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Rodrigo Barrenechea, Alberto Vergara

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PERU: THE DANGER OF POWERLESS DEMOCRACY

Rodrigo Barrenechea and Alberto Vergara

Rodrigo Barrenechea is assistant professor of social sciences at the Universidad Católica del Uruguay and a 2022–23 Santo Domingo Visiting Scholar at Harvard University’s David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies. **Alberto Vergara** is professor of political and social sciences at the Universidad del Pacífico in Lima.

For Peru, the last seven years have been a time of relentless political turmoil and democratic decay. There have been seven presidents in as many years. Early in December 2022, President Pedro Castillo reacted to repeated attempts to impeach him in Congress by launching a self-coup. It failed, as did his subsequent attempt to flee the country. He is now in jail, and his successor, First Vice-President Dina Boluarte, now the interim president, has been meeting street protests with levels of armed force that have no place in a democracy. In January 2023, the *Economist* rated Peru a “hybrid regime” in its annual index of the state of democracy in the world.¹

The academic literature on “democratic backsliding” assumes almost by definition that when democracies die, the cause is too much power accumulating in too few hands—often those of a lone strongman such as Hungary’s Viktor Orbán, Turkey’s Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, or the Philippines’ Rodrigo Duterte. The case of Peru, however, suggests that this is not the only path: Democracies can also perish from power dilution. Peru’s democracy is on the brink of collapse not because of a popular tyrant, but because it has been plagued by a myriad of unpopular, inexperienced leaders who have had little incentive to act on anything but the shortest of short-term motives. Parties and political elites able to aggregate interests and represent society are in such short supply that democracy can barely function and the state has trouble performing its minimal duties. Peru, in short, has undergone a process of “democratic hollowing.”

Peru’s day-by-day politics is marked by events that either reflect a fragile democracy or are the sign of a nondemocratic regime. In recent

years, conflict between the executive and legislative branches of government has led to seven processes aimed at removing a president from office. Three of these processes have succeeded, the third and latest being Congress's impeachment and removal of President Castillo as an im-

mediate response to his coup attempt. In 2019, President Martín Vizcarra dissolved Congress during a dispute over anticorruption measures. The atmosphere of repeated high-stakes contention—with rival branches not merely disagreeing but threatening to “end” each other politically—has led the military to become gradually more involved in the political process. An interim president, Manuel Merino, had to resign after just five days in November 2020. In the latest round of trouble, under President Boluarte, violent protests have swamped the country. These, together with brutal repression by the military and the Na-

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tional Police, have led to the deaths of sixty people as of this writing in March 2023.² The recent trajectory confirms that the country's political regime is moving away from democracy.

Seven years ago, the presidential election in this Andean country of 34 million featured an exceptionally tight runoff between Pedro Pablo Kuczynski (PPK) and Keiko Fujimori, the daughter and political heir of Alberto Fujimori, Peru's authoritarian president in the 1990s. PPK won by only about forty-thousand votes in a race where more than seventeen-million ballots were cast. He had made it to the June 2016 runoff with a historically low vote share of around 20 percent. After refusing to accept her loss, Keiko Fujimori vowed that she would implement her program through her party's 73-seat majority in the 130-member unicameral Congress.

In March 2018, Congress toppled PPK on its second try in four months, citing his involvement in the massive Odebrecht corruption scandal. The actual means of ousting him was Article 113 of the 1993 Constitution, which says that one of the things which can “vacate” the presidential office is a congressional declaration that the incumbent suffers from “permanent physical or *moral* incapacity” [emphasis added]. He resigned on March 21, just ahead of a vote in which leftist lawmakers would have joined the *fujimoristas* in removing him. Later reports suggested that First Vice-President Vizcarra, a former regional governor still little known on the national stage, had been coordinating with the Fujimori camp.³

The seeds of interbranch war had been sown. PPK had tried to survive by negotiating with the legislature, only to face Congress's most

destructive weapon. Vizcarra took a line hostile to Congress and the Fujimori camp, gathering a wide popular coalition to make up for his lack of regular party support. In December 2018, he secured the passage (by a huge margin) of a referendum banning members of Congress from seeking consecutive terms.

In September 2019 came another escalation as Vizcarra dissolved Congress over the anticorruption dispute. He used another constitutional provision (Article 134) that allows the chief executive to dissolve the legislature and call a fresh election if lawmakers refuse a vote of confidence to two cabinets in a row.

Congress immediately declared Vizcarra's actions unconstitutional, said that his presidency was suspended, and named Second Vice-President Mercedes Aráoz (PPK's second vice-president) as his interim replacement. Confusion reigned for a few hours until the popular Vizcarra posted on social media a photo of himself with the chief of the National Police and the top military commanders. Aráoz declined her congressional appointment to the presidency on October 1, and the Constitutional Tribunal later sealed Vizcarra's victory by ruling that his dissolution of Congress had been legal.

When there had been two claimants to the presidency, Vizcarra had won by showing (with the online photo) that he enjoyed the backing of the armed forces. But escalations are hard to stop. The Congress chosen via the January 2020 snap election had 58 fewer members of Keiko Fujimori's party, but the new legislature remained opposed to the president. (Lacking a party to back him, Vizcarra had run no one for Congress, and the newly elected legislators quickly took a defensive stance against a popular, anti-Congress president.) Once again, the method of declaring a presidential *vacancia* under Article 113 was tried. In this case, the underlying matter was corruption allegations against Vizcarra dating from his time as a governor in southern Peru. The first effort, in September 2020, failed. The second one, in November, succeeded. Vizcarra left office quietly on November 9.

The swiftness with which, in the middle of a pandemic, an unpopular Congress had acted to remove a popular president sparked outrage. Merino, the legislature's appointee to the presidency, met with strong public disapproval. He appointed a cabinet filled with right-wing authoritarian figures and mobilized security forces to secure his grasp on power, but within less than a week protests forced him to hand things over to another transitional president, albeit not before harsh repression had led to two deaths and more than a hundred injuries.

The 2021 presidential election saw democratic erosion take on a new dimension. If politicians' actions had downgraded the system to a sum of power grabs, the two candidates who reached the June 6 runoff each introduced a distinct note of authoritarianism. Keiko Fujimori, seeking the presidency a third time, promised to make Peru a "demodura"²⁴ and vindicate her imprisoned father's authoritarian legacy. Pedro Castillo, the other contender, was running on the ticket of a self-described Marxist-Leninist

party.⁵ His populist campaign vowed to dismantle political institutions and convene an elected assembly to rewrite the constitution, the same recipe followed by other left-wing populists in the Andes. During the campaign, both candidates warned of fraud. Castillo won by the same agonizingly small margin (less than three-tenths of a percentage point) that had lifted PPK to the presidency over Keiko Fujimori five years before.⁶

There was no consensus about the supervening value of democracy available to cushion the consequences of another narrow runoff result: Fujimori refused to accept defeat, claimed fraud, and called on her followers to take to the streets against the “communist threat.” Without evidence, she and her camp charged that a large and clandestine organization of people had forged votes in peripheral areas of the country. Fujimori, supported by the whole right-wing spectrum, sought to nullify more than 200,000 votes from the highlands, where Castillo had performed exceptionally well.⁷ They could not derail Castillo’s victory, however, and he was inaugurated in July 2021.

A newcomer to public office (he was an activist from a teachers’ union) and facing an opposition that flatly denied his legitimacy, Castillo got off to a shaky start. Press and opposition attention focused at first on his far-left allies, but soon shifted to corruption and incompetence scandals involving most of his cabinet. His government was a *mélange* of radical discourse, political ineptitude, and blatant patrimonialism. During his seventeen months as president, he had a change of cabinet ministers at the rate of one every six days.

Castillo’s approval rating went from weak (38 percent in August 2021) to abysmal (19 percent in April 2022).⁸ Without popular support, he quickly became the target of removal attempts in Congress. He took to the nation’s geographic interior, holding televised meetings with community leaders while serving up helpings of populist rhetoric and attacks on Congress. At the same time, criminal investigators were looking into credible corruption allegations against him.

On 7 December 2022, Congress was preparing to vote on a third *vacancia* process against Castillo. Most likely, the 87 votes needed to oust him were not there, but the president panicked and went on live television to announce that he was dissolving Congress, declaring emergency rule, imposing a curfew, and calling for a constituent assembly. After an hour of confusion, it became clear that Castillo was acting without the backing of his cabinet, his party in Congress, or (most crucially) the armed forces. The military high command and the National Police issued a statement rejecting Castillo’s coup and reaffirming their loyalty to the constitution. Congress immediately voted to find the presidency vacant, and swore in Boluarte. Castillo was arrested the same day.

Boluarte, a lawyer and bureaucrat, had resigned from Castillo’s party and enjoyed little popular support: A national survey taken the month before the December crisis found 87 percent of respondents saying that

early elections should follow if Castillo were to fall. Only 8 percent wanted Congress to serve until 2026.⁹ An oblivious Boluarte nonetheless announced that she and Congress would stay in office for the rest of the term; protests swiftly broke out. As had happened when Vizcarra was ousted, a significant share of the citizenry was reacting against what it saw as a power grab by an unpopular Congress.

Seeing her mistake, Boluarte then said that her administration would be transitional and that she was open to elections in 2024. This came too late, however. Protests had already engulfed the country. What is worse, they featured previously unseen levels of violence: Public buildings were destroyed, several airports were seized, a congressman's house was torched, and dozens of roads were blocked.

The government bet on a militarized strategy to deal with the protests. The new president and her allies claimed that rather than having a political crisis featuring widespread, decentralized protests, Peru was beset by a criminal insurrection. Senior National Police and military officers echoed rhetoric from the internal armed conflict of the 1980s and 1990s, when the Shining Path had made world headlines with its Maoist violence. Within days of Boluarte's swearing-in came the start of a spiral of repression and disorder that so far has left sixty people dead. On December 15, an attempted airport takeover in the Andean city of Ayacucho led to clashes with security forces and left ten dead. According to reliable reports, at least six of them were killed by shots fired by troops.¹⁰ On 9 January 2023, National Police in another interior city (Juliaca) clashed with protesters, leaving eighteen civilians dead, and dozens wounded. Soon after, a large mob attacked a pair of police officers on duty in the town. One was beaten; his partner was burned to death in their patrol car.¹¹ Boluarte is now supported by the most conservative and authoritarian sectors of Peruvian politics—the ones that had dismissed the ticket she ran on as a winner only by fraud.

Since 2016, Peru has descended the slope of democratic backsliding with alarming speed. The military—in part against its own inclinations—has been gradually finding its way back into politics. The right has tried to deny the result of a legitimate electoral process. A left-of-center president attempted a self-coup. State repression and civil-liberties violations are on the rise. The “ultimate weapons” written into a pair of constitutional articles have been used recurrently and frivolously in what amounted to power grabs. The civic consensus that democracy presupposes has broken down. Why has Peru followed such a path?

Democratic Hollowing

The recent months of rights abuses and excessive uses of force in Peru seem like a more classic form of democratic deterioration, a lurch toward coercion and authoritarianism. The longer trend, however, re-

veals a different problem: Peru's predicament is a crisis not of power accumulation, but of power dilution.

Scholarship on democratization has generally seen the concentration of power—by oligarchs, generals, or a political strongman—as democracy's natural nemesis. Robert

Scholars have mostly concerned themselves with studying the different ways in which power can re-concentrate. But having enough power is as critical to making democracy work as having limited, divided powers is for preventing authoritarianism.

A. Dahl's influential account of democracy as "polyarchy" is concerned with the conditions that allow groups to challenge and break up oligarchic power.¹² Democracy emerges when power becomes less concentrated, to the point where no actor can unilaterally impose its will on the others. Instead, all the players in the political game must learn the arts of bargaining, compromise, argument, persuasion, and give-and-take: They must get used to the reality of pluralism and

figure out how to pursue their various goals and represent their various interests within its bounds.

The idea that power concentration is democracy's antithesis has guided de-democratization studies. Scholars in this field have mostly concerned themselves with studying the different ways in which power can re-concentrate, whether suddenly as in a coup,¹³ or via more gradual processes of democratic backsliding and erosion.¹⁴

But having enough power is as critical to making democracy work as having limited, divided powers is for preventing authoritarianism. Peru shows that when people and organizations who are able—who have enough power—to effectively represent society's various interest groups, classes, regions, and factions are absent, a democracy can become ungovernable to the point where its liberal aspects are jeopardized and the door may swing open to authoritarianism.

Peter Mair proposed a decade ago that European democracies were hollowing. Citizens retreated to private life and politicians to their offices, eroding the appeal of parties as forums in which citizens and politicians could interact.¹⁵ Echoes of that diagnosis are present in the literature on party-system de-institutionalization in Latin America.¹⁶ In Peru, hollowing is deeper and wider; parties and politicians have vanished instead of disconnecting from citizens. The hollowing in this case means the extreme dilution of power observed as electoral fragmentation, the gradual replacement of professional politicians by political "outsiders," and the breaking of linkages between elected officials and society. These three phenomena turn politics into a short-term game in which politicians feel no incentive to cooperate and instead have strong

incentives to engage in radical and predatory behavior. As we explain below, politicians with no political past, no future, and no base holding them accountable will focus on maximizing their gains, power, and influence in the present. This, we argue, helps to explain the series of failed power grabs that have beset Peru in recent years and rendered its democracy unworkable.

Electoral fragmentation. This clear indicator of power dilution goes back to the final years under Alberto Fujimori, who fled the country and resigned the presidency in November 2000, after a decade in office. Political parties had been pushed aside and badly weakened under the authoritarian rule that Fujimori launched with his April 1992 self-coup, during which he shuttered Congress and the courts and took legislative and judicial powers into his own hands. Eleven parties obtained representation in 2001; the highest finisher among them received barely more than a quarter of the vote. Wary of party fragmentation, Congress passed reforms to contain it.

The reforms failed, however. Centrifugal tendencies continued to dominate. Parties command little loyalty because politicians do not rely on them to run their campaigns, counting instead on their own reputations and resources. Fragmentation favors individual political entrepreneurship, since not many votes are needed for election to Congress. Politicians can get elected by gaining control of something like a small local radio station, or by “renting” small electoral “machines” organized by hired political operatives.¹⁷ Once a candidate secures election to Congress, it is time to split off and look for other opportunities. Thus did Congress go from six party groupings to thirteen between 2016 and 2019. The Congress that was elected in 2021 started with ten blocs and now has thirteen.

Fragmentation is also apparent in presidential elections. In 2001, the two candidates who made it to the runoff had claimed a combined 62 percent of the vote in the first round. In 2021, that figure had dropped to 32 percent. A February 2023 survey showed that, when asked to name someone who could be a good contender for the presidency, the person who drew the most mentions had only 4.5 percent of responses and was, moreover, a political outsider. Of the more than eighteen candidates mentioned (pollsters presented no list, but simply let respondents supply names), only two topped 4 percent. Fully 71 percent of respondents either mentioned no name or said flatly that nobody would be a good contender.¹⁸

Even before 2021, when Vizcarra’s referendum to prohibit immediate reelection went into effect and reduced the number of returning lawmakers to zero, members of Congress almost never held onto their seats in the next election. This of course reduces incumbent parties to little more than names that are largely swept aside by each turn of the electoral cycle: Perú Posible went from 45 seats in 2001 to just a pair of

seats in 2006; the Partido Aprista Peruano fell from 36 seats in 2006 to four seats in 2011; Gana Perú (Peru Wins) went from 47 seats in 2011 to none in 2016; and Peruvians for Change went from 18 seats in 2016 to none five years later. Peruvians elected a different party to the presidency each time, and they sent it into electoral oblivion five years later.

Since they chose the agronomist Alberto Fujimori to be president in 1990, Peruvian voters have been turning to political outsiders to solve deep, long-running problems such as poor public-goods provision, weak rule of law, high levels of inequality, and ethnic exclusion. Typically, the outsider president starts with high hopes and approval numbers, then loses support and crashes. Since 2001, Alejandro Toledo, Ollanta Humala, PPK, and Castillo have come to power and then collapsed in political discredit. Consequently, power has circulated more than accumulated, and experienced politicians are nowhere to be found. Peru has long been called a “democracy without parties.” Today it could be called a democracy without politicians.

Personalistic amateurism. Among the most striking features of Peru’s democratic hollowing has been the replacement of politicians with political amateurs bereft of experience and reliable support. Electoral fragmentation and turnover have ended the possibility of a political career. Only amateurs are left, even for the highest offices. Parties are weak and fleeting, so by default these amateurs tend to run on *personalismo*, without larger organizations such as parties to support or control them. Of the nine presidents since 2001, six had never held a prior elected position. Three ran on behalf of parties that were merely personalist vehicles, while three others had no meaningful connection to the party whose ticket they headed.

Presidents since 2016 illustrate this trend. A noted technocrat, PPK led a shaky right-of-center coalition and had little appeal outside middle- and upper-class parts of Lima. Vizcarra had been the one-term governor of a small region. Castillo was a rural teacher who led a small union. His entire political experience consisted of finishing fourth in a race to be mayor of a district with fewer than two-thousand voters. The media had barely heard of him, and he did not show up in polling until ten days before the 11 April 2021 first round. It quickly became clear that his candidacy was improvised, and that he had no real ties to the Marxist-Leninist party (run by a Cuban-trained surgeon) on whose ticket he was running. Many of Castillo’s advisors were his relatives. Dina Boluarte, his replacement, is a minor public functionary who failed at runs for a mayoralty and a congressional seat. Once elected first vice-president, she saw the post as so tenuous that she wanted to make sure she could keep her day job working in the national vital-statistics office.

Political amateurism was facilitated by Peruvians’ electoral behavior and reinforced by a 2018 constitutional reform. Congressional-re-

election rates had been exceedingly low since the country's return to democracy; by means of his December 2018 referendum, which passed by almost 86 percent, Vizcarra then made immediate reelection of congresspeople illegal altogether. A similar law regarding governors and mayors had passed in 2015, making Peru's electoral institutions a career-ending machine for politicians. If amateurs lack a political past, the rarity of—and then the outright ban on—reelection ensured that they can have no future either.

Inexperienced amateurs may not only be prone to gross miscalculations (such as Castillo's attempt to seize power), but will have weak accountability given their lack of organizational ties. This is a recipe for irresponsible behavior.

Absence of political linkages. The third characteristic of democratic hollowing is the lack of significant and stable linkages between politicians and society. In the 1980s, programmatic divides shaped Peru's party system and provided relatively stable ties with voters. After Fujimori, however, alignments based on policy preferences became more tenuous, and the outsiders who have governed the country since his day have become known for changing their policy stands once in office. Parties that are little more than names on the campaign posters of personalistic candidates are not going to hold politicians accountable. Clientelist tactics meant to mobilize voters during campaigns come and go with those campaigns. Partisan identification is low.

Perhaps the most stable ties that politicians have with society are not any political identities at all, but rather “anti-identities.” Outsiders appeal to the visceral rejection of parties, and especially the rejection of *fujimorismo*.¹⁹ Anti-*fujimorismo* has sufficed—barely—to keep Keiko Fujimori out of the presidency, but it has been the “brand” of a string of outsiders (Toledo, Humala, PPK, Vizcarra, Castillo) who have had little to give them a governing agenda, to hold them accountable, or to support them once they have reached the highest office. More recently, in the aftermath of Castillo, the right seems to be rallying around an “anti-left” ideology to support Boluarte's presidency.

Democratic Hollowing: What It Does

One implication of democratic hollowing that we can observe in Peru is the vast weight of short-term calculations in both campaigning and governing. With no political experience behind them, uncertain prospects before them, and no linkages to society, Peruvian politicians have only the present. Fragmentation, amateurism, and the absence of linkages to society increase uncertainty about the future. Loyalty to parties that are little more than letterheads makes no sense, and reelection is rare or illegal. There is little incentive for self-restraint: Election results

can be denied, Congress dissolved, presidents removed, and coups attempted. The game is “take your one shot, and take it now.”

The forced resignation of PPK from the presidency illustrates this logic. Both the leftist parties and the *fujimoristas* opposed him fiercely. The left had more or less ideological reasons: He was a U.S.-trained neoliberal technocrat whose base was white, upper-class Peruvians. The *fujimoristas* did not oppose PPK programmatically (he had backed Keiko Fujimori against Humala in 2011), but because he had beaten their candidate (Keiko again) in 2016. They wanted to oust him, in other words, because they thought they could, given the opportunity.

That came when the media reported allegations that PPK had been corrupt during his time as Alejandro Toledo’s finance minister. *Fujimorismo* instantly became the most enthusiastic supporter of using the *vacancia*, the Peruvian constitution’s nuclear weapon, to remove the president. There was every chance that PPK’s party (which was also called PPK) would vanish from Congress at the next election, as indeed happened.

With PPK gone, Congress next challenged President Vizcarra to a game of “chicken,” daring him to issue a dissolution decree. When he did so and a new legislature was sworn in after the resulting fresh election, that Congress ousted Vizcarra via *vacancia*. In short-sightedness and selfishness, this removal exceeded even the toppling of PPK, coming as it did in the middle of the pandemic in one of the countries hardest hit by covid. The climate of confrontation, the opposition charges that Vizcarra was a “communist,” and the immediate resort to the most radical constitutional measures all bespoke the lack of restraint and rejection of cooperation.

Once PPK and Vizcarra were removed from office, short-term thinking became even more radical, as it became clear that adversaries could not only disappear tomorrow but could be made to disappear today. The electoral denialism displayed by Castillo’s opponents and the subsequent refusal to accept the legitimacy of his presidency was a forecast of disloyal behavior to come. For their part, Castillo’s circle and Perú Libre dedicated themselves to steps meant to maximize gains from their temporary position of power: predation of public resources and, following the lead of other Andean populist leaders, the promotion (by Perú Libre especially) of radical institutional changes to be passed by a constituent assembly whose draft of a new constitution was supposed to go directly to a popular referendum without the need for congressional approval.

The concept of democratic hollowing helps us to account not only for the dynamics of conflict, predation, and disloyal opposition seen among politicians in today’s Peru, but also for Peruvian society’s seeming inability to resolve conflict following Castillo’s downfall. The government’s rights abuses and the overinvolvement of the military and National Police in the political process are best understood less as the deliberate work of a power-concentrating dictatorship than as telltale

signs of power dilution and fragility besetting an overwhelmed government that in its panicky flailings against widespread protests has been sacrificing democracy in the name of order.²⁰

Peru's politicians are capable of engaging in unrestrained institutional conflict, but not of aggregating demands or mobilizing society to resolve conflicts. This is especially regrettable now, since the decentralized character of the protests makes the demands of interest aggregation and negotiation more complex. Since President Boluarte acknowledged the need for an announcement of early elections to help quell the crisis, leftists and rightists in Congress have bickered and stalled. The leftists still want to hold out for a referendum on whether to convene a constituent assembly, while the rightists fear that a fresh recourse to the ballot box will cost them their seats. Curiously, this squabbling has meant that the only group in Congress to fully back the idea of early elections has been the *fujimoristas*, who after all are the one party with some assurance of an ability to survive into the future.

Although President Boluarte has abused her authority by going along with excessive repression, her power is as precarious as that of her predecessors. According to credible reports, she has twice tried to quit.²¹ So, even amid the most authoritarian episode in Peruvian politics in decades, it is not power concentration that helps to explain the crisis, but political precariousness and power dilution. Sadly, the future seems to threaten more of the same.

Politics Out, Force In

De-democratization, in Peru as elsewhere, is bringing with it the replacement of politics by force. Peru's path from hollowed-out politics to a government that relies on unaccountable and abusive violence is all too straightforward.

Peru is a warning. Complaints about parties and professional politicians are common everywhere, but Peru is what a country without parties and professional politicians looks like. The question is no longer about the kind of government Peruvians want, but about whether the country can be governed at all. The tendencies described in this essay are not peculiar to a single country in the Andes.

Elsewhere in Latin America we find that Guatemala too seems to be suffering from democratic hollowing. In the campaign leading up to the June 2023 presidential election, for example, Zury Ríos, daughter and political heir of 1980s dictator Efraín Ríos Montt, is leading the polls with less than 20 percent support. The current president, Alejandro Giammattei, reached the second round in 2019 with a mere 13.9 percent of the vote. Guatemala's Congress, meanwhile, has long been filled with politicians who would not surprise Peruvians: Individual legislators endlessly switch sides and parties lack solid links to society (despite

some clientelism in rural areas). The predatory behavior made easier by hollowing is now being seen in Guatemala. Illegal, informal, and de facto powers fill the vacuum left by democratic politics. No strongman has emerged. What the country must cope with instead is an unstable, corrupt pluralism that makes meaningful reforms unlikely. According to political scientist Omar Sánchez-Sibony, Guatemala is no longer a democracy despite having elections that remain competitive (at least for those who are allowed to participate in them). This antecedent should worry Peruvians since illegal and informal activities have gradually penetrated politics in Peru.

Beyond Peru and Guatemala, Colombia and Chile display characteristics of a mounting crisis of representation: unexpected outsiders reaching presidential runoffs, and parties no longer able to properly represent their societies. Both countries have also, like Peru, seen outbreaks of violent social unrest met with brutal state repression. According to official sources, the *estallido social* (social explosion) in Chile that was at its most intense between October 2019 and March 2020 saw 36 people killed, while 29 died during Colombia's 2021 protests. On the one hand, Latin American societies are displaying unprecedented levels of rage. On the other, governments are increasingly responding with repression. These are manifestations of a failing representation system. Thus, the mechanics of hollowing are not peculiar to Peru. As Uruguayan political scientist Juan Pablo Luna likes to say, Peru is not a rare case in Latin America, but merely the vanguard of a regionwide crisis of representation.²²

NOTES

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2. The Lima newspaper *La República* is keeping track of the fatalities online, and memorializing those who have died, at <https://data.larepublica.pe/paro-nacional-muertos-por-protestas-en-peru-cuantos-y-quienes-son-un-recuento-de-los-civiles-que-fallecieron-dina-boluarde>. Of the sixty dead in *La República*'s count, 48 were civilians killed, reports the newspaper, "presumably by the forces of order in the context of the clashes during the protests."

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4. She vowed this during an interview via Twitter on 25 February 2021, https://twitter.com/KeikoFujimori/status/1365040976037838850?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw.

5. "Perú Libre: Ideario y Programa," February 2020, <https://apisije-e.jne.gob.pe/TRAMITE/ESCRITO/2108/ARCHIVO/FIRMADO/9716.PDF>.

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