



THE PERMANENT COUP

THE president ran away.

Peruvians were about their usual weekend routines on Sunday morning when cabinet president Federico Salas called a press conference. With glum colleagues at his side, Salas made the awkward announcement: President Alberto Fujimori was forwarding his resignation as president of Peru from the swank New Otani Hotel in Tokyo. It was November 19, 2000.

Alberto Fujimori's long-distance resignation was the final act in a political crisis that started in September 2000 with the release of a videotape that showed Fujimori's longtime national intelligence advisor, Vladimiro Montesinos, bribing a congressman. The leak of the video set off a bizarre chain of events that starkly revealed the regime for what it was—corrupt, criminal, authoritarian. Montesinos fled Peru, leaving behind a cache of videotapes documenting the crimes that he and others had committed while in service to the president. Eventually, Fujimori followed suit, disguising his escape as a diplomatic trip abroad.

Ending his decade-long presidency from behind closed doors was a fitting conclusion for Fujimori. After all, he had run the government as a

clandestine operation for years. In Fujimori's Peru, the most important decisions were always made out of public view and without regard for what Peruvians wanted. That Fujimori could not even face fellow Peruvians for a final farewell, a last hurrah, was equally telling. Fujimori once delighted in making public appearances and rubbing elbows with *el pueblo* (the people). He rode bicycles through dusty urban slums. He wrapped himself in ponchos in the sierra. No local headdress was too extravagant for the president to try on. The photo opportunities were endless.

In his last year as president, Fujimori's photographs were equally unforgettable, but for different reasons. Fujimori obsessively pursued an unprecedented third election, and it took a toll on his once-legendary popularity. On the last night of their 2000 campaign, President Fujimori and his daughter, First Lady Keiko Sofia, huddled behind plastic police shields as protesters hurled fruit and eggs—an image unimaginable five years earlier. In the months ahead, the pictures got worse. When cameras panned the scene of Fujimori's third inauguration, downtown Lima looked like a war zone, complete with clouds of tear gas and deadly fire.

Reengineering Peru

Back in 1995 there had been no flying fruit or tear gas and no reason to hide. On the evening of April 9, 1995, President Alberto Fujimori was in an expansive mood. He had just won 64 percent of the vote in his bid to serve a second term as Peru's chief executive. His political organization, Cambio 90-Nueva Mayoría (C90-NM), shared in the success. Fujimori could count on governing with an absolute majority in congress. The election victory was sweet, especially for a government that, three years earlier, had engineered a coup d'état that obliterated the constitutional order.

Savoring the win, President Fujimori made his way through street celebrations and headed to the Hotel Crillon in downtown Lima, where the national and foreign press corps gathered. Pointing to the abysmal results of rival parties in the election, Fujimori declared that democracy based on parties was dead in Peru. He vowed never to govern with parties, including his own. Fujimori interpreted the day's election results as a sign that the public wanted an efficient, problem-solving democracy led by a president unencumbered by pesky legislators.¹ In an interview with the *Houston*

Chronicle, Fujimori offered his views on the future of democracy: “Democracy now should not include the participation of political parties. The people have learned a lot. They have said: Enough of this kind of democracy. We want democracy that is more efficient, that resolves our problems. Democracy is the will of the people—good administration, honesty, results. They don’t want speeches, or to be deceived by images.”²

Fujimori touted his vision as the “politics of anti-politics,” and boasted that it was a new model for other countries where citizens were equally dissatisfied with traditional politicians. He called his government a *democracia con estilo* (democracy with style), an administration manned by selfless technocrats instead of self-serving politicians.

Alberto Fujimori’s postelection ruminations may have sounded faintly familiar to Americans grown accustomed to Ross Perot and his antiparty diatribes.³ Peruvians had heard the arguments before, too. On April 5, 1992, Fujimori had suspended the 1979 constitution, closed the national congress, and ordered a mass firing of judges and prosecutors. The military backed the measures and sent tanks cruising through the streets to show support.

The coup was the first salvo in Fujimori’s effort to radically remake the political system. He justified his actions as a means to resolve Peru’s economic problems and beat back violent communist guerrillas, and most Peruvians seemed to accept the rationale. In the days after the coup, the president called for a plebiscite to confirm public support. He planned to continue on as president until the next scheduled national election in 1995. Apparently, old-fashioned, one-man rule was Fujimori’s idea of political reform. He pledged that the coup would not be used as a vehicle to arrange for his own reelection in 1995. It was a promise that would soon be broken.⁴

Fujimori’s effort to represent his coup-based regime as new form of democracy did not go unchallenged. Rival politicians, intellectuals, and labor and community leaders believed that Fujimori was pushing Peru in the direction of authoritarianism, not democracy.⁵ United States president George H. W. Bush told Fujimori that democracy had to be established or U.S. assistance would be in jeopardy. The Organization of American States (OAS) condemned the coup and threatened economic sanctions if representative democracy was not restored.

Fujimori reluctantly conceded and agreed to hold elections for a new congress that would write a new constitution. The OAS accepted the plan, which allowed Fujimori to direct his own, mostly unmonitored, political

transition. The result was a new election for a constituent assembly and, subsequently, a new constitution that overturned the traditional ban on presidential reelection. In short, despite OAS and U.S. protestations, the coup had indeed opened the door for Fujimori to stay in power.

Fujimori's push to restore the appearance of political normalcy by holding elections and developing a constitution effectively quashed international criticism and removed the immediate threat of economic sanctions. But reconstructing the appearance of constitutional order did not mean that the president had changed his mind about how best to govern Peru. Fujimori's approach remained the same. He despised fellow politicians and made no bones about saying so. He liked to say that he was the "manager" of Peru, more like a Wall Street wizard beholden to no one than a mundane public official accountable to everyone.

This became the favored metaphor: Fujimori was "reengineering Peru" and his *oficialistas* (loyal officials) were managers.⁶ Governing was to be a neat exercise in decision making and management, with little in the way of deliberation or consensus building. According to Fujimori, Peru's problems could be traced to the *palabrería* (excessive, useless talk) of the traditional political class and his administration would remedy that with action. The president's photo opportunities with the press were primed to produce action shots. Images showed the president handing out food, leading journalists through the jungle, and inspecting the gruesome cadavers of dead terrorists.

The disdain for *palabrería* was the central tenet of *Fujimorismo*; it permeated the culture of the administration from the cabinet to the congress. Talk did not just waste time; it was downright subversive. When opposition leaders demanded accountability from the government—explanations or investigations of conduct or policy—they ran up against a wall of silence. Government officials routinely refused to provide legislators and the press with information. They invoked national security considerations as a defense against discussing a whole range of unsettling issues, including the astronomical income of Peru's number-one appointed official, Vladimiro Montesinos.

The OAS may have forced Fujimori to remount the institutions of representative democracy, but what the OAS, the U.S. government, and other international onlookers either failed to grasp fully or blatantly chose to ignore was that leaders scornful of democratic institutions were being charged

with their restoration.⁷ The rebuilding of Peru's institutions was left to a president who was averse to the principles of democratic governance. Deliberation, oversight, and accountability never figured in Fujimori's agenda of reengineering Peru.

As Peruvians discovered, the aversion to talk only applied to the public speech of opponents. There was plenty of jawboning among *oficialistas*. That chatter went on in the offices of Vladimiro Montesinos, tucked behind the high walls of the national intelligence headquarters, the Servicio de Inteligencia Nacional (SIN). Under Montesinos's watch, the SIN became the regime's central command, where plots were hatched to subvert every institution for the purpose of keeping Fujimori, and by extension Montesinos, in power. Political power was not the only objective. For many insiders, especially Montesinos, unchecked political power equaled untold opportunities to amass vast personal fortunes through crime. In the Fujimori era, politics was a heady and lucrative endeavor.

A President Unleashed

One national television network promoted its coverage of Fujimori's second inauguration in 1995 by inviting viewers to witness the dawn of *democracia plena* (full democracy). The official line was that the 1995 election equaled democracy and an end to the era of coup-induced legal limbo. Fujimori's high job-approval ratings in public-opinion surveys and his success at the polls were cited as proof positive of the regime's democratic credentials.

Analysts at home and abroad were fascinated by Fujimori's apparent popularity. He was often cited as one of the new wave of leaders in Latin America that included President Fernando Collor de Mello of Brazil and President Carlos Menem of Argentina.⁸ What all three leaders had in common were their neopopulist political styles and neoliberal economic programs.

Fujimori's high job-approval ratings diverted attention from one of the most important and persistent problems of his presidency. Fujimori was popular in general terms, but less so regarding the specifics of how he governed. Polls often showed widespread disapproval of many of the government's policies, especially in the realm of military, human rights, and constitutional or legal issues. Fujimori's much-touted popular support (at

least as expressed in polls) frequently dissolved when it came to questions about the real political features of his regime and the conduct of government officials.

Public opinion was as troublesome as it was useful to the Fujimori government. By all accounts, Fujimori and Montesinos were obsessed, poring over surveys and focus-group studies at every opportunity. Their conundrum was one familiar to fellow politicians: figuring out how to simultaneously invoke public opinion (when it was favorable) and ignore it (when it was not). Fujimori made ample rhetorical use of public-opinion polls when they showed support for the 1992 coup or economic and counterinsurgency policies. But the same polls had to be discounted and rendered invisible when they ran counter to the administration's plans, especially on a fundamental issue like reelection. The Fujimori regime grappled permanently with the puzzle: it had to ensure that the Peruvian public (as represented in the polls) oscillated between "being and nonbeing." The public was, simultaneously, "of the utmost political importance and of no importance at all."⁹

Leaders of the political opposition were the subjects of similar pretidigitation. After the adverse international reaction to the coup, the government had to allow room for political opponents to operate because it helped to legitimate the regime. But at the same time, the administration demonized and stymied opposition leaders whenever they challenged the government.

Denial and deception became the defining features of public life in Fujimori's Peru, where contrary opinions were routinely dismissed and inconvenient facts were ignored. When all else failed, the government resorted to bald-faced lying. The C90-NM majority in congress, in both the legislatures of 1993–1995 and 1995–2000, played a critical role in mounting these elaborate games. Because civil liberties and the representative institutions stipulated by the OAS had to stay in place, *oficialistas* had to find ways to block opponents from using these tools to uncover the truth and disrupt the consolidation of the regime. Toward this end, rules and rule making in the legislature, judiciary, and other regulatory bodies had to be structured so the opposition could not use institutions as venues to debate, investigate, or lodge legal challenges to the regime.

Congress's C90-NM majority became the battering ram in what the opposition called the "*re-re-elección*"—the plan to grant President Fujimori a third consecutive term in office starting in 2000. Acting on instructions

from Vladimiro Montesinos, the C90-NM legislators undertook a systematic assault on the entire system of checks and balances laid out in their own 1993 constitution. Politics became a “permanent coup”—a steady evisceration of the constitution and the rule of law.¹⁰ No tanks were needed, thanks to the dutiful legislators of C90-NM, who readily hung a veil of legality over an inoperative constitution.

Congressman Carlos Ferrero began his career as an *oficialista*, a member of the C90-NM caucus. On election night in April 1995, an animated Ferrero joined in a televised roundtable analyzing the day’s events. When asked to interpret Fujimori’s stunning electoral victory that night, Ferrero breezily replied that the victory was a license for the president to *hacer lo que le da la gana* (do whatever he feels like). Ferrero’s observation was far more prescient than he could have imagined that night. In fact, in the years ahead, Ferrero was shocked by Fujimori’s willingness, and the willingness of those around him, to do whatever it took to pursue yet another reelection. Ferrero dissented and later abandoned the C90-NM caucus to become an acerbic opponent of Fujimori. Among *oficialistas*, Ferrero’s rebellion was an aberration—but he was not alone. Many other Peruvians joined Ferrero in resisting the reelection, and by doing so, they played a critical role in the unmaking of the regime.

Authoritarianism Redux

Fujimori always liked to say that his government was unique while simultaneously insisting that it was a democracy. After the 1992 coup, Fujimori proclaimed that Peru was a “*sui generis* democracy.” In the dark days following his 2000 reelection, Fujimori conceded that his country still was an “unconsolidated democracy.” Whatever Peru was, Fujimori insisted that it was some kind of “democracy with adjectives,” with the emphasis on “democracy.”¹¹ Other analysts accentuated the less felicitous “adjectives.” In a widely read 1997 essay in *Foreign Affairs*, Fareed Zakaria referred to Fujimori’s regime together with other “illiberal” democracies—that is, governments founded in free and fair elections but faulty in the practices of constitutional liberalism.¹² Zakaria’s description matched Guillermo O’Donnell’s discussion about the rise of “delegative democracy” in Latin America. O’Donnell identified delegative democracy as a hyper-presidential

system, characterized by few checks or balances to executive power and weak civil liberties.¹³

Where does the Fujimori regime belong in the annals of Latin American politics? In hindsight, conceding the word “democracy,” even modified with adjectives, seems overly generous. Noted Peruvian analysts argued early on that the regime deserved to be regarded as authoritarian, notwithstanding the restoration of elections and institutions after the coup. As Romeo Grompone later noted, the apparent pluralism in the Fujimori regime was completely consistent with Juan Linz’s classic definition of authoritarianism—no angst about the regime’s “hybridity” was ever required.¹⁴ North American author Cynthia McClintock strongly concurred. Drawing on the historical record of other civilian-led authoritarian regimes (e.g., Mexico under the PRI, the Dominican Republic under President Joaquín Balaguer), McClintock made a powerful case that the political competition and elections taking place in Peru under Fujimori should not be mistaken as proof of democracy.¹⁵

Fujimori undoubtedly earned his place on the list of Latin American presidents who set aside democracy and the rule of law for the purpose of staying in power. *Continuismo* (the practice by incumbents of keeping themselves in office) has a long history, and in so many ways, the Fujimori regime was dreadfully derivative. Hours after Peru’s 1992 coup, neighboring Ecuadorians noted that their own populist president José María Velasco Ibarra had pioneered the *auto-golpe* (presidential-led coup) back in 1970 when he shut down the congress and governed by decree. In historical terms, Fujimori’s successive reelections were hardly groundbreaking. Peruvians constantly compared Fujimori with President Augusto Leguía, the other Peruvian president who tried his hand at three terms in office from 1919 to 1930. Leguía insisted that he was creating a new political order, a *Patria Nueva* (New Country).

Fujimori’s unchecked ambition was unoriginal, and so were his ideas about creating a new type of democracy rooted in technocratic values and public works. Since the nineteenth century, Latin American politicians had dreamed of a technocratic utopia. From Porfirio Díaz in Mexico to Juan Perón in Argentina, dictators hitched their wagons to public works and professed their love of technocracy.¹⁶ The similarities between Fujimori and other dictators are hard to miss. For example, General Marcos Pérez Jiménez, the president-dictator of Venezuela from 1950 to 1958, was de-

scribed this way by Fernando Coronil: “Pérez Jiménez derided politics and its language of deceit which only betrayed the people’s interests. He offered instead material benefits. In return for which he asked for the acceptance of his authority as leader of the nation. Democracy was now to be judged by its deeds and practical accomplishments rather than by its origins or methods.”¹⁷

Fujimori and the history of his regime readily evoke Latin America’s past.¹⁸ Analyzing the Fujimori regime solely through a lens of comparison with previous dictatorships, however, risks losing sight of today’s particular mix of dilemmas in the region. Fujimori’s regime evolved under internal and external conditions distinct from those that had prevailed in heyday of Latin America’s tyrants during the 1950s and 1960s. When the 1952 election in Venezuela failed to produce a real victory for General Marcos Pérez Jiménez at the ballot boxes, the election was simply voided with a *golpecito* (little coup) that was tacitly approved by the U.S. ambassador.¹⁹

Fujimori executed the 1992 coup so that he could govern with complete dictatorial powers. But Fujimori’s coup stopped short of morphing into Venezuela’s *golpecito*. There was no automatic wink and nod from the U.S. ambassador. Instead, President George H. W. Bush telephoned to say, disapprovingly, that Peru had to return to the fold of democracy.²⁰ The OAS delivered the same message and urged Fujimori to restore representative democracy quickly.

The international reaction had a counterpart at home. While most Peruvians originally supported the coup, they also wanted new elections and a congress. Fujimori ceded to the demands to restore representative democracy, but the underlying antidemocratic values that inspired the coup remained. For the rest of the life of the regime, the objective was subterfuge: disguising authoritarianism as something else, something that could, at a minimum, be sold to Peruvians and the international community as a democracy. What emerged was not a democracy but a regime closer to the “competitive authoritarianism” described by Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way—that is, a regime that opened “arenas of contestation” to opposition forces, then structured ways to render them irrelevant.²¹

In the new international environment of the 1990s, the task of creating democratic forms devoid of substance was not always easy. Holding evidently rigged elections or holding elections while the opposition was in jail and the press was censored would not pass muster with international allies

and would put Peru on a list of pariah nations. The situation was a far cry from the 1950s, when the United States unhesitatingly embraced dictators as long as they sported solid anticommunist credentials. With the Cold War over, dealing with the United States was complicated by new imperatives. Now relations were shaped by a new and often ill-defined “conditionality,” which revolved around democracy, drugs, and neoliberal economic reforms. The U.S. government expected Latin American countries to be democracies, to join in a hemispheric war on narco-trafficking, and to implement neoliberal economic reforms.²²

The Fujimori government manipulated these expectations for its own purposes. Fujimori never lost an opportunity to trumpet his government’s achievements in economic reforms, counterterrorism, and counter-narcotics policies—calculating that good behavior in those areas would tamp down criticism from the U.S. government. To a great extent, the calculation was correct, but the problem of Peru’s political structure could not be cast aside completely. So Fujimori set about to restore representative democracy in order to win international acceptance, while preserving the powers he had usurped through the coup.

This type of restoration—one that could be marketed as credible by 1990s standards, but in essence was not—had two faces. First, the institutional side of democracy would have to be resurrected, and those institutions would have to be seen as meeting at least the minimum international standards for a democratic system. For example, Fujimori could not be elected president for life, since such a move would clearly have provoked condemnation both at home and abroad. There would have to be periodic elections, a legislature, a constitution laying out the framework of inter-governmental relations, and so on. Once these democratic institutions were established, however, subverting them, through practices that could be represented as normal politics, became the government’s goal. Congress served as the linchpin of this strategy.

The other side of the restoration required creating the appearance of a public sphere normally associated with modern democracy while ensuring that it would not work properly. In other words, all the processes and institutions associated with public deliberation and the formation of public opinion, especially the media, had to look like they were functioning in standard democratic fashion. When opinions circulating in this sphere were useful for legitimating the regime, then they were welcome; when opinions

ran against the regime, they had to be stripped of all significance. The challenging task of overseeing this oscillation—the being and nonbeing of the public sphere—ultimately fell to Fujimori’s right-hand man, Vladimiro Montesinos.²³

Disabling the Public Sphere

In contemporary democracy, political talk matters. Policy forums, radio call-in shows, opinion polls, town hall meetings, rallies, online chats, letters to the editor, and lobbying congress—all of these are part of the political communications that link society to the state in a democracy. The media play a central role in organizing and telling us about the political talk that goes on in a democracy. Broadly speaking, we can think of the public sphere as encompassing both the processes involved in political communication (deliberation on issues and expression of opinion) and the sites where those processes take place (the media, organizations in civil society, etc.).²⁴

By definition, a democracy is a political system that allows political talk to take place in a relatively untrammled way—that is, civil liberties provide people with the ability to express views that run contrary to majority opinion or the views of government incumbents. In the language of democratic theorist Robert Dahl, there is an expectation that the political preferences expressed in a democratic public sphere are “freely formed.”

Political talk in a democracy is open and unpredictable, something more than propaganda or the recitation of a dominant ideology. This is not to argue that the modern public sphere comes close to approximating the ideal type of public sphere described by Jürgen Habermas in his classic book on the subject, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.²⁵ In that work, Habermas located the origins of the liberal public sphere in eighteenth-century Europe—in the salons, coffeehouses, and clubs where members of the emergent “reading public” gathered to discuss the political news of the day. Habermas idealized the early public sphere as a realm of political communication marked by a deliberation among equals, where rational argument prevailed.

Historians have dedicated enormous time and energy to debating Habermas’s interpretation of the early public sphere; these debates will

not be reviewed here.²⁶ Whatever the problems in Habermas's interpretation of European history, his views on how the contemporary public sphere operates are much less sanguine. In contemporary democracies, political communication is dominated by the electronic mass media and shaped by corporate capitalism. In Habermas's words, the public sphere is always "power-infiltrated" and as such, constantly subject to distortion and elite manipulation.

Nonetheless, even relentless and sophisticated efforts to control the public sphere are never quite successful. People excluded from the public sphere find ways of being heard. Poor people, minorities, and dissidents of all sorts form their own communicative networks. They constitute "counter publics" and create counter-public spheres that push the boundaries of dominant political discourse, sometimes transforming the mainstream in the process.²⁷ Habermas refers to the communication that takes place in the media and in the organizations of civil society as an unregulated "wild complex," a periphery lying outside the administrative core of the state that supplies the opinions that become the raw materials for public policymaking.²⁸

What makes the public sphere something more than a realm of idle talk is its relation to the state. In democratic systems, the opinions that emerge in this "wild complex" can and do, under certain circumstances, influence decision makers inside the state. The existence of civil society *per se* does not ensure that the public sphere is influential; what makes for an influential public sphere is the connection between political talk and institutional responses by the state.²⁹

Legislatures play a crucial role in connecting the public sphere to the state. This is because legislatures are both deliberative and decision-making bodies. Legislators project themselves as representatives of the public and, in the course of making decisions in the public's name, they are obliged to debate and make their arguments about issues known. Parliamentary bodies are the "public sphere inside the state."³⁰ As such, a legislature is the entity most immediately attuned to the ebb and flow of ideas in the public sphere and its own agenda is shaped by that interaction. Since legislators speak and act primarily in public (in hearings or in debates on the floor, for example), they are natural targets for media attention and scrutiny.

As poll after poll indicated, Peruvians wanted all the normal features found in a modern democracy—elections, civil liberties, functioning insti-

tutions. The public's desire for democratic normalcy, however, clashed profoundly with what was required to reproduce the regime founded in the 1992 coup. For those in power, staying in power meant making institutions and the public sphere amenable to their project, no matter how this was accomplished.

Leaders in democratic systems routinely try to manipulate public opinion. The American political system is an example par excellence; politicians and lobbyists can conjure up public support using methods and techniques that are staggering in their sophistication and their cost.³¹ The practices of the Fujimori government veered far from the accepted practices of spin found in contemporary democratic politics. Using the intelligence agency as his center for operations, Montesinos mounted an elaborate system to commandeer institutions and the public sphere through corruption. He paid off everyone who mattered—legislators, judges, bureaucrats, businessmen, executives, and entertainers. In doing so, he created a demimonde dedicated to doing whatever was necessary to reproduce the regime.

How and why so many people succumbed to Montesinos's temptations is one of the dark puzzles of the Fujimori era. But not everyone was prepared to conspire. The history of the Fujimori presidency is a chronicle of wrongdoing and complicity, but it is also a story about resistance and the limits of deception in modern politics. Because Peru's public sphere maintained some of its qualities as a "wild complex," the efforts to manipulate it eventually became more apparent and heavy-handed. The more government officials tampered with what was supposed to be the free flow of ideas and expressions, the more they inadvertently exposed the ills they were trying to cover up—and the more Peruvians got mad.

The Reelection Obsession

After the 1992 coup, the essential problem for Fujimori and his inner circle was this: how could the regime be maintained until 1995 (the original date for the end of Fujimori's term) and then beyond? There were no obvious candidates to succeed Fujimori in 1995 or 2000. No Eva Perón or Hector Trujillo waited in the wings; there was no pliable relative, no surrogate for Fujimori who was electable and who could be trusted to act as a guarantor

of the regime. No matter what Fujimori's own personal wishes originally may have been on the subject, his reelection became the means to maintain the regime.

Securing reelection (in its 1995 and 2000 incarnations) was an ambitious political project. The idea of reelection had to be framed as a normal exercise in democratic politics rather than as a retrograde reversion to *continuismo*. For the 1995 race, reelection required a significant constitutional overhaul; for 2000, even more elaborate legal circumlocutions had to be mounted. In both cases, congress was the indispensable actor in laying the legal groundwork for reelection, thus special care had to be taken to ensure the legislature's reliability as a partner in the project.

Constructing the requisite legal cover was essential to the reelection project, and it had wide-ranging consequences. The drive for reelection shaped public policy, intergovernmental relations, political rhetoric, ethics, military affairs, and the conduct of the media. In terms of Peru's political development, the pursuit of the 2000 reelection was the political equivalent of a cluster bomb; its destructive effects spewed out across the entire landscape of state and society.

Fujimori and his administration officials reveled in representing what they were doing as a refreshing new departure, referred to as a *cambio de rumbo* (change of course, in the words of Finance Minister Carlos Boloña). Fujimori was changing history, but his changes did not take place on a tabula rasa. He was beholden to Peru's history in ways that he and his associates were always loath to acknowledge. The traditional practices that are part and parcel of the other "institutionalization" in Latin American politics—clientelism and corruption—were the keys to reproducing the regime.³² The weaknesses in Peru's public sphere and the lack of government accountability were not invented during the Fujimori era. Peru's political development had long suffered from these problems. Fujimori and Montesinos were not the first to corrupt Peruvian politics, but they took the practice to a new level, unprecedented in its systemization and scope.

In the course of taking old ways to new extremes, Fujimori and Montesinos changed Peru's history for the worse, fusing criminality and authoritarianism in their own peculiar way. That symbiosis and the struggle against it are the subjects of this book.