



## Fujimori and Post-Party Politics in Peru

[Steven Levitsky](#)

*Latin America's Imperiled Progress*

As it has in the past, Peruvian politics defied regional trends in the 1990s. Whereas democracy either took hold (Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay) or at least survived (Colombia, Ecuador, Nicaragua) throughout most of Latin America, it collapsed in Peru. That collapse took place on 5 April 1992, when President Alberto Fujimori, in a military-backed *autogolpe* (self-coup), closed the Congress, suspended the constitution, and purged the judiciary.<sup>1</sup> After ruling by decree for seven months, the Fujimori government held elections for a constituent assembly in November 1992; in 1993, it secured the approval, via referendum, of a new constitution. Two years later, Fujimori, who had originally been elected president in 1990, was reelected by an over-whelming margin. These developments led many observers to place Peru back in the camp of democratic (or at least "delegative democratic") regimes.<sup>2</sup> Such a characterization is misleading, however. Although the restoration of formal constitutional rule and elections represented an important step away from full-fledged authoritarianism, it was accompanied by a systematic assault on a range of democratic institutions that has left contemporary Peru with a regime that is best described as "semidemocratic."

The Fujimori regime falls short of widely accepted "procedural minimum" standards for democracy in several respects.<sup>3</sup> First, civil liberties are routinely violated. The phone lines of most major journalists and opposition leaders are tapped; many journalists are followed, **[End Page 78]** harassed, and intimidated by death threats; and several regime critics have been forced to flee the country to avoid trumped-up legal charges. In one well-known case, Baruch Ivcher, an Israeli immigrant and majority shareholder of the Channel 2 television station, was stripped of his Peruvian citizenship (and Channel 2) and forced into exile after the station began to air critical news coverage. Violent human rights abuses, though not systematic, have also taken place. The most notorious perpetrator of such abuses is the Colina Group, a paramilitary organization linked to the army and, reportedly, to top Fujimori advisor Vladimiro Montesinos. The Colina Group has been implicated in the November 1991 massacre of 15 people at Barrios Altos, the July 1992 killing of ten students at La Cantuta University, and the torture and murder of an intelligence agent believed to have leaked information about La Cantuta to the press. Although military courts convicted several officers for the La Cantuta massacre, civilian courts were blocked from investigating the case, and higher level authorities who are believed to have been involved--including Montesinos--were never investigated.

Second, electoral institutions have been politicized--if not corrupted outright--by the Fujimori government. The nominally independent National Board of Elections (JNE) has been stacked with government loyalists, and the JNE's internal rules have been modified so that four of its five members must vote for a resolution in order for it to be adopted. Given the body's progovernment majority, a vote against Fujimori--for example, regarding the legality of his reelection bid--is extremely unlikely. Although the current electoral authorities are unlikely to engage in systematic fraud,

opposition parties lack the means to ensure their accountability and to prevent arbitrary rulings in the government's favor. As a result, many opposition leaders fear at least some fraud in the 2000 elections.

Third, the armed forces are not fully subordinated to civilian authorities. The military regularly issues its own political proclamations, and on several occasions it has sent tanks into the streets of Lima in a none-too-subtle gesture to reinforce its positions. Moreover, the civilian authorities lack oversight capacity on issues of military budgeting, military justice, and human rights. Thus, although Fujimori is not a puppet of the military, the armed forces are more of a coalition partner than an institution subordinated to the president.

Beyond failing to meet these procedural minimum requirements for democracy, the Fujimori government has also systematically weakened what Guillermo O'Donnell has called "horizontal accountability,"<sup>4</sup> or the capacity of autonomous legislative and legal institutions to check the power of the executive. The Congress has been transformed into a virtual rubber stamp. It has not only failed to check abuses of power by the executive; but has been an accomplice to such abuses, approving **[End Page 79]** measures of dubious constitutionality aimed at weakening other independent bodies. The independence of the judicial branch has also been eroded. To ensure that his rule would not face legal or constitutional challenges, Fujimori has stacked the Supreme Court, the Council of Magistrates, and the Constitutional Tribunal (TC). Lower-level judges and district attorneys are routinely removed from cases for political reasons. Many judges have been kept on "provisional" status, which, by leaving them vulnerable to removal at any time, greatly limits their independence. Finally, Fujimori has sharply curtailed the powers of the *Fiscal de la Nación*--a formally independent body with the authority to investigate and prosecute abuses by government officials--by transferring most of its powers to an executive-controlled body called the Executive Commission of the Public Ministry.

The absence of democratic checks on executive power was made manifest in the case of the Law of Authentic Interpretation, the controversial legislation that cleared the way for Fujimori to run for a third term in 2000. The TC divided over the issue in late 1996, and in an extraordinary series of events, it was discovered that a justice with ties to the National Intelligence Service (SIN) had stolen documents related to the case from another justice. This crime went unpunished, but when three of the seven justices moved to declare the law unconstitutional, they were sacked by the Congress. The justices were never replaced, and the TC has been inoperative since 1997.

In short, unlike virtually all of its South American neighbors, including troubled regimes like those in Ecuador and Colombia, Peru falls short of the minimum procedural standards for democracy. While the persistence of competitive elections distinguishes Peru from full-fledged authoritarian regimes, the autonomous power of the armed forces and the SIN, the systematic efforts to intimidate the press and opponents of the regime, and the politicization of electoral institutions disqualify Peru from being labeled as even a delegative democracy. It is at best a semidemocracy.

## Explaining Democratic Failure

A striking feature of the breakdown of Peru's democratic institutions is that few Peruvians lamented their passing. While Fujimori's decision to close the Congress was condemned abroad, his approval rating at home soared after the *autogolpe*, and public-opinion polls showed nearly 80 percent support for the coup.<sup>5</sup> In massively backing the coup, Peruvians essentially converted Fujimori into a "democratic dictator," delegating extraordinary power to him in a context of profound crisis. This crisis should be understood on two levels. First, as is well known, Peru experienced massive political and socioeconomic problems in the early 1990s that literally brought the state to the brink **[End Page 80]** of collapse. Hyperinflation, the violent advance of the Shining Path guerrillas, and executive-legislative deadlock created a climate of ungovernability that legitimated--if it did not precipitate--the coup.<sup>6</sup>

Yet the erosion of support for the democratic regime was also a product of a longer-term crisis of the Peruvian political class. It is a paradox of Peruvian politics that, with a few relatively short-lived

exceptions, democratic institutions have historically been associated with rule by a relatively narrow stratum of society. In cases ranging from nineteenth-century Europe to the contemporary Southern Cone, South Africa, and South Korea, democratization was clearly associated with broader representation and more inclusive politics. In Peru, however, the relationship between democracy and inclusive politics has never been so clear. Democratic regimes in the 1940s and the 1960s were associated with a political class that was drawn from, and largely representative of, a small European elite.<sup>7</sup> By contrast, the regimes that took the most significant steps--at least symbolically--to expand the scope of Peruvian politics, such as those of Generals Manuel Odría (1948-56) and Juan Velasco (1968-75), were authoritarian.

To some extent, this pattern was repeated in the 1980s and 1990s. Although both the socialist left and the populist American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) successfully appealed to the working and lower classes in the late 1970s and 1980s, neither of these forces was able to consolidate a stable base of support among the rural poor or the burgeoning urban informal sector.<sup>8</sup> By the late 1980s, all of Peru's political parties, including the United Left and APRA, had lost the capacity to attract broad-based support in a society that remained highly stratified along racial and sociocultural lines. Even parties that had once mobilized significant popular bases were perceived to have been co-opted into an aging and predominantly white, Lima-based political elite that was increasingly out of touch with the day-to-day realities of most Peruvians. As a result, many Peruvians came to view the entire party system as an "oligarchic" political class. Thus, popular support for the 1992 coup should not be seen as merely a mandate to combat terrorism and hyperinflation. It was also implicitly a mandate to supplant a political class that, it was widely believed, had ceased to adequately represent most Peruvians.

The crisis of the Peruvian political elite, made manifest by the 1990 election to the presidency of a political outsider of Japanese descent, contributed in an important way to the collapse of democracy in 1992. Yet the crisis also represented an opportunity for democratic renewal. Much of the time, the kinds of institutional reforms that are needed to "renovate" democratic regimes where legitimacy or effectiveness has been eroded are extremely difficult to bring about. As cases such as Brazil, Colombia, Italy, Japan, and Venezuela make clear, established political elites and institutions often prove highly resistant to change. **[End Page 81]** Moments in which these elites are weakened and new leaders face relatively clean slates are rare in politics. If such moments are used to create more representative or effective democratic institutions, as happened in Italy in the 1990s, they may have healthy consequences for democracy.

The collapse of Peru's discredited political elite arguably gave Alberto Fujimori an opportunity to found a more broad-based and effective democratic regime. *Fujimorismo* had its social base in the marginal sectors of Peruvian society: non-whites, evangelicals, self-employed or informal-sector workers, and the urban and rural poor. It was these sectors that, by the late 1980s, had grown most dissatisfied with the existing democratic institutions and the parties that governed them. *Fujimorismo* changed the face of Peruvian politics in 1990, ushering in a new set of political leaders. Drawn to a significant extent from provincial, nonelite, and nonwhite sectors, the original *Fujimorista* politicians were more socially, culturally, and racially representative of Peruvian society than the political class they replaced. As one pro-Fujimori congressman put it:

The members of the democratic opposition are the ones who have always held power. With Fujimori, people like me are in congress. The opposition would never have allowed me into their ranks because I'm not like them. I'm not white. I'm not from Lima. And I don't have money.<sup>9</sup>

If President Fujimori had invested in building new democratic institutions, he might have used his massive popular support to infuse them with a broad legitimacy that they have historically lacked in Peru, and the historical linkage between democratic institutions and oligarchic politics that has long plagued Peruvian democracy might have been broken.

But Fujimori did not choose that road. Although his electoral victory and the 1992 coup swept away Peru's discredited democratic institutions and the old-guard party leaderships that governed them, Fujimori has done little to replace them. He has made no attempt to establish an institutionalized

relationship to his mass base, relying instead on personalistic appeals and periodic spending projects. Rather than building a political party, he has created "disposable parties"<sup>10</sup>--minimalist organizations that are created for a single election and then discarded. Thus far, Fujimori has created three such parties (Change '90 in 1990, New Majority in 1995, and Let's Go Neighbors in 1998), and he is reportedly preparing at least one more for the 2000 elections. In spite of his rhetoric about decentralization, Fujimori has been unwilling to devolve power and resources to local governments. Indeed, his efforts to co-opt and control local mayors and their organizations have systematically undermined decentralization [End Page 82] projects. Finally, although the 1993 Constitution created a referendum system, the government blocked the opposition's effort to submit the reelection issue to a popular vote. In short, President Fujimori did not found a long-term regime in Peru. Unlike the democratic dictators of ancient Rome, who were elected during periods of crisis but then gave up power when the crises ended, Fujimori and his military allies had no intention of ceding power. Tragically, in acceding to the destruction of republican institutions, Peruvians also surrendered their most effective means of taking it back.

## Prospects for Redemocratization

The prospects for redemocratization in Peru are mixed. There are good reasons to be pessimistic. Civil society is extraordinarily weak.<sup>11</sup> Decimated by economic crisis, the Shining Path, and the co-optative strategies of the Fujimori government, the civic organizations that forced an end to military rule in the late 1970s are a mere shadow of their former selves. The traditional political parties have become virtually extinct. The left, which had played such a central role in the late 1970s in the democratization movement, has disappeared from the political map, and traditional parties like Popular Action (AP) and the Popular Christian Party (PPC) are mere shells of what they once were. Even APRA, Peru's only real mass party, has been reduced to a small, cult-like core of activists. Moreover, organized labor--another crucial player in the 1970s democratization movement--has virtually ceased to exist. Due in part to the growth of the informal economy, the unionization rate has fallen from 18 percent of the workforce in the early 1980s to just 7.8 percent in 1995,<sup>12</sup> crippling Peru's major labor confederation, the General Confederation of Peruvian Workers (CGTP). Human rights and prodemocracy organizations remain weak and marginal, and although student activism has picked up in the late 1990s, it remains low compared to previous periods in Peruvian history.

A second (and related) problem is that the democratic opposition remains very narrowly based. Its umbrella organization, the Democratic Forum, remains a Lima-centered, predominantly upper-middle-class movement. The Democratic Forum represents virtually the entire pre-1990 elite, from left to right, including all of Peru's traditional parties. Nevertheless, the Forum has failed to establish a presence in either the urban shantytowns or the provinces. Moreover, because its leaders are widely (and correctly) perceived to represent the old political class that *Fujimorismo* displaced, the organization has been unable to gain political momentum.

The weakness of both civil society and the democratic opposition has been made clear by the opposition's failure to sustain a pro-democracy [End Page 83] movement in the post-1992 period. In 1998, for example, despite a marked decline in public support for Fujimori, prodemocracy organizations were unable to mobilize Peruvians against the regime.<sup>13</sup> In July of that year, a prodemocracy demonstration organized by a coalition that included all of Peru's traditional parties, the CGTP, human rights and prodemocracy organizations, and university student organizations managed to mobilize only an estimated 6,000 people in Lima's central plaza. A week later, President Fujimori mobilized several times as many people for his birthday party.<sup>14</sup> Later that year, the opposition's weakness was underlined by the failure of the Democratic Forum's initiative to call a referendum on the issue of Fujimori's eligibility for reelection. Although the Forum collected an impressive number of signatures, the petition drive never really took off outside of Lima. In the end, not only did the Forum fail to collect enough signatures to survive the scrutiny of the progovernment electoral authorities; it also failed to mobilize people in defense of the referendum after the government killed the initiative. The issue was soon forgotten. In sum, the democratic coalition has failed to expand beyond where it was in 1992. Surveys show that most Peruvians support democratization, but they clearly do not support the people who are leading the prodemocracy movement. To date, then, no real democracy movement with the capacity to pressure for regime

change exists in Peru, or is likely to emerge anytime soon.

Nevertheless, there are several reasons to think that Peru may democratize--in a procedural minimum sense--in the relatively near future. Just as Fujimori failed to build democratic institutions, he also failed to build authoritarian ones. With the exception of military autonomy (which may prove quite difficult to change), the Fujimori regime has not institutionalized an authoritarian project. While the government has trampled upon a wide range of democratic rights and institutions, it has neither abandoned the institution of regular elections nor established a stable mechanism (for example, a Mexican or Taiwanese-style hegemonic party) to dominate the electoral arena. As a result, unlike cases such as Chile, China, Mexico, or South Africa, democratization in Peru may not necessarily require high levels of civic mobilization, protracted pressure, or slow, incremental change. It could take place quickly and largely by default, through the election of more democratic leaders.

Paradoxically, the Fujimori government may have sown the seeds of this kind of democratization, for its extraordinary successes in **[End Page 84]** combatting hyperinflation and terrorism have eliminated the crisis conditions that previously legitimated authoritarian rule. The economy has been stabilized, and the Shining Path, whose bloody guerrilla war had pushed Peru to the brink of ungovernability, has been crippled by the 1992 capture of its leader, Abimael Guzmán. Although the Shining Path continues to survive in a few pockets in the highlands, it no longer poses a serious threat to society or to the state. Moreover, the government dealt a death blow to a second guerilla movement, the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA), when army commandos successfully stormed the MRTA-occupied Japanese ambassador's residence in April 1997, rescuing all but one of the hostages and killing all of the guerrillas. Although in the short term Fujimori benefited from these successes, over the longer term they have undermined the rationale of his claim to dictatorial power. With the end of the crisis and the return to "normal" politics, it has become increasingly difficult to justify authoritarian measures. Whereas Peruvians massively supported the coup in 1992 and overwhelmingly reelected Fujimori in 1995, surveys now consistently show clear majority opposition not only to Fujimori's "re-reelection," but also to such extra-constitutional acts as his assaults on the *Fiscal de la Nación* and the Constitutional Tribunal.

Without the massive popular support that legitimized authoritarian rule during the 1992-95 period, and without stable authoritarian institutions to rely on, Fujimori has become vulnerable. It is here that the persistence of elections becomes critical. Since he was reelected in 1995 with over 60 percent of the vote, Fujimori's public approval rating has declined steadily, and it now hovers between 30 and 40 percent. Given that Peru's two-round electoral system requires that he win an absolute majority, Fujimori's reelection is far from certain. Even if he employs a moderate amount of fraud, it is entirely conceivable that Fujimori could lose the 2000 election. Thus he faces a difficult dilemma. On the one hand, he could resort to massive fraud and outright authoritarianism. Given Fujimori's relatively low level of public support (as well as a regional climate that remains unfavorable to outright authoritarian rule), however, such a naked power-grab would be a high-risk venture. For a president who has earned his place in Peruvian history by defeating both hyperinflation and the Shining Path, a move that might pose the risk of his being unceremoniously forced out by the military (or, though less likely, by a Philippines-style popular mobilization) may be very unattractive. For this reason, if Fujimori calculates that he cannot win the 2000 elections, he may well decide not to run.

Such a scenario opens the possibility that a more democratically minded president might be elected. One serious alternative to Fujimori is Lima mayor Alberto Andrade, a former PPC member who left **[End Page 85]** the party to run for mayor as an independent. Andrade, who has led in the national opinion polls for well over a year, has taken an ambiguous stance on issues of democracy. He did not publicly oppose the 1992 coup, and at times he has been silent when Fujimori has trampled on democratic institutions. Yet Andrade's core constituency--middle-class and professional voters--is the group that has shown the greatest interest in the restoration of republican institutions. Realizing this, Andrade has moved slowly but steadily toward the democratic camp since 1995, and played a leading role in the 28 April 1999 "democratic strike" against Fujimori's reelection bid. If Andrade were to win as a "prodemocracy" candidate in 2000, he might be more inclined to respect democratic rights and institutions, which might well permit their strengthening to the point where Peru could be called a procedural-minimum democracy. If such a transition occurs, a critical issue will be whether Andrade is able (and willing) to assert civilian control over the military and the National Intelligence Service.

## A Democracy Without Parties?

What might a post-Fujimori democracy be expected to look like? Two probable features are worth examining. First, it is likely that post-Fujimori democracy--like pre-Fujimori democracy--will rest on a relatively narrow base of legitimacy. While President Fujimori has enjoyed (and continues to enjoy) substantial support among the poor, he has failed to translate that support into any kind of institutionalized mechanisms of representation or participation. At the same time, the democratic opposition has failed to broaden its base beyond the urban middle classes. The emerging coalition behind Alberto Andrade is in many ways similar to the "oligarchic" coalition that Fujimori defeated in 1990: predominantly white, middle-class, and Lima-based. Like Fujimori, Andrade has neither invested in building a party organization nor demonstrated a willingness to decentralize power. Thus if democratization does occur, it is unlikely to be as a result of pressure from the prodemocracy movement. While by no means precluding the construction of a more broad-based and legitimate regime, these factors do not bode well for the quality (or stability) of post-Fujimori democracy.

Second, post-Fujimori democracy is likely to be a democracy without political parties. The Peruvian party system has disintegrated to a degree that is unrivaled in Latin America. Whereas in the 1980s four parties--the United Left, APRA, AP, and the PPC--accounted for roughly 90 percent of the vote, a decade later the same parties accounted for less than ten percent of the vote. Moreover, these traditional parties have been replaced not by new parties--at least not as we conventionally understand parties--but by "independent movements," **[End Page 86]** which are really personalistic campaign vehicles that are discarded after elections.<sup>15</sup> At both the national and local levels, political entrepreneurs now routinely calculate that they are better off without a party than with one. Thus they are defecting from traditional parties and essentially running on their own, creating a multiplicity of candidate-centered movements that lack horizontal or cross-territorial ties to one another. They also tend to lack ideological bases. Without an appeal that transcends the individual candidate, many of these new "independent movements" have adopted names based on the locality in which they are competing, such as "Eternal Cuzco," "Ayacucho '95," "We are Huancayo," and "Union for Puno." Similarly, recently founded parties at the national level have called themselves "We Are Peru," "Peru Now," "Possible Peru," and "Peru Toward 2000."

Thus *Fujimorismo* as an organizational and electoral strategy has been widely replicated. Both progovernment and opposition candidates now routinely pursue nonparty electoral strategies, and the practice is likely to persist after Fujimori himself has disappeared from the political scene. Indeed, "independent movements" continue to expand their share of the electorate. The first-place finisher in the 1998 municipal elections was "independent lists," followed by Alberto Andrade's "We Are Peru" and Fujimori's "Let's Go Neighbors," both of which appear to be "disposable parties." Moreover, all of the top candidates for the presidency in 2000 are nonparty candidates. The only traditional party leader who even registers in the opinion polls is former president Alan García of APRA, and most polls place him at less than 3 percent.

In sum, parties as we traditionally understand them are virtually extinct in Peru. Party politics has been replaced by an almost pure form of candidate-centered politics. As a result, the party system is not only highly fragmented--with each major political entrepreneur creating his or her own party--but also extremely unstable. The party system is literally created anew at each election. This party-system fragmentation, which is more extreme even than in cases like Russia, Brazil, and Ecuador, is unlikely to be reversed in the near future. Indeed, the prospects for re-equilibration of the party system are considerably worse than the prospects for redemocratization. For this reason, it is worth thinking seriously about how a democracy without political parties might function in Peru.

Prominent analysts of political parties have argued that the absence of parties is fatal for democracy. E.E. Schattschneider, for example, has claimed that "democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties," and that parties "are the only kind of organization that can translate into fact the idea of majority rule."<sup>16</sup> More recently, John Aldrich has written, "All democracies that are Madisonian, extended republics, which is to say all democratic nations, have political parties. . . . The **[End Page 87]** political party . . . provides the only means for holding elected officials responsible for what they

do collectively."<sup>17</sup>In Latin America, party-system decomposition has indeed been associated with extreme electoral volatility, personalistic politics, executive-legislative deadlock, and the rise of populist, antisystem candidates--none of which is conducive to stable democracy.<sup>18</sup>

Yet while Peru's "partyless" party system will undoubtedly pose a challenge to democratic governance, it may not be quite as destabilizing as we might think. In developing this point, it is important to make a distinction between highly personalized politics and the kind of outsider-based, antisystem politics that has been widely associated with democratic instability. Although *Fujimorismo* was an example of *both* of these phenomena in 1990, the two do not necessarily go together. In fact, while Peru continues to exhibit highly personalized politics, it has made a subtle but important shift away from outsider politics. Peruvians had been at the forefront of the wave of "outsider" politics that brought figures such as Italy's Silvio Berlusconi, Brazil's Fernando Collor de Mello, and U.S. independent candidate Ross Perot to the world's attention in the 1990s. They elected nonparty radio personality Ricardo Belmont mayor of Lima in 1989 and the then-unknown Fujimori president in 1990. Yet the electorate has changed markedly since 1990. Peruvians have not turned back to parties with the passing of the crisis, but they do appear to be turning away from outsider politics.

In fact, it appears that Peruvian voters have begun to place a higher value on administrative capacity. If Belmont and Fujimori were elected because they were outsiders, they were each reelected (in 1993 and 1995, respectively) because they were considered to have governed well. Similarly, Alberto Andrade's current success in the polls is a product of neither outsider status nor a charismatic personality. A traditional politician, Andrade won the Lima mayor's race in 1995 because he was thought to have governed capably in the upper-middle-class district of Miraflores, and he rose to national prominence because he was considered to have governed well in Lima. In fact, the top three candidates in the presidential polls--Fujimori, Andrade, and former head of social security Luis Casteñeda Lossio--are all "insiders" with reputations for effective governance. By contrast, none of the outsider candidates who have entered the presidential race this year have attracted much support. A similar pattern appears to have emerged at the local level.

Thus, Peruvian electoral politics, despite remaining partyless and personalized, has to some extent stabilized over the course of the 1990s. This suggests that candidate-centered electoral politics does not necessarily entail the repeated rise of populist, antisystem candidates. Peruvian politicians do not need to belong to parties to win **[End Page 88]** higher office, but they increasingly *do* need to demonstrate an effective track record, which to some extent compels them to work their way up through the ranks of either elected office or public administration. If this is the case, then Peru's partyless system might be somewhat less unstable (and less dangerous to democracy) than we generally assume. Although electoral politics would be volatile and the organization of the legislature difficult, democracy itself could--at least potentially--stabilize and even consolidate in such a context.

The issue of democracy without parties is an important one for students of democracy. Although the Peruvian case is certainly extreme, it may not be as exceptional as it initially seems. Evidence from the former Soviet Union, Latin America, and even Europe and North America suggests a generalized trend, not only away from mass parties toward more media-based parties, but also toward more personalized, candidate-centered politics.<sup>19</sup> For that reason, it is worth thinking about the kinds of institutional innovations that will be necessary to ensure governability in the context of a democracy without parties. Peru, where a return to democratic politics is far more likely than a return to party politics, will be an important case to follow in this regard.

## The Risks of "Democratic" Dictatorship

Peruvian democracy has long suffered from the paradox that democratic institutions and their defenders have been associated with a small elite of predominantly European descent, while the governments that have in many ways been most socially and culturally "representative" of Peruvian society have shown little respect for democratic institutions. Massive popular support and the collapse of the old political elite gave Alberto Fujimori an opportunity to reverse that pattern. Yet while Fujimori succeeded in taming both hyperinflation and the Shining Path, he proved uninterested in building a long-term regime. A pragmatist to the core, Fujimori took advantage of a weakened

political class not to build more effective and representative democratic institutions, but to concentrate power. Thus Peru's weak democracy was replaced by a nondemocracy.

The Peruvian case may usefully be compared to contemporary Venezuela. As Jennifer McCoy describes in this issue,<sup>20</sup> Venezuela is currently suffering a party-system collapse on a Peruvian scale. Newly elected president Hugo Chávez is an outsider who campaigned against a discredited political class. He has attacked as undemocratic the political parties that had created the only democracy Venezuela has ever known, and he has spoken vaguely of replacing Venezuela's "partyarchy" with an "authentic" democracy. Like Fujimori, Chávez was elected with the massive support of those sectors--particularly the **[End Page 89]** poor--who had felt most marginalized under the old regime. And like Fujimori, his victory brought the definitive collapse of the old political order. For liberal democrats, the lessons from Peru are clear. "Democratic" dictatorships, in which citizens delegate power to a leader or group in order to "clean up" a discredited democratic regime, are risky ventures. In the hands of exceptional leaders, such power may be used to create a better democracy. But as the Peruvian case reminds us, most leaders pursue other--less benign--goals.

President Fujimori's failure to establish authoritarian institutions and the persistence of regular elections may soon give democratic elites another chance to govern Peru. A major challenge for these post-Fujimori elites will be to build democratic institutions that represent a broad stratum of Peruvian society. So far, the democratic opposition has failed to meet this challenge. Its social base remains confined largely to upper-middle-class Lima, and as a result, more than seven years after Fujimori's coup, no real democracy movement exists in Peru. If Peruvian democrats are unable (or unwilling) to broaden the base of republican institutions so that more than a small circle of Peruvians has a stake in their survival, then post-Fujimori democracy, even if it emerges, may prove no more robust than the democracy that Fujimori buried in 1992.

[Steven Levitsky](#), currently a Ph.D. candidate at the University of California at Berkeley, will be a visiting fellow at the Kellogg Institute for International Studies at Notre Dame in the fall, and an assistant professor of government at Harvard University starting in January 2000. He is the author (along with David Collier) of "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research," published in April 1997 in *World Politics*.

## Notes

\* I thank David Collier, Paul Dosh, Barry Levitt, Liz Mineo, Angel Paez, Kenneth Roberts, Cynthia Sanborn, and Lucan Way for their helpful comments and suggestions on this article.

1. On the 1992 coup, see Maxwell A. Cameron, "Political and Economic Origins of Regime Change in Peru: The *Eighteenth Brumaire* of Alberto Fujimori," in Maxwell A. Cameron and Philip Mauceri, eds., *The Peruvian Labyrinth: Polity, Society, Economy* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); Maxwell A. Cameron, "Self-Coups: Peru, Guatemala, and Russia," *Journal of Democracy* 9 (January 1998): 125-39.

2. For example, Cameron wrote in 1998 that Peru met "most, if not all, of Robert Dahl's requirements for polyarchy," and that persisting problems like the absence of executive accountability "fall largely outside those requirements" (Cameron, "Self-Coups: Peru, Guatemala, and Russia," 137). Also see Samuel Huntington, "Democracy for the Long Haul," in Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner, Yun-han Chu, and Hung-mao Tien, eds., *Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies: Themes and Perspectives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 10. On Peru as a delegative democracy, see Cynthia McClintock, "La Voluntad Política presidencial y la ruptura constitucional de 1992 en el Peru," in Fernando Tuesta Soldevilla, ed., *Los enigmas del poder: Fujimori 1990-1996* (Lima: Fundación Friedrich Ebert, 1996). On delegative democracy in general, see Guillermo O'Donnell, "Delegative Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 5 (January 1994): 55-69.

3. Procedural-minimum criteria for democracy are generally said to include free elections, universal suffrage, protection of basic civil liberties, and civilian control over the military. See David Collier and Steven Levitsky, "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research," *World Politics* 49 (April 1997): 434-45.



4. O'Donnell, "Delegative Democracy," 61-62.
5. McClintock, "La Voluntad Política presidencial y la ruptura constitucional de 1992 en el Peru," 54.
6. Scholars disagree over whether the coup was precipitated by executive-legislative conflict, or, alternatively, whether deadlock was used as a pretext by an authoritarian president. For the former argument, see Charles Kenney, "Por qué el autogolpe? Fujimori y el congreso, 1990-1992," in Tuesta Soldevilla, ed., *Los enigmas del poder*. For the latter argument, see McClintock, "La Voluntad Política presidencial y la ruptura constitucional de 1992 en el Peru."
7. Aldo Panfichi in "The Authoritarian Alternative: 'Anti-Politics' in the Popular Sectors of Lima," in Douglas A. Chalmers et al., *The New Politics of Inequality in Latin America: Rethinking Participation and Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 221-31.
8. Cynthia Sanborn, "The Democratic Left and the Persistence of Populism in Peru: 1975-1990" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1991); Maxwell Cameron, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in Peru: Political Conditions and Social Change* (New York: St. Martin's, 1994).
9. Congressional deputy Erland Rodas, interviewed by Liz Mineo, 4 May 1999.
10. This is a translation of *partidos fusibles*, or, literally, "fuse parties."
11. It should be noted that, according to research carried out by Cynthia Sanborn and Aldo Panfichi, participation in some forms of civic organization--particularly neighborhood self-help groups and other nonprofits--actually *increased* in the 1990s and is relatively high by Latin American standards. Nevertheless, the capacity (and will) of such organizations to serve as the bases of a democratization movement are far from clear. See Cynthia Sanborn and Aldo Panfichi, "Fujimori y las raíces del neopopulismo," in Tuesta Soldevilla, ed., *Los enigmas del poder*, 46-47; Cynthia Sanborn, "Philanthropy and Social Responsibility in Peru" (paper presented at the workshop "Strengthening Philanthropy in Latin America," Harvard University, 23 November 1998, 3).
12. International Labor Organization, *Latin America and the Caribbean 1996 Labour Overview* (Lima: ILO, 1996), 38. Some observers claim that the rate is actually lower.
13. There are some indications that this may be changing in 1999. On 28 April 1999, labor and opposition groups led a relatively successful 24-hour strike, as well as nationwide demonstrations, against Fujimori's reelection bid. Many observers consider the protest to have been the most successful prodemocracy mobilization to date.
14. It should be noted that Fujimori's birthday falls on Peruvian independence day, which meant not only that most people had the day off, but also that people went to the plaza to celebrate for more than one reason.
15. Noting that these parties are little more than names, Pedro Planas has labeled them "letterheads." See Pedro Planas, "Existe un sistema de partidos en el Peru?" in Tuesta Soldevilla, ed., *Los enigmas del poder*, 196-201.
16. E.E. Schattschneider, *Party Government* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1942), 1. See for example Planas, "Existe un sistema de partidos en el Peru?"
17. John Aldrich, *Why Parties?: The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 3.
18. See Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully, eds., "Introduction: Party Systems in Latin America," in Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully, *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995).
19. Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organization and Power*, Marc Silver, trans. (Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press, 1988), 262-69. On Latin America, see Carina Perelli, Sonia Picado, and Daniel Zovatto, eds. *Partidos y Clase Política en América Latina en los 90* (San José, Costa Rica: Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos, 1995).

[20](#). See Jennifer McCoy, "Chávez and the End of 'Partyarchy' in Venezuela," on pp. 64-77 above.

<a href="#">Muse</a>	<a href="#">Search</a>	<a href="#">Journals</a>	<a href="#">This Journal</a>	<a href="#">Contents</a>	<a href="#">Top</a>
----------------------	------------------------	--------------------------	------------------------------	--------------------------	---------------------