

## Terror and the Privatized State: A Peruvian Parable

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On March 20, 2002, nine months after the inauguration of Peru's newly elected president, Alejandro Toledo, and two days before George W. Bush's much anticipated trip to Peru, two simultaneous car bombs shattered the tranquility of an upper-class neighborhood a few blocks from the U.S. embassy in Lima. Nine people were killed and forty injured in the blasts, for which no one claimed responsibility. Rumors immediately began to circulate in Lima. Some speculated that perhaps the moribund forces of Abimael Guzmán's once-strong Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) party had gathered a new and unnoticed strength. Others cast a nervous glance backwards toward the still very real threat of the National Intelligence Services formerly headed by the now infamous criminal—and once-favored U.S. ally—Vladimiro Montesinos. Still others read the bombs as warnings from the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) and their Peruvian "narco" allies about the dangers of any further concessions to Bush's "Colombia Plan." Along with such rumors, however, Peruvians quickly relapsed into old habits. Security measures were increased, parties canceled, fear revived, and public life curtailed. The bombs had brought with them another unsuspecting victim: the illusion of a time without terrorism.

What remained curiously hidden from most Peruvians' sensibilities, however, was the odd coincidence between these new *coche-bombas* and the March 23 visit of George W. Bush, a visit in which he hoped to reach consensus on an expanded Latin American base for his international war against terrorism. While the allegedly new

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FARC incursions across the Colombia-Peru border served as the immediate, local pretext for the trip, the broader international context was, of course, Bush's push to isolate Cuba and to solidify his own political standing as self-appointed leader of an international crusade against terrorism and evil. As if to signal the true extent to which optimism had taken hold of Peru's political elites, Bush's visit was widely viewed as an expression of the U.S. president's sincere concern for Peru and his desire to establish the beneficial bilateral economic agreements that would help this country—a country that no U.S. president had previously bothered to visit—to recover from terrorism. To guarantee that such agreements could be reached, the Peruvian government passed special emergency laws to ensure that the various demonstrations, planned to coincide with Bush's visit, did not lapse into violence. What Bush was to see was a country where violence had given way to progress and growth. In this context of expectancy, then, the bombs—like other anonymous acts of terror—were less remarkable for whatever special “political” message they were intended to convey than for the instantaneous effect they had on Peruvians' newfound complacency. As if conjuring ghosts of the not quite yet dead, the car bombs drove home the fact that the fear and uncertainty that had pervaded Peruvians' lives during the 1980s and 1990s were not yet a thing of the past.

How are we to read this moment, in which the memories of terrorism in Peru come alive in the new context of a U.S.-led international war on terrorism? How should we think about the different spatial and temporal registers in which a highly localized terrorism—a terrorism that many described as the last Maoist guerrilla war—comes face-to-face with a new international terrorist “network”—which some believe has changed the way in which we need to think about the world? For many people in the world, however, the terrorist acts of September 11, although shocking for their magnitude, did not constitute a paradigm-shattering event. Many Peruvians, Colombians, Guatemalans, and Argentineans, for example, reacted to the disaster with a muted sense of irony. “At last,” they reflected, “Americans will understand what we've been through.” Seen from their perspective, fear and uncertainty were nothing new. Moreover, all of the antidemocratic measures invoked to fight this terrorism—such as suspension of habeas corpus, special military tribunals, sanctioned racial profiling, heightened surveillance, “homeland security,” military checkpoints, unrestricted wiretapping, and censorship—were hauntingly familiar to Latin Americans. While U.S. liberals react with alarm to such dramatic changes in their country's democratic culture and constitutional regime, many Latin Americans credit the United States with fostering similar measures in their own countries. Seen from a regional perspective, it is not difficult to argue that the United States began experimenting with such procedures on another September 11—twenty-eight years ago when a CIA-sponsored coup brought an end to the elected government of Salvador Allende and ushered in the era of neoliberal governance in Latin America. Since that time, the wars in Argentina, Central America, Colombia, and Peru have

served as virtual laboratories for U.S. experimentation with the idea of “market democracy” as a permanent state of exception. For many of the people who have lived through these histories, the post–September 11 events have been secretly relished as signs that the United States is finally “getting a taste of its own medicine.”

In this article, we would like to reflect on the coincidence between these different registers in the history and geography of twentieth-century terrorism—one local and out of date, a sort of last, anachronic gasp of a pre-1989 world; and the other all too global and cutting-edge, a sort of first glimpse of a world where the battle between “fanaticism” and “modernity” has supposedly eclipsed the struggle between left and right. Specifically, in this brief reflection on the recent history of Peru, we want to suggest that a historical understanding of the new regimes of power and meaning introduced by terrorism requires a consideration of the ways in which terrorist violence is mimicked and inscribed in the new forms of state power that have emerged in many parts of the world. Taking the case of the Peruvian Communist Party, Sendero Luminoso (PCP-SL), we first consider how terrorist violence works. We then examine briefly the forms of violence assumed by the Peruvian state in its war against the PCP’s terrorist tactics. We conclude with some reflections on what it is that unites these two forms of violence and their relation to privatized forms of state power.

### **Violence as History**

Violence has, of course, always existed in Peruvian history. Agrarian labor regimes and the extractive or “boom” economies that integrated Peru into the world market were based on coercion and outright violence. Local authorities and landlords practiced their violence with virtual impunity. Opposition to state abuses has also frequently taken violence as a weapon. Land seizures, armed left-wing movements, and strikes have made use of varying levels of violence.<sup>1</sup>

What distinguished the terrorism of the 1980s was both new levels of violence against civilians and a new relationship between violence and state power. The point of departure for this new violence can be located in May 1980, when a little-known left-wing party, the PCP-SL, carried out its first “armed action” by burning the ballot boxes in a small Andean town. During the next twelve years, the PCP-SL expanded its theater of operations from the Andean highlands to the capital city of Lima. Its increasing reliance on targeted killings of local government officials, exemplary punishments, destruction of state infrastructure, and random bombings was met with equal force by the Peruvian armed forces, who quickly adopted all the familiar strategies of a classic counterinsurgency war. The wanton and widespread utilization of violence by the armed forces surpassed its customary and thus accepted levels. The arbitrary detentions, occasional killings in confrontations with demonstrators, torture and mistreatment, exile and deportation with which the state

had previously confronted the opposition and popular movement, gave way to more drastic modes of exemplary violence aimed against the civilian population, popular leaders, and grassroots and left-wing organizations. In rural areas, paramilitary and military “death caravans” carried out torture, rape, and executions; college professors and students disappeared from dormitories; entire peasant villages were relocated into strategic hamlets; thousands of people suffered systematic police harassment and arbitrary detention; journalists, lawyers, and relatives of alleged subversives were executed, arrested, or disappeared. Although international human rights monitors amply documented all of these abuses, state proclamations concerning the “just war” against terrorism met their objections.

The PCP-SL also exceeded the usual accolades to revolutionary violence that had characterized the Peruvian left. In the decades preceding the emergence of the PCP-SL, these had included armed propaganda, economic sabotage, and even occasional military engagement with the state armed forces. In a dramatic reversal from this tradition of class-based vindictive violence, the PCP-SL turned its violence toward those who occupied any sort of middle ground between its own fundamentalist positions and those of the state. It executed leaders of the many unions, peasant federations, women’s groups, neighborhood organizations, and student federations who had not pledged allegiance to the PCP-SL. Activists, elected officials, nuns, priests, nongovernmental organization workers, and local government functionaries were also targeted, often in public executions or “people’s trials.” Senderista cadres in the rural areas also used exemplary punishments to retain control over peasant communities. In the cities, PCP-SL combatants carried out random bombings and shootings of passers-by and bus and cab drivers to enforce the organization’s “armed strikes.” In one of its bloodiest actions, the PCP-SL, in July 1992, set off a powerful car bomb which destroyed several apartment buildings in a residential middle-class neighborhood in Lima, killing over twenty people. Through such acts, the PCP introduced a new form of violence known as *terrorism* into the lexicon of Peruvian political life.

Indeed, the first government reaction to the PCP-SL armed struggle was lexical: the government defined terrorism as a special crime subject to military jurisdiction. Any perceived act of “apology or support” for terrorism was prosecutable as terrorism. Those accused of terrorism were subject to relaxed rules of evidence and received summary trials in front of masked military judges. Curiously, among the most frequent targets of the state’s terrorism laws were the same people targeted by the PCP-SL. Grassroots leaders and elected officials from the United Left coalition (at the moment the country’s second most important electoral force) were charged as sympathizers or terrorists. Antiterrorist legislation also provided justification for rounding up all the dark-skinned *cholos* and *indios* who the state perceived as the “natural” allies of Sendero Luminoso.

Over the following decade, the PCP-SL “people’s war” pried open even further this Pandora’s box of racialized violence and political conflict. For people in the cities, the war meant adjusting their daily lives to nearly constant bombings, blackouts, and police roundups. For Andean peasants caught between the crossfire of so-called terrorists and antiterrorists—to paraphrase an influential early report on the Peruvian war by Amnesty International—the PCP-SL’s armed struggle ushered in a new moment in their history, which they aptly called the *manchay tiempo*, or time of fear.<sup>2</sup> Although fear and violence had certainly existed in other periods of remembered history, the fear generated during this time was in many ways unique. It was, on the one hand, more extreme and, on the other, more arbitrary and thus polarizing. These characteristics, in turn, had much to do with the ways in which the PCP-SL elevated violence to a metaphysical principle at the core of an imagined historical process.

Founded in the early 1970s, the PCP-SL had its origins in one of the splinter Communist Party groups that emerged in the aftermath of the schism between Moscow and Beijing followers. The PCP-SL was established as a militarized cadre organization, which rejected electoral politics and any form of legal struggle as “parliamentary cretinism” and “pacifism.” Both were considered to have their origins in the “revisionism” that Abimael Guzmán saw as dominating the rest of the Peruvian left. While Maoism has always concerned itself with ideological purity, Guzmán took this discourse to an extreme. He described the party as a body that had to be cleansed and purified of the “cancer” and “filth” of revisionism, or of any influence questioning the inevitability of the armed struggle. His metaphors of disease and purification conveyed an ideology whose simplicity proved extremely compelling to the predominantly young and provincial followers who supported the PCP-SL’s armed struggle. As a worldview that divided everything neatly into absolute good or absolute evil, it provided simple answers to the problems of Peru and its largely futureless youth. For Guzmán and his followers, the armed struggle represented a purging mechanism for the attainment of absolute purity, perfection, and truth. As such, violence constituted a means to intervene in the cosmological battle between good and evil. This Olympian struggle was to be fought at all levels of existence, from the universe to the individual soul. “The problem,” asserted Guzmán, “is the presence in each soul of two flags, one black and one red. We are [the] Left, let us make a holocaust with the black flag; it is easy for each to do it, and if not the rest of us will do it for them.”<sup>3</sup>

Since Guzmán believed the opposition between the red and black poles to be irreconcilable, the black or impure pole required total annihilation, leaving no remains. It was the mission of the PCP-SL and its leadership to carry out this task of excising the impure through a process to which Guzmán referred repeatedly as “sweeping” or “burning.” Led by its revolutionary party, the people then had to erad-

icate all physical trace of the “revisionists” so that the “cancer” would not once again reproduce itself. “The people,” wrote Guzmán, “will tear the reactionaries’ flesh, convert it to shreds, and sink the black scraps of meat into the slimy mud; what remains, [they] will burn and scatter to the winds of the earth so that nothing remains except the evil memory of that which must never return because it cannot and must not return.”<sup>4</sup>

This black-and-white vision of political struggle derives from Guzmán’s idiosyncratic understanding of the Maoist and Marxist concept of contradiction. According to Marx, contradiction manifests itself through the struggle between opposing classes in society. In capitalist society, the principal contradictions are those between wage labor and capital, and between money and the commodity form. They are fundamentally and characteristically dialectic because both terms of each contradiction presuppose the other. As such, social contradictions imply a form of inclusive opposition that must be worked out through the concrete actions and struggles of human beings. It is this human agency and struggle that is, for Marx, the motor of history. All ensuing Marxist tradition follows Marx’s interpretation of contradiction as a unity of opposites.

Drawing in part on his studies of Kant, Guzmán rejected the basic Marxist principle of the unity of opposites. He instead constructed his theory of contradiction to parallel Kant’s concept of real or exclusive oppositions, resolvable only through the intervention of a suprahuman agency (the divine). For Guzmán, this meant that the two poles of a contradiction remained in essence different from and external to each other, rather than being viewed, as in the Marxist dialectic, as two aspects of one and the same force. Guzmán concluded that the necessary and only resolution to the antagonism or contradiction between such irreconcilable (because exclusive) poles would be through the eradication of one of them. It is this conclusion that leads to his conception of the armed struggle as a universal purging mechanism—the suprahuman force—which would rid both society and the party of all traces of the evil pole of revisionism and the reaction. The inevitable outcome of this process would be a society cleared of all antagonism, contradiction, and difference—what Guzmán called the “society of great harmony.”

Guzmán also presented the PCP-SL’s armed struggle as an act of destiny because of its inevitability. Building on Kant’s theory of causal necessity, Guzmán saw the party and its armed struggle as the necessary consequence of all past events leading up to this moment. For him, the party had the supreme task of systematizing the force of violence in Peru into the people’s war that would end the third stage of contemporary Peruvian history, or the “general crisis of bureaucratic capitalism.” Bureaucratic capitalism, wrote Guzmán, “is born sick, rotten, tied to feudalism, and subjected to imperialism.” Its destruction was therefore both inevitable and a goal of an armed struggle, which would unfold—with the help of Guzmán’s party—in three

predetermined stages. The first entailed the development of guerrilla warfare and the establishment of bases of support among the peasantry. For Guzmán, the PCP-SL successfully carried on this stage during the first eleven years of its struggle. The second stage involved the deployment of larger military units in frontal engagement with the enemy forces and the establishment of a “strategic equilibrium” between Sendero and the armed forces. The bombings of energy pylons, executions of popular leaders in the strategic shantytowns surrounding the capital city, and intensification of actions of armed propaganda in Lima during May 1991 were all designed to mark the beginnings of the final state of the people’s war. This third stage, the “strategic counteroffensive,” was to be followed by a general urban insurrection, the retreat of the enemy, the final victory, and the establishment of the “New Democracy.”

What made Guzmán’s vision of history-as-armed-struggle compelling was precisely its combination of cosmic inevitability and armed agency. By participating in the PCP-SL’s armed struggle, its cadre believed to be participating in a cosmological unfolding of world history. Such a metaphysical view of history made inquiries into causes or historical processes irrelevant. Thus, for Guzmán and his followers, there was no need to look back into the past and question why or what if—to look for reasons that might provide a moral justification for violence. Rather, morality, like history, was simply a nonissue. “The done is done,” Guzmán taught his followers. “It cannot be reopened. Are we to revoke written time, the fact engraved in matter? How can the grains detain the millstone? They will be reduced to dust.” As in other fundamentalist ideologies (e.g., religion, nationalism, or fascism), individual agency and life were dismissed as irrelevant to the sweeping course of history: “One [person] is worth nothing, the masses are everything. If we are to be something, it will be as part of the masses.” Thus deprived of human agency, morality, or will, the historical movement toward the armed struggle was graphically depicted in Guzmán’s fiery rhetoric as a “storm,” “bonfire,” or “earthquake”—as natural forces impossible for the individual to resist.

For Senderistas then, violence represented the irresistible force moving history forward. Guzmán taught his followers that violence constituted a natural and universal fact that needed to be elevated into the guiding principle for political action, revolutionary praxis, and the reorganization of a “new society.” “We reaffirm ourselves in revolutionary violence as the universal law to take Power and as the essence for substituting one class for another,” proclaimed Guzmán. “We will attain communism only with revolutionary violence, and while there remains a place on Earth in which exploitation exists, we will finish it off with revolutionary violence.” For this reason, Guzmán continued, “We communists must empower ourselves ideologically, politically, and organically to assume [violence] properly.”

### The End of Violence?

In September 1992, the patient surveillance work of a national police unit led by General Ketin Vidal finally paid off with the capture of Peru's most wanted terrorist, Abimael Guzmán. As police operatives burst into his safe house in a middle-class neighborhood in Lima, the much-feared "Fourth Sword of Marxism" waited calmly. On confronting his captors, he is said to have told Vidal: "Sometimes you win; sometimes you lose. This time it's my turn to lose."

On hearing the news of Guzmán's capture, Peruvians celebrated in their homes and in public. For most, it seemed clear that the violence would finally end and that life in Peru's cities and towns could return to normal. Then-president Alberto Fujimori quickly moved to claim the police intelligence operation—begun years before his election in 1990—as a victory for his new hard-line policies of fighting terrorism through increased executive powers, militarization, and the centralization of the national intelligence services under the control of his henchman, Vladimiro Montesinos. Guzmán's arrest, he suggested, would not have been possible without the sorts of special legislative and judicial authority he had delegated to himself some months earlier in the self-inflicted coup, or *autogolpe*, of April 5, 1992. At that time, Fujimori—supported by the armed forces—had closed congress and the judiciary, and had begun to delegate unrestricted powers to his own executive branch. During the months between the *autogolpe* and Guzmán's arrest, Fujimori "streamlined" the judiciary by dismissing judges and magistrates not affiliated with his political organization. He also dismantled the fledgling regional governments established during the previous administration and assembled a handpicked constituent assembly to rewrite the constitution. Through such measures, Fujimori sought to reassert the sovereignty of the Peruvian state as what Schmitt has aptly described as the "monopoly to decide."<sup>5</sup> Indeed, as if setting out to create a textbook example of a state of exception, Fujimori set himself up as a sovereign whose legislative and executive powers were both above and outside the law. In the process, it became clear to all who wished to see, that the precarious foundations of Fujimori's own authority lay in the forms of extralegal force and secrecy that had become the norm during the counterinsurgency war.

But how much of this were Peruvians willing to see? The immediate rhetorical context through which Fujimori attempted to legitimize the overall state of exception was, not surprisingly, the war against terrorism. If extreme measures had not been perceived as necessary during the long years when the war affected mostly indigenous peasants and remote provincial populations, they most certainly were once the war reached the centers of power and the whiter middle classes of urban Lima. The confidence invested in Fujimori's presidency and person by the majority of the Peruvian electorate, who claimed to support the *autogolpe*, suggests the extent



to which their fear of terrorism had indeed blinded them to the dangers of the new type of state that Fujimori and his followers intended to create. Much as the events of September 11 have proven a boon for Bush's failing presidency, the serendipitous arrest of Guzmán on September 12, 1992, served to validate Fujimori's cynical claims to be acting in the national interest. With Guzmán behind bars and public optimism high, Fujimori was left with a virtual *carte blanche* to continue reformulating the rules of democratic governance. The result has been a reshaping of the social pact through which the Peruvian state had historically retained its traditional monopoly on violence.

A key to understanding this new relation between violence and the state can be found in the other enemy that Fujimori conjured as an excuse for his April coup. This equally insidious enemy of the Peruvian nation was the corruption that all Peruvians knew existed in their courts and government offices. It, Fujimori argued, had made it impossible for citizens to obtain justice, for the government to fight terrorism, and—importantly—for foreign investors to find the efficiency they would need to restore Peru's beleaguered, war-torn economy. Like terrorism, corruption was a disease, rotting the nation from within. Like terrorism too, it was invisible and insidious; it was undermining the moral fabric of society and preventing democracy from taking hold. To fight it, it would be necessary to dissolve the existing judicial and legislative branches of the government, purge them of dishonesty, and make them more transparent through their absorption into the centralized control of Fujimori's own executive branch.

The key to this two-pronged crusade against terrorism and corruption was to strengthen the state's sovereign claims to a monopoly on secrecy and knowledge. The war against terrorism and corruption would require a centralized system of intelligence gathering in the form of the National Intelligence Service (SIN). Headed by the former CIA collaborator and drug-connected lawyer Vladimiro Montesinos, the SIN absorbed the formerly autonomous intelligence units of the police and the different branches of the Peruvian armed forces. From his seat of power at the SIN, Montesinos established a string of sensationalist tabloids to attack the opposition. He brokered spurious business deals and used outright blackmail to control nearly all of Peru's television networks and the editorial line of several important newspapers. Through a team of specialists led by the psychiatrist—and convicted murderer—Alfredo Luza, Montesinos established within SIN a department of psychological operations. Dubbed "psycho-social operatives" by the press, these functionaries sought to spread rumors and create moral panics through such tactics as fabricating stories about miraculous sacred images. Oppositional figures, public celebrities, popular leaders, businessmen, and even high officials in the armed forces were blackmailed into supporting the government through rigged tapes and recordings. More humble and not so well-known citizens were also subjected to the gaze of

the state through the hundreds of surveillance cameras installed in Lima's plazas and along streets traditionally used to stage demonstrations, marches, or public assemblies. Hundreds of SIN informants infiltrated colleges and universities, ministries, the judiciary, public offices, and even the military. This revamped surveillance and intelligence apparatus became, in essence, what Sendero had always claimed to be: the "thousand eyes and ears" that knew what each person was thinking, saying, and doing.

Indeed, the history of SIN makes it all too clear that part of what makes terrorism unique is the mimetic power of its fundamentalist claims to secrecy and absolute power. George W. Bush, of course, was quick to demonstrate this last year in his horrifying insistence that the war against terrorism required that "you be either with us, or against us." Beyond sharing the polarizing language of the fundamentalists, the antiterrorist state also appropriates the ahistorical vision of history that terrorists so frequently use to justify their role in it. Montesinos, for example, wrote his own history of the SIN in a language that resonated with Guzmán's metaphysical vision of the party's armed struggle. In this publication, Montesinos describes a "period of incubation" running from 1972 to 1980. During this period, which corresponds to the military dictatorships of Velasco Alvarado and Morales Bermudez, intelligence operations were dispersed in different branches of the armed forces, the national police, and the national investigatory police. The following phase he calls the "period of initiation and consolidation" from April 1980 to July 1985. Here, Montesinos rewrites history to locate the initiation of the centralized SIN one month before the initiation of the PCP-SL's armed struggle in May 1980. His next period, "gradual expansion," corresponds to the period between the armed forces' entry into the war and the 1985 election. The fourth period "of explosive growth" runs through the presidency of Alan Garcia and corresponds to what might be seen as the war's peak. During the fifth period, Montesinos—as if echoing Guzmán's idea of a final phase of a New Democracy—describes a "new role of the State" that is launched with Fujimori's election and culminates in the April 1992 *autogolpe*. Finally, there comes what Montesinos refers to as "the Final Period . . . of involution and irreversible defeat of the subversion."<sup>6</sup> What is striking here, of course, is the extent to which Montesinos's language of historical movement and causation mimics that of Guzmán. Whereas Guzmán located violence at the center of historical movement, Montesinos constructs the SIN as the new state's nerve center and, as such, as the organic force moving history forward. By celebrating secrecy as the key to consolidating state sovereignty, Montesinos made state violence simultaneously inevitable and invisible.

As the immediate—and intended—effects of recentering the state around the secrecy and exceptional powers deemed necessary to combat "invisible" enemies, the state's relationship to violence becomes paradoxically both more visible

and more pervasive. As all historians and theorists of the state well recognize, state sovereignty is always founded on violence. This fact, however, has always remained a well-kept secret for the defenders of liberal democracy. Kant himself very clearly understands that the origins of justice and law lie in what he calls “reciprocal coercion.” Yet at the same time, he cautions us regarding the inherent danger of dwelling on this point of origin. “The origin of the supreme authority,” Kant writes, “is not open to scrutiny by the people who are subjected to it. . . . Whether as historical fact, an actual contract . . . originally preceded the submission to authority or whether, instead the authority preceded it and the law only came later or even is supposed to have followed in this order—these are pointless questions that threaten the state with danger if they are asked.”<sup>7</sup>

Terrorism brings this secret into the open and forces a reaccommodation of the state’s relationship to violence. In so doing, it dramatically changes the terms in which state violence is “seen.” In Bush’s post–September 11 world, for example, it is no longer possible to contend that U.S. power does not rest and depend on military means. Nor is it any longer necessary for the state to hide that fact. Similarly, in Fujimori’s Peru, state violence in the form of arbitrary arrest, disappearances, summary justice, illegal wiretapping, surveillance, and even blackmail became an acknowledged and—for many—acceptable feature of the new state. As long as terrorism was around, such “excesses” found easy justification as necessary weapons in the cosmological battle between good and evil. When terrorism appeared on the decline, they measures could be either denied or attributed to terrorism, thus conveniently reinvoking the enemy necessary to maintain the state of exception. Thus, following Guzmán’s arrest, Fujimori allowed for a brief window of optimism. However, he very quickly called on all Peruvians not to let up their guard. Terrorism, he warned the public, had not been totally defeated. For that reason, it was necessary to keep over 50 percent of the country’s territory in a special state of emergency under military administration and with suspended civil rights until far past the time when any armed actions had been reported.

It was also necessary to continually invoke, as the state-controlled television channels and newspapers did, the imminent return of the terrorist. Thus following Guzmán’s arrest and the sharp drop in terrorist violence, state-controlled television stations began to report on the shadowy movements of the rebellious PCP-SL commander “Feliciano,” whose column was supposedly spotted moving through the eastern slopes of the Andes. In July 1999, Feliciano was finally captured (just in time to bolster Fujimori’s annual state of the nation address on July 28). After claiming credit for the arrest, Fujimori immediately invoked the threat of a second renegade column under the leadership of Artemio, another Senderista leader who, Fujimori arrogantly announced, would be captured in February 2000, just in time for the next round of elections. The dramatic display of Feliciano on national television was part of the daily

barrage of media images through which Fujimori and Montesinos sought to keep terrorism alive as a national menace. Television programs showed footage from surveillance cameras in which purported terrorists were seen moving around in public markets and streets. The message conveyed was clear: the “thousand eyes” of the state were tracking the terrorists, both ubiquitous and invisible to the common citizen.

Until the bitter end, Fujimori continued to invoke the ghostly presence of Sendero to legitimate his rule. In the days before elections, army patrols would move through the former war zones of the Peruvian highlands, warning peasants, who had not seen a Senderista for years, that a Sendero column had just been sighted “over there, just beyond that next ridge.” To ensure the army’s continued protection, they were cautioned, it would be important to cast their vote for Fujimori’s ruling party.

### Conclusion

After a dramatic period of escalating popular mobilizations against the electoral fraud through which Fujimori attempted to steal the presidency for an unconstitutional third consecutive term, both Fujimori and Montesinos fled the country in the final months of 2000.<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, the events that triggered their fall from power grew out of the same arrogance that had permitted their hold on power for so many years. Fujimori’s handling of the April 2000 elections against Alejandro Toledo made patently visible the extent to which he considered himself above the law. Montesinos’s fall, in turn, followed shortly after the release of videotapes in which he is seen paying elected representatives to switch over to the government party. Both incidents proved fatal precisely because they made visible the fault lines along which the neoliberal state had constructed its precarious legitimacy. What became visible through Fujimori’s arrogant and overtly fraudulent handling of the elections, and through the videotapes of a smiling, camera-conscious Montesinos handing over large wads of cash, was the fine line separating the forms of privatization and profit making integral to the neoliberal state project from the forms of privatized power and illicit gain that form the target of anticorruption campaigns. If corruption represents such a source of anxiety—and such a reality—in neoliberal states, it is precisely because it must be constantly distinguished from the backroom deals and cabals through which decisions about the “legitimate” privatization of state assets occurs. It is no coincidence that *transparency* became a political watchword in the 1980s. During this period public interests began to be regulated by supragovernmental (and nonelected) organizations whose priorities lay in selling off assets and services once administered by independent nations who worked—at least on the discursive level—in the public interest of national communities.

The neoliberal state is thus given an impossible charge: to be transparent in its operations while at the same time auctioning off regulatory and service functions to the inherently opaque domain of private interests. This, then, is the context within

which Fujimori and Montesinos reasserted secrecy as a traditional and necessary seat of state power in Peru. They justified secrecy as part of the state of exception that they claimed necessary for the successful elimination of terrorism. What is remarkable is the way in which the claim to exceptional powers that comes along with the belief in a “just war” depends on a logic in which the state must assimilate the tactics of the enemy. To combat terrorism, it must assume or mimic the invisible and exceptional forms of power to which the terrorist so effectively lays claim. However, an important distinction must be made between the terrorism of the state and that of nonstate actors. Whereas the terrorist, who has no legitimate or lawful claim to power, can openly celebrate and mythicize violence, the liberal state must deny that its laws (and thus forms of legitimacy) are grounded in violence.

This paradox, which is central to all liberal states, took a particularly dramatic—or exaggerated—form in a historical context in which Peru was forced not only to fight a very real and frightening form of terrorism, but also to shrink its own institutional and regulatory powers to meet the demands of neoliberal policies of economic restructuring and privatization. Indeed, more than any other Latin American leader, Fujimori had subscribed to neoliberalism in chapter and verse. He carried out the required economic and state reforms by making use of the exceptional powers he had gained through the war on terrorism. These same circumstances had allowed him to privatize social services and regulatory functions of the state without meeting any of the usual criteria of transparency and accountability.

To return to our opening questions, then, one way to think about the different registers that seem to distinguish Peru’s experience of terrorism from the circumstances we all now face in the U.S.-led war on terrorism, is by asking what happens to particular economic and political regimes when populations and states accept exceptional powers as a means of combating the exceptional violence of terrorism. The case of Peru suggests that we should worry about not just the horrifying loss of life that will inevitably come when powerfully militarized states take on the exceptional powers of the terrorist, but also about how the escalating demands for state secrecy will play in the sphere of economic interests, the privatization of public services and national resources, and the regulation of privacy and human rights. So far, the experience with Bush’s war on terrorism gives every indication that the Peruvian experience was less an exception than a rule. If the United States is indeed getting a taste of its own medicine after September 11, let us hope that that medicine does not bring with it all the bitter aftertaste that Fujimori’s secret deals and privatization schemes left in the lives of Peruvians—who must now live with the fear and uncertainty of an economy that has no future, a society that has only the very rich and the very poor, and a state that has nothing left to sell.

### Notes

1. For “traditional” forms of violence in Peru, see Deborah Poole, ed., *Unruly Order: Violence, Power, and Cultural Identity in the High Provinces of Southern Peru* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1994).
2. For a detailed account of this war, see Deborah Poole and Gerardo Rénique, *Peru: Time of Fear* (London: Latin America Bureau, 1992). See also Carlos Ivan Degregori, *Ayacucho, 1969–1979: El surgimiento de Sendero Luminoso* (Lima: IEP, 1990); and Steve Stern, ed., *Shining and Other Paths: War and Society in Peru, 1980–1995* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998).
3. Abimael Guzmán, “Por la Nueva Bandera,” in *Guerra popular en el Perú: El pensamiento Gonzalo*, ed. Luis Arce Borja (Brussels: Borja, 1989), 145; Authors’ translation.
4. Abimael Guzmán, “Somos los iniciadores,” in Borja, *Guerra popular en el Perú*, 165. Authors’ translation.
5. Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), quoted in Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 16.
6. Vladimiro Montesinos, “El sistema de inteligencia nacional y la subversion,” in *Comando en Acción: Revista del Comando Conjunto de las Fuerzas Armadas*, 1994, 27–44.
7. Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysical Elements of Justice*, trans. John Ladd (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), 84.
8. See Deborah Poole and Gerardo Rénique, “Popular Movements, the Legacy of the Left, and the Fall of Fujimori,” *Socialism and Democracy* 14.2 (2000): 53–74.