



# Alberto Fujimori, Deceiving Democracy: Source of Power for Neo-Populism and Neo- Authoritarianism in Peru, 1990 to 2000

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Alberto Fujimori, Deceiving Democracy:  
Source of Power for Neo-Populism and Neo-Authoritarianism in Peru, 1990 to 2000

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## Abstract

Alberto Fujimori served the people of Peru as President from 1990 to 2000. Political science scholars have documented his tenure as one marked by major successes with regard to the fight against terrorism as well as stabilizing economic growth in the country. Nevertheless, Fujimori's tenure was also viewed as quite controversial. Was he a democratic leader, or was his success achieved through authoritarianism and neo-popular measures? Questions remain: how did he achieve success? How was an "outsider" able to gain vast democratic support from Peruvians for such a relatively long period of time?

Through a rigorous document review and analytical process, this qualitative study uncovered three important factors that influenced the political outcomes achieved by Fujimori: (1) strategic actions with regard to the media; (2) targeting of fiscal resources toward social programs; and (3) Fujimori's overall character, which greatly influenced his ability to achieve success across the decade he was in power. I reviewed 75 documents in the form of policies, speeches, videos, executive orders, laws, unclassified cables, and news broadcasting to gain a deep understanding of the complexities that existed throughout Fujimori's presidency.

The results point to a tenure that made strategic use of the media and fiscal resources for social programs that then covertly deceived the people of Peru into believing he was a traditional democratic leader. Fujimori's ability to connect with his constituents, as well as his personality and character, served to further advance his political goals, thus undermining democracy and embracing neo-authoritarian approaches to leadership.

This thesis contributes to the existing knowledge base of the Fujimori era in Peru by unpacking the qualitative variables that contributed to his success beyond economics while also eradicating terrorism.

## Dedication

For the Peruvian people, and for those who have suffered through numerous dictatorships not only in Peru but throughout all of Latin America.

## Acknowledgments

I am deeply indebted to Dr. Keita Franklin for her help and encouragement throughout this process. In fact, this thesis would have not been possible if not for Dr. Franklin's support.

I also want to thank Harvard's staff for their guidance and assistance, in particular my thesis director Dr. Asher Orkaby for his enlightenment and inspiration. It was Dr. Orkaby who inspired me to choose the thesis path while teaching the class "Graduate Research Methods and Scholarly Writing" in Social Sciences Government and History at the Server building in Harvard Square. He told us about the gratifications of doing a research project and how self-satisfying it was. Although the process was difficult, he was not far from the truth.

I also want to thank Harvard Research Librarian Anna Assogba. Her guidance enabled me to find sources that were crucial to completing this thesis.

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

Alberto Fujimori's transition from a democratically elected leader of Peru in 1990 to a popular quasi-autocrat by 2000 is often attributed by many scholars to his well-documented success with the Peruvian economy, and to his accomplishments in reducing terrorism (Arce & Kenneth, 1998; Carrion, 2006; Gutiérrez & Holmes, 2002; Mauceri, 1997; Weyland, 2002). According to a 1995 public opinion poll conducted by APOYO, approval ratings for Fujimori's regime were very high midway through his ten-year tenure despite his efforts to undermine the democratic process in Peru (APOYO, 1996).

By way of context, by 1995, Fujimori had already engaged in a self-coup against his own government. He closed and removed the Peruvian Congress, dismissed the legislative and judicial powers, eliminated the existing constitution, executed a new constitution, and ran for re-election when it was previously illegal to do so after just two years as president. In spite of all of these actions, Fujimori continued to receive full democratic support from the Peruvian population throughout his presidency. Furthermore, he won the presidency by large margins during every election where he was a candidate.

By 1995, most Peruvians viewed Fujimori's management of the economy as successful. This is evident in data from opinion polls by APOYO in 1995, where 55% of the population approved his handling of the economy (APOYO, 1996). The notion that more than half of the population approved Fujimori's neoliberal economic plan seems

contradictory when one considers the austere measures taken by his government, such as reduced government spending and an increase in taxes. These two measures normally do not create widespread popular support for any government.

When it came to matters related to terrorism, Fujimori was also viewed positively by Peruvians despite the many well-known human rights violations and abuses committed by the state. The data points to the fact that by 1995, 79% of the population approved of Fujimori's handling of events and issues related to terrorism (APOYO, 1996). Taken together, there is no question that Fujimori was viewed as successful in his handling of the economy and with terrorism.

Fujimori presented himself as a democratic leader, yet there were many examples throughout his tenure where he led in ways that would not meet the definition of "democratic." Despite this, he still gained vast support from Peruvians. This might suggest that the economy and anti-terrorism efforts were far more important for Peruvians than, for example, democratic freedoms and reforms. This also directly contradicts data affirming that on average 70% of the Peruvian population saw democracy as the best form of government during the second half of the Fujimori regime (United Nation, 2018).

This leaves unanswered the question of how Fujimori was able to draw popular support for his undemocratic government from a population that saw democracy as the best type of government.<sup>1</sup> Much of the extant literature correlates public support of

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<sup>1</sup> This thesis conceptualizes "democracy" at a "mid-level" range, defining it as a political system in which the following basic factors exist: regular free and fair elections, universal suffrage, effective guarantees for freedom of expression, and accountability for the state's institutions and elected representative. Equally important in the context of Alberto Fujimori, this thesis adds to the definition of democracy the idea of a relatively level political playing field.

Fujimori's presidency with his achievements vis-à-vis the economy and terrorism, but neglects to identify other actions taken by Fujimori to build mass popular support for his presidency.

Fujimori's actions to improve the economy and to eliminate terrorism were necessary conditions for gaining major popular support for his neo-authoritarian/neo-populist regime (referred to by Peruvians as *Fujimorismo*). But these factors alone do not fully explain how he ensured political success throughout his tenure. There is a missing element that fueled his success as a leader.

This thesis posits that the Fujimori regime was successful as a result of three additional factors:

- 1) His control and manipulation of the media.

- 2) He used his position of power to target the fiscal resources in Peru toward certain types of social programming, thus leading citizens to believe that he single-handedly was responsible for their welfare and inevitable success.

- 3) His neo-populist charismatic personality.

Together, Fujimori used the power of the executive office to control the media, to craft laws and executive orders, and to direct fiscal resources to specifically skew the public's perception of his regime.

Controlling the media and the nation's financial resources to enhance public social programming were important factors for Fujimori enabling him to manipulate the narrative on behalf of his government, and to limit any credible threat from the opposition. Had Fujimori failed to manipulate the media so as to deceive the population or to control all public fiscal resources, his popularity would have not reached the levels

needed to undermine democracy and still achieve major popular support. Further, Fujimori's populist character is another factor that needs to be considered in order to develop a better understanding of his political success, specifically, how this populism gave him an advantage over other candidates.

This thesis will qualitatively review, through document analysis, a number of key artifacts from the Fujimori presidential era. The analysis will extend our current knowledge about the success of the Fujimori presidential era. It will focus on gains in the economy and dealing with terrorism, to a more multi-layered phenomenon that included specific media actions, targeting fiscal resources toward social programs, and building on his populist persona cast as a political "outsider" in order to achieve vast support and following by Peruvians. All of this contributed to his ability to engage in quasi-authoritarian leadership.

### Theoretical Framework

Before examining the three areas that I believe explain Fujimori's presidency, it is important to define some terms that serve as a framework for understanding this research. For purposes of this thesis, I will define these concepts below.

*Competitive authoritarianism*: Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way (2010) shed light on Fujimori's methods. Levitsky and Way developed this term to describe a situation in which a leader of society presents himself as democratic but in reality uses fraud, civil liberties violations, and abuse of state and media resources to silence opposition and further support his candidacy. In the end, such democracies are anything but democratic, since they are based on fraudulent methods that make it

difficult to compete with them. Without a fair playing field, Fujimori's competitors struggled to convince any other Peruvians that they would be worthy of the Office of President, which enabled Fujimori to continue—even flourish—in this competitive, authoritarianism leadership style.

*Neo-Populism:* When neo-populism concepts are coupled with competitive authoritarianism, it helps explain actions taken by Fujimori in his bid to gain large-scale support. I draw on Kurt Weyland's characterization and definition of neo-populism (1996): a situation in which leaders reach out to the masses (often excluded from political participation) in a personal manner and bypass established organizations like political parties and institutions in order to build support for the leader's agenda.

With these concepts as a background, this thesis aims to advance the existing research and empirical evidence about the factors that contributed toward the perceived success of the Fujimori regime.

Gaining an in-depth understanding of Fujimori's regime is important because it provides a context about governments that, from all outward appearances, begin as democratic and then in time turn into quasi-authoritarian regimes. Such transitions are not a product of a coup, but instead appear to deceive the population as the broader international community.

Unpacking the Fujimori presidency is relevant not only for the history of Peru, but for the international community. Other leaders, such as Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia, have similarly used the democratic institutions of their country to become quasi-authoritarian leaders. By understanding and identifying the types of

governments that are susceptible to or at risk for this type of leadership, the international institutions that defend democratic values may be better equipped to deter those leaders and to engage proactively to avoid serious consequences from these governments.

## Chapter II

### Background

Despite beginning as a complete outsider in Peru, the subsequent rise to power of Alberto Fujimori set the stage not only for his presidency but also for Peruvian politics for years to come. It is important to note that Fujimori had not held any political office prior to his presidential bid. He did not enjoy name recognition in the same manner as novelist Mario Vargas Llosa (whom Fujimori defeated in the 1990 presidential elections). Running against Vargas Llosa served a key purpose for Fujimori: it enabled him to gain popularity by exploiting populism concepts. As a presidential candidate, Vargas Llosa offered a clear contrast to Fujimori's populist approach. Vargas Llosa represented the well-educated upper class; Fujimori embraced the uneducated and lower class. Fujimori also represented a sharp social and ethnic contrast to the white and elitist image of Vargas Llosa. Fujimori, a son of Japanese immigrants, surrounded himself with other candidates of provincial and dark-skinned backgrounds. This resonated very well with the majority of the population as he represented the class struggles of the everyday men and women of Peru. His populist strategy of reaching the masses in a personal way rather than by established institutions like political parties or organizations made Fujimori look like he was 'one of the people', and made the 1990 presidential elections a very clear competition between 'the people' (Fujimori) versus 'the elite' (Vargas Llosa). Voters often saw Fujimori riding a tractor trailer out in the country side of Peru while he was campaigning, or dancing folkloric songs among the local population while dressed as like

of the people. These populist strategies resonated with the voters, and Fujimori won the 1990 presidential election with 57% of the votes (Base de Datos Políticos de la Américas, 2001).

Fujimori's administration has been well documented as consisting of many corruption scandals. At the same time, it is also cited as an era of economic prosperity and one that ended the terrorism. The economic situation in Peru when Fujimori came to power was precarious, with skyrocketing inflation and a negative gross domestic product (GDP) that continued to decline. If analyzed on the basis of the country's GDP, for example, Peru under the Fujimori administration experienced a steady increase of the country's GDP for the 10 years he was in office (see Figure 1).

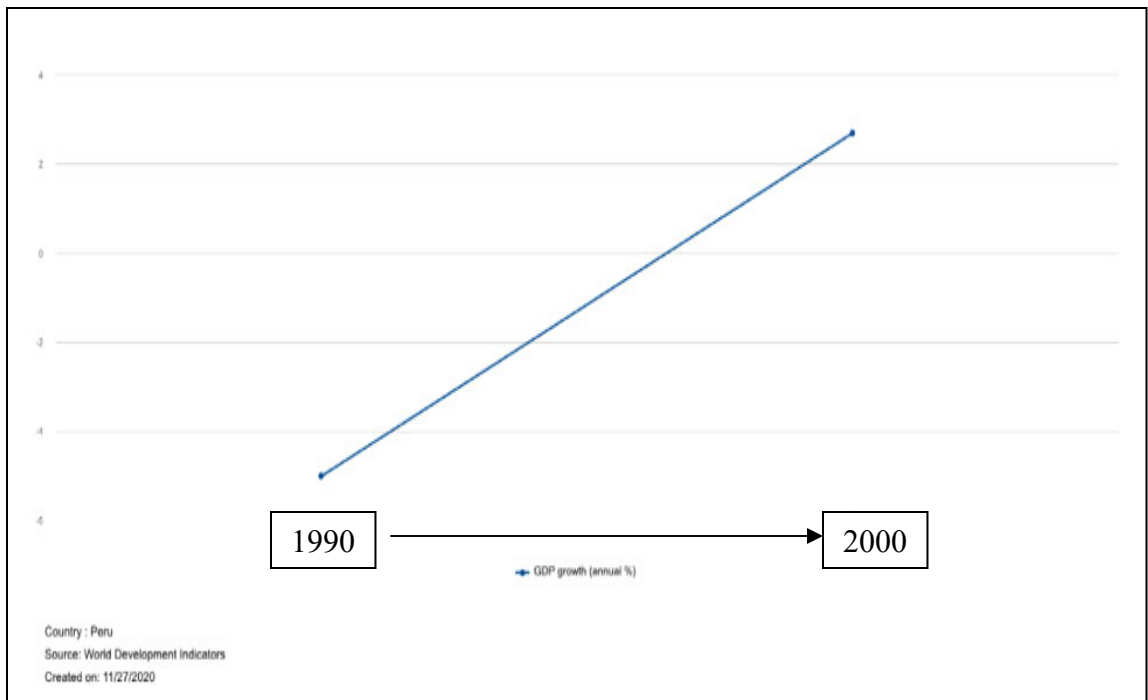


Figure 1. GDP Performance Years, 1990-2000.

Source: created by thesis author from World Bank data, 2020.



When it comes to terrorism, Fujimori became president at the time when guerrilla-style groups were emerging in Peru. By 1990, terrorist attacks had reached 500 per year. Fujimori campaigned on a platform to eliminate terrorism. During his leadership, political terrorism diminished drastically during the first half of Fujimori's tenure, and it became almost nonexistent by 2000 (see Figure 2). He accomplished this in part by overhauling the judicial system that dealt with terrorist offenders. He took jurisdiction over terrorism cases away from the civilian courts, and required suspected terrorists to be tried through military tribunals. This act, coupled with other reforms, greatly contributed to his success in eradicating terrorism at the time.

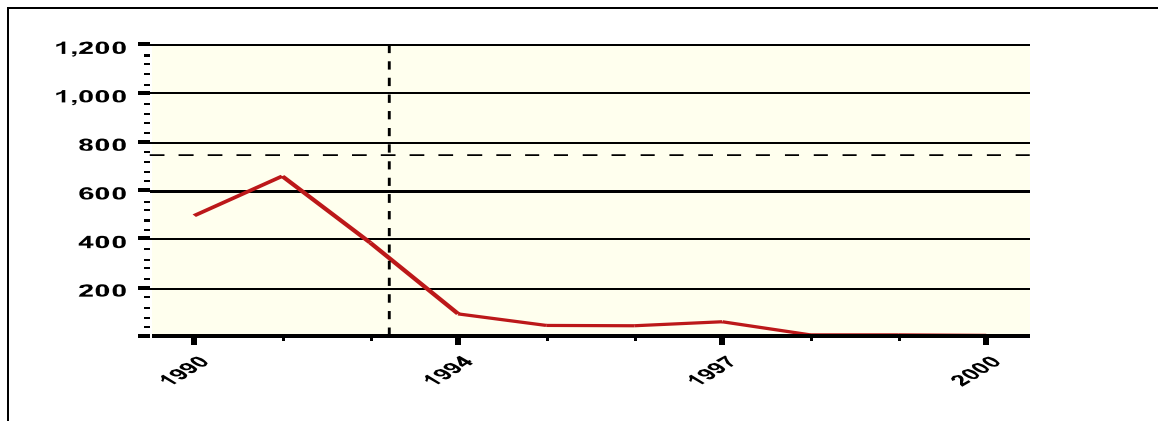


Figure 2. Political Terrorism Violence Years, 1990-2000.

Source: Created by thesis author from University of Maryland, Global Terrorism Database (GTD).

These successes seem very positive. However, they were achieved through other actions that involved executive overreach, human rights abuses, and corruption allegations, all of which hovered over Fujimori for the duration of his presidency. Evidence of corruption became clear in September 14, 2000, when a video surfaced showing Fujimori's right-hand man and head of the Peruvian intelligence services,

Vladimiro Montesinos, paying US\$15,000 to former opposition congressman Alberto Kouri in payment for his allegiance and supporting votes in Congress in favor of Fujimori. The leak of the video started a spiral of more videos showing Montesinos paying millions of U.S. dollars not only to other politicians to get them side with Fujimori, but also to news outlets for press coverage supportive of Fujimori. Although Fujimori denied any affiliation with Montesinos' actions, the majority of the population saw these videos as exhibits of what was already known but not proven—Fujimori was corrupt.

Acts such as these started the beginning of the end for the Fujimori regime as more people started asking for Fujimori's resignation, and for pursuit of legal actions against such behavior. In November 2000, Fujimori left Peru under the pretext of participating in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Conference as head of Peru. He never returned to Peru, and on November 21, 2000, submitted his resignation via fax from Japan, where he used his Japanese citizenship (inherited from his parents) to seek political asylum.

Fujimori lived in Japan until 2005 after being arrested while traveling to Chile that same year. In 2007, the Supreme Court of Chile approved the extradition of Fujimori to Peru where he was sentenced to 25 years for human right crimes stemming from the massacres at La Cantuta and Barios Altos, and the kidnapping of journalist Gustavo Gorriti and businessman Samuel Dyer. The court found Fujimori to be the perpetrator of these crimes.

It is worth highlighting that the four succeeding presidents of Peru following Fujimori—Alejandro Toledo (2001-2006); Alan Garcia (2006-2011); Ollanta Humala

(2011-2016); and Pedro Kuczynski (2016-2018))—also struggled or were unable to recover from the impacts of Fujimori’s leadership on the politics of Peru.

The lasting effects of Fujimori can be seen today throughout Peruvian politics, society, and culture. Whether it is the unicameral Congress that he created in 1992, or the closure of Congress by the current Peruvian President Martín Vizcarra, or the increase in executive corruption, Fujimori’s influence is ever present. It is remarkable that since the 2005 arrest of Fujimori for human rights violations after his visit to Chile, every Peruvian president thereafter has also been arrested and/or are facing criminal charges for corruption.

For example, Alejandro Toledo, the first president elected after Fujimori’s resignation, is currently in U.S. custody pending extradition to Peru to face corruption charges. Toledo is accused of taking more than US\$20 million in bribes as part of a scandal involving the Brazilian construction company Odebrecht. In 2018, the construction company admitted paying US\$800 million in bribes throughout Latin America in exchange for lucrative construction contracts (Casey & Zarate, 2019). Toledo was president of Peru from 2001 to 2006, after a victory over his predecessor Alan García. His presidency was looked upon with high hopes after the turmoil of Fujimori’s last two years. Toledo’s campaign promised to bring equality to marginalized populations, stop corruption, and put an end to poverty. But ultimately, his inability to accomplish these goals made him a very unpopular president.

The president following Toledo was Alan García. García had been president of Peru in the pre-Fujimori era (an important note for further discussion in this thesis), and was elected President of Peru for a second time from 2006 and served until 2011. He, too,

was incriminated in the Odebrecht scandal, and indicted for corruption in 2019.

Tragically, García took his own life as police tried to arrest him at his home in Lima.

Like Toledo, President Ollanta Humala rose to power after Alan García by supporting the idea of breaking away from Fujimori's autocratic government. In fact, Humala was an army officer when Fujimori was president, and in late 2000s, directed a small military uprising with the aim of overthrowing Fujimori and installing a government under a nationalist philosophy called *Etnocacerista* (Nesbet-Montecinos, 2011). Humala was president of Peru from 2011 to 2016 after winning the election against Fujimori's daughter, Keiko Fujimori (although she never won the presidency, she is also in jail for corruption charges).

Ironically, Humala shared the same outcome as did all the presidents following Alberto Fujimori. Humala was arrested in 2017 (along with his wife) for corruption charges stemming from the Odebrecht scandal.

Pedro Pablo Kuczynski was the last Peruvian president jailed over corruption charges after Fujimori. He did not even finish his presidential term, and was forced to resign after just two years in power. Kuczynski governed Peru from 2016 to 2018. Like those who served before him, Kuczynski, is currently under criminal investigation for taking bribes while he served as President, and when he was a government official during García's presidency.

While corruption existed across the ranks of the executive branch for decades, it was even more prominent during the era that began with Fujimori and in the eras that follow. The corruption of President Fujimori set the stage for a trend that lasted for the

next two decades (and likely beyond) where Peruvian presidents engaged in direct abuse of power and corruption.

The lack of democracy during the era of Alberto Fujimori is not a new phenomenon in Peru nor is it uncommon among the widespread authoritarian governments in Latin America since the 1970s. However, there are several characteristics that are unique to Fujimori, which define him distinctly within the amalgam of authoritarian regimes in Latin America. First, neither Fujimori nor his quasi-authoritarian regime came directly from a military actor. Fujimori was never a military officer or an enlisted soldier. Second, Fujimori's government did not come after a *coup d'état* like many others in Peru or Latin America. What made Fujimori's era unique was that he convinced the Peruvian public that he was using democratic tools, when in fact he did not use such tools to win the presidency or maintain it for ten years.

Without a source of power traced back to the military or to a coup, what defined the source of power for the Fujimori era? Many Latin American scholars place Fujimori's source of power almost exclusively on two factors: his success with the economy and the elimination of terrorism. For example, Philip Mauceri (1997) argues:

Fujimori's popularity and re-election were largely the result of his administration's success in ending hyperinflation and sharply reducing the level of political violence that was dominant during the late 1980s (p. 899).

In his article "The Rise of Fujimori's Neopopulist Leadership," Kurt Weyland (2002) strongly asserted that the emergence and victory of Alberto Fujimori in 1990 would have been inconceivable "without the grave dual crisis afflicting Peru at that time, namely incipient hyperinflation and massive insurrectionary violence" (p. 20). But this literature,

while scientifically empirical, fails to explore other possible factors that played a role in Fujimori's popularity.

It is important to cross-reference the arguments about the circumstances prior to Fujimori within the literature because the narrative about Fujimori's source of power exists in parallel with the political climate in the 1980s. Latin American expert and researcher, John Crabtree (2001), highlights another possible factor in addition to the economy and terrorism: the history of democracy in Peru (p. 289). Since its creation and foundation as a modern independent state, Peru had not experienced an extensive period of democracy. Crabtree highlights this fact when he argues that "Peru cannot look back to a period of stable democracy in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century" (2001, p. 289).

Democracy did not appear until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century when the people of Peru elected the civilian government of President Fernando Belaúnde (1980-1985), and President Alan García (1985-1990) after suffering through many military-style dictatorships. This short period of democracy (1980 to 1990) in Peru did not produce a better economy or the elimination of the political violence created by terrorist groups like Shining Path and MRTA—issues that were important to the people at that time. Crabtree (2001) describes the 1980s elections and the return to democracy in Peru as ineffective, one where the two major factors that engendered the Fujimori dictatorship took shape: the birth of terrorism and economic decline.

Numerous scholars and authors suggest that the source of power and legitimacy for Fujimori's regime has its root in the structural conjunctions created a decade prior to his presidency. The decline of the economy, the beginning of terrorism and terrorist

groups, and discontent with democratic political institutions in Peru can be traced back to 1980—a decade before Fujimori took power.

Philip Mauceri (2006) points to other factors that help explain how Fujimori's competitive authoritarianism style of government was not just tolerated in Peru, but welcomed. According to Mauceri, one factor in Fujimori's extraordinary executive power can be traced back to the colonial legacy of Peru. The Spanish viceroy political system not only put in place a hierarchy in which the executive branch was the principal actor when it came to authority and decision making, but also one without restraint from local or other political institutions. Executive power was viewed as an extended arm of the Spanish king himself (Mauceri, 2006, p. 43). This political system became engrained so deeply into Peruvian politics and society that former Peruvian politician and diplomat, José Pareja Paz-Soldán, affirmed in the early 1990s that the presidential structure in Peru at the time was an expansion of the viceroy system given the amount of power and lack of accountability held by the executive branch in Peru (Loveman, 1993, p. 55).

Another factor that correlates with Fujimori's extraordinary executive powers is the historically weak civil society that exists in Peru. The systematic political and social exclusion of Peru's largest indigenous population, along with a very limited concept of citizenship, made it difficult for groups to form civil societies that could demand any kind of accountability from the executive branch (Mauceri, 2006, p. 43). The concept of civil society is important during the context of Fujimori's dominance because it functions as a system of checks and balances against the president's power. Nations with weak civil societies that are incapable of analyzing, scrutinizing, or criticizing its president in a way

that results in policy change(s), will be highly vulnerable to regimes that undermine any political institution focused on holding elected officials accountable.

Equally important for a society, and a third factor that might explain why Fujimori's quasi-authoritarian government encountered so little resistance and received such enormous popular support, has to do with political parties. Political parties are important because they not only serve to mobilize and build support, but also to mobilize and build significant opposition. They also serve to hold elective officials accountable to a particular agenda or party goal, and to perform checks and balance on elective officials. Kenneth Robert (2006), while examining the role that political parties played in Peru under Fujimori, states:

Whereas parties were marginal and even dispensable actors in the electoral arena, they remained vital institutional vehicles for securing democratic practices in the exercise of public authority, and their absence proved corrosive for democratic accountability (p. 83).

Robert's point further highlights the importance of political parties in a society in order to cultivate a democratic regime.

Even before Fujimori's presidency, Peru's political party system was very weak. In fact, Fujimori created a new political party each time he chose to run for president, then later dismissed that party once he was in office. Mauceri (2006) defines a weak political party as one with little capacity to mobilize voters, with a small number of representational capacities, weak national organization, and few affective ties (p. 43). In contrast, strong political parties can mobilize large numbers of voters with great representational capacities. Moreover, strong political parties are well organized at the national level, and have effective ties to influence policies.



It can be argued that there was only one political party in Peru's twentieth-century history that fit the definition of a strong political party: Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA)). APRA was founded in the early 1920s by Haya de la Torre in Mexico City, and emerged as a leader of the left in Peru's early twentieth-century history.

In the 1980s APRA would have been a strong political party if defined by Mauceri's criteria. The entire party system in Peru was fairly new, and it was the least institutionalized in Latin America at the time. Institutionalized political parties are important for any civil society because they bring a sense of structure, stability, and legitimacy that form the basis of a solid democracy. Mainwaring and Scully (1995) argue that Peru's political system in the 1980s would be rated last based on institutionalization compared to other Latin American political parties when measured by four distinct criteria: stable roots in society, electoral volatility, solidity of party organization, and legitimacy (Mainwaring & Scully, 1995, p. 4).

Even today, Peru's political party system lacks the institutionalization needed to be effective. Since 2006, Peru has had 92 political parties. Of those, 54 remain registered and 24 have any registered members. In addition, only 10 parties have had uninterrupted participation and membership in Peru since 2006. Also, in Peru's political system there are more than 3,000 regional movements and hundreds of local organizations and electoral alliances.<sup>2</sup> Despite the fact that Peru has all these political parties, regional movements, and alliances, they all lack the criteria discussed above that are needed to

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<sup>2</sup> Data about all political parties, regional movements, and affiliations was taken from the Jurado Nacional de Elecciones (JNE) website. JNE is an autonomous body within the government of Peru with the mission to validate national elections and to maintain the registry of all political organizations.

reach the level of an institutionalized political party system. The majority of the political parties in Peru do not have stable roots in society, and many were only created as a vehicle for a particular election rather than to solidify the party organization. For example, Fujimori created the political party Cambio 90 in 1989 in order to run for the presidential elections of 1990. In 1992, he created the political party Nueva Mayoría for the special elections of that same year; in 1997, he founded the political party Vamos Vecino-Sí Cumple with the aim of indirectly participating in the 1998 municipal elections. Finally, he founded the political party Peru 2000 when he needed a party to run for reelection in the 2000 presidential elections. Martin Tanaka (2003), when referring to Fujimori's political party practices, stated:

Its [Fujimori's] anti-institutional nature lay in the fact that there was not, properly speaking, any political movement behind it. The various incarnations of this movement . . . were only electoral vehicles, not authentic representational organizations (p. 227).

Temporary political parties do not add depth or value to the goal of institutionalization.

Electoral volatility, or the change in the percentage of the votes received by one party from one election to the next, has been very high in Peru since the 1980s. Charles Kenney (2004), when discussing the high volatility in Peru's political parties, discovered that in Fujimori's 1990 elections, "100% of the votes were being disputed by candidates whose political organization did not exist in 1985" (p. 45). Furthermore, political party affiliation has always been low in Peru despite the high number of political parties and movements. The data show that in 2018, only 6.6% of the eligible voting population was affiliated with any political party—especially notable given that in Peru voting is

mandatory and anyone over the age of 17 is penalized with a monetary fine if they do not vote, and this requirement remains in place until a voter reaches the age of 70.<sup>3</sup>

Due to the lack of stability and organization in the Peruvian political party system of the 1980s, strong electoral volatility seemed inevitable as well as other problems that impeded legitimacy. Nonetheless, these flaws became somewhat expected after what Mauceri (2006) refers to as the fourth factor that could help explain Fujimori's broad support to his regime: Peru's long history of both military and civilian authoritarian regimes. The 1980s saw the first two democratically elected presidents in Peru after a long period of authoritarianism. When Fujimori won the presidency in 1990, the free participation of political parties was a fairly fresh concept. Nonetheless, the collapse of the political party system in Peru in the 1980s can be correlated to failures by the political elites. The breakdown of the traditional political parties in the 1980s created a political vacuum in Peru that made it possible for an outsider with an anti-party rhetoric to win the presidency. Moreover, it also relates to discontent with democracy among Peruvian voters. Hence, it can be argued that Fujimori was a product of the disappointments of the 1980s political parties more than an autonomous presidential candidate (Kenney, 2004, p. 77).

Political parties were not only perceived as failures in the 1980s; there was also a perception of failure economically and an increase in political violence. The colonial legacy of Peru, its weak civil societies, its failing political parties systems, and its long

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<sup>3</sup> Data for party affiliation was taken from the JNE website and evaluated with the total population required to vote by law. The total population over the age of 17 and under 70 was projected from the CIA *World Factbook*. Prisoners, police, and military personnel were taken into account for the total population eligible to vote for this analysis due to the fact that a 2014 constitutional amendment gave these three bodies suffrage rights (Aprueban, 2014).

history of authoritarian regimes played a role in creating the vacuum that enabled Fujimori to consolidate broad support for his undemocratic regime. Political elites are also directly related to this vacuum in Peru in 1980, particular the two presidents who served in the 1980s: Fernando Belaúnde Terry (1980-1985), and Alan García (1985-1990). Thus, I believe it is important to briefly analyze these two presidents in order to understand how they played a role in the crisis that resulted in Fujimori's broad support.

### Fernando Belaúnde Terry

After ten years of military government in Peru, in 1977 General Francisco Morales Bermudez established a pathway for a democratic and civilian government, calling for a general election to build a freely elected constitutional assembly in Peru. Fernando Belaúnde Terry (who was overthrown by a military coup in 1968 after winning the presidency following many years of military government), won back the presidency in the 1980 election. Like Alan García, Belaúnde encountered two problems during his second time in office: a failed economy, and the rise of armed terrorist groups. On the economic front, GDP growth had been declining throughout the prior four years before the first free elections in 1979. In 1975, annual GDP growth in Peru was 4.3%. A year later, annual GDP growth was just 1.4%, fell further to 0.3% by 1977, and -2.6% by 1978 (see Figure 3). Inflation during this period increased from 24% to almost 70%, making the country's foreign debt a problem that required the intervention of the International Monetary Fund (Kenney, 2004, p. 21).

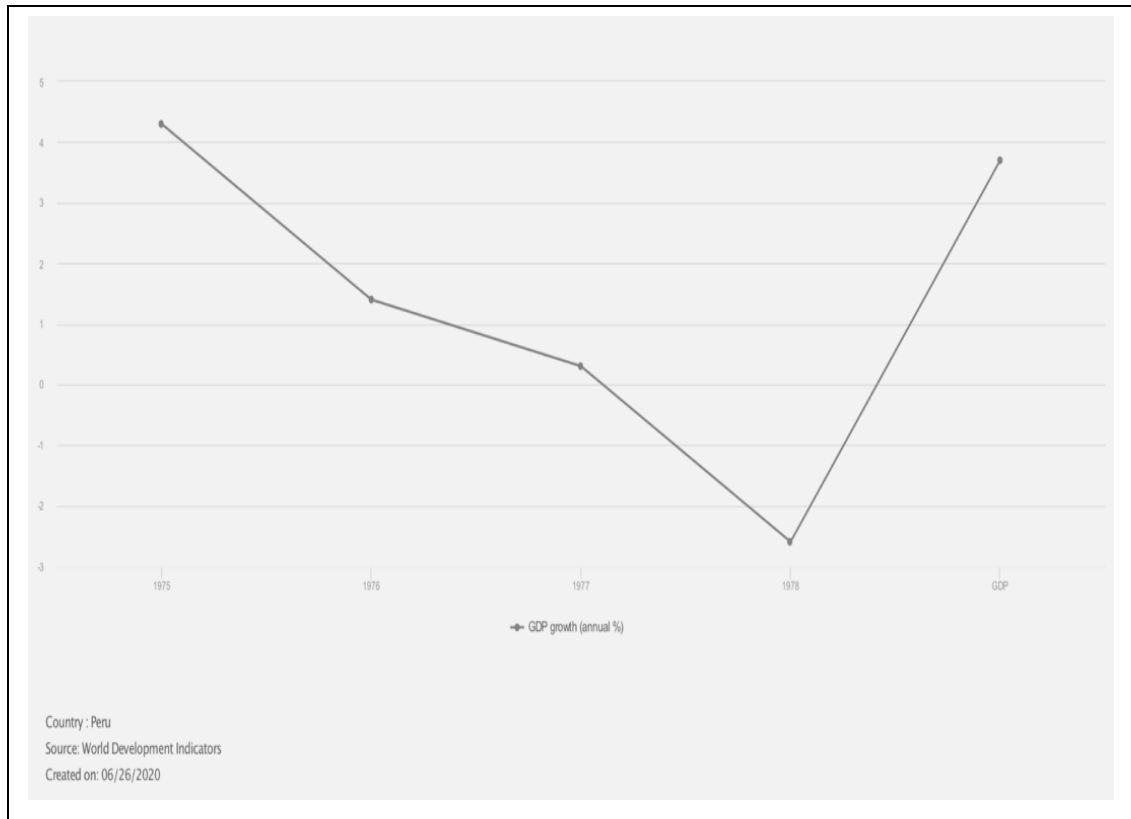


Figure 3. Annual GDP Fluctuation 1977-1978

Source: created by thesis author from World Bank data, 2020.

Belaúnde won the 1980 presidency by campaigning on a promise to create one million new jobs in a country of only seven million people. Upon becoming president, he shortly changed his agenda and opted for a more established economic agenda (Kenney, 2006, p. 21). He also governed by decrees rather than by cooperation across the congressional aisle, issuing hundreds of executive orders throughout his presidency. Governing by executive orders quickly aroused the ire of the opposition, but Belaúnde had the benefit of a parliamentary majority during his time in office. In fact, more than

50% of the laws passed during Belaúnde's term were legislative decrees originated by executive power (Planas, 1999, p. 120).

National security was another major challenge facing Belaúnde in 1980. The rise of terrorism in the form of armed insurgency can be explained by the political climate and the military in the 1980s. A change in the military's focus in Peru played a major role in forming terrorist groups. By the 1980s, the main focus of the military was to transition the country from a military government to a civilian democracy. The military in Peru did not want to fall from grace as happened to other military governments in Latin America, so their priority was to return to the barracks with dignity and under their own terms. Hence, this interest consumed considerable time, with the result that during the unprecedented elections of 15 candidates, terrorist groups were overlooked (Kenney, 2006, p. 23).

For historical context, the left-wing guerrilla movements Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) and Revolutionary Movement Tupac Amaru (MRTA) began forming and became terrorist organizations in Peru during Belaúnde's presidency. After the split of the Peruvian Communist Party (PCP) in 1964, left-wing movements were characterized in Peru as pro-Soviet or pro-Chinese parties. The pro-Soviet communist party became known as the Peruvian Communist Party Unity (PCP-U), while the Peruvian Communist Party Red Flag (PCP-BR) followed the pro-Chinese fraction. The later was further split by future leader Abimael Guzmán in 1970 to form the biggest terrorist organization in Peru—the Peruvian Communist Party “Sendero Luminoso” (PCP-SL “Shining Path”).

Founded around the singular leadership and cult personality of Abimael Guzmán, and drawing from an amalgam of Marxism, Leninism, and Maoism, Sendero Luminoso

found their ideology well received among the population in rural areas of Peru. By early 1980, Sendero Luminoso's first graduating military class was ready to engage in what they called "the people's war" (Poole & Renique, 1992). Sendero Luminoso did not wait long to let its presence be felt. On May 17, 1980, on the day before the first general elections in Peru after 17 years of dictatorship, five militants from Sendero Luminoso entered the electoral registry building in the town of Chuschi in the Andean province of Ayacucho and burned ballot boxes and voting registration books that were to be used in the next day's elections (Gorriti, 1990, p. 43). By 1991, Sendero Luminoso was responsible for carrying out an average of eight terrorist attacks each day (Kenney, 2004, p. 159). In a comprehensive study of the political climate of Peru in early 1990s, Deborah Poole and Gerardo Renique (1992) argue that the rise of terrorist organizations like Sendero Luminoso was due in part to the "government's [i.e., Belaúnde] initial reluctance to take Sendero seriously as a political-military force when it started operations in 1980" (p. 5). Factors like these had a huge impact on the future of politics in Peru.

Perhaps with fewer capabilities than Sendero Luminoso, and with less ideological structure, the left-wing terrorist group Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru (Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement, (MRTA)) also engaged in terrorist acts with the aim of disrupting the government and establishing a left-wing state on behalf of the poor people in the mid-1980s (Poole & Renique, 1992). MRTA came into the spotlight during Fujimori's presidency when, on December 17, 1996, MRTA members invaded the Japanese embassy in Lima and held its occupants hostage as they were celebrating the birthday of Japan's emperor for 126 days. The Japanese embassy hostage crisis promoted

Fujimori's popularity even higher when his administration liberated all but one hostage while losing only two of its military forces and killing all 14 MRTA members.

### Alan García

Alan García succeeded Belaúnde in the 1985 presidential race after a run-off election with former mayor of Lima Alfonso Barrantes. It was the first time since its foundation that a candidate from the APRA political party won the presidency in Peru. García, who was only 35 years of age when he became president, opened his administration by handling the macroeconomic situation in the country in an aggressive manner. He fostered a close working relationship with the private sector, and stimulated demand by extending agriculture credits, raising wages, and setting controls on prices, interest rates, and exchange rates (Sheahan, 1999, pp. 139-140). These policies gave García positive results in the short run as he was able to bring down monthly inflation from 11% to 4% and maintain it at that rate for over a year. The inflation rate in 1984 was 111%, and had soared to 158% by 1985. However, by 1986 the inflation rate dropped to 63% (Crabtree, 1987, p. 806)

However, García's policies began to show weaknesses after 1987 when production plunged rapidly and inflation skyrocketed to levels never experienced before in Peru. In the last two years of García's administration, per capita GDP fell 10.2% and 13.4%, respectively. Inflation rose to 1,722 points in 1988, and 2,775 points in 1989. By the time Fujimori came to power in 1990, inflation had reached 7,650 points. Near the end of García's administration, per capita GDP had fallen below that of 1962, and inflation had accumulated to an unprecedented 2,178,479%. White-collar wages in Lima



alone fell by 49% from 1985 to 1989, and blue-collar wages fell similarly to 43% in the four from 1985 to 1989 (Balbi & Gamero, 1990, p. 102). In short, the economy plunged so dramatically under Garcia's administration that it was worth asking if a democratic government was a good option.

Due to increasing threats from terrorist groups like Sendero Luminoso and MRTA, national security also did not improve under Garcia's administration. In fact, the number of terrorist attacks increased yearly from 1,750 in 1984 to 3,149 in 1989 (Kenney, 1004, p. 32). Several theories offer some light into why political violence from revolutionary groups like Sendero Luminoso and MRTA increased during that period in Peru. For example, James Davies (1962) theorizes that "revolutions are most likely to occur when a prolonged period of objective economic and social development is followed by a short period of sharp reversal" (p. 6). The sudden drop in economic performance under García's administration, with inflation skyrocketing to levels never seen by Peruvians before and wages falling almost 50%, validates Davies' theory as to why the revolutionary groups flourished in the 1980s.

Harvard scholar Theda Skocpol (1976) theorized that political violence in the form of insurgency groups occurs when a country's institutions, charged with controlling society, are not only weak but also broken (p.181). In Peru, the military was the only institution able to contain terrorist groups. But as explained earlier, the military in 1980 was more concerned with the transfer of power from the military to the civilian sector than with fighting insurgency groups. That lack of attention by the military allowed Sendero Luminoso and MRTA to flourish in the 1980s, and to become a serious threat to the government.

David Wood (2000) argues that despite the ideological and policy differences between Belaúnde (1980-1985) and García (1985-1990), Peru saw “economic crises, uncontrollable inflation, political ineffectiveness, and the rise of Sendero Luminoso to become a genuine threat to the continuing functioning of the state” (p. 20) during the decade prior to Fujimori. When Alan García took office in 1985, he promised to put an end to the terrorist problem by engaging the rural population of Peru in social programs and economic developments (Poole & Renique, 1992). However, the economic crisis of the 1980s became even worse under Garcia’s government because there were insufficient resources to launch counter-initiatives.

It can be argued that the 1980s set the foundations for Fujimori’s power. But the literature fails to explore how Fujimori exploited these factors to gain major popular support for his regime. The colonial history of Peru, its weak civil societies along with its weak political parties, and the history of dictatorship and authoritarianism in Peru are ideological explanations that may have set the stage for a Fujimori regime, but these alone do not fully explain why he was so popular.

The literature seems to suggest that Fujimori did not play a role in his popularity, that he became a popular quasi-autocrat by external factors beyond his control. While it might seem logical to infer that his popularity was due to his successes with the economy and terrorism, these two factors alone do not account for the pragmatic steps that Fujimori took in order to gain major popular support for his regime. Furthermore, despite the success of the economy and with greatly reduced terrorism, such a conclusion does not fully explain how Peruvians supported Fujimori’s effort to turn a democratic country

into a quasi-authoritarian state while at the same time pushing democracy as the best form of government.

In the end, the era of the 1980s and all the political and economic crossroads that came with it set the stage for the Fujimori regime. But this does not fully explain why society at large in Peru allowed his regime to operate unilaterally. Fujimori took aggressive steps to disguise his regime as democratic. He exploited the anti-establishment sentiment toward career politicians and leaders with tactics related to theories of populism. He used the press as a mechanism to control and manipulate public opinion in favor of his regime, and to legitimize his government despite numerous instances of corruption and human right violations.

Many of the laws passed by Fujimori and his regime were never intended to enhance the democratic process and the institutions of Peru. On the contrary, he used his executive office to pass laws intended to limit political competition from the opposition and to ensure his own continuity. While Fujimori did not act as a traditional authoritarian president compared to past authoritarian leaders of Peru and Latin America, he deceptively portrayed himself as a democratic “for the people” president while engaging in corruption and purposeful actions that were more quasi-authoritarian than they were democratic. These actions included re-directing the media as well as financial resources designated for social programs to his own self-serving outcomes. Public perception is greatly shaped by the media; social programs were crucial for gaining major support from Peruvian society, and he used both elements not to alleviate wealth disparity or poverty, but as a weapon to solidify his regime.

Finally, Fujimori's charismatic character drew to him the people he served and greatly contributed to his ability to unilaterally and deceptively engage in competitive authoritarianism as the governance strategy underlying his regime.

## Chapter III

### Methodology

This thesis seeks to understand the governance of Alberto Fujimori by using a deductive thematic analysis of key documents. This form of qualitative research reviews and analyzes key documents that appeared from 1990 to 2000 during his presidency. Specific documents are analyzed to provide explanation, and to give a voice to possible meaning surrounding Fujimori's leadership.

#### Sources

- The Peruvian Constitutions of 1979 and 1993, laws and decrees, executive orders, presidential speeches, and policy documents during the Fujimori era were drawn from the online archives of the Peruvian Congress for analysis.
- Radio and television broadcasting during that period was obtained from the Foreign Broadcast Information Services (FBIS) archives and analyzed.
- Copies of local national newspapers were extracted from the national library of Peru. International newspapers and declassified situation reports from the United States Embassy in Lima and the National Security Agency (NSA), were obtained from the Harvard Library archive system and used as independent third-party sources in order to corroborate themes found in the local reporting.
- Public opinion polls and marketing studies were pulled from Apoyo Opinion Y Mercado S.A. (APOYO) public opinion studies, Compañía Peruana de Investigación

de Mercados y Opinión Pública S.A.C (CPI), and IMASEN. These public opinion and market studies were used to support deductive themes found in the media about the Fujimori regime.

- Economic data were drawn from the World Bank database and underwent rigorous analysis.
- Data about terrorist attacks were examined at the University of Maryland's Global Terrorism Database (GTD).
- Films depicting the Fujimori regime were extracted from the Center of Documentation and Investigation (LUM) at the Peruvian Ministry of Culture.

Information obtained from each of these sources underwent a rigorous coding process to ensure that all content was broken down to the lowest level to enable key themes to emerge.

### Document Analysis

There were many advantages to using document analysis as part of the qualitative research for this thesis. First, document analysis is an efficient way to review historical artifacts about the leadership of Alberto Fujimori. Second, this type of study is cost-efficient and time-efficient when there is a need to examine things from another country and another era. Document analysis often supports other types of quantitative research that have already been produced, that is, it extends existing research and can strengthen what is already known about the subject, in this case Fujimori. Document review gives researchers and political scientists an opportunity to examine things that can no longer be observed—a critical area of importance for advancing the field of international studies.

Document analysis is often used during social science research in an effort to better understand various phenomena that have occurred in the past. In the case of this study, these methods shed light on the nuances surrounding Fujimori's leadership style and how he deceived the public regarding his expressed ideal of leadership based on democratic versus quasi-authoritarianism principles.

This research sought convergence and corroboration with the data by looking at multiple documents that appeared between 1990 and 2000. When and where possible, the research worked to triangulate the data in order to provide an increased level of evidence and credibility about the issues under examination.

This research utilized Zina O'Leary's (2014) eight-step planning methodology for a qualitative review of documents related to this study. These steps are outlined below:

1. Create a list of 'texts' you wish to explore. If the breadth of texts you wish to explore is overly wide, you will need to develop an appropriate sampling strategy
2. Access – how you will locate and access texts
3. How you plan to control your biases
4. How you might develop the skills/resources needed to carry out your textual exploration
5. Strategies for ensuring credibility
6. What it is you are looking for or trying to find in your texts
7. Ethics/ethics approval
8. Contingencies

The data collected for this thesis underwent analysis for content and themes in order to derive meaningful information about Fujimori's leadership. Deductive thematic

analysis was used to gather patterns in the data and draw inferences for the hypothesis under study.

#### Document Review Limitations

Like any research method, there are limitations to a qualitative document review. First, the researcher must ensure that the documents are worthy of analysis, that they are legitimate documents, that there was no bias in their selection for review. It is also important to ensure that each document is examined through the lens that was intended when it was written, printed, and/or disseminated. The source of the document is important. It is also important to examine the document through the style and tone of the document.

#### Research Limitations

One limitation of this study has to do with the period of time that is under review. My research examined the years from 1990 to 2000; it was not intended to be or provide a longitudinal analysis beyond those years. I briefly examined some periods prior to 1990, but only to make comparisons to the target time frame.

Although this thesis explores theories of populism and competitive authoritarianism in Latin America, this study is limited to studying the politics of Peru in general, and Alberto Fujimori specifically.

The data collected for this study constitutes a small sample. Future researchers might want to consider a larger survey or data that afford participants the opportunity to answer quantitative-driven hypotheses that might add to this line of research.



Finally, the researcher should possess the necessary skills for conducting this research, such as fluency in the Spanish language, and experience with Peruvian idiosyncrasies. In my case, I have taken many trips to Peru since 2007, Spanish is my native language, and I have considerable rapport with Peru and its people.

## Chapter IV

### Results

This qualitative research used deductive thematic analysis as the method for reviewing key objects that informed the investigation related to three central areas: (1) Fujimori's use of the media to manipulate and/or control his constituents, (2) the overt directing of fiscal resources to certain social programming, and (3) the character of Fujimori himself.

One group of artifacts reviewed was related to the media, including 17 news documents, 11 broadcast transcripts from local Peruvian radio and television networks, 10 films, two public opinion studies, and review of 27 of 1,601 laws passed by the Peruvian Congress while Fujimori was in power.

Other group of artifacts reviewed was related to the distribution of funding for social programming, including four laws passed by the Peruvian Congress under Fujimori, one public opinion study, and one economic database.

In order to review Fujimori's character, two speeches were reviewed. The findings for each area are described below.

#### The Media and Alberto Fujimori

The following documents were analyzed to better understand how Fujimori used the media to build and maintain his popularity, which ultimately helped the success of his presidency:

- Fujimori’s national televised message, April 5, 1992, announcing the self-coup.
- Congressional laws passed by the Peruvian Congress and enacted by Fujimori, each involving the media, from 11/21/1990 to 11/14/2000.
- Recorded films: self-recorded videos from the head of Peruvian Intelligence Services, Vladimiro Montesinos, from approximately 1995 and 1997, commonly known as “Vladivideos.”
- Declassified situational reports from the U.S. Embassy in Lima to the U.S. State Department in Washington, DC: April 5 and 6, 1992.
- Declassified intelligence reports from National Security Agency to the Defense Intelligence Agency in Washington, DC: April 5, 1992 .
- Peru Armed Forces: declassified orders by Peruvian Joint Chief of Staff: April 5, 1992.
- Foreign Broadcast Information Services (FBIS): transcripts from local radio and television broadcasting: April 5 to 7, 1992.
- Peruvian newspapers: *El Comercio, Diario Expreso, La República, El Peruano, Gestión, El Popular, El Ojo*, reporting from April 6-7,1992.
- International newspapers: *New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, and Times of India*, April 6, 1992.
- APOYO: public opinion polls about Fujimori’s support for the coup from April 6, 1992.
- Compañía Peruana de Estudios de Mercados y Opinión Pública (CPI): marketing report concerning national preferences on print media in 1994.

The self-coup orchestrated by Alberto Fujimori in 1992 was a pivotal moment in Peruvian politics, and one that began the intense relationship between Fujimori and the media. Ultimately, the self-coup left Fujimori in a better position to govern because it created fewer checks and balances on his regime. The media played an important role in energizing Fujimori's popularity despite the fact that he engaged in the most anti-democratic act of eliminating the legislative and judicial powers. It marked the start of Fujimori directly and indirectly controlling the media to build his popularity while deceiving his constituents.

His physical control of the media, aiming to manipulate its reporting to gain more support for his regime, was analyzed by reviewing documents surrounding the self-coup of 1992. Around 10:00 PM on Sunday evening April 5, 1992, Fujimori appeared on Peruvian television with a sudden and unprecedented message to the nation: he was undertaking a coup against his own government. Ten minutes into his speech, he gave his rationale for the coup, stating that he decided to take the following actions:

- temporarily dissolve Congress
- reorganize the Judiciary, the National Council of Magistracy, the Court of Constitutional Guarantees, and the Public Ministry; and
- reconstruct the country's General Comptroller of Account.

In the same speech, Fujimori advised that the continuity of government would occur through the use of an "Emergency Government of National Reconstruction." He laid out specific objectives for this new government to accomplish, the main one being the "modification" of the current Constitution (i.e., the Constitution of 1979), and to create a new structure within Congress and the judiciary.

Prior to announcing these measures, Fujimori used the media to depict a gruesome picture of all the narcotics traffic, economic, and terrorist problems affecting Peru, which he blamed on the Congress and the judiciary. For the first ten minutes of the speech, he railed about the obstruction and corruption of Congress which, according to Fujimori, was preventing the country from improving its economy and reining in terrorism. Without showing any evidence, Fujimori stated:

The legislature's ineffectiveness and the judicial branch's corruption are compounded by the evident obstructionist attitude and covert plans of certain party leaders against the efforts of the people and government . . . . The legislature has displayed weakness and inconsistency in the struggle against drug trafficking . . . corruption and political infiltration have reached such proportions that they are found at all levels and instances of the judicial branch. (Fujimori, 1992)

Fujimori's dire representation of Peru laid the blame for these problems on the Congress, arguing that the only solution was to eliminate the government and reorganize it from the top down. This televised speech is an example of Fujimori's use of the media to control the narrative about his regime.

Minutes before Fujimori's announcement of the self-coup, the Peruvian military and police were dispatched to all news media outlets in Peru, and to key locations around the city. A review of declassified cables from the U.S. Embassy in Lima to the U.S. State Department in Washington D.C. reveal significant themes that point to Fujimori's insistence on having full control of the reporting. He wanted to change the narrative from a traditional coup and instead characterize his moves as necessary "measures" for the good of the country.

The declassified cables also confirmed that major newspapers like *La República* were not only taken over by the military but also officially censored by the new Fujimori

regime. The only news the media was allowed to publish was the official transcript of Fujimori's speech along with the Joint Chiefs' communication. A review of the April 6 edition of *La República* shows that the first two pages of the newspaper were blank ("La Histórica," 2016).

The publisher APOYO, which prints excellent political content in their journals *Semana Económica* and *Peru Economico*, reported to the U.S. Embassy in Lima that they were expecting to be censored at any time. Declassified cables to the U.S. State Department in Washington, DC also reported that the news agency UPI was occupied by military personnel on the night of Fujimori's self-coup, and that international dispatches were censored by the government along with one newspaper and one radio station. The U.S. Embassy in Lima further confirmed press censorship in its April 7 situational report to Washington, stating that the media was working under the "watchful eye of the military," and that weekly magazines *Caretas* and *Sí* would not be allowed to publish their paper for the remainder of the week.

Former Minister of Industry and owner of a weekly economic publication called *Medio Cambio*, Guido Pennano, reported to the U.S. Embassy in Lima that he was served with an official government communication instructing him that freedom of the press had been suspended and that criticism of government policy was no longer permissible.

A further review of declassified documents from the U.S. Embassy in Lima point to the fact that popular news channels like "Radio Programas" and APRA-inclined radio channel "Antenna Uno" were initially taken off the air by Fujimori that Sunday night. Dennis Vargas Marin, news director of "Radio Programa del Peru Network," stated in a

note to the U.S. Embassy in Lima that the network could not broadcast the morning after the coup due to the presence of armed forces in their central headquarters.

A review of documents obtained from the Foreign Broadcast Information Services (FBIS) verified the theme of censorship and control by the Fujimori regime toward radio and television stations. FBIS transcripts show that on the day after Fujimori's coup, all Lima radio and television stations were visited by military personnel; also that opinion programs on Peruvian television were being censored. Transcripts from FBIS reveal that while the censorship of television programs only affected the opinion shows, and that news was still being broadcast on April 6, the broadcasts were undertaken carefully and with evident self-control. For example, Panamericana Television Network aired a live broadcast of Fujimori's message to the nation on April 6 where he further justified the coup, and no opinions or commentaries from pundits were allowed after the speech. Transcripts from FBIS establish that on that evening, "Radio Programa del Peru Network" did not broadcast its usual newscast after Fujimori's speech. It shows that the morning after the coup, the network limited its political reporting to simple reading of newspaper headlines instead of doing its customary morning call-in programs.

A review of a declassified document from the Peruvian Joint Chief of Staff confirmed that not only were the media outlets seized by Fujimori, but also reporters and key personnel who might pose a threat to the coup and to the new governance he was trying to establish. That document is a signed order from the commanding officer of the Peruvian Armed Forces, General Nicolas de Bari Hermoza, on April 5, 1995, directing military and police personnel to arrest "elements whose name and identity were verbally given" (Peru, A. F., 1992).

Although the names and the identities of the individuals arrested by the government were not disclosed in the order, a closer examination of declassified cables from the U.S. Embassy in Lima to the U.S. State Department in Washington on the night of Fujimori's self-coup point to a recurring theme of personnel being arrested: specific people were chosen due to their position and potential influence against Fujimori's actions. The U.S. Embassy in Lima confirmed to the U.S. State Department that the President of the Senate, Felipe Osterling, and the President of the Lower House of Representatives, Roberto Ramirez del Villar, were put under house arrest. In addition, the Lima embassy verified that former Peruvian President, Alan Garcia, sought exile in the Colombian Embassy before the police arrived at his house to arrest him; his wife was arrested upon returning to Peru that same night.

Influential journalist Gustavo Gorriti, known for his affinity with the left in Peru and with guerilla groups like Sendero Luminoso, was also detained—but by the intelligence service instead of the police or the military—for a “rigorous intellectual discussion of his writings.” The U.S. Embassy in Lima reported that the Spanish Ambassador in Lima asked for the release of Gorriti, but was advised by authorities that his release would not be possible for several days.

The U.S. Embassy reported that Enrique Zileri, editor of the influential news magazine *Careta*, was in hiding, with his deputy, for fear of being targeted due to his media campaign against Fujimori's advisor Vladimiro Montesinos. Moreover, the embassy confirmed that former APRA ministers and the top leaders of that political party, Agustín Mantilla and Abel Salinas, were arrested and their whereabouts unknown that night. APRA colleagues speculated to the U.S. Embassy in Lima that the former



ministers were held by the Rimac unit, but they were not able to see or communicate with the former ministers. Declassified cables from the U.S. Embassy in Lima to the U.S. State Department added that communication among opposition politicians was further controlled by Fujimori as all cellphones were reportedly shut down during the coup.

Fujimori strategically and consistently used control and manipulation tactics in order to advance his initiatives and deceive the Peruvian public into believing he was a democratic leader who had their best interests in mind. This theme was even more evident upon review of key documents from his era, which pointed to specific acts such as his directive to seize all media outlets and key opposition leaders in order to shut down negative reporting about the coup.

Fujimori needed to secure a united message during the critical hours after the self-coup event so that a large portion of the population believed his message about the coup: that it was a necessary “measure” for the good of the country. No negative reporting was allowed, and in the end, his moves increased Fujimori’s popular perception as a benefactor of the people against “corrupt politicians.” Further analysis revealed that there was an absence of any negative reporting in Peru for the two days after the self-coup. This is important because in politics and in leadership, language matters. It was interesting to note that the word *golpe* was not used in the media when referring to Fujimori’s actions. Instead of using the word *golpe* the media used more unbiased terms. This is significant because in Spanish the word *golpe* not only has a negative and violent connotation, but it is also correlated to the many military coups and dictatorships in Peru and throughout Latin America. In fact, just two months prior to Fujimori’s self-coup, Hugo Chavez in Venezuela tried his first unsuccessful coup attempt against the

government of President Carlos Andrés Pérez. Equally important, the media made sure to include Fujimori's main talking points from his speech with language about how the Armed Forces supported Fujimori's decision.

When I cross-referenced Fujimori's televised address from that night with reporting from the media, it was striking to find that the same key themes from Fujimori's address are reiterated by the press without any opposing views or dissent for two days after the coup. In one form or another, the press used the verbs "dissolve," "reorganize," "reconstruct," and "modification"—the same four terms used by Fujimori himself to describe the self-coup.

Avoidance of the word *golpe* by all the major news outlet in Peru was too coincidental; the word would undoubtedly have been used if Peru enjoyed a free and independent media at that time. Freedom of the press existed in Peru prior to Fujimori during the civilian governments of Belaúnde and García in the 1980s. Both Belaúnde and García promoted freedom of the press with key legislative actions such as tax exemptions for the media, and by reinforcing freedom of expression via clarifying laws in the Peruvian Constitution. Thus, Peru still enjoyed an independent and free media when Fujimori first came to power. Fujimori's later encounters with the media bore evidence of his effort to control media reporting. The media in Peru is not controlled by big corporations or groups as it is in other developed countries, but by individual families such as the Miró Quesada or the Schütz. This made it easier for Fujimori to control the reporting, using his executive powers to coerce these families into doing his bidding.

By controlling what the population consumed in the mainstream media, Fujimori was able to build even more support for his regime, above and beyond the high level of

approval he received for his response to the country's problems with the economy and terrorism.

A further analysis of seven articles from major newspapers and magazines in Peru describing events of the morning of April 6 (the day after Fujimori's speech and the self-coup), points to additional tactics taken by the media to shape the views of the public.<sup>4</sup> For example, articles depicted in the news outlets showed that all headlines and reports carried the word "dissolve" or "closure" to identify Fujimori's self-coup instead of harsher words such as "coup" or the standard term "coup d'état."

The front-page headline of the newspaper *La República* is a good example: "Fujimori announces plebiscite, [THEY] CLOSED THE CONGRESS." (Note: original emphasis—second sentence in all caps and in oversize font). Under the headline, the newspaper showed important points from Fujimori's speech, in bullet format, using key terms such as "reorganization...", "will restructure...", "will modify..." to disclose his agenda after the self-coup. Inside the newspaper, under the section about politics, one of the first pages starts with a title indicating that the closing of Congress by Fujimori was temporary. Furthermore, the article upheld Fujimori's talking points from the speech so well that one might think Fujimori wrote the article himself.

The newspapers *El Comercio* and *Diario Expreso* both used the words "dissolution of congress" in their front headlines, followed by bullet-format subtitles announcing the major actions taken by Fujimori. They both began with front headlines about how Fujimori planned to reorganize the main institutions of Peru, how the military supported Fujimori's action, and how the elimination of congress would be a temporary

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<sup>4</sup> Photocopies of all major newspapers from April 6, 1992 were taken from the newspaper library at the National Library of Peru.

measure. These three newspapers alone were not only the bestsellers and most well-respected newspapers of Peru in the early 1990s, but they also accounted for about 45% of all public newspaper reading according to Peruvian marketing research company CPI. Inside, just like *La República*, the three newspapers paraphrased Fujimori's message from the day prior, also communicating the military's support of Fujimori. The newspaper *El Peruano*, the official state newspaper, did not mention the word "coup" or any other negative terms. They informed the public with a headline that read: "The government of national reconstruction is in charge." followed by a more detailed account of Fujimori's plan taken from his speech the night before.

The newspaper *Gestión* used the more neutral term "dissolution of congress," similar to how the other two newspapers front-page headline referred to Fujimori's self-coup. They also paraphrased Fujimori's speech and key points from his speech the night before, informing Peruvians about new changes in the national government moving forward. For example, *Gestión* specified that the continuity of a democratic government will be through a government of national unity. Furthermore, it refers to the self-coup with the terms "temporary closure of Congress" and one that was needed due to the precarious state of affairs at the moment.

Two of the most prominent informal tabloid newspapers, *El Popular* and *El Ojo*, together accounted for 7.2% of the reading public between 1993 and 1994 (CPI, 1994). They used the headline "Fujimori Closes Congress" instead of a more negative word such as "coup." Both tabloids also accounted for 10% of the reading public relative to the size of the Peruvian population which in 1993 was estimated by the World Bank at 23 million. Both newspapers were oriented toward entertainment and show business reporting, but

they do dedicate a few pages to politics. *El Popular* used a colloquial expression in its front-page headline when referring to the closure of Congress. They abbreviated the name Fujimori to “Fuji,” and used the expression “Fuji Sacá Sable” which literally means “Fujimori took out a knife.” This expression in Peruvian jargon insinuates that a person showed courage when doing something, or that they had the guts to do something unthinkable. Thus this newspaper implied that Fujimori exhibited courage in closing the Congress. The common language used by *El Popular* was targeted to its audience. The front-page also had key points from Fujimori’s speech, such as the reorganization of democratic institutions and the support not only of the military but also of the national police.

The newspaper *Ojo* also carries the same showbiz theme as *El Popular*, but they do dedicated a section of their front-page headline to politics. With a bit more formal language, *Ojo*’s front page informed its readers that Fujimori had closed the Congress and that he would reorganize judicial power. It also informed its readers that the armed forces were in support of Fujimori’s actions.

The censorship of the media in Peru by Fujimori, even while undertaking a self-coup, was so profound that it echoed in international news as well. International news media refrained from using the word “coup” or “coup d’état” in their April 6 headlines, despite the fact that it appeared to be a traditional coup in the sense that Fujimori overthrew the existing government—except for himself. For instance, the *New York Times*’ April 6 headline read: “Peru’s Leader Dissolves Congress.” (1992). The *Washington Post* stated “Peru’s Leader Suspends Constitution” (1992), while the *Los Angeles Times* wrote “Peru Leader Oust Congress and Suspends Constitution” (1992).

Even the *Times of India* did not use “coup” in its headline, instead publishing “Parliament in Peru Dissolved” (1992).

In summary, a qualitative review of numerous articles and newspapers published during the week of April 6, 1992, highlight specific actions taken by the Fujimori regime to shape communications that went to the Peruvian public. This shaping led the public to believe that Fujimori’s acts were pure and necessary for the good of the people. The data that has emerged as part of this analysis points to alternative tactics that used the media to deceive the public and ultimately produce great self-gain for Fujimori.

It also confirms the censorship imposed by the Fujimori regime, and that the homogeneity across the media had to be engineered with the aim of curtailing any information not authorized by Fujimori himself. As such, since the night of the coup, Peruvians have heard only one side of the story: Fujimori’s side. For more than 24 hours, the population received a series of concise messages that included positive words” “reconstruction of the government,” “restructure of congress,” “reorganization of the judiciary” across all forms of the media and from the only voice allowed to speak: the government. Fujimori framed the coup as an action that was not only necessary for the good of the nation, but also one that was democratic. None of the media outlets printed or disseminated any criticism or contradictions to these measures for the next 48 hours. Indeed, Fujimori’s justifications for the coup were repeated over and over by all forms of the media. This manipulation of the media had a major impression on the people, and thereafter raised Fujimori’s popularity to levels far beyond the improvement of the economy and reducing terrorism.

A review of results from public opinion polls about the self-coup further confirms the theme that Fujimori's plan to seize and manipulate the media while engaging in a coup resulted in a boost to his popular support. A public opinion poll conducted by APOYO (1992) on the day after Fujimori's self-coup was analyzed to corroborate this theme. The poll shows 80% support for Fujimori's self-coup (APOYO, 1992). These polls were published and promoted by Fujimori as evidence that his actions were correct. The publisher of *Careta*, Enrique Zileri, in an interview with researcher David Wood (2000) stated that these polls were a tool for the Fujimori regime to further manipulate the public sphere and enhance his popularity. He argued: "The Peruvian people, with very little self-confidence and not knowing what to think in the face of this new phenomenon, would have allowed itself to be influenced greatly by the favourable polls published" (p.28). Fujimori championed these polls throughout his presidency, and in fact ordered many of them to be done when it suited his regime.

Fujimori's effort to control and manipulate the media did not stop with the self-coup. On the contrary, it was a continuing endeavor that lasted until the end of his presidency. An analysis of 10 recorded films leaked in 2000, and later seized by the post-Fujimori government during its investigation, show how Fujimori coerced the media through the use of bribes. The videos were recorded by former Fujimori right-hand man and head of his National Intelligence Service, Vladimiro Montesinos, and are estimated to have been recorded between 1995 and 1999. The self-recorded videos show

Montesinos paying up to US\$2 million to owners of news and television networks with the aim of giving Fujimori more positive press coverage.<sup>5</sup>

Additional examples of Fujimori's use of bribery with regard to the media are apparent in the number of interactions with principal television stations such as those in Lima: Frecuencia Latina (Channel 2), América Televisión (Channel 4), Panamericana Televisión (Channel 5), and the cable news station Cable Canal De Noticias (CCN). He also bribed the mainstream newspaper *Expreso* as well as highly popular tabloid newspapers known in Peru as "prensa chicha." These tabloids report sensationalist types of news, with picturesque and colorful images often depicting crime scenes and semi-nude photos of showgirls. Fujimori knew these were popular sources of news consumption for some Peruvians, so he strategically targeted them with bribes to help advance his cause. Most important for Fujimori regarding the "prensa chicha" was that it sold for less than fifty cents each, reaching almost exclusively to the low-income and less-educated population of Peru. Reaching these populations was important for Fujimori because they formed the core of his support. These tabloid newspapers were often, if not exclusively, displayed at the many street kiosks around the city for anyone to see their eye-catching pictures and headlines. This meant the tabloids were exposed to uncountable numbers of Peruvians as they conducted their regular daily business, which meant the papers had a major impact on public opinions about the Fujimori regime and his popularity.

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<sup>5</sup> Videos showing Vladimiro Montesinos paying large sums of money to politicians, military, and media owners were first leaked in 2000. These videos are commonly known as the "Vladi videos." A full collection of the Vladi videos can be found in the Peruvian Ministry of Culture website.



In 2004, Montesinos' ex-secretary, Mario Ruiz Agüero, during the course of corruption investigations launched by the Peruvian Congress, confessed that Montesinos himself read the tabloid headlines (Mazzei, 2014). Ruiz Agüero confessed that the goal of bribing the media was to exalt the achievements of the Fujimori regime, and to attack opposition leaders or anyone in contradiction to Fujimori's presidency. What started with a physical seizure of the press during Fujimori's self-coup continued via less-obvious methods such as bribes but with the same goal in mind.

The qualitative review of these videos coupled with the review of the news articles, further informs this thesis, and points to themes of controlling and manipulating the media with the aims of achieve huge popularity that extended well beyond the scope of producing a solid economy and bringing an end to terrorism.

A thorough review of the laws, legislative resolutions, and decrees passed from November 12, 1990 to November 14, 2000, under the leadership of Alberto Fujimori, further confirm Fujimori's intent to control the media for his own benefit. This review initially found 1,601 laws passed and enacted by the Fujimori presidency.<sup>6</sup> Of these 1,601 laws, 27 were directed toward all forms of the media; 9 focused on the press, radio, and television broadcasting; 18 focused on telecommunications.

Prior to the 1980s general elections, the military government, under Decree No. 22633, made it illegal for anyone to publish anything in any form of media that could be perceived as hindering the "honor and reputation" of another person. Further, it argues that it will be considered an aggravating offense if the target is an authority, public entity,

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<sup>6</sup>All laws, legislative resolutions, and decrees passed by the Peruvian Congress were extracted from the Congreso de la República del Perú. Archivo Digital de la Legislación del Perú (Congress from the Republic of Peru, Legislative Digital Archive of Peru).

or an official institution of the state. Fujimori left this law intact with the passing of the new 1993 Constitution and used it as a tool to silence the media. The punishment for this offense carried up to a year in prison for anyone found guilty of the crime. The decree also put courts and judges in charge of not only the investigative process, but also the judgments rendered in these matters. More important, this law issued prior to the Fujimori presidency and left intact after 1993 stated that “it does not define the legal situation of the plaintiff or defendant, the parts will not make use of the media to refer to their respective persons and/or the facts of such charge.” In other words, it will only take the filing of a complaint in court to stop any information deemed damaging to the “honor and reputation” of a government official from being published in a newspaper or on television. This law not only helped silence reports on human rights abuses conducted by the military in their fight against terrorism, but also it gave Fujimori the power to immediately keep the media from making any negative comments about his government. By retaining the legislation that dictated how people could express themselves, Fujimori created an environment where people were only exposed to the narrow views of his regime; people were swayed by the state without any opposing views. The fear of judicial backlash kept reporters from operating outside the boundaries of the law, thus shaping what the public knew about the Fujimori regime.

An examination of four executive orders that were turned into laws by the Government of Emergency and National Reconstruction shows the urgent desire of the administration to control the media’s representation of Fujimori’s regime. Just two months after the self-coup, Fujimori ordered Decree No. 25559, the reorganization of the Peruvian state broadcaster Cine, Radio, Y Televisión Peruana (RTP). Organization of the

state media was very important to Fujimori as he needed to reach a larger population in order to hide the reality of his competitive authoritarian regime. Decree No. 25559 instructed the director to take any necessary measures to fix the affairs of the company even if that meant hiring third-party services to catch up with the books, inventories, and other tasks needed to organize the company (2<sup>nd</sup> Article). Furthermore, in July 1993, just three months after the coup, Fujimori ordered the acquisition of the property located at No. 1040-1054 José Galvez Lane, Urbanización Santa Beatriz in Lima, in order to install the headquarters of RTP under Decree Law N° 25633. Article 1 declares this new acquisition will function as a social communication for the Peruvian state.

The urgent desire to get the state media functioning is established in Article 2 when, despite the huge austerity measures passed by Fujimori in January 1992, it exempted RTP from such economic restrictions and gave the directors of RTP a blank check to acquire the property needed for the State media. Article 3 guarantees funding through the national bank with the use of public funds.

The fourth law passed by the Government of Emergency and National Reconstruction regarding the RTP shows the importance to Fujimori of arming a state media for his regime. Decree Law No. 26007, passed in December 1992, orders the Chilean company ENTEL, S.A. to forgive RTP's debt of \$4,193,349.42 Peruvian soles. It also exempts both companies from any tax obligation that RTP's debt would have created with the State in the course of their dealings.

Another tool that Fujimori found useful to indirectly coerce the media was implementing tax laws. In the 1980s, Belaúnde government exempted publishing companies from paying import tariffs on materials connected to printing (e.g., paper)

through the passage of Law No, 23407. This exemption aimed to improve the journalism industry in Peru after the many years of censorship under the military governments prior to the 1980s. In addition, the tax exemption took into consideration the fact that Peru did not have a substantial paper industry at the time.

In December 1992, just eight months after the self-coup, Fujimori and the Government of Emergency and National Reconstruction terminated the tax exemptions on materials related to journalism with the passage of Law No. 25980. Article 1 announced that operations declared tax exempt under Law No. 23407 would now be subject to a sales tax of 18%. During an interview with researcher David Wood (2000) in 1994, prominent Peruvian journalist Juan Gargurevich Regal stated that Fujimori rejected any objections brought to him, since his measures were seen to be a threat to the freedom of the press. Fujimori's answer was to state that the media would have to adjust to Peru's new economic reality (p. 29).

Additional qualitative review of Law No. 23407 in regard to newspapers and political magazines like *Careta* point toward once again to the theme of control of the media by Fujimori. *Careta* was incorrectly categorized at a higher tax bracket in the first week of June 1992 after a tax assessment by SUNAT (Superintendencia Nacional de Aduanas y de Administración Tributaria), an executive agency in charge of administering national taxes and customs. *Careta*'s new tax assessment pushed the magazine in the 25% tax bracket from its previous 15% bracket. Shortly thereafter, the magazine published an op-ed in its June 8 edition interpreting the SUNAT tax assessment as an attack on the press that were opposed to the post-self-coup government of Alberto Fujimori. By the first half of 1994, all media companies in Peru received a new tax

assessments by the now empowered SUNAT. The resulting tax increases caused many to not only fail but also face fines, back taxes, and interest payments to the Peruvian state. For example, the director of magazine *Oiga* was advised in an interview that the magazine owed a total of 855,000 Peruvian Soles (approximately US\$392,202 in 1994). Likewise, the magazine *Gente* was charged approximately US\$101,989 in 1994 in interest payments alone (“Atentado,” 1992).

The tax assessments on the media, required by SUNAT and approved by Fujimori, were crucial in putting economic pressure on communication outlets. Most, if not all, news media in Peru are run by individuals and families rather than by big corporations. This amount of debt in taxes meant that individuals would be personally liable for paying it. Knowing this, Fujimori offered a tax break to the indebted media firms in exchange for providing air space for government publicity. The newspaper *El Comercio* reported that the first news outlet to sign this tax relief agreement to provide government advertising was the newspaper *Expreso* in July 1994. Other troubled newspapers, radio, and television stations followed in September 1994 (“Acuerdo,” 1994).

In summary, at the onset of the coup, Fujimori proactively and strategically used the media to influence the thoughts and minds of the Peruvian people. Fujimori continued this strategy for the rest of his presidency to ensure his political survival. Fujimori inserted certain messages and falsehoods while at the same time controlling any counter-opinions or arguments, so the Peruvian people were in effect forced to believe what they saw or heard. This manipulation of all forms of the media had tremendous spillover effects for Peruvian society. Peruvians were misled to believe that the self-coup was for

the betterment of the country and for the people, when in fact the coup only served to give Fujimori autocratic powers and increase his popularity to higher levels when his efforts deal with the economy and terrorism did not. Opinion polls after the coup showed that Fujimori's endeavors worked, even more so than having an improving economy. The tendency to control and manipulate the media is characteristic of a competitive authoritarian regime. In the end, it served as one of the defining tactics of Fujimori's legacy.

This analysis of all major media-related documents including speeches, television press conferences, radio and television broadcasting, official reports by the U.S. Embassy in Peru, Decree Laws, and public opinion polls in light of the self-coup of 1992 points to the same themes:

- A correlation between controlling the media and an increase in popular support. The more Fujimori regulated the media, the higher his popular support soared.
- A strategic effort to dominate the narrative in order to disguise actions—which were catalogued as negative—into a positive.
- Using targeted social programs and populist strategies to achieve a level of support that belied his performance with the economy and with terrorism.

#### Fiscal Resources for Social Programs

Directing fiscal resources toward key social programs was another tool used by Fujimori to increase his popularity, to appear democratic, and to mitigate his quasi-authoritarian regime. Whereas good economic performance and anti-terrorism efforts benefited friends and foes equally during Fujimori's tenure, targeted social-assistance

programs were curtailed to particular groups. Targeted social-assistance programs under Fujimori were generally offered to those who fell within the working class or poverty class within Peru. During his tenure, Fujimori made sure that he received full credit for executing numerous social programs—clearly using the programs for political purposes. In a subtle yet purposeful way, Fujimori rewarded his supporters for their votes. He also used targeted social-assistance programs to help win over undecided voters.

This research previously noted the economic gains made by Fujimori during his presidency. National economic gains are typically followed by increased spending on social programs. For the purposes of this thesis, the following documents, focused on fiscal resourcing of social programs, were reviewed and analyzed to determine what themes emerged:

- Decree Law 657: law published on August 8, 1991 establishing FONCODES (Fondo Nacional de Compensación y Desarrollo Social).
- Decree Law 776: law published on December 31, 1993 changing how municipalities collect taxes.
- Decree 25307: law published on February 15, 1991 redirecting the management of social program “vaso de leche.”
- Decree 017-96: law published on April 10, 1996 approving the transfer of the budget from the ministry of education to order to FONCODES.
- World Bank Data: expenditure data from FONCODES from 1992 to 1998.
- IMASEN: public opinion poll from September, 1994.

All of the decrees described Fujimori's attempt to direct government funds toward certain social programs, highlighted as Fujimori's attempts to alleviate poverty and improve access to social services. In some cases, the social programs were focused on helping women and children. Some of the decrees point to dollars spent in rural areas and in specific community-based programming. Other decrees were focused on school programming and assistance with basic necessities like food and clothing. The social programming efforts were directed toward poor provinces and, based on the dates on the documents, it appears the funding and programming were released strategically to perhaps influence the outcome of the elections by convincing vulnerable Peruvians that the Fujimori regime was there to support them.

An analysis of the dates of each decree compared to the dates of key national elections points to the fact that the Fujimori regime used the decrees and associated funding to appear to "help the people" who needed it most while also likely using the programs as a way to advance the political goals of the Fujimori administration. The decrees that were reviewed point to national programs that were executed through the federal regime of Fujimori. This national emphasis is in contrast to ministry-directed or local social programming.

Additional findings from the review of the decrees had to do with Decree Law 657 (1991), in which Fujimori created a new and unprecedented organization within the executive branch of the government called "Fondo Nacional de Compensación y Desarrollo Social" (FONCODES or National Fund for Social Compensation and Development). A review of this law shows that FONCODES operated as an independent body within the Ministry of the Presidency, and was in charge of controlling all spending



for infrastructure projects, road and school construction, and many safety net programs. The executive director of FONCODES reported directly to a board of five members, but the board members were appointed by Fujimori himself—further confirming that Fujimori had direct control over the office and wanted a hand in how the social resources were spent.

Supporting data from the World Bank estimates that FONCODES spent approximately US\$570 million from 1992 to 1998 (World Bank, 2002). A document review of the focus and timing of FONCODES expenditures revealed that these programs, while on the surface appeared to be pure and focused on solving the broad poverty and inequality problems of Peru, in fact they had the additional goal of bolstering Fujimori's popularity in key targeted areas, thus helping to keep his regime in place.

Another review of World Bank data showed that FONCODES expenditures were focused on small-scale, community-based projects instead of nationwide developments that would have a greater impact in the country as a whole. Between years 1992 and 1998, FONCODES funded approximately 32,000 community-based projects averaging approximately \$US15,000 to US\$20,000. Equally important, the timing of these small projects supported the theme that FONCODES was used to build additional support for the Fujimori regime and not for developmental goals.

An analysis of the World Bank data discloses a substantial increase in spending by FONCODES around three major national elections in Peru from 1991 to 1995. The first spike in spending coincided with the Constitutional Referendum following Fujimori's 1992 self-coup, resulting in the approval of the new Constitution by only 52% of the votes. The second substantial spending increase came at the same time as the

ratification of the new Constitution; the third came with the presidential elections when Fujimori won with 64% of the votes (Base de Datos Políticos de la América, 2001) (see Figure 4).

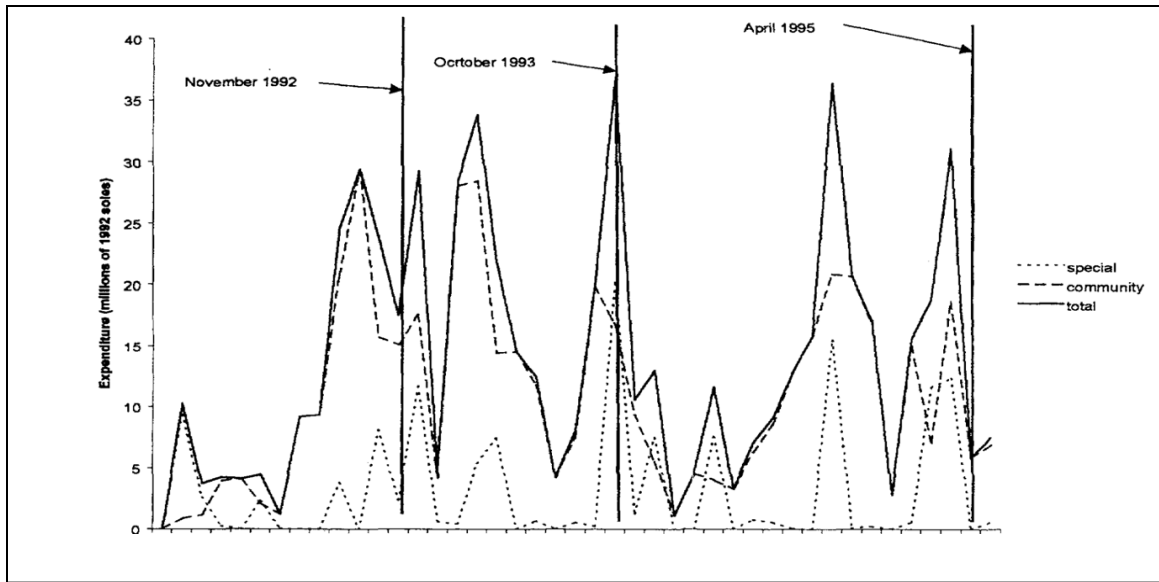


Figure 4. FONCODES Monthly Expenditures from 1991-1995.

Source: created by thesis author using World Bank data, 2020.

Collectively, these analyses point to the strategic use of FONCODES funding and associated laws to advance the popularity of the Fujimori regime, thus ensuring that the administration remained in place. Developing social programs to help the needy and the poor is a noble cause and one that would be looked upon positively by any external reviewer. However, in the case of the Fujimori administration, it appears that these funds were directed in a way to influence election outcomes, sway the minds of the general public, and advance overall political goals.

Fujimori also crafted laws in order to limit the ability of municipalities and local governments to provide social programs at the local level, hence creating the appearance that the Fujimori was the only politician providing these services. A qualitative analysis of Decree Laws 25307 from February 15, 1991, and Decree Law 776 published on December 31, 1993 point to themes that support the notion that Fujimori used FONCODES to increase his popularity among the population by taking resources from local governments and disbursing them himself to places of his choosing. With Decree Law 25307, Fujimori transferred the program “Vaso de Leche (Glass of Milk)” to the Ministry of the Presidency. This program provided daily food rations to low-income families with children ages newborn to 6, and was initially designed to be administered by municipal governments. By shifting control of this program to the executive branch, Fujimori denied local governments the ability to provide visible benefits to their constituents and instead established himself as their benefactor.

This theme is reinforced by a qualitative analysis of Decree Law 776. Under Article 6, Fujimori further restricted the capacity of local governments to provide social programs by reducing the amount of taxes they could collect from 20 elements to only 6. This law also created the “Fondo de Compensación Municipal” (FONCOMUN or Municipal Compensation Fund) to manage the resources allocated by the central government to local governments. FONCOMUN functioned as a type of a communal fund, so Fujimori could channel targeted resources throughout Peru as he decided. In other words, this law created an environment in which all local governments were dependent on the executive branch.

Equally important, Decree Law 776 gave Fujimori direct access or contact with the voters, since every park built, every school building erected, every road fixed, came from the executive office via FONCOMUN. A review of public opinion polls from 1994 (the year before Fujimori's re-election in 1995) show that at least 29% of the poorest residents of Lima identified Fujimori's public and educational projects as another reason to support Fujimori (IMASEN, 1994).<sup>7</sup>

The importance of FONCODES for the Fujimori regime, and for his political ambitions, is further advanced in a qualitative analysis of Decree Law 017-96 from April 10, 1996. Under that decree, Fujimori ordered the transfer of the Ministry of Education budget to FONCODES in order to "attend expenditures from the social program aid." The notion that an executive leader decides to unilaterally take the education budget and instead use it to fund more targeted-social programs points highlights Fujimori's expectation that targeted-social programs would provide more benefits to his presidency than would education. Fujimori won two consecutive elections: 1990 and 1995. Given his aim to run for re-election in 2000, targeted-social programs needed to be enhanced. This move further solidified the theme that using social programs as a tool would help him gain major popular support.

A qualitative analysis of the Fujimori's administration usage of fiscal resources to enhance social programs highlights how targeted these social programs were, and how they were used for political gain more than for the common good. The laws passed by Fujimori in favor of targeted social-assistance programs also point to Fujimori's effort to appropriate all social expenditures and limit local governments and opponents to provide

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<sup>7</sup> Presumably responders were referring to Fujimori's high-profile school building program and not to any work done to the education system itself.

such support to the people. In other words, Fujimori ensured with his executive powers that the population saw him as the sole benefactor of all public aid.

In summary, the documents reviewed as part of this thesis pointed to a number of consistent themes: Fujimori's desire to control (at the federal national level) expenditures on social resources; more specifically, to use them in ways that suited his desire for political gain, his desire to execute laws that gave him a more hands-on approach with decision-making over where and how social programs were executed. Finally, there was an emphasis to stand up social programs in an effort to gain popularity from the certain sectors of the general public when and where he needed it, again for political gain.

### Neo-Populism and Fujimori

Alberto Fujimori's presidency is a prime example of how a neo-populist president functions, and is also representative of the trend of neo-populist presidents arising in Latin America in the 1990s. For example, Brazil's Fernando Collor de Mella (1990-1992) and Argentina's Carlos Menem (1989-1999) both portrayed themselves as political outsiders and against the established political class which they criticized endlessly in order to build popular support.

As noted earlier, this thesis draws from Key Weyland's (1996) definition of neo-populism, defining it as one where leaders reach out to the masses, often excluded from political participation, in a personal manner and bypass established organization like political parties and institutions in order to build support for their agenda. A key contrast between traditional populism and neo-populism is the fact that neo-populists do not form a movement or a formal political party. Neo-populist politicians boast their support by

claiming they are “outsiders,” not established politicians. Neo-populists often argue that the current establishment is corrupt, full of elitists who do not care about the average citizen, also that they are free from any formal institution.

This thesis has established that the decade prior to the Fujimori administration explained why Fujimori’s neo-populist character helped him draw considerable support for his presidency. Peruvians had already experienced, as never before, an economic collapse and an increase in political violence under Presidents Belaúnde and García, so an “outsider” candidate with no affiliation to the past or to traditional political parties seemed like the perfect person for the future. Fujimori often exploited these sentiments, asserting that his lack of political experience gave him an advantage over other established names that seemed like elitists—for example, Mario Vargas Llosa.

Two of Fujimori’s speeches were analyzed to better understand how he used neo-populist themes to draw support into the regime:

- Address to the Nation by the President of Peru Alberto Fujimori: televised message on April 5, 1992, in which Fujimori discusses the self-coup.
- Closing Day Speech by Alberto Fujimori, President of Peru: speech given in China at the Fourth World Conference on Women, September 15, 1995.

This qualitative review and analysis of Fujimori’s speeches points to themes of an “outsider politician,” “anti-establishment,” “we the people against them the elite,” and the image of an “every-day man.” These themes suggest that Fujimori was able to draw considerable popular support for his regime by leveraging these character descriptions.

The speech Fujimori gave to announce his 1992 self-coup fully embraced the theme of neo-populism. In the speech, before Fujimori announces the closing of Congress

and the judiciary branch, there are 21 separate instances where he alludes to a dichotomy between the current political class and the voters themselves. He describes members of Congress and the judiciary branch as corrupt, and as engaging in “parliamentarism” or “politicism.” These terms allude to the idea that members of Congress and the judiciary are spending their time debating and playing partisan politics but producing little or no specific action. These terms were used by Fujimori to further enforce his popularity as an “outsider” president who had no links to current members of Congress and/or the judiciary, and someone who takes action as opposed to debating and playing politics.

Fujimori carried out these themes throughout his presidency, and used them frequently when his policies were challenged by any opposition leader. He also often used the neo-populism persona of being a “simple, hard-working” man in contrast to the elitists of Congress—again, to boost his popularity. The review of his speech given at the 1995 in China at the National Conference on Women clearly shows Fujimori labeling himself as someone not associated with established politicians. He stated: “I am not a suit-and-tie statesman working from the Government Palace in Lima, but a President who wears tennis shoes and blue jeans, committed to facing problems wherever they arise” (UNDP, 1995). He also stated that he knows about the problems affecting women not because he reads statistics but because he is connected to the people. He argues: “I routinely travel four times a week, to marginal urban areas in the larger cities of Peru, as well as to rural areas” (UNDP, 1995). Although he did not mention any member of Congress or the judiciary (perhaps because he was not in Peru at the time), this recalls the theme of the “anti-establishment” leader—in direct contrast with a “corrupt” system that does not understand common men and women.

Taken together these two speeches demonstrate how Fujimori presented himself as a different type of political leader, someone who was just like the people he was elected to serve. Whether it was the clothes he wore while delivering speeches, or the words he used, or the venues where he gave his speeches, he made great effort to appear as though he was an average person who understood the needs of the average Peruvian. Fujimori's populist approach drew in the people he served, and likely played a considerable role in his success as a Peruvian politician for more than a decade.



## Chapter V

### Conclusion

The Fujimori era will go down in the history of Peru as a period marked by economic gains and an end to acts of terrorism. Both of these goals were achieved by the Fujimori administration, and they are admirable and commended by political scientists and Latin American researchers.

Notwithstanding this perception, this thesis aimed to uncover the many other complexities that defined Fujimori's tenure at president of Peru. His presidency was greatly influenced by the era in which he served, including the government he inherited from his predecessors, and the larger Latin American community in which Peru existed. Fujimori took over the presidency at a time when the Peruvian people were ready for something different, ready to embrace a man who looked and outwardly acted more like a common lay-person rather than an elite presidential figure. His charismatic character and consistent alignment as "one of the people" helped his constituents resonate with him, trust him, and believe in him. With this environmental and political context as his backdrop, coupled with his vibrant character, Fujimori did things that would not have been acceptable nor would they have occurred under any other president.

Today political scientists should be challenged to further unpack the Fujimori presidency, to look beyond economic gains and the elimination of terrorist actions as the sole yardstick for measuring the outcomes of Fujimori's presidency. Future scholars

should gain a greater appreciation for the themes that emerged during the qualitative document analysis in this thesis.

Specific themes highlighted in this thesis demonstrate that Fujimori was a complex man who strategically sought to control and manipulate the media, to sway the minds of the Peruvian public, and to benefit his political aspirations. His ability to take these actions likely had a major impact on the economic gains he achieved. The manipulation, control, and bribery that took place with the media likely had spillover effects on his success in decreasing terrorism; indeed, one could not exist without the other.

The analysis in this thesis of decrees and laws of the day showed how Fujimori spent federal resources on social programs, not only to limit local spending on such programs, but also to advance his position and take credit for helping the people, thus building his support as president. These heavy-handed acts to direct fiscal resources during times and in geographic areas where he decided it was needed were self-serving and should also be included in historical descriptions of his presidency. In a country that has struggled with poverty for decades, fiscal resources for social programs are of critical importance, and Fujimori used to his advantage to build a power base that enabled him to covertly lead the country to believe he was a “by the people, for the people” democratic president. In fact, he was more of a stealth dictator who advanced his own self-interests above all else.

Only through an in-depth historical document review and analysis are we able to fully appreciate the complex nuances that defined the Fujimori presidency. Through this expanded level of understanding and awareness, we may be able to ensure that future

elected political figures are true to their campaign promises, govern on democratic principles, and appropriately serve their constituents with the integrity and honesty that is worthy of the executive branch of government.

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