



## Study of Internal Conflict (SOIC) Case Studies

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### Peru 1980–2003

#### Executive Summary

Peru experienced an internal conflict between the government and the Communist party, *Sendero Luminoso*, or “Shining Path,” which was established by Abimael Guzman in Ayacucho in the wake of democratization after more than a decade of military government.<sup>1</sup> Peru’s economic struggles at the time provoked rural and peasant groups to rebel against the government. The key figure in this conflict was Guzman, a former university professor who concentrated on spreading a doctrine based on the teachings of Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, and Mao Zedong in the 1960s, later attempting to overthrow the government in the 1980s and 1990s.

The Shining Path used bombing of public and private companies, assassinations, and attacks on local public figures as forms of violence, which increased as the movement grew.<sup>2</sup> The government declared a nationwide state of emergency in May 1983 and arrested 15,000 people following the attacks by the Shining Path on numerous businesses and infrastructure facilities.<sup>3</sup> One Shining Path attack struck the capital, causing a complete blackout in Lima and in cities.<sup>4</sup> By 1993, the Shining Path extended the territories under its control to parts of 114 provinces, including Huallaga Valley, which supplied 60 percent of the world’s coca leaf.<sup>5</sup> The Shining Path relied on recruiting members from the peasant and rural areas and taxed farmers, peasants, and drug traffickers.<sup>6</sup>

The government arrested Guzman in September 1992 and gradually rounded up his successors in the 2000s and 2010s.<sup>7</sup> Since then, the Shining Path movement has been weakened to a nuisance level. Indigenous people residing in the rural areas and peasants of the Andean region were most affected by the conflict, which took 70,000 lives, mostly civilians.<sup>8</sup>

#### Assessing the Five Factors

##### 1. Was the country at the time of the conflict a nation?

Yes. Peru is ethnically diverse, but a strong majority of its citizens consider themselves Peruvians. It has several languages, including Spanish (84 percent), Quechua (13.6 percent), and Aymara (2 percent), and there are distinct divides between rural and urban identities and between indigenous peoples and immigrants of Spanish descent, as well as a class divide between rich and poor.<sup>9</sup> However, the country has been successful in creating a pan-national Peruvian identity.

**2. Was the government perceived as legitimate by 85 percent of the population?**

Yes. In the 1980 presidential election, out of more than 17 million Peruvians (of whom more than 9 million were between the ages of 0 and 19, and thus ineligible to vote), more than 6 million registered voters and 3,991,254 valid votes were counted.<sup>10</sup> Approximately one-fourth of Peru's population, who were illiterate, were allowed to vote for the first time, and President Fernando Belaunde Terry won the election with 45 percent of the votes out of 15 candidates.<sup>11</sup> A strong majority of the population accept the results of elections as legitimate.

**3. Did the government maintain or achieve security control over roughly 85 percent of the country's overall population?**

Yes. The Peruvian government followed a counterinsurgency campaign in the 1980s, and in 1992 Guzman was arrested. Reports on the violence indicate that human rights abuses were perpetrated by the military against the indigenous and peasant population, which alienated a segment of the people against the government.<sup>12</sup> However, the Peruvian security forces were able to protect a majority of the population from contact with the insurgents.

**4. Did the rebel movement have persistent access to external sanctuary in a neighboring country to a militarily significant degree?**

No. The Shining Path did not have an external sanctuary across the Peruvian border. It sought protection in remote mountainous and jungle areas and recruited peasants to the movement while gaining funding from the drug trade.<sup>13</sup>

**5. Was there a government army or armed constabulary force in existence at the start of the conflict?**

Yes. Peru had been ruled by a military government for over a decade until the 1980 election, and afterward, the military started its counterinsurgency campaign in the country.<sup>14</sup>

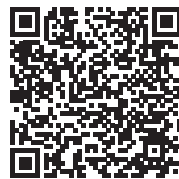
PERU 1980–2003	
NATIONAL IDENTITY	YES
GOVERNMENT LEGITIMACY	YES
POPULATION SECURITY	YES
EXTERNAL SANCTUARY	NO
EXISTING SECURITY FORCES	YES

## Outcome

The Shining Path, or *Sendero Luminoso*, failed to overthrow the government and impose its own rule. Despite a lack of cross-border refuge, the rebel group did extend its territory into parts of more than 100 of Peru's 193 provinces at its peak.<sup>15</sup> However, Peru defeated the *Sendero Luminoso*, and the government remained in power. The Shining Path continues to exist but is not a significant factor in Peruvian politics and security today.

## Endnotes

1. Max G. Manwaring, “Peru’s Sendero Luminoso: The Shining Path Beckons,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 541 (September 1995): 157–66, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1048282>.
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3. David P. Werlich, “Peru: The Shadow of the Shining Path,” *Current History* 83, no. 490 (February 1984): 78–82, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45315275>.
4. Werlich, “Shadow of the Shining Path.”
5. Manwaring, “Peru’s Sendero Luminoso.”
6. Michael Burch, “Natural Resources and Recurrent Conflict: The Case of Peru and Sendero Luminoso” (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2012), <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/files/case-study-competition/20130322-Natural-Resources-and-Recurrent-Conflict.pdf>.
7. Manwaring, “Peru’s Sendero Luminoso,” 163.
8. Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, and Chad C. Serena, “Peru (1980–1992),” in *Mexico Is Not Colombia: Alternative Historical Analogies for Responding to the Challenge of Violent Drug-Trafficking Organizations, Supporting Case Studies* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014), 23–52, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/j.ctt7zvzdn>.
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11. Werlich, “Shadow of the Shining Path.”
12. Coletta A. Youngers and Susan C. Peacock, “Peru’s Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos: A Case Study of Coalition Building” (Washington, DC: Washington Office of Latin America, October 7, 2002).
13. Burch, “Natural Resources.”
14. Manwaring, “Peru’s Sendero Luminoso,” 157–66.
15. Manwaring, “Peru’s Sendero Luminoso.”



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