy to do so.⁴³ Therefore, what we observe is not so much a direct confrontation between the Sendero Luminoso and the government: rather, what we see is a selective picking apart of elements of state sovereignty in marginal communities far away from the centers of political and economic power. The analysis of Menard (2007) is particularly illuminating in this regard. Menard notes that a “high level of political pluralism... seems to be an obstacle for the consolidation of insurgents,” implying that regions that already have an active political life, with elections and pluralism, are generally unsusceptible to the attempts at domination of the Sendero.⁴⁴

It is therefore important to note that the Sendero was particularly able to thrive in regions where the state had not had a strong presence consolidated. This becomes clear in the evidence brought forth by Kent (1993), who discusses the geographical components of the consolidation of the Sendero.. Furthermore, as noted above, Menard (2007), Sendero found it particularly difficult to establish itself in regions with strong counter-insurgence forces (i.e. strong presence either of police forces or the military) or more interestingly from the standpoint of this paper, the presence of political pluralism. This is a strong indicator that the Maoist movement of the Sendero Luminoso found its strongest expression precisely in regions where either a political vacuum was already established, or where it could be easily established through the use of violence. The informe (report) of the CVR (Truth and Reconciliation Committee) puts it thus:

According to Guzmán, it was an enormous surprise the ease with which a vacuum of power of created in the zones where they [the Sendero] acted. This had forced them to... decide that in the zones where such “vacuum of power” was created, they had to advance in the construction of a “new state”, based on the Popular Committees.⁴⁵

⁴³ Taylor 1987, pp. 143.

⁴⁴ Menard 2007, p.28.

⁴⁵ CVR, p. 34. “Según Guzmán fue una enorme sorpresa la facilidad con que se creó el vacío de poder en vastas zonas donde actuaban. Esto los habría obligado... a decidir que en las zonas donde habían creado «vacío de poder», tenían que avanzar en la construcción del «nuevo estado», sobre la base de los Comités Populares.”

This element of creation of a “new state” is something that is worth emphasizing. One has to realize that the agenda of the Sendero did not limit itself to the destruction of any type of social institution, whether it be the Catholic churches or the communal leaders; whether it be the mayors or the teachers who had been moved to these communities at the bequest of the central government. Principally, the strategic move of the Sendero was to establish in these regions a “new state” that did not necessarily have to rely on the complete support of the peasantry. Certainly this was not a process that was consolidated with ease.⁴⁶ Indeed, as pointed out by Degregori 1988:

[Sendero’s] problems started when it began to construct its new power over this shattered territory. It was then that at different levels the geological failures of the senderista project, fissures between the party strategy and the regional and peasant dynamics began to appear.⁴⁷

The particular fissures that Degregori is alluding to were the tensions between what the Sendero sought to implement within the peasant communities and the latter’s resistance against them. We shall discuss these and frame them with the exercise of violence. Indeed, an element of selective violence was a predominant feature of the Sendero’s strategy to dominate these communities and obtain their support, whether it be voluntary or not.

⁴⁶ Degregori 1988, Stern 1995.

⁴⁷ Stern 1995, p. 130. “Sus problemas comenzaron cuando sobre ese terreno desbrozado comenzó a construir su nuevo poder. Fue entonces que a diferentes niveles comenzaron a advertirse varias de las fallas geológicas del proyecto senderista, fisuras entre la estrategia partidaria y la dinámica regional y campesina.”

Violence and the Sendero

History can be quite instructive in understanding events such as the revolutionary Maoist movement in Peru, as led by the Sendero Luminoso. In particular, it can guide our understanding of how a revolution comes to consume the very actors it is meant to empower. The revolutionary leadership that claim to be pushing forth the interests of a particular class in society, in particular peasants, is one that is surprisingly unscrupulous in its exercise of domination over the peasantry. One has only to look at the Bolshevik movement in Soviet Russia and observe the terrible cruelty with which the peasantry was executed, starved, and broken for the creation of a new society that the communist leadership envisioned for them. What is necessary to point out here is that any effective change is one that is based primarily on violence, for the conservative tendencies of society are indeed quite a potent force of resistance to change in its radical form, such as the one implemented by the horrifying view into the immense human cost – suffered disproportionately by the peasantry – that revolutions impose upon the societies they wish to transform. In order to break pockets of resistance against the reforms to be implemented by the Sendero, it did not hesitate to execute violence and force the peasants to follow as they were instructed, against their own will. As Weber himself puts it, the exercise and monopoly of violence is one of the central instruments through which a state is able to force its servants to do as they are commanded. The Sendero Luminoso, which called itself the “new state” in the “liberated areas,” was no exception.

Yet perhaps prior to discussing the relationship between the peasantry and the Sendero Luminoso as one dominated by the exercise of organized violence, we shall first seek to explain the role of the peasantry in Sendero’s ideological framework. It is indeed curious how the Sendero understood the role of the peasantry in its movement. As pointed out by Starn (1985), “the insurrection of the Shining Path was begun by middle-class university intellectuals, not poor

villagers.”⁴⁸ It is important to note the origins of Abimael Gúzman and how he came to organize the movement. Born to a middle-class family, he organized the Sendero Luminoso from the intellectual context of the Universidad Nacional de San Cristobal Huamanga. Thus what potential linkage could be found between the movement of the Sendero, composed of large segments of young, educated men who did not really fit into any definition of peasant, nor had to endure the same mode of life as the former.⁴⁹ The Sendero movement was not one organized by low-income villagers who were actively seeking to find guidance under the revolutionary thought of Marxism to overthrow the prevailing order of socioeconomic injustice, but by highly organized, disciplined intellectuals who saw the overthrow of the Peruvian state through the active rebellion of the peasantry as the only means to bring about communism in the country.⁵⁰

Therefore it is quite clear given the origins and the cadres that compose the Sendero that the basis for effective change within these peasant communities of the Peruvian Andes will not be based purely on consensus. Violence will play a role, to become an almost ideological focus of the Sendero Luminoso, which saw in violence the instruments through which the peasantry could be liberated from not only the Peruvian state, but from the backwardness of their socioeconomic condition. The project of the Sendero Luminoso was one of complete transformation of the peasant communities, and it sought to reorganize the entire sociopolitical and economic structure of such communities. As pointed out by Kent (1993):

Key elements included attempts to outlaw fiestas and drinking, abolition of the traditional civil-religious system of governance, imposition of a communal planting system based on residential neighborhoods, prohibition of peasant participation in the weekly markets, and an attempt to close the only road to the town. However, the Shining Path was resisted on all counts, and its efforts to implement the changes had generally failed by late 1982.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Starn 1995, pp. 403.

⁴⁹ Degregori 1988, Starn 1995.

⁵⁰ Manwaring 1995.

⁵¹ Kent, 1993, pp. 444.

As pointed out by Isbell (1992), it was not particularly the ideology of the Sendero that appealed to the peasant communities, but rather their implementation of a cruel but efficient justice system, where the Sendero arrives as a “hooded justice” that punishes cattle thieves, adulterers, wife abusers, etc.⁵² Any attempt to dramatically transform the social fabric of the peasantry was fiercely opposed. Except for superficial changes such as the elimination of police forces, or local mayors who had restricted support, the status quo of such communities was highly conservative. Another complicating factor was the lack of any structures of domination by large hacendados (large landowners) over the peasantry, a particular dynamic that no longer existed in the Peruvian Andes due to the agrarian reforms previously enacted by General Velasco in 1969. In a perhaps fortuitous preemptive move, the military dictatorship had prevented one of the perhaps greatest sources of legitimization of the Sendero Luminoso par rapport the peasant communities: liberation from the domination of large landowners.⁵³ The sources for positive attachment to the Sendero therefore restricted itself to vague notions of a new communist order and the exercise of moral justice within the community and in relation to its neighbors. Yet it is important to stress that this in itself did not provide a remarkably strong source of positive attachment to the Sendero.

Attempts to block the access to markets by local producers was passionately resisted, to the point that the Sendero found itself punishing peasants who refused to obey.⁵⁴ Attempts to establish a form of egalitarian distribution of goods was opposed to and resented by peasants who did not believe in the equal distribution of production at all.⁵⁵ It is not difficult to see how such restricted range of sympathetic sentiments, and the strong sentiments against the

⁵² Isbell 1992.

⁵³ Saleth 1991.

⁵⁴ Degregori 1988.

⁵⁵ Theidon 2006.

transformative policies of the Sendero, could hardly hold together a strong alliance between the Sendero and the peasantry. Indeed, as stated by Ron (2001):

Many Peruvians, especially those of Indian origin, distrusted Sendero's educated, elitist, and mestizo orientation, Sendero activists had to overcome widespread disinterest. Sendero thus used assassination and terror as a recruitment mechanism, facilitating the functioning and expansion of the [movement's] infrastructure.⁵⁶

Here we observe a explicit formulation of the role of violence, in the form of assassination and terror, as a recruitment mechanism, a form of “infrastructure” that allows the proper functioning of the movement of the Sendero Luminoso in the areas that it seeks to dominate. This is a crucial notion and one that we shall find remarkably in harmony with the more explicit formulation of the instrumental role of violence in Weber’s definition of the state or Hobbes formulation of the sovereign. The use of violence for both thinkers is necessary in order for the state or the sovereign respectively to enact its policies and see to their execution. A similar dynamic is placed in the context of the Sendero Luminoso and its own attempt to become a “new state,” replacing the Peruvian one or, more accurately, establishing itself where no true state had previously existed. It is in this light that the “collective annihilation, punitive operations, destruction (death, assaults, rapes, burning of households, robbery, etc.)” are to be understood, for to think of them as merely gratuitous violence, although capturing some dimensions of the problems, does not highlight the particular instrumental value that violence played in the ideology of the Sendero Luminoso and its attempt to truly revolutionize these peasant communities.⁵⁷

Desai and Eckstein (1990) define this role of organized violence in guerrilla movements quite brilliantly:

⁵⁶ Ron 2001, p. 576.

⁵⁷ CVR 2004, p. 27.

This transformation also involves a change in the nature of violence. Under the control of disciplined, organized revolutionaries, frenzy is systematized: its energy is controlled and its efficiency is increased by guerrilla practices. Insurgencies fit Trotsky's famous argument that, without revolutionary organization, "the energy of the masses would dissipate like steam not enclosed in a piston-box. But nevertheless what moves things is not the piston or the box, but the steam."⁵⁸

The particular organization of the Sendero Luminoso guerrilla, its highly disciplined and efficient cadres and their tactics of selective violence – targeting a few key figures of public authority such as teachers or judges, priests and leaders of land cooperatives – were remarkably efficient at generating a power vacuum firstly, and then establish the Sendero's own power over the community. Yet this form of domination, instead of serving the purpose of a hypothetical freeing of the peasantry from the domination and exploitation of an imagined bourgeoisie or bourgeois state rather established precisely a new and different form of domination. The typology of the hacendado state and the peasant community therefore was one that although not adequate to discuss the landscape immediately prior to the incursion of the Sendero, became so in the course of the attempts by the Sendero to dominate and control large regions of the Peruvian Andes, especially in the particular felicitous formulation by Piel (1970):

Thus the servile rural community of the hacienda, under a strict subjection to the landlord who was the sole legal authority on his own land, is clearly distinguished from the free Indian community which, led by its cacique and its curaca, enjoyed considerable independence from the Spanish colonizers. On the one hand there was the serf, tied to the land and to the person of his master; on the other, the peasant who, within his community, enjoyed the use and the co-ownership of his land, in the name of his ancestors since "time immemorial" according to the official formula.⁵⁹

When the Sendero took control over vast swathes of the Andean population, what we observe is that instead of freeing the community from structures of domination, the Sendero

⁵⁸ Desai and Eckstein 1990, p. 463.

⁵⁹ Piel 1970.

itself became this new “landlord” with authority over the land, a particularly perverse outcome that led to the massive migration of peasants away from the Peruvian Andes and into the “barrios jóvenes” (new neighborhoods) of Lima and other major cities.⁶⁰ Compounding the further isolation and helplessness of the peasant communities, it was mainly the young people who are able to escape these communities, leaving behind them older adults who were unwilling to or unable to abandon their land.

What further complicated the conflict generated by the Sendero and aggravated its impact on the communities was that the territorial control of the Sendero was not particularly well grounded and institutionalized insofar as the cadres of the guerrilla group had no obligation to remain themselves within a particular community. In other words, while violence was enacted to consolidate the power and influence (i.e. its sovereignty) over the particular peasant communities it sought to dominate, it had not to be dependent upon the residence of the guerrilla members within the particular community. There was no sense of the necessity to remain and protect these communities, and therefore one of the complimentary roles of the state, the protection of its subjects from the violence of external actors, as Hobbes himself describes, and thus while organized violence had a transformative aspect to it in the sense of regulating and changing the behavior of the members of a particular peasant community, it did not serve to protect them. Indeed, what became quite clear from the standpoint of the peasants was that whenever there was a strong punitive move by the armed forces, the Sendero chose to flee, leaving the unprotected villagers to face the wrath of the army.⁶¹

Therefore, what we shall point out is that the peasant communities did not have a strong sense of allegiance to the middle-class intellectual leadership of the Sendero Luminoso, while at

⁶⁰ Bourcque and Warren (1989), p. 18.

⁶¹ McClintock 1984.

the same time they faced the mistrust and lack of intelligence (in the sense of information) of the Peruvian armed forces. From one side, the Sendero stressed the necessity for loyalty and coerced the peasantry into submission, executing without scruples those they deemed “soplones” (whistleblowers), individuals who had contributed information to the Peruvian army. At the same time, the army raided villages and executed peasants who they believed had sided with the Sendero. Similar to what had occurred in the confrontations between the White and Red Army in Bolshevik Russia, history repeated itself in the Peruvian Andes. Initially incapable of organizing strong pockets of resistance, the peasant communities observed the execution of its communal and religious leaders by the Sendero, as well as the young males who were perceived to be cooperating with the Sendero by the army. In the end, therefore, we have in the figure of the Sendero a “state” that is incapable, or rather, unwilling to affirm its sovereignty through the active protection of those who support it. In this fatal deficiency lies the key to the solution to the crisis of the movement, which for this particular reason was not able to generate positive attachments from the peasant communities as any effort to join the movement meant to risk one’s life and to fall under the constant threat of violence from the Peruvian armed forces.

The armed forces of Peru intervened in the Andes at the invitation of President Fernando Belaúnde Terry in December 1982. It was given the role of reestablishing order and peace in the regions of Ayacucho and surrounding departments, given the central government’s incapacity to do so in the preceding two years.⁶² However, the initial strategy was one of brutal and indiscriminate repression, due to the army’s inability to effectively locate targets, and its profound mistrust of both the Sendero and the peasants, who could potentially be “senderistas” (members of the Sendero Luminoso) in disguise. Thus, what began was a cycle of ineffective violence by the armed forces. And “the results of the genocidal offensive unleashed between

⁶² Degregori 1988, Stern 1995, Fansworth 1988.

1983 and 1984, that produced over five thousand casualties in a territory of under five hundred thousand inhabitants, was completely counterproductive.”⁶³

It is a terrible figure to confront, but one that tells the story of a true slaughter of the Peruvian peasants in painful clarity: according to the final report by the CVR, 75% of the victims were native Quechua speakers, the language spoken primarily by isolated peasant communities in the Andes. Initially, the peasants found themselves in the cross-fire of both the Sendero and the Peruvian armed forces, but this is not to say that such a state of affairs would be borne passively by the peasants. Adjustments were to be made, and a new strategy was to be developed by a peasantry that sought to reestablish within the “sierra” a modicum of security that the Peruvian state alone could not provide. The rise of the “rondas campesinas” (peasant patrols), marks the turning point in the fight against the Sendero, the formation of a strategic partnership between the Peruvian state and the peasant communities that ultimately deterred Sendero’s revolution.

⁶³ Degregori 1993, p. 7. los resultados de la ofensiva genocida desatada entre 1983 y 1984, que produjo más de 5 mil muertos en un territorio con menos de 500 mil habitantes, fueron totalmente contraproducentes

Chapter 4

Forces of integration: the Rondas Campesinas

It becomes clear from the above account that the initial stages of the Sendero's revolution was quite successful. Little resistance was to be found, both by the peasants or the Peruvian state, and the senderistas found themselves quite capable, through carefully coordinated action, to dismantle the existing structures that sustained state sovereignty over the Peruvian Andes. The vacuum of power that was thus created was rapidly filled by the Sendero, that sought to thoroughly transform these communities. As put by Theidon (2006):

The Shining Path cadres began closing the markets, prohibiting the sale of agricultural products, burning the Catholic churches, and smashing the image of saints. Faced by these affronts to the material and moral economy, the communal authorities began to throw the Senderista cadres out of these communities. The subsequent reprisals against "innocent people" were a key factor in alienating the rural population. The Shining Path leadership was reproducing a double standard that is too familiar to rural peasants: the powerful dictate how justice operates and for whom.⁶⁴

The fact that the Sendero was unwilling to allow for the autonomy of these peasant communities to be preserved was a key factor in the active resistance by these communities, which were not willing to tolerate the violent methods employed by the Sendero against itself. Furthermore, there was a change in the "constellation of power" as put by Theidon (2006), when the central government decided to allow for the incursion of the armed forces into the highlands of the Peruvian Andes, in order to enforce law and order that the central state was incapable of doing. The urge to make the army subordinate to the central government was particularly strong due to the recent transition from military authoritarianism to a representative democracy in 1980,

⁶⁴ Theidon, 2006, pp. 440.

and this was one of the reasons for the hesitation by President Belaúnde to activate the armed forces.

Nevertheless, the declaration of a state of emergency in the departments of Ayacucho, Huancavelica and others in 1982 marked a clear turning point. The initial response by the army was one that Taylor (1998) appropriately deemed to be “a scorched earth” strategy, one that unsurprisingly gained little traction with the peasant communities. The army was initially incapable of successfully locating the Senderistas, who benefitted both from the mountainous terrain of the Andes, the remoteness of their areas of operation and the unwillingness of the peasantry to cooperate with the armed forces. The army therefore exercised indiscriminate violence against the communities perceived to have cooperated with the Sendero, a tactic that the Sendero itself, in its cynicism, seemed to embrace. The use of violence by the Sendero and the violent response generated by the armed forces was one that “provoked the State to react in a disproportionate manner, so that it ‘showed its antidemocratic face.’”⁶⁵

Ironically, this strategy backfired, as the Senderistas who had initially gathered the support of the peasantry, left them to their own fate once the armed forces stormed in to search and execute them. The peasant communities did not take long to realize that, in fact, the Sendero while claiming to organize a war in the interests of the peasantry, had absolutely no qualms in leaving them to their own fate once the military used force. Many peasants were tortured, imprisoned, or killed in the process. The lack of military support by the Sendero proved to be a fatal strategic mistake by the guerrilla movement, that neglected the possibility that the rise of the costs of supporting the Sendero – by the violent reprisal of the Peruvian armed forces –

⁶⁵ CVR, pp. 35. ‘Así se provocaba también al Estado a reaccionar de manera desproporcionada, a fin de que ‘muestre su faz antidemocrática.’

would ultimately break the last sentiments of sympathy towards a movement that neglected the protection of these peasant communities from the so-called “antidemocratic face” of the state.

Ultimately, this possibility of switch of allegiance is one that is described by Hobbes himself in the *Leviathan*. Given the threat of generalized war and the struggle to ensure one’s survival, Hobbes himself posits that: Lastly, when in a warre... he that wants protection, may seek it anywhere; and when he hath it, is obliged... to protect his Protection as long as he is able.⁶⁶ It is important to note here that Hobbes makes an important fold within his theory, one that should not be taken lightly. Indeed, what one comes to realize is that in the integrity of Hobbes’ common wealth, or in this case, the peasant community, and its willingness to cooperate with a sovereign is highly based on the perceived balance of power between competing sovereigns, and their capacity to protect the subjects that align themselves to them. This insight is one that should not be forgotten in the context of any civil war, which is indeed but a specific case of war where the competing sovereigns are ones that acts at a national and the other, at least initially, at a local level.

This is precisely the dynamic that occurred in the case of Peru in the mid 1980s, particularly in the region of the Centro-Sur Altiplano. As the declaration of the state of emergency, and the authorization of the armed forces to enter the Peruvian sierra in December 1982 to take control of the region, the peasants became very conscious that the balance of power lay decisively on the side of the Peruvian army. More importantly, the uncontrolled use of force by the army, its summary execution of both senderista and perceived collaborators, while contributing to the disgruntlement of the population and leading to the joining of the movement by resentful peasants, ultimately had precisely the opposite effect that the Sendero had hoped, drawing the peasantry farther away from the Sendero and pushing them towards a closer

⁶⁶ Hobbes, pp. 375.

cooperation with the army. Now, it is important to note that the violence orchestrated by the armed forces was not in itself a reason for the rapprochement between the armed forces and the peasant communities. The existence of generalized violence is the context in which the decision by these communities was made to cast their lot with the government rather than with the Sendero.⁶⁷

Indeed, the army had faced initial approaches by the peasant communities with great mistrust, which had to be overcome by these peasant communities. This was gradually done by the army through the moving away from the tactics of indiscriminate violence and the shift towards the attempt to build a more cooperative relationship with the peasant communities, exploiting the fact that many of them had come to resent the movement and the miseries it had brought upon the region.⁶⁸ As pointed out by Starn (1995), the revolt of the peasants against the revolution was brought forth by a realization that “the military was not about to ‘collapse before the glorious advances of the people’s war’”.⁶⁹ It is a point that is emphasized by other scholars, such as Theidon (2006) and Stern (1982). As cited in Starn (1995): “‘peasant societies, to survive, are notoriously sensitive to changes in power balances.’”⁷⁰ Thus what we observe is, with the incursion of the military and its violent repression of the Sendero movement, the peasantry became acutely aware that the Sendero was unwilling to directly confront the army, instead employing guerrilla tactics of hit and run that left the peasant communities, differently from the nomad Senderistas territorially bound, vulnerable to military repression.

⁶⁷ Palmer, 1992, pp.5.

⁶⁸ Stern (1999), p. 230.

⁶⁹ Starn (1995), pp. 552.

⁷⁰ Ibid, pp. 552.

This state of affairs was certainly not sustainable, and it did not take long for the peasant communities to actively seek to protect themselves from incursions by the Senderistas in the first place. As stated by Taylor (1998):

The incursion of the PCP-SL into a new area brought some initial benefits, but led to the closure of schools and medical posts, the arrival of the armed forces, a significant escalation in violence, with civilians being caught in the cross-fire and subject to assassination by both parties. If this routine scenario was to be avoided, the rational response was to try and prevent the PCP-SL from operating in your district.⁷¹

The formation of the so-called *rondas campesinas* (peasant militias) was decisive in preventing the expansion of the Sendero's operation and became the focal point of resistance of these communities against the Sendero. However, it must be pointed out that the active resistance of the peasant communities was not in itself sufficient to counter-act the violence of the Sendero. Sendero Luminoso rapidly came to understand the potential threat to its plans in the formation of such *rondas*, and violently sought to suppress any attempt by the peasantry to mobilize itself against the Sendero.⁷² Needless to say, this met fierce resistance by the peasantry itself, which sought the contribution of the army in order to protect and organize such *rondas*. The peasant communities saw their own militarization as the only solution to the cycle of violence that swept through the Peruvian highlands and had claimed the lives of thousands of them.

The peasant communities sought support from the military, by approaching the bases stationed throughout the region in hope for support, both in organization strategy and armament. As put by the Truth and Reconciliation Committee: "If the first organizations [of *rondas campesinas*] could have been spontaneous, the growth and expansion of peasant militias was a

⁷¹ Taylor 1998, pp. 49.

⁷² Taylor 1998, Theidon (2006).

process supported, and often directed, by the military.”⁷³ Here is one crucial element that distinguished the rondas campesinas from the previous strategies of resistance by the peasants. While initially these may have been spontaneously generated, they relied strongly on the active support by the local army, that provided it with the necessary expertise and equipment to organize their war against the Sendero. The peasant communities came to realize that in order to preserve themselves, it was necessary to resort to “taking a stance against Shining Path and forging a conflictive but strategic alliance with the armed forces.”⁷⁴

Thus, the brutality of the military forces, while an initial deterrent to the forging of an alliance between the military and the peasant communities, had made clear that the Sendero was not willing to risk itself in order to protect the peasants from such brutality. The response by the peasants was to, so to say, take matters into their own hands and actively deter the Sendero from forcing them into the spiral of violence and misery that had marked the Maoist insurgency in the Andes. It was a clear objective that of course aligned with those of the military established in the region. Once the initial resistance by the military was overcome, the strategic partnership proved to be a formidable force against the violent strategies implemented by the Sendero. The revolt against the revolution, as put so aptly by Orin Starn (1985) neutralized the efforts by the Sendero to capture the allegiance of the peasantry through terror. This is a dimension of conflict resolution in Peru that proved particularly decisive to reverse the cycle of violence, and stated quite eloquently by the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee:

In retrospect, the peasants were neither the malleable material that the Sendero Luminoso expected nor the submissive mass that the Peruvian armed forces imagined. The defeat of the Sendero Luminoso began when the peasants lost their fear of Sendero’s actions, that for several years had paralyzed them and, side by side with the military, became actors of war.⁷⁵

⁷³ CVR, 441.

⁷⁴ Theidon, 2006, pp. 440.

⁷⁵ CVR, pp. 450.

With the greater institutionalization of the *rondas campesinas*, it became clear that the Sendero Luminoso was incapable of establishing itself in the regions where this particular institution had been established and consolidated. Furthermore, the institutionalization of the rondas made possible the abandonment of the indiscriminate violence against the peasant communities employed previously by the armed forces of Peru. As put by Degregori 1993:

What is sure is that the decision of the peasantry to incorporate itself to the committees of civil defense accelerates the changes in the armed forces that, as they accumulate experience improve as well their intelligence service. The repression [of the movement of the Sendero] becomes more selective.⁷⁶

Yet it is important to note that this solution is a military one, and that it entails as well the use of violence, be it institutionalized or not. The violence is directed against the Sendero Luminoso, yet it is important to note that within peasant communities themselves there were members of the Sendero movement who had to be either corrected or eliminated. It is here that the work done by Theidon (2004, 2006) becomes particularly insightful, especially as it seeks to capture the particular dynamics set in motion in the context of generalized violence, and the attempts by the peasantry to avert such a condition by cleansing themselves from elements of the Sendero. In order to do so these communities had to be tightly organized and sought to do so with the contribution of the military. One “acta”, or edict of the municipality of Hualla, captures this particular dynamic quite strongly:

Communal act of Hualla – 11 of October, 1984:

First: Rise of the community against the subversive delinquents or communist terrorists.

Second: Support to the forces of order or the army.

Third: Naming of the authorities of the district.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Degregori 1993 p. 10. Lo cierto es que la decisión del campesinado de incorporarse a los comités de defensa civil acelera los cambios en las FFAA que, conforme acumulan experiencias mejoran también el trabajo de inteligencia. La represión se vuelve más selectiva

⁷⁷ Theidon 2004, p. 240.

Degregori (1993) points out that there is a significant element of coercion involved in the organization of the rondas. The passage above demonstrates the significant degree of influence of the army upon the particular organization of the communities against the Sendero. Nevertheless, it must be understood that these represent also a spontaneous response by the peasant communities as a defensive mechanism to the “war of all against all” that predominated in the region of the Peruvian Andes and endangered the very existence of these particular peasant communities. The result of this process of gradual consolidation of the rondas was “the monopoly of violence organized by the soldiers, in other words, they generated a type of *Pax Castrense*.”⁷⁸ Along with this monopolization of violence we observe a gradual centralization of the population itself, in which “small populaces, or peasants who lived dispersed, [concentrate] in a single population center converted to a mix of military camp and concentration camp.”⁷⁹ Such centralization of the population reduced the risk of small isolated communities being susceptible to the invasion of the Sendero, as well as facilitating the oversight of the ronda over the actions of the members of the particular community it sought to protect.

These rose as a response to the generalized violence generated by the Sendero and at the same time executed violence obviously against it, as well as enforcing within its communities the particular role of civil protection against the potential subversive elements of the Sendero. This process of cleansing, however, as pointed out by Theidon (2004) would have fatal consequences, as we observe that the peasants engage in warfare against what they understand as being elements within their community, or within neighboring communities, who support the Sendero. Therefore we are to understand that in the process of seeking its protection, the rondas

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Degregori 1988, p.49.

campesinas did not refrain from actively seeking to cleanse surrounding areas from elements of the insurgency movement and therefore were engaging in organized violence against them. This is the formative and transformative aspects of organized employment of violence within a particular territoriality, as the peasants sought not only to acquire the trust and support of the armed forces – since these had the capacity to supply the rondas with the organizational tactics and the weaponry necessary to engage in combat against the Sendero – but also sought to reestablish themselves and the authority of the peasant communities within its territory.

It was essentially a repressive institution, that was controlled by the community itself. Indeed, Theidon (2004) points out that there was discretion over the life and death of particular members of the community if there were suspicions of alliance with the Sendero. Furthermore, as pointed out by Starn (1993) the rondas had prerogatives over the execution of justice. Thus we see the incorporation upon the military institution of the rondas a particular political role of internal organization of society in the punitive and coercive measures it is to implement, as well as the arbitration of justice over a particular territory. However, it is important to note here that the ronda is not an institution separate from the peasantry, one that is dominated by essentially foreign elements who are desensitized to the particular context of the community. Far from it, here we observe in these Andean communities the active participation of peasantries in the protection of their own life, and furthermore, the administration of the foundations (internal cohesion, arbitration) necessary for the survival of the community. While prior to the violence of the Sendero Luminoso, such a formally organized, repressive apparatus was unnecessary – the common assembly (*assemblea comunal*) had sufficed until then – it was impossible to these communities to continue with what had previously ensured the stability of these communities and their survival.

Thus, as a response to violence of the Sendero we observe the institutionalization of organized violence in the peasant communities, yet as always it serves a purely instrumental purpose, insofar as it allows the cohesion and maintenance of the Andean peasant community, protecting it from attacks by the Sendero and, equally importantly, preventing the possibility of attacks by the armed forces since these were constantly engaged in and acted with intimate cooperation. Now, of course this raises the question as to whether the high organization of power at a local level, on a scale that had not been previously seen except for the region of Cajamarca in the 1970s (See Glitlitz and Rosa) raises the question of whether these communities have truly become integrated into the national community or rather became self-sufficient centers of concentrated political power. Starn (1995) raises that question and points out that while it is important for these communities and a great sense of pride for them to have resolved the conflict largely with their own hands, it has not meant that they had simply removed themselves from the Peruvian national community. Theidon (2004) also stresses that there is, as a consequence of the violence, an unexpected resurgence of interest and “reconocimiento” (recognition) of the peasant communities, and as pointed out by Cameron 2009, we now observe a movement “hacia la alcaldia,” towards the mayorship as we see that the forces of political organization and the necessity to integrate themselves as a response to the threats posed by the external environment are not to be met by passivity, but by active pursuit of political power, whether it be through organized violence or, in civilized terms, the electoral ballot.

The rondas therefore serve an explicit political purpose insofar as they begin the process of the monopolization of violence within its territory, which Hobbes and Weber, from differing standpoints, as the main function of the state. Insofar as it is able to do so, the ronda becomes a

highly organized, and indeed a political force at the local level.⁸⁰ Thus, an intriguingly political motion of attempt to monopolize violence is set forth by the peasant communities as a response to the existence of the civil war: apparently Hobbes claim seems to be vindicated. Furthermore, while there is indeed an element of repression involved in the establishment of such rondas, there is also a remarkable degree of consensual agreement between the particular members of the community to establish it.

Yet shall we end at this, and simply lay to rest the question raised by Hobbes in the Leviathan? Hardly so, our inquiry is to lead us further to an analysis of the particular external conditions necessary for a society to ensure its protection by the establishment of some form of military institution that is able to use the physical strength of its members and furthermore coordinate their actions, regulate their behavior, proscribe their actions .⁸¹

Nevertheless it is important to distinguish to what extent the theory proposed by Hobbes corresponds to the actual reality of the Peruvian Andes in the region of the Central-South Andes. It is not simply the case that in the absence of a sovereign, there is the collapse of society into a generalized war of all against all. If this were indeed the case, the communities that inhabited relatively peacefully (although there were indeed occasional conflicts among them) would have never been able to maintain themselves stable throughout the region, corresponding to what previous Andean scholars had described as a fairly stable, cohesive unit of communal cooperation and reciprocal obligation.⁸² Yet the arrival of the Sendero and its use of organized violence had changed the external conditions in which these communities operated, and their reaction had to respond to this new reality, or threaten their simple demise. In regards to this change, it must be stressed that the formation of these tightly organized communities, under the

⁸⁰ Giltlitz and Rojas 1983, p. 165.

⁸¹ Starn 1995.

⁸² Wolf 1961, Mossbrucker 1989, Vilar 1998.

protection of the *ronda campesina* and the army, was a development that had an enormous impact on both the political and economic life of these communities. The violence during the crisis of the Sendero, in this sense, had a profoundly transformative impact upon the peasant communities.

Indeed, one peasant notes that:

Antes de la violencia política no sabíamos hacer nada. Éramos ignorantes. Pero es a partir de esa fecha que recién sabemos hacer algunas gestiones, gracias a todo lo que ha pasado. Seguro Papá Dios nos ha mandado como una prueba.

-FORTUNATO HUANUCO, HUAYCHAO⁸³

Thus we observe the ambiguous role to be played by violence and that it does not necessarily imply the destruction of a particular society as long as it finds within itself the capacity to organize collectively to respond to it, and suppress it. The case of Peru is a remarkable one and demonstrates the tenacity of the peasant communities when left to their own fate. Certainly the inherent weaknesses of the Sendero's strategy contributed to the defeat of its movement, furthermore the presence of the army was indispensable for the successful organization and mobilization of these communities. This is not to say, however, that these complementary reasons for the resolution of the conflict would, by themselves be enough. The forces of fragmentation generated by the organized violence of both the Sendero and the armed forces left a deep scar upon the politics and societies of the Peruvian Andes; yet ultimately the integrative one of the peasant communities demonstrated the resilience and the sheer courage that these peasants had to risk their lives to ensure their own lives and that of the communities they lived in.

⁸³ Theidon 2004, p. 162. Before the political violence, we knew nothing. We were ignorant. But after this date (event, presumably) we began to learn how to run administration, thanks to everything that has happened. Certainly Father God sent this trial to us.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Thus we reach the end of our analysis of the political dynamics set in motion during the violent crisis of the Sendero Luminoso in Peru of the 1980s. We have seen that it was not simply a case of the mere destructive influence of violence: the ambiguous role of it was felt by the peasant themselves, as the evidence above demonstrates. The profound impact of organized violence upon a society is one that cannot be sufficiently stressed, and in it lies perhaps one of the strongest motivations for the consolidation of a tightly organized, militarily based society. The response to fragmentation is indeed integration, but it is important to note that it is one based on several mechanisms, whether it be coercion or voluntarism, what is crucial is the necessity to achieve some form of internal cohesion and the eradication of foreign elements that seek to disrupt the normal functioning of a particular community. The fragmentation of the Peruvian society in the Southern and Central regions of the Andes was one that had taken place indeed far prior to the Sendero: the isolation of the peasant communities, their lack of a military apparatus, had made them particular susceptible victims to the attacks of the Sendero Luminoso.

But the latter was essentially a foreign element, and in being so had to confront the active resistance of the peasants once they had realized that the outcome of their cooperation would be misery: either wrought by the authoritarian structures imposed by the Sendero or the brutal retaliation of the army. The positive attachment of these communities to the Sendero were frail indeed, and soon enough the peasants began to actively resist the imposition of the domination of the Sendero and sought in its active organization or a particular military institution, the *ronda campesina*, a resolution of the conflict that would be able to not only violently repress any form of attacks by the Sendero Luminoso, but also ensure the internal cohesion of these particular

societies. What we observe thus is that the blatant violence of the armed forces would indeed never be sufficient to resolve the massive crisis that the Sendero had posed to the region. The declaration of a state of emergency in 1982 would not by itself resolve the conflict.

What was crucial was the institution of the *ronda campesina*, the active participation of single member of a community in the active protection of the community from outside forces, as well as the internal cleansing of it, with usually fatal consequences. Thus what happens? We observe the formation of small states, clusters of peasant communities that are to be protected and later administered by particular rondas. Thus, from the absence of the state we observe the formation of small states; similar to the coagulation of particular platelets when a wound is formed, as a response to the gaping injuries suffered by the peasant communities in the Peruvian Andes in the 1980s we observe the coming together of the Peruvian peasant communities to staunch the bleeding. It is in this sense that Degregori's (1993) statement can be understood: "las rondas ...pueden servir no sólo para el combate a SL sino como eje alrededor del cual sereconstruya un tejido social devastado por la violencia"⁸⁴ – the rondas may serve not only to the combat against the Sendero Luminoso, but also as the axis around which a social fabric is woven, one that had been devastated by violence.

Thus where are we left? It is worthwhile to consider the further implications of this argument and whether it can be expanded to other areas. This is the primary motive of any form of academic research: its generalizability provides us with important tools to understand the world. What shall be extracted from this, and looked forward to, is the processes through which societies come together in order to address threats to their survival. In the case of an armed insurgency that is not being generated by the particular communities it seeks to dominate, there is a significant margin for cooperation possible if greater autonomy is given to these

⁸⁴ Degregori 1993, p. 23

communities to administer their own survival. While this seems plain common sense, there are significant concerns to be voiced, from a national state perspective, as to the desirability of such policies, insofar as it is formative of what can be understood as small archipelagos of highly concentrated political power that is independent of the national state. Nevertheless, it is crucial to note that this choice should not be left to the hands of a national state removed from the brutal reality of generalized violence, but by the local community that is suffering it.

It was this strategic move made by the peasant communities and the armed forces which provided the foundation for the reestablishment – slow and painful as it may have been – of order and peace in the Peruvian Andes. Perhaps as a postscript to this successful story we may now note the recent flourishing of the Peruvian Andes and its greater integration into the larger economy. Dr. Richard Webb has just recently published a book, *Conexión y Despegue Regional* that addresses the dramatic flourishing of income, wage, urbanization and infrastructure in the Andes that challenges preformed judgments about the irreversibility of its poverty.

But how precisely do we get to that level of development? Dr. Webb argues that it is a confluence of factors: the increasing migration, the increase in the budgets of particular municipalities, the expansion in trade and agricultural production. Yet of course, these are tightly linked to what Adam Smith, in his *The Wealth of Nations*, describes as the existence of some form of “tolerable security.” The necessity for security to exist prior to the material development of a society is found in the *Leviathan*, where Hobbes himself eloquently states:

Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of Warre.... In such condition, there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof of uncertain: and consequently no Culture of the Earth; no Navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea; no commodious Building...⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Hobbes, p. 186.

Yet the story begins in the mid-1990s, precisely when the Sendero Luminoso's deadly grip upon the Andes began to collapse. Such timing, from my viewpoint, is no mere coincidence. We shall not forget the immense cost that violence demands from the individuals whose lives it claims or forever scars. Yet there is indeed, when the collective action of a tightly bound community, seeking to ensure its survival and that of neighboring communities, the hope that once the storm is weathered, better days shall come. The courage and resolution to fight for one's life and that of the communities is indeed one that is laudable. Abuses of power may occur, but these are secondary truly to the primary concern of any particular form of society: its survival.

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