Flávio Bolsonaro, one of the candidate's sons and himself a congressman, defended the act of symbolic aggression against Franco's memory, declaring that the men were simply "restoring order." This rejection of human rights memorialization practices echoed Jair Bolsonaro's own attacks on the NTC—and the vandalism itself was reminiscent of Bolsonaro's notorious impeachment speech in its blending of misogyny and authoritarianism. As for the two PSL candidates, both subsequently won their elections.

It is no accident that the main targets of Bolsonaro's ire, and that of his supporters, have been powerful women with strong identities as former political militants, human rights advocates, or both—foremost among them Dilma Rousseff, Maria do Rosario, Amélia Teles, and Marielle Franco. As a congressman and as a presidential candidate, Bolsonaro channeled the pervasive misogyny and machismo in Brazilian politics. His impeachment speech exemplifies how nostalgia for the dictatorship in his political rhetoric often equates with nostalgia for traditional gender roles and the promotion of conservative morality by Brazil's increasingly powerful Christian right.

This tendency has manifested itself elsewhere in contemporary Brazilian society through efforts to prohibit the word "gender" in schools, protests against the pioneering American gender theorist Judith Butler's November 2017 visit to Brazil, and attempts to close down art exhibitions and performances deemed offensive to traditional values. All of this is reminiscent of the dictatorship period, when censors and police were employed to ensure the strict observance of what the regime liked to call "morality and good customs." A central feature of Bolsonaro's pro-dictatorship campaign stance was the promise it represented of a return to the old social order and traditional values. Now that he has taken office, activists like the leaders of Mulheres Unidas are regrouping with plans to mount a forceful opposition to his agenda.

Ominous Signs

Does Bolsonaro's successful presidential bid signal that regime apologists, especially within the military, are currently prevailing in the struggle over historical memory in Brazil? Recent events do indicate a startling comeback—although champions of human rights memory, including recently formed groups such as Mulheres Unidas, are holding their own.

In light of Bolsonaro's victory, it is tempting to read Brazil's recent election as a referendum on the meaning of Brazil's experiment with dictatorship in the 1960s and '70s, one that revealed a nation profoundly divided on the subject. The outcome of the presidential race turned on numerous factors, but it is undeniable that Bolsonaro's pro-regime platform played a central role and even subsumed many other hot-button issues by proposing familiar-sounding authoritarian answers to ongoing challenges, especially urban violence.

The 2018 presidential election offers some important broader lessons, foremost among them the limitations of a truth commission in a post-truth era. Facts were less influential than appeals to the rage, fear, resentment, and moral panic that proliferate in moments of national political crisis. Bolsonaro proved to be a master of harnessing these emotions for his own political gain. The question now is to what lengths he will go in office to fulfill the grim promises he made to his right-wing supporters.

There are ominous signs that the armed forces learned a lesson or two of their own from Brazil's recent past. When Temer authorized the 2018 military intervention in Rio, army commander Eduardo Villas-Bôas reportedly sought assurances that the mission would never be subjected to a truth commission in the future. Although it's unclear whether such assurances were ever provided, there is little question that Brazil's culture of impunity remains intact and will only worsen under the presidency of Jair Bolsonaro. ■

PERSPECTIVE

Heat But Little Light: Peru's Memory Debates

Alberto Vergara

The permanent exhibition at Lima's Lugar de la Memoria, la Tolerancia, y la Inclusión Social (LUM, or the Place of Memory, Tolerance, and Social Inclusion) begins with a schematic overview of the two terrorist groups that waged war with the Peruvian state during the 1980s: Shining Path and the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement. At the top of the organizational charts are photos of Abimael Guzmán and Victor Polay, their respective leaders. Guzmán is dressed in suit and tie—he was a university professor, after all, albeit one intoxicated by Maoism. But the photo is controversial. Supporters of the armed forces argue that it would be more appropriate to use one that shows Guzmán in the striped prison garb of his post-capture appearances in 1992.

This ridiculous but apoplectic debate over a small photo at the start of a three-floor exhibition is hardly conducive to a public conversation that elucidates the terrible violence of the 1980s and early '90s, when tens of thousands were killed in a conflict that began in the rural highlands but by the end of the '80s had engulfed the whole country. Sadly, it is characteristic of most discussions about the period of violence: friction between the opposing sides of these debates gives off great heat but little light.

In April 2018, Edwin Donayre—a former commanding general of the armed forces, now a congressman—disguised himself as an elderly tourist and visited LUM in search of anything that might damage its reputation. Donayre joined a guided tour and fired off as many questions as he could in the hope of eliciting a hapless answer that he could secretly record and use to denounce the museum for advocating terrorism. When the guide blundered by replying that Guzmán—serving a term of life in prison—might be pardoned on humanitarian grounds, Donayre got what he wanted. He rushed off to make television appearances condemning LUM for harboring Shining Path sympathies.

Members of the *Fujimorista* parliamentary majority and its hangers-on—those loyal to former President Alberto Fujimori, who oversaw counterinsurgency operations during his decade in power from 1990 to 2000—immediately followed suit, saturating TV screens to echo Donayre's sentiments. The minister of culture, Patricia Balbuena, was called before Congress to answer for LUM. Some angry lawmakers demanded her resignation, while others sprang up to attack the museum. The minister kept her head down, muttering her apologies, and the guide lost her job.

This high-decibel pile-on was typical of the isolated, superficial controversies that emerge from time to time around the subject of the violence. Such scandals are incited by those whose mission is to derail reasoned debate by screaming about their grievances.

But why does the collective-memory agenda attract so little attention other than headlines over these sporadic commotions? The answer is fundamentally political, and has its origins in the collapse of Fujimori's government in 2000. Under the transitional regime of Valentín Paniagua, actors with an interest in controlling the public understanding of the conflict became locked in power relations that would shape the future debates.

The armed forces, a cornerstone of the Fujimori administration, were left licking their wounds. Effectively, they had been the "party" of the corrupt and authoritarian pairing of Fujimori and his intelligence chief, Vladimiro Montesinos. Much of the high command ended up in prison, while others fled. When the transitional government established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate crimes against human rights committed by both state and nonstate actors between 1980 and 2000, there were no military figures with opposing interests in a position to block it. Preoccupied with dodging jail, they were powerless to stop any political initiative.

The establishment of the commission was an *obsequio* (a gift) from the transitional government

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to the human rights community, as José Carlos Agüero, a researcher at the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, put it. It was not on Paniagua's agenda—in hindsight, he came to regard its formation with skepticism—and did not respond to any preexisting public demand. Yet it laid the foundations for a memory infrastructure—a voluminous report published by the commission in 2003 with its own terminology and explanations for the violence; artistic and documentary displays; monuments, and so forth—that the anti-memory sectors could seek to boycott, but not bury.

What none of the factions managed to do was create a constituency. The commission lacked a solid base of support in society, and its agenda has not created much demand to this day. As one LUM official lamented, there was no sizable mobilization in defense of the museum after Donayre's devious ambush. Just a few weeks earlier, when the Museum of Memory and Human Rights in Santiago, Chile, was engulfed in a similar controversy, 10,000 people came out to back it.

But LUM's detractors also suffer from a lack of support. Although their outbursts receive television and radio coverage, they have consistently failed to mobilize the public. The *Fujimorista*-dominated Congress recently created its own memory program under the slogan "Terrorism never again," but its impact has been negligible. As in so many aspects of Peruvian political life, there is an unbridgeable abyss between society and institutions.

ENGAGING THE PUBLIC

However, this deficit of societal involvement does not imply denial or a lack of public interest in understanding political violence. A recent study by Arturo Maldonado and other researchers found that in comparison with Latin America as a whole, Peruvians are more concerned about political violence. Moreover, the critical and commercial success of books such as *La distancia que nos separa* by Renato Cisneros and *Los Rendidos* by José Carlos Agüero (roughly translated, "The distance that separates us" and "The surrendered ones"), and the many movies dealing with this period of violence, point to a society that at least shows promising curiosity even if it has yet to display a strong appetite for more active engagement.

The armed forces produced *En honor a la verdad* ("To honor the truth"), a historical text that seeks to provide a reasoned and documented account of the conflict. Unfortunately, it has gone mostly unnoticed. In my own teaching experience, I have found that many students—not only those in the humanities and social sciences—want to understand what happened to the country in their parents' youth, when bombs were exploding every day. The more than 100,000 visitors that LUM receives each year are another signal of interest. There is a palpable, if disorganized, desire to know.

Yet society remains at a juncture that satisfies neither pro- nor anti-memory partisans. It is charged with a live, chaotic curiosity that runs counter to the denialism that anti-memory actors espouse. But pro-memory advocates have failed to consolidate the civil activism they long for. Peruvian society, ever distrusting of its institutions, keeps a prudent distance. The memory professionals, with their jargon and categorizations, do not look likely to bridge that distance. Nor will the aggressive right-wing brand of politics that insists Peruvians need to know nothing more than the simple tale that once upon a time there were terrorists, but happily President Fujimori defeated them.

So far it has been impossible even to find common ground on what to call the era in question.

However, the national conversation about the period must proceed (and on my more optimistic days I believe that sooner or later this will happen). The enormity of what happened in Peru makes it a virtual obligation. But so far it has been impossible even to find common ground on what to call the era in question. Proposed names usually lead to another of those debates with lots of heat but little light—was it an "internal armed conflict" (the Truth and Reconciliation Commission), a "period of violence" (LUM), or the "time of terrorism" (*Fujimorismo*)?

The demographic changes in Ayacucho—the impoverished south-central region where Shining Path arose, and the epicenter of the period's violence—comprise the starkest indicator of the conflict's grave consequences. Between 1981, when a population census was taken as the conflict was beginning, and 1993, when the bloodiest stage was over, Peru's total population increased. But Ayacucho's fell over the same period, from 503,392 to 492,507. The war was a demographic catastrophe.

More than 33,000 people have been formally recognized by the state as dead or disappeared.

According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's estimate, the actual toll is 69,280. One must go back to the nineteenth-century war with Chile to find violence on a comparable scale in Peru. The proportions of the tragedy make it difficult to imagine that the public would not be interested in understanding such an episode.

The same can be said of the combatants in the conflict. How could anyone remain indifferent to Shining Path, a delirious movement as violent as it was ideological, whose leader and adherents claimed to be the culmination of millions of years of evolution? No less disturbing was the response of the armed forces, which operated in the Peruvian highlands without guidelines to distinguish the just from the aberrant.

Can there be an institutional space in which to hold a national dialogue about the conflict? Or, alternatively, will society shape its own unmediated conversation? Of course, both routes are possible. Should the stalemate between the pro- and anti-memory camps continue, institutionalization will remain a distant prospect. On the other hand, political actors could take the issue seriously and engage the country's chaotic curiosity with a platform of general historical interest that would contribute to the development of a more peaceful, free, and egalitarian nation. ■