

Race and Political Representation in the Peruvian Public Sphere

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*“I am the Power, it is true.
But Power was given to me by the People.
I represent it.”*

- Alberto Fujimori¹

Introduction

Alberto Fujimori once declared proudly that people all around the world were studying his government: political outsiders striving for the position of national savior were trying to imitate him, and the international press had begun to baptize every of those outsiders as “Fujimoris”. He was true, but in a way unsuspected to him; for he was being studied, but not only by his fellow politicians, but by scores of political scientists trying to understand what different publications have called a “Peruvian labyrinth” (Cameron, Mauceri, 1997) or a “power enigma” (Tuesta, 1996).

The “labyrinthine” or “enigmatic” nature of his regime is best appreciated by giving a glance to some of the many conflicting characterizations that his political experiment has received. In different studies, Fujimori’s Peru has been characterized as a “delegative democracy” (O’Donnell, 1993), “bonapartism” (Cameron, 1997), “democradura” (López, 1994), “plebiscitarian democracy” (Cotler, 1994), “neopopulism” (Roberts, 1995), “fujipopulism” (Palmer, 1996), “charismatic governance” (Durand, 1996), “messianic presidentialism” (McClintock, 1994), “fascist traits” (Quijano, 1996), etc. Fujimori can claim indeed that he is being studied!

These characterizations are the result of different approaches. However different, though, two major contextual factors have never been absent in any explanation of the regime’s sustainability: its success in the stabilization of the economy and the neutralization of terrorist organizations. The government’s success in these fields would explain its acceptance by the population: the Peruvian regime is seen as the result of an exchange of stability for political loyalty.

This hypothesis, then, maintains the existence of a *performance-based authoritarian pact* between government and population in Peru resulting from reasonable choices made by actors interested in the maintenance of their conditions of existence, in an extraordinarily difficult political context and within a very particular institutional design.² Values and meanings play a very limited role in

¹ Quoted in Panfichi and Sanborn (1996; 41)

² Some authors stress the results of the electoral system and the constitutional presidentialism as autonomous variables conditioning the choices of the citizenry. See Tuesta (1996) and Graham and Kane (1998).

this explanation of the success of the Peruvian regime; interests and rational calculation seem to be the guiding aspect of every possible explanation.

The failure of the political elites displaced by the emergence of *Fujimorismo* to provide the same results is supposed to have been the reason for the progressive disenchantment of the population towards democracy. Certain political agents proved unable to deliver the results that their constituencies expected, therefore, they had to look for more efficient agents. The failure of the old leadership to provide services supposedly resulted in the slow erosion of long established political identities, thus creating a political vacuum. Without the ideological support of traditional political identities the population was left alone, forced to think pragmatically and to prioritize their own interests (Cotler, 1994).

There are certain important problems in this dominant hypothesis. If we were to focus just on the effective performance of a government in order to find the reasons of its stability, we would accept the problematic presupposition that nothing meaningful occurs between the perception of the effects of government policies and the production of interpretive discourses by the public. The hypothesis of a performance-based authoritarian pact between the population and the regime does not help us to understand the specific mechanisms of operation of the public sphere in Peru.

The notion of a performance-based authoritarian pact converts any other factor recognizable as relevant in epiphenomena that may need *ad hoc* explanatory frameworks. This overlooking of meanings and values hinders the possibility to make a normative critique to the new regime's claim to be a "new democracy", different and superior to the model based in the competition of political parties.

We need to dig deeper in the mechanisms of operation of the Peruvian public sphere where the political culture repertoires are created, in order to propose mutually consistent answers to the many questions related to the constellation of *Fujimorismo*. What are the mediations between government performance and legitimization in Peru? What is the object of "disenchantment" in failed consolidations? What is the effect of the specific ethnic and racial cleavages of a country in the emergence of new political staffs? How are the public mechanisms by which radically new political *personae* are created? What are the normative anti-democratic potentials in the *Fujimorista* challenge to representative democracy?

With this questions in mind, some scholars have attempted to understand the cultural aspects of societal alienation towards democracy and the old elites. The crisis of the old democracy is not, according to this hypothesis just a problem of efficiency, but a *crisis of representativity*: the old political actors and leadership are no longer recognized as valid representatives of the population. The discussion on representation --which is as complex and "labyrinthine" as the discussion on the characterization of the regime³-- attempts to shift the focus of attention from the empirical context to the cultural repertoires, from facts to meanings, from what people experience to what people believe.

³ On the uses and shortcomings of the idea of a "crisis of representation" many Peruvian authors have engaged in a useful debate. See Lynch (1992), De Soto (1993), Pease (1993) Rochabrún (1994) and Grompone (1995).

In fact, the focus on representation may provide us with an Archimedean point to understand these constellation of questions. The way in which Peruvians have understood this core method of modern democratic governance has changed dramatically in the last twenty years. The crisis of the democratic regime inaugurated in 1980 set off a multilayered critique to the liberal notion of representation as a link of legal authorization between a given constituency and an elected agent in charge of discussing the best interest of the nation in a public forum endowed with legislative powers. The shortcomings of democracy triggered a critique to the mechanisms and devices of representation, particularly political parties and the Parliament. This critique evolved into a deep skepticism about the very possibility of any politician being able to represent the interests of a people whose identity he or she did not share.

Legal bodies or agents looking for authorization to act as representers were criticized as inefficient advocates of their constituencies' interests. But that was only the first step of a more consequential process. In addition to that, they were also criticized as falsely democratic, as inadequate descriptors of the different ethnic and class cleavages of the nation, and as poor symbols of the national ideals.

This paper tries to grasp these problems in two parts. First, I propose an ideal model of the Peruvian public sphere that can situate us in the scenario of relevant issues and actors in which the normative presuppositions of political life are given a meaning. Second, I examine the specific critiques to democratic representation that have emerged under *Fujimorismo* and that are specifically functional to institutional aspects of the regime. I try to show that the notion of "political representation" itself –and not just political representatives-- has suffered the attack of authoritarian discourses. It has experienced a semantic shift that redefined it, from a political institution into a symbolic space of national self-recognition.

1. A Model of the Peruvian Public Sphere

In order to understand the semantic shifts in a concept like representation, it is necessary to know the space of argumentative interaction in which the concept finds its meaning. This can help us understand which are the relevant issues for society and how those issues emerge through discussions about apparently unrelated topics.

The public sphere is that complex articulation of differentiated sets of more or less institutionalized argumentative exchange; there, some participants, issues and discourses receive privileged attention and are given certain relevance. Certain other participants, issues and discourses, however, are more or less excluded and struggle to gain recognition through alternative circuits of discussion or discursive practices.

Excluded issues can gain sudden emergence on their own terms or through seemingly unrelated problems. In fact, I will maintain that race and racism are the great non-issue of the Peruvian public sphere, explicitly denied as problems under the superficial veil of a nominal rejection of racism and an ideology of *mestizo* homogeneity. We have to examine the structure of the Peruvian

public sphere to understand how is it that it has forced its own oblique way to public problematization.

The model I will draw to analyze the Peruvian public sphere is based in basic questions⁴: Who participates? How do the participants engage? Where and when? About what do the discussion revolve? Why? These question have been ordered around seven items: degree of plurality, degree of inclusiveness, ways of enactment of communicative practices, spatiality, temporality, thematic and implied reasons of engagement. This itemized presentation, I hope, will show in detail the differences between the classic model of the liberal public sphere constructed by Habermas (1962) and the implications of those differences in the construction of democratic polities.

Structural plurality and ambiguous relations of subordination between the levels of the public sphere

The classic model of the Western European public sphere supposes a long process of historical evolution that integrated an educated bourgeois public into the category of citizenship. In regard to that model, the historical constitution of the public sphere in Peru has left little space for the massive and homogeneous constitution of the population as a public where the universalistic identity of citizenship may be constituted.

The issues brought up in public discussion are not enough to homogenize and integrate the participants as political equals, because not everyone participates in the same condition. Not issues convoking discussion, but the bearers of political power proposing issues fulfill the function of creating homogeneity. The issues that are taken to the arena do not emerge from the public's manifest interest, but are proposed by the power-holders. The discussion is controlled and is used to constitute not citizenship, but clientele. This is why populism has been so pervasive in Peru, from the early mobilizations of the modern urban masses under Billinghurst, to the organization of mass parties like of APRA, Unión Nacional Odrísta, Acción Popular and the governmental co-optation of popular organizations under the military government of 1968-1975.

The official public, where this happens, is small and disconnected from other publics, also small and weak, but capable of thematizing issues and infiltrating up to a certain extent, the official public sphere. The official institutions of national discussion, like the parliament, are not a "strong" public (Fraser, 1992) but rather a fragile set of institutions surrounded by other publics that share the same fragility.

The advantage of the surrounding publics is their connection to the demands of substantive debate by the autonomous organizations of the excluded ones. An image that helps to understand this relation is the one proposed by Geoff Eley, when he thinks of the public sphere as a "...structured setting where cultural and ideological contest or negotiation among a variety of publics takes place, rather than as the spontaneous and class-specific achievement of the bourgeoisie..." (Eley, 1992, 306).

⁴ This questions were suggested as guides for the discussion during Nancy Fraser's course "Rethinking the public sphere" at the Graduate Faculty, fall 1996.

We can distinguish: (a) an *official* public formed by the democratic institutions that are supposed to be the hotbed of national discussion through the representers of all the relevant social sectors. (b) A non-official layer of publics formed by media enterprises, non-popular civil society organizations and the institution of “intellectuality” (i.e. an unspecialized catch-all academic and political elite that projects itself from educative and research institutions to political functions). Within this layer every sector is integrated in specific ways to the official public sphere, having particular gates of access and resources to mobilize issues. (c) A layer of *liminal* publics formed by organized labor, and *popular* civil society movements and organizations, whose access to the national debate is not guaranteed. It is important to notice that this layered structure does not include all the sectors of the population: among the popular sectors, those not organized are reduced to a situation of even deeper exclusion.

The relation between the official and integrated publics with the liminal publics is ambiguous. Alternative in principle, the “plebeian spaces” have never functioned as either transmission belts that integrated issues and agents in the political system, or as Gramscian trenches of siege-like struggle for hegemony (Franco, 1991). Their strategy has been ambiguous, and their constant engagement into the political schemes of successive populisms can be seen as indicative of an extreme diversity that has hindered the formulation of any common strategy to enhance their access to power and to achieve wider recognition.

The unity between these structurally differentiated layers of the public is given by the very problematic notion of *Peruvianness*, which is built as oppositional to legal, moral and cultural images of alienness. Even if we have very different kinds of participation in the public life, we still need to recognize each other as “the same”, in the absence of a universal, all-encompassing notion of citizenship, we imagine a nationhood that is homogeneous before external dangers and that silences internal pluralism.

Degree of openness.

In order to participate in the public sphere, a certain threshold of inclusion in material distribution must be achieved. The exclusion brought about by extreme poverty makes several issues and sectors pre-political because they are non-participants. The hyper-excluded, i.e., the economically marginal, are only vicariously present in the public discussion, variously depicted from the perspective of the participating sectors as “the poor”, “the people”, “the *cholos*”, “the public opinion”, “the sectors C and D”, “the common citizens” etc.

The construction of an excluded other is the result of overlapping class, race and gender criteria. Racial identifications and ethnic identities are not recognized as an issue in the official publics and are only marginally considered as such in the other layers of the public sphere. They are discussed, but only in the circuits of domestic life, as a private or intimate issues that must be silenced in order to maintain the fiction of equality into an all-encompassing identity of Peruvians.

Hegemonic discourses could maintain the fiction of universal and egalitarian integration in a *mestizo* society until the 1960s, when the social order still laid on the maintenance of strict boundaries between the Creole cities and the indigenous countryside. The crumbling of the old

system of domination, the massive migration of Andean populations to the cities, the emergence of a *cholo* bourgeoisie and specific immigrant subcultures created the conditions to the growing emergence of race and ethnicity as issues, though in an ambiguous and “flash-like” way (Franco, 1993).

The thematization of racial cleavages is further diffculted by the fact that, in a society divided in different publics that are more or less permeable, the individual has certain degree of freedom to choose relativistic strategies of self-presentation that allow to escape the experiences of discrimination. The same individual can be considered socially white or not depending on several factors, specially economic and educational, however, the individual will always have to negotiate its position and confront gate-keeping mechanisms and agents defending social boundaries.

Diversity of communicative practices and procedures.

The diversity of the levels of the public sphere is additionally complexified because they do not necessarily share the same codes of communication: their expressive resources and *rituals* are different. The official publics engage in codes that convey the objective of maintainance and glorification of hierarchies through the public display of authority -- official ceremonies centered in the figure of the *primer mandatario* are a perfect example of this. The liminal publics --on the other side-- make frequently use of an expressive strategy of carnivalesque disorder, through which they dramatize their demands (Da Matta, 1978). There is a *continuum* from the ritual of the popular demonstration that ends in a petition at the doors of a building that symbolizes power, to the ritual of urban tribes constituted by sports fans affirming their identities in violent and playful clashes with the *fuerzas del orden*.

The fact that the publics are not only centered around places or certain media but also around codes and expressive strategies makes it possible for skilled actors to participate in different spaces and to share different identities. As we mentioned before, an able individual can project a different *persona* in different circumstances: authoritative leader, fraternal fellow countryman, race-neutral citizen, ethnically marked friend or foe, etc.

Some of the forms of “publicity” enacted in the Peruvian society, specially those related to the official publics, resemble what Habermas saw as the early models of “representative publicness”, that is, rituals that embodied the abstract notion of power in the concrete figure of the sovereign (Habermas, 1962). In his late reassessment of *The Structural Transformation...* he seems to give more attention to the persistence of this aspect in modern history and to the popular reactions it generated in the form of revolt, carnival and counter-disciplines (Habermas, 1992). Indeed, the liminal publics does not only discuss thematics, but also strategies of dramatization of that thematic: street demonstrations, media appeals, etc.

Among the liminal publics the mechanisms of circulation and formation of opinion go far beyond a well-ordered structure of institutions that secure a space for literary exchange through the written media, relying instead on a vigorous orality and extensive networking. By *orality* I do not mean the “oral tradition”, that is, the sometimes manipulative invention of “folklore”, but simply the *procedure* of public communicative exchange in societies where for diverse reasons (high degree

of illiteracy, exclusion of native languages, differentiated access to the media) other means are closed for significant sectors of the population. In fact, orality appears as a sort of initial and constitutive level of participation for the hyper-excluded population that is not even capable of forming the liminal publics⁵.

The liminal publics are not institutionally linked, but there is a loose networking that permeates those different publics and that relates them even with the hyper-excluded populations. This networking resulted from the massive experience of peasant migration to the cities during this century⁶. Associations of members of the same province, large families, commercial links between the city and the countryside host a continuous flow of communication that has proved in different situations to be politically consequential.

Both orality and extensive networking are a factor to deal with when analyzing the Peruvian public sphere: phenomena such as *radio bamba* (mouth radio) and *encuestas de taxi* (taxi-polls) are concrete limits for the consent-manufacturing ability of the privately-owned big media. Their role in political campaigns and elections is enormous and extremely difficult to assess via modern methods of opinion surveying.

Spatiality of the public sphere: Real and Virtual Plazas

In a culture where the idea of equal individuals is still weak in relation to that of hierarchized *personae*, the public space is marked by the necessities of constant self-presentation, and that this affects the way in which the different layers of publics interact.

Liminal publics are frequently the result of the slow sedimentation of communicative practices in topical spaces like *locales comunales*, but sometimes they establish themselves as networks independent of particular locations. Integrated and official publics, on the other hand, are often identified with sacralized places: Congress, House of Government, Church, University, TV Station, where the rituals of “representative publicness” can be solemnly enacted and universally broadcasted in a way that gives a vicarious participation to every citizen, as if he were included in that virtual “there”.

Social temporality of the participation in the public sphere.

Participation in the public sphere is an extraordinary moment, particularly for the population that can gain access to the liminal publics. Here, the individual participation constitutes frequently the first act of self-affirmation and recognition of one’s own individuality. To give reasons in public, coming from a situation of exclusion and silence, to gain word and expressiveness breaks routine

⁵ The experience of the formation of public spheres by popular women, for instance, have been marked by the founding moment in which each individual discovers that is capable of appropriating the *word* for herself: “...in a women’s popular assembly, one of the participants shout “Speak! Say what you want to say! Say it, do not remain silent!” Modernity supposes the convocation to the speech...” (Cotler, 1991).

⁶ On Andean immigrant organizations, see Degregori, Carlos Iván (1986) and Golte and Adams (1987)

and creates extraordinary time, is revelation, beginning, “startling unexpectedness” (Arendt, 1958).

On the contrary, the rituals --or ritualized discussions-- that take place in the official public sphere mark a recurrent, cyclic time of official festivities and procedures.

The thematic of public sphere

As Eley (1992) noted, the political vocabulary brought by the revolutionary liberal ideals was appropriated in southern and eastern Europe as a tool for advancing a claim of nationhood. That is, the public sphere, instead of functioning as a forum for the reasoned clarification of the common good, functioned as a space for the imaginative exercise of founding a common identity.

I would argue that this is a thematic that unifies all the different layers of publicity in Peru, a society still struggling to define itself as a nation, trapped in the unsolved problem of lack of national sovereignty and extreme cultural pluralism. The complex relation of super- and subordination of the different publics make more difficult to create national consensual images.

Implied reasons of engagement.

In the Habermasian model, the modern individuals that participated in the public sphere had already clarified who they were in the sphere of intimacy. This notion stands in direct opposition to the Arendtian model of public participation as the way *par excellence* of clarifying through words and deeds who one is (Arendt, 1958).

I think that, while the Habermasian model is more adequate to understand the integrated publics, the Arendtian one is better suited to understand the reasons of engagement into the liminal publics. It is through the participation in the liminal publics where the excluded clarify their own distinctiveness, and where they access the universalistic identities of *compañero*, associate, neighbor, co-national and citizen, in tension with the centrifugal tendencies brought about by the structural differentiation of the public sphere.

2. Fujimorista Critiques Against Representative Democracy and its Redefinition on Ethnic and Racial Terms

Towards the end of the APRA government (1985-1990), the discredit of the democratic institutions was generalized in Peru. The Presidency and the Cabinet were regarded as weak; the Judiciary as corrupt; the Congress as hostage of permanent partisan conflict.

Fujimori’s surprising emergence as an outsider uncontaminated by the old practices changed the panorama: he conveyed the image of strong political will that was being unduly hindered by the discredited old parties entrenched in Congress. Fujimori’s message was that the struggle against terrorism and inflation could be successfully fought by the concentration of discretionary power in the Executive. Consequently with this, he demanded extraordinary legislative faculties from the

Congress. Though the Congress gave him those faculties, its reluctance to accept the whole of a comprehensive legislative packet proposed by the Executive in 1992 ignited a conflict of powers that ended in the *autogolpe*.

The arguments of the Executive against the Legislative shifted over time from allegations of obstructionism to a more sophisticated elaboration: the parliamentary attempts to check the Presidency were illegitimate because the members of the Parliament did not really represent the Peruvian people. In fact, after the *autogolpe*, and facing the pressure of the international community to hold talks with the members of the opposition, Fujimori answered: “Talks? Yes, but with the *true representatives* of the people” (Daeschner, 1993, p.307). The Congress was not the true representative of the people, even though, it was legally supposed to be so. To this, Fujimori added that it was also inefficient, an old machinery guilty of “indolence, sloth” (Arias Quincot, 1994, p. 152).

Fujimori’s alternative included answers in both counts: democratic authenticity and institutional efficiency. The *autogolpe* should not be construed as “...the negation of *real* democracy, but on the contrary, the beginning of a search for an authentic transformation that would ensure a *legitimate and effective* democracy” (Arias Quincot, 1994, p.156). Let us inquire in the consequences of this strategy of dual criticism and response.

First Level: Representative Democracy as an Inauthentic, Falsified Normativity

To say that the Congress is not truly representative of the people in this first sense means that it frustrates the democratic desires of the citizenry. Instead of representing the interests and values of the people, the legislators negotiate among themselves their own selfish goals. Such a regime can only be characterized as a “formal democracy” because the normative principles of reasoned deliberation and universal participation have been falsified.

But depending on the specific target of this critique, two different things can be understood:

-The democratic procedures are falsely democratic. That is, the mechanism of public deliberation in the sacralized space of the Congress is a sham of reasoned discussion, because what is really taking place in Congress is a feigned discussion that covers up the unprincipled negotiations between the politicians.

This is a very common argument in the Peruvian public discourse; Fujimori did not invent it: he had just to elaborate on an element of a political-cultural repertoire to which he had access. If we had to construct an ideal-typical utterance related to this argument, it would be something like

Politicians use the Parliament in order to achieve their own particular interests for whose sake they divide the people and permanently quarrel among themselves. These confrontations are only deceitful, though, for ultimately they all pursue the same self-interested goal⁷

⁷ The sources for the construction of this phrase are Boggio (1991) and Pineda et. al (1993)

Carl Schmitt (1923) made a very similar kind of argument in his critique of liberal parliamentary democracy. It was a system whose normative presuppositions --deliberation and openness-- had been falsified by the emergence of a mass society. The empty public reasoning that took place in the parliament was unable to give meaning to civic involvement in the political life of the nation and, more critically, it threatened the sense of national unity. His alternative was the rejection of parliamentarism and the strengthening of the role of the President, as the sole representative of the nation's unity and undivided will.

It is striking how Schmitt's argument has been followed in its consequences by *Fujimorismo* and, indeed, publicly asserted as correct by some *Fujimorista* politicians (Grompone, 1995 pp. 59-60). In fact, the answer to the old state of affairs in the Constitution elaborated after the *autogolpe*, was the reformulation of electoral rules in a way that affected the ways in which representation was exercised. The former mechanism of election of Congressmembers by different geographic electoral districts was rejected under the argument that it encouraged regional *caudillismo*. The Congress, according to the Constitution of 1993, is elected in a single national district as a way to ensure the principle that the "Congressmembers represent the nation" and not particular sections of it. But it can be clearly seen that the rejection of local *caudillos* is functional to the strengthening of the national *caudillo*: the President, the maximum leader who, according to the Constitution, "*personifies* the nation" (Landa and Velasco, 1995)

-The democratic model is falsely democratic Representative democracy in itself robs the sovereignty of the people. Every democracy that "delegates" power on representatives fatally replaces the will and judgement of the people by that of elites. In terms of the Peruvian political-cultural repertoire, this argument could be stated as

*Representative democracy expropriates the people's power and concentrates it in the hands of professional politicians. Thus, it is very difficult to render politicians accountable*⁸.

This critique is almost etymological: representation is not presentation. It is, by definition a negation of the basic promise of democracy: self-government by autonomous citizens. Now, in this strand of critique, democracy is a very important matter: it is not just the opportunity of debating about things to be done, but an opportunity to assert one's own value as a distinct individual that affirms itself in the public space via original words and deeds (Arendt, 1958).

These are very valuable ideals for a population whose majorities have faced permanent exclusion and whose participation in civil society organizations has been the clue to certain degree of access to substantive citizenship. The *Fujimorista* use of arguments linked to notions of direct democracy has been intensive, presenting the President as the only genuine interpreter of the voice of the people, expressed directly to him in his frequent visits to the countryside or in massive demonstrations. It also had constitutional effects: because institutions like referendum and recall of authorities were included in the 1993 Constitution (Landa and Velazco, 1993).

⁸ Boggio (1991), Pineda et. al. (1993)

Second Level: Representative Democracy as Inefficient Set of Institutions

To say that the Congress is inefficient is to say that it is a redundant political body that does not deliver concrete, graspable results in terms of material services and protection of rights. As in the case of the critiques centered on inauthenticity, this level of argumentation can also target two different things:

-The procedures are the cause of inefficiency. That is, deliberation in itself is the problem, because it elongates in time without arriving at conclusions and decisions. In a society where the problems are deemed as extremely urgent (and this is the case in a society with hyperinflation and generalized violence) deliberation is seen as a distraction from the immediate necessity of action. A typical-ideal utterance related to this argument would be:

*Parliamentary politicians spend their time in unending discussion but are unable to take decisions to solve concrete material problems.*⁹

The authoritarian use of this argument has led to two lines of policy: first, the perpetuation of the image of Congress as an empty, superfluous space that is Constitutionally denied of having any initiative in terms of expenditures. (Landa and Velazco, 1995). Second: the enhancement of the discretionary power of the President to directly administer funds for public works and donations. The presence of the President in many parts of the country, broadcasted every night by the electronic media personally initiating public works or inaugurating them reaffirms the idea that it is only in the Executive where the population can find concrete answers to their needs.

-The inefficiency lies in the very existence of democracy. In this very radical variable of the argument, the basis of the problem lies in the fact that democracy works via the public negotiation of redistributive interests between the representatives of different groups. The politicians form “redistributive alliances” that negate the natural efficiency of the markets (Tantaleán, 1996). In a different but related example, it can be said that politicians committed to certain values, like the respect to Human Rights, obstruct the technical solution of determinate problems, like the contrasubversive war. The argument could be expressed in this way:

Politicians should leave their place to specialists truly able to solve the problems of the country.

This argument makes evident one of the ideological paradoxes of the Fujimorista regime: it may be called “liberal” in terms of its economic policies and commitment to market mechanisms, but at the same time it may be seen as a “conservative” and repressive regime in terms of the contrasubversive war it waged (Adrianzén, 1993).

This argument proclaims the specialists’ right to rule without constrain, thus openly violating the democratic principle of equality. The idea of the privileged role of the experts is inherently undemocratic, because it implies the necessary abstention of the majority of the citizenry and the acritical enshrinement of certain issues of public life as “technical matters”, thus negating the definitory role of politics to distinguish between what is --in fact-- a matter of expertise and what

⁹ This is a very common argument in Peruvian politics. Dictator Manuel Odría (1948-1956) made famous the slogan “¡Hechos, no palabras!” (Deeds, not words!). See also Grompone and Mejía (1995, p.98)

is not. One of the most important characteristics of the *Fujimorista* regime is the emphasis in the technocratic background of the presidential advisers and their authorization to act in complete insulation from the public inquiry, only on the basis of the presidential confidence.

An outline of these two first levels of critiques can be seen in figure 1:

Figure 1.
Criticized aspects of representative democracy

	Critiques to the procedure	Critiques to the model
Level 1: Inauthentic representation	Special interests are secretly negotiated	The citizens are excluded of the decision-making process
Level 2: Inefficient representation	Deliberation does not produce decisions and results	Politics create artificial, inefficient mechanisms of resource allocation.

This dual approach helps us understand the flexibility enjoyed by the regime to design strategies of political stabilization: on the first level, it uses mechanisms of charismatic injection of democratic legitimacy via strong presidentialism with plebiscitarian elements; on the second, it establishes a pact of efficiency. There is no one-sided strategy. Figure 2 shows this by pairing the anti-democratic arguments and the authoritarian answers.

Figure 2. Main anti-representation arguments and its authoritarian synthesis

Argument critical of representative democracy	Problem posed	Authoritarian response
Level 1: Inauthentically democratic procedure	Falsification of principles of openness and discussion under conditions of distributive struggle.	Links between Congressmembers and specific constituencies are cut. The Presidency is strengthened as general representative of the nation.
Level 1: Inauthentically democratic model	Negation of the citizens' role as autonomous participants in the decision-making process.	Symbolic inclusion of the citizens through plebiscitary mechanisms posed and interpreted by the leadership.
Level 2: Inefficient procedure	Stagnation of the decision-making process in the deliberation stage.	Congress is confined to deliberation without executive initiative and support of Presidential initiatives.
Level 2: Inefficient model	Public discussion and political concerns hinder specialized knowledge.	Insulation of specialists from public control. They respond exclusively to the Presidency.

The thread that gives consistency to this complex anti-democratic argument is the proposal of a strong Executive. It offers more democracy, because it checks the permanent bargaining between politicians behind the back of their constituencies and because it empowers the direct voice of the people. It offers also more efficiency because it confines the inept Congress to a role where they can make no harm and it empowers specialists that can be trusted.

The Ethnic Dimension as the Basis for the Reformulation of Representativity

The arguments reviewed criticized the concept of representation informing the regime previous to *Fujimorismo* as undemocratic and inefficient. Consequently, the new regime proposed a “new democracy” and more efficiency. But it also offered something else: “true representation”, the descriptive likeness of the political body with the body of the nation at large, the capacity of the political leadership to symbolize that elusive thing: Peruvianness.

The criticized levels of representation had something in common: they were informed by the idea that representation was basically a political mechanism to legitimate rule. The representer was that person that had been legally authorized to act in the place of another: as we have seen, the legitimacy and the effects of that act of authorization were under siege in the Peruvian public sphere at the beginning of the nineties. This conception of representation as authorization, that -- following Hanna Pitkin (1967)-- we will call a “formalistic” notion was not enough to fill the expectations of a population deeply disenchanted with it. Politics in Peru had a symbolic level in which the objective was not only the creation of material prosperity, but also the creation of identities. Representation had to be reformulated in those terms.

A frustrated shift towards a descriptive notion of representation

The emergence of anti-politics, authoritarianism and outsiderism in Peru was accompanied by a developing sense of the importance of strategies of ethnic identification between representers and represented. A different staff of politicians would make their entry into the stage claiming to be closer in identity to the average citizen. Voters that were considered solidly aligned within the party spectrum began to favor independent candidates on the basis that the newcomers were not *políticos* but on the contrary, “the likes of us”. What exactly was to be considered the true content of that “us” became the central question.

Certainly, to claim representativity of the Peruvian people, any agent must first be clearly recognized as a member of that structure and advance his/her own notions of what is to be a Peruvian, boundaries separating “Peruvianness” from any alienness must be set. Any event blurring these imaginary lines would create a dangerous situation, because the agents competing for the exercise of representation would be uncertainly “like us”: it would be impossible to determine if they have the right to intervene in that public space whose activity substantiates representation. That is why the question about Fujimori’s “true nationality” has always been so critical. At the same time, internal boundaries must be set to position the agent in relation to specific cleavages that are recognized in the public sphere as relevant, and others that are only obliquely recognized as such: *serrano/costeño*, *limeño/provinciano*, man/woman, etc.

Both operations are intrinsically difficult in a society where, in spite of the extremely variegated backgrounds of the population, the issue of ethnic and racial diversity is not problematized in the public sphere. The background of a person can be identified with little discussion, that is, almost everyone will accept the existence of races and will perceive ethnic characteristics. At the same time, however, the same person will very probably refuse to claim any racial or ethnic label as the basis for his/her identity, for s/he recognizes as valid the stereotypes associated with those labels.

Ethnic and racial classifications are relative and positional (Degregori, 1993) but even in this form they maintain a hierarchizing role derived from an imaginary line of oppositions running between ideal extremes of whiteness and indianness (Callirgos, 1993).

Fujimori's emergence was possible because of his own liminal position as the child of immigrants was seen as less dangerous than his rival crystal-clear "white" identity. Vargas Llosa's whiteness was constructed by the public and by himself as a position defined by an irrepressible contempt for the lower classes and for the Andean and mestizo majorities. Fujimori's political staff was --and to a large extent still is-- the object of scarcely disguised racial scorn by the threatened political elites. His success claiming the representation of *chinitos y cholitos*, Peruvians of Asian and indigenous descent, against snobbish whites: *blanquitos* (Carrión, 1996 pp. 286-9) resulted in a carnivalesque inversion of hierarchies: Fujimori's opponents had to endure demeaning racial labeling that depicted them as the hated *pitucos*, a category associated to white arrogance and frivolity. Fujimori's main slogan during the runoff competition against Vargas Llosa in 1990 was "A President like you" suggesting ethnic identifications with the mestizo majorities (Caretas, 1990) and, of course, suggesting Vargas Llosa's differences with the population.

Fujimorismo, though, did not propose a new system of representation, descriptive of the country's ethnic and racial cleavages. On the contrary, as we have already seen, it even prevented the possibility of representing regional cleavages --deeply related to ethnic identities-- by the adoption of an electoral system based in a single national district. The use of racialized discourse was not intended to open a national discussion about race, it was just a short-term strategy to strengthen the new political staff's position *vis a vis* the old politicians.

Submerged Identities and the Frustration of new Forms of Representation

The problem of equating the notion of representation to the map-like sociography of a cleavage structure that is not publicly recognized, then, is that the submerged identities maintain their essentializing and discriminatory power. Racial and ethnic perceptions end up being used as a matter of image managing rather than one of mutual recognition. If the Congress, the politically recognized deliberative space *par excellence* is not the place for this representation, then the parties set a mute political struggle to suggest those identifications. The initial result of *Fujimorismo* claiming to be the true representative of a plebeian, i.e., mestizo population was the strengthening of the idea that there was an wide abyss between the former politicians and their constituencies: an essential difference that made impossible for the former to represent the interests of the latter.

As an openly descriptive representation of the racial and ethnic cleavages is not attempted, the regime proposes the image of the *caudillo* as symbolizing the nation as a whole. In the void left by a Congress not allowed to be the description of the nation, the role is left to the President to stages carefully planned dramatizations of power --representative publicness-- by which he suggests an identity between the sovereign's person and the nation. The president, after all, does not simply "represent" the nation, but "personifies it", according to the Constitution (Landa and Velasco, 1995).

However, in order to "personify" the nation, it is necessary to propose the political body a "persona" in which it can recognize itself. However, the destruction of democratic institutions using arguments that emphasize "national authenticity" has proved to be a Pandora's box, from where hate discourse involving race and nation have emerged, backfiring on its users. The severe crisis experienced by the government in 1997, under accusations that questioned Fujimori's Peruvian nationality, is an example of these risks. Fujimoristas cry racist foul (Althaus, 1997), but the sensation is that --in a strange way-- the one that kills by the insult shall die by the insult.

Down with the Japanese!

1997: Five years after the coup, Alberto Fujimori looked more as a respectable patriarch than as the energetic shogun that he once was. After his re-election, defeating another decent old white gentleman, former U.N. Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, the only surprise was the MRTA hostage crisis, which he solved again with his usual deceiving tactics. His popularity after the successful rescue of the hostages and massacre of the guerrillas was over 70% according to diverse polls.¹⁰

In that moment, a decision by the Constitutional Court was published: a law passed by the Congress --where Fujimori has absolute majority-- allowing him to run for the third consecutive time for president was declared "unapplicable". Believing in the untouchability of his "public opinion" support, the Congress alleged political motivation in the Court's decision and impeached the magistrates that expressed their opinion against the re-election.

In addition to that, Fujimori decided to deal with another tricky issue: a former ally, Baruch Ivcher, the owner of a TV station had been broadcasting denunciations of corruption in the government and Human Rights abuses. A street-level bureaucrat, a colonel named Huamán in the Ministry of Interior duly "discovered" that Mr. Ivcher, born in Israel, had committed procedural mistakes in his naturalization, and -although the statute of limitations for these mistakes has expired long ago, Ivcher's Peruvian nationality is revoked. It is decided that the administration of the TV station must go to the minority shareholders, who happen to be Fujimori allies, because under Peruvian law no foreigner can own a broadcasting station.

The unexpected happens again: Law and Journalism college students take the streets and organize massive demonstrations against the regime. They receive enthusiastic support from the street public, and soon their demonstrations become a carnival: the names of the most well known *Fujimorista* politicians are object of obscene insults and slogans, a group of students organize a public subscription to buy bus tickets out of the country to one of the most hated *Fujimorista*. Others, armed with brooms take the plaza in front of the National Congress and begin to work declaring that they want to "clean up all the filth" that has been accumulated in Congress.

In the demonstrations, the cry "Down with the Japanese!" unimaginable only a couple of months earlier reappear: the first time, it had been used was --paradoxically-- by Vargas Llosa's upper-class supporters in 1990. What happened? Nationalistic, ethnic and racial animosities had been

¹⁰ 74% of the public approved the way Fujimori handled his job, according to a poll by the agency DATUM, immediately after the hostages' rescue. I owe this data to Ginebra González.

systematically used by the government during the last years, to attack Ecuador, to rebuke U.S. ambassadors that criticize the government's record on Human Rights. The highest point of this strategy was the Ivcher affair: a Peruvian citizen was stripped of his nationality in order to snatch his station. The opposition, that had paid a high toll during the golden years of the regime, had learned some lessons itself, and used the same arguments: Fujimori's program of privatizations gives Peruvian wealth to foreigners: Chileans and Spaniards investors are "invading us again".

In the most perfect timing, a new journalistic scandal appears in a TV program that --even though showed in a small station-- is retransmitted via radio to the whole country and in the magazine *Caretas*: Fujimori is really Japanese. A journalist found in the National Archives the immigration papers of Fujimori's parents, showing that they came to Peru with two small children, one of whom could be Fujimori. In Peru, it is necessary to be born in the country to be President. But this legal fact is not the main problem: it is the irony of a political actor that has systematically used racialized arguments to sustain himself, suffering a terrible boomerang effect. The cry of "Down with the Japanese!" was generalized after the scandal of the nationality of the president.

However, racialized discourses were not ready to use for free, as opposition leader Lourdes Flores had to learn. In a demonstration in favor of "authentic Peruvian" Baruch Ivcher, she attacked the Ministry of Interior's official, colonel Huamán with the phrase "*What a Huamán!*". Although her phrase was received with applause by the multitude, in the following days, she fell under generalized criticism by the press: Huamán, an indigenous surname is used in creole racist codes as synonymous with "stupid". A few days later, the protest convinced her of the necessity of a gracious public apology.

1997 marks the end of a cycle: the re-inversion of the public uses of racialized political discourse. Again, *cholitos* and *chinitos*, are the object of despise, but this does not authorize to attack them unpunishedly. The main object of aggression is isolated in the "Japanese". And even if the Fujimoristas cry racist foul (Althaus, 1997), the sensation is not other than in a strange way that one killing by the insult shall die by the insult. The sensation is also one of lost opportunity: would it have been possible to confront our racism and our racial and ethnic cleavages in a democratic way? Could we re-invent our Peruvianness in an inclusive pluralistic way, or are we doomed to use race and ethnicity always as an insult and as an instrument of privileged positioning?

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