Democracy without Parties?
Political Parties and Regime Collapse in Fujimori’s Peru

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In much of Latin America, democracy faces a critical problem: one of its central pillars, the political party, is increasingly viewed with dissatisfaction by citizens\(^1\) and, in some cases, politicians. Yet most students of politics in Latin America and elsewhere continue to share E.E. Schattschneider’s (1942: 1) view that democracy is “unthinkable” without parties. Indeed, recent scholarship suggests that parties remain critical to the achievement,\(^2\) performance,\(^3\) and stability\(^4\) of democracy in Latin America.

Few countries highlight the difficulties of achieving and sustaining democracy in the absence of parties more clearly than contemporary Peru. In the 1990s, the Peruvian party system decomposed to a degree that surpassed even the most notoriously fragmented systems in Latin America. Throughout the decade, electoral politics was dominated by political “independents” and candidate-centered parties, many of which did not survive beyond a single electoral cycle. The percent of the vote won by established parties fell from 97 percent in 1985 to just six percent in 1995. At the same time, Peruvian democracy succumbed to a 1992 autogolpe, or presidential self-coup, led by President Alberto Fujimori. In the hybrid regime that emerged in the wake of the coup, politicians in both the pro-government and opposition camps largely abandoned (or were denied) their role as checks on executive power. As a result, there were few safeguards against the abuses and corruption that ultimately corroded the regime from within. Although opposition parties benefited from the collapse of the regime in 2000, they played a largely secondary and indirect role in the transition.

\(^1\)Recent Latinobarometer evidence of public dissatisfaction with parties in Latin America can be found in The Economist, 28 July 2001, p. 38.
\(^2\)See Corrales (2001)
\(^3\)See Mainwaring and Scully (1995), and Mainwaring (1999).
This paper analyzes the relationship between party collapse and political regimes in Peru. After an initial discussion of why parties continue to matter in a democracy, the paper examines three central questions. First, it seeks to explain the decomposition of the Peruvian party system. We argue that although the profound structural crisis of the 1980s created an opening for the election of an anti-political establishment candidate, the actual collapse of the party system, and its replacement with an atomized, candidate-centered system, were largely the product of Alberto Fujimori’s political success in the wake of the 1992 *autogolpe.*\(^5\) Non-Fujimorista politicians drew two lessons from this success: (1) that public opinion would not reward the defense of formal democratic institutions and (2) that parties were not necessary for—and may even impede—career advancement. In light of these lessons, scores of politicians abandoned both established parties and the democratic opposition, becoming political “independents” who pursued short-term, individualistic electoral strategies.

Second, we examine the regime implications of party system decomposition. We argue that although the established parties had clearly lost democratic support in Peru (in the sense that they were massively rejected by voters), their demise had far-reaching, enduring, and lamentable implications for Peruvian democracy. Party collapse and the proliferation of political “independents” weakened the democratic opposition in two ways. First, by focusing on short-term electoral gain rather challenging the increasingly authoritarian regime, key political figures ceased to serve as checks on executive power, or what O’Donnell (1994, 1998) calls agents of horizontal accountability. This strategy ultimately proved self-defeating, for it left politicians defenseless in the face of eroding conditions for free and fair elections. Second, the proliferation


\(^5\)Tanaka (1998, 1999) makes a similar argument.
of atomized candidate-centered movements eroded the opposition’s capacity for collective action. Democratic opposition movements require organizations that can speak for, coordinate, and discipline politicians from across the national territory. The post-1992 opposition lacked such organizations. Because they had no *raison d'être* other than the election of their founder, the so-called “independent movements” that emerged in the 1990s had short time horizons and lacked an encompassing interest in the preservation of democratic institutions. As a result, the opposition’s efforts to block Fujimori’s authoritarian encroachments were repeatedly undermined by collective action problems. Although the regime collapsed in 2000, the collapse was more a product of an internal implosion than of pressure from below or outside.

Third, we examine the prospects for rebuilding parties in post-Fujimori Peru. In contrast to approaches that locate the roots of party failure in either government repression or institutional design, both of which offer potential remedies in post-Fujimori period, we present a more pessimistic, historical-structuralist view. Strong parties and party systems are products of particular historical, sociological, and technological conditions that are no longer present in contemporary period. Due to long-term structural changes such as the growth of the urban informal sector and the increased influence of mass media technologies, contemporary politicians lack both an incentive and the capacity to build new party organizations. Although these structural changes did not *cause* the collapse of Peru’s party system, we argue that they may inhibit its reconstruction. If such is the case, then party system collapse may prove substantially more enduring than the regime that provoked it.
Political parties - to paraphrase Aldrich - make democracy “workable.” For voters, parties make democracy workable by providing critical information about what candidates stand for and how they can be expected to govern (Downs 1957). Voters use party labels and platforms as cues or shortcuts, and parties may be evaluated based on their past performance, either in government or in opposition. Where parties are weak or poorly institutionalized, voters are often confronted with a plethora of parties, many of which are new and will be short-lived. Voters must go over the merits and positions of dozens and even hundreds of individual candidates. In such a context, it becomes virtually impossible to evaluate parties retrospectively, associate candidates with known labels or ideologies, and differentiate among candidates (Mainwaring and Scully 1995: 25; Mainwaring 1999: 324-327).

Parties also make democracy workable for politicians (Aldrich 1995). Politicians are, of course, self-centered and short-sighted creatures. Left to their own devices, they have little incentive to think beyond the next election or their own electoral district. Consequently, politicians potentially confront a variety of coordination and collective action problems, both in their pursuit of public office and in government (Aldrich 1995). Parties are critical to solving these problems. According to Morris Fiorina, “the only way collective responsibility has ever existed, and can exist, given our institutions, is through the agency of the political party” (1980: 26). Because they exist beyond a single election and must compete on a national scale, parties develop longer-term priorities and broader goals than individual politicians. To the extent that

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6Modifying Schattschnieder’s of-cited claim that “democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties,” Aldrich (1995: 3) writes that “democracy is unworkable save in terms of parties.”
parties can discipline politicians, then, they can reshape their incentives in ways that induce them to think and act in a more far-sighted and collective manner. Thus, as Aldrich has shown, parties regulate competition among candidates (1995: 22), permit the construction of stable legislative majorities (1995: 33-45), and lower the costs of campaigning by providing candidates with a brand name and allowing them to take advantage of economies of scale (1995: 45-50).

Yet parties do more than simply make democracy “workable” for voters and politicians. They also help make democracy viable for society as a whole. In Latin America, parties have contributed to democratic stability in a variety of ways. First, they have helped to protect the interests of socioeconomic elites who have the capacity to "kick over the chess board" (Borón 1992: 76). When powerful socioeconomic actors cannot protect their interests in the electoral arena, they are more likely to support non-democratic alternatives (such as military coups or revolutionary movements) or engage in praetorian tactics that put democratic institutions at risk. Parties serve as an important means of protecting powerful interests in the electoral arena. As Edward Gibson (1996) has shown, where elite economic interests have been protected by strong conservative parties in Latin America, democratic regimes have tended to be stable. Similarly, where organized working classes are strong, ties to strong labor-based parties may be critical to regime stability (Collier and Collier 1991; McGuire 1997). 7

Strong parties are also essential to democratic governability, particularly in the area of executive-legislative relations. By serving as a bridge between the legislature and the executive, parties provide a mechanism for overcoming gridlock. They also help to ensure that legislatures
do what they were designed to do – legislate. The legislative agenda is set by party leaders, and the autonomy and initiative of the legislature depends on the success of these leaders in forming and sustaining legislative majorities. Without the disciplining function of parties, legislatures easily degenerate into chaos or, worse, a marketplace for peddling influence. In Latin America, weak parties and inchoate party systems have been associated with legislative inefficiency, corruption, executive-legislative conflict, policy ineffectiveness, and repeated institutional crises (Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Mainwaring 1999). These crises have at times contributed to the breakdown (Peru) or near-breakdown (Ecuador, Guatemala, Venezuela) of democratic regimes. By contrast, where parties were strong and party systems institutionalized (Chile, Costa Rica, Uruguay), executive-legislative relations tend to be smoother and governability crises tend to be less frequent (Mainwaring and Scully 1995).

Parties also help to hold elected leaders accountable to democratic institutions. Many Latin American democracies are characterized by weak or ineffective systems of checks and balances, or “horizontal accountability” which allow executives to govern at the margin of other democratic institutions and actors (O’Donnell 1994, 1998). Such Caesarist behavior, or what O’Donnell calls “delegative democracy,” is strongly associated with weak parties and poorly institutionalized party systems (Mainwaring and Scully 1995: 22-23; Mainwaring 1999: 328). Parties are important agents of horizontal accountability. Where they are weak and politicians gain power through direct, unmediated appeals, executives tend to govern in a personalistic and anti-institutional manner, often violating the “unspoken the rules of the game” that underlie

7 As James McGuire (1997) has shown, the weak institutionalization—and for many years, proscription—of the Peronist party limited the Argentine labor movement’s stake in electoral politics and encouraged praetorian behavior that at times undermined civilian regimes.

8 According to Mainwaring, weak parties are “at the core of delegative democracy” (1999: 328).
republican institutions (Mainwaring and Scully 1995: 22). By contrast, where parties are strong, politicians must work through them in order to obtain higher office and, when in office, cooperate with them in order to remain there.

The primary arena through which parties check executive power is the legislature. By resisting the tendency to fuse legislative and executive power, parties provide a bulwark against the despotism of an over-weaning executive. Through the right of inquiry, censure and oversight, they use the legislative branch to constrain executive power and prevent its abuse. Committees can investigate corruption or other executive abuses. When parties are so weak that the executive can bend the legislature to its will, investigative commissions are less likely to be formed and abuses more likely to go unpunished. Autonomous legislatures also help to guarantee the independence of the judiciary by ensuring that courts are not stacked and top judges not summarily dismissed. They may even help to ensure the integrity of the electoral process by defending—often though the legislature—the independence and transparency of electoral institutions. In this sense, horizontal accountability is critical to what O'Donnell calls “vertical accountability,” or free and fair elections. Opposition parties have a direct interest in ensuring that votes are cast freely and counted honestly, but they can only do so if the power of the executive branch is sufficiently checked.

Parties also play an important role in recruiting and socializing democratic elites, and thus in limiting the space available to outsider or anti-system politicians. Parties provide the foundation for a democratic political class, or the “separate category of political operatives” who regularly fill a country’s top public offices (Whitehead 2001: 15). Political classes vary
considerably with respect to their openness, their coherence, and their links to society, and this variation may have important consequences for democracy. Exclusionary political classes may, of course, undermine democracy. Where political classes become oligarchic or cartel-like, channels of political access and participation are closed off, the scope of political competition is reduced, and the gap between elites and mass publics widens. In such a context, citizens may conclude that politicians are unrepresentative, corrupt, and uninterested in the public interest, and the legitimacy of elected governments—and democratic regimes—may erode, as occurred in Venezuela in the 1980s and 1990s (Coppedge forthcoming). Yet a weak or non-existent political class may also have negative consequences for democracy. In the absence of a coherent political class, politics becomes a world of amateur or “outsider” politicians, many of whom lack experience with—and in some cases commitment to—democratic institutions.

Historically, the most effective means of maintaining a political class that steers clear of both oligarchy and amateur politics has been the political party. Strong parties broaden and diversify the elite recruitment process. In many European countries, for example, social democratic parties played a central role in recruiting members of the organized working class into the political system, and in the U.S., urban Democratic Party machines provided channels of access to various immigrant and ethnic groups. Parties also socialize potential office seekers into democratic politics and provide them with training and experience. Party politicians are hardly exempt from politically irresponsible and even authoritarian behavior. On the whole, however, they are more likely than political outsiders to have experience in government and to be oriented toward (and capable of) democratic practices such as negotiation, compromise, and coalition-
building. They are also more likely to value democratic institutions, or at least have a strong stake in their preservation. The absence of strong parties often gives rise to outsider or “neo-populist” candidates who are elected based on direct--often anti-system--appeals (Roberts 1995; Weyland 1999). Political outsiders are, by definition, amateurs at democratic politics. They constitute a shot in the dark in terms of their capacity to govern and their commitment to democracy. Although they might turn out to be effective leaders who value democratic institutions, they frequently do not. Indeed, in Latin America, the election of outsider or “neo-populist” politicians has frequently resulted in ineffective, irresponsible, and in some cases (most notably, Peru) undemocratic governments.

Finally, in addition to making democracy viable, political parties often play an important role in achieving democracy. They do so in at least two ways. First, as noted above, parties help politicians act collectively. The ability of democratic oppositions to maintain a united front is often critical to their success (Corrales 2001). Divided or fragmented democracy movements tend to be weak, to lack coherence, to have limited mobilizational capacity, and to be highly vulnerable to co-optation and divide and rule strategies by autocratic incumbents (Corrales 2001: 95-96). By facilitating coordination among and, when necessary, imposing discipline upon, individual leaders, strong parties help to avoid such problems. Second, strong parties provide opposition leaders with organizational resources and links to civil society, which are often critical to building and sustaining a mass-based democracy movement. Where parties are weak, pro-democratic elites often lack national-level infrastructures or extensive linkages to society. At the same time, social movements and civic organizations tend to lack horizontal linkages that

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9 Although Latin American parties have historically functioned less well as channels for political recruitment, parties such as Venezuela’s Democratic Action, the Chilean socialist and communist parties, and the Brazilian Workers
would enable them to act collectively at the national level (Roberts 1998: 72-73). Political parties provide such linkages, helping to solve the macro-level coordination problems faced by many grassroots organizations (Roberts 1998: 74) and providing critical human and organizational resources to pro-democracy movements.

In summary, political parties are essential to achieving, maintaining, and improving the quality of democracy. Where they are weak, class actors tend to have a lesser stake in electoral politics, legislatures are less able to oversee the executive, anti-system candidates are more common and more successful, and societies are less well-equipped to either resist authoritarian encroachments or remove autocratic governments.

**The Collapse of the Peruvian Party System**

In few countries have the problems of party collapse been more manifest than in contemporary Peru. The Peruvian party system decomposed in the 1990s to a degree rarely before seen in Latin American history. Scholars have attributed this collapse to a variety of factors. For example, institutionalist scholars have pointed to aspects of Peru’s electoral system that contributed to party weakness and party system fragmentation.\(^\text{10}\) These include the combination of presidentialism with proportional representation (PR) and no minimum threshold for legislative representation; the majority runoff system for presidential elections; the creation, in 1993, of a single national district for legislative elections, which all but eliminated the need for national party structures (Tuesta 1996: 123-139); and the double preferential vote system (in Party have served as important channels of access to the political arena for working classes.\(^\text{10}\) See Schmidt (1996), Tuesta (1996, 1998), and Planas (2000).
which voters may cast preferential votes for two candidates on party lists), which undermines party cohesion by encouraging candidate-centered campaigning (Schmidt 1996: 338; Tuesta 1996: 166).

Other scholars have pointed to *structural* causes of party system decomposition. For these analysts, Peruvian parties collapsed under the weight of profound structural changes, particularly the growth of a vast urban informal sector, as well as the deep political and economic crises of the late 1980s (Cotler 1994: 165-173; Roberts 1998: 235-246). The crises discredited the established parties, weakened social organizations, and eroded collective identities, which left a large sector of the electorate available for outsider appeals (Roberts 1995). A third group of scholars has highlighted the historically contingent causes of party system collapse (Tanaka 1998; Planas 2000). According to Martin Tanaka (1998), for example, party system decomposition was the product of two highly contingent events: the election of an anti-party outsider in 1990 and the extraordinary successes achieved by Fujimori between 1990 and 1995 (Tanaka 1998).

The argument presented here integrates elements of all three approaches, but it draws most heavily from the last two. We argue that although the crisis of the 1980s created an opening for anti-party outsider appeals, the actual decomposition of the party system and the consolidation of an atomized, candidate-centered system of electoral competition were a product of the political success achieved by Alberto Fujimori in the wake of the 1992 *autogolpe*.

**Party Crisis, Outsider Politics, and Democratic Breakdown**
The rise of Alberto Fujimori and the subsequent democratic breakdown were the product of both structural and historically contingent processes. In the mid-1980s, Peru possessed a relatively coherent (if weakly institutionalized) four party system, consisting of the leftist United Front (IU), the populist American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA), the centrist Popular Action (AP), and the conservative Popular Christian Party (PPC) (Cameron 1994). Although the strength and effectiveness of these parties has been the subject of debate, all possessed national structures, moderately coherent programs, and discernible electoral bases (Cameron 1994; Tanaka 1998). Collectively, the four parties won 97 percent of the vote in the 1985 presidential election and 93 percent of the vote in the 1986 municipal elections (Tanaka 1998: 55).

Peru’s established parties confronted an extraordinary confluence of social, economic, and political crises in the late 1980s. One component of the crisis was rapid growth of the urban informal sector. The informal sector, which by most estimates encompassed half of the economically active population by the late 1980s, constituted a vast electorate without stable attachments to any of the established parties (Cameron 1994). Due to their geographic fragmentation and extreme heterogeneity in their work, identities, and interests, informal sector workers are far more difficult to organize and encapsulate than are traditional working classes or peasantry (Roberts 1998). The established parties were also weakened by the dual challenges of hyperinflation and extreme political violence. By the late 1980s, it was widely perceived that the established parties had failed to respond effectively to either the mounting economic crisis or the growing threat posed by the Shining Path guerrillas, and as a result, the political class became

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11See, for example, Cotler (1994) and Roberts (1995, 1998).
12Thus, Planas (2000: 399) and Levitt (2000) argue that Peru’s traditional parties have always been weak and personalistic, while Tanaka (1998) argues that the parties were relatively strong.
broadly discredited. In the wake of the successive failures of the AP government of Fernando Belaunde (1980-85) and the APRA government of Alan García (1985-90), the political center collapsed, leaving a large sector of the electorate available for outsider appeals (Cameron 1994, 1997: 45-50).

The first signs of party system crisis arose in the 1989 municipal elections. In that election, the established parties saw their collective vote share fall from 93.2 percent of the vote (in 1986) to 71.5 percent (Tanaka 1998: 55), and Ricardo Belmont, a radio personality who had formed an “independent” movement called Obras (public works), won the Lima mayoral election with 44 percent of the vote. A year later, the top two finishers in the first round of the 1990 presidential election, novelist Mario Vargas Llosa and the virtually unknown Alberto Fujimori, were both political amateurs who emerged from outside the established parties.¹⁴

Although the erosion of support for the traditional parties created an opening for outsider candidates in 1990, the victory of an anti-political establishment candidate was by no means inevitable. Fujimori’s election was a highly contingent outcome, facilitated by the division of the IU, Alan García’s efforts to weaken APRA candidate (and internal rival) Luis Alva Castro,¹⁵ and Peru’s majority runoff system, which allowed Fujimori to capture the presidency despite finishing second in the first round election (Schmidt 1996; Tanaka 1998). Fujimori also benefited from Vargas Llosa’s political mistakes. An amateur politician lacking a common touch, Vargas Llosa did not know how to present the merits of his program for radical economic reform without frightening the average Peruvian voter. His promise of austerity, together with his

¹⁴Although the neoliberal Democratic Front (FREDEMO) that backed Vargas Llosa included AP and the PPC, Vargas Llosa’s greatest strength was his image as a political independent.
alliance with the discredited AP and PPC, alienated him from a majority of the electorate and helped to consolidate an “anybody but Vargas Llosa” vote. Indeed, Fujimori’s extraordinary rise in the polls in the days prior to the election is best understood as a wave of strategic voting by Peruvians desperate to avoid a runoff between Vargas Llosa and APRA (Schmidt 1996: 344-346; Tanaka 1998: 193). Under slightly different circumstances, then, leftist candidate Alfonso Barrantes (who had been near the top of opinion polls in 1988 and 1989) or APRA’s Alva Castro (who finished less than seven points behind Fujimori) might well have made it into the second round instead of Fujimori. In either event, the party system would likely have evolved in a different direction (Planas 1998: 338-339).

Yet if Fujimori’s election was in many respects a historical accident, it had devastating consequences for democracy. The causes of the 1992 democratic breakdown were many. Hyperinflation and sustained political violence had brought the state to the brink of collapse, and public dissatisfaction with the political status quo was widespread. Such conditions would have posed a severe challenge to any incoming government. Yet Fujimori was particularly ill-equipped to respond to the crisis in a way that was compatible with the preservation of democratic institutions. A political amateur, Fujimori had no real party behind him, no program ready for implementation, and no team to staff the government. He lacked a legislative majority,

\[\text{\textsuperscript{15}}\text{On García’s support for Fujimori, see Schmidt (1996: 341-342) and Tanaka (1998: 190-192).}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{17}}\text{A number of analysts have suggested that the severity of the economic and political crisis of the 1980s undermined support for democracy (Tanaka 1998, 1999; Cameron 1997). Since the 1970s Peru has, in fact, performed better under authoritarian rule than under democracy. In the decade of military rule in the 1970s, Peru grew on average at 3 percent annually. In the democratic period in the 1980s, the economy shrank on average by -0.3 percent (Figures on growth in the 1970s are from Hamann and Paredes (1991), all other figures from World Bank Development Report (2001: 295). By the same token, rates of violence reached their highest levels in the 1980s (Roberts and Peceny 1997). Poor performance can be blamed on bad governments or bad regimes. In Peru, a growing segment of public opinion attributed the disappointing performance of AP and APRA to the failure of the regime (including}\]
and it was widely assumed that the political class would quickly “eat him alive.” Moreover, enemies were everywhere. Business and the middle classes were appalled by Fujimori’s rise. The Church was horrified by his alliance with the evangelical movement, and his initial support from the left and APRA quickly evaporated. Lacking experience with (and patience for) the give and take of democratic politics, Fujimori opted for an authoritarian strategy for political survival designed by advisor Vladimiro Montesinos. The cornerstone of this project was the April 1992 presidential self-coup, or autogolpe (Cameron 1997, 1998). Although there is no guarantee that the regime would have survived under a party politician, or even someone associated with the parties like Vargas Llosa, it is reasonable to suggest that Fujimori, an anti-political establishment outsider without any socialization into the political process or a commitment to upholding democratic norms, was particularly open to an authoritarian alternative.

Authoritarian Success and the Rise of Political “Independents”

Fujimori’s election did not, by itself, trigger the collapse of the old party system (Tanaka 1998: 194-195; Planas 2000: 337). APRA performed surprisingly well in 1990, winning 25 percent of the legislative vote, and AP, the PPC, and the IU all remained important forces in the legislature. During 1991 and 1992, Fujimori engaged in a high-stakes battle with the established parties and the Congress, repeatedly attacking them as a collection of corrupt and obstructionist politicians. As Tanaka (1998) has argued, Fujimori’s victory in this battle was far from assured. Both Fernando Collor in Brazil and Jorge Serrano in Guatemala lost similar battles during the

its political parties) to generate efficacious leadership. The disenchantment with established institutions created an opportunity for anti-party political operatives.

Fujimori also faced problems with the judiciary, as lawyers from Vargas Llosa’s Democratic Front had initiated investigations into tax evasion allegedly committed by the new president.
1992-93 period, as did Ecuadorian president Abdalá Bucaram in 1997. Had Fujimori been impeached like Collor or Bucaram, or had he failed in his autogolpe attempt like Serrano, the old party system (or at least important elements of it) might have survived (Tanaka 1998: 198-200).

But Fujimori succeeded. His claim that the autogolpe was necessary to escape from a “false democracy” dominated by party cliques was, in large part, accepted by Peruvians. Public support for Fujimori jumped from 53 percent in March 1992 to 81 percent after the autogolpe (Tanaka 1998: 219), and over the next three years, the president’s average approval rating was a whopping 66 percent. Fujimori’s popularity helped to create a broad base of support (and legitimacy) for the new regime. Fujimorista forces easily won the constituent assembly elections held in November 1992, and the following year, a new constitution was approved—albeit with greater difficulty—via referendum. In 1995, Fujimori was overwhelmingly re-elected—with a stunning 62.4 percent of the vote—and gained an absolute majority in the new congress.

The success of the autogolpe was rooted in its timing (Tanaka 1998: 220-221). During the months immediately preceding and following the coup, Fujimori vanquished two forces that Peruvians had come to find unbearable: hyperinflation and the cycle of protest and violence that had culminated in the terrorism of the Shining Path. The autogolpe was carried out at a time when economic stabilization was taking hold and Fujimori’s popularity was on the rise (Tanaka 1998: 220-221). The capture of Shining Path leader Abimael Guzmán several months later helped to consolidate that support. By the end of 1992, an overwhelming majority of Peruvians

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19 Fujimori also faced the distinct possibility of a military coup. A military cabal began preparing a coup in 1989 and had planned to prevent Fujimori from taking office.

20 In a 3 May 1992 interview with El Comercio, Fujimori argued that parliamentarians were not representative of the population and their defense of democracy was self-serving. He insisted that political change could not come from within existing institutions and that the cliques in control of parties should be eliminated. Typical of Caesarist conceptions of rule, he stressed the value of direct “consultations” or plebiscites.

21 Based on data from Tanaka (1998: 219)
had decided that they had finally found in Fujimori the sort of strong leader for whom they had been yearning. This success distinguished Peru from other Latin American cases in the 1990s. Other anti-party presidents in the region who challenged the political establishment (Collor, Serrano) failed to resolve their countries’ deep political and economic crises and were ultimately defeated, and other hyperinflationary crises in the region were resolved by established parties (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil). Only in Peru was an authoritarian and anti-party president responsible for ending the crisis (Tanaka 1998: 52-53).

This distinct outcome had profound implications for Peruvian politics. The success of the autogolpe created a new political cleavage: Fujimori versus “the opposition.” Pre-existing cleavages based on class, ethnicity, region, and town or countryside were replaced by support for or opposition to Fujimori. Given the president’s popularity, this cleavage worked to the great detriment of pro-democratic forces. Anti-Fujimori politicians became collectively known as “la oposición,” a derogatory moniker connoting self-serving opponents of the government. Worse yet, established parties found themselves collectively on the wrong side of public opinion when they defended democratic institutions. In the aftermath of the coup, Congress, meeting in secret, impeached Fujimori and appointed his vice president, Maximo San Roman, to replace him; San Roman became a laughing stock, however, and legislators found themselves targets of derision when they appeared in public. When, in response to external pressure, constituent assembly elections were held in late 1992, APRA, AP, and the IU boycotted them; yet the boycott failed to

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22Fujimori’s New Majority/Change 90 won 49 percent of the vote, compared to 9.8 percent for the second place PPC.
23It was the great genius of Fujimori to establish the identify of “the opposition” and the discredited political class, so that the cleavage between government and opposition was one in which the “ins” were outside the government and the “outs” were in the government. More extraordinary yet, Fujimori continued to de-legitimate “the opposition” and identify himself with the “outs” while assiduously drawing the support of the most powerful groups in society – the armed forces, the Church, and business – away from the traditional parties.
prevent the constitutional process from moving forward, and the vacancy left by the established parties was quickly filled by political newcomers.24

Although the established parties participated in subsequent elections, they fared poorly. In the 1993 municipal elections, APRA, AP, the PPC, and IU collectively won just 33.3 percent of the vote, and in the 1995 presidential election, the four parties accounted for just 6.3 percent of the vote. In the 1995 race, no candidate who ran under an established party label won even five percent of the vote. Many regime opponents rallied behind the candidacy of former UN Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, who headed the Unión por el Perú (Union for Perú, or UPP). Though it presented itself as “independent,” the UPP was widely perceived as another incarnation of la oposición.25 Pérez de Cuéllar received just 21.8 percent of the vote, barely a third of Fujimori’s total.26

Peruvian politicians drew two lessons from the failures of the democratic opposition in the 1992-95 period, both of which had far-reaching implications for the party system and for democracy. First, they concluded that a staunch defense of the political status quo ante was not an electorally viable strategy. Public support for Fujimori made the defense of democracy and the rule of law unprofitable. Although studies of public opinion found substantial public opposition to many of the repressive and illegal actions undertaken by the Fujimori government (Tanaka 1999: 10-14; Carrión 2000), it is also clear that a substantial part of the electorate was prepared to live with these abuses of power as the price to pay for Fujimori’s strong and effective

24Eight-five percent of the vote went to either Fujimorista or “independent” candidates.
25Pérez de Cuéllar might have overcome is patrician image by dropping the aristocratic “de Cuéllar” from his name and running as “Javier Pérez,” as some of his advisors recommended. He refused.
26For a good analysis of the 1995 election, see Schmidt (2000a.).
leadership. Not only did a strategy that centered on the defense of democratic institutions lack public support, but it associated politicians with the discredited old guard elite that led the oposición. Confronted with this problem, ambitious non-Fujimorista politicians began to distance themselves from pro-democratic forces and to define themselves as “independents.” Many of them adopted an ambiguous position vis-à-vis the Fujimori regime, refusing to condemn the autogolpe and avoiding, whenever possible, direct conflict with the president. Rather than challenge the regime itself, they sought to advance their careers within it, focusing on developing personal reputations as effective administrators. In other words, the emerging “independents” exchanged democratic opposition for accommodation within the regime, effectively foreswearing their role as agents of horizontal accountability.

The second lesson drawn by politicians was that they no longer needed political parties. During the 1980s, independent, candidate-centered electoral strategies were rarely an effective alternative to parties. Politicians who defected from major parties, such as Hugo Blanco, Miguel Angel Mufarech, Andres Townsend, generally failed in the electoral arena (Tanaka 1998: 96-97). This changed considerably in the 1990s. A major lesson from Fujimori’s success was that established party labels and organizations were no longer necessary for (and might even be a hindrance to) a successful political career. Fujimori himself invested little in party organization. His original party, Change 90, lacked a program, a national structure, and even a minimal activist base. Although Fujimori might have used his popularity to transform Change 90 into an organized party, he ignored it and even actively impeded its consolidation as an independent
entity (Planas 2000: 347-351). Instead, Fujimori governed through state agencies (Roberts 1995; McClintock 1999). In preparation for the 1992 constituent assembly elections, Fujimori created a second, equally personalistic, party: New Majority (NM). Neither Change 90 nor NM ever developed an organizational life of its own. Indeed, Fujimori based his 1995 re-election strategy on a combination of direct appeals and the distribution of state resources (Roberts 1995). Three years later, Fujimori created a third party, Vamos Vecino (Let’s Go Neighbors), to compete in the 1998 municipal elections. The pattern was repeated in 2000, when the creation of Perú 2000 brought the total number of Fujimorista parties to four.

Fujimori thus established a new model of electoral organization: the disposable party. Though often referred to as “independent movements,” such parties are in fact little more than electoral labels or candidate-centered vehicles. Over the course of the 1990s, this model became generalized, as politicians from across the political spectrum reproduced Fujimori’s electoral organizational style. The result was a massive hemorrhaging of the established parties and the proliferation of personalistic vehicles.

Many of the new “independents” were defectors from established parties. The most important of these was Alberto Andrade of the PPC. A successful three-term mayor of the Lima district of Miraflores, Andrade quickly detected the anti-party mood of the electorate, and in

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27 According to Pedro Planas, Change 90 was “the first thing Fujimori dissolved by decree. He fired its General Secretary, closed its main offices, eliminated its internal organization, and ceased to work with its legislative bloc” (2000: 351).
28 These included the ministry of the presidency (which monopolized nearly one quarter of all central government spending (McClintock 1999: 83)), the armed forces (which, in lieu of party activists, were used in electoral campaigns to paint pro-Fujimori electoral graffiti), the tax collection agency, the National Intelligence Service, municipal governments, and social welfare agencies such as the National Food Assistance Program and the National Compensation and Development Fund (FONCODES).
29 Planas (1996: 196) uses the term “name plates.”
anticipation of the 1996 Lima mayoral election, he declared himself an independent. Reportedly telling PPC leader Luis Bedoya Reyes that “no candidate affiliated with a with party had a chance of winning the mayorship of Lima,” Andrade created a personalistic organization with a neutral, apolitical—indeed, anodyne—label: Somos Lima (“We are Lima”). The move was successful. Andrade defeated Fujimori ally Jaime Yoshiyama in the 1996 municipal elections and established himself as the country’s leading non-Fujimorista politician. Part of the key to Andrade’s initial success lay in his ambiguity vis-á-vis the Fujimori regime. During his first term as mayor, Andrade avoided taking positions on national issues—particularly those related to democracy—and instead sought to build a reputation as an effective administrator. Opponents of the regime projected democratic values onto Andrade, which he neither confirmed nor denied. Anticipating a 2000 presidential bid, Andrade transformed Somos Lima into Somos Perú (SP). Although Andrade made some effort to build a national organization (Planas 2000: 389-393), SP remained personalistic, candidate-centered, and largely without programmatic content.

Other party politicians who became independents in the 1990s include former Social Security Institute director Luis Castaneda Lossio, an ex-AP member who created his own National Solidarity Party (PSN) as a vehicle for his 2000 presidential bid, and former APRA senator Javier Valle Riestra, who, in an experiment in “democratic window dressing,” briefly served as Fujimori’s Prime Minister in 1998. At the local level, influential mayors such as Alexander Kouri of Callao (PPC), José Murgia of La Libertad (APRA), Michel Azcueta of Villa El Salvador (IU), and Angel Bartra of Chiclayo (AP) formed independent movements. Many legislators also declared themselves “free agents,” switching parties at each election to ensure

30 La Republica, 6 February, 2000.
their re-election. Examples include Henry Pease (IU to UPP to Possible Perú (PP)), Beatriz Merino (FREDEMO to the Independent Moralizing Front (FIM) to SP), Máximo San Roman (Change 90 to Obras to UPP), Anel Townsend (UPP to SP to PP), and Alberto Borea (Hayista Base Movement to PPC to UPP).

At the same time, many new and aspiring politicians began to create their own parties instead of joining existing ones. The most important of these was Alejandro Toledo, a business school professor and political amateur who created País Posible in preparation for a 1995 presidential bid. He resurrected the organization in anticipation of the 2000 elections, changing its name to Perú Posible (PP). Like Castaneda Lossio’s PSN and, to a lesser extent, Andrade’s SP, PP lacked an internal life of its own and had no raison d’être other than Toledo’s presidential candidacy. Another example was Federico Salas, who was elected mayor of Huancavelica as an independent, and who co-founded (but ultimately abandoned) Peru Now in preparation for a 2000 presidential bid.

By the end of the decade, the “independent movement” had become the dominant mode of electoral organization in Peru. All of the country’s successful parties—including both pro-government parties and opposition parties such as Somos Perú and Perú Posible—were personalistic, candidate-centered vehicles that lacked coherent programs, national structures, and even minimal ties to civil society. Without programs or ideologies to identify them, many of these parties simply adopted name of the territory they sought to represent. At the national level, We Are Peru, Possible Peru, Peru Now, Union for Peru, and Peru 2000 emerged between 1995

31*Latin American Weekly Report*, 1 September 1998, p. 3. One may surmise that the experiment was intended to encourage continuing doubt about Fujimori’s re-election intentions.
and 1999. This pattern was reproduced at the local level, where parties such as We Are Huancayo, Forward Chiclayo, Ayacucho 95, Eternal Cuzco, Let’s Save Huaraz, Chim Pun Callao, and Put Some Heart into Lince proliferated.

By the late 1990s, then, electoral politics had reached a degree of fluidity and atomization that surpassed any other country in Latin America, including notoriously fragmented party system such as Brazil and Ecuador. The party system was essentially created anew at each election: in 1990, the leading parties were Change 90, FREDEMO, and APRA; in 1995, they were New Majority and UPP; in 1998, they were Vamos Vecino and SP; in 2000, they were Perú 2000 and PP. In 2000, the parties that had dominated electoral politics in the 1980s received less than two percent of the vote combined, and each of the top five finishers in the presidential race--Fujimori, Toledo, Andrade, Salas, and Castaneda Lossio—presided over a disposable, candidate-centered party. This pattern was reproduced at the local level. Each municipality developed its own party system. The number of independent mayors increased from two in 1986 to 79 in 1993 (Planas 2000: 268), and in 1998, independent lists proliferated to such a degree that the overall number of parties soared into the hundreds.

There were a few attempts to build national parties in the 1990s. In 1998, for example, Andrade built alliances with mayors and regional leaders across the country in an effort to transform SP into a national organization (Planas 2000: 289-293). However, this party-building process never really took hold, and the performance of SP outside Lima was disappointing. After the 1998 municipal election, SP quickly fell victim to a government campaign to co-opt
pro-Andrade mayors. Many of these mayors were swayed by bribes or promises of future positions in the government. Others were fearful of trying to govern without central government support. Although some scholars have cited these developments as evidence that government repression made party-building impossible in the 1990s (Planas 2000: 394), the failure of the SP party-building project is probably best understood as a product of the incentives and constraints facing contemporary Peruvian politicians. Although Andrade needed to strengthen his presence outside of Lima, he could clearly do so without investing heavily in party organization. Indeed, his investment in party-building never even remotely approached that which went into building parties such as APRA or AP. Second, local politicians had few incentives to join (or remain with) SP. Like Andrade, the vast majority of local non-Fujimorista politicians were “independents” who had won (or could win) office without national party affiliation. Lacking a coherent identity, program, or ideology, a well-oiled party machine, or links to important social groups, SP possessed few means of establishing effective and enduring linkages to these free agents. Because local leaders didn’t necessarily need a national party affiliation, and because Andrade lacked either the resources or the disciplinary mechanisms to ensure that they remained in his camp, the SP coalition was inherently unstable. Once Andrade’s electoral prospects faded, a wave of defections became virtually inevitable.

In a little over a month in August-September 1999, 23 mayors abandoned Andrade (Planas 2000: 390). For example, in April 1998 a meeting was held between Montesinos, Fujimori and the mayor of San Borja, Maria Luisa Cuculiza, a member of SP. Cuculiza, who was unaware that the meeting was being videotaped, agreed to abandon Andrade prior to the municipal elections in 1998 and run as an independent with the support of Vamos Vecinos, the official ticket, in exchange for central government support. She later became a minister in the Fujimori administration. Given the capacity of other parties—including AD, APRA, and Peronism—to survive and even grow under conditions of far greater repression, it is difficult to believe that the relatively mild repression of the Fujimori regime was responsible for the collapse of SP.
Party System Collapse, Caesarism, and the Question of Democracy

The consolidation of a system of atomized, candidate-centered politics seriously inhibited efforts to restore democracy in Peru. Throughout the 1990s, opposition parties failed repeatedly to check the increasingly autocratic behavior of the Fujimori government. Moreover, they played only a marginal role in the regime’s eventual collapse. Scholars differ considerably in their explanations of these failures. Some, such as Tanaka (1998, 1999), have pointed to the opposition parties themselves, arguing that the parties failed to seize opportunities to promote a democratic transition. Other analysts, such as Nicholas Lynch (2000), locate the responsibility for the parties’ failures in the repressive tactics of the Fujimori regime. In Lynch’s view, opposition parties “found themselves in a closed scenario, where the possibilities for action were ... quite restricted” (2000: 8), a scenario that he attributes this scenario to an authoritarian regime that did not “permit competition” (2000: 9). We offer a somewhat different assessment. Like Lynch, we view the opposition’s failure to check Fujimori’s autocratic behavior as rooted more in its weakness than in its mistakes. Yet in our view, the opposition’s weakness was not primarily a product of government repression. Rather, it was a product of politicians’ adaptation to a political and electoral environment in which both the defense of democracy and party-building strategies were widely perceived as unprofitable.35

The proliferation of “independent” electoral movements in the 1990s, though beneficial to many individual politicians, undermined the democratic opposition’s capacity to act against

35 Our position is thus closer to Charles Kenney’s (2000: 13) observation that “Contemporary caudillos like Fujimori ... often win the battle for democratic legitimacy at critical moments both because their evidently massive public support constitutes a democratic trump of the republican and liberal opposition, and because those who raise the republican banner of horizontal accountability have themselves lost even the republican bases of legitimacy.”
Fujimori in two crucial ways. First, in abandoning anti-authoritarianism in favor of individualized efforts to achieve electoral success under the new rules of the game, “independent” politicians ceased to serve as agents of horizontal accountability. The fact that many of the country’s leading non-Fujimorista politicians refused to speak out against (much less actively oppose) important abuses of power badly debilitated the democratic opposition as a whole. Not only did the non-action of many independents contribute to the destruction of mechanisms of horizontal accountability, but it eroded vertical accountability as well. As we demonstrate below, vertical accountability and horizontal accountability are inextricably linked. To ensure that elections are free and fair, electoral institutions must be transparent and Congress and the judiciary must be able to check abusive uses of executive power. The “independent” politicians’ strategy of not defending these institutions thus proved self-defeating, for it ultimately left them defenseless in the face of the erosion of the conditions for free and fair elections.

Second, the collapse of parties eroded the opposition’s capacity for collective action and mobilization. Key decisions, such as whether or not to participate in or boycott a questionable election, how to select a single opposition candidate, and whether or not to negotiate with the regime (and on what terms), require organizations that can speak for (and discipline) large numbers of politicians across the national territory. The “independent movements” that emerged in Peru in the 1990s lacked such organizations. Because they had no raison d’être other than the election of their founder, they had short time horizons and lacked an encompassing interest in the preservation of democratic institutions. As a result, the opposition repeatedly
suffered from problems of collective action and was constantly vulnerable to government efforts to co-opt its members. Party weakness also undermined the opposition’s mobilizational capacity. Without national infrastructures, strong roots in society, or linkages to interest groups or civic organizations, Peruvian parties were reduced to narrow circles of elites, which left them—and the democracy movement they spearheaded—without much mobilizational muscle.

The Destruction of Mechanisms of Horizontal Accountability

Between 1996 and 2000, the Fujimori government grew increasingly authoritarian, circumventing, abusing, or dismantling many of the mechanisms of horizontal accountability that the regime itself had established via the 1993 constitution. This assault on the country’s already weak semi-democratic institutions can be attributed to the regime’s inability to institutionalize itself (for example, via a strong party organization). Because it lacked institutional mechanisms with which to maintain itself in office, the Fujimori government was forced to engage in a series of increasingly naked abuses of power. Equally important to the destruction of mechanisms of horizontal accountability, however, was the opposition’s striking and repeated failure to block Fujimori’s power grabs.

The process of regime hardening began in 1996 with an issue that had been at the center of the autogolpe decision: presidential re-election. Within a year of his re-election in 1995, Fujimori began a debate about whether he was eligible to run for election again in 2000. In August, 1996, the Congress passed a “surprise law” called the Law of Authentic Interpretation of the Constitution, which stated that article 112 of the 1993 constitution could not be applied

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36The importance of strong parties was clearly seen in Chile, where the capacity of opposition parties to unite into the Democratic Concertation was critical to their victory in the 1988 plebiscite and the negotiated transition that
retroactively and hence Fujimori had only been elected once under the new constitution. This law established the legal foundations for his 2000 re-election bid.

The opposition had few means of stopping Fujimori from running for re-election. The government controlled a majority in the Congress. Outside of congress there were three options. The first was to present a referendum (the 1993 constitution enabled referenda as long as 10 percent of the electorate signed a petition demanding one). The second was to challenge the Law of Authentic Interpretation in the courts. The final option was to challenge the law in the electoral institutions. These three options were blocked by the conspiratorial efforts of Vladimiro Montesinos, working from the offices of the National Intelligence Service (SIN). Montesinos, in cahoots with the congressional majority, used a network of agents within the judiciary to block the efforts to prevent presidential re-election. This vast informal network later served both the re-election campaign itself and the post-election construction of a majority in congress through bribery and extortion.

The effort to use a referendum was undermined by another act of Congress. In April 1996 the Congress approved the so-called “Siura Law III” (named after a lawmaker close to Montesinos), which required a minimum of 48 votes in Congress (in addition to more than a million signatures) before a referendum could be held. This law, which clearly violated the spirit of the referendum provision in the constitution, was initially adopted to stop an opposition-led referendum on privatization. It effectively meant that only the congressional majority had recourse to referenda. Notwithstanding the Siura Law, opposition leader solicited forms from the body in charge of organizing elections (ONPE) to begin a campaign for a referendum on re-

followed it.
election. ONPE declined. However, the National Election Board, which is the judicial body that oversees elections, overturned the ONPE decision. Congress then passed a new law to support ONPE, which was used against the JNE. The JNE responded by declaring the ONPE inapplicable.

At this point, the Constitutional Tribunal (TC) got into the act. The TC was the highest judicial body responsible for determining the constitutionality of government legislation. The case of the Law of Authentic Interpretation was brought to it by the Lima Bar Association. The TC could not agree on the unconstitutionality of the law, because such decisions required a majority of six out of seven, and several (at least two, perhaps three) tribunal members were closely linked to the executive. However, a simple majority of the tribunal agreed that the Law should not apply to Fujimori. In response, the Fujimorista majority in congress -- instigated by Montesinos -- formed an investigative commission that recommended impeachment of four members of the tribunal. In May 1997, 55 members of the majority voted to impeach three TC members, thereby leaving the nation without a body effectively able to declare any law unconstitutional.

The destitution of the TC provoked nation-wide protests and widespread public disapproval. However, the protests were not channeled into a sustained opposition movement. Lacking activist bases and national infrastructures, political parties contributed little to these protests. The umbrella groups that led the protests, such as the Democratic Forum and the Civic Committee for Democracy, were composed of an assortment of individual opposition leaders—
not necessarily representing their parties—too diverse and loosely organized to channel the protest activity into a sustained assault on the regime. Although that task might have been undertaken by Pérez de Cuellar’s UPP, which had mounted the most credible challenge to Fujimori in 1995, the coalition was immobilized by internal divisions, decimated by defections, and ultimately abandoned and as serious vehicle for opposing Fujimori. Efforts to build a coherent opposition in the legislature were also ineffective. Thus, the Parliamentary Bloc of Democratic Opposition disbanded soon after its formation because none of the leaders could find time to meet. At the same time, many of the country’s leading non-\textit{Fujimorista} politicians, including presidential hopefuls Andrade, Casteneda Lossio, and Toledo, refused to enter into the fray at all, largely avoiding public debate on the issue or offering only tepid support. For example, although Andrade criticized the destitution of the TC, he focused his public statements on efforts to improve vehicular circulation in Lima, remove the informal street vendors from the city center, and remodeling the central market area. Consequently, even though Fujimori’s popularity fell significantly during this period, no credible alternative presented itself. Without political leadership, the protest movement soon fizzled out.

Efforts to collect signatures for a referendum continued, but pro-government forces in congress persisted in clearing the way for Fujimori’s re-election bid by stacking the JNE. In December 1997, Congress approved a law (Law 26898, known popularly as the “Law of Fraud”) that allowed recently appointed “provisional” judges (whose positions depended heavily on

37 Fujimori’s approval ratings fell precipitously (from roughly 67 percent to 42 percent), and an overwhelming majority of the public expressed opposition to the dismissal of the TC judges (\textit{La Repubblica}, 19 May 1997 & 1 June 1997).
38 This fact was conveniently blamed on the \textit{Fujimorista} leadership of the Congress, which was allegedly holding too many marathon sessions. The group “failed completely to speak with a single voice, thereby letting Fujimori off the hook” (\textit{Latin American Weekly Report}, 24 June 1997, p. 297. The following year, another similarly inconsequential block would be formed, the Frente de Coordinación Nacional.
government discretion) to elect members of the JNE.\textsuperscript{39} JNE voting rules were modified so that a majority of four of the five judges was required for a decision to be overturned. ONPE once again resolved that the referendum effort required prior congressional approval, and the JNE, now with a number of judges in the pockets of Montesinos, reversed its earlier decision. In August 1998, congress voted 67 to 44 against the referendum. The door to Fujimori’s candidacy was now wide open.

Although surveys showed that a large majority of Peruvians supported the idea of a referendum, opposition protests against its derailment again fizzled. Despite that politicians from across the political spectrum were actively involved in the petition drive,\textsuperscript{40} and despite the fact that all of the major parties backed drive and its sponsor, the Democratic Forum, civic protests in defense of the referendum were largely a failure. Concern about the rule of law tended to be limited to relatively privileged sectors of society (notably students and professionals, as well as unionized workers), and mainly in Lima.\textsuperscript{41} Again, the leading presidential candidates for 2000 remained at the margins of the debate. Although Andrade—who led many opinion polls at the time—voiced support for the referendum, he never actively joined the petition drive and was coy about supporting the Democratic Forum.

\textsuperscript{39} In a video dated April 1997 Montesinos met with key members of the congressional majority. He thanked them for disbanding the Constitutional Tribunal but pointed out that three of the five judges in the JNE were still “negative for us.” Together, they plotted their conspiracy to control the JNE by nominating people favorable to regime. Reminding the majority that loss of control over the judiciary could mean that they would all go to jail, Montesinos urged them to focus on the task of winning a majority in 2000.

\textsuperscript{40} Leaders of the petition drive included leftists such as Javier Diez Canseco, Apristas such as Mauricio Mulder, and conservatives such as Lourdes Flores and Alberto Borea.

\textsuperscript{41} As Henry Dietz (1998) shows, the concerns of the poor tended to be much more concrete.
The Failure of Parties to Democratize Peru: The 2000 Elections

The collapse of the regime began in the first year of Fujimori’s second term in office. The inability of the regime to institutionalize itself can be traced, in part, to the absence of a party organization. In this sense, the Fujimori decade is similar to the period of the military rule under General Juan Velasco Alvarado (1968-1975), which relied on state corporatist institutions, rather than a party, because its leaders felt that parties had “performed poorly, serving only as the personal vehicles of their leaders” (McClintock 1983: 301). By trying to govern without a party, however, the bureaucracy and the armed forces became increasingly politicized, which ultimately resulted in the regime’s collapse. The same happened to Fujimori. Yet unlike the collapse of the military regime, which was accelerated, if not precipitated, by large-scale popular mobilization, the Fujimori regime collapsed largely from within. Opposition parties were relatively marginal actors in the transition.

After nearly four years of preparation, the decision by Fujimori to register his name as a candidate in the 2000 election at the end of December 1999 was an anti-climax. In spite of clear signs of ambivalence, Fujimori’s knew his presence was needed to ensure that the political system he had built did not collapse in disarray, leaving its key members to defend themselves against accusations ranging from human rights abuses to corruption and violations of the constitution. Moreover, his chances of winning looked good. Polls suggested that Fujimori was clearly the strongest candidate, with the support of approximately 40 percent of the electorate.

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42The most important of these was SINAMOS, a set of government agencies responsible for “social mobilization” and participation.
43McClintock and Lowenthal (1997) note the parallels between the Velasco and Fujimori regimes. A major difference between the two regimes is that the latter held elections and, as Kenney (2000) notes, “the possibility exists [in an electoral regime] that alternation will nudge a given polyarchy toward greater accountability.”
44 It is in this sense that one can accept Fujimori’s insistence that he had found no one to replace himself (El País, 6 April 2000).
The government hastily formed a new “electoral alliance” for the election called the
\textit{Frente Independiente Perú 2000}, which included (but also circumvented) Cambio 90, Nueva
Mayoria, and Vamos Vecinos. Each of the earlier electoral movements was led by a prominent
member of the Fujimori government: Luz Salgado, Martha Chávez, and Absalón Vásquez. 
Although there were sharp differences among these leaders, they agreed on the need to achieve
re-election. Moreover, there was never any question about where ultimate power lay in the
struggle for that end: Montesinos was the undisputed mastermind behind the re-election
campaign. To make this clear, candidates for congress were required to sign letters of adhesion
to the movement in the installations of the intelligence service.

The opposition candidates faced formidable challenges in their efforts to supplant
Fujimori, but they were also victims of their own strategies of party organization. The major
challengers to Fujimori were Andrade of Somos Perú (SP), Toledo of Perú Posible (PP), and
Castañeda Lossio of Solidaridad Nacional (PSN), but there were a number of less credible
candidates, including Maximo San Roman of the UPP, Federico Salas of Avancemos, Victor A.
Garcia Belaunde of AP, and Abel Salinas of APRA. The top three candidates led electoral
movements, rather than parties. They were vehicles for the campaigns of individual personalities,
precariously organized, with membership and supporters whose loyalty was contingent upon the
leader’s proximity to power rather than to common programmatic positions. Support for the
candidates – both among voters as well as members – tended to shift according to the rise or fall
of the fortunes of the leader. None of the electoral movements held primaries to choose their
Of all the opposition candidates, Andrade’s was certainly the best organized. However, the Lima mayor nevertheless dominated his party in a caudillo-like manner. He did not hesitate to give senior positions on his list to non-party members if he felt they would improve his electoral chances, a fact that led to considerable internal dissatisfaction. The other two major contenders, Castañeda Lossio and Toledo, had even more precarious electoral organizations, and even less quality control in the selection of their candidates. Neither had ever held elected office. Castañeda Lossio served as director of the Peruvian Social Security Institute, and Toledo was a professor of business administration who had run unsuccessfully for president in 1995.

The most important mistake made by the opposition candidates was their failure to withdraw from the competition as soon as Fujimori announced his decision to register his candidacy. They failed to detect a strategic opportunity to turn the tables on the regime and prevent its legitimation through an electoral process that was evidently designed to ensure re-election. The reason they failed is that, as leaders of electoral movements rather than parties, they had long ago abandoned the struggle to defend the democratic rules of the game and instead had concentrated exclusively on participating in electoral processes. They had, in other words, given up their role as agents of horizontal accountability in exchange for the opportunity to seek to replace Fujimori within the new political system. They ignored the fact that by running

45For example, Somos Perú co-founder Manuel Masias was passed over as a possible vice president in order to make a place for Beatriz Merino, who defected to Somos Perú in 1999. Masias would later become estranged from Andrade and was forced out of Somos Perú.
against Fujimori they legitimated the electoral process and weakened arguments against the constitutionality of re-election.

Of all the opposition politicians, Alberto Andrade was the least willing to cooperate to prevent Fujimori’s re-election bid. As early as April 1999, eight opposition parties had signed an accord to oppose Fujimori’s re-election and, if necessary, run under the leadership of a single candidate. To make the point dramatically, they called a general strike. Andrade remained aloof, perhaps sensing (correctly, as it turned out) that the strike was unlikely to succeed.46

Later, Andrade would acknowledge the error of running, but he attributed this to the belief that the regime would soften. Only wishful thinking could explain such an egregious error; other elements must have been at work. A hint of this comes from Andrade’s complaint that Toledo refused to withdraw. Presumably, everyone else should have withdrawn to allow Andrade to run as the sole opponent of the government. It is ironic that Andrade thought Toledo should have withdrawn given that, in the end, Toledo ran the more successful campaign and places first among the opponents. This Andrade attributed to the fact that Peruvian voters are “emotional.” But there was a deeper collective action problem in the individually rational strategies of the candidates not the collective irrationality of the voters. Each candidate wanted all the others to stand down; each believed he was the anointed successor to the incumbent. The candidates’ inability to overcome free rider problems was due to the lack of party organization and short time horizons. Since each represented little more than a short-term agglomeration dedicated to winning the current election – rather than an organization with an identity outlasting and subsuming the personal ambitions of individual leaders – there was little will to lose the
chance to participate in the lottery of electoral competition. Electoral rules encouraged the
hubris of the individual candidates. No leader hoped to win an outright first-round victory – all
hoped only to get into a second round and then develop a wider anyone-but-Fujimori campaign.
Had not Fujimori won that way in 1990?

Fujimori’s strategy in 2000 was to win in the first round, avoiding a run off. In the
absence of a strong governing party, the formidable resources of the state were thrown into the
service of his campaign. The intelligence service harassed the opposition by hiring thugs from
the tough working class neighborhood of La Victoria to organize counter-demonstrations
whenever the opposition candidate held meetings in Lima, and to travel to the provinces to
harass them there as well. The SIN also filmed the opposition candidates whenever they
appeared publicly. The television, especially network TV, was essentially monopolized by the
government, with 80 percent of the coverage for Fujimori and 20 percent (usually unflattering)
coverage for the opposition candidates.

Yet the lack of a strong party was nevertheless a source of problems for Fujimori. Because Perú 2000 was a party in name only and lacked even a minimal activist base, it was
unable to collect the nearly 500,000 signatures needed to register a new party. Leaked
information (most likely by members of Cambio 90, one of the parties that was marginalized by
the creation of Perú 2000) suggested that Perú 2000 had forged many of the signatures used to
register as a party. Closer investigation by the leading newspaper El Comercio showed that as
many as a million signatures had been forged by as many as 450 people working in “signature

46 Latin American Weekly Report, 27 April 1999, p. 188.
47 This hypothesis points to the rivalry between Vásquez and Montesinos.
factories” in late 1999, apparently under the supervision of close Fujimori ally Absalón Vásquez. The scandal should have led to the disqualification of Perú 2000, but the JNE and ONPE stonewalled and downplayed the issue. The government promised to investigate itself, but a congressional investigation by Fujimorista Edith Mellado and another judicial investigation by the notoriously biased judge Mirtha Trabucco found nothing pointing to higher-ups in the government.

Although the signature scandal further the regime’s legitimacy in the eyes of many observers, it did not derail—or even seriously seriously hinder--Fujimori’s campaign. As in the past, the government’s strategy rested on polarizing the electorate between supporters and opponents of Fujimori. Andrade later acknowledged that this polarization hurt his candidacy. His initially successful strategy in elections for the Lima municipality had been to avoid polarization and this won him a reputation as a mild-mannered and non-confrontational leader. By the time he was into the 2000 campaign this reputation had been changed and he was already seen as the incarnation of la oposición. However, it would be more accurate to say he was a victim of polarization combined with the precariousness of his own party organization. Ninety percent of the votes in the first round of the election were divided between Toledo and Fujimori. That means that once Toledo established himself as the primary challenger to Fujimori, nearly all of Andrade’s support evaporated as voters shifted to a new leader. Toledo benefitted from the underestimation of the government. Andrade, and to a lesser degree Castaneda Lossio, took the brunt of the government’s attacks, while Toledo was left alone perhaps because Fujimori and Montesinos felt confident that they had defeated Toledo in 1995. The two traditional parties in the race, APRA and AP, were marginal players, each receiving less than one percent of the vote.
The official results of the first round gave Fujimori 49.87 percent of the vote, tantalizingly close to the 50 percent mark necessary to avoid a second round, and 40.24 percent for Toledo. The results for Fujimori may have been inflated, and many observers suspect that ONPE would have inflated the results to the 50 percent mark and award Fujimori an first round victory were it not for intense scrutiny by national and international observers. Mass demonstrations in support of Toledo were held on election night in an effort to deter the authorities from stealing the vote. Although no independent observer could guarantee the fairness of the vote count, the outcome was not radically different from what polls had predicted. The “fraudulent” character of the election lay less in the possibility of dishonesty in the counting and more in the surrounding conditions that made the entire process fall short of internationally accepted norms.

Toledo immediately began to talk about withdrawing from the second round election race unless conditions were improved. This was a somewhat risky strategy, given the public’s relative lack of concern about the process. Moreover, the decision to withdraw could look cowardly, as if Toledo wanted to avoid competing with Fujimori. Indeed, there is every reason to believe that Toledo would have lost to Fujimori – even in a clean election. Toledo’s support was weakest in the lowest (and most numerous) socioeconomic categories, whereas this was precisely Fujimori’s greatest strength. On April 25, Toledo announced his decision to withdraw from the race. This boycott almost certainly occurred in the second round rather than the first

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49 It is also equally clear the strategy of re-election made free and fair elections unthinkable. Having stacked the electoral institutions and the courts, violated the constitution by registering to run, and having bought off the principle media outlets, Fujimori could hardly turn around and tell all the agents in his mafia to let the elections be free and fair.
round because existence of a sole contender eliminated the collective action problem that plagued the opposition in the first round.

Yet Fujimori survived the 2000 election. Fujimori insisted on sticking with the original electoral calendar and ran unopposed in the May 28 second round vote. The results gave Fujimori 51 percent of all ballots cast (including blank and null votes) and 74 percent of the valid votes.\textsuperscript{49} Two months later, he was sworn into the office of president for a third time. Both opposition mobilization and international censure failed to prevent this outcome.

\textbf{The Election Aftermath and the 2000 Transition: Party Weakness and Collapse from Within}

The Fujimori regime was, as former military president Francisco Morales Bermudez put it, “a monster that was destroyed from within.” Although external and domestic protest reached new heights after the 2000 election, it was the degeneration of Peru’s deliberative institutions that was the ultimate source of regime collapse. The detonating factor was the scandal created when this corruption was exposed. It is not our intention to diminish the importance of the March of the Four Suyos, a large-scale protest organized by Toledo to coincide with the swearing-in ceremony on July 28, 2000. This march may well have had a powerful impact on those who participated and those who were sympathetic to the efforts to restore democracy. However, it should also be acknowledged that the criminal violence (later proven to be caused by agents of the intelligence service) created in the center of Lima was used ably by the government to discourage further protests and discredit the leaders of the March among the broader public by arguing that the actions of Toledo and the opposition would only cause chaos, murder, and

\textsuperscript{49}Toledo instructed his supporters to write “no to fraud” on their ballots.
mayhem. These arguments actually strengthened the regime, so that by late August its agents were once again confident of their ability to retain power and weather the storm.

We do not diminish the role of the international community either, particularly the OAS High Level Mission. However, at the Windsor General Assembly in June 2000, shortly after the second round, the members of the OAS were unwilling to invoke Resolution 1080 and expel Peru from the organization on the grounds that the failure of the election to meet the minimal conditions required to be considered by the OAS observer mission to be free and fair counted as an interruption of the democratic institutional order. The failure to invoke 1080, largely due to the opposition of Brazil and Venezuela, hobbled the OAS. Nevertheless, the High Level Mission that was sent to Peru to examine and recommend ways of improving the democratic process in Peru wound up playing a much more important role in the reconstruction of democracy than anyone could have predicted. The mission created dialogue tables—an innovation necessitated by the malfunctioning of parties—bringing together the government and the opposition, and these ended up serving as effective vehicles for negotiating the transition once the regime had begun to collapse. The collapse of the regime would not occur, however, until September, when its internal machinations to retain power were exposed.

Party weakness continued to hinder democratization efforts in the immediate aftermath of the election. Writing about the role of parties in a parliamentary democracy, Max Weber noted that parliament without parties would become
a mere market place for compromises between purely economic interests, without any political orientation to overall interests. For the bureaucracy this would increase the opportunity and the temptation to play off opposed economic interests and to expand the system of log-rolling with job and contract patronage in order to preserve its own power. Any public control over the administration would be vitiated…” (1978: 1397).

Weber’s characterization applies strikingly well Peru’s congress in 2000. The results of the congressional elections gave Fujimori only 52 seats out of 120. Without a majority in congress, the government risked losing control over key committees that could begin to investigate the executive branch of government and hold it accountable. To avoid this, Montesinos immediately began to put into practice in the congress the same strategy he had used against Somos Perú in the 1998 municipal elections: to use bribery and blackmail to win over individual opposition members to the government side. As soon as the results were known, defection from the opposition parties began to occur. As many as 18 members changed their affiliation during the short life of the 2000-2001 congress, and came to be known as turncoats, or tránsfugas. The exact number of turncoats is not clear, because the defectors were often extremely ambiguous about their intentions, and some defected and then repented (the so-called tránsfugas arepentidas). Toledo’s group was the hardest hit by defections, with 8 or 10 tránsfugas out of a caucus of 29. The total number of tránsfugas may have been as high as 20, and certainly was no lower than 16. Either way, the defections provided Fujimori with an ample legislative majority.

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50 A new vocabulary was invented to describe the alchemy though which the government converted members of the opposition. In addition to the turncoats, there were reverse turncoats (re-, those who abandoned one side and then another), repentant turncoats (arepentidos, those who abandoned their party and then thought better of it), neo-
The tránsfugas justified their opportunism in a variety of ways. Those in Perú Posible said they wanted to distance themselves from the March of the Four Suyos and to avoid extreme positions. They stressed the value of independence, and a desire to work “for the country” rather than a party. Most insisted that they were not joining the government but sitting as independents, but of course this freed them to vote with the government whenever they saw fit. In fact, most of the tránsfugas were making deals with Montesinos, and many signed letters of adhesion to the government side--as had the Perú 2000 candidates--in the headquarters of the SIN. Many were paid handsomely for their betrayal, usually substantial monthly sums in cash. This was often justified, in the minds of the tránsfugas, as a way of paying off campaign expenses (recovering a political investment, in other words). And there were other rewards: most of the tránsfugas wound up in important committees (often as presidents or vice presidents), positions that brought power, prestige and additional perquisites. In other cases, Montesinos used his influence in the judiciary to have investigations into members of congress called off in exchange for abandoning their electoral group. In effect, the purchase of turncoats served as an alternative to parliamentary coalition-building.

The spectacle of something in the order of 15 percent of the congress changing its affiliation in the months following the election was unprecedented in Peru. Luis Solari, a spokesperson for Perú Posible insisted that the problem lay in the individual turncoats, not, as alleged by critics, the lack of a proper party organization. “I don’t understand this,” he said. “It strikes me that members of congress don’t assume responsibility for their acts, and now they call turncoats (neo-, those who abandoned the government party after it began to lose its grip on power) and ground hogs (topos, or double agents who remained in an opposition party while taking orders from the government).
themselves independent having reached congress with votes for an organization....This is not a crisis of a party, but of persons.”

Yet it was a crisis of party. The mass defections reflected the fact that the electoral movements that brought the turncoats to power were not solid political parties. The level of quality control in the selection of candidates was extremely poor. Candidates lacked even minimum previous commitments to loyalties to the parties that nominated them. In many cases, they shared no common identity, ideology, or even personal ties with the party. Their party loyalties were virtually nil. Moreover, the parties themselves lacked any mechanism with which to or induce or compel candidates to remain in the fold. Given that unsuccessful candidate-centered parties such as Casteneda Lossio’s PSN were unlikely to survive until the next election, their representatives had no incentive at all to remain with them. A large number of the elected representatives in 2000 were thus essentially free agents. Many of them looked upon elections as a commercial venture, involving an up-front investment to get onto a winning list. Once in power, they would recover their investment through the (not insubstantial) perquisites of office and the opportunities for illicit enrichment it would present. One member of congress committed a remarkable Freudian slip during his swearing-in ceremony, declaring his allegiance to God and money (Dios y la plata) instead of God and homeland (Dios y la patria)! With respect to Weber’s admonitions about parliament without parties becoming merely a marketplace for buying and selling influence, we are pressed to think of a better example than the Peruvian congress of 2000-2001.

Yet even as the government built an illicit majority in congress, its own electoral movements were showing signs of weakness. The leader of Vamos Vecinos, Absalón Vásquez,

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51 El Comercio, 3 August 2000.
was denied the presidency of congress by the leaders of Cambio 90 and Nueva Mayoria (Luz Salgado and Martha Chávez). They felt that Vamos Vecinos was getting too powerful, perhaps threatening to provide a civilian electoral base for the regime to rival their partnership with the intelligence service. Vásquez, for his part, suggested Luz Salgado had leaked information about the forging of signatures during the election campaign. Still, nobody anticipated Fujimori’s impending resignation at this time.

What brought about Fujimori’s resignation, and with it the collapse of the political regime created after 1992, was the publicity surrounding a video showing Montesinos paying off a tránsfuga. It is the video, rather than the March of the Four Suyos or the pressures of the OAS, that brought about the end of the regime, because it was the video that prompted Fujimori’s resignation. Without Fujimori’s resignation, events could have developed in a number of different directions (including retrenchment). Why the video led Fujimori to resign is not clear. The release of the video many have suggested that CIA patronage of Montesinos had come to an end, or shortly thereafter would. It may be that Fujimori was already tired of governing with Montesinos and skeptical of his ability to weather the impending storm. The video guaranteed that international and domestic pressures for new elections would be relentless and would endure. Above all, the video exposed the dark side of the regime; it made irrefutable the evidence pointing to a secret government within the government run by Montesinos. As former U.S. Ambassador Dennis Jett aptly put it, paraphrasing Lord Acton’s dictum: “Without any institutions that provide a check or balance on his power, Fujimori has again demonstrated the inevitability of absolute power corrupting absolutely.”52
As soon as Fujimori offered his resignation – and well before his flight to Japan – Peru’s democratic institutions began to function as they were designed to do. Although the dialogue tables became the privileged site of negotiation between the government and the opposition, the congress began to legislate again and the courts began to investigate. Once Fujimori fled, a provisional government was created that emerged from the congress. The executive emerged from congress, much as it does in a parliamentary system, leading to the formation of a government scrupulously committed to recovering and respecting democratic institutions. This government, led by Valentin Paniagua, an experienced legislator and former minister under Belaunde, won wide popular support and successfully engineered new elections in 2001.

**Change and Continuity in the 2001 Elections**

Elections held in 2001 met the conditions desired by domestic and international observers and all contending parties. Functionaries of integrity were replaced the agents of Montesinos in the ONPE and the JNE. A purge in the judiciary eliminated many members of his mafia, and hundreds of military officers were purged, or offered *mea culpas* for their relationship with Montesinos. In addition, the media began to offer more balanced coverage.\(^{53}\) In short, the elections marked the culmination of the democratic transition that began in 2000.

Yet the 2001 elections were also marked by some important continuities. Notwithstanding the improbable comeback of Alan García (and with him, APRA), electoral politics candidate-centered and virtually partyless. All of the presidential candidates except

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\(^{52}\) *Christian Science Monitor*, 2 June 2000.

\(^{53}\) When a television outlet linked to Montesinos tried to smear the president with unsubstantiated allegations of corruption, the response of the political class was swift and effective. A parade of leading figures, including Andrade, came to the president’s defense, and demonstrations were held outside the television station.
García ran on tickets that did not exist before 1990, and most of these were little more than candidate-centered vehicles. As a result, politics continued to be characterized by volatility, personalism, and programmatic incoherence. Within the electoral “movements,” primaries were again eschewed in favor of hand-picking and wheeling-dealing for positions. Again, defections were rampant. Four leading candidates of Somos Perú left Andrade after he decided to throw the support of Somos Perú behind former Ombudsman Jorge Santistevan. Andrade put a brave face on the matter, but it was clear that he had little control over his closest associates, and that their decisions were based on the purest calculation of self-interest rather than partisan loyalty. Perú Posible was rocked by allegations of nepotism and backroom dealing with powerful economic interests. 1,800 individuals came forward seeking places on the PP list. Places were purchased by wealthy individuals, or were given to candidates with no previous ties to PP (like the four Somos Perú candidates). The party leadership refused to hold a convention to determine the candidate list. Toledo’s response to unsuccessful applicants was that work in congress was “boring” and he would find places for excluded PP members from the executive.54

The 2001 election was also marked by the low quality of the candidates. Although Toledo was more committed to democratic institutions than Fujimori, in other ways, his rise was remarkably similar to that of his predecessor. Like Fujimori, Toledo had little experience in politics and had never held elected office. Like Fujimori, he was a marginal candidate whose second place finish in 2000 was virtually accidental—a product of a wave of strategic voting by anti-Fujimoristas desperately seeking a viable candidate. And like Cambio ’90, Toledo’s PP was—at least initially—little more than a vehicle for Toledo’s presidential bid. Though less autocratic than Fujimori, Toledo’s political style was highly personalistic. His inexperience

resulted in repeated mistakes during the campaign. Indeed, a major reason for his 2001 victory was simply the weakness of the rest of the candidate field.

The flaws of Toledo’s second round opponent were even more striking. To the surprise of many, Alan García re-emerged as the strongest challenge to Toledo. What does García’s rise tell us about the fate of parties in Peru today? First, it tells us that García is a stupendous campaigner and rhetorician, and that APRA, though decimated, possessed a national organization and at least a minimal activist base. Second, it tells us that, at least at the level of the voter attachments, little has changed since the 1980s. Toledo was vulnerable among the very poorest of the poor, which is where García was strongest. Since none of the 2001 candidates represented the views of the 40-50 percent of the electorate that had consistently supported Fujimori, many of these votes went to García. Above all, however, García’s success highlighted the profound weakness of mechanisms of representation. The options available to the voters in the second round of the election were a traditional politician from an established party that had undergone no major renovation and a new “independent” politician who had opposed the Fujimori government but whose electoral strategy faithfully reproduced the Fujimorista style.

The Prospects for Party (Re) Building in Peru

What are the prospects for rebuilding political parties in post-Fujimori Peru? Answers to this question vary, often hinging on scholars’ explanations of the party system’s collapse. For some analysts, the failure of party-building efforts in the 1990s can be attributed, in large part, to the repressive tactics of the Fujimori regime (Lynch 2000; Planas 2000). Thus, the government’s
successful assault on Somos Perú in 1998 and 1999 is taken as evidence that party-building was largely impossible while Fujimori was in power (Planas 2000: 389-394). Such an approach yields a relatively optimistic prognosis for party development the post-Fujimori era. If the primary problem in the 1990s was Fujimori, then Fujimori’s removal should clear the way for new party-building efforts.

Institutionalist approaches locate the roots of party weakness in electoral rules—such as the low-threshold PR system, the double preference vote, and the single national district—that create disincentives for politicians to build strong organizations (Schmidt 1996; Tuesta 1996, 1998). If those rules persist in the post-Fujimori period, institutionalists argue, there is little reason to expect the emergence of strong parties. Electoral rules can be changed, however. With electoral reform, politicians’ incentives could potentially be reshaped in ways that encouraged party-building. The 2000-2001 democratic transition created an opportunity for such institutional engineering. The transition triggered discussion—among both scholars and politicians—of a wide range of constitutional and electoral reforms. One of them, the replacement of the single electoral district with a multiple district system, was implemented prior to the 2001 elections. Although other rules—such as the majority runoff system and the double preferential vote—may prove more resistant to change, an institutionalist perspective holds out at least some hope that parties can be rebuilt in the future.

A third approach, which might be characterized as historical-structural, yields a more pessimistic forecast. According to this approach, strong parties are not products of electoral

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56 Several Vamos Vecinos organizers joined the García campaign as well.
engineering, but rather of particular historical, sociological, and technological conditions, many of which are not present the contemporary period. Stable party systems are often rooted in deep societal cleavages or intense political struggles (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Collier and Collier 1991; Scully 1992). Indeed, many of Latin America’s strongest and most enduring parties emerged out of civil wars, social revolutions, or periods of sudden or dramatic expansion of the electorate (Coppedge 1998). These party-building episodes were in many respects historically bound. Most stable party systems either took shape prior to the advent of mass suffrage (Chile, Colombia, Uruguay) or emerged out of the process of mass enfranchisement (Argentina, Mexico, Venezuela) (Coppedge 1998). After this period, the crystalization of party loyalties and the absence of large groups of new voters limited the electoral space available to new parties (Coppedge 1998: 175). Thus, with the exception of cases in which civil wars or revolutions broke down old identities and created new mass identities (for example, El Salvador), few stable party systems have emerged in the post-enfranchisement period.

Moreover, fundamental changes in class structures and technology have reduced politicians’ need for party organizations and increased the cost of building and sustaining them. Many of Latin America’s largest and most socially rooted parties built their electoral bases on large peasantries or emerging industrial working classes. Due to their geographical concentration (or stability) and lower levels of education and social mobility, these social classes were both relatively easy to organize and relatively stable in terms of their political loyalties.

56 As Planas put it, “efforts to establish a solid and democratic political organization at the national level don’t appear to do any good when one confronts—as a competitor—the state apparatus” (2000: 394).
57 Examples include the traditionally dominant parties in Colombia, Costa Rica, and Uruguay.
58 Examples include the Bolivian MNR, the Nicaraguan FSLN, and, more ambiguously directly, the Mexican PRI.
59 Examples include the Argentine Radicals and Peronists, the Mexican PRI, and Venezuela’s AD.
60 On the “closure” or “freezing” of European party systems, see Lipset and Rokkan (1967) and Bartolini and Mair (1990).
With the decline of peasantries and industrial working classes and the rapid expansion of the urban informal sector, the social bases of party politics have grown increasingly unstable. Geographically fragmented and highly heterogeneous in terms of their work, interests, and identities, informal sector workers are difficult to organize and tend to be volatile electorates (Cameron 1994; Roberts 1998). Few (if any) major Latin American parties have been built upon informal sector bases.

Technological change also militates against party building in the contemporary period. Most large-scale party organizations were established before the spread of television era. In the absence of mass media technologies, politicians were often compelled to build and maintain extensive territorial organizations in order to reach voters. Although politicians’ ability to substitute state resources or corporatist structures for party organization inhibited party development in some countries (McGuire 1997; Mainwaring 1999), party organization was nevertheless critical to electoral success in most countries. In the contemporary period, increased influence of mass media technologies has weakened politicians’ incentive to invest in party organization (Katz 1990). As the success of media-based candidates such as Fernando Collor de Mello and Vicente Fox has made clear, contemporary politicians may reach millions of voters through television, and they may do so more quickly and at lower cost (in terms of human and organizational resources) than with party organization. Hence, local party structures have become increasingly “vestigial” (Katz 1990).  

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62 For critiques of this view, see Ware (1992) and Scarrow (1996).
These structural changes do not spell the imminent demise of party organizations. In many countries, the persistence of strong partisan identities and the significant human, organizational, and patronage resource advantages enjoyed by existing parties continue to serve as important barriers to entry for political outsiders. As long as politicians believe the benefits of remaining in an existing party to outweigh the benefits of defecting and competing as an outsider, established parties may endure.

Once established parties fail, however, the incentives facing politicians change dramatically. Given the availability of mass media technologies and the volatility of contemporary electorates, individual politicians lack an incentive to build new party organizations from scratch. Consequently, contemporary party systems may prove to be somewhat like Humpty Dumpty: in the absence of crisis, they may persist, but if they happen to collapse (for any number of historically contingent reasons), all the institutional engineering in the world may be insufficient to put them back together again.

A historical-structural analysis thus suggests that the prospects for rebuilding parties in Peru may be rather bleak. If the structuralist argument holds, then the 1990s may constitute a critical juncture for the Peruvian party system. Although the post-1992 party system decomposition was a highly contingent outcome, the opportunities and constraints posed by the new social structural and technological context are such that politicians lack both an incentive and the capacity to build new party organizations. In other words, although long-term structural changes did not cause the collapse of Peru’s party system, they may inhibit its reconstruction.
Two additional factors may help to reinforce or “lock in” the post-1992 party system configuration. First, the contemporary environment “selects for” candidates (such as Toledo) who can succeed at media-based, candidate-centered politics, while the kinds of politicians that are critical to building and sustaining parties--good party bureaucrats or machine politicians--find little demand for their services. To the extent that this is the case, aspiring politicians will invest in the skills necessary to win as “independents.” Second, electoral rules may become an endogenous variable in this context. Most elected offices are currently held by non-party politicians who know how to win by electoral rules of the game that favor weak parties. Such politicians are less likely than party politicians to support reforms aimed at strengthening parties.

The Peruvian case highlights a rather paradoxical aspect of the relationship between parties and democracy: although parties are highly functional for—indeed, critical to—democracy, they are not created for that purpose. Rather, parties are created by politicians, in an effort to resolve their own problems and further their own careers (Aldrich 1995). Thus, parties’ various contributions to democracy (for example, as agents of vertical and horizontal accountability and mechanisms for legislative organization and elite recruitment and socialization) are essentially felicitous byproducts of organizations that are created for other purposes. As long as politicians believe they can advance their careers through parties, then the “democratic goods” associated with parties will be provided. But if politicians (or voters) decide they are better off without parties, then these democratic goods may be under-provided. In such cases, it unclear what kinds of institutions or organizations would serve as alternative providers of these goods.
We do not wish to argue that party rebuilding is impossible in contemporary Peru. As this paper has suggested, leadership, institutions, and contingent events all influence party system outcomes—often in ways that are not easily predicted. Moreover, even if old-style mass parties are unlikely to emerge in the contemporary period, the prospects for the emergence of media-based cadre parties--along the lines of the Argentine FREPASO or Chilean Party for Democracy--are somewhat better. Such parties would be far better for democracy than the personalistic parties that dominate Peruvian politics today. Nevertheless, a historical-structuralist analysis helps to highlight the enormous challenges that face aspiring party-builders in Peru, and it helps to explain why party system decomposition may ultimately prove substantially more enduring than the regime that provoked it.

**Conclusion: Democracy without Parties?**

Peruvian democracy rebounded in 2001 but thus far political parties have not. Although Alan García’s stunning comeback and the popularity of interim president (and active AP member) Valentín Paniagua may signal a resurgence of the traditional parties, and although Perú Posible could potentially translate Toledo’s success into a serious party-building project, there is reason to think that the era of well-organized and socially rooted parties is over. If this is in fact the case, and the emerging post-Fujimori regime is destined to be a democracy in which parties remain marginal forces, what are its prospects? Here the lessons of the 1990s are sobering. The challenge of making democracy work in a context of fluid and fragmented electoral politics will be a difficult one. To govern effectively, politicians will be compelled to innovate, particularly in the areas of coalition-building and legislative organization. Yet even in the most optimistic of
scenarios, the likelihood of executive-legislative conflict, executive abuse of power, corruption, personalistic and volatile electoral politics, and the emergence of new outsider and even anti-system candidates will remain high. Peru may not be alone in this challenge. Venezuela may well be on the road to party system decomposition, and although the evidence remains inconclusive, there is at least some indication of a general trend toward party decline in Latin America (Hagopian 1998).

This returns us to the conundrum mentioned at the beginning of the paper: parties are among the least credible institutions of democracy in Latin America today, yet democracy without them is nearly inconceivable. The Peruvian (and quite possibly, Venezuelan) experience offers stark evidence of the indispensability of parties as mechanisms of representation. Whether recognition of this fact stimulates a renewed interest in party building in the region, however, remains to be seen.
Bibliography


