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Trends. Throwing Out the Baby With the Bathwater: Form and Substance of Peruvian Democracy

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There has been significant regional and global opprobrium focused on the decision of Peru's President, Alberto Fujimori, to allow elections to be held in the face of many procedural irregularities and outright "dirty tricks" perpetrated by his supporters. This opprobrium also is fueled by earlier actions of Mr. Fujimori--e.g., his disempowerment of legislative and judiciary branches during political crises and beyond. While there is little question that the form of democracy has been significantly violated, the same may not be said for its substance.

Amidst the regional and global opprobrium, Mr. Fujimori's constructive achievements have been discounted or ignored. He defused the threat from two terrorist groups, deflated huge inflationary threats to the economy, and cooperated with United States counterdrug and antiterrorist and counterterrorist efforts. More importantly, he seems to have obtained the sincere support of many of the disenfranchised indigenous people of Peru who appreciate his contributions to their security and efforts at improving social welfare. In fact, many political experts believe that Mr. Fujimori would be victorious in a completely clean election--reflecting the will of the majority. Moreover, regional and global opprobrium may be said to be exploited and nurtured by Mr. Fujimori's political opponents. As well, the opprobrium develops and nurtures these opponents. In this sense, Mr. Fujimori's allegations that there are inappropriate foreign influences in the Peruvian electoral process and its political life find support and must be addressed along with his electoral misbehavior.

Democratic form may be the best of imperfect guidance to democratic substance. To reify form over substance, however, can also subvert democracy. Mr. Fujimori is not blameless, but neither are many of his attackers. Meanwhile, as battles of form over substance go on, so does a bleak life for the least fortunate throughout the world. (See Demanding new elections in Peru. (May 31, 2000). *The New York Times*, p. A 30; Domatob, J. (1997). Sub-Saharan Africa's democratic quest: Perspectives, problems and policies. *Western Journal of Black Studies*, 21, 59-75; Kunioka, T., & Woller, G. M. (1999). In (a) democracy we trust: Social and economic determinants of support for democratic procedures in central and eastern Europe. *Journal of Socio-Economics*, 28, 577-596; Mitchell, S. M., Gates, S., & Hegre, H. (1999). Evolution in democracy-war dynamics. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 43, 771-792; Sekulic, D., & Sporer, Z. (1998). Toward democracy or to the new authoritarianism? The case of Croatia. *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations*, 24, 129-169.) (Keywords: Alberto Fujimori, Corruption, Democracy, Peru.)