

Ideology in Context: Explaining Sendero Luminoso's Tactical Escalation*

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This article explains tactical escalation by a Peruvian left-wing group during the 1980s and 1990s as an interaction effect between organizational ideology and the broader political and organizational environment. In 1980, Peru's Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) organization ended a decade of political organizing and launched armed struggle against a new civilian government. Peru had been governed since 1968 by military officers, but popular pressure, including strong left-wing protests, had forced the military to cede control. In responding to democratization with revolution rather than electoral participation, Sendero broke with the rest of Peru's Marxist left. In 1983, Sendero again escalated its tactics, initiating a campaign of violent intimidation against Peru's legal left. By 1996, according to data assembled for this study, the group had selectively assassinated some 300 prominent Peruvian leftists. For theorists of revolutions and social movements, Sendero's tactical trajectory poses two important puzzles. First, many revolutionary theorists believe that transitions from authoritarianism to elections decrease armed insurgency. Why, then, did Peru's democratization provoke Sendero's escalation? Second, Sendero might well have been expected to cooperate with other left-wing groups, rather than to attack them so brutally. Why did Sendero choose an alternative path? The group's anti-left measures are all the more puzzling given the opposition they provoked among potential allies at home and abroad. This article explains Sendero's choices by drawing on political opportunity theory, theories of organizational competition, and the concept of declining protest cycles. Democratization can promote greater levels of strife if small but violence-prone groups fear marginalization in electoral politics. A dense left-wing social movement sector, moreover, can stimulate internecine competitive fighting if only some of the movement's members accept the legitimacy of national elections.

Introduction

In 1980, the Peruvian left-wing group Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) ended a decade of nonviolent activism and initiated a surprisingly effective armed struggle against the Peruvian state.¹ Over the next 14 years,

the organization's influence spread from the mountainous region of Ayacucho, where Sendero was initially based, to most areas of Peru. The number and frequency of armed Sendero actions climbed dramatically during the decade, reaching a crescendo in the late 1980s and early 1990s (McCormick, 1992).² Starting from a small core of several hundred committed activists, Sendero's roster of full-time fighters climbed to a reported 10,000 persons in the early 1990s, while its part-time supporters were estimated at 50,000–100,000 (McClintock, 1998: 441–455).² See Kent (1993: 441–455) for Sendero's geographic diffusion.

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¹ The group's full name is the 'Communist Party of Peru – For the Shining Path of Mariátegui'.

74–75). Throughout, Sendero combined political organizing with violence, targeting bureaucrats, security personnel, wealthy peasants, business leaders, and politicians. Peruvian security forces responded harshly, killing, injuring, and disappearing thousands (Americas Watch, 1990; Amnesty International, 1991; McClintock, 1998: 117–118). Beginning in 1983, Sendero gradually supplemented its assault on wealthy peasants and state agencies with violence and intimidation against left-wing activists, grass-roots organizers, and left-liberal intellectuals. By 1996, Sendero had selectively assassinated some 300 activists from Peru's legal left (see Figure 3 and Table I).

Sendero's tactical trajectory poses two important questions for scholars of internal war, revolutionary activism and social movements. The first question is one of timing: why did the group initiate armed struggle in 1980? Although the movement was founded in 1970, its leadership waited a decade before taking up arms. The choice of 1980 is particularly intriguing in that this was the year of the Peruvian left's greatest political victory: in 1980 the Peruvian military, which had seized power during a 1968 coup, responded to popular pressures by ceding power to an elected civilian president. Sendero was the only left-wing group to respond with violence. Sendero's 'declaration of armed insurgency in 1980', a noted historian of Peru observes, 'seemed absurdly out of step with the turn of the polity and the leftist opposition toward competitive electoral politics' (Stern, 1998a: 3). Sendero's 1980 choice also challenges conventional wisdom in revolutionary theory, which suggests that elections and partial democracy are powerful *disincentives* to armed struggle (Goodwin & Skocpol, 1989; McClintock, 1998; Wickham-Crowley, 1992).

The second question pertains to Sendero's campaign of assassination against Peru's left. Why did Sendero choose to attack other

Peruvian leftists, rather than pursuing collaboration? Why would a revolutionary movement attack groups close to its own political position? Although these assassinations were a small percentage of the total number of persons slain during the 1980s and early 1990s, they had a major impact on the way in which Sendero was perceived at home and abroad. Within Peru, Sendero was increasingly hard-pressed to recruit allies amongst the legal left and, over time, some Peruvian leftists began even to consider cooperation with state security forces (Burt, 1992: 5). Internationally, Sendero's assassinations were similarly counterproductive. Although the Peruvian state systematically abused human rights in its fight with Sendero, its brutality never translated into international support for a Sendero insurgency. In this, Sendero's experience was markedly different from that of El Salvador's leftist guerrilla coalition, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), which skillfully leveraged abusive government policies into international sympathy for its cause (Arnson, 1993; Whitfield, 1995).

Drawing on social movement theory and assassination data assembled for this study, I explain Sendero's tactical trajectory as the product of an interaction between movement frames, political opportunities, and competition within Peru's social movement industry. 'Movement frames' are organization-specific interpretations of reality offering a diagnosis of, and a prognosis for, specific social problems (Benford, 1993, 1997; Johnston & Klandermans, 1995; Snow & Benford, 1988); 'political opportunities' are new institutional arrangements that change the context in which collective action takes place (McAdam, 1982; McAdam, McCarthy & Zald, 1996; Pagnucco, 1996; Tarrow, 1998); and 'social movement industries' are clusters of organizations similarly concerned with social change (Zald & McCarthy, 1980).

In the Peruvian case, the relevant movement frame had two components. The first was Sendero's fierce anti-electoral sentiment, expressed by its leader Abimael Guzmán as the belief that 'elections have never given the working class or the people power', leaving only one option: 'prolonged and hard armed struggle' (Gorriti, 1999: 58). The second was Sendero's distaste for Peru's legal Marxist left, which had accepted elections and was therefore, in Guzmán's words, 'nothing more than opportunists, bourgeois agents infiltrated in the breast of the workers' movement, the best champions that the bourgeoisie can ever hope for' (cited in Gorriti, 1999: 123). The political opportunity in question was Peru's 1980 transition to civilian rule, while the social movement industry was Peru's organized left, which grew exponentially during the 1970s and 1980s.

Many theorists of revolution have observed that interaction effects between ideology, political and social context are vital, as neither ideas nor social structure alone can explain movement trajectories and tactics (Goldstone, 1991; Moaddel, 1993; Skocpol, 1985; Sewell, 1985). In the case of Peru, the need for an interactive model is particularly acute, since most Peruvian leftists responded to democratization with peaceful organizing, not violence, and most reacted to intra-left competition with collaboration or nonviolent competition, not assassination. Sendero's tactics were the exception, and its choices are most plausibly explained by reference to the interaction of its ideological orientation with broader contextual factors.

Sendero Luminoso: The Record

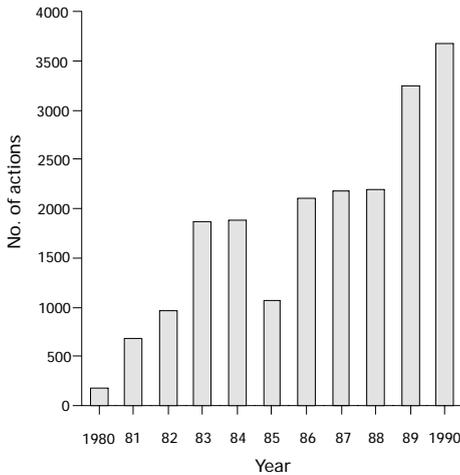
Unlike Nicaragua's Sandinistas or the Salvadoran FMLN, Sendero was increasingly reviled in both conservative and liberal circles. Critics of Peru's government often highlighted the structural causes for revolution in Peru – structural adjustment,

poverty, racism, and unemployment – but then recommended ways of ameliorating the situation *before* Sendero could seize power. Unlike the Sandinistas or the FMLN, a Sendero victory was rarely viewed by commentators on the right or the left as an improvement over the existing Peruvian regime, deeply flawed as it was. In 1992, for example, Alexander Wilde, then executive director of the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) – a respected US advocate of liberal/left movements and a bitter opponent of US foreign policy in Latin America – argued that Sendero Luminoso is 'an organization that utilizes terror tactics on a broad scale . . . [which are] particularly vicious, because they strike directly at human rights figures and popular leaders, the foundation of democracy' (US Congress, 1992). Americas Watch (1990: 7), the New York-based human rights group, also harshly criticized Sendero, noting that 'Sendero continues to enforce its control through brutality, including the killings of entire family groups, threats against the lives of citizens who participate in elections, selective murders of local officials and parliamentary candidates, and bombings'. Americas Watch, WOLA, and other liberal US groups rarely used such language when condemning other leftist groups in Latin America.

The extraordinary rise in political violence in Peru during the 1980s is clear from Figures 1 and 2, assembled from a RAND Corporation database (McCormick, 1992). Figure 1, which displays the number of Sendero-related violent attacks during 1980–90, underlines the growth in Sendero activity over the decade. Figure 2, which lists deaths attributed to Sendero–government clashes, shows that the number of persons slain by both sides mounted dramatically in 1983 and 1984, declined slightly thereafter, and remained at high levels until 1990. Although the RAND study does not continue beyond 1990, Sendero activity continued strongly

Figure 1. Acts of Sendero Political Violence, 1980–90

Source: McCormick (1992: 22).

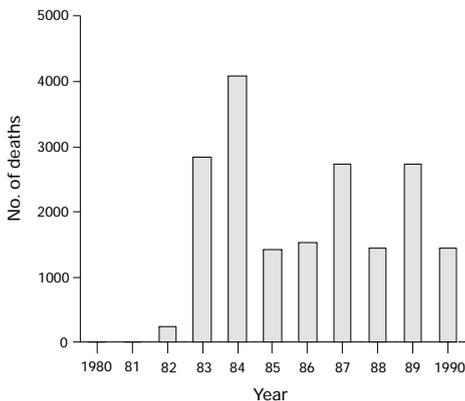


until September 1992, when Peruvian security forces captured the group's charismatic leader, Abimael Guzmán. Altogether, some 30,000 persons died from the hostilities during the 1980–95 period. According to human rights sources, the Peruvian security forces are responsible for half those deaths, as well as an additional 6,000 disappearances (Burt, 1998b: 36).

Sendero's difficulties in generating external sympathy did not stem from its assault on

Figure 2. Total Deaths Attributed to Political Violence Between Sendero and the Peruvian Government, 1980–90

Source: McCormick (1992: 22).



the Peruvian state, however. Other left-wing guerrillas in Latin America have rebelled against authority while retaining broad-based support at home and abroad. In many cases, in fact, it was only when guerrilla groups demonstrated battlefield credibility that external actors agreed to extend rhetorical or moral aid. Instead, Sendero's image problems stemmed largely from its attacks on the legal Peruvian left. Sendero rejected municipal and national elections, threatened those who did with violence, and eschewed long-term coalitions with other left-wing Peruvian groups. Although Sendero contested elections in some community organizations and trade unions, it rarely cooperated with other Peruvian social movement organizations.³ Journalists and academics alike described Sendero as a dogmatic, uncompromising, and vicious movement rejecting any option other than violent revolution.

As noted above, Sendero's criticisms of Peru's legal left were backed by violent intimidation during 1983–96. The study conducted for this article reveals that, during those years, Sendero selectively assassinated 291 left-wing union leaders, community organizers, politicians, and municipal authorities.⁴ Although these killings are an imperfect measure of Sendero's anti-left campaign, they are a good indicator of the overall trend. During 1980–82, Sendero did not systematically attack Peru's legal left, targeting instead individuals detested by rural communities for cattle-thievery, excessive wealth, corruption, or selfishness (Berg, 1986–87: 165–196; Isbell, 1988). This policy began to change in 1983, however, when Sendero's anti-left campaign first gathered steam (see

³ For an intriguing and empirically rich case study of Sendero's combined use of political organizing and assassination in a Lima suburb, see Burt (1998a).

⁴ McClintock (1998: 294) reports a different figure, counting 502 Sendero assassinations of 'political authorities' between 1980 and 1992. Her data do not specify whether the victims were all associated with the legal left, however, which may account for her higher tally.

Figure 3. Sendero Assassinations of Prominent Peruvian Leftists, 1980–96
Source: See Appendix.

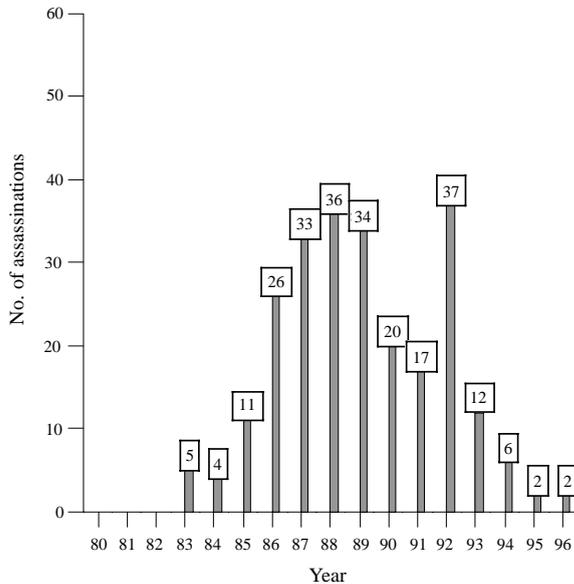


Figure 3). The anti-left assassination rate rose throughout the decade, declining slightly in 1990–91, and then climbed to a new crescendo in 1992. Following that year's capture of Sendero leader Abimael Guzmán, the death rate began again to recede.

Sendero's anti-left violence focused on activists affiliated with Peru's two principle legal-left groupings, the pragmatic, social-democratic American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana or APRA), and its more radical rival, the United Left (Izquierda Unida or IU).⁵ Sendero's assassination victims fell into four main categories:

- (1) Local authorities identified with APRA or the IU, including mayors, governors,

⁵ Although APRA was not considered part of Peru's radical left, it is included in this survey because it was a left-leaning, populist party that actively sought to recruit activists and supporters from Peru's poorest classes. For an overview of APRA, see Graham (1992). For a discussion of APRA's rivalry with the IU in Lima, see Burt (1998: 272). For a broader discussion of Peru's left-wing political terrain, see Hinojosa (1998).

and bureaucrats working for public development agencies.

- (2) Popular leaders identified with APRA or the IU, including activists in grass-roots organizations, peasant communities, neighborhood committees, and unions.
- (3) Political leaders, including candidates running for local or national elections on APRA or IU platforms.
- (4) 'Intellectuals' associated with APRA or the IU, including students, nongovernmental organization (NGO) volunteers, and professionals.

There are substantial regional variations in Sendero's assassination record. Our study revealed that death rates were highest in and around Lima, the capital city, followed by Ayacucho and then Junín, the industrial corridor to the east of Lima (see Table I).

Immediately below, I review several explanations for Sendero's tactics. Although informed and compelling, these arguments ultimately fail to persuade because they do not specify how and when Sendero's ideology

Table I. Sendero Assassinations of Peruvian Leftists by Department, 1983–96

	<i>Lima</i>	<i>Ayacucho</i>	<i>Junin</i>	<i>La Libertad</i>	<i>Huanuco</i>	<i>Apurimac</i>	<i>Pasco</i>	<i>Huancavelca</i>	<i>Ancash</i>	<i>Lambayeque</i>	<i>Puno</i>	<i>San Martin</i>	<i>Piura</i>	<i>Arequipa</i>	<i>Canamarca</i>	<i>Cusco</i>	<i>Ica</i>	<i>Loreto</i>	<i>Callao</i>	<i>Amazonas</i>	<i>Ucayali</i>	<i>Madre de Dios</i>	<i>Moquegta</i>	<i>Tacna</i>	<i>Tumbes</i>	<i>Total</i>
1983		1		1			1	2																		5
1984		2	1		1																					4
1985	5	2		2	1		3	1																		14
1986	6	5	7	1	2	1	3	3			2				1	1			1							33
1987	6	6	4	2	5			1	2	1	1	1			1					1						33
1988	2	12	7	3	2	14	5	2			1			3	2											55
1989	6	3	7	4	2		1	5	1		1		4	1	1											37
1990				7	2				1	6	1	3	1		2	2		4								27
1991	8	3						1				2		1					2							18
1992	25	1	7	2	1		1		1	1			1						1							42
1993	11				1				1																	13
1994	6																									6
1995	2																									2
1996	2																									2
Total	79	35	33	22	17	15	14	13	8	8	7	7	6	5	5	5	5	4	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	291

Source: See Appendix

interacted with structural factors. Following this brief review I provide my own analysis based on theories of political opportunity, cyclical decline, and social movement competition.

Violence as a Function of Organizational Ideology

Few analysts of Sendero discuss the movement without noting its uniquely combative ideology. Theorists who privilege the role of Sendero's ideas or 'movement frame' tend to highlight Sendero's 'Gang of Four' Maoism, the strand of Chinese political thought which became fiercely anti-reformist during the Cultural Revolution. Sendero's interpretation of that doctrine tended to view violence as an end in itself, a cleansing or a liberating force capable of driving out traditional ways of thought, allowing for new, revolutionary modes of behavior to take root. As the Sendero leader reportedly said in 1984, 'Blood makes us stronger' (cited in Gorriti, 1999: 105).

Journalist Simon Strong (1992) is one of the clearest and most colorful exponents of this argument, arguing for a close fit or 'frame resonance' (Benford, 1993) between Andean mysticism and radical Maoism. Strong analyzes Andean rituals and myths, which speak of lost Inca glory, an Indian/Andean/Inca utopia, and revenge against the Spanish oppressors, and notes the affinity with Maoism. 'It is the symbiotic nature of the relationship between Maoism and Andean tradition', Strong argues (1992: 64), 'that has conspired to turn centuries of hate into action, that has transformed chaotic rebellion, sometimes supine, other times blindly vengeful, into organized revolution'. The fit between Andean and Maoist world-views, Strong says, is bolstered by their shared emphasis on 'ideological purity' and their dichotomous, black-versus-white view of the world. The white half must eliminate the

black, and the preferred method is bloodshed, which acts as a cleansing, purifying, and motivating force. Once Sendero defined both the Peruvian left and the state as inhabitants of the 'black' half, they became targets for unflinching attack.⁶

Although many academics agree that Sendero's ideology was uncompromising and violent, some identify its roots in the leadership's political socialization, rather than Strong's Andean/Maoist synthesis. Gorriti's 1994 article comparing Sendero leader Abimael Guzmán to Stalin is one of the best of this genre (see also Gorriti, 1999: 98–103). Gorriti notes that while many communist leaders developed personality cults, they tended to do so after their movement's victory, as was the case in the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, China, and North Korea. Sendero, on the other hand, was unique in that the cult of Sendero's leader Guzmán developed during the course of the insurgency itself. Thus 'what distinguishes Sendero from other Communist parties', Gorriti (1994: 168) states, 'is that it had an autocrat at the helm from the very beginning of the armed struggle'. As a result, Sendero had a more unified, hierarchical, and centralized ideological line and decisionmaking process centered around Guzmán's uniquely radical thinking. Given Guzmán's central role in Sendero, his biography and intellectual background become of supreme importance in seeking to comprehend the organization. Thus Gorriti places great emphasis on Guzmán's scholarly training, his relationship with Stalinist intellectual Carlos De la Riva, and his trips to China during the Cultural Revolution. One of those visits in particular was a 'decisive experience. The Cultural Revolution was just beginning and revolutionary zeal was burning again countrywide'. Guzmán 'received thorough

⁶ A more sober version of this argument can be found in Palmer (1986).

instruction in People's War doctrine', which reinforced his interest in clandestine warfare and the use of explosives (Gorriti, 1994: 174). More importantly, perhaps, Guzmán absorbed Mao's hatred of political and ideological reform. China was then caught up in a broad-based campaign for ideological purity, anti-reformism, and orthodoxy, infusing Sendero's future leader with like-minded sentiments. Ever since the China visits, Gorriti says, Guzmán – and therefore his rigidly governed Sendero – was committed to harsh, anti-reformist action.

A third version traces Sendero's violent ideology to entrenched cultural legacies of Peruvian racism. Degregori (1994), for example, argues that Peru has three key racial categories – light-skinned Spanish descendants, Indians, and mixed-race mestizos – and that relations of suspicion, resentment, and anger prevail amongst them. The Peruvian elite is largely light-skinned, while Indians and mestizos occupy the bottom two niches. Although mestizos were historically superior to Indians, their privileges were eroded in recent decades as a result of economic growth and government intervention. Since many of Sendero's original cadre were mestizos, their relation to the Indian population was simultaneously paternalistic and violent. Degregori (1994: 58–59) argues that Sendero cadres articulated an 'authoritarian, tortuous, violent love of the [mestizo] superior for the [Indian] inferior, whom they sought to redeem or "protect" from the evils of the modern world', bolstering their own social position and egos in the process. Sendero's violence against left-wing Peruvian groups, in other words, was heavily influenced by broader currents of mestizo-Indian relations, rather than Chinese political thought or Guzmán's personal biography.

The ideology-based perspectives offered by Strong, Gorriti, and Degregori are clearly vital components of any analysis of Sendero, highlighting the group's predilection for

violence and its combative, anti-reformist world-view. Although these analysts do not specify a clear mechanism linking Sendero's ideology to specific strategies of violence, the implication is clear: Sendero's way of thinking makes its members prone to use violence against persons and groups defined as enemies, including both the Peruvian state and the legal left. Although the state is Sendero's chief enemy, the reformists, including even the legal Marxist left, are dangerous because of their betrayal of the revolution and the false hopes they offer.

What an exclusively ideational approach does not provide, however, is some way of determining the precise impact of these movement frames across time and space. Why did Sendero embark on armed struggle in 1980? Why, in later years, was Sendero respected and supported in the Upper Hualaga Valley, while it earned the hatred of many poor folk in Lima's shanty-towns? Why did Sendero engage in more assassinations in some regions than in others, as is apparent from Table I? Theorists privileging ideological orientation tend to posit vague tendencies without specifying when and why those tendencies are deployed in practice. When does Sendero's militant 'movement frame' swing into operation? When does it not? Why did Sendero launch its armed struggle in 1980, and not in 1975 or 1985? Why did the group assassinate more leftists in Lima than in Ayacucho? Any explanation relying solely on the power of ideas cannot fully answer these questions.

Violence as a 'Selective Incentive'

At first glance, Marks's (1994) rational choice approach appears to offer a convincing alternative to the ideational perspective. Rather than stressing Sendero's seemingly irrational world-view, Marks argues that Sendero's anti-left terror was a highly rational 'selective incentive' aimed at persuading

reluctant individuals unwilling to support the movement. Drawing implicitly on Olson's (1971) analysis of collective action, Marks describes Sendero's assassinations as a way of using violence and fear to persuade the under-motivated to join.⁷ Since 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' (Marks, 1994: 219–220).

Posed this way, Marks's analysis appears radically at odds with the ideological explanations surveyed above. Rather than arguing that uncompromising violence was hard-wired into Sendero's organizational identity, Marks sees terror as one of several potential recruitment strategies which Sendero could choose at will, depending on whether it encountered support or rejection. If the population in a given region were to cooperate with Sendero, the group would not use violence. If locals were to resist recruitment, however, Sendero assassins would swing into action, using violence as an 'incentive'. Marks's approach is thus almost explicitly anti-ideational, privileging 'harder' themes of rationality, resources, recruits, and organizational development.

This approach appears to offer a persuasive explanation for regional variations in Sendero's assassination campaign. Unlike the ideology theorists, Marks would not anticipate an indiscriminate campaign of anti-left violence by Sendero. Instead, he would expect the group to use violence selectively, targeting only those persons resisting recruitment. Thus in those areas where assassinations were high, the resistance to Sendero must have been strong. In areas where assassinations were low, on the other

hand, the locals must have been more willing recruits.

Marks's approach does suffer from two weaknesses, however. First, without reference to Sendero's unique ideological orientation, can we really explain Sendero's willingness to use violence in the first place? Some organizations use terror as a 'selective incentive', but others don't, viewing terror as illegitimate, immoral, or counterproductive. Sendero's use of violence as a recruitment tactic is only comprehensible when we factor in Sendero's movement frame. Marks does not do so, however, deploying a thin version of rationality that privileges narrowly defined, individual-level cost-benefit calculations over explanations placing rational action within a broader context.⁸ In portraying terror as a universally rational recruitment tool, moreover, Marks implicitly and wrongly defines *all* revolutionary movements as potentially cruel and indiscriminate killers willing to use terror to gain recruits.

A second drawback is Marks's limited analysis of the difficulties Sendero faced in recruiting members. Relying on a narrow interpretation of rationality, Marks focuses on the reasons that *individual* Peruvians might refuse to join, dwelling chiefly on the threat of government retribution. Could it be, however, that many Peruvians were willing to join risky social change organizations, but resisted recruitment into Sendero because of prior commitments to other political groups? Marks does not envision a more complex organizational terrain in which other political groups with similar interests might compete with Sendero for the loyalty of poor and/or progressive Peruvians. His analysis might have been more compelling had he taken note of Wickham-Crowley's (1992) study revealing that in Latin American countries where the rural

⁷ Classic rational choice perspectives on revolution can be found in Taylor (1985) and Lichbach (1994).

⁸ See Ferree (1992) for a critique of overly rationalistic analyses of social movements.

population was already mobilized by mass-based organizations, guerrilla movements encountered substantial barriers to recruitment. Guerrilla movements in undermobilized countries, on the other hand, did much better, since the population was politically 'unattached', leaving 'vast tracts of the national political patrimony' as 'virgin soil' for guerrilla recruiters (Wickham-Crowley, 1992: 257–259). Had Marks drawn on this perspective and provided a richer understanding of Sendero's political competition, he might have better explained the resistance Sendero encountered during recruitment efforts. Some people surely refused to join Sendero for fear of government reprisal, but, as we shall see below, others were already involved in rival left-wing groups. Much of Peru was not 'virgin political soil', to use Wickham-Crowley's words, but was instead occupied by strong, legal-left parties supporting parliamentarianism, including Marxist radicals.

Both the ideological and rational choice perspectives highlight vital causal variables. Sendero's world-view is essential to any explanation, but Sendero's violence is also grounded in rational decisionmaking linked to issues of recruitment, organizational development, and competition for scarce resources. In the following sections I explain Sendero's tactics by combining ideology and rational action with Peru's political and social context, focusing in particular on two tightly defined puzzles: Sendero's initiation of armed struggle in 1980 and its use of anti-left terror after 1983.

Empirical Puzzle #1: Why did Sendero Initiate Political Violence in 1980?

On 18 May 1980, after years of repressing anti-authoritarian protests, the Peruvian military dictatorship transferred executive power to newly elected civilian leaders. At

precisely that moment, however, Sendero decided to launch its revolutionary armed struggle. Why? After all, as many scholars have noted, violence has little appeal in systems marked by even a small measure of democracy (Goodwin & Skocpol, 1989; McClintock, 1998; Piven & Cloward, 1977; Wickham-Crowley, 1992). Ché Guevara cautioned would-be revolutionaries that 'one should never try to start a revolution against an elected government' (cited in McClintock, 1998: 5), a warning echoed by Goodwin and Skocpol (1989: 495), who discovered that the 'ballot box . . . has proven to be the coffin of revolutionary movements'. Why, then, did Sendero choose armed struggle at the precise moment of Peru's democratic transition?

Sociologists have offered different explanations for violent escalation by social movements. White's (1989, 1993) accounts of the Irish Republican Army's (IRA) decision to use violence in the early 1970s, for example, argues that the Republicans chose violence only after peaceful protests were brutally repressed by British troops. 'Support for political violence', White (1989: 1297–1298) argues, 'results from a conscious decision that occurs when people come to see peaceful protest is futile', concluding that 'state repression is the major factor' explaining armed struggle. White views escalation to violence as a tactic of last resort, used only when other, more peaceful methods have failed.

White's theory does not seem to hold up well in Peru, however. When Sendero's plenary session decided on 28 March 1980 to launch the shooting war, 12 years of Peruvian military dictatorship and repression were just coming to an end, and the political system was on the verge of liberalization (Gorriti, 1999: 27–28). Sendero's leaders thought the new democratic government would hesitate to use severe repression, and realized that nonviolent methods of political expression

and protest would soon be legalized (Gorriti, 1999: 33). Sendero's path was thus diametrically opposed to that which White might predict. Although state repression was perhaps a causal force in Sendero's expansion during the 1980s, it cannot explain the initial 1980 decision to begin armed rebellion.

McClintock (1998: 94) notes the limited applicability of the state repression-causes-revolt approach to Peru, but argues that, subsequently, politics cannot be the cause of Sendero's decision. Drawing on regime-based theories of revolution, McClintock argues that politics cause revolutions only when authoritarian systems shut challengers out. Since the Peruvian elections of 1980 were relatively fair, Sendero had no particular reason to feel repressed or excluded. Thus, McClintock concludes, politics cannot be the cause of Sendero's decision to escalate, turning instead to economic explanations. McClintock may have rejected political causality too readily, however. Focused on the lessons of revolutionary theory, McClintock examined only one dimension of politics, namely 'exclusion'. What if we were to conceive of the political more broadly, noting that dramatic political shifts, *either* towards greater openness *or* towards closure, can substantially effect revolutionary and/or social movements?

Social movement theory's political opportunity theory provides one such broad interpretation of political moments. Political opportunities, according to McAdam, McCarthy & Zald (1996: 2), are changes in the broader, institutionalized political system structuring opportunities for collective action. Unlike the regime-oriented revolutionary theories reviewed by McClintock, political opportunity approaches do not believe that only political closures will prompt escalation. Rather, they argue that new political configurations – whatever they may be – can create new opportunities for collective action, either violent or nonviolent. In fact,

many social movement theorists argue, government concessions, political openings, and increased popular access to political decisionmaking often lead to tactical escalation, not de-mobilization (Rasler, 1996).

More importantly, perhaps, many political opportunity theorists recognize that the broader political changes must fruitfully interact with movement ideologies if new movement trajectories are to occur. In their discussion of movement escalation towards violence, for example, political opportunity theorists argue that radical ideology is a necessary but insufficient explanation for tactical escalation. As Tarrow (1998: 196) discovered for Germany and Italy, 'political violence' by social movement organizations 'did not derive directly from the presence of ideologies that justified violence'. Instead, 'radical ideologies engendered radical violence repertoires only when political opportunities triggered escalation'. The political opportunities approach would thus suggest that 1980, a year of dramatic transformation in Peru's broader, institutionalized political system, played a key role in Sendero's escalation. How and why did this happen? The answer lies in the growth of the Peruvian left during military rule and the decisions forced upon all left-wing groups by the 1980 transition to formal democracy.

The 1968–80 dictatorship, paradoxically, had been a period of tremendous growth for the Peruvian left. Although repressive, the military junta also firmly supported progressive goals such as development, redistribution, and agrarian reform. Believing traditional landowners were blocking modernization, the junta created alternative forms of political organization in the hope of mobilizing the masses behind a military-led modernization effort. In the process, Peru's military rulers generated a plethora of new political organizations such as unions, peasant federations, and rural cooperatives (Burt, 1998a; Hinojosa, 1998; North &

Korovkin, 1981). Although many of the regime's goals were not implemented, its vision of popular mobilization was widely diffused, often by grass-roots organizers on the government's payroll. The Velasco military government (1968–75) was particularly active, creating SINAMOS, a state agency whose mandate was national social mobilization. As a result, Peru's organizational density was high in comparison to other Latin American countries. Importantly, two of the largest unions were Marxist (McClintock, 1989: 139).

In the late 1970s, however, Peru's military regime grew more conservative, and an increasingly mobilized political left began extensive and ultimately successful protests against military rule. In July 1977, trade unions organized a countrywide strike, all but shutting down the economy. Ten days later, Francisco Morales Bermudez, Peru's military dictator, announced the armed forces would conduct free elections for a civilian national assembly the following year. On 18 June 1978, the elections took place, and far left groups earned an impressive 29% of the popular vote. On 18 May 1980, the military held elections for a civilian president, finalizing the transition to civilian rule (McClintock, 1998: 102–103). By this time the Peruvian left was a large, well-organized 'social movement industry', united in its shared opposition to authoritarian rule. Although the military had facilitated the left's growth during the early 1970s, the left and the junta eventually parted ways, increasing the pressure for civilian rule.

In the years immediately preceding democratization, the Peruvian left was enmeshed in vigorous debates over its future role in civilian elections. Different left-wing 'coalitions and groupings drew together, drew apart, and drew together again within a few months, leaving behind a wake of acronyms and complex affiliations and ruptures' (Gorriti, 1999: 10), with the 'major

cleavage' being over participation in the new civilian political system (Woy-Hazleton & Hazleton, 1994: 226). Once the transition arrived, each one of these groups was suddenly forced to grapple with the specter of bourgeois democracy. Would they abide by the new rules of the game, accepting the legitimacy of electoral politics? Or would they refuse liberal democracy for fear their social justice agenda would be sidetracked, co-opted, and ultimately lost? The new civilian system did not guarantee the redistribution of wealth, land, or political power, promising only to allow civilian elites greater access to centralized political power. How would poor peasants fare under the new democracy? How would the trade unions do? What could the transition possibly do for Lima's shanty towns? The 1980 transition forced a resolution of that debate, requiring that decisions be made and that action be taken. Peru was becoming a limited electoral democracy or 'polyarchy' (Robinson, 1996), and protest groups hoping to be 'legitimate' players in the new environment would have to abide by the new rules of the game. In this respect, Peru's experience was not particularly unique. As Pagnucco (1996) observes, democratizing transitions have forced similar social movement decisions elsewhere, especially in Latin America and Eastern Europe. The diffusion of new political rules requires that each group defines anew its mandate, strategy, and tactics, forcing to the surface unresolved issues hidden when everyone worked together in a unified anti-authoritarian coalition.

Such moments of decision are crucial sites of interaction between ideology and social context. Although all Peruvian leftist groups faced the same new political environment in early 1980, each organization's response was shaped by its movement frame. Although many groups were left-wing or Marxist, Sendero was one of the most uncompromising and anti-reformist of them all. When the

elections arrived, Sendero's unique ideological orientation interacted with a unique Peruvian political moment, producing the decision to fight.

On 19 April 1980, Guzmán announced that

our work with hands unarmed has concluded. . . . A period has ended. . . . the people's war will grow every day until the old order is pulled down. . . . The flesh of the reactionaries will rot away, converted into ragged threads, and this black filth will sink into the mud. (Gorriti, 1999: 28, 34–35)

Although Sendero's ideological radicalism predated the spring of 1980, the impending political liberalization forced the group to concretize that radicalism through its decision to begin armed struggle. Sendero's first armed action took place on 17 May 1980, a day before general elections. Five Sendero militants entered a voter registration office in the town of Chuschi, located in the Ayacucho department, 'subdued and tied up the registrar, then burned the registry and ballot boxes. The attack began at two in the morning and was over in less than thirty minutes. . . . And so the war began' (Gorriti, 1999: 18). According to Gorriti (1999: 20), Sendero chose that particular village because 'a decision had been made to attack electoral symbols, and the ballot boxes and registry were kept in Chuschi'. Sendero launched armed struggle at the precise moment of transition to civilian rule, and picked as its first target the clearest possible manifestation of the new liberal democracy. Democratization and enhanced political openness had, paradoxically, produced tactical escalation. Although such a development might have been predicted by political opportunity theorists, it was the exact opposite of the dynamic revealed by White's (1989, 1993) study of the IRA, where British repression of Republican demonstrations had provoked escalation. In the Peruvian case it was

liberalization, and not repression, that stimulated Sendero's revolution.

Protest cycles and interorganizational competition are also relevant to Sendero's decision. As Tarrow (1998) demonstrated in his German and Italian case studies, social protest often comes in waves, and these protest cycles often take on a life of their own, impacting organizational decisions independently of other causal forces. When a cycle is on the upswing, organizations often share similar goals and methods. When the cycle begins to decline, however, processes of 'internal differentiation' amongst protest organizations set in as they compete for increasingly scarce resources. In Germany and Italy, Tarrow (1998: 196) reports, formerly allied social movements began to behave 'like rival companies vying for a share of the market', with 'each political organization' trying to 'distinguish its "product" from that of the others'. In some cases, 'groups attempted to survive by radicalizing their structure and ideology', leading to outbursts of political violence. An organization's temporal, ideological, and structural location within a protest cycle can have a huge impact on one's 'radicalism' and willingness to use violence. In many cases, the more radical groups are willing to use violence only at the tail end of a protest cycle, rather than at its beginning or middle. Della Porta & Tarrow's (1986) study of Italian Red Brigade violence supports their claim for the importance of 'tactical differentiation' during periods of cyclical movement decline. Italy's Red Brigades were the 'unwanted children' of the Italian left, isolated by new political arrangements and fearful that a declining cycle would leave them stranded, bereft of a social mission and resources. The Brigades thus turned to violence as a way of competing with and criticizing those leftists who had successfully merged with the political establishment.

Similarly, we can view Sendero's 1980

decision to launch revolutionary war as an act of 'differentiation' vis-à-vis other Peruvian groups, as well as a way of countering a declining Peruvian protest cycle. The 1977–80 period was one of intense political protest and mobilization in Peru, but once the transition to civilian rule was secured, the left had no burning, short-term issues to fight for. The protests had been victorious, and the political system had been successfully changed. A partial decline in political energy, activism, and protest resources could be expected as the left shifted from extra-parliamentary activism to electoral campaigns. As the more powerful groups geared up for elections and parliament, activists in the smaller organizations such as Sendero could expect to be increasingly marginalized. This was especially true given Sendero's rural, marginal image. Even in Sendero's birthplace, the remote Andean province of Ayacucho, mainstream leftists perceived Sendero in the 1970s as a group of 'crazies' and 'country bumpkins'. Sendero was 'considered to be just one of many minuscule organizations', regarded with disdain by the rest of the Peruvian left (Hinojosa, 1998: 62). More seriously, perhaps, Sendero's leaders, many of whom were university faculty at Ayacucho's Universidad Nacional de San Cristóbal de Huamanga, had lost their influence over the university's bureaucracy in the mid-1970s, driving the group further towards the outer edge of Peru's leftist social movement industry (McClintock, 1998: 263). Sendero's low status within the industry continued even after it began armed actions in 1980, when 'the mere mention of the Shining Path', according to Gorriti (1999: 64), 'provoked jokes in Lima, even on the legal left'. With the reinstatement of civilian government, most Lima elites viewed Sendero as a 'hysterical group outside history and situated on the political and psychological margins'.

Given Sendero's marginal position in the

overall Peruvian left, its leaders could have reasonably assumed that, after the 1980 liberalization, the lion's share of recruits, resources, and energy would flow to the main leftist parties, APRA and the IU, leaving the smaller leftist factions to wither away. What advantages could Sendero offer in comparison to the larger political groupings? What could their unique contribution be in a new era of national party politics, centered on the capital, Lima?

Sendero carved out a unique niche of its own by responding to the 1980 transition with violence rather than cooperation. In so doing, Sendero hoped to reinvigorate the Peruvian protest cycle while simultaneously differentiating itself from the broader, reform-minded Peruvian left. As noted above, however, ideological orientation remains key. Had Sendero's world-view not been prone to radicalism, it would most probably have responded differently to the prospect of cyclical decline, diminishing resources and interorganizational competition. Revolutionary violence against the state, after all, was only one of many possible forms of 'tactical differentiation'. As Tarrow argues, protest cycles are important structural forces in their own right. Organizations respond to cycle trends differently, however, based upon their own interpretations of reality.

The irony of the 1980 'political opportunity', then, is that greater political *openness* in Peru sparked Sendero's turn to armed struggle. In contrast to theories stressing the importance of repression and political *closure* in sparking revolution, the exact opposite occurred. Peru began to democratize, but political liberalization pushed Sendero towards revolutionary war, not towards political acquiescence. Although regime-based revolutionary theories may find this difficult to comprehend, social movement theory's political opportunities approach encounters no such problem.

Empirical Puzzle #2: Why did Sendero Attack Other Peruvian Leftists?

In 1983, Sendero again escalated its tactical repertoire, defining Peruvians on the legal left as targets for assassination. Why did the group launch attacks on potential allies? Above, Della Porta & Tarrow (1986) drew our attention to interorganizational competition and processes of 'differentiation' among like-minded groups, while Tarrow (1998) linked that competition to broader institutional changes or 'political opportunities'. Zald & McCarthy (1980) add depth to this approach, noting that personnel, money, and materials are scarce in densely populated social movement industries. This scarcity can spark competition between organizations 'for the time, effort, loyalty and money which citizens can give or withhold' (Zald & McCarthy, 1980: 4). When this happens, organizations with similar goals are led to compete with one another and challenge each other's credibility. Zald & McCarthy argue that the 'radical fringe' phenomenon in broad social movement industries, of which Sendero is a stellar example, is best explained by reference to competitive dynamics within the industry.

Competitive dynamics can often be exacerbated by state efforts at co-optation, Zald & McCarthy argue, which provoke further quarrels within the industry and drive 'radicals' and 'moderates' farther apart, ultimately ending in acrimony and violence. The process works in the following way: in an effort to attract additional members and resources, social movement organizations initially offer slightly different visions of the means and ends necessary to achieve their goals. Within an industry comprised of different organizations, some groups offer more comprehensive visions of required social change. States prefer to negotiate with organizations seeking less comprehensive

goals, however, and, in doing so, may push those seeking more comprehensive change beyond the pale of legitimacy. Moderate groups become 'legitimate' through their dialogue and cooperation with the state, while the more radical-leaning groups are driven to the fringes and transformed into supremely 'illegitimate' factions. Mutual recriminations break out among the two strands of the once-unified social movement industry, and the 'rich rhetoric describing fine degrees of co-optation and "selling out" grows out of this process' (Zald & McCarthy, 1980: 8). Organizational competition and state co-optation, in other words, magnify relatively minor initial differences between like-minded organizations, transforming interpretive nuances into bitter, ideologically driven debates. As a result, the broader social movement industry becomes polarized between the legal 'mainstream' and the illegal 'extremists'. Paradoxically, radical fringe groups may spend more time attacking the social movement mainstream than the authorities, since the mainstream is drawing off valuable resources from the limited pool available to the entire industry.

The relevance of Zald & McCarthy's approach to Sendero's assassination campaign seems clear. If a Peruvian social movement organization were to seek state legitimacy after 1980, it would have to embrace the new electoral process. As Gorriti (1999: 11) observed, in 1980 'those on the left had successfully joined the system. And they began to have a stake in maintaining the system's stability. . . . As part of government, the left would have an important role to play in changing the nation's course', a role that would be reinforced throughout the 1980s. Those that refused to accept parliamentary democracy, however, would find themselves placed beyond the pale by the state and the newly legalized mainstream left. As a result, small differences between Peruvian groups that appeared insignificant in the 1970s,

when all social movement organizations were equally excluded by the military government, would become magnified and bitterly contested. If the legitimized Peruvian left or 'social movement industry' was densely organized and broadly based, moreover, the newly 'illegitimate' Sendero could be expected to launch a campaign of terror out of competition for scarce resource.

Zald & McCarthy's (1980) scenario seems to account quite well for Sendero's trajectory. Peru's organized civil and political society grew throughout the 1980s, presenting formidable competitive challenges to Sendero. Mutual recriminations became the norm, Sendero accused the moderates of treason, and violence ultimately erupted in 1983. The growth of organized Peruvian political and civil life in the 1980s is indicated by Peru's rate of urban population, secondary school enrollment, per capita number of television sets, per capita number of newspaper copies, and newsprint consumption, all of which ranked higher than comparable Andean countries (McClintock, 1989: 138). Of even more direct relevance was the emergence of broad-based political parties of all persuasions following the 1980 transition. As one observer noted, 'the most important phenomenon to have developed since 1980, as opposed to the pre-1968 era of politics, is the emergence of an organized and well-articulated ideological spectrum which covers the whole distance from Left to Right' (Dietz, 1986-87: 146-147). Ever since the 1978 municipal elections, Peru has demonstrated high levels of political participation. During the 1980 presidential elections, for example, 82% of registered voters participated, followed by 92% in 1985 and 77% in 1990 (McClintock, 1998: 121).

The growth of the legal Peruvian left during the 1980s was particularly important, since it was these groups who competed directly with Sendero for the same resources and recruits. In the 1980 general elections,

the IU and APRA together won over 30% of the popular vote; that figure rose to 67% in 1985, 21% of which was earned by the radical-Marxist IU (Tuesta, 1994: 175, 194).⁹ The left's performance at the municipal level was similarly impressive. In the 1980 municipal elections, the IU and APRA gained over 45% of the vote; in 1983, their combined strength rose to 62%; and in 1986 they earned a resounding 78% (Tuesta, 1994: 169, 182, 188). Throughout, both the IU and APRA criticized Sendero's tactics and vigorously supported electoral politics (Dietz, 1986-87: 157).

The year 1985 was an especially important period of competition. While Sendero was seeking to aggressively expand throughout the country, APRA presidential candidate Alain García won the presidency on a platform of social-democratic reforms, pro-poor rhetoric, and economic redistribution. In 1986, when Sendero launched a major organizing effort in Lima, the IU and APRA fought a furious electoral contest for control over the capital's municipality. 'The race between IU and APRA was bitterly fought down to the last days of the campaign', Dietz (1986-87: 157) writes, with both parties running on platforms emphasizing their commitment to the poor. Over 80% of registered Lima voters went to the polls that year, one of the highest rates in the country (Tuesta, 1994: 169). The contest, which APRA ultimately won with 37.7% to the IU's 35.3%, signaled the legal left's success in generating substantial pro-election sentiment in Peru's capital, the ultimate Sendero target.

During the authoritarian 1970s, the ideological differences between Sendero and other Peruvian leftists were not as substantial as they appeared during the democratic 1980s. The dynamics of legitimization and de-legitimization identified by Zald &

⁹ In the 1990 election, matters were complicated by the introduction of two new parties, which upset the previous left-right division.

McCarthy (1980), however, forced the 'moderate' and 'extremist' wings of the Peruvian left further apart after the 1980 transition. As Gorriti (1999: 93) notes:

[I]f the paths that the other [Marxist] movements had taken between 1965 and 1980 gave the occasional impression of being parallel [to Sendero], as of 1980 they were not only in opposite directions but in open conflict. The Marxist left would end up defending the society that the Shining Path wanted to dynamite.

The IU and APRA accepted the new rules of the game, Sendero did not, but both were seeking to mobilize resources from the same pool. The 'legal left was a significant barrier to Sendero's success', and in areas where 'left organizations were strong, Sendero made few inroads'. As a result, 'Sendero made the legal left a key target in its guerrilla war' (Woy Hazleton & Hazleton, 1994: 226). Competition was especially intense between Sendero and the IU, as both sought the mantle of revolutionary-left leadership. The IU was formed as an umbrella organization for the radical-but-legal left in August 1980, only months after Sendero initiated armed struggle, and, like Sendero, the IU's strength grew throughout the 1980s. As the two groups enlarged their popular base, Sendero's competitive tactics became more brutal.

Zald & McCarthy's (1980) theory of organizational competition can also help explain regional variations in Sendero's assassination campaign. In the Andahuaylas and the Upper Huallaga Valley, overall left-wing mobilization was low.¹⁰ In the Huallaga in particular, Sendero was viewed as an important source of protection by coca growers suffering from extortion by Peruvian police and narco-traffickers. With the IU and APRA displaying less of an organized presence in these regions, Sendero encountered few obstacles to recruitment and resorted less

frequently to anti-left assassinations. In Lima, on the other hand, the organized, legal Peruvian left was strong, competition with Sendero was intense, and Sendero's rate of assassination was quite high. Other factors must have contributed to the variation in assassination rates witnessed in Table I, including individual initiatives of regional Sendero leaders and the strength of the Sendero presence. Still, Zald & McCarthy's focus on competitive dynamics within social movement industries provides a useful explanation. It seems likely that the more specifics we learn about Sendero's competition with the legal left in a given region, the more we will comprehend variations in Sendero's assassination rate.

As Marks (1994) argued in his rational choice analysis, Sendero's anti-left violence was instrumentally rational in as much as it was a calculated act aimed at promoting resource mobilization and recruitment. Zald & McCarthy add to Marks's perspective by emphasizing the importance of competition *within* social movement industries. Whereas for Marks the limits to Sendero's growth were caused by individual Peruvians fearing government retaliation, Zald & McCarthy suggest it was at least partially caused by interorganizational competition among Peruvian leftists.

Their analysis is incomplete, however, without reference to issues of movement framing. Intra-industry competition cannot, on its own, explain Sendero's assassination campaign. Like Marks, Zald & McCarthy appear to assume (wrongly) that violence, competition, and recrimination are the only 'rational' responses to competition. Why, however, did Sendero not try to compete peacefully with the IU? Why did it not build tacit or formal alliances? The important role played by Sendero's ideology is underscored by the counter-example supplied by the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru

¹⁰ For the Andahuaylas, see Berg (1986–87). For the Upper Huallaga Valley, see Gonzalez (1994).

or MRTA), a smaller Peruvian guerrilla group that encountered similar problems of competition. Unlike Sendero, however, MRTA never launched a Sendero-style campaign of terror against its legal-left rivals. MRTA's ideology was also very different from Sendero, never expressing the same anti-reformist sentiments as the Maoists (McCormick, 1993). Had Sendero's movement frame not predisposed it to violent anti-reformism prior to its encountering densely populated organizational terrains, the group might not have responded with anti-left killings, no matter how tough the competition. Another counter-example is provided by El Salvador's revolutionary coalition, the FMLN, which responded to competition from other leftist individuals and groups in the 1980s with coalition-building, not violence. Although some killings of non-FMLN leftists did take place, FMLN activists never approached Sendero's deadly record (McClintock, 1998: 59–60). Sendero faced a spectrum of possible choices when responding to intra-left competition, with assassination being only one of many options.

Sendero's ideological orientation, combined with organizational competition and partial state legitimization of the legal left, generated a unique strategic response to changes in Peru's social and political context. The world-view of Sendero's leadership acted as a filter through which it processed information and devised policy. That filter was shaped by some of the most radical variants of revolutionary thought, influencing Sendero's choices at critical moments. We should take care, however, not to confuse a filter with a preconceived, fully developed blueprint for action.

Contributions to Social Movement Theory

This study contributes to the social movement literature in several ways. First, it adds

an additional case to the small number of studies dealing with social movement violence. Although violence has been carefully studied by some social movement scholars (Della Porta, 1992, 1995; Della Porta & Tarrow, 1986; Tarrow, 1998; White, 1989, 1993), the contemporary debate has focused, for the most part, on nonviolent movements (Seidman, 2000). If social movement theory is to be broadly relevant to the contemporary world, however, it will have to deepen its understanding of armed struggle, the tactic of choice for many protest groups, including the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), which has fought the Turkish state for almost two decades; the Kosova Liberation Army (KLA or UCK), whose 1998–99 uprising against Serbia sparked NATO's air war; the Palestinian *Hamas*, which challenged the Palestine Liberation Organization's (PLO) decision to negotiate with Israel; the *al-Jama'a Islamiya*, mired in a protracted battle with the Egyptian state; and the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), still locked in a desperate struggle with Algeria's military rulers. Although all these groups are bona fide social movement organizations, their violence and non-Western geographical location have conspired to exclude them from social movement debates in the USA and Europe.

A related contribution is the notion that movements typically referred to as 'revolutionary', rather than 'social', are part of the same phenomenon: contentious collective action (Goldstone, 1998; Seidman, 2000; Tarrow, 1998). McAdam, McCarthy & Zald (1996: 9) lament that revolutions are 'a form of collective action that has, in recent years, come to be studied as a phenomenon distinct from other categories of movements', while Tarrow (1998: 3) regrets that revolution 'is mainly studied in relation to other revolutions, and almost never compared with . . . social movements'. By using social movement concepts and theories to analyze Sendero – a movement typically labeled as

'revolutionary' – I have sought to challenge this conceptual divide.

Third, this article has provided a case study of interaction between ideational currents, organizational context, and political environments, an important theme in social movement and revolutionary theory (Moaddel, 1993; Polletta, 1997; Sewell, 1985; Skocpol, 1985). While some scholars focus on 'soft' variables such as culture, ideology, and movement frames, others privilege 'hard' structural variables such as resources, repression, and organizational dynamics. Although social movement theorists often recognize the importance of both, it is difficult to clearly specify linkages between the two. By focusing on two, tightly bounded empirical puzzles – Sendero's 1980 launch of armed struggle and its 1983–96 use of assassinations against the left – I have tried to deepen our understanding of this relationship.

Finally, this article has addressed the notion that social movement organizations can, under some conditions, contribute to civil violence during major political transitions (Bermeo, 1997; Pagnucco, 1996). In Peru, as we saw, Sendero's ideological radicalism was translated into violence when it interacted with the 1980 transition to civilian rule. While conventional wisdom regards democratization as an unproblematic good, conflict scholars have been more cautious, believing it can exacerbate political violence in the short term (Bratton & van de Walle, 1996; Hegre et al., 2001; Snyder & Ballentine, 1996; Woodward, 1995). Examples include Turkey, where the 1981 transition to civilian rule helped create conditions for a Kurdish insurgency; the former Yugoslavia, where elections contributed to ethnic mobilization in the early 1990s; Congo-Brazzaville, where international electoral pressures partially fueled warlordism during 1991–95; and Rwanda, where electioneering exacerbated Hutu extremism before the 1994

genocide. This article's contribution to this debate shows how 'movement frames' can interact with democratization to promote violence.

Conclusion

Does this mean that democratization is a bad thing? No, since full democracies do tend to be more respectful of human rights (Howard & Donnelly, 1986; Mitchell & McCormick, 1988; Poe & Tate, 1994), and do, over the long term, promote greater civil stability (Hegre et al., 2001). Any claim regarding the *inherently* destabilizing effects of democratization is clearly misplaced (Sadowski, 1998: 106–111; Smith, 2000). The Peruvian case, however, does support the notion that democratization can have adverse outcomes. Liberal political rights, moreover, are only one of a panoply of ingredients required to create a truly participatory democracy, rather than a 'polyarchy' in which power is circulated among elites and nominally free elections coexist with gross inequalities (Robinson, 1996).

What about the Peruvian government's response to Sendero's violence? Was it effective and/or justified? During the first five years of Sendero's insurgency (1980–85), the military responded with indiscriminate brutality, alienating the peasantry and creating waves of internally displaced. Torture, disappearances, and illegal killings were widespread. As a result, Sendero's popular appeal was broadened, and its reach spread throughout the country. Over time, however, Peruvian armed forces developed a more nuanced approach, making some effort to selectively target guerrillas. By the late 1980s, this policy was supplemented by state efforts to recruit and arm rural 'rondas' or village-based civil patrols (Starn, 1998, 1999). Although the mobilization of rural civilians frequently *escalates* civil violence and human rights abuses (Kalyvas, 1999), the Peruvian case – on balance – appears to have had a more positive

outcome, due to the Peruvian military's populist traditions and broad-based resentment of Sendero's tactics, including its assault on the legal left. Starn (1998, 1999) argues that while Peru's *rondas* have encouraged rural patriarchy and clientelism, they have also provided peasants with some opportunities for empowerment and representation, as well as protection for those unwilling to join Sendero.

Former Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori's April 1992 'self-coup' was as controversial as the *rondas*. The coup was taken amidst mounting fears that Sendero was winning the war, and polls suggested at the time that between 70% and 90% of Peru's population supported the coup as a way of restoring stability (Burt, 1992: 5). Twelve years of conflict had produced tremendous war-weariness and fatigue, and many Peruvians hoped that, after a swift defeat of Sendero, Fujimori and the military would return the government to democratic and civilian rule. The government's capture of Sendero leader Abimael Guzmán in September 1992, coupled with Guzmán's 1993 call for a negotiated peace, suggested this might be the case.

By 1995, however, it became clear that the coup was not to be short lived, but was rather a return to militarized authoritarianism (Burt, 1998b). Fujimori's regime made little effort to work with the legal left against Sendero, choosing instead to rely on Peru's security forces. Officials ignored evidence of systematic government human rights abuses, rode roughshod over grass-roots groups, and promoted a harsh, neoliberal package of economic policies. In 1995, moreover, the Peruvian legislature passed a law guaranteeing security force members immunity from prosecution for human rights offenses. Fujimori's victory over Sendero, in other words, had given Peru's leaders a dangerous sense of entitlement and impunity. Thus while peace of a sort had been achieved, Peruvian democ-

racy paid a heavy price. By 2000, however, the regime had unraveled amidst accusations of corruption and gross abuse of power, especially by Peru's top internal security officials. Fujimori fled into exile in Japan and new elections were called. Eight years after democracy was suspended to combat Sendero, Peru's counter-insurgency regime collapsed under its own authoritarian weight.

Appendix

The data on Sendero anti-left assassinations (Figure 3 and Table I) were gathered by Ana María Quiroz, a Peruvian sociologist and human rights activist, who drew on the publications of DESCO, a respected, Lima-based group monitoring political violence. For the data on Sendero assassinations until 1988, the main sources were DESCO's *Political Violence in Peru: 1980–1988*, published in Lima. For the 1989–96 period, the main sources were DESCO's monthly *Special Reports*. The publications note acts of political violence committed by the security forces as well as various Peruvian guerrilla groups. In addition, unpublished DESCO data, daily newspapers, and local experts were consulted as supplementary sources.

Victims: Criteria

For the purposes of this study, a 'left-wing activist' was classified as any victim with a clear affiliation to APRA, the social-democratic party, or with the IU, the radical left grouping. APRA and the IU were the main legal-left parties attempting grass-roots organizing. Although APRA was more mainstream than the IU and was in government during part of the period under discussion, it was a left-leaning, populist party competing with more radical left-wing groups for working-class votes. As such, it is included in the survey. Both the IU and APRA employed public organizers, whose identity and affiliation were well known, as well as 'clandestine'

activists, whose affiliation was partially obscured by professional titles and activities. At the grass-roots levels, IU and APRA structures sometimes overlapped.

The study included only those victims killed in a selective assassination, as opposed to those slain in less discriminating attacks.

The DESCO databank does not consistently classify victims and perpetrators by political affiliation. As a general rule, DESCO uses three categories of victims: 'security forces', 'civilians', and 'subversives', or guerrillas. The political victims discussed in this article fall into the 'civilian' category. In some cases, the DESCO staffers noted that the victims were linked to APRA or the IU, while in other cases they did not. The reasons for the inconsistency remain unclear. In those cases where no political affiliation was mentioned in the DESCO publication, but the assassination was clearly selective and the victim appeared to be a political leader, labor activist, or community organizer, the researcher consulted supplementary DESCO files, conversed with DESCO staffers and other experts and checked daily newspapers to determine whether the victim was linked to APRA or the IU. If the victim was known to have clear affiliations as a member and leader in the local APRA or IU structure, their death was considered a selective Sendero assassination on the basis of their political beliefs.

Perpetrators: Criteria

The DESCO publications do not consistently identify the perpetrators of killings in the 'civilian' category. In those cases where a perpetrator was not clearly identified, the researcher deduced Sendero responsibility by analyzing the method of assassination. Sendero selective killings of leftist competitors tend to follow a common scenario, including prior written and oral warnings to the victims to cease their activities on behalf of APRA or the IU and, in many cases, a

'popular trial' involving witnesses, Sendero judges and makeshift courts. In many cases, Sendero assumed responsibility for the killings and justified them with rhetorical attacks on the victims in newspapers or leaflets.

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