Violent Political Movements:
Comparing the Shining Path to the Islamic State

by Scott Englund and Michael Stohl

Abstract

The threat posed by the Islamic State[1] is frequently described as unprecedented and unique. Measured by the size of territory it once controlled, its wealth in terms of cash on hand and access to modern military material, and in its shocking brutality, the Islamic State has broken new ground as a terrorist organization. However, the Islamic State is not simply a terrorist organization, but is also a well-equipped insurgent army, and a quasi-state that seized and–with qualified success–operated the bureaucratic institutions of the territories it captured. The Islamic State is often contrasted with its ideological predecessor and operational competitor, al-Qaeda. Highlighting how these organizations differ is helpful in developing effective means of confronting them. In this article, we compare the Islamic State to another terrorist organization the Sendero Luminoso of Peru, to help understand the forces that gave rise to them, sustained them, and ultimately led to Sendero's demise. Through this comparative analysis, we argue that understanding the Islamic State, not simply as a terrorist organization but also as a social movement, allows us to contextualize its violence within patterns evinced by other violent social movements. This approach will also allow us to better understand how the Islamic State might eventually end. Although the military defeat of the Islamic State may be inevitable, the socio-political conditions that gave rise to and sustained it will likely remain and its remnants may very well present a "traditional" terrorist threat for years to come.

Keywords: *Political Violence; Social Movements; Terrorism; Counter-terrorism*

Introduction

By employing a comparative approach to studying the Islamic State and applying social movement and revolution theory, we argue that the Islamic State is more than a transnational terrorist organization. We will compare Peru's *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) to the Islamic State, which, we believe, share important characteristics. The Shining Path held territory as does the Islamic State has and both are/were motivated by a clear political objective, the complete overthrow of an existing order, to be replaced by their own radically different political system. In the case of the Shining Path, we have the benefit of following the life of the organization from birth to eventual death (though it lives on in residual organizations, which is also instructive).

Social Movements, Contentious Politics and Terrorism

"Contentious collective action," Tarrow argues, is at the "base of all social movements, protests, rebellions, riots, strike waves, and revolutions."[2] He explains that collective action becomes contentious, "when it is used by people who lack regular access to representative institutions, who act in the name of new or unaccepted claims, and who behave in ways that fundamentally challenge others or authorities." The Islamic State meets all three criteria in Tarrow's definition: the post-2003 invasion Iraqi government, though nominally democratic by 2004, did not function as such; the Islamic State claims to act as a state with a form of government wholly new in the modern era; finally, the Islamic State has not only attacked the institutions and regimes in Iraq and Syria, and threatened others elsewhere, they also propose the transformation of those institutions and states into a new order represented by declaring the establishment of a caliphate. Similarly, the Shining Path meets Tarrow's requirements for contentious political action. The global aspirations of

both the Islamic State and the Shining Path are reminiscent of Theda Skocpol's requirement that revolutions completely remake the nature of the state both internally and how the new government relates to the outside world.[3]

The thread tying together the cases considered here is the application of a high-degree of violence to achieve a political objective, either the remaking of a global political-economic order, the vindication of ancient grievances, or the establishment of a divinely-inspired government on Earth. Ted Gurr defines political violence as including all political acts within a community, "against the political regime, its actors—including competing political groups as well as incumbents—or its policies." It is a "set of events, a common property of which is the actual or threatened use of violence." For Gurr, this concept "subsumes revolution, ordinarily defined as fundamental sociopolitical change accomplished through violence" and also necessarily includes, "guerrilla wars, coups d'état, rebellions, and riots."[4] Fundamentally, political violence challenges established orders, and functionally interferes with normal political processes. Collective political action is the product of shared discontent in a society. Political violence is possible when that discontent is focused on the activity or the inaction of a constituted political system. Thus, collective political violence is a function of shared discontent in a society, and the degree to which that discontent is blamed on the established political system. [5] In the cases of both Sendero Luminoso and the Islamic State, we find the qualities Gurr describes as fundamental to collective political violence: community discontent coupled with a perception that the current political order is to blame.

Comparative Analysis: Sendero Luminoso and the Islamic State

In this section, we compare *Sendero Luminoso* and the Islamic State. It begins with a brief analysis of the Islamic State in the context of the case study, without an extensive history of the organization, which has been treated thoroughly in recent scholarship.[6] Then we introduce *Sendero Luminoso*, beginning with a brief history, followed by comparative analysis.

The Islamic State

Rather than attempt to re-do the extensive scholarly work done on the history, ideology and tactics employed by the Islamic State, in this section we move directly to comparing and contrasting the Shining Path with the Islamic State.[7] Three dominant themes can be found in the analysis of each of our cases. First, both organizations claimed localized objectives as well as universal ideological goals. Secondly, violence is an essential element of both of these organization's operations; violence was both instrumental and symbolic. Finally, both groups viewed themselves as ideologically pure and belonging to the only "true" manifestation of their belief system.

The Islamic State and the Shining Path represent violent political movements claiming both particularistic and universal goals. The historical antecedents of what we now call the Islamic State rose out of the political marginalization of Iraqi Sunnis following the coalition invasion of Iraq in 2003. While particularistic political goals prompted its rise and motivated many Iraqis who joined its ranks, under the leadership of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, al-Qaeda in Iraq adopted its universalistic goals surrounding the establishment of a new caliphate.[8] In its current incarnation, the Islamic State has clearly enunciated its political objective:

> "My dear [Muslim] community: As we did not lie against God when we announced the Islamic State, so we do not lie against God when we say that it will persist…It will persist upon its creed (ʿaqida) and its path (manhaj), and it has not, nor will it ever, substitute or abandon these". – Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, July 21, 2012.

The Islamic State expects to extend its political dominion outward, obliterating current national frontiers as it

does, demanding universal obedience:

> "We inform the Muslims that, with the announcement of the caliphate, it has become obligatory for all Muslims to give bay'a and support to Caliph Ibrahim. Void is the legitimacy of all emirates, groups, administrations, and organizations to which his [i.e., Baghdadi's] authority extends and his army comes."

In a similar way, the leadership of the Shining Path sought to overthrow the Peruvian government, but also believed themselves to be the initiators of global revolution.

Figure 1: al-Qaeda in Iraq-Islamic State Attacks (right vertical axis), Killed, and Wounded
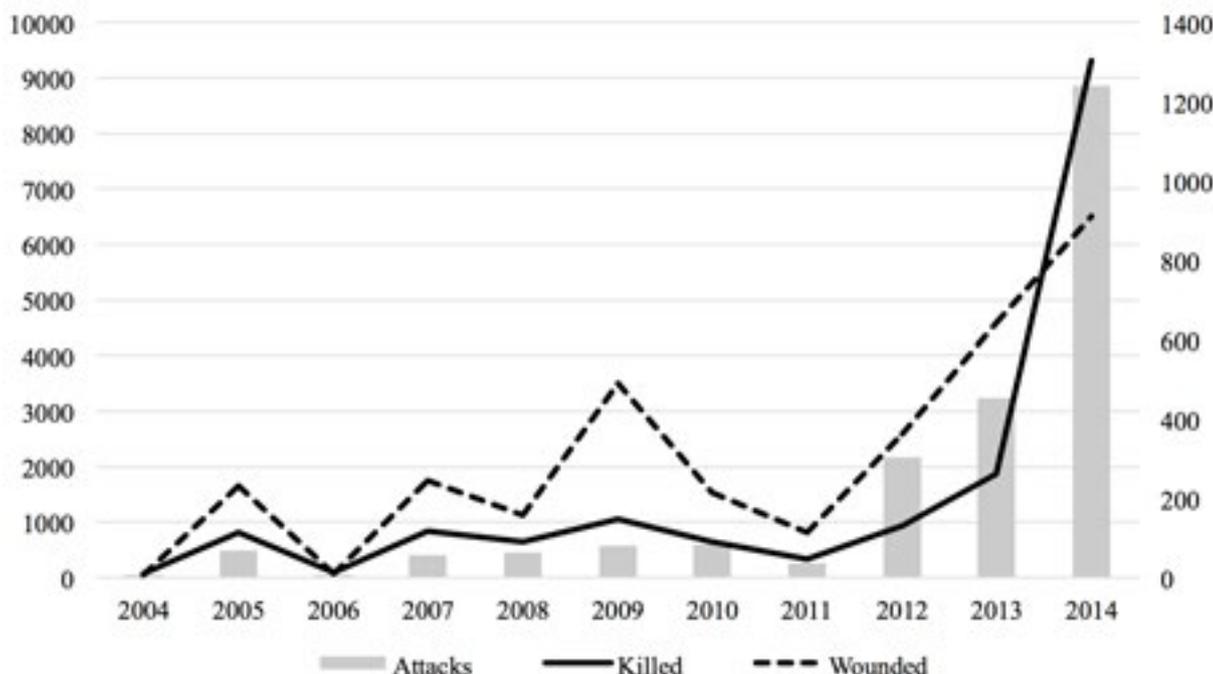
Data Source: Global Terrorism Database

Second, as with the Shining Path, the Islamic State demands violent action to achieve its goals, violence is both instrumental, and symbolic, having its own intrinsic value—violence is a means to an end and an end in itself. The text, *The Management of Savagery*, written in 2004 by Abu Naji Bakr, has served as a guide for waging jihad as violently as the Islamic State has. According to Bakr, savage violence is spiritually cleansing, and in fact merciful,

> "Some may be surprised when we say that the religious practice of jihad despite the blood, corpses, and limbs which encompass it and the killing and fighting which its practice entails is among the most blessed acts of worship for the servants… Jihad is the most merciful of the methods for all created things and the most sparing of the spilling of blood."

Violence is inherent to al-Baghdadi's interpretation of Islam:

> "O Muslims, Islam was never for a day the religion of peace. Islam is the religion of war. Your Prophet (peace be upon him) was dispatched with the sword as a mercy to the creation. He was ordered with war until Allah is worshipped alone. He (peace be upon him) said to the polytheists of his people, 'I came to you with slaughter.' He fought both the Arabs and non-Arabs in all their various colors. He himself left to fight and took part in dozens of battles. He never for a day grew tired of war."[9]

Violence is also instrumental. Abu Naji Bakr argues in the *Management of Savagery* that violence is useful in forcing non-participants to action:

> *"Dragging the masses into the battle requires more actions which will inflame opposition and which will make the people enter into the battle, willing or unwilling, such that each individual will go to the side which he supports. We must make this battle very violent, such that death is a heartbeat away".*

Similarly, the Shining Path believed in the transformative nature of violence to produce revolution;[10] violence is also an essential element of the Jihadi Salafism of the Islamic State which eschews negotiation and compromise.[11] Though the actual instrumental nature of their violence needs to be assessed in light of research that suggests that the intentional targeting of civilians is, in fact counter-productive. Terror groups that rely on dramatic surges of violence against civilian targets almost never get their way, and end up becoming pariahs.[12] While the Islamic State might believe in the instrumental value of violence, it's strategy is almost assured to fail to achieve it's political objectives.

Finally, the Islamic State claims to represent an ideological purity and to stand for correction of past errors, or a repentance, as did the Shining Path. The Islamic State embraces Wahhabi-Salafism, which focuses on the elimination of idolatry (*shirk*) and affirms the oneness (*tawhid*) of God. Its adherents view themselves to be the only "true" Muslims and they engage in the practice of *takfir*, or declaring other Muslims to be unbelievers.[13] Taken together, this results in a number of rigidly adopted positions by Jihadi Salafist organizations. For example, Jihadi Salafis must oppose democratic forms of government; since God needs no "partners" in legislating; man-made laws are by definition blasphemous. Also, Jihadi Salafis are violently opposed to the Shi'a, whom they consider as non-Muslims. Under Zarqawi, this pursuit of religious purity led him to seek a sectarian civil war in Iraq, beginning in 2004. Zarqawi believed the Shi'a to be even more of a threat to his plans to establish an Islamic state in Iraq than the occupying Americans. Writing in 2004, Zarqawi assessed that "the Crusader forces will disappear from sight tomorrow or the day after," but the Shia will remain, "the proximate, dangerous enemy of the Sunnis…The danger from the Shi'a…is greater and their damage worse and more destructive to the [Islamic] nation than the Americans."[14] Zarqawi's murderous antipathy toward the Shi'a was not shared by al-Qaeda senior leadership in Afghanistan, as demonstrated by a letter from Ayman al-Zawahiri to Zarqawi expressing concern over the latter spilling too much Muslim blood, and exhorting him to focus on expelling U.S. and coalition forces from Iraq.[15] That admonition was not heeded then and violence against Shi'a remains a significant element of the Islamic State's operations in Iraq and Syria.

The Fourth Sword

Between 1968 and 1979 Peru was governed by a military junta. Escalating protests during the latter half of the 1970s forced Peru's military rulers to democratize; most of the Marxist movements active in the 1960s and 70s became legitimate political parties and advanced candidates for office. The military government had been markedly leftist, endorsed by Fidel Castro, and militarily supported by the Soviet Union.[16] The exception among the Marxist-left organizations was the pro-Chinese Communist Party of Peru led by a philosophy professor at San Cristóbal of Huamanga University. His name was Abimael Guzman, and he founded a movement known as *Sendero Luminoso* (in English: The Shining Path–here referred to as SL). Guzman and his followers believed themselves to be the perfection of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist thought (Guzman referred to himself as the "Fourth Sword" of world revolution, after Marx, Lenin, and Mao). The *Senderoistas* cast themselves as the initiators of a new revolution that would, inevitably, engulf the entire world, and permanently reset the path of history. The SL was a particularly rigid, uncompromising organization, one focused on ideological purity (repudiating the United States, the Soviet Union, as well as Communist China under Deng Xiaoping). Above all, SL had an unwavering commitment to violent revolution.[17] SL followers believed themselves to be both ideologically infallible and utterly immune to failure as the only true vanguard Communist party.[18]

Guzman laid out his vision for remaking the world at the first meeting of their "military school", during his party's central committee meetings in March-May 1980.

> *"Revolution will find its nest in our homeland…the people's war will grow every day until the old order is pulled down, the world is entering a new era: the strategic offensive of world revolution. This is of transcendental importance."*

Guzman's millenarian, cosmic imagery could just as easily have been used to launch a holy war centuries ago:

> *"The trumpets begin to sound, the roar of the masses grows, and will continue to grow, it will deafen us, it will take us into a powerful vortex…we will convert the black fire into red and the red into light. This we shall do, this is the rebirth. Comrades, we are reborn!"[19]*

SL leaders had been influential academics, but in the late 1970s their status at the National University at San Cristobal de Humanga had suffered a decline.[20] Its bizarre tactics, the cult of personality around Guzman, and their rural isolation caused many observers to dismiss the SL as an obscure oddity, nothing to be concerned about.[21] Within three years of beginning its violent uprising, the SL not only attacked the government but also the Peruvian legal left movements, assassinating over 500 union leaders, political candidates and others from the left who participated in the legal democratic process in Peru.[22]

The SL presents an interesting analytical puzzle. As many theorists have noted, violence has little appeal in systems marked by even a small amount of democracy, as was the case in Peru in 1980.[23] Yet the SL chose a path of violence, targeting both the symbols and representatives of democracy, and eventually also killing leftists with whom they should have been ideological allies. Why did the SL enter its armed struggle in 1980, pursue it so vigorously as to murder tens of thousands of Peruvians, and at one point claim the allegiance of several thousand fighters, extending control through much of the countryside of the center and south of Peru? Ron argues that the SL saw 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."[24] The SL choice of violence was determined by their uncompromising commitment to armed struggle. Marks (1994), however, takes a distinctly different approach. Instead of explaining the SL's use of terror by its ideological commitment to protracted violent conflict, he argues that their application of violence can be understood as the rational application of "selective incentives" to persuade the under-motivated to join.[25]

The SL used violence to force non-participants to essentially choose sides, to intimidate Peruvians to join in their struggle. Others argue that ideological commitment is necessary, but not sufficient. Quoting Alexis de Tocqueville in his study when referring to the contentious politics that eventually ended the Soviet System in the 1980s, Tarrow asserts that, "the most perilous moment for a bad government is one when it seeks to mend its ways."[26] In the case of the Soviet Union, the major reform measures initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev opened opportunities for contention, which threatened the stability of the whole Soviet system. For Tarrow, ideology alone cannot predict action, rather, a "spiral of opportunities and threats" [27] offers the political space in which contentious political movements can grow and operate.

Figure 2: Shining Path Attacks (right vertical axis), Killed, and Wounded
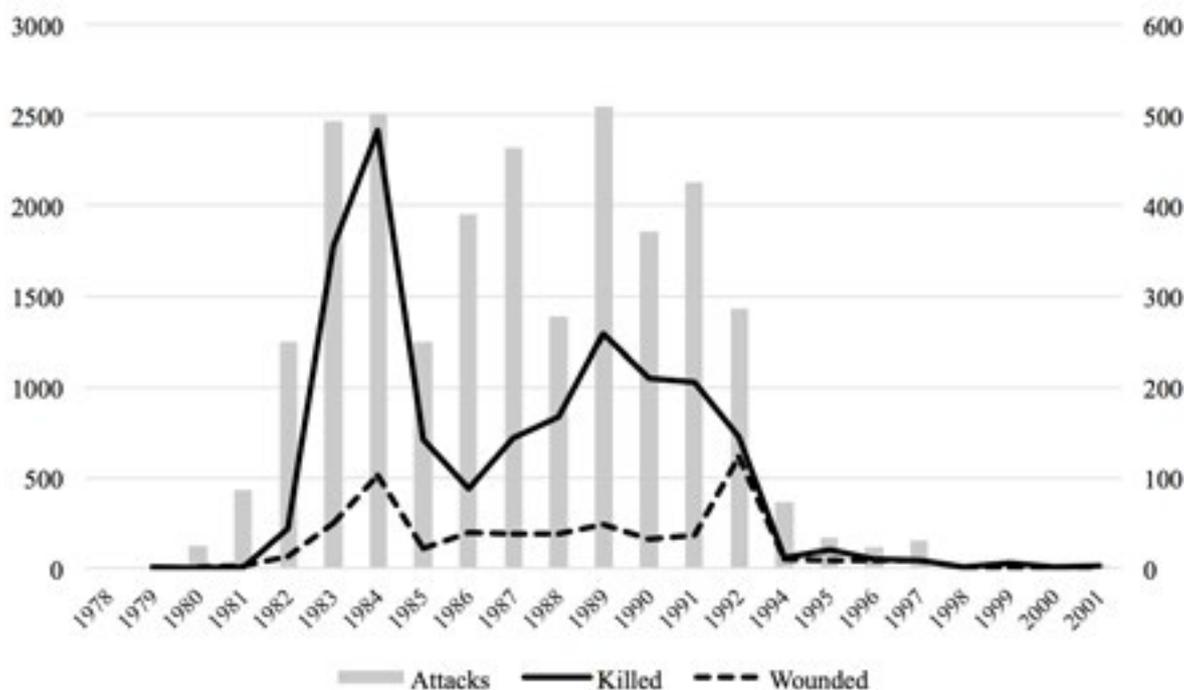
Data Source: Global Terrorism Database

The SL was ultimately undone by three forces: First, though the Peruvian government failed initially to fully appreciate the threat posed by SL, suffered from widespread corruption, and failed to understand counter-insurgency doctrine, eventually, the Peruvian government managed to score some significant intelligence victories. This had the effect of undermining SL's urban campaign and ultimately led to the capture, trial and imprisonment of Guzman, the founder and chief personality of the SL.[28] By 1992, the year of Guzman's capture, the personality cult surrounding "Presidente Gonzalo" (as Guzman was known) [29] was "rigorously enforced" by the party; the loss of so central a figure could only severely hobble an organization dedicated to honor such a cultivated image.[30] Guzman's capture appears to have a quantifiable effect on SL's terrorist activity. Immediately after Guzman was captured, the number of terrorist attacks by SL dropped; before his capture SL averaged over 150 acts of terror per quarter, after his capture, they averaged just ten (see Figure 2). Additionally, the lethality and complexity of these acts were also reduced.[31]

Secondly, the Peruvian government (especially under Fujimori) ruthlessly pursued the SL, undermining its ability to wage a guerilla war. Guzman explicitly organized the SL as a military organization, distributing to subordinate cadres documents that detailed its military doctrine, situated in Marxist-Lenininst-Maoist thought.

> "For Guzman, the militarization of the Shining Path did not presume a conversion into an army, but rather the focus of political activity on armed insurrection and restructuring the party so that it could direct war. Politics concentrated on the war, but did not become subordinate to the military organization charged with waging war."[32]

Organized as a revolutionary party, with a military force as its agent, the SL were committed to guerrilla warfare. As such, the SL required a safe base of support beyond the reach of government forces, the ability to maneuver unhindered, and reliable resupply of fighters and material. Relentless, oppressive government action denied SL the ability to act as a guerilla army, though it did little to address the underlying conditions

that engendered support for SL at its outset, which helps explain the arrival of successor organizations that bear some of the ideological commitments of SL.

Finally, the SL's campaign of violence estranged it from the Peruvian people.[33] Wickham-Crowley observed,

> *"The utter sectarianism and sheer 'orneriness' of Sendero is the root cause of its limitations. It has systematically lambasted and even assassinated, not just government officials and peasant villagers in the highlands, but even members of Marxist and social democratic political parties. They had shown virtually no concern about the attitude of other Peruvians concerning the future of the nation."[34]*

The effect of waging a protracted "people's war," one that often targeted the very same people in whose name the struggle was allegedly being fought, was to wear down popular support. "Just as ruthless violence cannot build a 'New Democracy', neither can it continue indefinitely as a political party's principal source of strength."[35]

Ultimately, between 1980 and 2000, between 61,000 and 77,000 lives were claimed during the conflict between SL and Peruvian government forces. According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2001-2003) (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, CVR), SL was responsible for more than half of the victims; government forces for the balance, mostly during the administration of Alberto Fujimori (1992-2000).[36] In those years, (especially after his self-styled "self-coup" or *auto-golpe* during which he dissolved the judiciary and Congress), and after Guzman's capture, the SL rapidly decayed. The final demise of SL, as the Communist terror organization it was in the 1980s and early 90s, has been variously set as early as September 1992 when Guzman was captured [37], or the year 2000, by the CVR, or at the end of the Fujimori era in 2001, after the disgraced president resigned and fled to Japan. [38]

Although the radically violent SL no longer exists, two remnant groups have continued to operate at a very low level in the coca growing regions of the valleys of Apurímac, Ene, and Mataro Rivers (VRAEM) and the Upper Huallaga Valley. The fervor and certitude of the Peruvian Communists who were utterly convinced of their future success at pulling down the current global political-economic-cultural system has long since faded. Their source of inspiration and central personality, Guzman himself, called for the end of violence as early as 1993, and one of the remaining members of the original leadership arrested in 2011 admitted defeat and the end of armed struggle.

How does Peru in 1980 compare to Iraq in 2003-2004? Peru in 1980 saw significant institutional change: military rule ended after twelve years, and a democratic system of contested elections came to be. Similarly, the invasion of Iraq by coalition forces in 2003 ended the thirty-year dictatorship of Saddam Hussein and introduced political reforms. The invasion meant revolutionary change was now possible; mobilization and agitation among contentious groups (divided along communal lines) precipitated an escalating spiral of action and counter-action. Violence and protracted struggle were "established repertoires" to shape political action in Peru in the 1980s and 90s, and in Iraq after 2003. The availability of violence as an acceptable tool of political action meant that once political space opened and allowed expression of contested political objectives, the move toward violence was just as likely as other forms of political action.[39] Marks's rational-actor approach appears to fit with justifications for violence found in the jihadi text, purportedly employed by the Islamic State and its predecessors, "The Management of Savagery." In both Peru and Iraq, violence has been both symbolic and instrumental.[40]

In both Peru and Iraq, the challenging movements arose in conditions of, as Gurr had hypothesized, shared discontent in a society. That discontent was blamed on the established political system, which, through the mobilization led by Guzman, resulted in collective violent political action.[41] In Peru, Guzman often asserted that "elections never served the masses," underscoring the SL dogma that their utopia could only come through violent overthrow of the existing order. The accompanying non-violent political movements

(against whom Guzman also directed Sendero's violence) provide strong evidence that a high degree of discontent existed, and that discontent was focused on a political system perceived to be beyond repair. Similarly, Sunnis in Iraq had, under Saddam Hussein enjoyed disproportionate political power. The invasion, and subsequent disbanding of the Iraqi army, and the criminalization of Saddam's Baath party, had opened the gates for strong currents of discontent among Iraqi Sunnis, who felt specifically targeted for retribution. These two decisions of the U.S.- led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) had the unintended (if not, unpredictable) consequence of alienating the Sunni community as a whole. In addition, Sunni leaders chose to boycott critically important elections early in the formation of a post-Saddam Iraqi government, which, in practical terms, served to ensure the Sunni's political marginalization.

How Might the Islamic State End?

When the Islamic State is defeated on the battlefield and its territorial control severely contracted or eliminated, it will likely persist as a traditional terrorist threat even if that defeat is accompanied by the collapse of its central leadership structure. The process of their inevitable defeat is already in progress. Significant portions of the territory they rapidly seized in 2014-2015 have been re-taken. Indeed IS leadership seems resigned to losing their so-called caliphate, and have begun to spin that possibility in the best possible way.[42] Many analysts and political leaders have interpreted their apparent shift from guerrilla warfare to more "traditional" terrorist attacks as evidence of a badly weakened Islamic State.

In this section we contemplate how the Islamic State may end, given what we have learned from our comparative analysis. First, we argue that the Islamic State has some unique characteristics when compared to SL that make it particularly dangerous, even if severely disabled. Secondly, decapitation is not likely to have a significant impact on its ability to operate; the effects of organizational "decapitation" will not resemble the almost complete collapse of SL following the capture of Guzman. Finally, the underlying social and political conditions that gave rise to the Islamic State are particularly intractable, and may have been significantly exacerbated since it came into existence.

The ideology of the Islamic State contains some deeply held convictions that set it apart from SL as well as many other terrorists. First, the Islamic State leadership is convinced that we are living in the End of Times and plans to play a central role in ushering in the coming apocalypse. Secondly, and related to the first, the Islamic State is committed to its war against Shi'a Muslims, whom they believe are apostates, a fact that will be revealed during the end times.[43] While SL may have believed themselves to be the vanguard of a new global order, figuratively ushering in a new millennium, they did not believe they were involved in a pitched battle of Good versus Evil on the brink of the end of the world. These differences make the Islamic State particularly dangerous: its apocalyptic vision makes conceding defeat impossible, and its war against Shi'a Muslims makes the majority population of Iraq and a minority elsewhere potential targets of terrorist violence. Even severely degraded and deprived of all of its territory and much of its other resources, followers of the Islamic State can carry on these elements of its violent ideology.

Killing Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (the self-proclaimed caliph and "commander of the faithful," also known as Caliph Ibrahim) is not likely to have much impact on the operational capacity of the Islamic State. We would argue that he does not have the charismatic leader role that Guzman had for the *Senderoistas*. In the Islamic State's apocalyptic belief system, who in particular is the caliph at the End of Times is not as important as what is being done to fulfill apocalyptic prophesies.[44] Research on the effects of targeting leadership is mixed. Jenna Jordan found that religious organizations are resilient even when their leaders are killed or captured.[45] Indeed, so far the leadership of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and its IS successor organizations have been successfully targeted, only to be quickly replaced up to and including its present cadre. Secondly, the case of Guzman and the SL could present an interesting lesson: capturing, trying and imprisoning Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi may have a different effect than simply killing him. The logistics of such an undertaking would

be problematic at best, even after locating and capturing him. For example, any trial that would be held in United States, Iraq or Syria would immediately be denounced as illegitimate.

Finally, even after the Islamic State is militarily defeated, with its leadership dead or in prison, and all its territories reclaimed, the social and political circumstances that gave rise to it (both in Iraq after 2003 and its resurgence in Syria, and then again in Iraq in 2012-2014) are likely to persist, and may even have been exacerbated. The inequality experienced by rural Peruvians contributed to the popularity of the SL.[46] If the underlying conditions that led to Sunni Muslims in Iraq and Syria (and beyond) to join and support the Islamic State are not addressed, it is reasonable to expect that it will continue to present a significant terrorist threat in the Middle East and beyond, likely to inspire additional attacks in Europe and beyond. There is no reason to believe that the operations of Islamic State affiliates (or "Emirates") in places like Libya, the Sinai, and Afghanistan would be significantly affected by the collapse of the central leadership structure without the successful management of the underlying local conflicts that gave rise to each of the groups who have declared their allegiance to IS.

Conclusion

Although the so-called Islamic State represents a significant challenge to the peace and security of the Middle East, and manages to project its terrorist violence to the Western world as well as Russia, one cannot conclude that it is wholly unique and unprecedented, or that the challenge it presents is insurmountable. We have assessed, through a comparative analysis of the *Sendero Luminoso*, that the Islamic State can be understood as a political movement borne of specific social-political conditions, with clear ideological objectives. As such, the historical trajectory of other comparable movements can be instructive for explaining how the Islamic State may have risen, earned sympathy with a constituency, and could eventually wither away. Our analysis has led us to conclude that the inevitable destruction of the Islamic State's military apparatus, and the eventual loss of the territory it has seized, will not mean that it ceases to exist altogether, but will continue as a traditional transnational terrorist threat.

Some of the Islamic State's core characteristics lend themselves to the perpetuation of struggle. Yet the present challenge is not unique. In 1947, George Kennan (under the pseudonym X) analyzing the Soviet system noted:

> *"The leadership of the Communist Party is therefore always right, and has been always right ever since in 1929 Stalin formalized his personal power by announcing that decisions of the Politburo were being taken unanimously…On the principle of infallibility there rests the iron discipline of the Communist Party… Like the Church, it is dealing in ideological concepts which are of long-term validity, and it can afford to be patient."[47]*

The same may surely be said of the leaders of the Islamic State. After all, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the current leader of the organization, chose to take the name of the first of those leaders known as the "Rightly Guided Caliphs" in Sunni Islam, Abu Bakr as Siddiq.

Kennan's prescription for foreign policy under such circumstances are now well known. He recommended "a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies." He cautioned that "such a policy has nothing to do with outward histrionics: with threats or blustering or superfluous gestures of outward 'toughness.'"[48] He suggested that the United States create in the world an image of consistency, harmony, and peaceful prosperity. Kennan cautioned that disunity is a balm to one's opponents in an ideological battle, "by the same token, exhibition of indecision, disunity and internal disintegration within this country have an exhilarating effect."[49]

Perhaps Kennan's seventy-year-old advice about one ideological conflict can be fruitfully applied to this present one. The intervening years have suggested that Kennan's read of Soviet conduct exaggerated the expansionist strategy of the Soviet Union, but given the Kremlin's inscrutability and open hostility at the time he wrote, his urgency may be forgiven. Arguably, it may not be possible to deter an organization like the Islamic State the same way that the Soviet Union and Stalin, a realist with an instinct for institutional survival, was deterred. However, Kennan's principal stricture was patient resolve in containing and squeezing the perceived threat from international Communism. Swagger, grand gestures, fruitless engagements were contra-indicated. Kennan understood that in open warfare the Soviet Union could not be defeated without great cost, and skirmishes would likewise harden Stalin's resolve. Instead, persistent containment, through positive example, negative consequences for bad behavior, and above all, unified action and harmony, were what he advised. Political competition is natural in liberal democratic societies, but the current level of discord and disunity in the United States and Europe must comfort Islamic State ideologues in Raqqa, Mosul and elsewhere. Just as it took forty-four years from Kennan's *X* article before the Soviet Union ceased to exist, the Islamic State and its residue may present challenges for many years to come. The important question is how well the threat that IS poses can be managed and reduced in the interim.

Open warfare may achieve one goal: the disintegration of the Islamic State's leadership and its ability to wage an insurgency, but it will not resolve the political conditions that brought it into existence, and neither will it contain the transnational threat remnant splinter groups may pose. Thus, "carpet bombing" the Islamic State (if one could practically accomplish that) would be counter-productive. As was Stalin's Kremlin in 1947, the Islamic State leadership believes themselves to be locked in an end-of-days battle in which it will inevitably be victorious. As Kennan advised, the longer the rest of the world can deny them any semblance of victory, and lay bare the adversary's hypocrisy and contradictions, then his decline and fall is achievable through patient, thoughtful opposition and defense.

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Notes

[1] The so-called "Islamic State" refers to the organization now also known as ISIS/ISIL or Daesh. We will use the name "Islamic State" because our analysis includes the period during which this organization was known by other names (such as, as al-Qaeda in Iraq, the Islamic State in/of Iraq, and others) before present names were popularly used, not because we endorse the organization's religious claims.

[2] Tarrow, Sidney G. (2011). *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics, 3rd Edition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[3] Skocpol, Theda. (1979). *States and Social Revolutions, a Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[4] Gurr, Ted Robert. (1970). *Why Men Rebel*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 3-4.

[5] Gurr, Ted Robert. (2015). *Political Rebellion*, London: Routledge, Chapter 1; Gurr, 1970..

[6] See: Byman, Daniel. (2015). *Al Qaeda, The Islamic State, and the Global Jihadist Movement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; McCants, William. (2015). *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

[7] For the Shining Path, see, for example: D'Alessio, Stolzenberg & Dariano 2014; Gorriti 1994, 1999; McCormick 1992; McClintock 1994, 1989; Lozada 2008; Ron 2001; Marks 1994; Wickham-Crowley 1992; Woy-Hazleton & Hazleton 1992. The full conference paper on which this article is based also made a comparison with al-Shabaab, but for considerations of length was removed for this publication; the full conference paper (not peer reviewed), is available at the TRENDS Research and Analysis website.

[8] Bunzel, Cole. (2015). "From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State", The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, Analysis Paper; McCants, 2015.

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[26] Tarrow, 2011, p. 157.

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