

[Velasquez Villalba on Soifer and Vergara, 'Politics after Violence: Legacies of the Shining Path Conflict in Peru'](#)

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Hillel David Soifer, Alberto Vergara, eds. *Politics after Violence: Legacies of the Shining Path Conflict in Peru*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2019. 392 pp. \$45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-4773-1731-0.

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Politics, Violence, and Peru's Shining Path

Alberto Vergara and Hillel David Soifer's compilation, *Politics after Violence: Legacies of the Shining Path Conflict in Peru*, covers historical aspects of the internal armed conflict and its impact on contemporary Peruvian politics. Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission focused on the period between 1980 and 2000; however, Vergara and Soifer focus their discussion on the period from 1980 to 1994 due to the military significance of the conflict at that time.

By choosing the period 1980-94, it is possible for the editors to organize the essays around the "legacies of violence" whereby the conflict is seen primarily as a military problem, not a political one. The introduction provides an essential methodological clarification, as the text focuses on the consequences and brutality of both state and subversive violence. "Fujimorismo," named for the policies of Alberto Fujimori who was president between 1990 and 2000, is understood as a *legacy* of violence rather than a *consequence*. Legacies, the authors argue, are related to the military violence per se (that is, the 1980-94 period), whereas consequences are associated with the entire period of the internal armed conflict (1980-2000).

Another methodological clarification relates to the definition of "post-conflict." Before discussing the impact of the armed conflict on post-conflict Peru, the editors reflect on the nature and limits of what they understand by post-conflict, and how other aspects of the political, social, and economic reality of the 1980s—such as hyperinflation and the party crisis caused by society's distrust of elites, which facilitated Fujimori's election—were resolved within the timeframe proposed by the commission. Finally, still in the introduction, the authors discuss the limits and scope of the differentiation between legacy and consequence. Studying the legacy of violence allows us to understand the legacies of the conflict: changes of constitutional regime, implementation of neoliberal policies, human rights violations situated within the internal armed conflict, the emergence (and tolerance) of new forms of civil authoritarianism, and so on.

Before beginning the discussion on the ways the internal armed conflict affected Peruvian politics, the authors present a historical overview of the conflict and situate it within theoretical understandings of civil wars as discussed by political scientists. The essay by José Luis Rénique and Adrián Lerner develops a splendid, detailed, and generous genealogy of Shining Path's ideology, a

history of ideas that includes those aspects that relate to ethnic and class components. The volume editors also relate armed violence and racism to the competition between the contending authoritarian trends, that of the Shining Path and Fujimorismo, with the latter triumphing.

The book discusses four different ways the internal armed conflict affected contemporary Peruvian politics: neoliberalism and democratic institutionalization, indigenous peoples and vulnerable populations, political ideologies and stigmatization, and the impact of memory on public opinion. The first focuses on the institutional aspect of the Peruvian state, mainly how a new neoliberal constitutional order was constructed within the conflict with a state apparatus that militarized politics through repression and an authoritarian public policy whose logic was inextricably tied to the privatization of public property. Maxwell A. Cameron's essay views the constitutional order born of Fujimorismo in the 1992-93 period as a process of continuity and change in the oligarchic nature of the Peruvian state, marked by the emergence of Shining Path.

This new authoritarian constitution gave rise to the country's new institutional framework. Public policies and institutions became an authoritarian extension beyond the period of the internal armed conflict that combined sovereignty, technocracy, neoliberalism, and legality. According to Eduardo Dargent and Noelia Chávez, one of the most notable examples of these authoritarian-institutionalist practices was that manifested in public higher education. Armed and political violence had an impact on the university crisis that had begun in the 1960s, transforming the institutional and ethical architecture of the universities. The result was the encouragement of meritocracy and competition and a weakening of student unions. These factors promoted the neo-liberalization of public education, understood as the opening of new for-profit universities, the defunding of public education, and an impoverishment of the quality of education in general.

A second aspect of the book focuses on vulnerable populations that suffered directly from the conflict's spiral of violence: women and indigenous peoples. Jelke Boesten's contribution—in line with her work on forced sterilization, victimization, and racial profiling in the Andes—shows that the existence of gender-based violence reflected the patterns of inequality that had existed prior to the conflict. The brutality of violence toward women in the Peruvian Andes was neither an exception nor a surprise but an expression of historical conditions of injustice, discrimination, and dehumanization. What is remarkable about this essay is that it not only posits a relationship between continuity and change that reaches into Peru's history but also poses a continuum that analyzes and reflects the discourses, attitudes, and gender stereotypes that still exist in contemporary Peru.

Concerning the relationship between conflict and indigenous populations in present-day Peru, Maritza Paredes studies civil society's interactions with indigenous organizations. Indigenous protests have been discussed in two ways: one that prioritizes human rights, and another that proposes the protection of the environment as a fundamental part of indigenous identity, especially an Amazonian one. This discursive construction is antagonistic to the state, which, on the one hand, promotes an extractivist and environmentally irresponsible economy and, on the other, bases its policy on the need for economic development. The latter is a legacy of the internal armed conflict and the problematization of indigenous existence. The internal armed conflict facilitated the emergence of a form of authoritarianism that espouses a development strategy (privatization, extraction, exploitation) that regulates, under its own terms, the legitimacy of indigenous protests and organizations.

The third part of the book centers on the political stigmatization suffered by other left-wing organizations because of the expansion of the Peruvian Right in response to Shining Path's insurrection, which itself also challenged the political Left during the 1980s. It is important to mention that this challenge also took place in ideological terms, encouraged factionalization, and included terrorist attacks against members of the Left. Fujimorismo, as Paula Muñoz points out, successfully created a narrative that established a direct relationship between terrorism, underdevelopment, and the Left.

Alberto Vergara and Daniel Encinas describe the context in which the new Peruvian Right emerged. Alongside Shining Path, the erratic economic policy of the 1980s led to the emergence of Mario Vargas Llosa and the Movimiento Libertad as standard-bearers for economic liberalization and market reforms. Despite the novelty of these political-economic arguments, what ended up being successful was a combination of economic liberalism and political illiberalism that began with Fujimori's "self-coup" in April 1992. This combination of liberalism and illiberalism promoted economic growth that overlooked poverty, inequality, quality of life, access to services, and a series of development alternatives. This success was not exclusively associated with state or Shining Path violence but was due also to institutional and economic chaos and hyperinflation. Neoliberalism came to mean stability, order, and fiscal and economic discipline that would safeguard progress.

Finally, the essays by Arturo Maldonado, Jennifer L. Merolla, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister and by Paulo Drinot on social networks show how memory of the conflict affected public perceptions of terrorism and this in turn influenced the subsequent process of democratization. Both essays focus on the relationship between armed violence and the construction of an enemy no longer understood in terms of public policies or economic practices but rather in symbolic terms: that is, what deserves to be remembered, how it should be represented, and what the debates around the victim/perpetrator dichotomy are. The processes of memory, musealisation, monumentalization, and memorialization of the internal armed conflict are marked by a confrontation between an authoritarian memory and a memory unveiled by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The discussion, therefore, focuses not only on the duty to remember but mainly on how and whom to remember. The essays highlight the interplay between the public sphere, public opinion, and public space.

The concluding essay by Steven Levitzky presents the reinvention and persistence of Fujimorismo as a political phenomenon after Fujimori's government collapsed in 2000. Fujimorismo became the articulator of legacies that had actual political consequences: political and economic authoritarianism, stigmatization of social protests and left-wing parties, strengthening of the conservative Right, and the "FujimORIZATION" of Peruvian democracy that ultimately still sets the tone and content of public discussion in Peru today.

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