

# “QUIEN HABLA ES TERRORISTA”

## The Political Use of Fear in Fujimori’s Peru<sup>1</sup>

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*Abstract: Scholarship on the decade-long rule of Alberto Fujimori emphasizes the surprising popularity and support for Fujimori’s rule. This essay, which analyzes the politics of fear in Fujimori’s Peru, suggests that this presents a partial view of the nature of Fujimori’s authority. Drawing on a Gramscian conceptualization of power, it explains how coercion achieved a consensual façade by manipulating fear and creating a semblance of order in a context of extreme individual and collective insecurity. It traces the roots of this insecurity in the economic crisis and political violence of the 1980s and 1990s, and explains how the Fujimori regime manipulated fear and insecurity to buttress its authoritarian rule. This essay also complements existing studies on Peruvian civil society, which point to economic factors, such as the economic crisis of the 1980s and neoliberal reforms, to explain civil society weakness. This paper explores the political factors that contributed to this process, particularly the deployment of state power to penetrate, control and intimidate civil society.*

On the night of July 27, 2000, the eve of Alberto Fujimori’s third inauguration as president of Peru, protestors from throughout the country converged on downtown Lima to challenge what they argued was an illegitimate electoral process. According to the 1993 constitution, which Fujimori and his allies in Congress put in place after the infamous *autogolpe* or self-coup of April 1992, a sitting president could be reelected only one consecutive time. This would be Fujimori’s third term in office,

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made possible, critics charged, by the manipulation of the rules of the game on the one hand and outright intimidation of the opposition on the other. Indeed, the Fujimori regime seemed bent on assuring a third term in office for the president at any cost.

In this context, social mobilization burst onto the scene to contest the legitimacy of the electoral process and of Fujimori's third term. From middle-class feminists to working-class moms, from soup kitchen organizers to university students, from urban shantytown dwellers to peasant federation members, thousands of people took to the streets during the contested first round of elections in April 2000, and again for three consecutive days on July 26, 27, and 28, to protest Fujimori's inauguration to a third term in office. What made this social mobilization so remarkable was that for the previous decade, social protest had been scarce.

Why was civil society unable to articulate an effective opposition to the Fujimori regime until the very last years of his decade in power? The traditional answer to this question—that civil society and the political opposition were weak and unable to articulate effective leadership—is unsatisfying. By locating the source of weakness in factors endogenous to the opposition, it fails to grapple with the complex interactions between the state, political society, and civil society that might provide a more complete understanding of the state of civil society in Peru in the 1990s. Other explanations for the weakness of civil society point to the economic crisis of the 1980s and the government's introduction of neoliberal reforms in the 1990s. Although economic factors certainly played an important role in the demobilization of civil society, they do not account for the specifically political factors that undermined civil society organization. This essay seeks to contribute to this discussion by examining the ways in which the Fujimori regime exercised state power to ensure that civil society remained disorganized and hence unable to articulate an effective oppositional discourse and politics. One mechanism deployed by state elites to demobilize civil society was the widespread use of patronage, which has been widely analyzed in the literature. This paper explores another means by which state elites demobilized civil society that has not been extensively examined: the instrumentalization of fear.

Analyzing the political use of fear in Fujimori's Peru is important for a second reason. Much of the literature on this period in recent Peruvian history emphasizes the consensual dimension of politics under Fujimori, despite and notwithstanding his government's use of repression and authoritarian tactics. While scholars highlighted the existence of a culture of fear in Peru in the 1980s (Bourque and Warren 1989), few analysts paid attention to the ongoing effects of fear, particularly after the capture of the top leaders and "strategic defeat" of the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) guerrilla movement. Scholarship focused on Fujimori's

surprising success in achieving key policy objectives and how these successes, particularly on the economic and security fronts, along with his “neopopulist” style of governing, helped him consolidate substantial popular support. Indeed, particularly after the 1992 autogolpe, when Fujimori and his military allies shut down Congress, suspended the Constitution, and centralized power in the hands of the executive, the president’s approval ratings shot up to 70–80 percent and remained surprisingly high throughout the decade.<sup>2</sup>

The persistence of a culture of fear and its demobilizing effect on civil society came to my attention during interviews with community activists in low-income districts in Lima between 1992 and 1994. Activists often expressed their repudiation of the Fujimori regime’s economic policies, its authoritarian practices and human rights abuses, and its manipulation of grassroots organizations, but they remained reluctant to contest the regime publicly. One community activist, when asked why she and others who shared her point of view did not engage in public protest against the regime, answered unequivocally: “*Quien habla es terrorista*” (“Anyone who speaks out [in protest] is [considered to be] a terrorist”).<sup>3</sup> This response and others like it challenged much of the common understanding of the Fujimori regime, suggesting that there was something going on in society that the polls were not registering. A current of opposition existed, if in latent form, even during the regime’s most popular moments, but it felt that it could not safely express itself in the public realm.

This essay draws on the work of Antonio Gramsci (1987) to highlight the coercive dimension of power in Fujimori’s Peru. In Gramsci’s analysis of power, consensus and coercion exist in tandem; the former cannot be understood without also understanding the way the latter operates. Not only does consensus have a material basis; it is also undergirded by coercive power relations that will enforce authority should consensus break down. In Fujimori’s Peru, alongside policies and political strategies designed to marshal popular support, state elites developed strategies to penetrate, control, and immobilize civil society. Clientelistic relationships were used to build regime support and simultaneously to undercut autonomous organizations and opposition groups. And the regime’s use of fear and intimidation kept opposition groups disorganized and on the defensive, and hence incapable of mounting a challenge to the authoritarian practices of the Fujimori regime.

2. This widespread support for the Fujimori regime has been amply documented and analyzed (Stokes 2001; Carrion 1998; Panfichi 1997; Roberts 1995).

3. Interview, Villa El Salvador, May 1994. I have identified interviewees who are national leaders or well-known local leaders, but do not divulge the identity of grassroots leaders and community activists. Such anonymity provided protection in a context of ongoing violence and ensured that interviewees would feel free to express their views fully.

Drawing on ethnographic research, including interviews carried out between 1992 and 2000 with grassroots activists, student leaders, and other opposition leaders, as well as discourse analysis, this essay examines the politics of fear in Fujimori's Peru. It begins by briefly reviewing the period of political violence in the 1980s and its demobilizing effects on civil society. Fear was multidirectional, since the Peruvian state *and* insurgent groups, especially Sendero Luminoso, strategically used violence to achieve political objectives and to deny support among the civilian population to enemy forces. Violence and the fear it engendered reordered political and social meanings in Peru, creating a "culture of fear" in which citizens willingly surrendered rights in exchange for the promise of order and stability. The Fujimori regime harnessed these new understandings into support for an authoritarian political project at the same time it used coercive methods to keep opposition groups off balance and unable to mobilize against the regime. Attention is focused on the discursive practices of the Fujimori regime and the actual deployment of state power to achieve these ends, not only in the latter years of the regime, when regime operatives engaged in a systematic campaign of intimidation to diffuse the opposition to Fujimori's reelection project, but throughout its tenure in power. The essay concludes with a brief discussion of the shifts that occurred in the late 1990s that contributed to a reactivation of civil society in the context of the 2000 electoral process and that contributed to the eventual collapse of the Fujimori regime.

#### CIVIL SOCIETY IN PERU

Civil society in Peru has long been characterized as weak, but such categorization obscures important variations in civil society mobilization.<sup>4</sup> Cycles of mobilization and demobilization are evident over the course of the past century, corresponding to changes in the political opportunity structure, the degree of political repression, the internal cohesion of social actors, and their ability to mobilize support and forge alliances with other groups in civil and political society.<sup>5</sup>

In the late 1970s, for example, trade unions, neighborhood associations, university students, peasant federations, and the emerging parties of the "New Left" mobilized massive strikes and street protests first in opposition to the military regime's economic austerity policies and

4. *Civil society* refers to uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes, and values. While the institutional forms of civil society are, in theory, distinct from those of the state, family, and market, in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family, and market are often complex, blurred, and negotiated.

5. These concepts are drawn from social movement theory. See, for example, McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001).

its rollback of reforms, and later to demand the military's ouster (Nieto 1983). This represented an important shift from a corporatist model of social organization (under the Velasco regime, see Stepan 1978; McClintock and Lowenthal 1983) to the affirmation of a more independent civil society (Stokes 1995).

The transition to a democratic regime in 1980 opened up political space, creating new possibilities for civil society organization. In this context, alongside traditional movements such as trade unions, peasant federations, and student movements emerged "new" social movements, including women's organizations, communal soup kitchens, neighborhood associations, and other community-based organizations. Such organizations were viewed not only as valuable grassroots efforts to resolve concrete problems but also positive contributions to the democratization of the country's rigid and hierarchical social and political structures (Ballón 1986; Degregori et al. 1986). The new alliance of left-wing parties, the Izquierda Unida (IU), promised to represent the concerns of these and other groups, such as workers and campesinos, while constructing the basis for a more participatory and inclusive democracy (Stokes 1995; Schönwälder 2002).

At the same time, however, a number of factors worked against the consolidation of civil society in Peru. The power of organized labor was shattered by the military regime's dismissal of some 5,000 public-sector workers, as well as by legislation that eroded workers' rights to organize and negotiate with the state. The weakening of the industrial economy and the rise of the informal economy also weakened the power of labor (Parodi 2000; Cameron 1996). While "new" social movements represented vibrant and creative solutions to immediate problems of hunger and unemployment, the persistence of the economic crisis and the onset of hyperinflation in 1988 undermined their resource base and led many activists to opt out in favor of individual solutions to the crisis. Hyperinflation in particular undermined long-term perspectives and shifted peoples' focus to immediate issues of survival (as was the case of the community soup kitchens), but as short-term survival strategies became quasi-permanent "solutions" to endemic poverty and unemployment, people's willingness to work voluntarily grew thin. Leaders felt burnt out; rank-and-file members grew increasingly suspicious of those in leadership positions and charges of corruption became widespread; and free riding became increasingly common as people turned to individual survival strategies<sup>6</sup> (Burt and Espejo 1995). State-led clientelism also weakened social movements, offering people cash and other immediate benefits that often drew them away from participation in grassroots organizations

6. On the free-rider problem in collective action, see Olson (1971).

(Graham 1992). By 1990, the collapse of the party system, and particularly the division of the IU and its eclipse as a major political force, further contributed to the fragmentation of civil society.

As Rochabrún (1988) has suggested, while leftist academics and intellectuals saw these movements as the harbingers of a "new social order," they were primarily defensive organizations—he called them "neomutualist associations"—created to weather the crisis, and they lacked a solid basis for autonomous action. This may be overstating the case to some degree, and it certainly overlooks the important political learning that took place within the context of these organizations, particularly among women who were previously marginalized from the public realm and whose participation in community-based organizations gave them the experience and skills to enter into positions of public authority (Barrig 1988). It also understates the degree of synergy that existed between new social movements and the IU, particularly in the mid-1980s, when municipal governments under IU control developed a range of social programs and initiatives that helped constitute civil society organization, which in turn developed an impressive mobilizational capacity (Stokes 1995; Roberts 1999). Yet the ease with which the Fujimori regime later co-opted many of these groups into its vast patronage networks that gave (or withheld) material benefits in exchange for political support highlights such organizations' extreme vulnerability to external forces, particularly the state.<sup>7</sup>

Political violence also contributed to the disarticulation of civil society organization in Peru in the 1980s. As John Keane (1996) has suggested, violence is the ultimate act against individual freedom. Keane argues that violence is not only incompatible with civil society "rules" of solidarity, liberty, and equality of citizens, but by destroying the space for the practice of these rules, it makes solidarity and collective action impossible to sustain.<sup>8</sup> Violence, in other words, silences civil society and destroys its ability to act in the public realm. It is important to clearly delineate how, in the Peruvian case, violence on the part of state *and* non-state actors acted upon civil society agents, reduced the public space that is an essential condition for democratic political action, and thus contributed to the demobilization of civil society.

7. For an analysis of the Fujimori regime's interactions with women's groups, see Blondet (2002).

8. For Keane, for civil society to be *civil*, it must be based on shared notions of nonviolence, solidarity, liberty, and equality of citizens. Although there are organized groups of citizens who preach violence, intolerance, and the like (such as the Ku Klux Klan), he argues, to denominate this *civil* society fundamentally violates the notion of civility that is a defining component of civil society. He refers to such groups as *uncivil* society. On uncivil society groups in Latin America, see Payne (2000).

*The Demobilizing Effects of Political Violence*

The recent report of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR) testifies to the magnitude of the phenomenon of violence in Peru. Between 1980 and 2000, some 68,000 people were the victims of political violence, 54 percent at the hand of insurgent groups and about 40 percent at the hand of state security forces, paramilitary groups, and other “irregular forces” such as peasant defense patrols. Another 8,000 were detained and “disappeared” by state security forces. Countless thousands more were detained without cause, tortured, and suffered long years of incarceration (CVR 2003).

Sendero Luminoso, the Maoist guerrilla movement that launched a “prolonged popular war” against the Peruvian state in 1980, became notorious for its attacks against the civilian population.<sup>9</sup> A classic Leninist-style vanguard party, Sendero’s ideological extremism, including a belief that violence was both “purifying” and a historical necessity, led it to repudiate any organization that did not support its revolutionary war and to engage in brutal acts of violence against leaders and members of such organizations (CVR 2003). Sendero considered the IU to be its greatest enemy: its participation in democratic government revealed its support for the “bureaucratic capitalist state,” while its project of participatory, grassroots democracy stood as an alternative to Sendero’s project of violent social change.<sup>10</sup> Scores of IU activists, particularly those involved in trade unions, peasant federations, neighborhood associations, and community-based organizations, for example, were systematically attacked by Sendero. In February 1992, a Sendero hit squad killed María Elena Moyano, a community leader and vice mayor for the IU of the popular district of Villa El Salvador because of her alleged collaboration with the state and her open defiance of Sendero’s advances into Villa. This was also an “exemplary punishment,” a message to grassroots leaders in Lima and throughout the country that resistance would not be tolerated (Burt 1998; CVR 2003).

Sendero also relentlessly attacked peasants involved in the *rondas campesinas*, or peasant defense groups. While *rondas* often organized independently of the armed forces, the Fujimori regime incorporated them directly into its counterinsurgency strategy, placing them under the legal control of the armed forces and using them as front-line combatants

9. There is a vast literature on Sendero Luminoso; see especially the essays in Palmer (1994) and Stern (1998). McClintock (1998) offers insightful comparative discussion of Sendero. Degregori (1990) and Gorriti (1999) provide compelling analyses of the insurgency’s early years.

10. For an analysis of Sendero’s attempts to destroy such alternative projects, see Rénique (1998) and Burt (1998).

in the war against Sendero.<sup>11</sup> For Sendero, any sort of collaboration with authorities was punishable by death, and thousands of peasants perished at the hands of the Maoists, often after mock trials conducted before forcibly assembled villagers. Like the murder of Moyano, such killings were designed to terrorize and intimidate the rural peasantry into submission to Sendero's revolutionary project.

In the context of the counterinsurgency war against Sendero Luminoso, the state also engaged in acts of political violence that by design or default contributed to undermining the basis of civil society organization. The state's role in the demobilization of civil society must be examined at two levels: the actual use of violence, on the one hand, and the state's inability (or unwillingness?) to prevent non-state actors such as Sendero from exercising violence against Peruvian citizens.

The Peruvian Truth Commission notes that "in some places and at some times" the state security forces engaged in systematic human rights violations (CVR 2003). In the countryside, the security forces engaged in classic counterinsurgency operations—draining the "sea" to catch the "fish," which resulted in massacres, extrajudicial executions, and "disappearances." In the city, individuals suspected of terrorism were detained and sometimes "disappeared." One case in 1989 that was captured on video and replayed on the nightly news made this secretive practice of state terror chillingly real: police detained and beat two university students, then placed them in the trunk of their car; no record of their arrest was made and, when they seemingly vanished, officials denied any knowledge of their whereabouts.

State security forces made little effort to distinguish Sendero combatants from civilians. Security forces viewed the IU as little more than the legal arm of Sendero—despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary and the fact that Sendero was also systematically attacking IU activists. As a result of the state's inability/unwillingness to distinguish between Sendero activists and individuals engaged in legitimate forms of social protest and political activity, many of those victimized by state security forces were members of such civil society organizations who were wrongly suspected of involvement in terrorist activity.<sup>12</sup>

At the same time, the Peruvian state, as the entity charged with guaranteeing citizen security, rule of law, and civil and political liberties, failed

11. The policy of arming the *rondas* actually began in the last year of the García administration, but became a systematic aspect of the state's counterinsurgency policy under Fujimori (Degregori 1996; Tapia 1997; CVR 2003).

12. This assertion is based on interviews with human rights activists in 1988 and 1989 and review of numerous human rights reports. See Comité de Familiares (1985); Amnesty International (2003, 1996, 1990, 1989); Human Rights Watch (1997, 1995, 1992); and CVR (2003).



to preserve these basic elements of a democratic polity, which are crucial to civil society's ability to organize in the first place. While institutions such as the police and judiciary have rarely been seen as acting on behalf of ordinary citizens, these institutions' lack of responsiveness to the growing violence and the resulting breakdown in civil order further eroded their credibility. The institutional structures that protect individual and civil rights—the sine qua non of civil society organization—disappeared in this context. Without state institutions to guarantee the rights to organize, to free speech, and to the inviolability of the person, civil society organization shriveled under the threat of state and insurgent violence. Thus as both an agent of violence and in its failure to prevent acts of violence by non-state actors, the state contributed decisively to the disarticulation and fragmentation of civil society.

Political violence, while deployed against individual bodies, is also directed at the larger social body (Suarez-Orozco and Robben 2000). In the Peruvian case, both Sendero Luminoso and state security forces used violence as a means of invalidating individuals and groups who (presumably) opposed them, and to send a powerful message to the rest of the social body that resistance would not be tolerated. In the context of such polarizing conditions, solidarity and trust were destroyed, collective identities undermined, and social mobilization weakened. Groups like trade unions, community soup kitchens, and neighborhood associations were regarded suspiciously by the state, while these same groups were under assault by Sendero Luminoso if they failed to submit to their vision of revolutionary violence. This multidirectionality of violence meant that fear took on many forms. For civil society activists in particular the fear the state would suspect them of terrorism on the one hand, and of incurring Sendero's wrath for not supporting its revolutionary war on the other, forced many to abandon their roles in the public sphere. As one community activist from Villa El Salvador stated:

While [the state] threatened our leaders by detaining them and sending them to prison, [Sendero] threatened them too, accusing them of being traitors and a series of other things. The leader-activists hid, avoiding positions of public responsibility, seeking refuge in silence.<sup>13</sup>

Fear became ingrained in the psyche of the Peruvian population. Fear—and suspicion of the "other," particularly acute given the strong social segmentation in Peru by social class and ethnic background—came to dominate social relations at all levels, to the point that even allies in the IU coalition began to suspect each other of belonging to Sendero.<sup>14</sup> The Peruvian case was thus unique in comparison to those of

13. Interview, Villa El Salvador, December 2002.

14. This observation is based on interviews and informal discussions with IU activists in 1988 and 1989.

the Southern Cone in two ways. In Peru, state terror was unleashed during nominally democratic governments (rather than military regimes), and, unlike the Southern Cone, where the state was the primary agent of violence, in Peru a combination of state and insurgent violence weakened collective identities and assaulted the material and moral bases of civil society organization.<sup>15</sup>

#### COERCION AND CONSENSUS IN FUJIMORI'S PERU

While these factors help us explain the disarticulation of civil society in the 1980s, how can we understand the continued weakness of civil society in the 1990s—when state structures were rebuilt, the economy improved markedly, and political violence diminished significantly after the arrest of the top leaders of Sendero Luminoso (and the less significant Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement, or MRTA) in 1992–93? Focusing on the internal weakness of civil society itself is insufficient, for it neglects consideration of external factors that may continue to inhibit or undermine civil society formation. Examining such factors is consistent with social movement theory, which emphasizes the importance of political opportunity structures for the emergence of social movement activity (Tarrow 1998). Scholarship has emphasized the role of neoliberal restructuring in the continued weakness of civil society, but less attention has been paid to specifically political factors in this process. This section thus focuses on the state and its instrumentalization of fear to create an “authoritarian consensus” within society, on the one hand, and to maintain civil society demobilized and unable to articulate its voice in the public realm, on the other.

The intense violence of the 1980s created a context in which many Peruvians were willing to cede citizenship and other rights to an extremely personalistic, authoritarian regime in exchange for order and stability. The Fujimori regime ably exploited this reordering of social meanings to generate consensus for its authoritarian state-building project. But even as the Fujimori regime was constructing this “authoritarian consensus,” it also deployed a series of mechanisms designed to keep civil society fragmented and disorganized. Patronage was one of these mechanisms, and the Fujimori regime's use of this practice has been widely documented (Roberts 1995; Schady 2000). Such clientelistic forms of domination and control helped build support for the regime

15. One prevailing hypothesis, known as the “theory of two demons,” suggests that left-wing guerrilla violence is equally responsible for the massive human rights violations committed by the military regimes in the Southern Cone. This view is widely criticized, however, given that violence was primarily exercised by state agents against unarmed civilians. See Izaguirre (1998).

even as they marginalized those who refused to abide by the new rules of the game, contributing to the fragmentation of civil society. Another key mechanism of social control, which has not been widely analyzed, was the instrumentalization of fear, which had at least two dimensions. The regime was itself an agent of fear, deploying state power to silence and intimidate opponents. At the same time, it sought to discursively exploit existing fears in society in order to maintain a disorganized civil society unable to articulate its voice.

*The Reordering Effects of Violence on Peruvian Society: The Authoritarian Consensus*

Scholars of societies that have experienced prolonged and/or particularly intense periods of political violence have noted the ways in which violence reshapes or reorders political and social meanings (Corradi 1992; Coronil and Skurski 2004). As Lechner (1992) has noted, in contexts of extreme crisis, collective referents are lost, future horizons deconstructed, and the social criteria of “normalcy” are eroded. Those in power play on the vital need for order in such contexts, presenting themselves as the only solution to chaos. In other words, elites shape and mold these new social meanings to justify and legitimize their authoritarian projects. The bureaucratic authoritarian regimes of the Southern Cone, for example, built on societal fears of violence and chaos to assert that politicians, political parties, and democracy were incompetent to deal with the crisis and that the armed forces alone were capable of stopping the downward spiral and restoring “law and order” (Corradi et al. 1992).

A similar process was evident in Peru during the late 1980s, when the country’s democratic leaders seemed incapable of addressing the dramatic expansion of violence and economic free fall. This contributed to popular dissatisfaction with politicians of all ideological stripes while also undermining confidence in democratic institutions and, indeed, in the state itself as an arbiter of social conflict. The violence thus directly contributed to a reordering of political and social meanings in Peru, fueling popular disillusionment with democratic norms and procedures and making authoritarian solutions appear more palatable. The result was a growing “common sense” favoring heavy-handed and extralegal solutions to the problem of violence and economic chaos.

It is tempting to suggest that this “authoritarian consensus” represented little more than a reversion to Peru’s long-standing authoritarian political culture (Atwood 2001). Yet such arguments do not take into account the nascent democratic practices being forged in Peru in the 1980s, or the specific effects of political violence in reshaping popular understandings of authority, governance, and order. Nor do they

consider the way in which state elites sought to harness and encourage such notions to justify and sustain an authoritarian political project.

The 1980s witnessed a wide range of experiments in democratic forms of participation and citizenship, not only through the exercise of the vote, but also through broader forms of citizen participation such as community-based organizations and local and regional government. Political parties played a dynamic role in this process, seeking (not always successfully) to represent and channel popular demands and operating within the context of democratic rules and procedures. At the same time, civil society was constructing a space for autonomous action (though this space was often ignored or trampled on by parties themselves through the use of clientelism and patronage).<sup>16</sup>

These nascent democratic modes of participation and governance were fundamentally challenged by the political violence that was engulfing the country by the end of the decade. Guerrilla violence created a crisis of public security and of public authority, to which the state reacted with either ineptitude or brutal repression, revealing its inability to respond to the guerrilla threat and also protect civil and political rights. As the crisis of public authority deepened, diverse social actors pursued private solutions to public problems, from the organization of civil defense patrols to deal with urban and rural crime and violence to the widespread use of private security systems in more affluent areas. By the late 1980s, the state's inability to guarantee citizen security, control its territory, or administer justice contributed to growing rejection of the system itself: democratic institutions seemed incompetent, corrupt, and aloof from the problems assaulting ordinary Peruvians. Increasingly, Peruvians viewed the political and civil liberties essential to democracy as expendable, and viewed heavy-handed solutions, from arbitrary arrest and detention to extralegal killings, as acceptable. As one human rights advocate noted, "Most people think that it is okay to kill a senderista."<sup>17</sup> Social conflict in the 1980s bolstered authoritarian understandings predicated on order, stability, and efficacy, over and above values like human rights, democracy, and negotiation.

Fujimori and his allies ably harnessed such notions into support for an authoritarian political project. Fujimori frequently justified heavy-handed solutions to Peru's multiple crises as the "only" solution to Peru's problems, and repeatedly attacked politicians, trade unions, human rights groups—even democracy itself, which he resignified as "party-crazy" to imply it had been corrupted to its core by party elites and special interests.

16. For literature on this period, see Ballón (1986); Degregori et al. (1986); Stokes (1995); and Schönwälder (2002).

17. Interview, Sofia Macher, Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos, Lima, June 24, 1998.

In this context, space for the defense of human rights and of basic democratic values (such as due process) was increasingly marginalized. Indeed, Fujimori often attacked those advocating such values as little more than the handmaidens of terrorism. State elites carefully constructed a discourse that played on peoples' fear and desire for normalcy and reiterated the claim that only heavy-handed solutions would revert the crisis and return order and stability to Peru. Thus, when Fujimori and his allies in the military carried out the autogolpe in April 1992, promising to restore order, eliminate the guerrilla threat, and rout out corruption, Peruvian society on the whole applauded it (Mauceri 1995).

The Fujimori regime used a variety of other methods to create and perpetuate this authoritarian "consensus." As Gramsci suggests, consensus is premised on a material basis, and Fujimori effectively delivered the goods: he stopped hyperinflation, he got the economy moving again, and with the capture of the top Sendero and MRTA leaders in 1992, he had defeated (if not eliminated) the guerrilla movements. He also began a more aggressive plan of social spending, building schools, roads, bridges, and encouraging community-based groups to apply for funds for local development projects (though these were tightly controlled by the Ministry of the Presidency, which superseded traditional ministries, such as Health and Education, and came to resemble traditional forms of clientelism). This consensus-building aspect of the Fujimori regime has been widely studied (Roberts 1995; Weyland 1996; Panfichi 1997; Carrion 1998). Within this literature, the term "neopopulism" has been widely used to describe the unmediated nature of the relationship Fujimori cultivated with the masses and to explain the surprising coupling of a populist leadership style with neoliberal economics (Roberts 1995; Weyland 1996). While such analyses recognize the authoritarian elements of the Fujimori regime, they do not adequately address the coercive dimensions of power, and in particular the way in which the state used its coercive power to demobilize political and civil society to prevent challenges to its power from emerging.<sup>18</sup> Roberts (1995), for example, notes that the failure of representative institutions such as political parties, labor unions, and autonomous social organizations to mediate between citizens and the state makes possible the direct, unmediated mobilization of the masses by a personalistic leader. This is doubtless true, but it does not account for, nor does it problematize, the ways in which the state might use coercive methods to perpetuate the inability of these intermediate institutions to act in the public realm. In this sense, the instrumentalization of fear is a key aspect to understanding the continued demobilization of civil society in Fujimori's Peru. Only

18. An important exception is Conaghan (2002), which analyzes the regime's control over the press and electronic media.

by grasping both dimensions of consensus and coercion—the basis of power as defined by Gramsci—can we understand how the Fujimori regime used state power to undermine these intermediate institutions and other civil society organizations as a way of maintaining its hold on political power.

### *The Instrumentalization of Fear*

As Lechner notes in his comparative study of the Southern Cone military regimes, the instrumentalization of fear does not require repression, only reinforcement of the absence of alternatives: “It suffices to induce a sense of personal and collective inability to have any effective influence on the public realm” (1992, 31). The only alternative for ordinary people in such situations is to seek refuge in private life, contributing to a process of atomization or anomie. The mechanisms the Fujimori regime employed to keep civil society disorganized were not dissimilar to those the bureaucratic authoritarian regimes of the Southern Cone of South America used—exploiting societal fears of a “return to the past” of violence and chaos to assert that politicians, political parties, and democracy itself were incompetent to deal with the situation and that only the armed forces could preserve national unity, restore “law and order,” and pursue the national interest (Garreton 1992; Lechner 1992). General Augusto Pinochet, for example, who ruled Chile with an iron fist between 1973 and 1990, frequently relied on such rhetorical manipulations of fear of the past—the economic debacle, food shortages, and political instability during the last year of Salvador Allende’s socialist government—to shore up support for his authoritarian regime and question the credibility of those contesting his power (Martínez 1992). In Fujimori’s Peru, elites similarly instrumentalized fear to undermine social mobilization and to keep civil society fragmented and disorganized. Elites used fear both as a narrative discourse and as an instrument of power in Fujimori’s Peru—not only in the latter years of the regime, when state violence sought to silence opposition to the regime’s reelection project, but throughout its tenure in power. The Fujimori regime’s neoliberal economic model, which eschewed structural explanations of poverty and violence and instead emphasized individual responsibility, dovetailed with this process of atomization and reinforced it.

### *Narratives of Fear*

The Fujimori regime systematically manipulated fear of Sendero Luminoso and the chaos of the 1980s to undermine social mobilization and keep civil society fragmented and disorganized. The regime developed a

visceral antipolitics discourse that blamed political parties and politicians for the economic and political crises of the 1980s, extolled the success of its heavy-handed measures (including the 1992 autogolpe and the repressive measures that were put in place following the coup) in returning order and stability to the country, and warned—as Pinochet frequently did in the 1980s—of the certain descent into chaos should the politicians be allowed to return.<sup>19</sup>

Particularly after Guzmán's arrest, which occurred just five months after the autogolpe, Fujimori repeatedly asserted the efficacy of the heavy-handed measures his government had taken, contrasting this to the incompetence of civilian elites, who were portrayed as fundamentally incapable of dealing with the economic and political crises that had engulfed the country by the late 1980s. By discursively locating himself as "part of the people" challenging the power and privilege of the "party-cracy," Fujimori created an "us versus them" framework that played on and stoked popular disgust with the political class's failure to address Peru's problems. He constantly played on people's fears by suggesting that without his heavy-handed approach, the chaos of the past would return. "Terrorism had infiltrated everything," said Fujimori, who described the self-coup as an act of "realism" that sought to reestablish "true" democracy in Peru.<sup>20</sup> "It would have been irresponsible to not consummate the autogolpe," he claimed, since it "permitted us to successfully wage the battle against terrorism, combat corruption within the Judiciary and deepen neoliberal reforms."<sup>21</sup> A made-for-television documentary narrated by one of Fujimori's top legislative allies, Jaime Yoshiyama, and aired in November 1992, similarly portrayed the autogolpe as an historical necessity given the corruption and myopia of the traditional ruling class.

Within the framework of the regime's Manichean discourse, regime opponents were categorically defined as illegitimate. For example, human rights organizations were vilified as the "legal arms of terrorism." During a ceremony on armed forces' day on September 24, 1991, Fujimori stated, "We know that the terrorists and their front organizations, or useful idiots, will not give up and will use all possible resources to harm the image of Peru by alleging that the Peruvian armed forces systematically violate human rights."<sup>22</sup>

Attacks such as these against groups questioning regime policies stoked fear among the opposition and effectively reinforced a sense of collective inability to challenge the regime's policies in the public realm.

19. On the regime's anti-politics discourse, see Panfichi (1997) and Degregori (2001).

20. As cited, *La República*, DESCO Database, May 27, 1996.

21. As cited from major Lima newspapers, DESCO Database, March 31, 1993.

22. As quoted in *Latin American Weekly Report*, WR-91-41 (October 24, 1991), 11.

As the community activist quoted earlier stated, "*quien habla es terrorista*": anyone who dares oppose the regime and give voice to that opposition is vilified as a terrorist, an ideological construct used to justify the criminalization of dissent and opposition activity and which left the individual so categorized devoid of rights and guarantees.

The government deployed this discourse in the context of the radical militarization of society and politics, a process that intensified after the *autogolpe*. Civilian governments dating back to 1982 had ceded authority to the military to deal with Sendero. Political-military commands were established in emergency zones, where constitutional guarantees were suspended and civilian authorities sidelined by military officials. Military power increased through a series of decree laws after the *autogolpe*—power that was not substantially altered when, under pressure from international criticism, a new Congress was elected and a new Constitution approved. The new legislature ceased to monitor the activities of the armed forces, which had acquired total control over counter-insurgency, and became a virtual rubber stamp of executive initiatives.

In this context, the militarization of social and political life expanded dramatically. The armed forces continued to rule directly in the emergency zones, which encompassed about two-thirds of the population. The proliferation of military bases in rural communities and urban shantytowns gave the military vast power to control the urban and rural poor. The army deployed "civic action" programs to "win the hearts and minds" of local populations while also allowing the military to more easily monitor and control the movements of the civilian population. Public universities were occupied by the armed forces, violating constitutional guarantees of autonomy. The *rondas* were placed under the direct control of the armed forces. This process of militarization demonstrated to the population the newfound power of state authorities to survey, control, and repress undesired social behavior.

State and para-state institutions received new, broad powers to penetrate, dominate and control civil society. Of particular importance was the strengthening of the National Intelligence Service (SIN) and the deployment of the Colina Group, a paramilitary group that operated out of the SIN and the Army Intelligence Service (SIE). Under the guiding hand of Fujimori's chief advisor, Vladimiro Montesinos, the SIN became the regime's political police, and the Colina Group its instrument to intimidate and silence regime critics through often macabre spectacles of violence.

One of the most infamous cases of such state violence was the 1991 Barrios Altos massacre, the first death-squad style mass execution to take place in Lima. A Colina Group unit was sent to assassinate presumed members of Sendero Luminoso, but the operatives went to the wrong floor, killing 15 people and severely wounding four others who had no political connections whatsoever. Another well-known case was



the disappearance of nine students and one professor from Cantuta University in 1992. The fact that the armed forces had assumed direct control over the university campus left little doubt who was responsible. When the victims' charred remains were discovered a year later, prompting opposition congressional leaders to launch an investigation, the head of the armed forces accused them of acting "in collusion with the homicidal terrorists,"<sup>23</sup> and army tanks were paraded in front of Congress to thwart further inquiry. As the case was being pursued in civil court, pro-regime legislators gutted the trial by passing a law relocating the case to military courts, a violation of judicial autonomy. When the military court convicted a few Colina Group operatives for the crimes, Congress engineered an amnesty law in 1995 to free them.

While the Barrios Altos and Cantuta murders were allegedly directed against presumed Senderistas, other cases reveal the state's use of its coercive power to silence legitimate opposition and its justification of such abuses by equating opposition activity with terrorism. Such was the case of the assassination of the general-secretary of the National Confederation of Peruvian Workers (CGTP), Pedro Huilca, who was gunned down in December 1992 by the Colina Group. Huilca, a strong critic of Fujimori's neoliberal policies, was trying to mobilize social protest against the regime. Two weeks before his death, Fujimori publicly attacked Huilca after critical remarks he made at the Annual Meeting of Entrepreneurs (CADE). According to a national media report:

Fujimori said, reading from his notes, "we have been building a national consensus since 1990. Bit by bit the grand social structures of deep Peru are emerging." Then Fujimori looked up at the auditorium and stopped reading, saying, "This is no longer a country ruled by the bosses [*cúpula*] of the CGTP or SUTEP [the national teachers' union], or the hordes [*huestes*] of Sendero Luminoso and the MRTA, or the bosses of the traditional parties." The message was directed against Huilca, who was in the auditorium.<sup>24</sup>

Discursively, Fujimori was locating trade unionists (and "traditional" political party leaders) in the same category as the armed insurgencies of MRTA and Sendero, despite the CGTP's long history of participation in democratic politics and the fact that Sendero had targeted several of its leaders. Government investigators and the media initially blamed Sendero, but Huilca's widow and CGTP leaders claimed that Fujimori and the government were responsible. The government's failure to investigate the murder of two other CGTP leaders suggested official complicity, and the administration's hostility to Huilca and the CGTP was evident in comments such as that by President Fujimori cited above,

23. As cited in APRODEH (1994).

24. *Oiga*, December 21, 1992.

and by Finance Minister Carlos Boloña, who had earlier assured business leaders that “the top leadership [cúpula] of the CGTP will soon be destroyed” (CVR 2003). In 1993, a dissident army general accused the Colina Group of Huilca’s murder, a charge confirmed a decade later by the Inter-American Court on Human Rights (IAHCR 2005).

A second example illustrates the way state violence was deployed to suppress legitimate social movement activity. On May 2, 1992, nine campesinos were disappeared from Santa, a village on the northern coast. They were protesting land-tenure arrangements against a local landlord, who called on powerful friends, including the brother of the head of the armed forces, to have the protest organizers identified as subversives and “eliminated.” Days later, the Colina Group was deployed to Santa and, one by one, the peasant leaders were plucked from their homes and disappeared (CVR 2003). As in the Huilca case, the regime blamed Sendero. Sowing confusion over authorship of such killings stoked fear of insurgent violence while also instilling fear of state repression in regime opponents.

### *The Law as a Source of Fear: Legal Repression*

The state’s failure to stem the Sendero Luminoso insurgency in the 1980s led to important shifts in counter-insurgency policy. The government emphasized intelligence gathering and dismantling the organization’s top leadership, a strategy that proved effective with the arrest of Sendero’s top leaders in 1992–93. Civic action campaigns to win the “hearts and minds” of the population were designed to undermine support for Sendero. As a result of these shifts, there were fewer indiscriminate massacres, but extrajudicial executions and forced “disappearances” against more selective targets continued. And increasingly, the use of legal repression—through massive and often indiscriminate incarceration of suspected “subversives” using the anti-terrorist legislation put in place after the 1992 autogolpe—became a centerpiece of the regime’s efforts to eliminate Sendero (Degregori and Rivera 1993; CVR 2003).

International jurists and local human rights organizations criticized the anti-terrorist legislation for its negation of due process guarantees and for the anomaly of trying civilians in faceless military courts (ICJ 1993). The legislation defined the crimes of terrorism and treason so broadly that individuals engaged in legitimate protest could be (and were) caught in its web. Indeed, under this legislation, hundreds if not thousands of individuals innocent of any crime were arrested and sentenced to long periods in prison. In other cases, individuals who were coerced into collaborating with Sendero, such as soup kitchen organizers who were forced to provide food to insurgents, were convicted of “terrorism” and given disproportionately long prison sentences (Burt 1994). Such harsh

treatment was designed to destroy any logistical support for Sendero. The fact that nearly 500 individuals were eventually found innocent of any wrongdoing and pardoned by Fujimori himself reveals the extent to which the regime abused this mechanism (De la Jara Basombrío 2001).

This use of legal repression exacerbated uncertainty and fear, especially among the rural and urban poor, who have a tenuous sense of rights and protection and who were the most likely victims of political violence. Interviews with community leaders in several Lima shantytowns in 1993 and 1994 revealed that such legal repression deepened activists' fear that the government might construe their involvement in grassroots organizations as aiding terrorists, leading many to retreat into the private sphere. Participants in focus groups carried out with randomly selected residents of lower-income districts in Lima in 1995 clearly expressed that fear of being associated with terrorist activity inhibited participation in public forms of protest:

Q: Why don't people protest?

A1: Because they feel afraid. They fear that making demands could put them at risk.

Q: Put them at risk, how so?

A1: The police would arrest them.

A2: And so they don't participate in protest marches.

Q: And why is there fear that you could be arrested, if you haven't done anything wrong?

A1: Because people are afraid the police will detain them for fifteen days and there is nothing you can do; they are afraid of being arrested and put in jail.

The reference to fifteen days demonstrates a remarkable awareness of the broad powers possessed by authorities to question detainees without an arrest warrant, the period during which torture is most likely to occur. It also shows awareness of the absence of legal guarantees for detainees, and how this knowledge inhibited opposition activity. Challenging abuse by authorities was out of the question, given this reality of legal repression and the ease with which legitimate protest was equated with terrorism:

Q: One can report police abuse, no?

A1: We have rights, yes we can.

A2: But they arrest us and accuse us of terrorism.

A3: It's not possible [to denounce abuses], they accuse us of different things.<sup>25</sup>

25. Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos, "Percepción de los derechos humanos en los estratos populares," 1995. This document reports on the findings of eight focus groups of men and women randomly selected from Lima's popular sectors between September 12 and 19, 1995.

By equating opposition activity with terrorism, the regime discursively undermined the space for civil society activity. The deployment of selective killings and disappearances, and the application of anti-terrorist legislation that failed to distinguish between legitimate opposition activity and terrorist activity, and that meted out harsh punishments, had a chilling effect on social mobilization. Regime opponents dared not voice their criticism publicly for fear of being labeled a "terrorist" and receiving the same treatment they receive—death, imprisonment, torture, silencing.

### *Impunity*

Scholars of political violence in Latin America have long noted the ways in which impunity contributes to a culture of fear by creating structures that prevent accountability for state-sponsored violence against citizens (McSherry and Molina 1999). Since the start of Peru's internal conflict, few state agents were convicted of human rights violations, and impunity certainly contributed to the climate of fear that reigned in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>26</sup> With the 1995 amnesty law, which was passed specifically to free members of the Colina Group who had been convicted by military courts for the Cantuta murders, impunity was institutionalized. State agents implicated in human rights violations were granted immunity from prosecution, and the few who had been convicted of such abuses were freed.

While public opinion wildly repudiated the amnesty law—three-quarters of those polled opposed the law and believed it should be revoked (Youngers 2003)—the testimonies of student and human rights activists reveal the way in which fear prevented opposition to amnesty from translating into broad-based mobilization. Though activists successfully organized a series of small-scale protests against the law, their efforts to launch a referendum to overturn it met with dismal failure. According to Susana Villarán, then president of the National Human Rights Coordinator, people were afraid to publicly sign a document of this nature that could identify them as opponents of the regime, which could lead to the suspension of material aid, incarceration, or worse.<sup>27</sup> In other words, the effort to overturn the widely unpopular law found little echo in society due to the prevailing climate of fear.

26. In the 1980s, while there was no formal amnesty law, the handful of cases involving accusations of human rights violations by military or police personnel were transferred to military courts, where impunity was assured. Often military courts would claim jurisdiction over cases being pursued in the regular judicial system; the Supreme Court would routinely rule in favor of military jurisdiction, thus providing institutional cover for impunity.

27. Interview, Susana Villarán, Lima, August 1, 2000.

The testimony of a student activist from the Catholic University highlights the extent to which the regime's equation of opposition activity with terrorism had been internalized by the population:

We went to the center of Lima for the first time [to protest the 1995 amnesty law]. It was the first time we found our public voice. But we saw the "other," the student[s] from San Marcos [University], from La Cantuta [University], not only as different from us, but also as dangerous. So what you had in the street protests, where everyone was scared to death . . . was the idea that we should not mingle with them. Our generation had lived with a profound trauma, fear of Sendero and of repression. There was a great deal of insecurity . . . which made people retreat in terms of demanding their fundamental rights.<sup>28</sup>

This testimony also reveals how the multidirectionality of fear reinforced existing class and ethnic cleavages in Peru, effectively undermining efforts on the part of university students from different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds to build more enduring bonds of trust and solidarity, the basis of collective action. Public universities such as San Marcos and La Cantuta, which were occupied by the armed forces and where student federations were not recognized by new state-appointed authorities, had become associated in the public mind with subversion; the poorer, darker-skinned Peruvians who studied there might have some connection to subversive groups, hence middle- and upper-class students from universities like La Católica would do best to avoid associating with them in order to avoid any problems with the authorities. Protest activity dissipated in the wake of such fears.

### *Fanning the Flames of Fear*

As political violence declined in the aftermath of the capture of the top leaders of the MRTA and Shining Path, one might have expected the opening of democratic spaces in Peru. But this was not the case. On the contrary, the regime tightened its stranglehold on power, and became even more systematic in its efforts to shut down any and all possible sources of opposition. Even as the threat posed by Sendero had begun to recede, the regime continued to equate opposition activity with terrorism, so that fear of being associated with Sendero either in thought or in deed, and of state repression, continued to inhibit civil society organization. This became particularly acute as the regime revealed its determination to assure a third term in office for Fujimori, which will be discussed briefly below.

In this context, the regime continued to fan the flames of fear by periodically warning of a "resurgence" of terrorist violence. According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

28. Interview, Lima, August 8, 2000.

Counterinsurgency operations ceased to be a means of capturing subversive leaders and concluding the war with the PCP-SL [Sendero Luminoso] and the MRTA, and became a means of propaganda for the government, in the best case, and a smokescreen, in the worst, to cover up the regime's crimes and excesses, which were being denounced with greater frequency. This was possible largely because of the progressive and almost total control the state had accumulated over the communications media, paid for with state moneys. (CVR 2003)

Similarly, the regime stoked societal fear of other types of violence, such as criminal and gang-related violence, which had risen significantly even as political violence was on the wane. Executive decrees defined criminal activities such as theft, robbery, kidnapping, assault, and gang activity as "aggravated terrorism," and many of the same harsh measures from the antiterrorist legislation were put in place. Opposition legislators and human rights activists complained that the vague definition of these crimes could result in legal repression against legitimate social protest.<sup>29</sup>

The regime also sought to reduce the space for independent media, particularly the electronic media (Conaghan 2002). Journalists who dared investigate the regime's shady or criminal dealings were threatened and intimidated. In the meantime—as we know now thanks to the hundreds of videotapes that document the regime's illegal dealings—the regime bought and extorted its way into controlling the rest of the principal media outlets, which gave it direct control over the scope and content of news coverage. Opposition views were rarely voiced, and the official version of events was the only story in town.<sup>30</sup>

The print and electronic media, increasingly controlled by Fujimori's inner circle, echoed the regime's discourse of fear. News programs reporting the day's events regularly portrayed opposition activity as inspired by terrorist groups. For example, in 1995 a human rights group sponsored an alternative rock concert in downtown Lima called "Olvidarte Nunca" ("Never Forget You") that focused attention on the state practice of forced disappearances. The next evening, Channel 4 news (which was on the regime's payroll) broadcast a story alleging that alternative rock groups were infiltrated by Sendero.<sup>31</sup> In the context of the 2000 electoral process, Channel 2 news (also on the payroll of the Fujimori regime) broadcast a program in 1999 menacingly titled "The Red Spider Web." The program documented the leftist affiliations of several individuals working in the Ombudsman's Office in an effort to

29. Interview, Anel Townsend, Lima, June 24, 1998.

30. Cable TV station Canal N was one of the few broadcast agencies that maintained an independent profile and which televised reports critical of the regime, but few Peruvians have access to cable TV, limiting its reach and therefore its impact. Its impact on middle class sectors, however, was probably quite significant in crystallizing anti-regime sentiment.

31. Interview, Miguel Jugo, Director, APRODEH, Lima, June 25, 1998.

sully the public image of one of the few state institutions that was able to maintain its independence vis-à-vis the Fujimori regime. This occurred in the context of the Ombudsman's questioning of several of the regime's policies and practices, most significantly Fujimori's unconstitutional bid for a third term.

Swift punishment met those who challenged the regime's media monopoly, as evidenced in the Baruch Ivcher case. In 1997, Ivcher, owner of *Frecuencia Latina*, broadcast a series of stories that revealed serious abuses by the regime, including a story about government espionage of opposition leaders and Montesinos' inexplicably high income. Another series of stories on the murder of a former army intelligence agent, Mariella Barreto, and the torture of another, Leonor La Rosa, who presumably leaked information about the Cantuta murders to the press, exposed serious abuses of state power. In retaliation, Ivcher, an Israeli by birth, was stripped of his Peruvian citizenship and control of his television station. The Ivcher case prompted much international attention and helped unmask the authoritarian underpinnings of the Fujimori regime. However, even as such abuses ignited the conscience of some and prompted them into opposition activity, it also evidenced the regime's willingness to go to any lengths, even murder, to silence those who challenged its power. These assaults sent a larger message to those within the regime and to society at large that dissent would not be tolerated. As opposition legislator Anel Townsend said at the time, "Fear became more palpable after Barreto. People think, 'if they [the SIN] do this to one of their own, what might they do to us?'"<sup>32</sup> A former human rights leader made a similar observation: "We care about human rights, but we don't want to happen to us what happened to Mariella Barreto."<sup>33</sup> This reflects the Foucaultian notion of how power reproduces itself even when it is under attack and its practices are coming under scrutiny.

#### THE RESURGENCE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Scholars of societies that have experienced long periods of violence have noted that in some circumstances, violence and fear may cease having the intended demobilizing effect on civil society and may in fact galvanize resistance to state power (Guzman Bouvard 1994; Afflito 2000; May 2001). A similar process occurred in Peru as small sectors of society, particularly university students, human rights organizations, and pro-democracy groups, began to articulate public criticism of the regime's abuse of authority. Fear continued to undermine their efforts, as evidenced in the failed attempt to overturn the 1995 amnesty law, and the regime's scuttling of a

32. Interview with Congresswoman Anel Townsend, June 24, 1998.

33. Interview, Susana Villarán, Lima, June 23, 1998.

referendum initiative launched by the opposition in 1998, which sought to overturn a dubious law passed by pro-regime legislators designed to legalize Fujimori's run for a third consecutive term. While the opposition managed to obtain substantial societal support for the referendum (including 1.4 million signatures), the regime maneuvered to halt the initiative and severely repressed protest activity. Yet, in dialectical fashion, such displays of power served as lessons to emerging opposition groups in civil and political society, forcing them to realize the need for unity and develop strategies to overcome fear. The 2000 electoral process became the galvanizing event for this process, providing a framework of rules and procedures codified in the Constitution that the regime was violating (the two-term limit, for example, or electoral rules that were being manipulated or ignored) and that could be effectively challenged by the opposition and that had international resonance given the growing concern for free and fair elections worldwide. While this process cannot be explored in any great length here, a few key points will highlight the shifts that began to occur that helped Peruvians overcome fear and made it more viable for civil society groups to organize an opposition discourse *and* movement to the regime.

As several analysts have noted, the 2000 electoral process galvanized opposition to the Fujimori regime in ways that were widely unexpected. Analysts have examined the abuses surrounding the electoral process—which together provided clear evidence that regime operatives were willing to go to any lengths to ensure Fujimori's third term in office—and how they galvanized domestic protest as well as international criticism and deprived the regime of the legitimacy it needed (Conaghan 2001). Armed with evidence of these abuses—from violating the Constitution to packing the courts to massive electoral fraud—key groups in civil society devised new ways of framing their opposition to the regime as something positive and proactive: a struggle to recuperate democracy. This disputed the Fujimori regime's claim that it had eliminated the old "party-crazy" in favor of "true democracy" and began to challenge the regime as a dictatorship that had usurped power and was violating Peruvians' basic political rights. By 1999, human rights groups, university students, pro-democracy groups like Democratic Forum and Transparencia, and opposition legislators were effectively articulating an ethical stance against the Fujimori regime's authoritarian practices and abuses of authority. While this was a relatively small—and largely middle class—movement, it was creating a crucial public space for dissent that would become central to the broader opposition movement that would emerge in the context of the contested 2000 elections. Thus, the 2000 electoral process created a new political opportunity structure for the reactivation of civil society; the increasingly blatant forms of abuse and manipulation necessary to reproduce Fujimori's authority



undermined the consensual aspects of his rule and revealed the coercive structures underpinning the regime's hold on power.

At the same time, however, other shifts were occurring in state-society relations that together revealed growing strains within the ruling coalition's support base. Imperceptibly, but perhaps most significantly, the political conditions that helped create the "authoritarian consensus" were beginning to shift by the end of the 1990s. The abuse of authority, once considered justified in the context of the war against Sendero Luminoso, was increasingly viewed by at least segments of civil society, as no longer so. As one university student activist noted in the context of the growing intensity of social protest in 1999 and especially 2000:

The fear of Sendero starts to fade, and people are no longer willing to delegate their rights. People are no longer willing to trade away their liberty, and they begin to make demands, and they begin to understand that others can also [legitimately] make demands. . . . There is a growing understanding that this is a repressive regime. Before oppression was stability for all. Today oppression is instability for all.<sup>34</sup>

In the context of the regime's unabashed effort to ensconce itself in power, a new discourse emerged that reframed the regime's abuse of power as no longer a means of defeating a dangerous insurgency but rather a means of maintaining an abusive and corrupt regime in power at any cost.

Also of importance was declining public support for Fujimori. The regime's approval ratings were at 60 percent or higher until mid-1996, reflecting popular support for concrete policy achievements and massive social spending. But the regime's inability to address poverty and unemployment, even as macroeconomic imperatives forced it to cut back on social spending, fed growing disillusionment. The period from 1997 on reveals a notable decline in Fujimori's approval ratings (though they remained at 40–45 percent). The material basis of consensus had eroded at least partially, meaning that some segments of society might be open to the appeals of regime challengers. The 2000 electoral process provided the background against which this growing discontent over Fujimori's economic policies—a central concern of poorer Peruvians—connected with the middle class groups whose opposition to the Fujimori regime was predicated more on a rejection of its authoritarian practices.

Also significant were the tensions brewing within the ruling coalition. Segments of the business elite had become increasingly skittish over the regime's authoritarianism, its criminal practices, and as we now know thanks to the hundreds of videos documenting the vast webs of graft and corruption that undergirded the Fujimori regime, the massive use of extortion to ensure compliance at all levels of society. Further research is

34. Interview, Alejandra Alayza, Lima, August 8, 2000.

needed to understand the complex relationships sustaining the Fujimori regime and how these shifted over time. But it is clear that some segments of the business elite had withdrawn their support for the regime, as evident in the increasingly critical editorial content of some communications media, such as the conservative Lima daily, *El Comercio*, and Ivcher's *Frecuencia Latina*, which prior to 1997 were largely uncritical (and sometimes quite supportive) of the Fujimori regime. The defection of previous regime supporters, such as Ivcher, and of regime operatives, such as Carlos Ferrero, the sole legislator from Fujimori's party to vote in favor of the referendum initiative (and who later joined the opposition), also testify to the growing cracks within the ruling coalition.

It is in this context that the massive social protests around the 2000 electoral process proved to be so debilitating to the façade of legitimacy the Fujimori regime was seeking to obtain by securing a third elected term in office.<sup>35</sup> The opposition's ability to articulate a clear case against the Fujimori regime based on the violation of internationally recognized standards of free and fair elections also prompted international actors, including international election watchdog groups, the Organization of American States, and the U.S. government to formulate direct criticisms of the regime and its corrupt electoral practices. The leadership role presidential candidate Alejandro Toledo played in bringing disparate groups in civil and political society together to contest the electoral process was of also of utmost importance. With Toledo taking the lead in mobilizing anti-regime protests, particularly after the fraud perpetrated in the first round vote and in anticipation of Fujimori's inauguration, the opposition was able to articulate an alternative to Fujimori.

The opposition movement did not prevent Fujimori from being sworn in as president for a third term. However, the resurgence of civil society played a very dynamic role in denying the regime the legitimacy it sought to ensure through fraud and violence. Without this, it is conceivable that the regime might have weathered the storm that followed the public airing of a videotape showing Montesinos bribing an opposition congressman 6 weeks after Fujimori's inauguration. Rather, Montesinos fled the country, and after failed attempts at damage control, Fujimori fled as well. He was removed as president in November 2000 and an interim government was formed. The following year, Toledo won a new electoral contest and took office as president in August 2001.

## CONCLUSION

Social movement theory suggests that political opportunity structures create the context for social mobilization to occur (Tarrow 1998). The

35. For a carefully documented review of this process, see Conaghan (2001).

degree of repression, of the cohesiveness of state elites, and the existence of institutional guarantees for civil and political liberties, are all elements of political opportunity structures that might be considered in evaluating the likely emergence and the relative weakness or strength of social movement activity. In the case of Fujimori's Peru, it has been suggested that each of these elements contributed to maintaining civil society weak and on the defensive, and particular emphasis has been placed on the instrumentalization of fear by state elites as a mechanism of social control. It is certainly true that civil and political society had been severely weakened by the political violence and economic crisis of the 1980s. But as the threat of violence waned and the economic situation improved, the Fujimori regime deployed a variety of strategies to keep civil society weak and disarticulated. These included consensus-building measures, such as the extensive use of patronage. But it also included the authoritarian exercise of power and the instrumentalization of fear. Civil society remained weak in the 1990s not only because of the devastating crises of the 1980s, or because of neoliberal social and economic policies, but also because state power was deployed with the aim of keeping civil society disarticulated and fragmented. As Fujimori and his allies sought to consolidate an authoritarian political project and prevent challengers to it from emerging, this strategic use of consensus and coercion prevented what Keane calls "political and social obstacles to state power" from developing. Such a situation—an increasingly assertive state in the hands of technocratic elites and supported by the domestic bourgeoisie and international capital, and a weak and fragmented political and civil society—is, according to Keane, "always hazardous and undesirable, a license for despotism" (1996, 51).

The resurgence of civil society in the context of the 2000 electoral process proved to be central to the regime's undoing, but it proved to be ephemeral in terms of the construction of a more durable and dynamic civil society. Indeed, facilitating the development of a robust civil and political society remains one of the vital challenges facing Peru's new democracy to ensure that no new despotisms arise. But without democratic state structures that guarantee the rule of law and accountability for public authorities, civil society will continue to be vulnerable to the kind of state practices that had such devastating consequences for democracy and human rights in Fujimori's Peru.

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