

**WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT, MODERNITY, AND STERILIZATION IN PERU,
UNDER ALBERTO FUJIMORI'S DICTATORSHIP FROM
1990 - 2000**

A Thesis By

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Abstract:

In summary, this thesis brings together historical events that have typically been analyzed as separate, unrelated episodes in Peruvian historiography. An examination of the principal crises preceding and unfolding during Fujimori's presidency reveals that issues were frequently studied in isolation. Women's rights, economic decline, political instability, rural insurgency, and military abuses were profoundly interconnected, creating the perfect conditions for the armed forces and the Peruvian government to target the poor and vulnerable populations as the cause of governmental failures.

The first examines Alan Garcia's concluding years in the presidency. It explores the state's confrontation with internal insurgent movements, namely The Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) and the Revolutionary Movement Túpac Amaru (MRTA), situating these conflicts within the broader context of Peru's profound economic crisis and rapid, largely uncontrolled population growth. The second section of this thesis focuses on how women are not a homogeneous group in their pursuit of liberation from male-dominated systems of control. Although public discourse often portrays women as protective, nurturing, or inherently aligned with collective female interests, historical evidence suggests a more complex reality. The third and concluding section delves into the methods and mechanisms employed by the government and armed forces to carry out sterilization campaigns targeting poor and socially vulnerable communities.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Almost 27 years later, in the province of Paucartambo in the department of Cuzco.

Dominga Pinchi Huaman was taken from her home and sterilized against her will. She was thirty-seven years old when two healthcare workers, Alicia and Peter, arrived in the community.

Healthcare workers came to my door and to the doors of many other women to try to convince us to get our tubes tied. My husband did not want this, but one day, Alicia and Peter came, having collected many other women into the car. They asked me how many children I had. I told them I had three boys and three girls. They exclaimed, ‘That many children! Get in, get in, get in, to the car at once! The car held about nine women. And once inside the car, they told us that this was an order from the government that we could not have that many children. We defended ourselves, saying that we did not want to go through with the tubal ligation. That the number of children did not matter, and what was the problem with having so many children? They would reply, ‘If we did not want to go through with the tubal ligation, we would go to prison. They said we could have only two children at most; that was the order from the Fujimori government. We were taken to the medical post in Colquepata. I managed to escape with another lady. I ran until I arrived at Colpamayo, when the cops finally caught up to me because my sandal had broken and I could no longer run. They pulled me by my arms and took me back. Once at the medical post, they took me to a room where they injected me about six times. I was struggling and kicking on the bed. There were a lot of women on a piece of plastic on the floor. Around four o’clock, they put me to sleep, and when I woke up around midnight, I was shaking on the floor. I could not get dressed because of the pain. When I finally arrived home, my husband kicked me out. ‘Why did you allow it!’ He yelled. Since then, he no longer provides for me.

Despite the amount of academic writing about Peru’s forced sterilization to date, existing scholarship has not examined the specific events that culminated in the Peruvian government’s sterilization of indigenous men, women, and girls. This study centers on the government-led sterilization campaign, analyzing how political instability, shifting state priorities, and broader social upheaval during Alan García’s final years in office and the election of Alberto Fujimori created conditions that allowed his administration to implement coercive reproductive policies. While economic crisis and rural unrest formed part of this backdrop, this project foregrounds the mechanisms of state power and the disproportionate impact on indigenous communities.

This thesis brings together historical events that have typically been analyzed as separate, unrelated episodes within Peruvian historiography. An examination of the principal crises preceding and unfolding during Fujimori's presidency reveals that issues were frequently studied in isolation. Women's rights, economic decline, political instability, rural insurgency, and military abuses were profoundly interconnected, creating the perfect conditions for the armed forces and the Peruvian government to target the poor and vulnerable populations as the cause of governmental failures. Within the same framework, I focus on the erroneous assumptions the Peruvian government held about women and how their relationship would evolve within hierarchical power dynamics. These assumptions cast women as materialistic, moral, and devoid of political and economic aspiration, because their socially constructed purpose emphasized motherhood and self-sacrifice. Despite women's socially constructed identities, which the government reinforced, they demonstrated outcomes contrary to those anticipated by both society and the state.

This thesis is structured into three distinct sections. The first examines Alan Garcia's concluding years in the presidency. It explores the state's confrontation with internal insurgent movements, namely The Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) and the Revolutionary Movement Túpac Amaru (MRTA), situating these conflicts within the broader context of Peru's profound economic crisis and rapid, largely uncontrolled population growth. The study considers how mounting demographic pressures and economic instability contributed to coercive measures of population control, including forced sterilizations that disproportionately affected the impoverished and rural communities. By examining the intersection of political violence, governance, economic strain, and demographic policy, this chapter seeks to illuminate the complex structural challenges that shaped governance, state capacity, and human rights during a pivotal period in Peru's history. The economic policies that bankrupted the country and intensified rural revolts against the government. This consequently led the upper echelons of the armed forces to plot a coup against Garcia's government.

The economy and the state of war the country was living through were among the various problems the Armed Forces saw as ramifications of skyrocketing population growth in an already impoverished country, unable to sustain its inhabitants. This situation of inequity and tangible need of the most underprivileged sectors led many people to join the communist guerrilla groups, creating alienation toward this specific sector of Peruvian society. All of this led to the Armed Forces' involvement in the surprise election of Fujimori, a newcomer to politics, through the influence of the ex-military captain Vladimiro Montesinos.

The second section of this thesis focuses on how women are not a homogeneous group in their pursuit of liberation from male-dominated systems of control. Although public discourse often portrays women as naturally nurturing, protective, or inherently aligned with collective female interests, historical evidence suggests a more complex reality. When afforded positions of authority or access to material and political benefits for themselves and their communities, some women have aligned with actively reinforced existing power structures, even when such alignment has come at the expense of other women.

This chapter examines this dynamic in the context of Peru under Alberto Fujimori. I lay out evidence that women across social classes and status groups supported and legitimized Fujimori's consolidation of power in ways that advanced their immediate interests while contributing to policies that harmed other women. In analyzing these patterns of support, I challenge the essentialist assumption about gender solidarity and highlight the political heterogeneity of women's engagements with authoritarian governance.

I argue that women were not homogeneous in their quest for freedom from patriarchy. Regardless of how they were portrayed by public opinion due to their femininity or their ingrained mothering and protective nature, they demonstrated that when granted positions of power and access to more significant benefits for themselves and their communities. Some selfishly supported the established power structure, disregarding the pain and suffering of others of their own gender. I

demonstrate how some Peruvian women, regardless of their social status or class, allowed President Alberto Fujimori to improve their own situation at the expense of others.

This chapter seeks to shine a light on middle- and upper-class women who came to power or were granted power by the president, many of whom were elected to Congress, and others who were appointed as ministers, organizers, or presidential advisors. As Cecilia Blondet states in her book *El encanto del dictador: Mujeres y política en la década de Fujimori*: “Los intereses que las acercaron al poder fueron muy diversos y mientras unas se relacionaron directamente con el presidente y contaban con su confianza.” Many of these became close advisers to the president, even though they were not public political figures.

What initially appeared as progressive reform increasingly revealed itself as a strategic political maneuver to gain favor with female voters and portray Fujimori to the international community as a great modern reformer committed to gender equity and inclusion. For many women, this was an about-face on gender issues within the Peruvian government, which for years had neglected the second half of the population, relegating them to matters of the home. The president's championing of women's rights within the nation surprised many women at home and abroad, encouraging some to return to Peru and become public servants. For some, for the first time, they had a reasonable chance of competing with their male counterparts in local and nationwide elections, as well as being eligible for various types of government jobs across the country. That is not to say that women have not been involved in politics or have not held office before; it is just that, in Peru's history, no president has ever empowered women to become a driving force behind change and decision-making.

Nevertheless, his public statements greatly contrasted with his actions behind closed doors. While he promised the women's feminist movement a ministry for women, Fujimori ignored their counsel on women's needs in the country and created the ministry without consulting a single female from the feminist groups that encouraged it. Even so, the president worked arduously to broaden access to family planning and contraceptive services, insisting that the use of voluntary surgical methods of

sterilization should become part of the contraceptive methods offered by the government, which was established during the mid-1990s.

Other essential factors I analyze in this chapter are the religious and historical roles women have held throughout Peruvian and Latin American history, drawing on texts from colonial eras and passages from the Bible that insist on placing women and men into separate spheres. In Peru, women continue to confront a deeply set double standard regarding their rights and needs. For years, feminists such as Flora Tristán, María Jesús Alvarado, and Zoila Aurora Cáceres, among others, including Lourdes Flores Nano and Susy Diaz, continued to fight for and uphold women's rights. They forged a path into Peruvian politics that, at the time, remained heavily male-dominated.

I also explore the effects of clientelism within Peru's lower classes and communities, specifically in Lima. Women there, under the threat of terror from the Shining Path and the Revolutionary Movement Tupac Amaru, and in dire economic instability, managed to continue to feed their children and their communities with hard work, communal strength, and vigilance. They managed to keep a steady supply of food and goods from NGOs, and government-funded aid reached those living on or below the poverty line. This facilitated Fujimori's clientelist policies. Throughout the years, various presidents attempted to establish connections with the women of these communal kitchens to garner their favor. Despite Garcia's and Belaunde's attempts to regulate or control the women in charge of these kitchens, they never gained a strong enough foothold to do so. Yet, by the time Alberto Fujimori came to power in the 1990s, this had changed. His economic restructuring plan forced many of these independent communal kitchens, formed by women and mothers, to establish ties with governmental agencies, successfully politicizing social assistance programs targeting the country's most impoverished and vulnerable populations. It is through the lenses of different social classes, as well as religious, historical, and political perspectives, that I demonstrate the varying levels of power within different social circles and how some women, when given the opportunity, abused their power for their own benefit.

The third and concluding section of this thesis delves into the methods and mechanisms employed by the government and armed forces to carry out sterilization campaigns targeting poor and socially vulnerable communities. A range of primary sources that foreground victims' voices directly implicated government officials. These documents provide substantial evidence that the president was aware of the inhumane practices through which men, women, and young girls were forcibly removed from their homes and villages and transported to the nearby medical post or makeshift medical clinics.

Through the Peruvian government's abuse of power in the name of modernity and the advancement of women's rights, cloaked in the rhetoric of family planning, I argue that the regime perpetrated this crime within the intersection of poverty, ethnicity, and gender. They focused on poor indigenous Quechua- and Aymara-speaking women, thereby making it a racialized system of population control. As explored in the first chapter of this study, alienation grew against the rural and popular sectors of Peruvian society due to the armed guerrillas that terrorized the country and murdered over 32 thousand people during their reign of terror. Alberto Fujimori and the leadership of the armed forces pursued a three-pronged Malthusian solution¹ to the nation's underlying problems by addressing skyrocketing population growth (see Figure 1).

1. Malthusian Solution: The term comes from a theory of Thomas Malthus posed in 1798 that with the exponential growth of the world's population and the linear increase of food supply would become a catastrophe, in which, the population exceeds the resources. His theory posed that if not solved this would become a crisis that would lead to famines, disease, or war to restore balance.

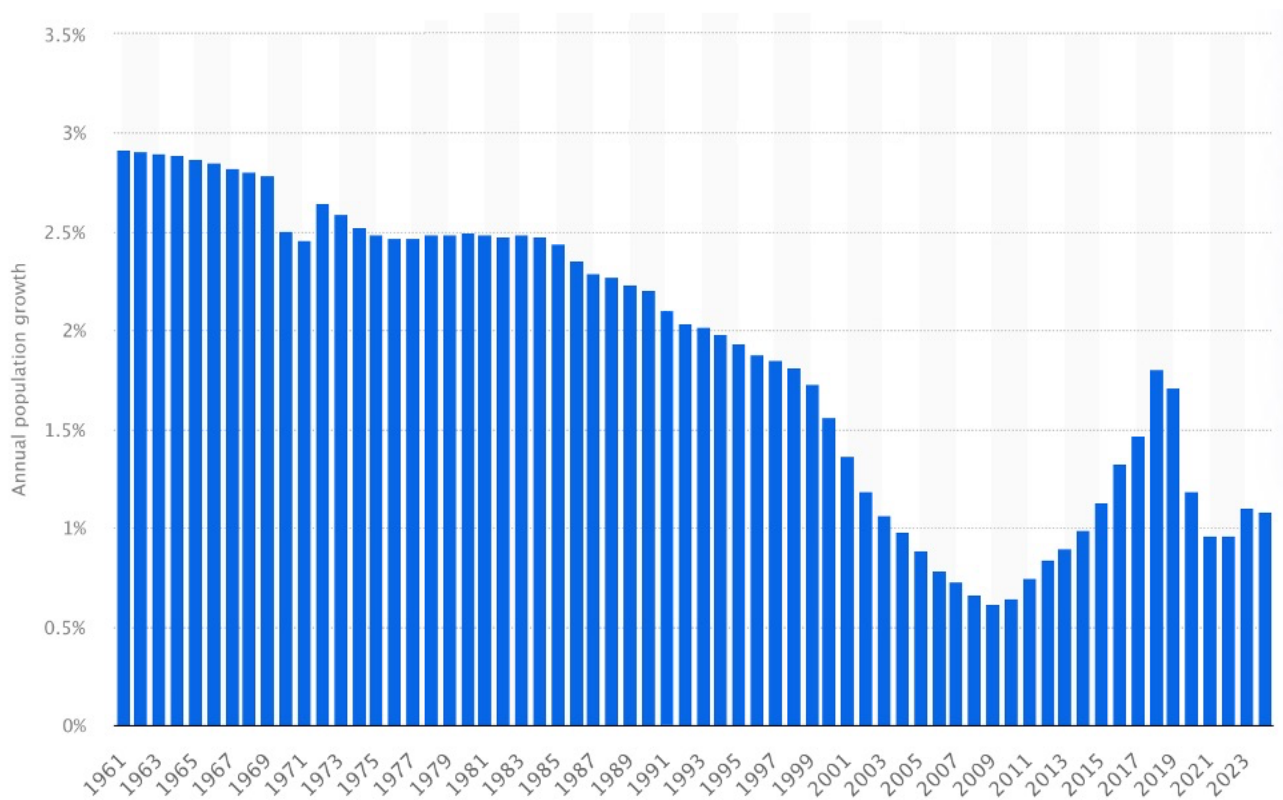


Figure 1. Annual population growth in Peru from 1961 to 2023.²

The steady decline in GDP, and the rapid elimination of harmful sectors of the population, such as criminals and subversives (the Shining Path and MRTA). The government and the Armed Forces plotted this solution a few years before Fujimori became the surprise winner of the 1990 election. The implication of the claim that the upper echelons of the armed forces deliberately postponed decisive action until after the elections, waiting to see whether their preferred right-leaning candidate, Mario Vargas Llosa, would prevail over the populist political newcomer Alberto Fujimori, is significant. Such an interpretation suggests that the military leaders were prepared to either seize power if the electoral outcome with the democratically elected winner, potentially pressuring him to step down should he refuse to accommodate their interests. As history would have it, the claim that the Armed Forces and the

2. "Annual population growth in Peru from 1961 to 2024," Statista, March 25, 2026, accessed April 11, 2026, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/459363/population-growth-in-peru/>

newly elected president (Fujimori) would agree to work with the Defense establishment to begin the groundwork for what would become the Peruvian version of Eugenics in the 20th century.

Finally, I analyze the interconnected economic, social, and political forces that collectively enabled and sustained the systematic forced sterilization of thousands of economically marginalized indigenous women. In the concluding chapter, I examine the administration's enacted laws, policies, and procedures to accelerate the National Reorganization process, as viewed by the Peruvian Armed Forces, and to rein in a failing country. I analyze the process of forced sterilization in Peru through a comprehensive framework. This integrates the social, economic, and political dimensions of this administration's grave violations against the indigenous and impoverished communities nationwide. First, the policy must be understood within the context of state alienation toward the rural and urban populations, many of whom were perceived, often indiscriminately, as sympathetic to, or coerced by, subversive groups such as Shining Path and the MRTA. Second, the government framed rapid population growth as a principal cause of the country's severe economic crisis, portraying reproductive control as a measure necessary for national recovery. Finally, these sterilization campaigns reflected a broader political strategy aimed at consolidating state authority. They targeted what officials characterized as "harmful" or undesirable segments of the population, thereby reinforcing existing structures of marginalization and exclusion.

Official documentation submitted by the Ministry of Health to the President supports this, including incriminating evidence in the form of detailed updates and statistical reports concerning sterilization procedures. These records contain troubling evidence indicating that, as of June 1997, sterilizations, specifically tubal ligations and vasectomies, were slated to increase, with the involvement of the Armed Forces and Police. The documentation further suggests that the arrangement with the Armed Forces and the Police was intended to be permanent in response to the rise in sterilization procedures.

This study of forced sterilizations in Peru promotes a deeper examination of Peruvian history and the enduring structures of power that have shaped the nation's social hierarchy. In particular, this inquiry has focused on the historical entrenchment of European supremacy and its lasting implications for the indigenous, criollo, and mestizo populations by situating the sterilization campaigns within a broader colonial and post-colonial framework. Through this study, I illuminate how radicalized ideologies and systemic inequalities have shaped and informed state policies and practices.

Through my research in the scholarship of sterilization, it became clear that the focus of scholars and human rights advocates who wrote on the subject tended to approach the issue through the brutal act of forced sterilization by the Peruvian government. In contrast, I contend that the plans that led to the forced sterilization emerged from the cumulative exclusion and social marginalization of the rural and impoverished populations in the country. This also led to a drastic change in perception within the middle and upper social classes toward the impoverished and indigenous populations. They saw these latter through the lens of constant uprisings and violence, and they associated the lower classes with subversive groups.

Another dimension of this study is the analysis of diverse and often complex ways in which women respond to, interpret, and engage with the suffering and lived experiences of other women within the context of a male-dominated society and social structure. I made explicit reference to women in positions of power, irrespective of the specific sources or spheres from which their immediate influence derives. As a result of fragmentation within women's groups and the government's use of material incentives, the state deployed resources to secure the support of the most vulnerable populations through promises of social mobility and family security. Women in leadership positions within the most impoverished sectors often acquiesced to arrangements in exchange for additional benefits for themselves. This was contingent on their continued efforts to mobilize and persuade women in their networks to align with the government's or the president's interests.

I demonstrate how heterogeneous dynamics across social sectors gave rise to a politically endorsed Malthusian strategy aimed at restructuring the nation under the guise of family planning. This approach sought to reduce the presence of indigenous populations, who, according to the Armed Forces, represented detrimental elements within Peruvian society.

The final contribution of this study analyzes the documentation pertaining to the procedures and practices employed in carrying out the State's sterilization program. I examine various sources that implicate government officials and foreign aid organizations, including the Nippon Foundation and USAID. I analyze Giuliana Tamayo's Human Rights report on surgical sterilization, which provides a detailed account of the ways in which government officials concealed the scale of sterilizations performed on indigenous Quechua-and Aymara-speaking women and girls across various provinces of the country. Tamayo's investigative work was instrumental in drawing media attention to what had previously been treated as isolated complaints from indigenous women. By documenting and quoting the testimonials of affected individuals, she centers the victims' voices. In translating and presenting these narratives, I seek to amplify their perspectives and allow the subaltern to speak, rather than substituting my own voice for theirs. This thesis demonstrates that Peru's forced sterilization program developed through identifiable historical processes, shaped by political transition, entrenched social hierarchies, which reveals the campaign as a systematic exercise of state power.

CHAPTER 2

THE FINANCIAL POLITICS BEHIND STERILIZATION

Las problemáticas de esterilización ocurridas en el Perú durante la década de los 1990 son de alguna manera una vieja historia: refleja el uso instrumental de la mujer, al que recurren los planificadores de políticas nacionales y las organizaciones internacionales como un medio de controlar el crecimiento de la población y de promover el desarrollo económico.³

In 1988, Allan García's economic policies collapsed and sent Peru into a financial debacle with an inflation rate that rose: "La tasa anual de inflación se disparó de una tasa anual de 360 por ciento en el primer trimestre de 1988, casi 7000 por ciento, la segunda más alta en la historia peruana." This created a vicious circle in which the *Banco Central de Reserva* printed money, leading to rising prices and hindering people's capacity to acquire. That would translate into a salary increase and force the government to raise subsidies on various goods.⁴ Garcia's economic policies caused the nation's Gross Domestic Product to plummet from 9,7 in 1987 to -9,4 in 1988, to -12,3 in 1989, and finally rise to -5,0" during the election year 1990.⁵

In this Chapter, I analyze the political, financial, and social challenges Peru confronted during the final years of Garcia's presidency, with particular attention to the economic policies that precipitated national bankruptcy and widespread rural unrest. This instability facilitated the intervention of the armed

3. Christina Ewig, "La economía política de las esterilizaciones en el Perú," In *Memorias del caso peruano de esterilización forzada: Recopilación e investigación*, ed. Alejandra Ballón (Biblioteca Nacional del Perú, Fondo Editorial, 2014), 50–51.

English Translation: "The problem with the sterilization campaigns that occurred in Peru during the decade of the 1990s is, in a way, a story of old: it reflects the instrumental use of women, one that national political planners and international organizations see as a means to control population growth and promote economic development."

4. Peter F. Klarén, *Nación y sociedad en la historia del Perú* (IEP Ediciones, 2004), 475.

English Translation: "Annually from 360 percent in the first trimester of 1988, to almost 7000 percent in the second, the highest in modern Peruvian history,"

5. Banco Central de Reserva del Perú, "Gerencia central de estudios económicos – PBI (variación porcentual)," accessed February 6, 2024, <https://estadisticas.bcrp.gob.pe/estadisticas/series/anuales/resultados/PM04863AA/html/1985/1995/>

forces and shaped the incoming administration's decision to acquiesce to military demands for the sterilization of women whom the military had deemed as a threat.

Throughout Garcia's economic crisis, Shining Path and the MRTA⁶ heightened their attacks on governmental institutions and the civilian population. That prompted the military to plan a mass sterilization campaign to prevent the birth of more subversives, a plan termed "*Plan Verde*." The basis for this plan was to rid the nation of future guerrilla fighters and prevent terrorist groups such as MRTA and Shining Path from ever happening again. Moreover, the Peruvian military was taking action to overthrow the government of Alan Garcia Perez, commonly referred to by the armed forces as "*El desastroso presidente que las mayorías nacionales eligieron*."⁷ It became evident that the strategy visualized by the Armed Forces for the future transformation of the nation by the twenty-first century would not come to fruition. As noted in the *Oiga* article, "*En los análisis se señala: el modelo de representación política vigente en el país se ha mostrado incapaz de proyectar al Perú*."⁸ Towards the prosperous future they had come to expect. However, for the armed forces, the root of all the nation's problems began with the high rates of population growth:

Ha quedado demostrado la necesidad de frenar lo más pronto posible el crecimiento demográfico y urge, adicionalmente un tratamiento para los excedentes existentes: Utilización generalizada de esterilización en los grupos culturalmente atrasados y

6. Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru.

English Translation: Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement.

7. Francisco Igartua, "El plan verde," *Oiga*, July 12, 1993, 24.
https://resistencia.org/documentos/el_plan_verde/el_plan_verde.htm?utm

English Translation: "The disastrous president chosen by the national majorities."

8. Igartua, "El plan verde," 22.

English Translation: the analysis points out that the current model of political representation in the country has demonstrated that it is incapable of projecting Perú."

económicamente pauperizados. Sin estas cargas innecesarias, se facilitaría el acceso de grupos familiares débiles a cierto nivel de bienestar.⁹

The marginalization of the poor and the Andean societies made it easier for subversive groups to take root in their towns and cities and easily persuade them to join the fight against the government in exchange for the promise of a better tomorrow. As the quote above states, backwardness, poverty, and subversion were merely excuses for a more comprehensive economic plan. Aside from the plan of sterilizations. The right wing of the military also played with the idea of a “Dirty War,” ignoring the vast casualties and human rights violations such a war would cause:

Una corriente de pensamiento de las fuerzas armadas proponía una “solución de guerra sucia a la Argentina” que recurriría a una represión masiva, sin importar el costo en violaciones de derechos humanos.¹⁰

Nonetheless, this idea was dropped for a developmental one that sustained:

Que una masiva asistencia social y programas de desarrollo económico extirparían las causas fundamentales de la insurgencia y ganarían los corazones y mentes de la población.¹¹

To gain the trust of the rural population, the military initially shifted its tactics and adopted a community-oriented approach, hoping the population would assist in capturing Shining Path guerrilla members. Nonetheless, the plan sketched out by the Armed Forces, which called for the legalization of sterilization through surgery as a form of birth control, continued its course. “Los métodos compulsivos

9. Igartua, “El plan verde” 26.

English Translation: “Necessity has demonstrated the need to stop demographic growth and the urgent need to deal with the existing surplus: The generalized utilization of sterilization in backward cultural groups and the economically impoverished. Once without these burdens, it will facilitate access to family groups of weaker status to reach a certain level of welfare.”

10. Klarén, *Nación y sociedad en la historia del Perú*, 491.

English Translation: A current of thought in the armed forces proposed a “dirty war solution to Argentina” that would resort to massive repression, regardless of the cost of human rights violations.”

11. Klarén, *Nación y sociedad en la historia del Perú*, 491.

English Translation: “That massive social assistance and economic development programs they would extirpate the root causes of the insurgency and win the hearts and minds of the population.”

deben tener solo carácter experimental, pero deben ser norma en todos los centros de salud la ligadura de trompas.”¹² To be used as a method to end the birth of what the military deemed poor, backward, and “population surplus harmful to the state,”¹³ which they considered as worthy of extermination:

Hay que discriminar el excedente poblacional y los sectores nocivos de la población. Consideramos a los subversivos, a sus familiares directos, a los agitadores profesionales, a los elementos delincuenciales y a los traficantes de pasta básica de cocaína como excedente poblacional nocivos...para estos sectores, dado su carácter de incorregibles y carencia de recursos...solo queda su exterminio total.¹⁴

The Armed Forces' view and reference to the sectors named above of Peruvian society are reminiscent of Nazi rhetoric. With elections around the corner, Mario Vargas Llosa, the right-wing candidate the military expected to win, began losing ground to Alberto Fujimori. Llosa unveiled his economic plan, which included a financial package that alarmed his supporters because of the austerity measures it would impose. Unlike his opponent, Alberto Fujimori, who ran an ambiguous electoral campaign with no clear proposals to address the nation's severe problems, Llosa presented a detailed economic plan outlining specific policy measures. Fujimori refused to acknowledge questions about his government plan and only spoke of the ills that enveloped the nation at the hands of career politicians and corrupt political parties: “*Un presidente como tú*”¹⁵ became his famed motto as he traveled the

12. Igartua, “El plan verde,” 26.

English Translation: “Compulsive methods must have an experimental character only, but Tubal ligation must be the norm in all health centers.”

13. Igartua, “El plan verde,” 26.

14. Igartua, “El plan verde,” 26.

English Translation: “One must distinguish between the population surplus and the harmful sectors of the population. Considering the subversives and their direct families, the professional agitators, the criminal elements, and the dealers of basic cocaine paste are harmful population surplus. Given these sectors' incorrigible character and lack of resources...the only alternative is their total extermination.”

15. Klarén, *Nación y sociedad en la historia del Perú*, 485.

English Translation: “A president like you.”

country in a Peruvian *poncho* and Peruvian *chullo* in a manner that reflected a populist style.¹⁶ He promised the lower sectors of society that he would “Hacer que el crédito estatal estuviese fácilmente a disposición de los informales y campesinos y brindar protección legal a los vendedores ambulantes,”¹⁷ effortlessly sweeping these sectors into his pocket. Leaving Vargas Llosa looking like an elitist, all arrogant and stiff, every time he appeared around the urban and pauperized sectors of Perú.

The armed forces closely examined the election results. They evaluated the prospects for a military coup to regain control of the economy and restore order, particularly in response to guerrilla forces that had devastated the countryside and were now intent on seizing the capital, Lima. The armed forces saw this as a task to reconstruct the nation, which slowly became known as “*Reconstrucción Nacional*,” The project of National Reconstruction “no oculta la orientación mesiánica y totalitaria de sus autores de la que Fujimori se ha hecho o, para mejor decir, lo han hecho abanderado.”¹⁸

The Deal

By July 27, 1990, the Armed Forces were ready to stage a coup before the new president took office on July 28. An agreement was worked out between Fujimori and the military to create an illusion of democracy, with Alberto Fujimori at the helm and the military dictating the president's course of action from behind the scenes. The armed forces termed this adopted procedure as “*Democracia*

16. Chullo is a typical Peruvian hat worn in the highlands of Peru.

17. Klarén, *Nación y sociedad en la historia del Perú*, 485.

English Translations: Make state credit easily available to informal workers and peasants and provide legal protection to street vendors.

18. Igartua, “El plan Verde,” 22.

English Translation: “could not hide the messianic and totalitarian characteristics of its authors, making Fujimori its leader.”

Dirigida,” which would be combined with a free-market economy to bring the country back from financial disaster.¹⁹

The initial agreement required Fujimori to establish a guided democracy and integrate Peru into the global market economy. The second agreement stipulated that if Fujimori refused, he would cede full authority to the military, declaring himself incapable of addressing the nation’s deep crises.²⁰ The deal struck between Fujimori and the military proved mutually convenient for both sides. Fujimori needed the help of the armed forces to pacify the country and end the decade of terror with Shining Path and MRTA. On the other hand, the armed forces facilitated their plan of National Reconstruction through the Fujimori self-coup, claiming that “El Perú tiene una sola salida: La Reconstrucción Nacional.”²¹

And bringing down the established control of presidential powers by claiming:

La inoperancia del Parlamento y la corrupción del Poder Judicial se suman a la evidente actitud obstruccionista y conjura encubierta contra los esfuerzos del pueblo y del gobierno por parte de las cúpulas partidarias.²²

This allowed the dissolution of the 1979 Constitution and its replacement with the current Constitution, which Perú ratified in 1993 through a national plebiscite. Although approximately 65% of the Peruvian population supported Fujimori’s self-coup to end the decade-long insurgent violence that had devastated the country, this moment marked a significant turning point in Peru’s democratic

19. Igartua, “El plan verde,” 22.

20. Igartua, “El plan verde,” 22.

21. Alberto Fujimori, “Mensaje a la nación del presidente del Perú, Ingeniero Alberto Fujimori Fujimori, 5 De Abril De 1992,” Congreso del Perú, April 5, 1992, https://es.wikisource.org/wiki/Mensaje_a_la_Nación_de_Alberto_Fujimori%2C_5_de_abril_de_1992?utm

English translation: “Peru only has one way out: National Reconstruction.

22. Fujimori, “Mensaje a la nación del presidente del Perú,” 1.

English translation: “the inoperable behavior of Parliament and the corruption of the Judiciary only add to the evident attitude of obstructionism, and it quietly conjures against our peoples efforts and the government by these party structures.”

trajectory. Despite the president's high approval ratings, fueled by widespread fear and desire for stability, the Peruvian public were confronted with an impossible choice: The public was forced to choose between accepting a new constitution, one that significantly weakened the system of checks and balances established by the 1979 Constitution, originally designed to prevent future military rule but now re written with the promise of economic and social stability, or risking the continued deterioration of the nation's already fragile economic and social conditions.

Moreover, the 1993 Constitution allowed the president to dissolve Congress even if only two of his ministers were denied or censured by Congress. By eroding the bicameral Congress's balance of power in the new constitution and turning it into a unicameral body, the president could now dissolve Congress at will, with no other chamber, such as parliament, to control his actions. The new constitution also granted him the power to promote members of the armed forces and the national police.

Artículo 172: Los ascensos que confieren conformidad de la ley. El presidente de la República otorga los ascensos de generales y almirantes de las Fuerzas Armadas y de los generales de la policía, según propuesta del instituto correspondiente.²³

That dissolved all merit-based promotions and made them based on favoritism. Under the 1979 Constitution, all members of the armed forces and the police were appointed by parliament based on their capabilities for the job, which provided greater freedom for the armed forces and the national police to do their jobs without fear of crossing the president's favor. Moreover, the 1993 Constitution granted the president the power to name ministers and diplomats without the ratification of Congress, as

23. Perú, Constitución política del Perú, art. 172, Chap. XI, <https://www.gob.pe/institucion/presidencia/informes-publicaciones/196158-constitucion-politica-del-peru>

English Translation: "The promotions confer compliance with the law. The president of the Republic grants promotions of Generals and admirals of the armed forces and of the police generals according to the proposal of those corresponding institutes."

Article 118 establishes: “El Presidente puede nombrar embajadores y ministros plenipotenciarios, con aprobación del Consejo de Ministros, con cargo de dar cuenta al Congreso.”²⁴

The 1979 constitution established checks and balances designed to curtail executive power, whereas the 1993 Constitution redistributed authority to strengthen the executive branch, thereby enabling Fujimori to carry out the military’s governance agenda upon assuming power.

Moreover, not only did Fujimori break democratic continuity through his self-coup, but he also placed himself “in charge of drafting the new constitution (and of) the organization and implementation of the elections” under international pressure.²⁵ While at the same time, Fujimori made sure to elect his Supreme Court members for them to name “new members to the *Jurado Nacional de Elecciones*.” (The National Election Board [JNE]).²⁶ After promising the *La Organización de Estados Americanos* (OAS) that “electoral rules would be coordinated by all political parties.”²⁷ Nonetheless, Fujimori remained adamant about listening to differing points of view from the different parties, forcing many in opposition to “abandon negotiations with the government.”²⁸ Thereby, “preventing the success of any legal challenges from the opposition.”²⁹ In the end, Alberto Fujimori issued a 147-article decree that arbitrarily set new electoral rules, which the opposition viewed as an illegitimate election process. However, those who participated in the election process sought to present the elections as legitimate,

24. Perú, Constitución Política del Perú, art. 118, chap. VI, no. 12.

English Translation: “Appoint ambassadors and plenipotentiary ministers, with the approval of the Council of Ministers, with responsibility for reporting to Congress.”

25. Julio F. Carrión, ed., *The Fujimori Legacy: The Rise of Electoral Authoritarianism in Peru* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 2, ProQuest E-book Central.

26. Carrión, *The Fujimori Legacy*, 2.

27. Carrión, *The Fujimori Legacy*, 2.

28. Carrión, *The Fujimori Legacy*, 2.

29. Carrión, *The Fujimori Legacy*, 2.

along with the new organizations created specifically for that purpose. It was this set of arbitrary rules and regulations that the armed forces had in mind when they reached a consensus with Fujimori on a guided democracy.

Democracia Dirigida, or guided democracy, is defined as a subversion of democratic institutions in which the people continue to believe they are exercising their legal right as citizens to elect candidates of their choice. As José Arsenio Torres explains: “Una curiosa teoría de la representación, que viene a rechazar la decisión de la mayoría en favor de la unanimidad de los cuerpos representativos entonces vigentes.”³⁰ Jose Arsenio Torres wrote this quote about Sukarno’s government in Indonesia after the Japanese invasion and Dutch decolonization. In many ways, Perú's condition during the coup period was comparable to that of Indonesia after World War II. The Government was in crisis mode due to the war against subversive groups that had destroyed the country’s infrastructure, leaving the nation and the economy in ruins.

Un sistema basado en la justicia social y en una construcción democrática ha de necesitar apoyo durante el período que sucede a la independencia, con medidas de emergencia del tipo totalitario. Sin disciplina, la verdadera libertad no puede subsistir.³¹

Making it increasingly evident that the Armed Forces had thought this through when they insisted on a guided democracy, it became imperative to stabilize the country by choosing a path of a unanimous coalition of governing elites led by Fujimori. Since he was new to the political scene, he was the perfect man to lead the government through what was believed to be a liberal democracy. At the same time, he began to set the groundwork for a totalitarian-style guided democracy. Fujimori’s self-coup cemented the country's totalitarian foundations in its constitution.

30. José Arsenio Torres, "La ideología política de la democracia dirigida," *Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 1 (1962): 36–37. <https://revistas.upr.edu/index.php/rccs/article/view/9491>

English Translation: “A curious theory of representation that rejects the decision of the majority and favors unanimity of the representative bodies that are currently present.”

31. Nkrumah Kwame, *Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (Nelson, 1957), X.

Nonetheless, elections were held after Alberto Fujimori's 1992 self-coup.

Institutions were created arbitrarily to ensure that the elected president won a majority without significant opposition in Congress. Moreover, a directed democracy has the underpinnings of a totalitarian regime, in which the government does not guarantee changes in public policy that it does not consider beneficial to the nation. At any time, the government can infringe on citizens' constitutional rights. This aspect of Fujimori's government style became evident from:

Desde un comienzo, Alberto Fujimori mostró tener un carácter con tendencia al autoritarismo. Algo que se confirmó en 1992. El 5 de abril de ese año, el mandatario se dio un autogolpe de Estado en el que, con ayuda del Ejército, se tomó el Congreso y las sedes judiciales.³²

The coup on April 5 was far from a desperate president being hindered by parliament and the judiciary from governing. According to Francisco Igartua: "Nunca antes un parlamento había otorgado con más amplitud y facilidades poderes extraordinarios al ejecutivo, sobre todo en el terreno de la lucha antisubversiva."³³ Making it clear that from the moment Fujimori was sworn in as president, he (Fujimori) and the military had already agreed that to gain control of a quickly failing country, Fujimori had to dissolve Congress and all governmental agencies, as well as private ones, such as broadcasting media and some more prominent, better-known newspapers and political magazines of the time.

After the April 5 coup, a series of kidnappings and the imprisonment or exile of political opponents took place that night. A well-known journalist for the political magazine *Caretas*, Gustavo Gorriti, narrates his experience of that night:

32. Alvaro Cordero, "Alberto Fujimori: Historia del expresidente más polémico del Perú," *France24*, March 23, 2022. <https://www.france24.com/es/programas/historia/20220324-fujimori-peru-presidencia-polemica-historia>

English translation: From the beginning, Alberto Fujimori showed that he had a character with a tendency towards authoritarianism. Something that was confirmed in 1992. On April 5 of that year, the president carried out a self-coup in which, with the help of the Army, he took over Congress and the judicial headquarters.

33. Francisco Igartua, "El plan verde," 23.

English Translation: "Never before has a parliament granted extraordinary powers to the executive with greater breadth and ease, especially in the field of the anti-subversive fight."

Esa noche fui capturado y brevemente desaparecido por un escuadrón de inteligencia que actuó bajo las órdenes del presidente golpista Alberto Fujimori y su oscuro asesor Vladimiro Montesinos sobre los que se basaba mi investigación, en las pocas horas que mediaron entre el golpe y mi captura. El episodio resultó en la separación forzada con mis materiales de consulta y en el cambio abrupto de mis condiciones de trabajo.³⁴

Like Gorriti, members of the opposition and anyone they considered a threat to Fujimori's mandate were taken or exiled. The task during the self-coup was to silence society and instill fear. As Jo-Marie Burt quotes a community activist from Villa El Salvador, an urban district on the outskirts of Lima:

The State threatened our leaders by detaining them and sending them to prison. Shining Path threatened them, too, accusing them of being traitors and a series of other things. Social activists hid, avoiding positions of public responsibility³⁵

If there was any indication of the new president's dictatorial tendencies, they were at once confirmed after the self-coup that was entirely backed by the armed forces. The goal was to embed fear in the Peruvian psyche, and between the Guerrillas and the armed forces, it was accomplished by forcing activists and community leaders into silence with the impending threat of death by Shining Path, disappearance, or prison by the military.

"In a society in which social segregation by race and class is already acute, a fear exacerbated suspicion of the 'other' and became a defining feature of daily life."³⁶

State terror continued with added force after the coup in *La Universidad Nacional de Educación Enrique Guzmán y Valle (La Cantuta)*:

34. Gustavo Gorriti, *Sendero* (Editorial Planeta, 2017), 14.

English Translation: That night, I was captured and briefly disappeared by an intelligence squad that acted under the orders of the coup President Alberto Fujimori and his shadowy advisor Vladimiro Montesinos, on whom my investigation was based, in the few hours between the coup and my capture. The episode resulted in the forced separation with my reference materials and the abrupt change in my working conditions.

35. Jo-Marie Burt, *Political Violence and the Authoritarian State in Peru: Silencing Civil Society* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 13.

36. Burt, *Political Violence and the Authoritarian State in Peru*, 13.

En la madrugada del 18 de julio de 1992, miembros del Grupo Colina —cuerpo adscrito al Servicio de Inteligencia Nacional del Perú— irrumpieron en los dormitorios de la Universidad Nacional de Educación Enrique Guzmán y Valle (La Cantuta), secuestrando y desapareciendo a nueve estudiantes y a un profesor, a las afueras de la ciudad de Lima, para después asesinarlos y sepultarlos en fosas clandestinas.³⁷

Reminiscent of the disappearances that took place in Argentina and Chile in the 1970s, under the rationalization of a communist threat, and imposed years of state terror upon their civilian population. The Peruvian military, under the command of Alberto Fujimori, took control of the Universities they believed to be breeding grounds of subversive ideologies and recruitment centers for Shining Path and MRTA. However, this was not the first massacre of innocent civilians that took place. In 1991, in the district of *El Cercado de Lima*, in an urban sector known as *Barrios Altos*, *El Grupo Colina* massacred about thirty people on the night of November 3. These were some of the first acts against human rights that the newly installed president perpetrated against Peru's civilian population.

It is essential to mention that the guerrilla of Shining Path had begun their assault on the capital city of Lima in the district of Miraflores, where Shining Path planted a car bomb loaded with 250 kilos of explosives.

Cuatrocientas veinte familias se quedaron en total desamparo debido a la destrucción de sus viviendas tras la explosión del coche bomba en pleno corazón de Miraflores...³⁸

The death toll and the damages became evident that day as *El Comercio*, the largest newspaper in Peru, reported:

37. "La Cantuta," CEJIL, accessed February 24, 2024. <https://cejil.org/en/case/la-cantuta-2/>

English Translation: In the early morning of July 18, 1992, members of the Colina Group—a body attached to the National Intelligence Service of Peru—broke into the dormitories of the Enrique Guzmán y Valle National University of Education (La Cantuta), kidnapping and disappearing nine students and a teacher, on the outskirts of the city of Lima, and then murdered them and buried them in clandestine graves.

38. "420 Familias quedaron en total desamparo," *Diario Expreso*, July 19, 1992, LUM Centro de Documentación e Investigación. <https://lum.cultura.pe/cdi/periodico/victimimas-del-atentado-tarata>

English Translation: Four hundred and twenty families were left utterly helpless due to the destruction of their homes after the car bomb explosion in the heart of Miraflores...

A las 20 se elevó el número de muertos a causa del atentado terrorista en Miraflores... En cuanto a heridos, en los diferentes nosocomios se atendió a 250 en total. Aún permanecen internados 145, de los cuales 60 se encuentran graves. Al hacer un estimado de los daños materiales, Masias indicó que hay 400 inmuebles afectados y 28 están destruidos completamente...³⁹

These acts began a much larger campaign of human rights violations imposed by the state and the armed forces on the most vulnerable sectors of Peruvian society. At the same time, Fujimori catered to the middle and upper classes around the country with promises that he (Fujimori) would end the Shining Path and MRTA subversive groups as long as people supported him.

A Numbers Game

In 1990, when Alberto Fujimori took office, one of his first actions was to alleviate the skyrocketing inflation. On August 8, 1990, Fujimori shocked the nation when his government deregulated prices, ending an era of government-mandated subsidies on all consumer goods. At 9 pm, Finance Minister Hurtado Miller broke the news to the Peruvian public, stating that this was necessary for the country to stabilize its economy. Miller knew this would be terrible for all sectors of Peruvian society, specifically the poor and vulnerable, since prices of milk, bread, and gasoline would, from one day to the next, increase by thousands, leaving millions of people unable to afford food for their tables. Vehicles were left without gasoline because prices became unattainable. At the end of his broadcast, Miller said, “*Que Dios nos ayude.*”⁴⁰ The consequences brought on by the shock were terrible for an already poverty-stricken people who, for years, had endured food, water, and electricity shortages due to

39. “A 20 subió el número de víctimas por acción terrorista: Diferentes nosocomios atendieron a 250 heridos en total,” *El Comercio*, July 19, 1992, LUM Centro de Documentación e Investigación, <https://lum.cultura.pe/cdi/periodico/victimas-del-atentado-tarata>

English Translation: The number of deaths due to the terrorist attack in Miraflores rose to 20... as for the injured in the different hospitals, 250 were treated in total. 145 remain hospitalized, of which 60 are in serious condition. When estimating the material damage, Masias indicated that there are 400 buildings affected and 28 are destroyed...

40. Willax Televisión, “¿Dios nos ayude? Juan Hurtado Miller da detalles desconocidos del Fujishock, 29 años después,” posted August 9, 2019, YouTube, 13:36. <https://youtu.be/Z4FGI5wA6G4>

English translation: “May God Help Us.”

terrible government policies, along with the terrorist groups that besieged the nation. By the time Alberto Fujimori took power, Abimael Guzmán, leader of *Sendero Luminoso*, controlled about 40% of the national territory, forcing the government to declare these areas emergency zones. It became apparent that the country's economic crisis had a devastating financial impact not only on the civilian population but also on the armed forces. Peter Klarén explains:

El salario de los oficiales se había desmoronado, de modo que en los 1990 un general peruano, para dar un ejemplo, ganaba apenas la cuarta parte de su contraparte chilena.⁴¹

This situation caused high rates of desertion, corruption, and military involvement with drug trafficking. The low salaries also led to a decline in morale and a severe loss of pride in their chosen profession. “El orgullo que sentían los militares por los avances en la profesionalización que tuvieron lugar en los 1950 y 1960 no era sino un lejano recuerdo.”⁴² Fujimori’s austerity measures pushed the nation further into poverty.

Entre los años 1990 y 1992, el ingreso real de los peruanos cayó en una tercera parte... y un estimado de un millón de trabajadores perdió su puesto de trabajo. Para quienes sí lo conservaron, el salario disminuyó un setenta por ciento en el sector público y un cuarenta por ciento en el sector privado.⁴³

It was a swift shift from Alan Garcia’s heterodox financial plan to a market economy. The Fujishock was a quick way to begin stabilizing the Peruvian economy and to accelerate Peru’s entrance into the world financial market; an economist cited by Peter Klarén described what the Fujishock felt

41. Klarén, *Nación y sociedad en la historia del Perú*, 490.

English Translation: Officer salaries had collapsed so that in the 1990s, a Peruvian general, to give an example, earned barely a quarter of his Chilean counterpart.

42. Klarén, *Nación y sociedad en la historia del Perú*, 490.

English Translation: The pride that the military felt in the advances in professionalization that took place in the 1950s and 1960s was but a distant memory.

43. Klarén, *Nación y sociedad en la historia del Perú*, 490.

English Translation: Between 1990 and 1992, the real income of Peruvians fell by a third...And an estimated million workers lost their jobs. For those who did keep it, the salary decreased by seventy percent in the public sector and forty percent in the private sector.

like for Peruvians: “era como cirugía al corazón, el estómago, el riñón y los pulmones, todo al mismo tiempo, en un paciente que no ha comido en tres años.”⁴⁴ By February, Fujimori had put additional measures in place to continue stabilizing the economy. He began the privatizations, deregulated the labor and financial markets, and worked on tax and tariff reform. From a GDP perspective, Peru’s gross domestic product per capita grew at an average annual rate of 2.2 percent. Superior to any decade since the 1950s.”⁴⁵ However, despite the growth of “3.4 percent a year 1990-1997, the Peruvian GDP per capita fell at a rate of 0.6 percent for the year 1997-2000.”⁴⁶ Although GDP does not strictly correlate with poverty measures in a country, it is clear that as the gross domestic product declined between 1997 and 2000, the nation's economic well-being declined, with an uptick in poverty levels. From 1990 to 1997, poverty decreased by 39%. Notwithstanding, the years of economic growth and prosperity came to a halt by 1997, causing a substantial increase in poverty levels, according to two private statistical institutions, the National Statistics Institute (INEI) and Instituto Cuánto, quoted by John Sheahan in Table 1.⁴⁷

This left half of the population living beneath the poverty line at a breathtaking 54.8%, and 24.4% living under extreme poverty. Fujimori’s Market Reforms can explain that the Peruvian state went from producing to dedicating itself to regulating. This shift became paramount to attract private

44. Klarén, *Nación y sociedad en la historia del Perú*, 491.

English Translation: “It was like surgery on the heart, stomach, kidney and lungs all at the same time, in a patient who has not eaten in three years.”

45. Carrión, *Fujimori Legacy*, 183.

46. Carrión, *Fujimori Legacy*, 183.

47. Carrión, *Fujimori Legacy*, 187.

investment and to encourage foreign capital as the primary source of development, with the market as the allocator.⁴⁸

Table 1. Incidence of Poverty

	Poverty		Extreme Poverty	
	Instituto Cuánto	INEI	Instituto Cuánto	INEI
1985	41.6	—	18.4	—
1991	55.3	—	24.2	—
1994	53.4	—	19.0	—
1997	50.7	42.7	14.7	18.2
2000	54.1	48.4	14.8	15.0
2001	—	49.8	—	19.5

Source: PNUD-PERÚ 2002, 18; Herrera 2002 (for INEI and the Institut de recherche pour le développement), 82, 84.

These reforms included putting an “end to hyperinflation by radically cutting state spending, unifying multilayered exchange rates, revoking state subsidies, lifting price controls, and adopting a floating exchange rate system.”⁴⁹ In addition to privatizing state enterprises, liberalizing trade, abolishing labor-protection laws, and further curtailing state spending, the government pursued sweeping neoliberal reforms.⁵⁰ In terms of social spending, to give an example: in 1990, the social per-

48. Carlos Parodi Trece, “Peru: pobreza y políticas sociales en la década de los noventa,” *Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 7, no. 3 (September–December 2001): 380, <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=5850804&utm>

49. Carrión, *Fujimori Legacy*, 135.

50. Carrión, *Fujimori Legacy*, 135.

capita cost was \$12; by 1993, it had risen to \$62, and by 1994 to \$83. This upward trajectory persisted, with the cost reaching \$130 in 1996 and \$167 by 1998.⁵¹

By the mid-1990s, the Peruvian government established a series of emergency programs to assist the country's most vulnerable. The government's first social program was *Programa de Emergencia Social (PES)*, which sought to improve nutrition and healthcare for those at and below the poverty line. However, due to “*Restricciones fiscales y fragilidad logística*.”⁵² The safety nets these programs offered to the poor and vulnerable collapsed. Forcing the government to create two separate programs to alleviate poverty in Peru, *Fondo de Compensación para el Desarrollo Social*, better known as *FONCODES*, focused on ensuring proper infrastructure for families living in poverty or extreme poverty. It did so by facilitating connections between the local governments and residents to help them secure sustainable living conditions.

Foncodes tiene como visión ser reconocido como el programa líder a nivel nacional en promover las oportunidades económicas y el desarrollo social, en el marco de una política de inclusión social con enfoque territorial, dirigida hacia la población en situación de pobreza, pobreza extrema, vulnerabilidad o exclusión, en el ámbito rural y urbano.⁵³

The second program, *Programa Nacional de Asistencia Alimentaria (PRONAA)*, focused on the nutrition of children and pregnant women.

The main problem with many of these programs was a severe lack of direction and overlapping benefits for a single community. Often, this left local governments within the provinces in charge of

51. Parodi Trece, “Peru,” 381.

52. Himilce Mora Estrada and Alexis Perea Flores, Informe de coyuntura no. 26, 2007–2008: Los programas sociales en el Perú 1990 – 2007: del alivio al a superación de la pobreza, accessed March 1, 2023, [https://www2.congreso.gob.pe/sicr/cendocbib/con2_uibd.nsf/86BA8BB7E32BE9780525784E00542271/\\$FILE/DelAlivioalaSuperaciondeLaPobreza.pdf](https://www2.congreso.gob.pe/sicr/cendocbib/con2_uibd.nsf/86BA8BB7E32BE9780525784E00542271/$FILE/DelAlivioalaSuperaciondeLaPobreza.pdf)

53. Perú, Ministerio de Desarrollo y Inclusión Social, “Foncode,” accessed on March 1, 2023, <https://www.gob.pe/institucion/foncodes/institucional>

English Translation: Foncodes's vision is to be recognized as the leading program at the national level in promoting economic opportunities and social development within the framework of a social inclusion policy with a territorial approach directed towards the population in situations of poverty, extreme poverty, vulnerability, or exclusion, in rural and urban areas.

ensuring these benefits reach all vulnerable sectors of society; however, they fell short, leaving many without proper aid due to the program's disorganization. In 2012, PRONAA was officially canceled due to questionable resources reaching many of these communities.

From the beginning, Fujimori focused primarily on poverty and how to ameliorate its effects on the country. Fujimori's initial push to aid the poor reflected the rhetoric of his populist campaign, in which he identified with a minority and claimed to understand what the other minorities, the poor, and the marginalized parts of the Peruvian population needed. By electing him as president, he would fix all their problems. He claimed that he and his family had suffered at the hands of the Peruvian government when all Japanese and their descendants were placed in concentration camps, extradited to the United States, or deported back to Japan during the Second World War. This led to gaining the trust and love of the people he had promised to help.

Once the structural issues in the economy began to stabilize and Fujimori's pacification plans for the Nation began to take shape, the president's discourse turned to alleviating poverty in the country. "El objetivo general del gobierno es mejorar las condiciones de vida de la población en extrema pobreza a través de programas de salud, alimentación, educación y proyectos de generación de empleo."⁵⁴

Nonetheless, the new government programs implemented to aid the poor were hindered by presidential actions, as the president and the agencies responsible for administering social benefits for the population were often at odds, competing for the same incoming financial resources. According to a study made by Efraín Goldenberg, the premier at the time:

Se reconoce que la erradicación de la pobreza extrema compromete la acción solidaria del Estado y que el déficit social global, entendido como la diferencia entre lo que los

54. Felipe Portocarrero and María Elena Romero, *Política Social En el Perú 1990–1994: Una agenda para la investigación* (Universidad Del Pacífico Centro de Investigación, 1994), 50–51.

English Translation: "The general objective of the government is to improve the living conditions of the population in extreme poverty through health, food, education, and employment generation projects."

peruanos consumen y lo que deberían consumir para disfrutar de una canasta básica completa, alcanza una cifra cercana a los 15 mil millones de dólares anuales.⁵⁵

In his study of poverty in Perú, Efraín Goldenberg provided the Government with an estimate of the cost of ensuring that every Peruvian living on or below the poverty line received the necessary nutrition. This did not include lifting people from their dire living conditions. To quell the rise of poverty after the effects of the Guerrilla and the financial shock the country suffered. The government took it upon itself to focus aid to the most vulnerable sectors of the nation and, through FONCODES and PRONAA, provide the necessary assistance.

With a history of fiscal deficits and real GDP declining by an accumulated total of 25% in those four years, the government was in a financial crisis, with a total GDP growth rate of -1.2 from 1981 to 1990. However, by 1993, the GDP began its ascent thanks to Fujimori's economic policies. Nonetheless, a fifteen-billion-dollar price tag to properly feed an ever-growing population of the poor across the country quickly became a national and international source of concern.⁵⁶

Economist Thomas Malthus, in 1798, came out with the theory that unregulated population growth would surpass the earth's capability to produce maintenance for the overflowing population that, in turn, would "rebasaría la capacidad de producción, agrícola, conduciendo a una degradación general de los estándares de vida internacionales."⁵⁷ Under the influence of this Malthusian theory, the United States began a government-encouraged movement to control birth rates abroad, specifically in Latin

55. Portocarrero and Romero, *Política Social En el Perú 1990-1994*, 55.

English Translation: "It is recognized that the eradication of extreme poverty compromises the solidarity action of the State and that the global social deficit, understood as the difference between what Peruvians consume and what they should consume to enjoy a complete basic basket, reaches a figure close to 15 billion dollars annually."

56. Klarén, *Nación y sociedad en la historia del Perú*, 490, 519.

57. Alejandra Ballón, ed., *Memorias del caso Peruano de esterilización forzada* (Biblioteca Nacional del Perú, Fondo Editorial, 2014) 54.

English Translation: "It would exceed agricultural production capacity, leading to a general degradation of international living standards."

America, in which the United States saw its uncontrolled population growth as a threat to national security: “Especialmente por el dramático número de inmigrantes latinoamericanos como resultado de los conflictos centroamericanos y la crisis económica regional en los años noventa.”⁵⁸

By 1993, the United States president had discussed financial assistance with Peruvian president Alberto Fujimori to encourage population control measures in Perú. The aid came under women’s rights and family planning rhetoric, with the “Peruvian government declar[ing] the 1990s the decade of family planning.”⁵⁹ Eugenicist ideals were far from faded among Peruvian politicians. The idea was born in the early 1920s, when Peru, as well as other regions of Latin America, began imposing restrictions on people of color who migrated to those countries. This became a demographic push to whiten the population by allowing only white Europeans to migrate. Perú, like the rest of Latin American countries: “Comenzó a ser común argumentar que la pendiente demográfica indígena, y negra y las familias de menos recursos obstaculizaban el progreso nacional.”⁶⁰

The government of 1960s President Juan Velasco Alvarado had halted the push to whiten Peruvian society because he saw it as “interference from the Yankee imperialists.”⁶¹ Velasco took the position of a pronatalist and favored national demographic growth. This was followed by his successor, Morales Bermudez.

58. Ballón, *Memorias del caso Peruano de esterilización forzada*, 54.

English Translation: “Especially due to the dramatic number of Latin American immigrants as a result of the Central American conflicts and the regional economic crisis in the 1990s.”

59. Rachael E. Seevers, “The Politics of Gagging: The Effects of the Global Gag Rule on Democratic Participation and Political Advocacy in Peru,” *Brooklyn Journal of International Law* 31, no. 3 (2006): 903.

60. Ballón, *Memorias del caso Peruano de esterilización forzada*, 54.

English Translation: “began to be common to argue that the indigenous, Black, demographic slope and lower-income families hindered national progress.”

61. Ballón, *Memorias del caso Peruano de esterilización forzada*, 54.

Theories brought in by eugenics had not entirely dissipated, nor had Thomas Malthus's concepts of "el control de la población era requisito esencial para alcanzar un desarrollo sostenido,"⁶² which had only fortified in the minds of the military and governmental leaders. Alberto Fujimori would echo this in Congress after his 1995 electoral victory, when he launched his government's plan for the next five years.

He declared:

Para el año 2000, vamos a multiplicar diez veces el ahorro interno, a través de las Administradoras de Fondos de Pensiones, gracias a la nueva ley de pensiones. En el siglo XXI nuestro ahorro interno será una mayor fuente de inversiones que el capital extranjero. Ello tendrá un enorme efecto multiplicador, económico y social.⁶³

Fujimori directed his efforts toward the nation's economic growth through internal savings and stated that he expected this financial plan would create a larger accumulation of funds than the government received from external capital. His focus then shifted from the accumulation of wealth within the country to the eradication of extreme poverty. He continued:

Ya hemos empezado a ver la luz al final del túnel, en cuanto a la erradicación de la pobreza extrema se refiere. Si hemos de hablar de metas ambiciosas, tenemos que proponernos reducir en un 50 por ciento los niveles de extrema pobreza para el año 2000.⁶⁴

He integrated his vision of modernity and development for the terror-stricken sections of the nation, such as Vilcashuamán and Huancahuasi, stating that by 2000, these forgotten areas of the

62. Ballón, *Memorias del caso Peruano de esterilización forzada*, 55.

63. Alberto Fujimori, "Mensaje del presidente del Perú, ingeniero Alberto Fujimori Fujimori, Ante El Congreso Nacional, iniciando nuevo periodo gubernamental," July 28, 1995, 4
<https://1996pnsrpf2000.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/fujimori-mensaje-al-congreso-1995.pdf>

English Translation: "By the year 2000, we are going to multiply internal savings tenfold, through the Pension Fund Administrators, thanks to the new pension law. In the 21st century, our domestic savings will be a greater source of investment than foreign capital. This will have an enormous economic and social multiplier effect."

64. Fujimori, "Mensaje del presidente del Perú," 4.

English Translation: "We have already begun to see the light at the end of the tunnel, as far as the eradication of extreme poverty is concerned. If we have to talk about ambitious goals, we have to propose reducing extreme poverty levels by 50 percent by the year 2000."

country would become part of the globalizing world. Saying plainly that he expected, “Una modernización sólida es aquella que alcanza a todos los miembros de una sociedad.”⁶⁵ Yet this was far from the truth, based on the neoliberal policies he implemented, along with the government’s removal of protections for workers. That left all members of society vulnerable to abuses within the labor market, especially from newly privatized companies and foreign corporations. This policy increased the levels of inequality in the country, causing an increase in the poverty rate and quashing Fujimori’s ambitious plan to cut extreme poverty by fifty percent in five years.

Additionally, taking on “*La revolución productiva también para la mujer*,”⁶⁶ announcing the government's interest in supporting associations of organized women, in the popular sectors of the country. “En la agenda de mi segundo gobierno está contemplado el apoyo decidido a las mujeres organizadas en los sectores populares, urbanos y rurales.”⁶⁷ Affirming that Peruvian women played an essential role in the country's success, Fujimori declared: “Utilizan todos los recursos de la manera más racional. Ellas son capaces de administrar miles de pequeñas economías, microeconomías, para producir bienes y servicios con la máxima eficiencia.”

Further, women would not be shunned in the twenty-first century. With this speech, Fujimori propelled his plan to uplift a particular sector of Peruvian women in the eyes of the Peruvian public and

65. Fujimori, “Mensaje del presidente del Perú,” 3.

English Translation: “A solid modernization is one that reaches all members of a society.”

66. Fujimori, “Mensaje del presidente del Perú,” 6.

English Translation: “The Productive Revolution also for Women.”

67. Fujimori, “Mensaje del presidente del Perú,” 6.

English Translation: “The agenda of my second Government includes decisive support for women organized in the popular, urban, and rural sectors.”

the world by stating, “Una de ellas preside este Poder del Estado.”⁶⁸ Referring to Martha Chavez, the first woman elected president of the Peruvian Congress, he obscured his true intentions by offering generalized commendations to all women in Peru. However, in the next breath, Fujimori immediately delved into the issues of uncontrolled population growth and the sad reality that many of these children suffered only to become criminals or petty thieves. Making it his governmental plan to “difundir, he dicho difundir, a fondo, los métodos de planificación familiar.”⁶⁹ For all women in the country to take control of their reproductive rights. Fujimori declared that it was unfair that only the middle and upper classes were capable of affording preventive care and preventive education when it came to having children, further adding that during his government, all women should have free access to the different forms of birth control, which included the more terminal manner, which consisted of tubal ligation and Vasectomies for males.⁷⁰

It is essential to mention that at the beginning of his presidency, tubal ligation and vasectomies were not included as forms of birth control that the government could offer. However, after Fujimori’s return to democracy, the restructuring of Congress and the court system occurred. Fujimori called for a hurried vote on the legality of tubal ligations and vasectomies; nonetheless, with Peru being known as a solid Catholic nation, the Peruvian Government had for years observed the Church’s opinions and input when it came to the types of birth control that the government should allow, if any. Despite the churches’ opinion on the matter of birth control, Fujimori forced the vote and won in favor of tubal ligations and vasectomies becoming legal for the government to offer nationwide, free of charge to all.

68. Fujimori, “Mensaje del presidente del Perú,” 6.

English Translation: “One of them presides over this State Power.”

69. Fujimori, “Mensaje del presidente del Perú,” 6.

English Translation: “The agenda of my second Government includes decisive support for women organized in the popular, urban, and rural sectors.”

70. Fujimori, “Mensaje del presidente del Perú,” 6.

By passing this law through Congress, Fujimori could now advertise his plan for population growth, disguising it under women's right to choose how many children they wanted to have. This position was aimed at the poor and rural sections of society, those who saw their identity as females as directly linked to the ability to become pregnant and have children.

In 1995, after his election to his second term in office, Fujimori began a nationwide campaign encouraging women who had three or more children to seek tubal ligation, thus ending the indiscriminate growth of more "hungry, malnourished, homeless, and some growing up to become delinquent" Children.⁷¹

Conclusion

The protracted guerrilla conflict, which persisted for more than a decade, and the destabilizing economic policies implemented by General Velasco's military government laid the groundwork for Peru's severe economic decline. These structural weaknesses, compounded by mounting political instability, culminated in a profound national crisis. Under the administration of Allan Garcia, misguided fiscal and monetary policies, including uncontrolled public spending and unsustainable attempts to curb inflation, further undermined the economy, leading to hyperinflation, widespread poverty, and social unrest. By the end of his term, Peru's economic collapse had not only eroded public confidence in democratic governance but also intensified the conditions that enabled the expansion of authoritarian measures and military influence in state policy.

In the eyes of the world, Peru was a failing state with little hope of recovery and a negative gross domestic product. Peru could no longer sustain the social reforms made by past dictators and presidents alike. By the time Fujimori entered office, Peru was on the brink of being taken over by the Shining Path guerrilla. Thousands were left migrating to the capital city of Lima in fear of the growing presence and

71. Fujimori, "Mensaje del presidente del Perú," 6

violence of the Shining Path and that of the military that, for some time, had been brutally murdering the rural peasants of the *Sierra*. The alliance between the incoming president and the military coincided with the destruction of the guerrillas, the stabilization of the economy, and the end of indiscriminate population growth, which they saw as a hindrance to the nation's Success. However, the reasoning for sterilization changed from ridding the country of new subversives to a rapid end of poverty for political and economic reasons. Politically, Fujimori had to maintain his approval rating above fifty percent due to his populist appeal to the masses. Losing the country's approval would likely end the success he felt his presidency was having and would also reduce public support for his policies. On the other hand, Fujimori found his administration constrained when foreign loans were withheld due to the nation's declining GDP after its initial recovery in 1991.

This had become a problem for Fujimori, as it hindered his efforts to keep the masses at ease and happy with his presidency. The rise in poverty after 1994 was due to his neo-liberal policies and the privatization of public services. It became clear by the time he spoke to Congress about Family Planning that his urgency to pass tubal ligation into law would help accelerate the process of ending poverty in the country by fifty percent or more. By 1995, Fujimori had made an agreement with USAID for a hefty amount of money for his government to begin the sterilization of women. He believed this would help reverse the declining GDP and open the door to much-needed loans from abroad.

CHAPTER 3

WOMEN'S RISE TO POSITIONS OF POWER UNDER ALBERTO FUJIMORI: THE STOLEN FEMINIST DISCOURSE

Consciente de su capacidad, alentada por sus legítimos derechos, susceptible al progreso universal, herida en su dignidad, recobrando la noble altivez y energía del ser humano, ha roto las puertas de su lóbrega prisión, ha traspuesto los mezquinos límites de la vida vegetativa, ha protestado de la inferioridad y de la inercia mental a que la condena el ansia de predominio del varón.⁷²

In the long trajectory of Peruvian history, women endured systematic subjugation under patriarchal norms imposed by their male counterparts.

“Parece que tácitamente los hombres de todos los pueblos hubiesen acordado, en su soberbio egoísmo, oprimir cruelmente a la mujer, negándole los bienes sublimes de la libertad y de la ciencia.”⁷³

Always denying women the rights that all men enjoy, placing them in second or third place when it comes to meeting their physical, mental, and spiritual needs:

Subyugada al hombre, relegada a segundo o tercero y hasta último lugar; y aun más, convertida en cosa, artículo de venta, en servil esclava, sin ningún derecho, sin intervención en la administración pública, con la exclusiva misión de reproducir la especie, y obedecer siempre, sin protestar jamás a su amo y señor.⁷⁴

72. María Jesús Alvarado Rivera, *El feminismo: Educacion femenina* (1912)
<https://repositoriodigital.bnp.gob.pe/bnp/recursos/2/html/el-feminismo-conferencia-leida-en-la-sociedad-geografica-de-lima-el-28-de-octubre-de-1911/6/>

English translation: Aware of her capacity, encouraged by her legitimate rights, susceptible to universal progress, wounded in her dignity, recovering the noble arrogance and energy of the human being, she has broken the doors of her gloomy prison, she has crossed the petty limits of vegetative life, “She has protested against the inferiority and mental inertia to which the desire for male dominance condemns her.”

73. Alvarado Rivera, *El feminismo*, 3.

English Translation: “It seems that men of all peoples have tacitly agreed in their arrogant selfishness to cruelly oppress women, denying them the sublime goods of freedom and science.”

74. Alvarado Rivera, *El feminismo*, 2.

The tendency to control women's ability to reproduce drove men across the globe to swiftly reduce women to the status of mere objects to be had, scrutinizing every aspect that would help women liberate themselves from a fate approaching that of slavery.

In Peru, women continue to confront a deeply set double standard regarding their rights and needs as the other half of the nation. For years, feminists such as Flora Tristán, María Jesús Alvarado, and Zoila Aurora Cáceres, among others, including Lourdes Flores Nano and Susy Diaz, continued to fight for and uphold women's rights by forging a path into Peruvian politics that, at the time, remained heavily male-dominated.

According to Cecilia Blondet:

En la década de los años 80, sectores femeninos organizados jugaron un rol importante y tuvieron probablemente comportamientos "pragmáticos", pero estuvieron encubiertos por la vigencia y el ejercicio de un sistema de partidos con dirigencias masculinas que bloquearon sistemáticamente la participación femenina.⁷⁵

As the decade progressed, organized women's sectors continued to gain visibility through their pragmatic approaches and effective organization on issues concerning women's rights as citizens of the nation. Regardless of their efforts to be taken seriously by society's political and public sectors, they were delegitimized by the political sector, thereby losing their capacity for representation and being shunned from the public sphere once again.

In this chapter, I argue that women are not homogeneous in their quest for freedom from men's controlling authority. Regardless of how they were portrayed by public opinion due to their femininity or their ingrained mothering and protective nature, they have demonstrated that when granted positions of power and access to more significant benefits for themselves and their communities, they selfishly

75. Cecilia Blondet, *El encanto del dictador: mujeres y política en la década de Fujimori* (Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, [IEP], 2002), 32.

English translation: "In the 1980s, organized female sectors played an important role and probably had "pragmatic" behaviors, but they were covered up by the validity and exercise of a party system with male leaders that systematically blocked female participation."

supported the established power structure, disregarding the pain and suffering of others of their sex. I aim to demonstrate how Peruvian women, regardless of their social status or class, yielded power to President Alberto Fujimori to improve their own situation at the expense of others.

At the time Fujimori took office, he had destroyed the credibility of all traditional political parties in Peru by declaiming their elitist nature, lack of organization, and flawed decision-making.

He criticized their inability to modernize the nation, arguing that their rigid adherence to the feudal system established during the colonial period hindered progress. Furthermore, Fujimori focused on the 1994 Population and Development Conference in Cairo, particularly on discussions centered on “Gender Equality, Equity and Empowerment of Women.”⁷⁶ The United Nations sought to outline the measures each nation needed to take to ensure that girls and women could reach their full potential.

The U.N.’s plan stated that: “Countries should act to empower women and should take steps to eliminate inequalities between men and women as soon as possible.”⁷⁷ This context of opportunity for then-President Fujimori to appeal to female voters across all social sectors by presenting himself as a champion for women’s rights. Concomitantly, he sought to demonstrate to the international community that his administration prioritized the needs of Peruvian women, portraying himself as a great modern reformer committed to gender equity and inclusion. It did not take long for Fujimori to garner significant support from women who were drawn to his stated cause:

En efecto, el régimen fujimorista tiene acogida entre mujeres de distintas capas sociales, estructural e históricamente postergadas, que tienen intereses y expectativas desatendidas que creyeron poder alcanzar con el gobierno fujimorista.⁷⁸

76. United Nations, Population Development: Programme of Action Adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development , September 1994, 17.

77. United Nations, Population Development: Programme of Action, 18.

78. Blondet, *El encanto del dictador*, 31.

English Translation: “In effect, the Fujimori regime is welcomed by women from different social strata, structurally and historically neglected, who have neglected interests and expectations that they believed they could achieve with the Fujimori government.”

For some women, Fujimori represented a president who acknowledged the struggles women faced in a country that, for the most part, was shaped by chauvinistic Spanish culture. During the Spanish conquest, women were often treated as mere objects, or even commodities, to be used in business transactions and to form alliances through marriage. Spanish influence in Peru has remained strong and consistent, particularly in gender relations. As Joan Scott portrays in her article “Gender a Useful Category of Historical Analysis,”

Gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power. Changes in the organization of social relationships always correspond to changes in representations of power.⁷⁹

These structural power relationships in Peru have always been safeguarded by males in positions of influence. The Catholic Church further reinforced them to maintain the status quo of the position held by women within society as subordinates to males. These relationships further strengthened the Spanish-taught ideals of Machismo and Marianismo, in which each gender was portrayed through exaggerated social constructs. Machismo portrays males as overly aggressive, involved in public demonstrations of dominance, and constantly alluding to their sexual prowess and womanizing abilities, among other negative male characteristics. These, in males, continue to be highly valued in Peru, as in much of Latin America.

In contrast, religious authorities actively compelled women to “maintain the house and silence,”⁸⁰ as Fray Luis De León wrote about the place of women in early Mexican society. Women’s roles were closely tied to the idealized embodiment of the Virgin Mary, who was envisioned as the epitome of perfect womanhood. The Holy Mother was portrayed as embodying the desired female

79. Joan W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986): 1067. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1864376>

80. Javier Villa-Flores, “Through Eve’s Open Mouth,” *Dangerous Speech: A Social History of Blasphemy in Colonial Mexico* (University of Arizona Press, 2006), 104.

qualities that men sought in their daughters and wives, such as self-sacrifice, passivity, spirituality, chastity, and overall obedience and submissiveness. Not only were women faced with an unattainable image of perfection in the Virgin, but they were constantly reminded of their subordinate position by the Catholic church and its teachings on the virtues of womanhood and their position within society, as Saint Paul wrote:

A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; She must be quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.⁸¹

This passage from the Bible further emphasizes the subordinate role women were compelled to follow. Pressure came from both males in society and the church. Specifically, during early colonial times, when the church would write books on

La Perfecta Casada by Fray Luis De León, “Thus, men should endeavor to impose on them the Christian female virtues of silence, chastity, and obedience.”⁸² Some writers suggest physical punishment for women who overstep their position as subservient to their husbands, fathers, etc.

Male entitlement, along with a church and government that continues to uphold female subordination, applauds male machista behaviors and defends male dominance and aggression against women. This behavior is displayed in a 2023 interview with the recently retired Archbishop of Lima, Cardinal Juan Luis Cipriani, on radio station RPP Noticias, where he alleged, “Las estadísticas nos dicen que hay abortos de niñas, pero no es porque hayan abusado de las niñas, sino porque, muchas veces, la mujer se pone, como en un escaparate, provocando.”⁸³

81. 1 Timothy 2:11-15 (New Catholic Bible).

82. Villa-Flores, *Dangerous Speech: A Social History of Blasphemy in Colonial Mexico*, 107.

83. Juan Luis Cipriani, “La mujer se pone, como en un escaparate, provocando,” *La República*, March 7, 2023, <https://larepublica.pe/politica/789837-juan-luis-cipriani-la-mujer-se-pone-como-en-un-escaparate-provocando>

English Translation: “Statistics tell us that there are abortions of girls, but it is not because the girls have been abused, but because, many times, the woman stands, as if in a shop window, provoking.”

Cipriani's misogynistic words conflating girls and women were in response to cases of female sexual assaults that resulted in pregnancies and, in turn, led many young women and girls to seek abortions. Cipriani's statements only reinforced the church's support of female subordination as well as the age-old ideals of Marianismo. According to the Cardinal, women are not raped, but they put themselves on display, provoking men's poor control of their sexual impulses. He concluded with a call for girls and women to dress modestly to avoid suffering sexual violence at the hands of the nation's men. The indoctrinated message of women's submission is still being pandered.

In 1995, Alberto Fujimori fooled most of the female population in Peru by promising them reproductive rights and empowerment, promising to listen to their needs, and claiming to make the country a safe and prosperous place for women to grow and succeed. For years, Peruvian women's voices and opinions had been pushed aside by dictators and traditional political parties alike. The sudden change in Peruvian political discourse in 1995 captured the minds and hearts of women in the nation:

Fujimori vio en las mujeres un apetecible caudal de votos y la posibilidad de enriquecer su reconocimiento internacional bajo las banderas del anti-machismo y la equidad. Para conseguirlas, se dedicó a dictar una serie de medidas dirigidas especialmente a los distintos grupos de mujeres, dándoles una atención y prioridad nunca antes vista. Al mismo tiempo, Fujimori capitalizó, con un "maquiavélico" manejo de los medios masivos de comunicación, los grandes cambios de la sociedad producto de la modernización de mediados de siglo, los logros de las luchas de las mujeres a nivel nacional e internacional y su disponibilidad e interés por entrar a la escena pública.⁸⁴

According to Cecilia Blondet, this sudden empowerment that the president gave women in all sectors renewed sense of being and a shift in the Peruvian population's common conceptions about female roles within society. However, Fujimori's sudden interest in the plight of women can be traced

84. Blondet, *El encanto del dictador*, 20.

English Translation: "Fujimori saw in women a desirable flow of votes and the possibility of enriching their international recognition under the banners of anti-machismo and equality. To achieve them, he dedicated himself to dictating a series of measures aimed especially at different groups of women, giving them attention and priority never seen before. At the same time, Fujimori capitalized, with a "Machiavellian" management of the mass media, on the great changes in society resulting from mid-century modernization, the achievements of women's struggles at the national and international level, and their availability and interest in entering the public scene."

back to the president's need to demonstrate Peru's modernization efforts. In a nation that for years was viewed as violent and backward due to extreme poverty, peasants continued to live under pseudo-feudal arrangements with the landed class, and the nation's mainly agricultural economy and its lack of industrial development. It became vital for Fujimori to change the way the world saw Peru. Fujimori had to rebuild trust within his government to continue reaping the benefits of foreign investment and secure additional financing for his political projects.

He pursued modernization policies even at the expense of women, aiming to maintain high presidential approval ratings and advance his political agenda. He declared that “women can have at their disposal full autonomy and freedom, the tools necessary for their own lives.”⁸⁵ When he appropriated the Peruvian feminist discourse, using it as a tool to press Peruvian women's liberation in the eyes of the world and simultaneously cause a rupture within feminist groups, who argued that although Fujimori was on the right track, offering birth control and tubal ligation free of cost to all, still many believed that his policies did not go far enough because women were still constrained by the nation's conservative views on the issues of granting women complete authority over their bodies. The decision of the president to push through the 1993 constitution that systematically denied women the constitutional right to terminate unwanted pregnancies and prevented the unnecessary deaths of girls and women who, in desperation, sought underground physicians, colloquially known as “*Cuchareros*,” to terminate their pregnancies.⁸⁶ In addition to the government's blatant dismissal of feminist input in issues that affected their bodies and reproductive health directly. For many, this became the determining factor in withdrawing their support for Fujimori and severing a once-united feminist front.

85. St phanie Rousseau, “Populism from Above, Populism from Below: Gender Politics Under Alberto Fujimori and Evo Morales,” in *Gender and Populism in Latin America: Passionate Politics*, ed. Karen Kampwirth (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 145.

Cuchareros: A colloquial manner of calling doctors that would perform underground abortions. The English Translation would be “Spooners.”

Notwithstanding, a large swath of feminists agreed and were swayed by the president's "bold move to broaden access to family-planning and contraceptive services."⁸⁷ Women perceived the president's expansion of family planning services as a measured triumph, as it offered them increased autonomy over their reproductive decisions. Their support subsequently reinforced the president's authority in confronting opposition to policies, particularly from the Catholic Church, which maintained a staunch resistance to his family planning initiatives.

In response to opposition from the church and conservative factions within Peru, Fujimori strategically leveraged the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, aware that the international community would be attentive to his actions. At the conference, Fujimori declared:

The Church is trying to prevent the Peruvian State from carrying out a modern and rational family planning policy. We have been accused of trying to impose "mutilations" and "killing poor people" after a recent law was passed by Congress allowing voluntary vasectomies and fallopian tube ligation as part of a contraceptive method.⁸⁸

Rebuking the hierarchy of the Peruvian Catholic Church that "has labeled this government's decision an expression of the "power of darkness,"⁸⁹ for the State trying to educate women from all social sectors of the country. It was during this conference that Fujimori cemented the allegiance of women in Peru when he picked up the sword to defend Peruvian women's rights against the ultra-conservative groups in the nation:

Peruvian women are not going to remain confined or constrained by the intransigence of ultraconservative mentalities that pretend to turn into a dogma, their incapacity to accept social change and deny a truth so simple like the need of both boys and girls who come to this world to enjoy a dignified condition given by the Creator of human life.⁹⁰

87. Rousseau, "Populism from Above, Populism from Below," 148.

88. Alberto Fujimori, "Speech at the Fourth World Conference on Women," <https://www.un.org/esa/gopher-data/conf/fwcw/conf/gov/950915131946.txt>

89. Fujimori, "Speech at the Fourth World Conference on Women."

90. Fujimori, "Speech at the Fourth World Conference on Women."

Fujimori's defense of women served two significant purposes. The first was to gain women's support, since the approval rating among men in the country had started to dwindle slightly due to the perceived authoritarian manner in which Fujimori led the nation. The second served a much darker purpose: to uplift women in all sectors of society, specifically hand-picked by him to promote his new family planning program to the rest of the nation. His strategy built a smoke screen at the fanfare of uplifting women's rights and advocating for women to enter the political sphere by "reforming the electoral code, that manda[ted] that 25 percent of party candidates for congress and municipal elections be women."⁹¹ He further argued that women were, in fact, "more honest than men and more dedicated to the public good."⁹² Female support for the president steadily rose among middle and upper-class women, many of them compelled by the promise of pushing women to reach their full potential, especially after Fujimori established "the first cabinet-level ministry of its kind in Latin America"⁹³ (*Ministerio de Promoción de La Mujer y el Desarrollo Humano*) or PROMUDEH. This ministry for promoting women and human development was established on October 29, 1996, stating that the mission of this ministry was:

El Ministerio de Promoción de la Mujer y del Desarrollo Humano tiene como misión promover el desarrollo de la mujer y la familia, promover las actividades que favorezcan el desarrollo humano de la población y la atención prioritaria a los menores en riesgo.⁹⁴

91. Rousseau, "Populism from Above, Populism from Below," 147.

92. Rousseau, "Populism from Above, Populism from Below," 147.

93. Rousseau, "Populism from Above, Populism from Below," 146.

94. Decreto Legislativo No. 866: Ley de organizació y Funciones del Ministerio de Promoción de la Mujer y del Desarrollo Humano, October 29, 1996, <https://www.leyes.congreso.gob.pe/Documentos/DecretosLegislativos/00866.pdf>

English Translation: The Ministry of Promotion of Women and Human Development's mission is to promote the development of women and the family, promote activities that favor the human development of the population, and prioritize attention to minors at risk.

Once founded, “Fujimori transferred many social programs targeting poor women from the ministry of the president to PROMUDEH.”⁹⁵ Feminist groups in Peru had long advocated a women's ministry; however, not a single feminist group was involved in the making or planning of this critical governmental office built to represent and protect women. “The ministry’s mandate was designed without feminist input, and its successive ministers came from outside feminist circles.”⁹⁶ Making PROMUDEH the fundamental ingredient for Fujimori’s clientelist pursuits with the lower classes and making this ministry the cornerstone of his populist political activities.

Despite the glaring absence of feminists who advocated for a women’s ministry, much of the Peruvian public, including some feminist groups, supported the president’s actions in granting women greater rights and protection under the law. In addition, the introduction of electoral quotas successfully drew middle- and upper-class women into the ranks of the regime. The purpose of PROMUDEH became Fujimori’s link to the poorest sectors of the nation, allowing him to integrate the (*comedores populares*) communal kitchens by providing them with the necessary food items that were donated or subsidized by the Peruvian government through a decentralized governmental entity known as PRONAA (*Programa Nacional de Asistencia Alimentaria*). Its mission was to reach some of the poorest areas in Peru, focusing on the basic nutritional needs of women and children living on or below the poverty line. Notwithstanding, Fujimori successfully politicized the social assistance programs targeting the country’s most impoverished and vulnerable populations. It’s important to recognize that, during the García administration’s financial crisis, women in the nation’s poorest regions assumed primary responsibility for sustaining both their families and their communities. These women organized and distributed scarce food resources through communal kitchens, which primarily served children and their families, thereby positioning themselves as a significant political force.

95. Rousseau, “Populism from Above, Populism from Below,” 146.

96. Rousseau, “Populism from Above, Populism from Below,” 148.

Throughout the years, various presidents have attempted to establish connections with the women of these communal kitchens to garner their favor. Despite Garcia's and Belaunde's attempts to regulate or control the women in charge of these kitchens, they never gained a strong enough foothold to do so. However, by the time Alberto Fujimori came to power in the 1990s, his economic restructuring plan forced many of these independent communal kitchens formed by women and mothers to establish ties with governmental agencies, as the quote below states:

Programa Nacional de Asistencia Alimentaria (PRONAA) que reconoce por ley a las socias de los comedores populares como interlocutoras del Estado en la distribución de alimentos y en el plan de alivio a la pobreza. Esto permitiría que la oficina estatal regule en cierta medida la otrora organización autónoma de mujeres mediante un subsidio parcial a la producción de comida, al mismo tiempo que subordinaba y formalizaba la relación de dependencia de las mujeres y conformaba una "clientela".⁹⁷

Through the State-regulated program of food distribution and Subsidies, "Fujimori used control over food aid for political manipulation."⁹⁸ As stated above, his politicization of the different assistance programs began with selecting favored communal kitchens where his government would supply goods, depending on the support these women would provide to his campaign. However, the benefits did not end with food supplies, which were primarily financed through foreign donations and some governmental funding for these programs. Fujimori would also promise proper plumbing and electricity to areas on the outskirts of Lima that families had illegally occupied, thereby turning a welfare program into clientelism. Nonetheless, female leaders within these communal kitchens and women's clubs fell prey to the government's enticing promises of stability and future financial success, in other words, a

97. Cecilia Blondet and Carolina Trivelli, *Cucharas en alto: del asistencialismo al desarrollo local: fortaleciendo la participación de las mujeres* (Instituto de Estudios Peruanos [IEP], 2004), 15.
<https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/fc0fc312-3e56-415d-ab8b-de36fa9e6cd6/content>

English Translation: PRONAA National Food Assistance Program that recognizes by law the members of soup kitchens as interlocutors of the State in the distribution of food and in the poverty alleviation plan. This would allow the state office to regulate, to a certain extent, the once autonomous organization of women through a partial subsidy to food production while at the same time subordinating and formalizing the relationship of dependence of women and forming a "cliente."

98. Rousseau, "Populism from Above, Populism from Below," 149.

quid pro quo by the Peruvian government, as the quote below indicates. Yet these promises only worked if they helped him stay in power. Thereby subordinating all these women's groups and communal kitchens to the government's political disposition, they clumsily lose their ability to negotiate and simply accept empty promises of success or, for some, the promise of finally being able to develop their micro-enterprise.

Sin embargo, a pesar de la intuición de las dirigentas de esta privilegiada situación, muchos factores entorpecieron su capacidad de negociación, convirtiendo a muchas de ellas en presa de ofertas irresistibles, sometiéndolas a un discurso asistencialista y pragmático de parte del gobierno. "Con el presidente Fujimori seguirás recibiendo lo poco que recibes y podrás seguir soñando con la ilusión de convertirte en una microempresaria; con cualquier otro no hay seguridad" fue el texto que las subyugó.⁹⁹

For some of the community leaders of these food programs, the government representatives who delivered the food donations for their kitchens managed to entice them with their promises of extra food delivery if they worked their magic with the rest of their community. In many cases, this caused a loss of trust in these female leaders when the rest of the community realized that they claimed to work for the community's benefit but only sought their own welfare and the elevated position of power.

Clientelism, however, is not a new phenomenon in Peru; all those who have held the presidency have, in various ways, sought to engage the poor. Unfortunately, like Fujimori once said, "Poverty has a female face."¹⁰⁰ That led governmental agencies to focus mainly on the exploitation of women. Since it was on them that need became most prevalent during times of political and financial crisis. Between 1985 and 1990, Allan Garcia created a temporary work assistance project, known as PAIT (*Programa*

99. Cecilia Blondet, *Lecciones de la participación política de las mujeres* (Instituto de Investigación de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo Social, June 2004), <https://scispace.com/pdf/lecciones-de-la-participacion-politica-de-las-mujeres-4x0qpydym7.pdf>

English Translation: However, despite the leaders' intuition of this privileged situation, many factors hindered their ability to negotiate, making many of them prey to irresistible offers, subjecting them to a welfare and pragmatic discourse on the part of the government. "With President Fujimori, you will continue to receive the little you receive, and you will be able to continue dreaming of the illusion of becoming a micro-entrepreneur; with anyone else, there is no security," was the text that subjugated them.

100. Fujimori, "Speech at the Fourth World Conference on Women."

de Trabajo Temporal), which heavily employed women from urban centers, such as *Villa El Salvador* in Lima. These jobs, however, selected certain women for the work the government needed done. The condition for hiring them was that they attend campaigns and rallies to show their support for the President and his party. To receive government-provided work assistance. If they failed to attend the party-organized events, the men in charge of hiring would no longer hire the women who were unable to participate. Thereby denying them a much-needed second income during economic crises. Lieutenant Mayor and advocate for women's rights in Villa El Salvador, María Elena Moyano, declared during an interview: "Pero vemos con mucha preocupación y mucha extrañeza cómo las mujeres han venido siendo utilizadas, ¿no? Políticamente."¹⁰¹ Similarly, when Fujimori came to power in the 1990s, he adopted what would be characterized as a left-leaning approach to the "welfare state" that Garcia had imposed. And turned the government into a welfare-based clientelism. It is a populist practice in which people receive benefits in exchange for electoral support after elections. This heightened the president's interest in the Peruvian feminist discourse as a means to increase his ability to convoke "algunos sectores de mujeres 'poderosas' y populares 'desde arriba' se puede entender como un mecanismo de manipulación política del electorado femenino."¹⁰² A deliberately crafted strategy of selective inclusion designed to allow Peru to respond to growing international pressure on gender-related issues, especially after the Gender, Equality, Equity, and Empowerment of Women's conference in Cairo in 1994. The ears and eyes of the Peruvian President had been laser-focused on these women's discourses to put into action his family planning and contraceptive plan the following year, which included legalizing tubal

101. Lola G. Luna, "Entrevista a María Elena Moyano 'Madre Coraje' (Primera Parte)," posted May 30, 2017 YouTube, 15:02, <https://youtu.be/qcKpD0y9jn8>

English Translation: "But we see with great concern and great surprise how women have been used, right? Politically."

102. Blondet, *Lecciones de la participación política de las mujeres*, 8.

English translation: "Some sectors of "powerful" and popular women "from above" can be understood as a mechanism of political manipulation of the female electorate."

ligation and vasectomies at the behest of the U. S. government, which insisted on these measures after having applied them to Puerto Rican women. Laura Briggs points out in her article, “Discourses of ‘Forced Sterilization’ in Puerto Rico: The Problem with the Speaking Subaltern.” In which she investigates the U.S. reproductive rights movement to end coercive sterilizations in Puerto Rico and the mainland United States. According to Briggs’ article, different authors and filmmakers such as Ana Maria Garcia, Angela Davis, Mass and Gordon, “purported the existence of a U.S. corporate and government policy, begun in the 1930s, to eradicate ‘excess’ Puerto Rican workers through a policy of mass sterilization of women .”¹⁰³ This placed direct blame on women and women’s bodies, as Margarita Ostolaza writes,

The ideological discourse of colonial politics, the fact that the labor force is reproduced in a woman’s body...makes her responsible for the rise in unemployment ...increase in poverty, the increase in the public debt... According to the ideological discourse, it seems that women are responsible for having given birth to two million surplus Puerto Ricans, Puerto Ricans in excess.¹⁰⁴

Moreover, regardless of the abuse accusations made by his ex-wife, Susana Higuchi, the president continued to gain popularity among women and the public. His charisma and appeal to the lower sectors of society, primarily Afro-Peruvians and the Indigenous population. As a political figure of Japanese descent in a society marked by discrimination against Asian communities, and having personally experienced such prejudice, he appealed to social sectors that previous administrations had largely ignored or marginalized. That explained the strong appeal women held for him, especially when he placed women’s long-ignored plight at the forefront of his national campaign, which demonstrated his capacity to capture the Peruvian public. At the same time, he sought to legitimize and shield the authoritarian character of his administration by systematically appointing female leaders who aligned

103. Laura Briggs, “Discourses of ‘Forced Sterilizations’ in Puerto Rico: The Problem with the Speaking Subaltern,” *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 10, no. 2 (July 1998): 32. <https://doi-org.lib-proxy.fullerton.edu/10.1215/10407391-10-2-30>

104. Briggs, “Discourses of ‘Forced Sterilizations’ in Puerto Rico,” 58.

with his governing style and would advance his policy agenda. One such figure was Luz Salgado, who was interviewed the day after his release from prison by court order. “Para él no existen derechos humanos; para él no existe ningún tipo de beneficio...yo creo que a los terroristas les tienen mayor consideración que al hombre que nos dio la Paz.”¹⁰⁵

Like her, Marta Chavez was among the first women elected to Congress under his political party's banner. Martha Moyano was elected to Congress in 2000, following the country's highly contested presidential election and the president's third run for office, which was marred by allegations of electoral fraud, unlike her sister, Maria Elena Moyano, who vigorously worked for her people in Villa el Salvador, refusing to take sides with either the Guerrillas or the government. She always stood up for the welfare of the mothers, women, and children in her district, always cautious of the promises of political leaders to the women of the communal kitchens and protective of the small resources her community received, especially when the Shining Path guerrillas began their assault on poor rural communities in Lima, searching for men and women to fill their ranks as well as for resources to continue the fight against the Peruvian government. Martha Moyano, after her sister's tragic death by the Shining Path guerrilla, became a firm believer in Fujimori and continues to defend him after his government trespassed on women's human rights by leading a sterilization campaign enforced by coercion and lies to the poor and most vulnerable women of the nation. Even so, as expressed by their recent statements, these women were elected to Congress under his political party and remain dutifully loyal to the president today.

If we focus on non-election positions in other sectors of society, Fujimori carefully chose women who wholeheartedly agreed with his policies and would successfully inspire trust and demonstrate the president's promise to women. A clear example of female devotion towards Fujimori within the

105. Peru21 TV Channel, “Luz Salgado sobre Alberto Fujimori: ‘El juez ha recibido mucha presión de los caviars,’” posted December 1, 2023, YouTube video 6:18, <https://youtu.be/1nGF5F2PUvc>

governmental positions he handpicked was the Minister for Women's Health and Development, Maria Luisa Cuculiza. She was recently interviewed about Fujimori's release from prison this past December 6, 2023, and declared to a local news channel that: Me siento muy feliz y contenta, por el presidente por su familia, por que por fin se hizo justicia con este hombre que trabajo por el país.¹⁰⁶

Remember that as Ministra de La Mujer, she was charged with protecting all women in the country, specifically the most vulnerable, such as the poor and those living in rural Andean communities. In a separate interview on a Peruvian news show called Buenos Días Perú.¹⁰⁷

Reportero: “¿Usted se siente aludida cuando se habla de esta campaña (de esterilizaciones forzadas)?

María Luisa: “No, para nada.”

Reportero: “Usted era ministra de la Mujer en esa época.”

María Luisa: “Sí, sí, sí la campaña existió”

Reportero: “¿Realmente se esterilizó a mujeres contra su voluntad?”

“La campaña sí existió, pero no de la manera como lo presentan. No fue forzada; a nadie, pues, en sus cuatro cabales, la van a meter a una sala de operaciones a la fuerza. Eso a mí no me vengan a decir porque es imposible; la persona tiene que firmar la autorización.”

Her dismissal of any blame and quick defense of the President's actions reinforces the blind faith these women in power had in Fujimori. It also shows that not all women are moved by honesty and integrity when it comes to their hold on power.

The substantial support Fujimori garnered from the female population underscores not only his mastery over media narratives but also his strategic use of gendered appeals to consolidate political authority. By positioning himself as an advocate for women's interests, he effectively shaped public perception, masking the underlying realities of his authoritarian regime.

106. ATV Noticias, “Luisa Cuculiza sobre la liberación de Fujimori: ‘Me siento muy feliz, por fin se hizo justicia,’” posted December 6, 2023, YouTube video, 1:17. https://youtu.be/u_vyFDv4j4Y

107. María Luisa Cuculiza. Interview by Beto Ortiz. *Buenos Días, Perú*. Panamericana Televisión, posted May 10, 2011 by Esteban Valle Riestra, YouTube, 2:44. <https://youtu.be/9z3gM2OxpME>

To provide an example of the degree of acceptance Fujimori had among women, in his second presidential run in the 1995 elections, Fujimori won 65% of the female vote compared to 61% of the male vote.¹⁰⁸ And by the 2000 election year, the number of women supporting Fujimori's electoral campaign had grown to a stunning 79.7% of the female vote, compared to 46.8% of the male vote.¹⁰⁹ The numbers provide a clear example of the influence and manipulation Fujimori wielded over the female electorate.

Muestra asimismo la perversa capacidad de un gobierno y una maquinaria autoritaria que utiliza el control de instituciones y recursos para ganarse la adhesión de reconocidas líderes sociales, aprovechando para sí tanto su experiencia como su orfandad institucional.¹¹⁰

However, some women who cooperated with the president in various government agencies did so out of greed and ambition for stability and power. They understood that they could remain involved in government through Fujimori's tenure in power. Many also realized that as long as they walked the political tightrope, they would receive additional financial aid from the president to continue political projects, receive extra food, and receive monetary gifts the president's political party offered via PRONAA, which demonstrates women's lack of recognition for the consequences their political and social actions would mean for other women in vulnerable positions.

Many took the bait, thinking that, indeed, the president sought to improve women's condition in the country and believed his actions so far demonstrated his intent to liberate women from a patriarchal society. Not realizing that the authoritarian way Fujimori led the country was, in many ways, a paternalistic government in which his only motive for incorporating women was to win their electoral

108. Rousseau, "Populism from Above, Populism from Below," 148.

109. Rousseau, "Populism from Above, Populism from Below," 147.

110. Blondet, "Lecciones De La Participación Política De Las Mujeres," 18.

English Translation: "Finally, it also shows the perverse capacity of a government and an authoritarian machinery that uses control of institutions and resources to gain the support of recognized social leaders, taking advantage of both their experience and their institutional orphanhood."

support in the following elections. This placed women within the police force to handle traffic, again under the pretense of female honesty and higher moral standards than men. The more educated females, like congresswomen within Fujimori's political party, such as Luz Salgado, manipulated the poor women who worked in the communal kitchens, exchanging votes for the promise of additional food supplies—a carefully planned political practice to gain enough political support for her upcoming congressional election.

Cecilia Blondet quotes Luz Salgado, saying to a reputable Peruvian newspaper: “Yo no he estafado en tráfico de armas ni en corrupciones y pido que se sancione a los culpables...”¹¹¹ Her actions illustrate that, when women occupy positions of power and face comparable conditions, they may be equally susceptible to systematic pressures and incentives that foster corrupt behavior. This underscores the influence of institutional and structural factors of gender in shaping political conduct, as Stéphanie Rousseau writes:

In a context where politicians in general were perceived to be corrupt, authoritarian, lazy, and self-centered, electing women became perceived as a worthy alternative. When asked to compare male and female mayors, respondents in a survey in 1998, men work more and are more efficient, women are more honest, loyal, just, and sensitive to social and human issues. The mothering and caring characteristics which the average Peruvian values in women were seen as necessary to clean up the political sphere and provide more trustworthy political leadership.¹¹²

This benevolent view of the female sex was another way to manipulate the feminine electorate in his favor. Fujimori's discriminatory selection of women for positions of power within the popular and middle-upper-class sectors provided him with enough power to fraudulently win his illegal third

111. Blondet, *El encanto del dictador*, 55.

English Translation: “I have not defrauded in arms trafficking or corruption, and I ask that the guilty be punished.” (Source was quoted From *El Comercio* Marzo 22 de Noviembre del 2000.)

112. Stephanie Rousseau, “Peru,” in *Sharing Power: Women, Parliament, Democracy*, ed. Yvonne Galligan and Manon Tremblay (Routledge, 2016), 96–97.

consecutive run for the Peruvian presidency and to continue the use of women's rights as a smoke screen to maintain his popularity.

Ultimately, the political marginalization of women in Peru, coupled with the rigid gender norms of marianismo and machismo introduced by the Spanish, produced a distorted notion of female authority. This misconception shaped perceptions of women's influence in both public and private spheres, particularly regarding societal expectations of their roles. The image of women as caring, nurturing, and more likely to become involved in charities and work for the disadvantaged automatically portrayed women as a single entity that would work in unison. This assumption was quickly dispelled when, in 1990, Fujimori came to power and opened the way for women to gain access to circles of power. In 1997, the President enacted the quota law, which required political parties to allocate twenty-five percent of their candidate lists to women running for public office. Yet female political participation increasingly functioned as a strategic instrument within his broader political calculus. By bringing women into the political sphere, through the quota law and by creating a ministry dedicated to women's affairs, Fujimori sought to mobilize them as allies who could help legitimize and stabilize the inner workings of his administration, an effort grounded in the presumption of women's inherent moral superiority. This assumption proved untenable, as corruption charges emerged across all levels of his regime.

According to Blondet, Fujimori hand-picked women who remained his close advisers and would remain anonymous to the public but were the brains behind Fujimori's decision-making and handling of the government, making them the "eyes and ears of the president."¹¹³

113. Blondet, *El encanto del dictador*, 45.

Las orientales mujeres de procedencia familiar asiática, de las que sólo se sabe que estaban ubicadas en puestos claves, pero en la segunda línea, y se dice que eran los "ojos y oídos" del presidente.¹¹⁴

Blondet contends that, due to these women's high-ranking governmental positions and deliberately low public profiles, these Asian women enjoyed Fujimori's utmost confidence and effectively operated as key political gatekeepers. Their roles highlight the intersection of gender and ethnicity in shaping political authority, as many of these women, affiliated with NGOs, were instrumental in organizing the Ministry for Women, leveraging feminist principles to exert influence within the state while navigating the constraints of an authoritarian regime.

The Fujimori administration effectively incorporated women into the public sphere, providing them with access to positions of power and decision-making that ostensibly benefited the broader population. However, this inclusion must be understood within the context of a broader political strategy that sought to consolidate authority, which simultaneously implemented coercive policies, such as the forced sterilization of poor women, revealing a stark tension between the appearance of empowerment and the exploitation of vulnerable populations for political gain. Not all the women who worked behind the scenes in the Fujimori regime had direct access to the president. Many of these educated and capable women served as intermediaries between the public and the legislative branch, wielding significant influence in shaping policy and public engagement. Yet their authority remained circumscribed by the regime's hierarchical, patriarchal structures. In doing so, they linked community leaders with government authorities, thereby extending the state's reach into local communities and undermining their autonomy. This strategy facilitated the creation of a clientelist system that encouraged, and, in

114. Blondet, *El encanto del dictador*, 44–45.

English Translation: "The Oriental women of Asian family origin, of whom it is only known that they were located in key positions, but in the second line, it is said that they were the "eyes and ears" of the President."

many cases, coerced, community members, particularly women, to actively participate in Fujimori's campaigns and propaganda in exchange for food.

The Fujimori pro-women stance enabled many educated and capable women to become full collaborators within the government. These privileged women systematically disregarded or ignored the repeated accusations of spousal abuse and, later, the indiscriminate forced sterilization campaign the government waged against the poor and most vulnerable women of the nation. This demonstrates that women are not a homogeneous group in their thinking and, like men, can engage in corrupt or dictatorial behavior and may not always prioritize humanitarian or social welfare initiatives, contrary to public perception and the narrative promoted by the regime. And that, like men, they too can be corrupt, dictatorial, and not necessarily interested in humanitarian and social aid, as was thought by the public and stressed by the regime.

CHAPTER 4

THEIR BODIES SHOW US THE TRACES OF STERILIZATION

De la mano de las organizaciones locales de mujeres, fuimos accediendo a la memoria reciente de aquellas que, colectivamente, buscaban protegerse de una nueva resignación. Los números comenzaron a recobrar sus nombres y sus rostros. Los cuerpos comenzaron a mostrarnos las huellas de lo acontecido.¹¹⁵

The objectification and weaponization of women's bodies in Peru took center stage during the conflict between subversive groups and the Armed Forces. Popular outrage stemmed from the abuse of power by armed forces members against women the regime perceived as enemies, as they exploited embedded biases against Indigenous people of the Sierra. The Commission of Truth and Reconciliation (CVR) findings highlighted this:

El 83% de los perpetradores de estos crímenes pertenecían al ejército y a la policía, mientras el 17% restante integraban grupos subversivos. En la mayoría de los casos, los altos mandos estaban al tanto y eran los que fomentaban esta práctica.¹¹⁶

Furthermore, instances of sexual violence against women are not a recent phenomenon when seen through a historical lens, reflecting the longstanding efforts of men and governments to constrain and regulate women's autonomy over their bodies. This is particularly evident in Peru, where seventy-six percent of the population adheres to conservative Catholic values. However, Alberto Fujimori's ascension to power in the 1990s and his re-election in 1995 sparked social and religious debate over the ethics of lowering the country's fertility rate. In 1991, President Fujimori declared: "el Año de la Austeridad y la Planificación Familiar," "lo cual suponía que las políticas del gobierno en ese año estarían encaminadas a lograr las metas planteadas por dicha denominación." In the same year, his government began speaking about:

115. Gaby Cevasco, *Nada personal: Reportaje de derechos humanos sobre la aplicación de la anticoncepción quirúrgica en el Perú, 1996–1998* (CLADEM Regional, 1999), 10, https://1996pnsrpf2000.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/cladem_nada-personal.pdf

116. DEMUS, "Caso Manta," Accessed March 1, 2023, <https://demus.org.pe/campanas/caso-manta/?utm>

Metas a mediano plazo para reducir las cifras de crecimiento poblacional y la tasa de fecundidad; el Programa Nacional de Población tenía como meta la reducción de la tasa de fecundidad por mujer a 3,3 hijos.¹¹⁷

It came as no surprise to Peruvians when Fujimori legalized the use of surgical tubal ligation and vasectomies as an acceptable means of birth control through a Ministerial resolution N° 0738-92-SA in December 1992. This occurred nine months after he issued a self-coup in April of the same year that granted him the ability to govern the country by decree with full support from the Peruvian Armed Forces and all the powers of the state at his hands.¹¹⁸

In this chapter, I address the Peruvian Government's abuse of power in the name of modernity and the advancement of women's rights through the disguised rhetoric of family planning. I argue that the regime perpetrated this crime within the intersection of poverty, ethnicity, and gender. They mainly focused on poor indigenous Quechua- and Aymara-speaking women, thereby making it a racialized system of population control.

From a mountainous backdrop, Esperanza Huayama Aguirre dials a cell phone from her humble little house in Radio Pampa, a town in the department of Huancavelica in the central highlands of Peru, about 140 miles from the capital city of Lima. She begins her story by stating her name and hometown before sharing what happened to her.

Nos hemos reunido en el policlínico más de cien mujeres, y allí nos tenían muy aprisionadas. Cerraron el portón. Y de allí entramos, y ya no nos dejaban salir. De allí me pasaron a hacerme la ligación. Me pusieron la anestesia, poquito me quise dormir y de allí, rapidito, me cortaban y yo me dolía. Escuche que dijeron 'la señora está en estado' dijeron. Entonces yo no quería mi hijito en ese momento muera. Yo le dije, 'yo no quiero

117. Cevalco, *Nada personal*, 30–31.

English Translation: medium-term goals to reduce population growth figures and the fertility rate; The National Population Program had the goal of reducing the fertility rate per woman to 3.3 children.

118. Klarén, *Nación y sociedad en la historia del Perú*, 499.

que lo saquen a mi hijito. Prefiero morir junto con mi hijito, y mi hijito no me lo van a sacar.”¹¹⁹

Like Esperanza, the Peruvian government sterilized approximately 270,000 women and 22,000 men between 1996 and 2000 under the leadership of the Peruvian president. Fujimori stepped onto the stage at the 1995 Fourth World Conference for Women to the applause of all in attendance. Fujimori declared that in Peru, "Poverty has a female face "¹²⁰ and that "poverty in our countries hits women twice as hard in times of crisis."¹²¹ Fujimori remarked on the number of women he sees across the country with "a baby wrapped in a blanket on her back, surrounded by an additional three or four more children."¹²² In many cases, these same females carried another child in their wombs. Instead of creating a progressive and empowering solution for women's reproductive rights, Alberto Fujimori engaged in a three-pronged Malthusian solution to the nation's underlying problems by addressing the skyrocketing population growth, the steady decline of the GDP, and the rapid elimination of harmful sectors of the population, such as criminals and subversives (Shining Path, MRTA).

According to the political magazine *Oiga*,

Ha quedado demostrado la necesidad de frenar lo más pronto posible el crecimiento demográfico y urge, adicionalmente, un tratamiento para los excedentes existentes: utilización generalizada de la esterilización en los grupos culturalmente atrasados y económicamente pauperizados... “Hay que discriminar el excedente poblacional y los sectores nocivos de la población. Consideramos a los subversivos y sus familiares

119. The Guardian, “Llamadas por Justicia,” posted March 9, 2017, YouTube, 21:28, <https://youtu.be/P-cREVT5Jr0>

English translation: “We were gathered in the polyclinic, more than a hundred women; there they held us all pressed together, and then they closed the door. And from that moment on, they did not let us out. From there, they took me into surgery to get my tubes tied. They anesthetized me a bit, and I almost dozed off to sleep. But they began cutting, and it was hurting me. When I overheard someone say, “This lady is pregnant.” Right away, I did not want my child to die, and I told them, “I don’t want you to remove my child. I would rather die with my child, and you will not take my child out.”

120. Fujimori, “Speech at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

121. Fujimori, “Speech at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

122. Fujimori, “Speech at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

directos, agitadores profesionales, elementos delincuenciales y a los traficantes de pasta básica de cocaína como excedente poblacional nocivo.¹²³

Moreover, the article also brings into focus the rampant population growth, claiming that the critical issue is:

Reside en que las tendencias demográficas han alcanzado proporciones de epidemia...de nada servirá derrotar a la subversión si seguimos incrementando en 500 mil personas anuales la demanda de alimentos, educación, servicios, empleos, vivienda, agua, energía.¹²⁴

By the time Alberto Fujimori took office in 1990, he foreshadowed a blueprint of what was to come when it came to family planning:

“Reunió los apoyos necesarios para poder plantar cara a la Iglesia y proponer ante el Congreso la legalización de la esterilización libre y voluntaria. Estos apoyos en un primer momento vendrían de las organizaciones feministas y de las organizaciones internacionales, llegando a acuerdos en la denominada Mesa Tripartita.”¹²⁵

Many Peruvians believed the government would address women’s reproductive rights by granting women throughout the country free access to a range of contraceptive methods, including tubal ligation surgery. However, Fujimori stopped short of legalizing abortion in the country. As a result, he alienated the support of a significant segment of feminist organizations that had invested political trust

123. Igartua, “El plan verde,” 26.

English Translation: The need to stop demographic growth as soon as possible has been demonstrated, and urgent additional treatment for the existing surpluses: widespread use of sterilization in culturally backward and economically impoverished groups... We must discriminate against the population surplus and harmful sectors of the population; we consider subversives and their direct relatives, professional agitators, criminal elements, and cocaine traffickers as the harmful population surplus.

124. Igartua, “El plan verde,” 26.

English Translation: “It lies in the fact that demographic trends have reached epidemic proportions... it will be useless to defeat subversion if we continue to increase the demand for food, education, services, jobs, housing, water, and energy by 500 thousand people annually.”

125. Ignacio Lorenzo Gallardo, “Discursos políticos sobre la anticoncepción quirúrgica voluntaria en el Perú,” *Revista de Lugar de la Memoria, la Tolerancia y la Inclusión Social +Memorias*, no.3 (September 2021): 353–54, <https://revistas.cultura.gob.pe/index.php/memorias/article/view/51>.

English Translation: that gathered the necessary support to stand up to the Church and propose before Congress legalizing free and voluntary sterilization. At first, the support would come from feminist organizations and international organizations, reaching agreements in the so-called Tripartite Table.

in a president who publicly emphasized the importance of women's reproductive rights. According to the 1993 Peruvian Constitution, Chapter 2, Article 6:

La política nacional de población tiene como objetivo difundir y promover la paternidad y maternidad responsables. Reconoce el derecho de las familias y de las personas a decidir. En tal sentido, el Estado asegura los programas de educación y la información adecuados y el acceso a los medios que no afecten la vida o la salud.¹²⁶

Thus far, the new Constitution suggests that women and their spouses are protected in their right to decide how many children they wish to have, without government interference in their personal affairs. Nonetheless, a few lines below, the Constitution states: “Es deber y derecho de los padres alimentar, educar y dar seguridad a sus hijos. Los hijos tienen el deber de respetar y asistir a sus padres.”¹²⁷

The caveat in Fujimori's 1993 Constitution rested on a narrow definition of “responsible parenting,” which required parents to feed, educate, and provide security to their children. In subsequent years, the Peruvian Government and Ministry of Health invoked this premise as legal justification for the forced sterilization of men and women. Officials employed subjective standards to determine who conformed to the state's ideal of responsible parenthood. This selection process was arbitrary and relied primarily on race, social class, and the number of children.

During the first year, the state promoted tubal ligation and vasectomies as instruments of population control. In many cases, women admitted to hospitals for childbirth were sterilized without their informed consent or coerced through the sustained pressure of the medical personnel. According to

126. Perú, Constitución Política del Perú (1993), art. 6, chap. II.

English Translation: “The national population policy aims to disseminate and promote responsible parenthood. It recognizes the right of families and individuals to decide. In this regard, the State ensures appropriate education and information programs and access to the media, which do not affect life or health.”

127. Peru, Constitución Política del Perú), art. 6, chap. II.

English Translation: “It is the duty and right of parents to feed, educate, and provide security for their children. Children have the duty to respect and tend to their parents.”

El reporte de derechos humanos sobre la aplicación de la anticoncepción quirúrgica en el Perú 1996-1998, their findings on the abuses against the victims of sterilization were: “Esterilización bajo engaño manifiesto, coacción o grave amenaza hacia la persona objeto de intervención o hacia su cónyuge.”¹²⁸

Tamayo’s research led her to interview women who had gone through the procedure without their knowledge and “who were taken into medical care under different circumstances, such as postpartum and post-abortion, or with other reproductive health issues.”¹²⁹ For those who did not consent to the sterilization, healthcare staff sought the “consent of their (male spouses or cohabitants).”¹³⁰ In order to meet their daily sterilization quota.

En mayo de 1997 recibí la visita de la enfermera Julia (no recuerdo el apellido), quien ya me había buscado muchas veces. Mi esposo se niega a recibirla, pues ya había escuchado en la calle que cortaban a las mujeres para que no tuvieran hijos. Sin embargo, dos enfermeras me ubicaron y envuelta en una frazada, y diciendo que me iban a poner inyecciones para la anemia, me llevaron a la posta. Cuando llegué a la posta, me dijeron que para evitar que tenga hijos con anemia, me iban a ligar pues así me iba a curar. Asustada, quise escapar. Pero lograron meterme en una sala. Me acostaron en el piso atada por las manos. Había otras señoras tiradas sobre el piso que me decían que para qué había ido, pues me iban a cortar también. Entre ellas, distinguí a la hija de Anselma, a la que en ese momento la estaban forzando, atando de las manos. Pedí que no me cortaran pues tenía la T de cobre, me contestaron que me la sacarían y que no pasaría nada y que además mi esposo había firmado y que la operación sólo duraría un año”¹³¹

As the sterilization campaigns made headway in the poorest areas of the country, isolated accusations were heard from “some women’s groups and human rights organizations that began to denounce abuses in 1997,” which slowly began to reach the offices of *La Defensoria Del Pueblo*.¹³²;

128. Cevalco, *Nada personal*, 41.

English Translation: Sterilization under blatant deception, coercion, or serious threat towards the person subject to intervention or towards their spouse

129. Cevalco, *Nada personal*, 41.

130. Cevalco, *Nada personal*, 41.

131. Magali Zevallos, ed. “Pobres sin derecho a tener hijos,” *Bajo La Lupa* 1, no. 4 (January 2008): 22, <https://es.scribd.com/doc/187866068/Bll-04-Exp-Fujimori>

132. Cevalco, *Nada personal*, 16.

¹³³ Likewise, Giuliana Tamayo, in her human rights report, writes:

Comienzan a revelarse presiones sobre el personal de salud para el cumplimiento de cuotas de captación de usuarias de anticoncepción quirúrgica, en diferentes localidades urbanas y rurales, y empiezan a surgir las primeras pruebas sobre la existencia de metas numéricas al respecto establecidas por la autoridad político-administrativa en salud.¹³⁴

Across the country, women who met the profile that the regime looked for were stalked, harassed, and even taken by force by health professionals who belonged to the Voluntary Contraception Program (VSC). In the case of Mamérita Mestanza Chávez, she “received approximately ten intimidating visits before she gave in to the official’s demands”¹³⁵ to get the procedure done. In various other cases, women were offered gifts, clothing, and food, as the headlines of *Diario La República* state (Figure 2).¹³⁶

133. La Defensoria del Pueblo is an institution established by the political constitution of 1993 to address any violations of the rights of Peruvian citizens. This autonomous entity operates independently of all other public or private powers, acting in the interest of the common good and in defense of the Peruvian people.

134. Cevalco, *Nada personal*, 16.

English Translation: “Pressures on health personnel to meet quotas for attracting surgical contraception users are beginning to emerge in different urban and rural locations, and the first evidence is beginning to emerge regarding the existence of numerical goals in this regard established by the political-administrative authority in health.”

135. “Caso Mamérita Meztanza Chávez,” CEJIL, <https://cejil.org/en/case/caso-mamerita-mestanza-chavez-2/> Accessed November 30, 2024.

136. “Esterilización Obligatoria al Descubierta: Ligaduras a cambio de comida,” *La República*, December 7, 1997, <https://1996pnsrpf2000.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/la-repucc81blica-7-de-diciembre-de-1997.pdf>

English Translation: “Ligature in Exchange for Food.”



Figure 2. Ligadura a cambio de comida.¹³⁷

Despite the health minister Marino Costa Bauer's strong denial and assurance of an in-depth investigation, "para dar con el origen del documento apócrifo que firma la existencia de una campaña de incentivos a cambio de esterilizaciones."¹³⁸ As a disclaimer, he added: "Sin embargo, no puedo negar que el documento haya sido producido, ya sea en el ministerio o en el Instituto de Seguridad Social, como propuesta preliminar de trabajo."¹³⁹ Regardless of how often government officials,

137. "Esterilización Obligatoria al Descubierta: Ligaduras a Cambio de Comida," *La República*, December 7, 1997.

138. "Ministro negó política de incentivos a cambio de esterilizaciones," *Gestión*, July 19, 1996. <https://1996pnsrpf2000.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/gestiocc81n-19-de-julio-de-1996.pdf>

English Translation: "To find the origin of the apocryphal document that confirms the existence of an incentive campaign in exchange for sterilizations."

139. "Ministro negó política de incentivos a cambio de esterilizaciones."

including the President, denied baiting the poorest of the nation with gifts of food and clothing in exchange for them getting the surgical procedure done. The Peruvian media, as well as the international media such as *The New York Times*, reported on Peru's Family Planning Program. They provided first-hand accounts of bribes and empty promises the healthcare workers made and revealed how these professionals preyed on the desperate needs of the nation's poorest and most vulnerable.

For Magna Morales and Bernadina Alva, peasant Andean women who could barely afford to feed their families, it was a troubling offer but one they found hard to refuse. Shortly before Christmas, Government health workers promised gifts of food and clothing if they underwent a sterilization procedure called tubal ligation. The operation went well for Mrs. Alva, 26, who received two dresses for her daughter and a T-shirt for her son. But Mrs. Morales, 34, died of complications 10 days after the surgery, leaving three young children and a husband behind. She was never well enough to pick up the promised gifts, and the family was told it could not sue the Government over her death because she had agreed to the procedure.¹⁴⁰

The media coverage became inundated with eyewitness and victim testimonies documenting abuses committed against men and women in the outskirts of major cities and in isolated Peruvian villages and towns. A year later, surgical contraception was approved by Peruvian law 26.130, which guaranteed tubal ligation and vasectomy as a right for all. The Archbishop of Huancayo, Monseigneur Jose Rios Reynoso, denounced that:

Hombres y mujeres de los pueblos alejados de esta provincia y de Concepción son llevados en camiones a los centros hospitalarios, muchas veces con engaños y a cambio de algo, para hacerles la vasectomía y la ligación de trompas.¹⁴¹

English Translation: "However, I cannot deny that the document was produced either in the ministry or in the Social Security Institute as a preliminary work proposal."

140. "Using Gifts as Bait, Peru Sterilizes Poor Women," *New York Times*, February 15, 1998, <https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/using-gifts-as-bait-peru-sterilizes-poor-women/docview/2236243315/se-2>.

141. "En camiones llevan a hombres y mujeres para esterilizarlos," *El Comercio*, July 20, 1996. <https://1996pnsrpf2000.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/el-comercio-20-de-julio-de-1996.pdf>

English translation: "Men and women from the remote towns of this province and Concepción are taken in trucks to hospital centers, often with deception and in exchange for something, to perform vasectomies and tubal ligation."

Congress members like Rafael Rey openly denounced the government's "Festivals of Sterilization"¹⁴² (see Figure 3) that enticed young women to get the procedure. Congressman Rey, on January 1, 1998, called out the minister of PROMUDEH, Miriam Schenone, stating that:

La existencia de una campaña de esterilización montada por el gobierno que incluye metas establecidas para los médicos del sector salud... Todas las mujeres del país acuden a una posta o un hospital del sector salud o del Instituto Peruano de Seguridad Social pueden dar fe de esta campaña de esterilización."¹⁴³

Rey held that: "que esta campaña no respeta el derecho de información ni la libertad de elección de las mujeres a quienes engaña para que se sometan a métodos quirúrgicos de esterilización."¹⁴⁴

Nonetheless, the director of Planificación Familiar del Ministerio de Salud, John Nagahata, denied that the government had any involvement in surgical procedures performed on women or that officials offered food in exchange for undergoing the procedures. He argued that critics had distorted the program. Claiming that:

Este programa, que tiene como principal objetivo facilitar el acceso a la información y servicios de planificación familiar a todos los peruanos de manera irrestricta, en la aplicación del principio fundamental de la libre voluntad."¹⁴⁵

142. Rafael Rey, interview by Beto Ortiz, *Buenos Dias Peru*, YouTube video, 5:05, posted May 31, 2011, <https://youtu.be/Gdobz1gMFUY>

143. "Congresistas de enfrenta a ministra," *El Sol*, January 7, 1998, <https://1996pnsrpf2000.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/el-sol-7-de-enero-de-1998.pdf>

English translation: "The existence of a Sterilization campaign mounted by the government that includes goals established for doctors in the health sector...all women in the country go to a post or hospital in the health sector, or the Peruvian Social Security Institute can attest to this campaign sterilization."

144. "Congresistas de enfrenta a ministra," *El Sol*, January 7, 1998.

English Translation: "this campaign does not respect the right to information or the freedom of choice of the women whom it deceives into undergoing surgical sterilization methods."

145. Congresistas de enfrenta a ministra," *El Sol*, January 7, 1998.

English Translation: This program, whose main objective is to facilitate access to family planning information and services to all Peruvians in an unrestricted manner, in the application of the fundamental principle of free will."

Despite early evidence of healthcare personnel being forced to meet daily quotas of sterilizations, medical personnel and government officials constantly denied any charges of quotas or that the family planning program was a concerted effort to systematically eradicate poverty in the country.



*Figure 3. Sterilization festival banner.*¹⁴⁶

Years later, Beto Ortiz, a popular television news host, interviewed former congressman Rafael Rey during the 2011 presidential campaign, when Fujimori’s daughter, herself a former First Lady, ran for the Peruvian presidency under the banner of Fuerza Popular and selected Rey as her vice-presidential candidate. In a candid interview, Rey addressed his role as administrator and defended the government’s population policies. Ortiz asked, “¿Existió una política de esterilización? ¿Voluntaria, forzada, se les daban folletos en español a mujeres quechua hablantes? ¿Qué ocurrió realmente, señor Rey?”¹⁴⁷

Rey’s response was clear and unequivocal:

146. Archivo PNSRPF, “Informe Defensorial no. 7: fotos de campañas,” <https://1996pnsrpf2000.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/informe-defensorial-n7-fotos-de-campancc83as.pdf>

147. Rafael Rey, interview by Beto Ortiz.

English Translation: “Was there a sterilization policy? Were brochures in Spanish voluntarily, forcedly given to Quechua-speaking women? “What really happened, Mr. Rey?”

¡Yo creo que ocurrió, sinceramente, una barbaridad! Yo fui el que hizo la denuncia; fui el que, por primera vez en el Congreso, mostró las fotografías de la propaganda del ministerio en las que se decía ‘Festival de ligadura de trompas.’¹⁴⁸

Ortiz finally confronts Rey by asking:

Ortiz: ¿Entonces usted está contradiciendo a Lucha (María Luisa) Cuculiza?

Rey: ¡Totalmente!

Ortiz: Ella me dijo acá que no, que fue voluntario y que es imposible que a una mujer se le lleve contra su voluntad.¹⁴⁹

However, the most damning evidence against the Fujimori government and its health ministers would come from the ministers themselves. In July 1997, Health Minister Marino Costa Bauer sent a statistical report to President Alberto Fujimori that stated:

A partir de junio, un incremento en la producción de las Fuerzas Armadas y Policiales, tanto en lo relativo a la ligadura de trompas como en la vasectomía, como consecuencia de la permanente coordinación con estas instituciones.¹⁵⁰

Bauer had a direct connection with the President, informing him about the progress being made and the military and police support for the healthcare staff when it came to hunting down women to get

148. Rafael Rey, interview by Beto Ortiz.

English Translation: “I honestly believe that something outrageous happened! I was the one who made the complaint; I was the one who, for the first time in Congress, showed the photographs of the ministry's propaganda in which it said, ‘Tubal Ligation Festival.’”

149. Rafael Rey, interview by Beto Ortiz.

English Translation: “So you are contradicting Lucha (María Luisa) Cuculiza?”

Rey: “Totally!”

Ortiz: “She told me here that no, that it was voluntary and that it is impossible for a woman to be taken against her will.”

150. Ministerio de Salud, “Oficio núm. SA-DM-0722/97 del 10 Jul. 1997,” July 10, 1997, <https://1996pnsrpf2000.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/oficios-firmados-por-el-ministro-m-costa-bauer.pdf>

English Translation: “As of June, an increase in the production of the Armed and Police Forces, both in relation to tubal ligation and vasectomy, as a consequence of the permanent coordination with these institutions.”

the procedure done. Alejandrina Pacheco Huamán, a Cusqueñan Peasant from the district of Colquepata, exemplifies the Health Minister's quote above:

Yo me escapé junto con tres mujeres de mi comunidad, trepando el cerco de la posta, pero la Policía me decía: “¿Adónde estás yendo? Tu esposo va a ir a la cárcel y tú también vas a ir a la cárcel.” Dos policías me cogieron fuerte de los brazos como si fuese una ratera, una ladrona. Uno de los policías se llamaba Jorge. Me llevaron a la posta de Colquepata para esterilizarme.¹⁵¹

In the words of Alejandra Pacheco Huamnán, the presence of the Police and the Armed forces became a prevalent coercive force behind the Healthcare staff. Not only did they become the authority to force these women into the clinics, but they also participated in the lies and fearmongering to make sure these women complied. See Figure 4.

However, it would not be the last mention of the involvement of the Peruvian military and armed forces. Eighteen years later, *Diario 16* would publish photos and documents that would directly incriminate the military, with signs posted on some of the patients' recovery beds that read: “El Ejército Peruano, presente en esta Acción Cívica, colaboró prestando camas de campaña, para el reposo de nuestras pacientes.”¹⁵²

151. Melissa Goytizolo, “Dos policías me llevaron de los brazos como ladrona para esterilizarme,” *La República* (Lima), November 11, 2015, <https://especiales.larepublica.pe/esterilizaciones-forzadas/pdf/3.pdf>

English Translation: “I escaped along with three women from my community by climbing the fence of the post, but the Police told me: “Where are you going? “Your Husband is going to go to jail, and you are going to go to jail too.” Two police officers grabbed me tightly by the arms as if I were a pickpocket, a thief. One of the police officers was called Jorge. They took me to the Colquepata post office to be sterilized.”

152. “Dossier esterilizaciones forzadas: Las sangrientas imágenes del horror,” *Diario 16*, July 13, 2015, 5, <https://es.scribd.com/document/430613291/ANTICONCEPTION-QUIRURGICA-VOLUNTARIA-DURANTE-EL-FUJIMORISMO>.



Figure 4. Las sangrientas imágenes del horror.¹⁵³

The government deployed the armed forces to override the fundamental and human rights of Peruvian citizens, including the men and women it sterilized through coercion and force. Giuliana Tamayo, in research documents submitted to CLADEM, Giuliana Tamayo concluded that the Peruvian government implemented sterilization as a racialized and gender-based campaign. That discriminated against the pauperized sectors of Peruvian society, which disproportionately affected vulnerable indigenous communities.

Under the subheading, “Examen de discriminación,” she wrote:

El PNSRPF 1996-2000 consideró a la población bajo pobreza y pobreza extrema como destinataria de medidas y dentro de esta, de relieve fundamentalmente a las mujeres en edad fértil... (El Programa de Planificación Familiar) Resultó orientado en la práctica por pautas y criterios apartados de un enfoque de derechos humanos, lo que dio lugar a violaciones a las libertades y derechos fundamentales, resultando afectadas, en particular y desproporcionadamente, mujeres en pobreza y pobreza extrema, entre estas, mujeres rurales e indígenas.”¹⁵⁴

153. “Dossier Esterilizaciones forzadas: Las sangrientas imágenes del horror.”

154 . Cevasco, *Nada personal*, 124.

The Government made it clear to the Peruvian public that it prioritized the eradication of poverty as its primary objective when it chose to sidestep or altogether ignore the protections and rights delineated by the 1993 Constitution, which specifically mentioned Indigenous communities and women.

Chapter III, Article 4 of the Peruvian Constitution states that:

La comunidad y el Estado protegen especialmente al niño, al adolescente, a la madre y al anciano en situación de abandono. También protegen a la familia y promueven el matrimonio. Reconocen a estos últimos como institutos naturales y fundamentales de la sociedad.¹⁵⁵

It specifically mentions that the State and the community should protect and promote family and marriage. It states that marriage and family constitute a natural and fundamental institution of society. Moreover, the Constitution also provides protections for Peru's Indigenous population. Chapter VI Article 89 describes in broad terms the legal rights and protections for its Indigenous population and communities:

Las comunidades campesinas y las nativas tienen existencia legal y son personas jurídicas. Son autónomas en su organización, en el trabajo comunal y en el uso y la libre disposición de sus tierras, así como en lo económico y administrativo, dentro del marco que la ley establece. El Estado respeta la identidad cultural de las comunidades campesinas y nativas.¹⁵⁶

Still, from 1995 to 2001, no stipulated protections for the vulnerable sectors of Peruvian society were followed. The constitutional rights that Fujimori approved in the new constitution in 1993 became void as his government pursued the eradication of poverty and the elimination of future uprisings or subversive movements, such as the Shining Path and MRTA. The close ties Fujimori maintained with the armed forces and his closest advisor, ex-military Vladimiro Montesinos, worked together to implement the covert military proposal known as *Plan Verde* to eradicate poverty and the seeds of terrorism in the country. According to the Armed Forces, it was the pauperized sections of the nation

155. Perú, Constitution Política del Perú (1993), art.4, chap.III.

156. Perú Constitution Política del Perú (1993), art. 89, chap.VI.

that the armed forces saw as a threat and a never-ending expense to the already bankrupt Peruvian government. The military plan underlined the need to have a generalized system of sterilization in the country that would provide the government cover to begin sterilizing men and women it deemed a threat. The *Programa Nacional de Salud Reproductiva y Planificación Familiar* became the catchphrase within the Peruvian political majority party to promote family planning and reproductive health to men and women nationwide.

At this point, President Fujimori filmed a three-minute ad on national television advocating his *Programa Nacional de Salud Reproductiva y Planificación Familiar* to the masses. He claimed that it had come to his attention that the reproductive health program (begun in the early 1990s) had been paralyzed due to severe deficits in key areas. He advanced his point by openly accepting the rejection of contraceptive methods given by the State. To be clear, resistance to contraceptives originated primarily in remote sectors of Peruvian society, including the Quechua- and Aymara-speaking communities, various indigenous groups in the Amazon basin, and, to some extent, the impoverished populations in the outskirts of Lima, groups historically identified as Wari and the criollos within the country.

Ya desde el año se viene hablando de la falta de suministros en los servicios relativos a la salud reproductiva y planificación familiar. Las noticias llegan desde centros de salud de diversas regiones y que por lo cierto, son tamizadas y minimizadas por el ministerio. Ratifican que existe una preocupante carencia de insumos a nivel nacional y que el programa de salud reproductiva implementado en la época del 90 está paralizado precisamente en las zonas en que más se le necesita para combatir la pobreza.¹⁵⁷

Furthermore, Fujimori advances his argument in favor of the reproductive health program by blaming conservatives within the government who oppose the use of contraceptives. This explains why there has not been sufficient progress in the field, particularly in relation to the lack of funding for the program aimed at reducing poverty in the country.

Esta deficiencia delata la posición conservadora del actual régimen con su rechazo a los métodos anticonceptivos. Eso explica el por qué no se han dado pasos alentadores en este

157. Alberto Fujimori, "Fujimori sobre planificación familiar," posted December 11, 2010 by jacqueespa, YouTube 3:46, <https://youtu.be/IJVggyEcQ>

campo. Más aun, no se ha destinado el presupuesto adecuado a programas para paliar la pobreza y reducir la mortalidad materno-infantil.¹⁵⁸

His emphasis on poverty reduction throughout the advertisement obscures the president's true intentions for his family planning and reproductive health program. As the ad continues, Fujimori conveys with great pride his program's advances in controlling population growth by announcing that the global fertility rate (according to UNICEF in 1990) was 3.7 children per woman of fertile age and had decreased substantially by 2000 to 2.7 on average. According to World Bank data, the fertility rate among Peruvian women had drastically reduced since 1990, when Fujimori entered the presidency, when the average birth rate was 3.9. This correlated to the regime pressing for family planning and passing new laws that would lay the groundwork for the following years. By 1996, the average fertility had steadily declined to 3.2 children per household. These numbers continue to decline as the Peruvian government intensified its poverty eradication by forcefully sterilizing women with financial support from foreign governments and organizations, including the Nippon Foundation, USAID, and United Nations Population Fund. Some of these actors, most notably the United States, regarded Peru's population growth as a potential threat to national security.

By 2001, as Fujimori mentions, Peru's fertility rate had dropped to 2.7 children per household, a figure verified by the World Bank (see Figure 5). He emphasized, while on the campaign, how rapidly his government curbed population growth in under a decade: "Así, la tasa de crecimiento demográfico de 2,3% se redujo en una década en 1,7%, una tasa más compatible con el desarrollo del país."¹⁵⁹

158. Fujimori, "Fujimori sobre planificación familiar."

159. Fujimori, "Fujimori sobre planificación familiar."

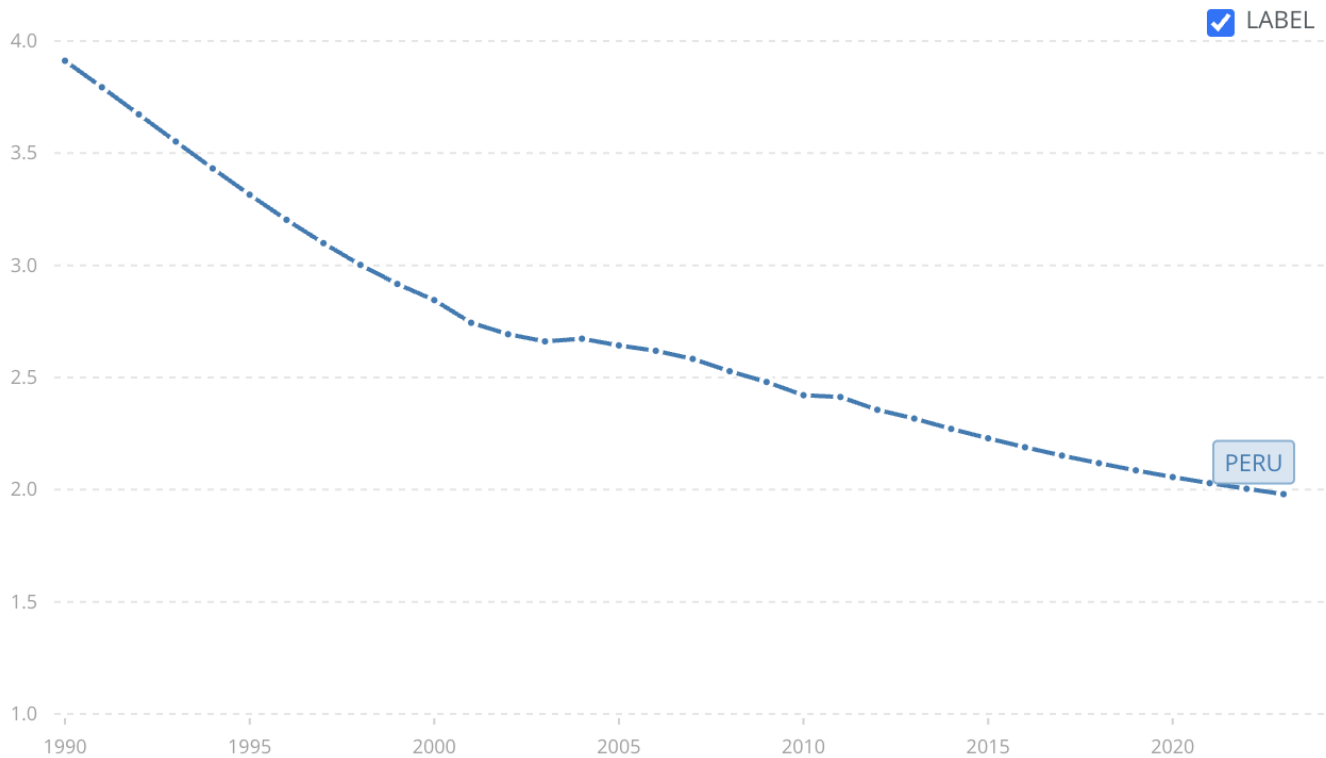


Figure 5. Fertility rate.¹⁶⁰

According to the House Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights. The Chief Counsel of the Subcommittee assigned Grover Joseph Rees to travel to Peru and investigate the charges. Rees found enough troubling evidence and strongly recommended that USAID should:

1. Discontinue all direct monetary assistance to the Government of Peru's family planning programs until it is clear that the sterilization goals and related abuses have stopped and will not resume.
2. Discontinue in-kind assistance to the government family planning program unless it is clear that such assistance will not assist or facilitate, either directly or indirectly, the sterilization campaigns or related abuses.
3. Discontinue public expressions of support for the government's family planning program, for instance, joint Ministry of Health/USAID billboards encouraging Peruvians to limit their families, which could easily be misconstrued as expressions of support for the sterilization campaigns.

160. World Bank, "Fertility rate, total (births per Woman) -Peru," revised 2024, Accessed April 11, 2026, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN?end=2023&locations=PE&start=1990&view=chart>

4. *Dissociate the United States from the sterilization campaigns, goals, quotas, and associated abuses far more publicly than has been done up to now.*
5. *Discontinue the use of words and actions that lend themselves to the accusation that USAID still favors population control over family planning.* [Emphasis added]
6. In choosing non-governmental organizations as grantees or contractors, use only those who will work independently of the government and who have not shown a preference for sterilization over other birth control methods.
7. *Discontinue the distribution of food through government medical posts or in cooperation with entities closely associated with the sterilization campaign.*
8. Contract for an independent audit to determine whether any U.S. assistance to the government or NGO's has been used in support of the sterilization campaigns.
9. Consult with a broader spectrum of voices within Peru on family planning needs and concerns.
10. Finally, notify congressional oversight committees of problems as soon as they appear.¹⁶¹

Rees visited Peru between January 17th and the 25th, 1998. His recommendations to disassociate U.S. government funding suggest that USAID covertly advanced a population control agenda in Peru, with the knowledge and support of the United States Government. Rees is clear in his recommendations when he writes: “Discontinue the use of words and actions that lend themselves to accusations that USAID still favors population control over family planning.”¹⁶²

According to Jelke Boesten, USAID is an organization that has propelled the family planning movement in the world's poorest nations. Nonetheless, she states that in their quest to keep women from suffering pregnancy after pregnancy, these interventions have become aggressive and, in many cases, abusive and coercive. She acknowledges that this system of aid in family planning failed because it did not change the fundamental political, economic, and social structures within the countries it sought to

161. U.S. Congress, House, Committee on International Relations, The Peruvian Population Control Program: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Operations and Human Rights, 105th Cong., 2d sess., February 25, 1998, 9–10, https://commdocs.house.gov/committees/intlrel/hfa48459.000/hfa48459_0f.htm

162. U.S. Congress, The Peruvian Population Control Program, 105th Cong., 2d sess., 9–10.

help.¹⁶³ Moreover, she also points out that the International Population and Development Conference that took place in Cairo in 1994 opened discussions about the benefits of controlled fertility for women, such as female autonomy, birth spacing, reduction of maternal and infant deaths, the decrease in abortions, and the rise of desired pregnancies followed to term.¹⁶⁴

The Cairo Conference of 1994 shifted power and focus from the top hierarchies to the bottom echelons of society, empowering women and men with the tools to better plan their futures and those of their families. The drastic shift in focus and the positive results these changes achieved in other countries finally cemented Alberto Fujimori's plan to eradicate poverty in Peru. The government implemented this policy through the *Programa Nacional de Salud Reproductiva y Planificación Familiar*, which framed the initiative as one of female empowerment. In practice, the program created the illusion that women in the most vulnerable sectors could freely choose their family planning method. In reality, officials and medical personnel subjected many of these women to sterilization through force, coercion, and or inducements. As a physician in the province of La Mar, Ayacucho stated in 2001: "Las mujeres aquí son ignorantes. Las compramos con un poco de plata para sus necesidades."¹⁶⁵ The doctor's words demonstrate a high level of disdain toward his poor indigenous female patients. Casually narrating how he got women to accept sterilization by offering them money in exchange. Fully aware that the surgery could have life-altering effects on these women, not to mention life-threatening risks. The doctor's words also express an intense feeling of loathing that he, like the rest of Peruvian society,

163. Jelke Boesten, "Prólogo," in *Memorias del caso peruano de esterilización forzada*, ed. Alejandra Ballón (Biblioteca Nacional Del Peru Fondo Editorial 2014), 22.

164. Boesten, "Prólogo," 22.

165. Boesten, "Prólogo," 24.

English Translation: "The women here are ignorant. We bought them with a bit of money for their needs."

has been led to feel toward the indigenous poor since Spanish colonial times. Boesten reiterates these feelings:

Se observa en la vida cotidiana de las mujeres, sino que también es reproducida por medio del menosprecio y del abuso verbal y físico ejercido desde las instituciones por sus representantes.¹⁶⁶

This presents a confluence of sexism, racism, and classism. This phenomenon reflects the complex interplay of intersecting systems of oppression that collectively shape social hierarchies and individual experiences. This framework divides individuals into distinct categories through the lenses of class, race, and gender. Under Fujimori's family planning program, these intersecting systems of oppression manifested in three principal ways. First, the state sought to control women's bodies through sterilization while presenting the policy as a grassroots feminist initiative. Second, the government framed the program as a poverty eradication strategy and targeted the nation's most vulnerable and impoverished regions, effectively treating certain populations as expendable. These populations were disproportionately Indigenous or living in extreme poverty. Finally, the program focused primarily on women's reproductive organs rather than on those of men, revealing a gendered imbalance in the implementation of reproductive control. Although the program included both men and women, it overwhelmingly targeted women, sterilizing roughly two hundred seventy thousand women through tubal ligation while subjecting only about twenty-two thousand men to vasectomies, compared to women who were sterilized via tubal ligation.

In many cases, medical personnel forced women onto the operating tables after their spouses capitulated and provided consent through a medical form requiring the man to print, sign, or fingerprint

166. Boesten, "Prólogo," 2.

English Translation: "It is not only observed in the daily lives of women, but it is also reproduced through contempt and verbal and physical abuse exercised by institutions and their representatives."

authorization for the procedure. At times, staff obtained this consent under duress by threatening imprisonment or withholding medical care if the woman became pregnant again.

Ultimately, throughout the history of Latin America, particularly in the case of Peru, Spanish colonizers marginalized and excluded the indigenous population from the envisioned nation-building projects. As Mary Weismantel recounts:

In South America, the image of the Chola is a sunny one: A brown-skinned woman who sits in the plaza at midday selling ripe fruit and flowers. Beloved denizen of the traditional Latin City, she appears in the popular imagination in gathered skirts and a big hat, laughing and gossiping with her companions. The Pishtaco, by contrast, is a creature of the night: a white man with a knife, pale and terrifying. According to tales told in the southern Andes, he awaits alone in the shadows along isolated country roads, searching for victims to eviscerate.¹⁶⁷

The *Pishtaco*, or in Quechua, the *ñakaq*, is a depiction of whiteness, power, and masculinity that threatened and remains a latent threat to the indigenous people of the Sierra. This makes them distrustful of the white and criollo populations of the cities, specifically those who come from abroad or from the capital city of Lima. According to Weismantel: “More than one researcher had fled in fear of his life, as the rumors of his nocturnal killing sprees spun out of control.”¹⁶⁸

Likewise, the word *Chola* becomes a slander when directed toward indigenous women. The word “*Chola* racializes produce vendors, turning their attention away from the women’s occupation and onto their bodies, which sexualizes them to degrade. As *Cholas*, market women become the butt of dirty jokes and are the target of sexual aggression.”¹⁶⁹ A clear example is portrayed on national television shows such as *La Chola Chabuca* and *La Paisana Jacinta*. Both characters are depicted by criollo men pretending to be indigenous women from the Sierra. *La Paisana Jacinta* is an ignorant indigenous

167. Mary Weismantel, *Cholas and Pishtacos: Stories of Race and Sex in The Andes* (University of Chicago Press, 2001), xxi.

168. Weismantel, *Cholas and Pishtacos*, xxvii.

169. Weismantel, *Cholas and Pishtacos*, xxvii.

woman dressed in typical clothing, bumbling her way through the streets of Lima as the white and criollo men make her the subject of all their jokes.

On the other hand, La Chola Chabuca is a criollo man who dresses as a woman from the Sierra and interviews local celebrities and politicians. He imitates what he portrays as these women's "broken" Spanish, given that Quechua is their first language, and mocks the way they dress and speak. He does so through exaggerated and grotesque behavior, much like the character La Paisana Jacinta.

In 1824, during the early years of the Peruvian Republic, "La comunidad imaginada por los criollos peruanos limpiamente dejó de lado a la mayoría indígena."¹⁷⁰

According to Richard Webb, an opinion columnist for *El Comercio*.

Una de las primeras definiciones que leí cuando buscaba conocer el Perú fue "la mancha india", que se refería a los departamentos de Cusco, Puno, Apurímac y Huancavelica. El término resaltaba el carácter indígena de la mayoría de la población en esos departamentos y servía a la vez de explicación para la pobreza general.¹⁷¹

In recent years, the term "Mancha India" has been replaced by less offensive terms, such as "Southern Sierra" or "the country's rural areas." This change, according to sociologists, "refers to explanations of politics and property that are meant to clarify the backwardness and poverty of the majority of the population."¹⁷² Obscuring the legal advantages granted and the systematic expropriations of indigenous lands that justify the low levels of infrastructure and social spending. Considering

170. Klarén, *Nación y sociedad en la historia del Perú*, 177.

English Translation: "The community imagined by Peruvian Creoles clearly excluded the indigenous majority."

171. Richard Webb, "Mancha," *El Comercio* (Lima), February 25, 2024, <https://elcomercio.pe/opinion/columnistas/economia-comunidades-mancha-por-richard-webb-noticia/?ref=ecr>

English Translation: One of the first definitions I read when I was trying to get to know Peru was "the Indian stain," which referred to the departments of Cusco, Puno, Apurímac, and Huancavelica. The term highlighted the indigenous character of the majority of the population in those departments and served as an explanation for the widespread poverty.

172. Webb, "Mancha."

historical patterns of marginalization and state intervention, the mistrust exhibited by indigenous communities nationwide toward Fujimori's family planning program is both intelligible and warranted.

Despite implementing a range of educational initiatives to promote family planning and providing all contraceptive methods at no cost, the government failed to acknowledge the deeply entrenched mistrust indigenous communities harbored toward state institutions and white and criollo elites who administered them. This further reinforced the biased and paternalistic notion that indigenous populations were intellectually incapable of making informed decisions regarding reproduction and family life, particularly within the context of poverty. This development enabled government officials, acting through the Ministry of Health, to systematically accelerate the sterilization program, with a particular focus on impoverished indigenous populations and the reproductive bodies of indigenous women. Alberto Fujimori's populist government framed indigenous populations as obstacles to national development and his regime's long-term political viability. The association of poverty, indigeneity, and backwardness reflected a deeply ingrained colonial and racialized assumption about development. This reflected the government's perceived need to reduce the birth rate among the country's impoverished and indigenous populations, who were viewed as a disproportionate economic burden on an already resource-strapped nation.

The appropriation of 'women's rights' discourse served to obscure a broader socio-economic and political agenda aimed at controlling the reproductive autonomy of poor indigenous women. Under the guise of promoting reproductive health and well-being, the Peruvian government deployed healthcare personnel to the nation's most impoverished regions. While administering vaccinations to children, these teams targeted women with more than two children for reproductive intervention, systematically stripping them of the very rights the government so publicly championed at the 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women.

The implementation of policies aimed at poverty eradication was sustained through the deceptive framing of family planning initiatives and the purported promise of enhancing the lives of impoverished

women by promoting education and the illusion of autonomous decision-making regarding family size. Although a significant portion of the Peruvian population at the time supported Fujimori's family planning efforts, they were viewed as a means to help impoverished women overcome poverty by reducing the economic burden of unexpected pregnancies and limiting the number of dependents to support. Hypothetically, suppose that the family planning program remained consistent with its publicity-stated goals: to provide women with voluntary, informed reproductive choices. In that case, its implementation might have been regarded as a legitimate effort toward women's empowerment, particularly in a country that remains deeply rooted in conservative and patriarchal norms, and where embedded gender norms and moral ideologies shaped reproductive policies.

Nonetheless, the consequences of forced sterilization across the country have been profoundly damaging, particularly within the traditional indigenous communities of the Sierra. A significant number of the women who were subjected to the procedure because of state-sponsored misinformation, coercion, and intimidating tactics were, in many cases, abandoned by their partners and shunned as '*Machonas*' or mannish in English—often left to navigate the aftermath of sterilization alone, struggling to care for themselves and their children while coping with the physical, psychological, and social repercussions of the procedure.

In retrospect, Alberto Fujimori appeared to possess a clear vision of the legacy he intended to establish. It would be an oversimplification not to overlook the significant transformations that occurred in Peru under his administration. These included advancements in economic stabilization, agricultural development, infrastructure expansion, and most notably, the dismantling of the decade-long insurgencies led by the Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA). Nevertheless, his pragmatic disposition and strategic intent enabled him to navigate the complex political challenges that accompanied his emergence as a populist leader. To sustain his policy agenda, Fujimori continuously balanced the demands of maintaining public approval with the implementation of unpopular policies that had far-reaching implications for the nation,

primarily influenced by the United States. To secure ongoing financial assistance from the World Bank and the United States, Fujimori had to confront the country's deepening poverty and the disproportionately high birthrate among the marginalized populations. To meet conditions imposed by international actors, Fujimori accelerated the implementation of the family planning program with the support and endorsement of key officials, including the Minister of Women's Affairs, Maria Luisa Cuculiza, and the Minister of Health, Marino Costa Bauer. His congressional bloc further provided unequivocal institutional backing, ensuring the program's rapid implementation with minimal opposition.

The Peruvian government's calculated abuse of power under the pretense of modernity and women's empowerment was executed through the deceptive rhetoric of health and family planning. This state-sponsored campaign constituted a racialized system of population control, operating at the intersection of poverty, ethnicity, and gender. The program specifically targeted poor indigenous women, particularly those of Quechua and Aymara speaking populations, thereby exposing how reproductive policies were weaponized to marginalize those deemed obstacles to national development and security.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The convergence of political instability, severe economic turmoil following years of hyperinflation driven by misguided economic policies, and a decade-long insurgency led by Sendero Luminoso and MRTA generated unprecedented levels of social tension in Peru.

These crises intensified long-standing divisions between the impoverished indigenous populations and the predominantly white and criollo middle- to- upper class communities across the country. Furthermore, decades of systematic marginalization and deliberate exclusion of indigenous people from national development and state-building projects had entrenched patterns of inequality and mistrust. These feelings continued and grew as the violence of the guerrillas intensified throughout the country. These tensions did not remain confined to social and political divisions but increasingly shaped state policies toward marginalized populations. As the government frequently framed Indigenous and impoverished communities as potential sympathizers of insurgent movements, the government's strategies often targeted them directly. Within this climate of suspicion and hostility, coercive measures emerged, including forced sterilization campaigns and broader repression of those labeled enemies of the nation. These actions reflected a state apparatus seeking control over populations it viewed as both politically and socially threatening to national growth.

This thesis argues that Peru's forced sterilization campaign emerged from a broader project of state consolidation during the transition from García to Fujimori. Rather than a narrow public health initiative, the campaign functioned as a mechanism of state control that targeted poor indigenous populations while exploiting gender politics and economic threats. It brings together political instability, economic crisis, insurgency, gender politics, and authoritarian governance.

Alberto Fujimori's populist government framed indigenous populations as obstacles to national development and his regime's long-term political viability. The association of poverty, indigeneity, and backwardness reflected a deeply ingrained colonial and racialized assumption about development. It

reflected the government's perceived need to reduce the birth rate among the country's impoverished and indigenous populations, who his administration viewed as a disproportionate economic burden on an already resource-strapped nation.

Despite the government's implementation of a range of educational initiatives to promote family planning and provide all contraceptive methods at no cost, the government failed to acknowledge the deeply entrenched mistrust indigenous communities harbored toward state institutions and white and criollo elites, who administered them. Historical patterns of marginalization and state intervention, as well as the mistrust exhibited by indigenous communities nationwide toward Fujimori's family planning program, are both intelligible and warranted. This dynamic further reinforced the biased and paternalistic notion that indigenous populations were intellectually incapable of making informed decisions regarding reproduction and family life, particularly within the context of poverty. This development enabled government officials, acting through the Ministry of Health, to systematically accelerate the sterilization program, with particular focus on impoverished indigenous populations and the reproductive bodies of indigenous women.

It is within this context that the appropriation of 'women's rights' discourse served to obscure a broader socio-economic and political agenda. The administration aimed to control the reproductive autonomy of poor indigenous women. Under the guise of promoting reproductive health and well-being, healthcare personnel were deployed to the nation's most impoverished regions. While administering vaccinations to children, these teams targeted women with more than two children for reproductive intervention. In doing so, they systematically stripped them of the very rights the government so publicly championed at the 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women.

The government sustained the implementation of policies aimed at eradicating poverty by deceptive framing of family planning initiatives. They also promised to improve the lives of impoverished women by promoting education and by creating the illusion of autonomous decision-making over family size. Although a significant portion of the Peruvian population at the time supported

Fujimori's family planning efforts, the government's efforts were viewed as helping impoverished women. Sterilization would help them overcome poverty by reducing the economic burden of unexpected pregnancies and by limiting the number of dependents they supported.

Nonetheless, the consequences of forced sterilization across the country have been profoundly damaging, particularly within the traditional indigenous communities of the Sierra. A significant number of the women were subjected to the procedure as a result of state-sponsored misinformation, coercion, and intimidating tactics. Many women were subsequently abandoned by their partners and shunned as '*Machonas*' or mannish in English. Often left to navigate the aftermath of sterilization alone, they struggled to care for themselves and their children while coping with the physical, psychological, and social repercussions of the procedure.

In hindsight, Alberto Fujimori's presidency represented a decisive attempt to reconstruct the Peruvian state in the aftermath of the profound economic collapse and political violence that characterized the 1980s. While the transformations that occurred during his administration were significant, they must be understood with a broader political and historical context that shaped their implementation. Fujimori presided over a period of macroeconomic stabilization, infrastructure expansion, and renewed agricultural investment. Most significantly, his government dismantled the insurgent movements that had destabilized Peru for more than a decade, most notably The Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary movement (MRTA). These developments helped restore state authority and reduce political violence, reinforcing Fujimori's legitimacy as a capable leader able to impose order after a period of institutional crisis.

Yet, his achievements were inseparable from his governing strategy that balanced popular legitimacy with the implementation of contentious reforms. Fujimori's administration operated within a framework heavily shaped by international financial institutions and bilateral relations with the United States, both of which influenced the direction of Peru's economic and social policies during the 1990s.

In confronting persistent poverty and high fertility rates among marginalized populations, the government accelerated the implementation of a national family planning program. Supported by senior officials, including the Minister of Women's Affairs, Maria Luisa Cuculiza, and the Minister of Health, Marino Costa Bauer, the program was presented as a necessary public health intervention. Subsequent historical scholarship has emphasized the tensions between its developmental rhetoric and the coercive practices reported in its implementation, particularly among rural and indigenous communities.

Taken together, the implementation of Peru's Family planning campaign reveals how reproductive policy became a mechanism through which the state pursued developmental objectives while simultaneously reinforcing existing social hierarchies by disproportionately targeting poor, indigenous women, particularly Quechua and Aymara speakers. The program exposed ways in which discourses of modernization, public health, and women's empowerment could be mobilized to legitimize coercive population control. In this sense, the campaign was not merely a public health initiative but a manifestation of a broader state project in which race, poverty, and gender shaped reproductive autonomy in the name of national development.

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