Populism in Peru: From APRA to Ollanta Humala

Cynthia McClintock
George Washington University

To one degree or another, in one form or another, populism has been not only recurrent in Peru since the 1920s, but almost constant. The persistence of populism in the country is not surprising. First, social and economic divides in Peru have been very deep, provoking intense resentments that politicians have galvanized to their advantage. The divides were deeper in Peru than in other Latin American nations because Peru was the home of one of the region’s two largest and most sophisticated indigenous civilizations and then one of Spain’s two viceroyalties; the Spanish conquest and colonial rule were especially traumatic. The divides were also deeper due to geography; in contrast to other Andean countries, Peru’s capital is on the coast, separated from the country’s indigenous peoples by some of the highest mountains of the Andes.

Second, populism has persisted because, for a variety of reasons, liberal democracy has been perceived as not sufficiently successful in bridging Peru’s divides, and so frustrated Peruvians have turned to populist alternatives. Although the failures of Peru’s 1980-1990 liberal-democratic governments are the best-known, there is a long history of liberalism without social reform in Peru. The governments during the 1895-1914 “Aristocratic Republic,” of Manuel Prado (1939-1945 and 1958-1962), and Fernando Belaúnde (1963-
1968) were all elected governments (albeit with various degrees of restriction on the franchise and various promises of reform) that were perceived to be insufficiently committed to social reform.

The trajectory of populism in Peru responds to evolving national realities and conforms in part to its evolution elsewhere in the region. Emerging in the 1920s, the populist APRA [American Popular Revolutionary Alliance] lambasted both imperialism and Peru’s oligarchy for decades—essentially, into the 1960s, when the power of international corporations and Peru’s “forty families” was in fact curtailed. Like other populist leaders of this era, APRA’s Victor Raúl Haya de la Torre was an institution builder, constructing a strong political party that endures to this day, based on the emerging middle and working classes on Peru’s coast. But, like other populist movements of this era as well, APRA was also polarizing, in part because its commitment to liberal democracy was tenuous at best. In turn, APRA’s uncertain stance towards liberal democracy reflected the fact that democracy in Peru during this period was inchoate and an APRA electoral victory was unlikely to have been tolerated by Peru’s elites.

With the military government of General Juan Velasco Alvarado (1968-1975), however, populism in Peru took a somewhat different turn than in other Latin American nations. Like APRA and other populist movements of this era, the Velasco government divided Peruvians between the oligarchy and the people and one of its key objectives was the demise of the oligarchy. However, earlier than in other Latin American nations, the Velasco government repudiated Peru’s traditional political parties and proclaimed an alternative, which in this case was the “fully participatory social democracy.”
Subsequently, populism in Peru has continued to be linked to the disparagement of political parties and liberal democracy and to an affinity for the institution of the military, but populists’ position on the left-right spectrum varied. Under Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000), a populist political strategy was coupled with rightist policies--free-market reform and hard-line counterinsurgency positions. In the 2006 elections, the former lieutenant colonel and first-round winner Ollanta Humala coupled a populist political strategy with proposals for a greater role for the state and more attention to the plight of the poor. In various respects, however, Humala was difficult to place on the left-right spectrum.

**Populism and Haya de la Torre’s APRA**

Founded in 1924, Haya de la Torre’s American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) was one of the first movements in the hemisphere to be considered “populist,” and it fits our definition of the concept in most key respects.ii The APRA emphasized an antagonism between imperialism and the oppressed peoples of Latin America (although over time this emphasis was moderated). Also, its leader Haya was charismatic and the party’s commitment to liberal democratic principles was ambiguous. However, it was not APRA’s interpretation of the role of political parties that called into question its commitment to liberal democratic principles; to the contrary, the APRA was a highly disciplined political party (albeit also clientelistic) and became the only institutionalized political party in Peru’s history. Rather, it was APRA’s toleration of political violence—albeit during an era when Peru was far from a model of liberal democracy—that was at issue.

**Conditions for the Emergence of APRA**

The rise of APRA in the 1920s and 1930s was in good part a reflection of the economic and social changes in Peru during these decades.iii Between 1895 and 1919 under
what was called the “Aristocratic Republic,” and between 1919 and 1930 under the authoritarian government of Augusto Leguía, export-led growth was robust; “forty families” were widely believed to control these exports and constitute Peru’s “oligarchy.” Leguía in particular enjoyed close ties with the United States and U.S. capital flowed into Peru. With up-to-date technology, sugar and cotton haciendas on Peru’s coast and silver and copper mines in the highlands expanded at the expense of traditional landowners, smallholders, and peasant communities. Foreign companies often disrupted local operations but brought little benefit to Peru; for example, from 1916 to 1934 the U.S.-owned International Petroleum Company (IPC) had apparently no local suppliers and only 16% of the value of its total sales (primarily exports) stayed in Peru in the form of wages, taxes, or other payments. For the first time, a working class emerged.

_Haya’s Background and Ideology_ vi

Tall and white-skinned, Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre was born in 1895 to an upper-middle-class family in Trujillo, on Peru’s sugar-growing north coast. Haya’s father was an editor of a Trujillo newspaper and Haya attended private school. Haya was only in his twenties when he became the foremost leader of the political opposition to the dictator Augusto Leguía. As a university student, Haya was a key negotiator for the 1919 student-worker front that successfully demanded an eight-hour day; Haya subsequently organized a network of “popular universities” for workers and then in May 1923 galvanized this network to successful opposition to Leguía’s plan to consecrate Peru to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. As a result of Haya’s stunning political skills, he was jailed in October 1923 and then deported and lived abroad, in Mexico and elsewhere, until 1931.
Haya’s ideology evolved in part through debates with José Carlos Mariátegui, who was Perú’s first prominent Marxist, and also in part through his observations of the course of the Mexican revolution. Mariátegui believed that international capitalism had co-opted Perú’s middle classes and accordingly national transformation could come about only through the actions of the working class. By contrast, for Haya, Perú was a feudal country, rather than a capitalist country, in which the working class was small and weak. Haya believed that, if foreign investment were regulated by the state and the power of the oligarchy eliminated, Perú’s domestic bourgeoisie would thrive and Perú would grow with equity. The national transformation would be achieved not through class conflict but through the construction of a joint front among not only the peasantry and the proletariat but also the middle classes, which together would build a strong state and combat imperialism. Haya’s ideas were circulated in newspapers, magazine articles and pamphlets, and in 1936 they were published as a book, *El antimperialismo y el APRA*.

*Hayá’s Leadership and the APRA Party* vii

Without a doubt, Haya de la Torre was a charismatic leader. He was a prolific writer and a spellbinding orator who tapped many Peruvians’ religious and emotional chords. His proclamation “Sólo el APRA salvará al Perú” ("Only APRA will save Perú"), which captured both Peruvians’ frustration and hope for their nation in a religious metaphor, is the most famous in the country’s history.

Haya was also more dedicated to and more effective in the construction of a political party than any other Peruvian leader before or after him. As noted above, one of the reasons for the young Haya’s political success was his organization of a network of “popular universities.” He worked with intellectuals, student militants, and union leaders to build
party organs that were compared to extended families, churches, and (by APRA’s critics) “sects.” In particular on the north coast and in Lima, workers and lower-middle-class Apristas met two or three times a week at the party’s “Casas del Pueblo ("Houses of the People"). At these meetings, speeches were made, political strategy discussed, and the party anthem, the “Marsellesa Aprista,” sung. Moral discipline and austerity were encouraged; alcohol, for example, was prohibited. At the same time, the party offered material benefits, including medical and dental clinics, legal services, “popular restaurants,” and sporting activities (Davies, p. 13).

APRA’s social base was (and remains) on Peru’s north coast. From 1890-1920, sugar was Peru’s most valuable export, and Peru’s north coast was the home of Peru’s sugar hacendados, who were considered its wealthiest oligarchs. At this time, most of Peru’s population was in the highlands, and the haciendas brought in large numbers of laborers from the highlands, often under false pretenses, as well as from China and Africa. Wages were low, hours were long, and abuses common. For these workers, the appeal of ARPA was strong; in the 1931 election, more than one-quarter of APRA’s total vote came from the two departments where the sugar industry was concentrated, La Libertad and La Libertad; in key coastal valleys, he won 90 percent of the vote.

APRA did not build a social base in the highlands because, at this time, most highlanders could not vote. Illiterates were not allowed to vote in Peru until 1980 and most highlanders were illiterate. For example, in 1940, 85% of the population over 15 years of age in the southern-highlands provinces of Apurímac, Ayacucho, Cusco, Huancavelica, and Puno was illiterate.

Perspectives on Democracy
Between 1930 and 1968, there was a vicious circle in Peruvian politics: on the one hand, it was at a minimum not clear that Peru’s elites would tolerate a government that threatened their interests; on the other hand, APRA did not accept the rules of the democratic game and its militants’ resort to violence deeply alienated not only Peruvian elites but also the military. The upshot was that the oligarchy and the military on the one hand and APRA on the other were intransigent opponents, and reform initiatives failed.

This vicious circle began in the bitterly fought elections of 1931, in which Haya was defeated by Luis Sánchez Cerro, a mestizo military commander who had toppled the dictator Leguía. Sánchez Cerro enjoyed the support of the oligarchy; at the same time, his modest, provincial background and darker skin appealed to popular groups. Sánchez Cerro denounced APRA as anti-Catholic, anti-military, and closet-Communist. Without evidence, APRA repudiated the 1931 electoral result as fraudulent and quickly became obstructionist in the legislature. In retaliation, Sánchez Cerro deported APRA’s entire congressional representation. In 1932 in Trujillo, Apristas rebelled, executing sixty-odd members of the army. In reprisal, the military killed 1,000 to 2,000 Apristas. In 1933, Sánchez Cerro was assassinated by an Astra. Under Sánchez Cerro's successor, repression of APRA intensified and Aprista militants continued to resort to violence.

Between 1936 and 1968, when elections were held, APRA was proscribed to one degree or another. In part as a response, Haya continued to seek out allies in the military and plot with them against the government. Under the military government of General Manuel Odría (1948-1956), many Apristas were again imprisoned and Haya was a political refugee. Over time, the party’s years in the underground reinforced its emphasis on sacrifice, struggle, and martyrdom. At the same time, Haya gradually appeared to weary of
his role in the opposition; his ideology moderated and he sought political accommodation with Peru’s elites and the United States.

**Populism and the Government of General Juan Velasco Alvarado**

To date, Peru’s only initiative of a leftist-populist orientation to achieve power has been the military government of General Juan Velasco Alvarado (1968-1975). Like APRA and other populist movements of the twentieth century, Velasco and his colleagues considered Peru’s oligarchy a curse, condemning Peru to social injustice and underdevelopment. Although in contrast to Haya in the 1920s and 1930s, Velasco did not commonly use the concept “imperialism,” the Velasco government also sought to regulate foreign capital and significantly distanced Peru from the United States.

However, as a military regime, the Velasco government was anomalous. Like more recent populist movements but not others during the 1920s-1960s, Velasco lambasted Peru’s traditional political parties and favored not liberal democracy but a “fully participatory social democracy.” Yet, the contradiction between an unelected military government and “a fully participatory social democracy” was impossible to resolve. A further anomaly was that Velasco himself was not charismatic. Accordingly, although the Velasco government advanced social justice in Peru, its leaders were not linked to its supporters and it failed to build a political base. In part because of the anomalous character of the politics of the Velasco government and in part because other concepts, in particular “revolution” and “corporatism,” were more common at the time, the government was only rarely described as populist.

Classification of the Velasco government was difficult also because, relative to most political parties, the government included very distinct ideological factions as well a “silent
majority” of officers and it was rarely clear what the government would do. The reform process was uncertain and dynamic and depended a great deal on Velasco himself. Although in 1968 Velasco was thought to be a “conservative nationalist,” he was caught up in the whirlwind of his own reforms and, perhaps driven by personal resentments from his origins in a poor family in the coastal town of Piura, took the process further than most military officers wanted. Velasco fell seriously ill in 1973 and was overthrown in a palace coup in August 1975 by his premier and finance minister General Francisco Morales Bermúdez; less than two years later, in July 1977, Morales Bermúdez announced a return to democracy.

Conditions for the Emergence of a Populist Military Government

As of the 1960s, no government committed to redistribution had been in power for any length of time in Peru, and in part as a result social injustice in the country was extremely severe. Peru's income distribution was one of the most unequal in the region; in 1961 the wealthiest 1 percent of the economically active population received a staggering 30 percent of the national income. Also, the Gini index of land distribution was the most skewed among fifty-four nations for which data were reported; a mere 280 families--less than 0.1 percent of all farm families--owned approximately 30 percent of the land and more than 50 percent of the best land. Moreover, the disparity in living standards between the capital and the hinterlands--in Peru’s case between Lima and its southern highlands in particular--was egregious. Two poles endured in Peru: at one pole were “the oligarchy” and perhaps another ten percent of the population who were Caucasian, Catholic, Spanish-speaking, wealthy, and based in Lima; at the other pole were some 40 percent of the population, called "Indians,” who were dark-skinned, at most nominally Catholic, Quechua-speaking,
impoverished, and based in the Andean highlands, in particular the southern highlands. On numerous measures of political participation too, Peru was "behind" its neighbors. xviii

Elected in 1963, the government of Fernando Belaúnde Terry promised socioeconomic reform. As Fidel Castro had come to power in Cuba and Marxist influences were growing in Latin America, including Peru, the need for reform appeared especially urgent. Peru’s military in particular began to believe that, if Peru’s peasants were not integrated into the national fabric, Marxist insurgencies were inevitable and loss to Chile in a second war not improbable. But, after five years in power, the Belaúnde government had not undertaken a significant agrarian reform and it had not expropriated the International Petroleum Company (IPC), which was the focus of strong nationalist sentiment in Peru. Worse yet from the Peruvian military’s perspective, APRA had become so opportunistic that it had allied with its archrival in Peru’s congress—and yet it was poised to win elections scheduled for 1969.

_Ideology and Policy Agenda_

The tone of the Velasco government was that it would finally carry out what APRA and subsequent reformist political parties had promised to do but had not done. In Velasco’s speeches and other government publications, it was emphasized that the country’s oligarchy had blocked Peru’s national development and that the military government would bring about social justice for Peru’s people:

“Today we are one, People and Government, People and Armed Forces.

Today Peru is living the grand experience of its transformation. History will say that in these years an entire nation and its Armed Forces embarked upon the road to its definitive liberation, established the bases
of genuine development, forced the power of the egoist and colonial oligarchy to yield, recuperated authentic sovereignty before foreign pressures and began the great task to realize social justice in Peru.**xix**

In Velasco’s speeches, “the oligarchy” was one of the most frequently mentioned concepts; only the concepts “socioeconomic development,” “social justice,” “revolution,” and “structural transformation” were mentioned more frequently.xx

Ultimately, the consensus is broad that, indeed, the oligarchy was eclipsed by the Velasco government’s reforms. Its agrarian reform was the most sweeping in Latin America save the Cuban; almost all landholdings over fifty hectares were expropriated and transformed into various kinds of cooperatives, benefiting to various degrees approximately 25 percent of Peru’s farm families.xxi The government also expropriated a broad spectrum of other enterprises that were largely owned by oligarchic families—from fishing, mining, and banking companies to daily newspapers.

Relative to its views on Peru’s oligarchy, the Velasco government’s perspectives on the United States and U.S. investment were inchoate. IPC was nationalized within a matter of days; yet, at the time the government said that IPC was a unique case because it had violated Peru’s laws.xxii In subsequent years, additional U.S. companies were nationalized, but the government continued to declare its desire for foreign investment, in particular in industry, which respected Peru’s need for development.xxiii In general, in Velasco’s speeches, the word “imperialism” was rare.xxiv

Overall, the structure of power and wealth changed considerably in Peru.xxv Between 1968 and 1977 the state’s percentage of Peru’s gross national product (GNP) increased from
25% to 50%; following the import substitution industrialization (ISI) model, tariffs were raised and industry expanded from about 22% of GDP in 1964 to over 26% in 1975.\textsuperscript{xxvi} Peru's income distribution improved and the middle classes grew. However, the reforms did little to alleviate the lot of Peru's poorest—its highlands peasants. There was not enough quality land to redistribute in these areas to make a major improvement in peasants’ living standards, and public expenditure was not shifted toward highland agriculture. The government did, however, continue to expand educational opportunities, and encouraged respect for the culture of indigenous peoples, in particular by recognizing Quechua as the second national language of Peru.

\textit{Democracy, Institutions, and Leadership}

In part reflecting Peruvians’ disappointments with the Belaúnde government and APRA, the Velasco government repudiated liberal democratic institutions. When Velasco was asked if he had any affinity for a political party, he replied that “I had some sympathy for the Christian Democrats, at the beginning…The rest were pure blah-blah-blah.”\textsuperscript{xxvii} The traditional political parties’ leaders were considered to be co-opted by Peru’s elites and unable to undertake reforms; the government called for a “no-party” model.\textsuperscript{xxviii} By the standards of Latin American military regimes of the time, the government was not severely repressive; dissidents were not killed, although approximately a score were deported. Political-party activity was virtually prohibited and Peru’s major newspapers were expropriated and gradually became mouthpieces for the regime.

In such a context, the government's claim to be building an “authentic democracy” and a “fully participatory social democracy” was not persuasive.\textsuperscript{xxix} At no time did the Velasco government endorse the principle of elections, or even referenda, but most Peruvians
believed that democracy entailed elections. Rather than its own political party, the government created a political agency, the National System for the Support of Social Mobilization (SINAMOS, an acronym that means "Without Masters"), but the contradictions of this political project were obvious. In particular, if SINAMOS were to stand for participation “without masters,” why were SINAMOS officials appointed by the government rather than chosen by citizens? It was widely viewed that the actual goal of SINAMOS was to mobilize support for the regime, but overall it failed to do so; worker and peasant organizations expanded dramatically but largely under the banner of the Marxist left.

The military government’s difficulties in the establishment of a political base were exacerbated by the fact that Velasco was not charismatic. Velasco had become president because he was the commander of the army at the time of the coup; he had no special achievements to his credit, but rather had climbed steadily up the bureaucratic ladder. He was not particularly handsome: “The face of General Juan Velasco Alvarado is the face of thousands of men who sit behind small, linoleum-covered desks at army barracks throughout Latin America.” Nor was he a gifted orator: “He sweats and fidgets profusely during his televised speeches, making them a droning agony both for the speaker and his audience...” Especially after Velasco fell ill, he did not travel around the country or even speak at rallies. Clearly, however, Velasco did have political courage and determination.

Populism and the Fujimori Government

NEED INTRODUCTION

*Conditions for the Emergence of “Neo-populism”*

In 1980, the prospects for democracy in Peru were more favorable than ever before. No longer was an oligarchy looking out first and foremost for its own interests and no longer
was APRA proscribed. A new political left was expected to push for greater social justice; for the first time in the 1979 constitution, illiterates were enfranchised. Peru’s democratic transition was coinciding with a return to democracy in much of the region and a rhetorical U.S. commitment to democracy and human rights.

Ultimately, however, as in most of the region, the return to democracy in Peru coincided with the debt crisis and Latin America’s “lost decade,” provoking tremendous challenges for democratic governance. Further, in Peru, amid the economic crisis, the brutal, virulently Maoist Shining Path insurgency emerged in Peru’s southern highlands, expanded into many parts of the country including Lima, and by the late 1980s threatened the state. These challenges proved overwhelming to the government of Fernando Belaúnde, re-elected in 1980. Ultimately, Belaúnde was perceived as impervious to the suffering of the Peruvian people; in cartoons, he was portrayed as sitting in the clouds. On economic policy, Belaúnde spoke as a neoliberal but in fact initiated minimal free-market reform and was at odds with the International Monetary Fund. With respect to the Shining Path, at first he belittled the threat, and then endorsed wholesale repressive military action, which resulted in thousands of civilian deaths and more support for the insurgency.

In 1985, Alan García, who had succeeded Haya de la Torre as APRA’s leader, was elected in a landslide. At times, García has been classified as a populist, primarily because he was charismatic and his economic policies were unsustainably expansionary; but, the character of a government’s economic policies is not one of the criteria for populism in this volume. The García government did not fit other criteria for populism in this volume. Although he criticized imperialism and the United States, he did not attack Peru’s own elites; to the contrary, he sought to overcome APRA’s divisive legacy and emphasized that his
García’s leftist, expansionary economic policies culminated in economic debacle. In his inaugural address, the president blamed Latin America’s debt crisis on imperialism and the United States and said that Peru would pay no more than 10 percent of its export earnings to service its debt. García's position outraged the international financial community and the Ronald Reagan administration. Following the tenets of import substitution industrialization, García introduced expansionary fiscal policies in the hope that domestic industrialists would seize the day; but, in 1987, as Peru’s international reserves were running out, he concluded that they had failed to do so and, rashly, sought to nationalize Peru’s private banks. At that point, not only foreign capital but domestic capital was dismayed, and soon Peru was suffering quadruple-digit inflation, food shortages, a plunge in real wages, and massive unemployment. Corruption was considered rampant.

At the same time, the Shining Path expanded--seemingly inexorably. García understood the Shining Path as a serious problem that was the result of the destitution of the southern highlands and rejected an exclusively military approach to the problem; he sought to provide economic aid to the area and to raise the military's respect for human rights. However, these efforts failed. By 1989, the Shining Path guerrillas numbered approximately 10,000 combatants, had the support of roughly 15 percent of Peru's citizens, and controlled about 28 percent of the country's municipalities.

The Government of Alberto Fujimori

The son of lower-middle-class Japanese immigrants, Alberto Fujimori was a former mathematics professor and university head who had no political experience until he ran for
president in 1990. With APRA discredited and the Marxist left divided, Fujimori was able to secure much of Peru’s left and center-left vote to defeat novelist Mario Vargas Llosa, whose call for a “free-market shock” had frightened voters. Fujimori’s Japanese heritage was an asset; Fujimori actually looked more like the majority of Peruvians than the country’s white-skinned presidents, and persons of Asian origin were widely perceived as honest, hard-working, and smart.

Almost immediately after Fujimori’s inauguration, he began to attack Peru’s liberal-democratic institutions. He denounced congressmen as “unproductive charlatans” and judges as “jackals;” he constantly hurled charges of corruption. Just like Velasco, he belittled not only existing political parties but the concept of parties; they were “palabrería” (all talk and no action). For Fujimori, even his own parties were disposable; during the ten years of his presidency, he created four electoral vehicles--Cambio 90 (Change 90), Nueva Mayoría (New Majority), Perú 2000, and Vamos Vecino (Let’s Go, Neighbor)--and abandoned them when it suited his interests.

Without a political party, Fujimori turned to the intelligence services and the military for institutional support. Immediately after the runoff, on the advice of Vladimiro Montesinos (a former army captain and lawyer for drug-traffickers who had helped Fujimori with a legal problem during the campaign), Fujimori moved to a military residence and signaled his interest in a close relationship with the military. Montesinos began to control military appointments. In late 1991, when Fujimori’s draconian new counterinsurgency measures faced resistance from Peru's legislature, Fujimori, Montesinos, and the head of the joint military command, General Nicolás de Bari Hermoza Ríos, plotted the autogolpe (coup by the president himself). In the event in April 1992, the 1979
constitution was suspended, the congress padlocked, several opposition leaders arrested, and the judiciary begun to be dismantled. For more than six years, Fujimori, Montesinos and Hermoza became Peru’s governing troika, and on two occasions in 1992-93 when the government was threatened, Hermoza ordered his troops onto the streets. Unlike leftist-populists, the troika was not interested in alternative concepts of democracy.

Soon, the regime appeared successful to most Peruvians. In September 1992, a small, elite squad within Peru's antiterrorist police (established under García) captured the leader of the Shining Path, Guzmán. Within the next few weeks, using information found in Guzmán's hideout, police arrested more than 1,000 suspected guerrillas. During the next few years, the Shining Path was decimated. Also, as in much of Latin America, the economy recovered. Reversing his campaign promises, Fujimori had implemented a drastic economic "shock"; state expenditure was slashed, foreign investment laws eased, tariffs reduced, and privatization initiated. Peru renegotiated its foreign debt and returned to the good graces of the international financial community.

In the 1995 elections, Fujimori won a landslide victory. His popularity was due to his economic and counterinsurgency successes and also to considerable government spending.\textsuperscript{xxxix} Funds from the government’s privatization program were spent in part on social programs and infrastructure for poor communities. Dressed in a poncho and Andean-style hat, Fujimori helicoptered frequently to highlands communities to inaugurate new schools and roads. Although Fujimori was not a compelling public speaker and was not charismatic, for years he was portrayed in the Peruvian media as an austere, dedicated workaholic, and this image persists to this day. Support for Fujimori was quite even across Peru’s departments and social classes.\textsuperscript{xl}
In the late 1990s, Peru’s economy was slowing (as in much of Latin America) and Fujimori’s authoritarian proclivities were increasingly obvious. However, despite the erosion of his support, Fujimori sought a third consecutive term. Although there was a constitutional limit of two consecutive terms, Fujimori’s congressional majority passed a law affirming his eligibility; when Peru’s Constitutional Tribunal ruled against this law, it was dismembered. In the 2000 elections, the electoral playing field was steeply tilted: election officials were in the Fujimori camp; television news was blatantly biased; opposition candidates were slandered; the continuation of government food programs was conditioned on recipients’ votes. Still, one of the opposition candidates, Alejandro Toledo, effectively challenged Fujimori and forced a runoff. However, the Organization of American States (OAS) election monitors were concerned that the Fujimori government was plotting fraud; ultimately Toledo boycotted the runoff and election monitors withdrew. Undeterred, Fujimori claimed that he won with 51 percent of the vote.

Only three months later, however, Peru’s media showed a videotape in which Montesinos was bribing an opposition congressman. Peruvians were disgusted. Fearing criminal prosecution, Montesinos fled the country and Fujimori faxed his resignation from Tokyo.

**Populism and Ollanta Humala**

Peru’s current foremost populist leader is Ollanta Humala, who came within five points of winning Peru’s 2006 runoff and is a key contender for the 2011 contest. Like other populist leaders of the twenty-first century, Humala fomented division between “the people” and the “traditional political class” and denigrated traditional liberal democracy. Like other populist leaders on the political left, Humala advocated a larger role for the state in Peru’s
economy. Also similarly, Humala was not a Caucasian from an elite family but a mix of races.

However, Humala was anomalous in various respects. Like Hugo Chávez but unlike other current populist leaders, Humala’s background was in the military; Humala was not so much charismatic as he was fiery, and nationalism and militarism were very salient in his discourse. For Humala, the traditional political class was not the only enemy; Chile was too. Like various other populist and leftist leaders, Humala harked back to his country’s historical figures; for Humala, these figures were General Velasco and a mestizo general who had rallied Peruvian highlanders against the Chilean invaders during the War of the Pacific. Also like Chávez, Humala did not show respect for liberal democracy; but to a greater degree than Chávez at the time of his first election, Humala was new to Peruvian politics and his true political principles were murky and inchoate. Like Evo Morales, Humala championed indigenous ethnicity and mobilized support from Peru’s indigenous departments; there was concern about ethnic intolerance. In part for these reasons, Humala was very difficult to place on the conventional left-right spectrum and, to a greater degree than Venezuela’s traditional political left with respect to Chávez, Peru’s traditional political left was wary of Humala.

*Conditions for the Emergence of Humala*

Recently, Peru has enjoyed legitimate democratic governments, political peace, and robust economic growth. From 2002 through 2008, annual GDP growth averaged 7.4 percent versus a 4.6 percent regional average and Peru vied with Panama for the accolade of the highest growth rate in Latin America. As a result of free-market policies under the governments of both Alejandro Toledo (2001-2006) and Alan García (2006-) and strong
global demand, trade and investment boomed. As of 2008, the value of Peru’s exports (primarily minerals) was approximately quadruple the annual average of 1998-2002 and, as of 2007, foreign direct investment in Peru was more than triple the annual average of 1998-2002.\textsuperscript{xlii}

Further, there were some indications that Peru’s growth was benefiting most Peruvians and helping to bridge Peru’s divides. The Gini index of inequality improved from 52.0 in 2003 to 49.6 in 2006; on the index, Peru was faring better than its neighbors.\textsuperscript{xliii} (The index was at 58.2 in Bolivia in 2005, 58.5 in Colombia in 2006 and 54.4 in Ecuador in 2007, and the figures for the latter three nations were a tad worse than for the preceding measurement year.\textsuperscript{xliv}) According to official estimates (which were, however, questioned), poverty fell from 55% of the population in 2001 to 44 percent in 2006, 40% in 2007, and 35% in 2008.\textsuperscript{xlv} Nationwide in 2007, unemployment was less than 5 percent.\textsuperscript{xlvi} In 2007, Peru’s infant mortality rate was at 17 per 1,000 live births, the same rate as in Colombia and a tad better than in Ecuador, although in 1990 Peru’s rate had been more than twice Colombia’s and more than 30% higher than Ecuador’s.\textsuperscript{xlvii} As of 2007, 72% of the relevant age group was enrolled in secondary school, a higher percentage than in Bolivia, Ecuador, or Colombia.\textsuperscript{xlviii}

Yet, most Peruvians were dissatisfied. Between 2000 and 2007, wages—which had risen considerably under the Fujimori government in the mid-1990s--were stagnant.\textsuperscript{xliv} Of particular significance, regional inequality remained severe. For example, in 2007, the poverty rate was 18.5% in Lima, but 73.3% in the rural highlands.\textsuperscript{1} In 2005, chronic malnutrition was suffered by 7 percent of children under five in Lima, but 43 percent in the highlands, which was the same rate as in Burkina Faso and Mali.\textsuperscript{li} The regional inequalities
generated perceptions that the international mining, energy, and logging companies that were extracting natural resources in Peru’s hinterlands were not sufficiently compensating the residents of these areas for the damages that they inflicted on the environment and for the communal lands that, in some cases, they were taking over. Conflict between these companies and contiguous communities was escalating throughout Peru, and in June 2009, it exploded with tragic consequences in the northern-jungle town of Bagua.

Neither Toledo nor García was able to persuade the majority of Peruvians that his government was doing enough to improve their lots. As Peru’s first president of indigenous descent since 1931, Toledo confronted a variety of prejudices and stereotypes, and in part for this reason his lifestyle was perceived as frivolous and insensitive. Most of Toledo’s key advisers were Caucasian technocrats who were as comfortable in Washington as in Lima, and his government was not considered inclusive. For García’s part, after a center-left presidential campaign, the APRA leader shifted sharply rightwards. The president rarely acknowledged popular grievances and blamed social conflicts on outside agitators, in particular Chávez. García’s leitmotif was Aesop’s fable of the “Dog and the manger,” in which a dog lying in a manger of hay prevents the oxen from eating; García’s analogy was to indigenous peoples who cannot exploit Peru’s resources themselves, but prevent others from doing so. Like Toledo, García failed to incorporate people of mixed races into his cabinet in any number. Toledo’s nationwide approval ratings hovered in the teens and twenties, García’s in the twenties and thirties.

**Humala’s Background and Ideology**

Humala’s family background is unusual and replete with contradictions. On the one hand, Humala is mestizo. He was raised amid a quasi-fascist ideology called the
“Movimiento Etnocacerista,” or “Ethnic-Cáceres Movement,” which exalted the superiority of “the copper-skinned race,” the Incas, and the military, and demonized Chile. The founder of this ideology was Humala’s father, Isaac, who hailed from Ayacucho and spoke Quechua. Ollanta is an Incan name, and Isaac gave most of his other children Incan names as well. For these reasons, in January 2006, 47% of Peruvians believed that Ollanta’s social class was “low.”

In fact, however, in contrast to other current populist leaders, Humala was from Peru’s upper-middle class. Despite Isaac’s ideology, he was a well-educated lawyer specializing in labor issues for construction businesses. Ollanta was born in Lima in 1963 and raised in Santiago de Surco, a prosperous area of the capital; like most of his siblings, Ollanta and his brothers studied at private schools (in Ollanta’s case, the Colegio Peruano-Japones) and at the Sorbonne in Paris. In 1995, when Ollanta was merely an army captain, he bought an apartment in one of Lima’s wealthiest areas, Miraflores, for $33,000. Again despite Isaac’s ideology, he chose a fair-skinned woman as his wife, and most of his sons followed suit; Ollanta’s wife, Nadine, is from Ayacucho but looks Caucasian and completed her undergraduate studies at an expensive private university, the Universidad de Lima.

During the 2006 election campaign, it was not clear to what extent Humala adhered to the ideology of the Ethnic-Cáceres Movement. In August 2005, Humala presented himself at Peru’s National Electoral Commission as the representative of the movement; but in 2006, Humala’s brother Ulises was also a presidential candidate, and Ulises was said to be the movement’s standard-bearer. In general, Humala’s family was outspoken during the campaign, and especially in the first months of the campaign, Humala appeared close to his family.
The Ethnic-Cáceres movement was named after General Andrés Cáceres, a Peruvian hero of the War of the Pacific (1879-1883), and connotes the interpretation of Peruvian history in which it is the country's white, civilian elites who cede the national interest, while its darker-skinned military leaders stand up for the country. At the outset of the war, as Chile scored naval victories, the civilian president Mariano Ignacio Prado abandoned Peru; the Chileans occupied Lima and Peru's national government fell. At this time, based in Peru's central highlands, General Cáceres--a Quechua-speaking, mestizo commander who became known as "El Brujo de los Andes" (Wizard of the Andes)--organized armed peasant groups against the oncoming Chilean army. Cáceres's peasant forces won several battles; they attacked not only the Chileans but also large landowners (many of whom hoped for an end to the war at any cost and were collaborating with the Chileans). Ultimately, Peru made territorial concessions and signed a peace treaty in 1883. Enjoying a huge groundswell of popular support, Cáceres was elected president of Peru in 1886 and was a key political leader in the country until 1895.

The Ethnic-Cáceres Movement is militaristic. In its ideology, the army is the backbone of the state; strong military leadership is necessary; and, after two sons have been born to a family, the third is to be a “son of the fatherland,” incorporated into the military. It is also virulently opposed to Chile. Humala has suggested an alliance with Bolivia to regain territories that the two countries had lost to Chile in the War of the Pacific: “We contemplate a Tahuantinsuyo Motherland, which will comprise Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, the north of Chile and the Argentine northwest.” Humala is emphatic about the need to bolster the Peruvian military against Chile and to restrict and regulate Chilean investment and trade.
Until Humala was 41, his professional career was in the military. Humala received no particular recognitions, and was accused of serious human-rights violations when, in the early 1990s, he commanded the military base at Madre Mia in the Upper Huallaga Valley (a major coca-producing area of Peru) during the Shining Path insurgency. Yet, Humala has highlighted his military background. Humala was often called “el comandante,” and his first support base was army reservists.

Humala’s first appearance into Peruvian politics, in October 2000, was at the time perceived to indicate democratic protest against the authoritarian Fujimori government, but upon subsequent investigative reporting, this interpretation was shown to probably have been incorrect. On October 29, at his military base in the department of Tacna, Humala led what was said to be a coup attempt against the Fujimori government. Humala was briefly imprisoned. However, journalists came to suspect that in fact the coup attempt had been a smokescreen to distract attention from Montesinos’s escape from Peru, which had occurred the same day. There was evidence that Montesinos had called the army base three times that day. Apparently also, the fifty soldiers recruited by Humala were not told the nature of their mission. During the campaign, Montesinos himself echoed these charges—but given the disrepute of Montesinos, his charges might actually have benefited Humala. (Also, one of Humala’s vice-presidential candidates, Carlos Torres Caro, was a constitutional lawyer who had ties to the Fujimori government.)

Concerns about Humala’s militarism and disrespect for liberal democracy were intensified in 2005 during an attempt by Humala’s brother Antauro to overthrow the Toledo government. On New Year’s Day, leading approximately 150 army reservists, Antauro seized the police headquarters in Andahuaylas and demanded Toledo’s resignation. In the
uprising, four police officers and two rebels were killed and ten police officers taken hostage. To re-take the station, the government sent a 1,000 man force; Antauro was arrested. Reportedly, at the time a military attaché in South Korea, Ollanta commented: “the etnocaceristas are people who are carrying out a daring action by asking for the resignation of a president who has lost legitimacy.”

Further, Humala was not assiduous in the establishment of his political party for the 2006 elections. His own party, the Partido Nacionalista Peruano (Peruvian Nationalist Party, PNP) was registered only in mid-November 2005 and accordingly did not meet the legal requirements for registration for the April 2006 elections. To compete, Humala had to identify a registered party that would make him its presidential candidate. Humala found the Unión por el Perú, which had been founded by former United Nations Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar in the mid 1990s, but had drifted in recent years. After Humala lost the presidency, the PNP and the Unión por el Perú split apart almost immediately.

Humala’s 2006 Presidential Candidacy

With respect to economic policy, Humala’s discourse during the 2006 campaign (as well as most recently) matched that of leftist populists elsewhere in Latin America. In general, Humala blamed the greed of transnational corporations and the corruption of Peruvian governments and elites for social injustice in Peru. Humala proclaimed that his objective was to reduce poverty to 15 percent of Peruvians. To this end, Humala said that Peru’s contracts with foreign extractive companies should be reviewed and that their taxes (which had often been negotiated under very favorable terms when mineral prices were low under the corrupt Alberto Fujimori government) increased. Humala promised to end privatizations in Peru and to renew the role of the state in many companies that had previously been
privatized, especially to assure fair prices for utilities. Humala indicated that he would not support the free-trade agreement between the United States and Peru. Also, like Evo Morales, Humala criticized the “war on drugs” and promised to legalize coca.

However, Humala’s views about democracy were at best unclear, and primarily for this reason he did not gain the backing of most of Peru’s traditional left. Humala spoke about democracy and “re-founding Peru” with a new constitution, but he did not elaborate and it appeared that, without much thought, he was simply taking a page from Chávez’s playbook.

Also, Humala regularly signaled that he was not afraid to break the rules of the democratic game. Prior to the first round of the elections, Humala repeated frequently that, if Lourdes Flores won, it would be by fraud, and he would de-stabilize her government. At the start of the May 21 presidential debate, when millions of Peruvians were glued to their television sets, Humala arrived more than fifteen minutes late, and then lied, saying that he had been tardy because the road had been blocked by García supporters. In fact, Humala had been videotaped at a convenience store. Humala also placed a Peruvian flag on his podium and would not remove it, even at the request of the moderator (who finally removed it himself).

Hugo Chávez’s support for Humala was a double-edged sword. Humala had visited Venezuela several times, and appeared to have a friendship Chávez; Ollanta’s campaign was estimated to have received $1 million from Chávez. In April 2006, after the first round of the elections but before the runoff, Chávez went very public in his support for Humala. Just after incumbent President Alejandro Toledo signed the U.S.-Peru free trade agreement, Chávez denounced Peru’s decision; García criticized Chávez and Chávez unleashed a torrent
of insults against García. Chávez called Humala “compadre” and “compañero” and threatened to cut relations with Peru if Humala did not win the runoff. Most Peruvians believed that Chávez was intervening inappropriately in Peru’s election. On the other hand, Humala pledged to slash gas prices by 30 percent, which was credible given Chávez’s likely support of a Humala-led government.

In part because of the ideology of the Ethnic-Cáceres Movement, there was concern about racism, virulent nationalism, and social intolerance. Humala’s party’s symbol was an Incan-style pot with the colors of the Peruvian flag. At campaign rallies in highland areas, Humala wore a poncho and Andean music was played. Invariably, Humala played the Peruvian national anthem and wore a red t-shirt with the words “Amor por el Perú” in white, after the red and white colors of the Peruvian flag. Upsetting to many Peruvians was Humala’s family’s social intolerance; in particular, in March, Humala’s mother declared that homosexuals should be shot.

**Political Support for Humala**

Humala’s support was concentrated among Peru’s poor, indigenous peoples. For example, in a February 2006 poll when there were twenty candidates in the race, Humala enjoyed the support of 32% of Peru’s poorest stratum but only 6% of its wealthiest stratum (stratum “A”). In the 2006 runoff, Humala won fifteen of Peru’s seventeen departments in the interior but lost all eight departments on its more prosperous coast. Humala won by landslides in the poorest, most indigenous departments of the southern highlands: a stunning 83% of the vote in Ayacucho; 76% in Huancavelica; 74% in Apurímac; 73% in Cusco; and 70% in Puno. By contrast, he got only 38% of the vote in Lima.

**Humala After the 2006 Election**
To Peruvians’ surprise, especially in the first two years after the election, Humala took a low profile. Despite occasional charges by García, most Peruvians did not believe that he was de-stabilizing García’s government. In general, Humala appears to be trying to re-make his image, becoming a more conventional leftist-populist leader. His emphasis has been on the campaign promises that García highlighted but has not kept—specifically, promises about the right to unionization, overtime pay, and the elimination of “services” (informal labor contracts under which businesses avoid labor rights). He has now won the support of key groups in Peru’s traditional left. Whether this will help Humala in the 2011 elections remains unclear. Early election polls in Peru are very unreliable; currently, Humala is in the second tier of candidates, with Alejandro Toledo and Lourdes Flores, behind frontrunners Luis Castañeda Lossio (a successful, long time mayor of Lima) and Keiko Fujimori, the imprisoned president’s daughter.

Conclusion

It is clear that populism has been a virtual constant in Peru because social inequalities have not been redressed by liberal-democratic governments. But this conclusion provokes a plethora of questions. First, over the last fifty years, social inequalities have in fact been ameliorated considerably under these governments; how much amelioration should be enough? What are the benchmarks? Is the real problem in Peru a cynical political culture? Recently, this is the analysis advanced by the García government, and it is not groundless.

However, in my view there are inherent challenges for liberal democracy in Peru and most other Latin American nations at similar levels of development. First, in election campaigns, promises are made, and these promises build expectations. In Peru, promises have tended to be both specific and ambitious, and it is not difficult after an election for
opposition politicians to cite a plethora of unmet promises. Ollanta Humala regularly lists the promises that García made and has to date not fulfilled. Also, the development of political parties that are truly committed to the popular welfare is not an easy proposition. For various reasons—including education, social networks, and campaign finance, Peru’s political parties have rarely recruited members from humble origins. In 2006, of twenty presidential candidates, Humala was one of only two or three (another of whom was his brother) who was mestizo rather than Caucasian or Asian. Rather, Peru’s military has recruited members from humble origins.

Over time, these challenges can be met. If democracy is not interrupted, candidates will have more political experience and their records should become more important than their promises. As access to education improves, as it certainly has in Peru, political parties will have more representatives from humble origins and democracy is likely to be more inclusive.

NOTES


1The APRA was intended to be a region-wide movement. The Partido Aprista Peruano (PAP) was founded in 1930 to be the movement’s party in Peru. However, the party is most commonly called APRA.


1 The concept of “the oligarchy” was used by Peruvians and scholars alike. One excellent study is Dennis L. Gilbert, The Oligarchy and the Old Regime in Peru, Cornell University Latin American Studies Program Dissertation Series, January 1977.


Excellent analyses include Cotler, pp. 233-236; Klarén, p. xi and 113-136; and Stein, pp. 134-136 and 150-161.


In 1940, the populations of Cusco, Junin, and Puno were slightly more than 50% of the population of Lima; see Magali Sarfatti Larson and Arlene Eisen Bergman, Social Stratification in Peru, University of California at Berkeley, Institute of International Studies, Politics of Modernization Series #5 (1969), p. 299.

Klarén, p. 136.

Larson and Bergman, p. 363.

Velasco’s principal speechwriter, the sociologist Carlos Delgado, was closely tied to Haya de la Torre; see Carlos Contreras and Marcos Cueto, Historia del Perú Contemporáneo (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 2004), p. 328.


Juan Velasco Alvarado, Velasco: La Voz de la Revolución Vol. 1 (Lima: SINAMOS, 1972), p. 57. These words were from Velasco’s speech for independence day, July 28, 1969.


Velasco, Vol. 1, p. 29.


Lowenthal, pp. 427-428.

Caretas 512 (February 3, 1977), pp. 30-33.


On these concepts, see Velasco, Vol. 1, p. 9 and Vol. 2, p. 271.


Gall, p. 307.

McClintock, Revolutionary Movements, p. 73.

Conaghan, p. 30.


Conaghan, p. 25.


Figures are from annual editions of *Perú en Números* and from the International Monetary Fund; see McClintock and Vallas.

Figures are from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Economist Intelligence Unit; see Cynthia McClintock and Fabián Vallas, “The United States and Peru in the New Millennium,” in Jorge I. Domínguez and Rafael Fernández de Castro, eds., *Contemporary Inter-American Relations* (New York: Routledge, forthcoming).


Ibid, pp. 68-69 and 72-73.


Webb and Fernández Baca, pp. 675-677 and 691. Average real wages were stagnant in the private and public sector, and the real minimum wage at the national level was not rising.

Webb and Fernández Baca, p. 599.


La República, January 15, 2006, p. 2.


See the photograph of Isaac’s wife in Renato Cisneros, “¿Auténtico o imposter?” *El Comercio*, January 21, 2006, p. a10. Nadine is in the media regularly.


Cisneros, op. cit., p. a10.

Cisneros, op. cit., p. a10. See also Páez and Hidalgo., p. 27.


“Ollanta Humala starts producing surprises,” *Latin America Weekly (or regional?) Report,* get date and page.


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xix Juan Velasco Alvarado, Velasco: La Voz de la Revolución Vol. 1 (Lima: SINAMOS, 1972), p. 57. These words were from Velasco’s speech for independence day, July 28, 1969.
xxiiJuan Velasco Alvarado, Velasco: La Voz de la Revolución, Vol. 1, p. 29.
xxviLowenthal, pp. 427-428.
xxviiCaretas 512 (February 3, 1977), pp. 30-33.
xxixOn these concepts, see Velasco, Vol. 1, p. 9 and Vol. 2, p. 271.
xxviiiby McClintock, Revolutionary Movements, p. 73.
xxviiiConaghan, p. 30.
xxviiiFigures are from annual editions of Perú en Números and from the International Monetary Fund; see McClintock and Vallas.
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xxviiIbid, pp. 68-69 and 72-73.
xxviiWebb and Fernández Baca, p. 599 and “La Pobrez Hizo Click,” Caretas, May 21, 2009, p. 34; the figures are questioned in Richard Webb, “Quizás, Quizás, Quizás,” El Comercio, June 2, 2008.
xxviiThe World Bank, World Development Indicators 2009 (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 2009), pp. 84-86. Figure is for net enrollment ratio.
xxviiWebb and Fernández Baca, pp. 675-677 and 691. Average real wages were stagnant in the private and public sector, and the real minimum wage at the national level was not rising.