

Breaking history, building memory: the Peruvian bicentennial generation and the democratisation of democracy

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Abstract

This article analyses the social mobilisations that took place in Peru in November 2020 in the context of the political crisis generated by the presidential vacancy of Martín Vizcarra and in the context of the short-lived—and usurping—government of Manuel Merino. The article proposes to understand the social mobilisations as a movement of rupture with history and political fear—through the “defujimorisation” of Peruvian politics—but, at the same time, as a movement that represents the continuity of the battles of Peruvian memory linked to the political past of the last 40 years, marked by the political violence experienced during the internal armed conflict (1980-2000).

Keywords: Peru, social mobilisation, memory, neoliberalism, Fujimorismo, fascism

Introduction: mobilising civil society, a matter of history and memory

Peruvian recent political history is fundamentally shaped by two traumatic events: the internal armed conflict (1980-2000) and the rise of Alberto Fujimori’s presidency (1990-2000). The internal armed conflict between the Peruvian State and Shining Path, among other subversive organisations, caused more deaths than all of Peru’s internal and external wars in its republican history (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación 2003). Fujimori takes credit for the military victory over Shining Path, and Fujimorista memory has been built around this “savior” or “heroic” logic in which Fujimori is not only the victorious politician but the one who set Peru on the “path of progress” (Milton 2011, 2015). Based on a “discourse of development”, a new authoritarian and neoliberal constitution, and a fundamentally extractivist and privatising economy, this idea of progress is central to understanding many of the popular demands of the various social, student, environmental, peasant and trade union organisations in Peru.

In this historical-memory scenario, Peruvian politics has been unfolding from 2000 onwards. In 2000, Fujimori’s government collapsed amidst serious accusations of corruption. Besides, since 2007, Fujimori has been in prison for various crimes, including severe human rights violations. The fact that Fujimori is in prison when for many, he is the “savior of the republic” mobilises a series of

antagonistic memories: those who vindicate his legacy based on an iron-fisted leadership, repression, but also on solid macroeconomic indicators; and those who vindicate the memory of the victims of both the Shining Path and the State. These positions seem irreconcilable and whose discourses and narratives emerge in every presidential election, where the alternatives are usually *Fujimori libertad* and *Fujimori, nunca más*.

In 2016, Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, a Peruvian-American banker, was elected president of Peru for the 2016-2021 term. Kuczynski defeated Keiko Fujimori, daughter of Alberto Fujimori, in a hard-fought run-off election. Peru's presidential system allowed Kuczynski, whose parliamentary force came third, to govern with an opposition congress dominated by the Fujimorista party *Fuerza Popular*.

The tensions between the Executive and the parliament began very early on. In successive clashes, Congress criticised the government's education policy, including the so-called "gender ideology", which might be "homosexualising children". Also, several congressmen—Fujimoristas, conservatives and ex-military personnel—criticised the official memory policy, accusing the official museum, the *Lugar de la Memoria, Tolerancia e Inclusión Social* (LUM), of the "internal armed conflict" of being anti-military, pro-Left and dangerous for the country's development.

To get closer to Fujimorismo and ensure an (amoral) form of governance, Kuczynski pardoned Alberto Fujimori in Christmas 2017. This generated a wave of indignation that included protests and the repudiation of several international organisations, even the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. Disguised as a "humanitarian pardon for medical reasons", it was discovered what the population suspected: the pardon had been negotiated to avoid presidential vacancy in the context of the severe scandals and accusations of corruption against the Peruvian political elite. To put it in context: all the presidents elected between 1985 and 2016 are or have been in pre-trial detention, formally accused by the prosecution, fugitives from justice, and even one (Alan García) committed suicide when the police entered his home to arrest him.

When Kuczynski resigned in 2018, Vice President Martín Vizcarra took his place. Vizcarra initiated a series of judicial, political and electoral reforms to make Peruvian politics more transparent. The pro-Fujimori Congress quickly blocked his efforts. As an extension of the Executive and the Legislative branch's conflict, Vizcarra closed the Congress in 2019 and called for new parliamentary elections in early 2020. Ultimately, the new Congress declared the president vacant, accusing him of corruption.

In this context of political instability, Peru had to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. This instability can be seen in that Peru has had three presidents (in one week) and five health ministers throughout the pandemic. The presidential vacancy of Martín Vizcarra opened the door for the President of Congress, Manuel Merino, to take over the Presidency of the Republic in November 2020.

This generated a wave of protests combining diverse demands and motivations that included more and better democracy, greater transparency, better quality education, respect for human rights, economic policy reform and a new constitution. The ephemeral Merino administration ordered brutal repression, ending with at least two deaths: Inti Sotelo and Bryan Pintado.

After the collapse of this short-lived government, Congress appointed Francisco Sagasti to complete the 2016-2021 mandate initiated by Kuczynski. In this new “democratic transition”, various artistic, social and political movements and collectives began to “memorialise” the protests and their new martyrs, Inti and Bryan. This process marks the continuity of the historical demands for a “defujimorisation” of Peruvian politics and, at the same time, inaugurates an original process in recent Peru in which the power of mobilisation and communication no longer rests exclusively with the elites and the media, but is shared with civil society.

This article pays attention to an aspect linked to the processes and battles of memory in contemporary Peru: the social mobilisations of November 2020. These demonstrations, mainly by young people, were organised under various slogans and nomenclatures, two of which stand out for this article: “The Bicentennial Generation” and *se metieron con la generación equivocada* (“you messed with the wrong generation”). What is the relationship between memory and social mobilisation? We deal with a relationship mediated by the continuity/change relationship between history and the present. Thus, on the one hand, this new cycle of protests that have turned into social mobilisation does not carry the historical memory of the internal armed conflict, so the processes of stigmatisation and criminalisation do not affect their socio-political behaviour.

On the other hand, although they are not responsible for the Peruvian political crisis, they have suffered the consequences of neoliberalisation, demoralisation and decomposition of the Peruvian political and economic system. *Se metieron con la generación equivocada* is also a memory movement in which Fujimorismo and other conservative sectors are not the heroic protagonists. On the contrary, this generation did not carry the burden of the internal armed conflict. A widespread and spontaneous mobilisation has diverse and sometimes contradictory motivations for protest. I am not suggesting that the November 2020 mobilisations are “anti-Fujimorismo”. I am proposing that the critique of the political, economic and welfare state system can be read, even by Fuerza Popular, as “anti-Fujimorismo” insofar as the relationship between a market economy, neoliberalism and authoritarianism are concepts strongly linked to the historical role assigned to Alberto Fujimori.

These mobilisations occur in a context of high polarisation where political debate is constituted around the dichotomy “them versus us”. The agonistic nature of democracy is, to some extent, desirable: the impossibility of reaching an agreement is what energises debate and produces new arenas of discussion (Mouffe 1992, 2019). However, this dichotomous form of memory battles and their impact on the Peruvian political debate must include certain minimum

guidelines that ensure all (or most) actors' participation, recognising both the legality and legitimacy of the diverse memories involved. Memory battles in a framework of antagonistic democracy require broad boundaries in which consensus is reached through conflict. The debates that emerge from memory battle processes are fundamentally an expression of inadequate conflict management, which affects the construction of democratic citizenships and communities.

In this scenario, it is evident that Peruvian democracy exhibits authoritarian characteristics marked not only by the authoritarian tradition (Flores Galindo 1997) of its society and institutions but also by the continuing validity of the 1993 neoliberal constitution, whose guidelines organise economic policy and are ultimately directly responsible for the current political crisis. The Peruvian "authoritarian trademark" does not require a Fujimori to be carried out, but rather the continuity of certain repressive practices which have not only been maintained but have also been strengthened since 2000 and which have manifested themselves through the deepening of social, labour, ethnic and environmental conflicts.

Before continuing, I would like to reflect on the relationship between Fujimorismo and authoritarianism. The authoritarian tradition indeed forges a political culture in which vertical intra-party leaderships are not exclusive to the conservative right-wing sectors. However, making a clear distinction between Fujimorismo and authoritarianism could imply a kind of "democratic Fujimorismo" and an "authoritarian Fujimorismo". At best, there is a liberal and a conservative Fujimorismo. The problem in making a sharp distinction between Fujimorismo and authoritarianism lies in the fact that party organisations replicate their internal verticalism in the relationship between state, government and society, creating scenarios in which authoritarian mechanisms emerge in forms as varied as the takeover of the armed forces or the intimidation of the press. Thus, once antagonistic parties end up converging in examples such as *Fujiaprismo* or *Fujicerronismo*.

As Carlos Meléndez (2019) suggests, there is a bifurcation between technocratic-liberal and authoritarian-conservative alternatives on the Peruvian Right. In recent years Fujimorismo has become involved in a conservative socio-cultural agenda, aligning itself with groups such as *Con mis hijos no te metas*. However, this cultural battle is not limited to discussions about abortion rights, the gender perspective or the teaching of comprehensive sex education in schools. These (socio)cultural battles, as seen in the 2022 presidential elections, exacerbate antagonistic discourses about the permissible and the intolerable. Fujimorismo thus complements its nature as a political movement and "economic doctrine" with popular characteristics that ensure it has a broad base for social and electoral mobilisation. Unlike other right-wing alternatives, whether liberal or conservative, Fujimorismo appeals not only to the "electorate" but to the "people" and presents itself as the last bastion of stability in the face of hyperinflation, security in the face of terrorism, and Christian values in the face of "foreign agendas" or the "new world order". In this

scenario, it could be said that Fujimorism is not just an authoritarian movement but a movement of multiple authoritarianism. Those multiple authoritarian sides emerge and compete with each other when circumstances require it. However, in the face of critical events—such as the rise of a supposedly reformist leadership like Pedro Castillo—it brings together these authoritarian discourses around a single slogan: Peruvians or *terrucos*. The success of the most authoritarian and conservative side of Fujimorismo is demonstrated in two ways: first, it needs to be more radical than alternative radicalisms; and second, it presents liberal, social democratic, progressive or leftist discourses as extremist.

Regarding social mobilisation, I understand the mobilised citizens as a process of democratic strengthening. Therefore, a mobilised civil society is a dissent factor, a democratic expression and a fundamental component in the weakening and even the collapse of authoritarian regimes (Waisman, Feinberg, & Zamosc 2006). In this understanding, civil society “operates as vehicles for the exercise of citizenship, as agencies that make demands, offer contingent supports, and audit governmental activities, there is a strong civil society, which produces a republican or civic democracy” (Waisman, Feinberg, & Zamosc 2006, 3). This does not imply that civil society is a panacea. I want to clarify that a robust civil society usually functions as a bottom-up influencer and democratizes the *public sphere*.

However, how do these authoritarian characteristics affect the evolution of the processes and the memory battles in Peru? It is essential to highlight that Peruvian authoritarianism functions as social, political, and economic practices. This does not automatically make Peru a dictatorship, but not being a dictatorship does not mean that Peru is a democracy. In this sense, in this article, the relationship between memory and democracy has been drawn very categorically: it is not just a matter of the “duty to remember” but of “remembering to transform”. Therefore, the transformation I am talking about can be read in several ways; one might be reconciliation and the establishment of much more transparent and ethical mechanisms to discuss the past and build an inclusive State. This inclusion is not only built around economic policies, investment or labour, but also the inclusion of diverse narratives, histories, ethnicities and, fundamentally, the inclusion within “the legal and the legitimate” of a series of social claims among which those linked to human rights in all their forms (economic, social, political, cultural and environmental) stand out.

Creating the political rivalry

One might ask, why did social mobilisations take so long to undermine the power of a State that oscillates, as will be seen below, between the authoritarian, the inefficient and the corrupt—or, for that matter, why is “electoral patience” still the most normalised form of protest? To answer this question, in this article, I will focus on two authoritarian practices of the Peruvian State’s

governmentality that are very efficient in limiting socio-political protest: surveillance (Foucault 1977) and (the use of) fear (Robin 2008).

Surveillance, in this case, is understood as the disciplinary function exercised by the State through its institutions. Due to this piece's nature, I will refer primarily to the mechanisms of censorship used to delegitimise those mobilisations that question the heroic narrative of Fujimorismo. The success of these censorship mechanisms is determined by their capacity to instil fear in the population. At this point, the logical question is: fear of what? In the political context of the internal armed conflict memory processes, fear is directly associated with the possibility of being labelled a "terrorist". This process, known in Peru as *terruqueo*, is an instrument of political and social censorship that begins by delegitimising certain memory narratives focused on human rights, victims and reparations and moving on to delegitimise various claims that are associated with a Left-wing or progressive agenda. In a country like Peru, where disappearance and torture occurred based on simple accusations and without due process, *terruqueo* is a very efficient practice to keep the conflict's trauma alive and artificially construct political enemies of the State.

It is important to note that the above categories have been successfully exploited by anti-human rights memory sectors, including Fujimorismo, due to the trauma inherited from the internal armed conflict. Disciplinary practices exercised through fear imply the annulment of debate within a community. In these contexts, memory processes are not only undesirable but inconvenient. Memory initiatives can then be seen as inconvenient, as they disrupt the disciplinary practices analysed by Foucault, which instead aimed to promote the normalisation of certain discourses that are methodologically violent and ideologically authoritarian. This is the case because their goal is to eliminate the possibility of conflict. In this scenario, using terror to instil fear in the broader population appears as an anti-democratic political tool. As Robin (2008) described, political fear is an instrument to maintain the status quo. In Peru, the use of fear not only serves to discourage memory initiatives in the field of culture or to stigmatise social mobilisations but as an instrument that builds a truthful narrative around the "success" of Peruvian democracy in its function of reducing or eliminating social conflicts, usually through violent repression. In that sense, fear relates to the memory of the conflict insofar as the latter involves political violence, authoritarianism, economic crisis and administrative chaos; that according to the historical discourse proposed by Fujimorismo, Fujimori put an end to.

Fear is not a single technique; it is an instrument that must become more sophisticated to increase its efficiency and avoid losing its efficacy. Power demonstrations must accompany normalisation and discipline processes for fear to complement surveillance. It not only represses narratives of memory that contradict official versions of history but also discourages their formation. In a formally democratic context, death squads are no longer viable, legal, or legitimate and can be replaced by specialised national police or intelligence service units. Similarly, in a "pacified" society, political repression is no longer

carried out by the Armed Forces but by State institutions that regulate the legality of particular political discourses or actions. This means that the formation and continuity of political movements or collectives are strongly limited by a repressive legal-institutional structure that condemns the emergence of social or cultural organisations that contradict the narratives of development and democracy proposed by Fujimorismo.

I propose an analysis of these mobilisations by situating political-historical memory as an element of rupture with the past. It is then a question of an irruption into history from memory in which anti-elite, anti-fascist and anti-market elements stand out and are articulated as a political discourse that proposes the “democratisation of democracy” that can also be read as a “defujimorisation process”.

The heterogeneous nature of anti-Fujimorismo can partially explain the apparent multiple articulations of discontent, various oppositions and varied grievances. Fujimorismo is not only a social and political movement. Fujimorismo has a robust cultural component anchored in governance based on a neoliberal development paradigm. This cultural component is strengthened by the origin and historical context of the historical Fujimorismo leadership: the combination of an economic crisis, a political crisis and a “military crisis”. Fujimorismo has been culturally successful in proposing and organising a “development ideology” around the free market, the militarisation of society and the securitisation of politics. In other words, it was a mixture of an iron fist and a reduction of the State, which Peruvian society enthusiastically greeted at that moment of crisis.

Nevertheless, precisely this uneasy articulation of the various “anti-Fujimorismos”, which makes it difficult to organise without fissures, gives it its strength. The challenges that anti-Fujimorismo poses to Fujimorismo are radically democratising insofar as they also expose the intra-party fractures (as in the case—which we will see later—of the murals by Inti Sotelo and Bryan Pintado), the support for the Merino government, or the need to install a transitional government in the face of Marta Chávez’s “anti-communism”. Fujimorismo emerged as an expression of the crisis of representation of political parties in the late 1980s and early 1990s; anti-Fujimorismo did it too. It expresses this crisis insofar as no party has organised an agenda that simultaneously dismantles all of Alberto Fujimori’s reforms: his welfare state model, his Constitution, the structure of the executive, the relationship between the branches of government, the overvaluation of extractivism, the relationship with indigenous peoples, among other points.¹

Many of these discussions are emerging in citizen protests, which, as the most recent general election showed, does not mean that there is a “spring of civil

¹ This idea about the relationship between Fujimorismo and anti-Fujimorismo anchored to the crisis of representation was inspired by the work of Rodrigo Gil Piedra (2021), who analyses the political-discursive confrontations of two Peruvian political collectives *No a Keiko* and the ultra-conservative *Con mis hijos no te metas* in a context of high political polarisation (2016-2019).

society”. However, it might mean that specific power structures and instruments of domination are running out, specifically those that, for example, can be interpreted as memory devices or civil society organisations seeking cultural transformation.²

Fujimorismo has been successful in two fields: in “inventing its own necessity” and in creating a socio-political order where there is a figure of “permanent hero” in opposition to the “permanent enemy”. This device responds correctly to another scenario described: Peru today still faces significant challenges in terms of social and economic development, but above all, in terms of national security.

In a permanent state of exception (Schmitt 1985, 2009), the need for a heroic figure becomes perpetual, precisely in this field where memory and trauma are connected. This means that the State’s survival is above the survival of any political or social actor. This approach is beneficial for understanding the repressive nature of some State institutions and for the theoretical justification for drawing legal and legitimate boundaries. Thus, national security discourse adopts characteristics that exceed narrative limitations and encompass economic policy, territorial management, natural resources, and political-electoral participation. A permanent state of exception guarantees a new form of conflict regulation by limiting some political actors’ scope and form. Peru’s recent history has been a pseudo-example of the need for an iron-fisted leader (Fujimori) to order the country economically and politically. Fujimorista memory thus operates as a tool to construct the supposedly unobjectionable need for a “hero”; therefore, all his enemies are Peru’s enemies.

The abuse of the State of emergency as an instrument to regulate social protest and political discourse has been one of the great successes and legacies of Fujimorismo. In this sense, attending a massive social mobilisation process in Peru is something that can only happen within the framework of the dismantling of a traditional Fujimori strategy of the period 1992-2000: the total control of the political community, whether of the elites through the National Intelligence Service; or of the popular sectors, limiting their mobilisation capacity through a clientelistic system (Meléndez & León 2010, 459).

One of the most salient traumas in Peru today is the inability to eliminate the Fujimorista structures that socially and symbolically regulate social mobilisations. This is directly linked to the idea of sovereignty based on the control of legality under the principle of authority (Schmitt 2009). Thus, sovereignty, understood as the order and the rules that define political contests, becomes a fundamental element in the political “pact” proposed by

² Examples of these groups are the collective *Murales por la Memoria* (Murals for Memory), which carried out artistic performances in the streets of Lima after the November 2020 protests, or the *Frente de Organizaciones Populares para el Desarrollo de Carabayllo*, which organised “days of cultural reflection” on the political situation at the time. In addition, the *Unión de Cineastas Peruanos* and the *Asociación de Prensa Cinematográfica* strongly opposed two Fujimorista draft laws that sought to censor narratives about the internal armed conflict or about certain political leaders, in the context of the release of films such as *Hugo Blanco*, *Río Profundo* and *La Casa Rosada*.

Fujimorismo. Therefore, given that any anti-corruption campaign, pro-human rights or environmentalist or trade union mobilisation breaks that “pact,” any form of organisation and protest outside the framework proposed by the current Peruvian order is susceptible to be considered subversive, dangerous or terrorist. In short, the continuity or rupture between violence and mobilisation is, at some point, ruled by the structures of power inherited from the 1993 Constitution. This must be added to the memory battles inaugurated with the publication of the *Informe Final* (2003), which due to its critical stance, has taken the Fujimorista sector to exacerbate the social and political discourses on Fujimori’s legacy, which continues to rule today’s Peru under the Fujimorismo without Fujimori.

Making the enemy and *Terruqueo*³

Terruquear is a Peruvian expression to label as terrorist any act or form of protest against the State’s policies. Although the Fujimorista anti-terrorist legislation had many legal loopholes, Fujimorismo did succeed in building a political environment in which mere suspicion was enough to generate distrust and terror among the population (Burt 2006; 2014). Apart from being slanderous, this accusation awakens traumatic memories and deep fears in a country that suffered a bloody conflict. Besides, it undermines social organisations’ attempt to create any form of opposition against the establishment and building legitimacy. In this sense, *terruquear* is, above all, an attempt to control and monopolise political legitimacy by resorting to the traumas of the recent past. The fear of repetition of the painful past is powerful enough to manipulate public opinion and criticise the various social protests.

In Peru, as in other examples of post-authoritarian experiences, such as Argentina and particularly Chile, discussions about ideological continuity and change of old authoritarian practices began first in the cultural sphere, to later move to collective action and citizen’s protest (Calveiro 1998; Favoretto 2014; Pino-Ojeda 2020). Nevertheless, in Peru, fear and stigmatisation by *terruqueo* have been increasing, which has resulted in undermining political participation and debate in the framework of what I may call a privatised democracy, characterised by participation limited to a few, to those with the capacity to finance political candidacies, where militancy and ideology have lost their predominant place.

Terruqueo is one of the most complex discursive instruments affecting the democratisation and memory processes because of its historical violence and the legal architectures built around political fear and surveillance: the criminalisation of apology for terrorism. Apology for terrorism, that is, to justify any act of terrorism perpetrated during the internal conflict, is today a criminal offence. In practice, this strategy serves to regulate political, social or cultural

³ The Spanish infinitive is *terruquear*, the Spanish substantive is *terruqueo*. The Peruvian slang for “terrorist” is *terruco*.

behaviours that—by not adopting a direct critical stance but rather an analytical one—can be considered carrying out an apologetic or supportive position towards subversive or terrorist organisations, which includes as well subscribing to their discourse or ideological agendas. In this sense, the difficulty in defining what is and is not an apology for terrorism makes this law an instrument that could be used to coerce freedom of expression.

This crime is typified in articles 316 and 316-A of the Penal Code modified in 2017. It states that anyone who publicly exalts, justifies or glorifies a crime or a person convicted by final judgement as a perpetrator or participant during the internal armed conflict or related to ongoing narco-guerrilla activities shall be sentenced to imprisonment.⁴

Terruqueo is also a tool to instil fear built from two historical memory elements. In the first place, the fear of an already known enemy (terrorism); and the fear of repeating the past atrocities (the spiral of violence). These elements have perpetuated a relentless confrontation between “us” and “them” beyond the Shining Path’s actual emergence and decline. At the base of this construct, a political culture manages the exclusion (Dagnino, 2018), which can be understood as reducing “access to citizenship”.

As Aguirre (2011), Burke (1993) and Franco (2006) suggest, disqualification based on political, ethnic, or nationalistic positions tends to annihilate the reputation of the victims and produces their social destruction. The dimension and scope of the exclusion are ruled by the ability to take material actions against the excluded: censorship, detention or prosecution. Thus, accusing a person or organisation of terrorism imposes a categorisation from which it is difficult to free oneself and reduces the discursive scene to an attack-defence relationship. The focus of the discussion is missed, and the central debate disintegrates. In this context, the legal rationality is subverted; it is not the accuser who must propose the burden of proof but the accused who must prove his innocence. In this performance, the defence is no longer exercised just before the accuser but before the whole society.

Although the primary responsibility for the internal armed conflict lies with the Shining Path’s declaration of war on the Peruvian State, it is also relevant to recall the *Informe Final*’s three main factors that explain the roots and extension of violence: racism, discrimination, and centralism. When taken into the public sphere, this over-stigmatisation will inevitably favour the reproduction of these stereotypes. To cite some examples, Theidon (2000) identified the military discourse in the context of the internal armed conflict, basically creating an automatic correlation between *indio* and violence. In Franco’s words (2006), this military discourse is constituted as a *common-sense discourse* and organises the ideas and stereotypes constructed from “us” and “them”. This problem becomes much more evident, according to Boesten (2008), when, by analysing the work of the Truth and Reconciliation

⁴ Law N°30610 (Peru)

Commission, she concludes that although the Armed Forces were more diverse in terms of ethnicity than the Andean indigenous communities, the construction of the “us-them” was fundamentally justified by the country-city dichotomy. The Andean population’s perception as irrational, mysterious, violent, and savage has undoubtedly contributed to the violence with which the Armed Forces approached the population in the areas most affected by the Shining Path violence. This also made the soldiers’ violence towards Andean women tolerable or acceptable (Boesten 2008, 204).

This supposed “Andean indigenous irrationality” is the perfect argument to vilify indigenous and marginalised populations’ social claims. In this sense, given that there is an overlap between territory (natural resources) and population (communities), the way Peruvian political elites have found to justify the overexploitation of natural resources regardless of the people or the environment is the development discourse designed around a premise that prioritises economic growth over other development indicators (Pieterse 1991; Raftopoulos 2017). This discourse is articulated not only around the modernising rationale based on neoliberal paradigms (reduction of labour costs, weakening of unions, outsourcing of labour and privatisation of public resources) but also on authoritarian paradigms by placing the idea of development as a public good and the utilisation of violence to comply with “neoliberal legality”).

Following Aníbal Quijano’s theory on *coloniality* (1999), a colonial aspect is hidden in Peru’s political, economic, and social practices under these modernising paradigms. Therefore, since “development”, understood as “economic growth”, is supposedly the perfect justification for the exercise of State violence, all forms of counter-state violence are classified as “subversive” or “terrorist”. Thus, the idea of economic growth becomes an axiomatic proposal that normalises and standardises a discourse of progress that opposes the tradition expressed in the indigenous component of the country.

Terruqueo is a discursive construction of a political, economic, social, and ethnic nature based on the need to create a socio-political enemy, usually artificial, whenever an actor or group opposes the neoliberal totality of the development discourse. Under this logic, the sequence of racism/ethnicity, discrimination/rurality and centralism/urbanity constructs enemies, usually indigenous, peasant and leftist, who coincide with the *terruco* phenotype, prototype and stereotype.⁵

The dramatic consequences of *terruqueo* also manifest themselves in human rights policy, particularly in reparation plans, and more significantly in those focused on identifying bodies and the search for the disappeared. In this specific case, the connection between citizenship, reparation and symbolism is given by

⁵ I would like to highlight recent works (Arteaga 2021; Alcalde 2022; Méndez 2021) that analyses the relationship between political violence and the collapse of the democratic Left in Peru, as well as the political use of the label “terrorist” as part of the process of destroying the political, ethnic and cultural identity of political parties and social organisations.

what Robin Azevedo calls “moral panic” or “politics of grief” (Robin Azevedo 2020). Her work focuses on the “controversial” commemorations made by members of subversive organisations extrajudicially murdered in the prison massacres and their memorialisation forms through the Shining Path mausoleum. In this scenario, who has the right to remember, and what are the ethical limits of *terruqueo*? Clearly, in this context, Peruvian society faces the panic generated by the mere possibility that a memorial remembering the “victims” of the Shining Path could reignite a spiral of violence like the one experienced in the 1980s. Also at stake is the moral dimension of memory and whether it is legit to remember victims who are perpetrators to a certain extent.

I take this extreme example about the memory conflicts between the State’s and Shining Path’s memories to highlight how narrow (and problematic) the concept of victim can be presented to civil society. In this case, how the transition from citizen to victim or terrorist is constructed also criminalises (*terruquea*) the search for justice for crimes the State committed against innocent civilian victims. The victim begins to be a suspicious element. This is inserted into a dangerous narrative: Shining Path members are dead, if they are dead, they are guilty, and if they are guilty, they are not victims. Thus, those “truth-seekers” (victims) or those who echo that search appear marked under the stigma of terrorism.

The above leads us to briefly discuss a figure present in the history of the dirty war in Latin America. The drama of the forced disappeared persons is directly associated with the need to mourn within the right to bury, know the truth, and come to terms and accept death (Robin Azevedo 2020). This understanding of the figure of the forced disappeared person produces two effects on the victimology of the conflict: first, it accepts them as victims; and, secondly, it opens up a sphere of new victims with legitimacy to claim for the forced disappeared (the survivors, relatives) within the framework of what is considered “humanitarian” approaches (Fassin 2011; Fassin & Rechtman 2009).

However, the way the figure of the disappeared has been dealt with and processed in the Southern Cone memory tasks differs considerably from how this has taken place in Peru. In Argentina and Uruguay, the process of social discipline took as its object the modern and rational individual himself (Gatti 2008, 132). The disappeared in the Southern Cone were part of a society built around a civilising mandate (urban, white/mestizo and educated), which makes forced disappearance not only an ultraviolent technology but also implies a direct attack against the order that the very same State once created. It is as if the State regrets the society it managed to build and, at some point, considers the need to correct the process through an “inverted civilising mandate” (Gatti 2008, 133). This is how the concept of “detained-disappeared”, “disappeared”, or “political disappeared” is forged. The political and militant condition of its (in)existence is what allows society itself to look for it. The internal conflict demonstrated Peru’s structural problems and expressed, with the lives of many Peruvians, the different ways the violence impacted. In Peru, as in Guatemala,

most fatalities, relatives, or disappeared were indigenous peasants without ties to the intellectual and professional middle classes (Basombrío 1999, 127).

I argue that the rhetorical and symbolic forms of violence to criminalise social, political and popular demands and mobilisations are a culturally exacerbated continuity (a form of repetition) of political violence. In this context, and regarding the number of memory battles and their material and symbolic representations, the rhetorical application of the victims of *terruqueo* and human rights organisations has two characteristics. First, it dehumanises the victim (Aguirre 2011, 127), removes their rights, and limits their citizenship. Second, in Peru, the people who disappeared are not necessarily classified as forced. This makes the Peruvian case complex insofar as political, institutional, and even economic violence are intimately related to coloniality and structural racism. In such a scenario with an evident lack of citizenship, indigenous people cannot disappear because they must have existed before.

For this reason, I argue that the democratisation process in Peru, both on a political and socio-cultural level, cannot be centred only on a platform of “restitution of rights”. In Peru, the idea of restoring rights is almost chimerical. Following Gatti, the inverted civilising mandate was not bureaucratized but instead based on the intersection between ethnicity and class. Unlike the Southern Cone’s countries, there was not even a successful colonisation-repopulation project, nor was the territory “ideologically empty”. In this situation, the civilising emphasis is not placed on the “modern individual” (or on the modernisation/elimination of the individual) but the indigenous population: they need to be “civilised”.

In the Southern Cone nations, a person could simultaneously be an individual and subversive. The “subversive individual” is a criminal-political categorisation that “justifies” his political disappearance through illegal means. In contrast, in Peru, the stigmatisation and violence process that, I maintain, is reproduced through discursive tools such as *terruqueo* builds an unbreakable category: *indio terruco*. Therefore, reconciliation assumes the same ups and downs as the (re)democratisation problem: it is impossible to restore what has existed only in a nominal way so far. The route passes through creating new public spheres and articulating new forms of citizenship; this is something that, from this point of view, has been happening in Peru since President Kuczynski tried to pardon Alberto Fujimori in December 2017.

All the above help us propose an interpretation of the relationship between *terruqueo*, democratisation, and memory. The traumatic memory of the internal armed conflict has been politically overexploited for many years. It has served as the “anti-heroic” mirror on which the Fujimorista memory and the entire current development model have been built. This has been possible by combining two central factors defining Peru’s recent history: fear and trauma. Both are linked to Shining Path, and the subsequent social and political chaos added to the political violence: hyperinflation, state over-intervention in the economy, and even Velasco Alvarado’s agrarian reform. This traumatic scaffolding shows its complexity when the elites activate the warning signs.

When social, ethnic or economic claims emerge, they are directly associated with the elite's loss of specific social, ethnic and economic privileges. Hence, the Fujimorista memory success lies precisely in creating a narrative of progress used to include those who have not historically been beneficiaries of such progress.

Consequently, this leads us to think that memory in Peru can be seen as a device that has been useful to dynamise and articulate recent social demonstrations against everything the Fujimorista memory. This does not rule out other elements. Corruption or criticism of the current political and economic system are relevant in the protests. However, it is still especially striking that the large mobilisations began precisely on Christmas 2017, in a context where the debated narrative was (and continues to be) the legality and legitimacy of the presidential pardon given to Fujimori by Kuczynski. As I will explore in the coming pages, this debate ended in the legal arena but continues being fought in the social and political spheres in the form of fights against corruption.

The bicentennial generation: structural reasons to protest

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the year 2020 will probably be engraved in the global collective memory. Peru is among the countries with the most deaths per million inhabitants, and in August 2020, it became the deadliest country in the world concerning its population (Quigley 2020). The context of the pandemic is crucial because it is an additional ingredient to the constant political instability that Peruvians have been suffering since the election of Kuczynski in 2016, the pardon of Fujimori in 2017, the rise of Martín Vizcarra in 2018, the closure of parliament in 2019, and the new legislative elections in 2020 that ultimately reinitiated the cycle of instability through the presidential censure mechanism in November 2020 and provoked the most significant social mobilisation in recent history.

The year began with extraordinary parliamentary elections to restore the Congress' activities after being dissolved by ex-President Vizcarra in September 2020. These elections represented a severe setback for Fujimorismo, as *Fuerza Popular* lost 58 members of Congress compared to the 2016 elections. The other party involved in serious corruption scandals, the APRA, failed to overcome the electoral hurdle and was left without representation for the first time since 1980. *Acción Popular*, the party of Fernando Belaúnde (1963-1968 and 1980-1985) and Valentín Paniagua (2000-2001), won the first minority and with it the presidency of Congress, which fell to Manuel Merino, who would later bear the most significant political responsibility for the repression in the November 2020 demonstrations. The second minority belonged to *Podemos Perú*, a party founded by former Congressman José Luna Gálvez, who also owns a recently closed university because it did not meet minimum educational quality standards, an issue to which I will return later.

The Public Prosecutor's Office is investigating José Luna Gálvez, and the former mayor of Lima, Luis Castañeda Lossio—is in pre-trial detention for

embezzlement due to his relationship with Odebrecht, calculating the damage at S/.524 million.⁶ This political party also has as its presidential candidate Daniel Urresti, a former general and former minister of the interior in the Humala administration, on trial for the murder of the journalist Hugo Bustíos, who in 1988 was investigating the accusations against the Armed Forces in Ayacucho in the context of the internal armed conflict. This highlights that what Peruvians chose in the new Congress is not necessarily “better” than what they had. Therefore, the relationship between political crisis, corruption and memory is still a very valid one: is it possible to renew the institutions with the renewal of their members or is Peru’s democratisation attempts a problem of a structural nature. Furthermore, how can these structures be changed if the problem is structural?

The context in which the social mobilisations of November 2020 took place is amid a global pandemic. However, the relationship between the pandemic, society and national politics has had local specificities. In this sense, social mobilisations can be explained by a combination of historical background and the immediate precedents linked to the renewal of the legislative agenda and the relationship between the state powers.

Considering the historical background, I would like first to highlight that the relationship between party crises and crises of political representation has been endemic malice in Peru since the election of Fujimori in 1990 (Dargent & Muñoz 2012; Levitsky & Cameron 2003; Tanaka 2005). The combination of economic crisis and subversive insurgency created the conditions for the emergence of a form of authoritarianism that was a response to restoring the missing order. The Fujimorista response to the chaos created a neoliberal order applied through a mixture of shock doctrine with a military solution in the form of the State of emergency.

This “Fujimorista democracy” created the sensation that there is only one alternative: Fujimorismo, that is, a form of governance that has only worked in a context in which the same party controlled the Executive and the Congress and, given the recent investigations into corruption in Peru, this context has required not only the traditional alliance with the Armed Forces but also the intervention of the judiciary and the Public Prosecutor’s Office. However, it is also relevant to note that although it is a limited democracy, it is still a formally competitive democracy with diverse actors and that, although under a constitution born of a dictatorship, it maintains a minimum and necessary form of guarantee of due process, separation of powers and institutionalised justice. Of course, when the presentation of a public enemy is built around “corruption”, many of these characteristics (mainly the administration of justice) are weakened in the face of the lack of transparency and allegations of dishonesty or inadequacy of judges, prosecutors and other public servants. It seems that “Fujimorista democracy” only works with a Fujimorista party in power, effectively making a highly politically fragmented country ungovernable. In this context, constructing an

⁶ Nearly USD160 million.

internal social enemy, the *terruqueo*, is a valuable instrument to weaken progressive opposition political forces and organise and unite the most conservative forces behind an authoritarian, neoliberal and, in some cases, fascist discourse.

Following this line, the collapse of the Fujimori administration also triggered conservative and neoliberal memories; this is, those who, without being explicitly Fujimoristas, give continuity to their economic policy, line up behind the “discourse of development” and identify the Left, social movements or any reformist force as “enemies of the State and ‘progress’”. Thus, in Fujimori’s absence, these narratives first maintain his politically and economically authoritarian legacy as a paradigm that impacts Peruvian politics because this paradigm benefits his political heirs, who are grouped around the *Fuerza Popular* party. Furthermore, secondly, this political-memory construction put forward by *Fuerza Popular* involves a narrative that slips into the political identity of that generation that maintains the memory of the internal armed conflict, regulates the debate, denies competition, stigmatises the opposition and holds them responsible for the chaos and terror of the 1980-1990 period. Therefore, political participation is not only inadequate but undesirable. Politics then become an extension of the war and a very unattractive sphere of participation.

A central question is how to explain from a collective memory perspective the November 2020 social mobilisations. It is prudent to situate these mobilisations in a broader framework that represents a continuity of citizens’ distrust of their political parties, which is a consequence of the crisis of representation. The “Fujimorista democracy” did not solve the problems that created Fujimorismo. Therefore, the causes that facilitated the emergence of Fujimorismo are similar to the ones that mobilise citizens to find solutions to problems that the current political elite does not even ask itself about. Therefore, it can be inferred that democracy without highly institutionalised and democratic parties has built a republic without citizens (Flores Galindo 1997). Peru’s republican institutions are not representative of the whole society. If the only parties that have transcended the structural crisis of representation have been highly personalist parties (*Fuerza Popular* and APRA), which are seen as paradigmatic examples of corruption, political violence and authoritarianism, it is clear that social mobilisations invigorate, question and reform Peruvian politics. Therefore, it is expected that expressions of anger and indignation are not an accident but the only valid mechanism for democratising the conflict: opening up the political arena to social actors and decentralising it from the political-economic axis in which it is located.

The second historical-structural condition covered in this section is the conflict between the Law for the Promotion of Investment in Education⁷ passed in 1996

⁷ Legislative Decree N°882

by Alberto Fujimori and the University Law⁸ of 2014, passed by the government of Ollanta Humala. The Law enacted during the Fujimori government legalises and encourages the creation of new and private universities. Some authors suggest that the public university crisis was aggravated by implementing Fujimori's neoliberal policies (Burga 2008; Germaná Cavero 2002). The consequence of this privatisation of higher education was expanding the number of private universities, determined by economic interests, ultimately reducing the State's investment in public universities. These measures destroyed the sense of university co-government and expanded horizontal mechanisms of joint support to groups of corporate power (Casas Sulca 2012). The promise that education as a service promoted by private management would improve education quality through the competition to attract students evolved into a higher education system that produced a substantial drop in research rates. It also increased the underemployment of university professionals, inequalities and the stigmatisation of certain universities. Finally, it reproduced a circle of marginalisation and discrimination based on the university of study and ethnicity (Cuenta & Reátegui 2016).

The 2014 University Law proposed two fundamental changes to the model that had been in force until then. It created a highly specialised agency to supervise the operating conditions of universities. This was an implicit recognition that the total self-management model inherited from the 1983 University Law and the 1996 Fujimori decree had failed. It impacted the logic of educational services of a business-oriented nature. University reform respects private initiative in higher education but recognises the right to quality education over private investment protection (Mori Valenzuela 2016, 52-53).

The reform promoted by this law led to the closure of many universities, mainly private but also publicly managed. This threatened the survival of many businesses that functioned as political-electoral platforms, patronage of some political parties, or facades for illicit businesses. Thus, César Acuña went from the owner and president of the Private University César Vallejo to Trujillo's mayor, one of the country's largest cities. Congressman and presidential candidate Virgilio Acuña, brother of César, owner of the University of Lambayeque, finances the *Unión por el Perú* party, supporting Antauro Humala's release, brother of Ollanta, and leader of an armed insurrection against the Alejandro Toledo administration in 2005. Another example is José Luna Gálvez, owner and president of TELESUP University, financier of the *Solidaridad Nacional* party, founder of *Podemos Perú*, and congressman elected in 2016. Fidel and Joaquín Ramírez, Alas Peruanas University owners, are accused of drug trafficking and money laundering for *Fuerza Popular's* benefit. Except for the César Vallejo Private University, all the universities

⁸ Law N°30220

mentioned above have been closed for not meeting minimum educational quality standards.⁹

This helps to broadly contextualise the conflicts between Congress and various ministries of education committed to university reform. For example, this explains the parliamentary censorship suffered by Minister Saavedra during the Kuczynski government's first year. In 2020, bills to roll back the reform were presented to Congress. The bill proposes to amend the University "to guarantee student participation, the suitability of its authorities, and promote the decentralisation of university education."¹⁰ Between June 2 and October 30, seven bills were submitted to the Congressional Education Commission, which seeks to create five more universities in Ayacucho, Piura, Lima, Puno, and the Valley of the Rivers Apurímac, Ene and Mantaro. Four of these initiatives are promoted by *Alianza para el Progreso*, the party led by César Acuña (Salazar Vega 2020).

Once the moratorium that prevented new universities' creation had expired, the Executive presented a bill to extend this impediment. The Education Commission discussed the bill in May 2019, but the Budget Commission, chaired by Humberto Acuña, another brother of César Acuña, blocked its debate. At the same time, the number of new universities proposed reached twelve. Between 10 and 15 November, while Manuel Merino was ruling the country, Congress was ready to debate the Bill "which declares a national emergency in the education system of Peru and proposes its comprehensive reform", which proposed the derogation of the University Law (La República 2020).¹¹

Continuing with the Peruvian State's authoritarian features, on March 27, less than two weeks after the quarantine began, Congress passed the Police Protection Act.¹² This Law makes three main changes to the current legislation. First, it prohibits preliminary judicial arrest or preventive detention against police officers who use their weapons or means of defence and cause injury or death. Secondly, it modifies the exemption grounds from criminal liability provided for National Police and Armed Forces members. Finally, it removes the explicit requirement that the Police use force only in proportion to the threat.

⁹ As a symbol of the education system, when TELESUP University failed to get accreditation for falling short of basic academic requirements, education inspectors released photos showing that the top three floors of an alleged seven-level building, were just a façade supported by metal struts (Collins, 2019). This is an iconic example that shows the continuity of problems inherited from specific public policies designed during Fujimorismo. University policy, along with others (internal security, public health and economic recovery, among others) is central to understanding the mobilisations of 2020.

¹⁰ Draft Law N°6341 (Peru)

¹¹ Draft Law N°5581 (Peru)

¹² Law N°31012 (Peru)

During the November 2020 demonstrations, videos were circulated with police pointing the demonstrators' bodies at the "kill him, kill him" group, and the use of lead bullets and glass marbles were reported. It was also shown that the National Police used custody and riot control units and specialised ones, intelligence and task forces, and its undercover police agents to make arrests. After the protests in which the national police murdered two citizens, Human Rights Watch (2020) called for repealing laws protecting abusive police practices. With Francisco Sagasti as interim president, and a new congressional board, the possibility of revising or repealing the Police Protection Law was raised, a debate that continues (La República 2020).

However, it is notable that the possibility of initiating a democratic police reform also has political consequences. From Fujimorismo, the attempt to change the law has been criticised, proposing a narrative in which any change to these regulations would imply that the "mobs take to the streets and impose their will" (Correo 2020). When President Sagasti removed the senior officers from the police force, the retired officers tried to dispute the president's decision in the judicial organs. They invited the Executive to reflect and show political humility to end this painful event that transcends personal aspects since it weakens the very foundations of the democratic system (RPP 2020). Retired officers expressed concern about the changes since "it affected the morale and police 'institutionality'" (Gestión 2020). It is striking that they were police officers and officers of the Armed Forces, including General Francisco Morales-Bermúdez, Peru's last military dictator. *Acción Popular*, Merino's party, politically supported both demands in an attitude bordered on sedition (Gestión 2020).

Within the pandemic context, it became evident that the economic model has profound limitations for guaranteeing the population's health, food, and social security. In principle, and like in other countries, public hospitals collapsed, which led to many patients going to private clinics, which requested an advance of approximately S/.25,000 to S/.70,000 to guarantee medical care (Ojo Público 2020).¹³ This was a problem that many countries had to face, but in Peru, due to the constitutional rank of "entrepreneurial and market freedoms," the only thing the State could do was to include them in the sphere of coordination of the Ministry of Health, but without the capacity of decision making in their operation (Salazar Vega 2020). It reached an agreement with the private institutions for the State to assume responsibility for the patients' expenses almost four months after the crisis, and only under the threat of nationalising them as a public necessity in a context of risk to national security (BBC 2020).

Simultaneously, since the market regulated the value of oxygen cylinders, private producers increased the price exponentially, with a couple of media-famous exceptions. The State's response was to finance oxygen plants through research funds so that some university laboratories could produce and market

¹³ Between USD7,500 and USD20,000

oxygen at a “fair price” (Cabezas Medina 2020). Again, the 1993 Constitution prohibited the State from having any entrepreneurial initiative where a private party could carry it out.

Almost three-quarters of the Peruvian economy is informal. However, informality does not only mean underemployment, unregistered work, or tax evasion. Informality is also visible in economic activities relevant to Peru’s GDP, such as mining and agriculture. This clarifies that the State is more interested in regulating those activities where the “informal economy” competes “unfairly” with big capital. Even though large corporations still limit the right to unionise, many of which have tax debts judged in international courts. However, the State’s regulatory duty is unclear in situations where informality makes work easier: food markets. A possible reason is that effective regulation of food markets would increase maintenance and surveillance costs, which would cause prices to rise and consequently generate discontent in the population.

The problem is that having little or no control over Peru’s wholesale, retail, and neighbourhood markets, they became infection centres (GRADE 2020). This shows a severe disconnection between the government and the governed. The State has shown itself to be unaware of the conditions in which society lives. Nevertheless, this is not only an error of omission but also an error of action. In 2010, Alan Garcia’s government changed the oxygen purity requirements from 99% to 100%. The acceptable range was 93% to 100%, while in Chile, the minimum limit is 93% (Quintanilla Chacón 2020).¹⁴ After this requirement, many small and local producers could not continue operating, ultimately impacting oxygen supply and price during the pandemic.

Despite a high degree of formal employment, this does not imply existing labour stability. Most people work as self-employed or in covert labour relationships; therefore, they were economically obliged to continue working without a plan of subsidies or direct money transfers, which increased the contagion rate. Not to mention that social benefits, such as unemployment insurance or access to social security, are suspended when a self-employed worker stops paying social security. Besides, although markets were one of the primary sources of contagion, the government did not implement a door-to-door food distribution programme. That would not have been successful either because almost 50% of households in Peru do not have a refrigerator, which is exacerbated in the most disadvantaged sectors (Perú - Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática 2017, 379).

To avoid a total collapse of the economy, on April 6, ex-President Vizcarra’s government prepared an ambitious plan called the *Programa de Garantías Reactiva Perú* (“Programme of Guarantees ‘Reactiva Perú’”).¹⁵ This plan sought to ensure continuity in the chain of payments by providing guarantees to micro, small, medium and large enterprises to access working capital loans and thus

¹⁴ Regulation on Medicinal Gases for Human Use - 30 December 2013 (Chile)

¹⁵ Legislative Decree N°1455

meet their short-term obligations to their workers and suppliers of goods and services (Perú - Ministerio de Economía 2020). However, the aid fund was absorbed by large companies by 71%, with small and micro enterprises receiving 23% of the fund, while medium-sized enterprises received 4%. The country's large banks managed to transfer funds since the *Banco de la Nación*—Peru's only public bank—is also prevented from offering financial products to anyone who is not a government retiree or public employee. Consequently, the large Peruvian banks used *Reactiva Peru* to transfer funds to their parent companies or other group subsidiaries (Salazar et al. 2020).

At the same time, on April 14, the government issued a protocol of “perfect suspension of work.”¹⁶ This means that the employment contract is “perfectly suspended” when the worker's obligation to provide the service and the employer's obligation to pay the remuneration ceases temporarily, without the employment bond disappearing. In other words, there is no work or salary payment, but the employment contract remains in force. The law does not exclude companies that have distributed profits in the last year or part of economic groups with headquarters in tax havens. Initially, it also did not prevent the participation of companies that had taken advantage of the subsidy to cover 35% of their workers' salary receiving less than S/1,500.¹⁷ The rule also clarifies that social security and health contributions are suspended, leaving the worker unprotected. However, the worker can withdraw part of his capitalisation fund as compensation. This, in effect, implies not only a decapitalisation of the worker, in addition to the loss of work and social protection but also a transfer of responsibilities from the State to the individual. The worker's fund should not have been considered as “compensation” since, by definition, it is one of the labour rights.

This is the context in which the mobilisations emerged. Firstly, an attempt at a presidential vacancy in which Manuel Merino consults the Armed Forces if he has their support. Secondly, a successful vacancy due to accusations of corruption by ex-President Vizcarra was used as an excuse to prevent university, electoral and political reform. Thirdly, Peru has had three presidents and four health ministers in this pandemic. Fourth, the corruption scandals and the economic model made it clear to the population that embezzlement of funds, influence peddling, vote-buying, illegitimate use of privileged information, fraud and tax evasion were not only media scandals but caused damage in the form of deaths.

The COVID-19 Pandemic did not generate protests. It did make it clear that citizens are invisible to the State; that the State does not know the nation, and that Peruvian democracy is a testament to this, strongly corporatist, where there are not too many ideological boundaries between parties but a *modus operandi* that is functional to shared economic interests that cut across most political

¹⁶ Emergency Decree N°038-2020

¹⁷ Nearly USD400

parties. The political crisis of 2020 is not an exception but the continuity and the consequence of the intimate relationship between corruption and private enterprise in its attempt to besiege and colonise the *res publica*.

Understanding recent mobilisations in a larger picture

In light of the 2021 general elections, especially the presidential run-off, it would seem evident that the November 2020 protest cycle, as characterised in this article, has failed to “defujimorise” Peru. One of the aspects I would like to highlight is that the condition of “anti-Fujimorista” does not function exclusively as a political label but rather, according to my reading of memory battles between Fujimorismo and human rights, as a disjointed ideological construct that emerges in critical contexts. These contexts are especially visible in the presidential elections, where the Fujimorista machine constructs a narrative of development based on the idea of social pacification and economic growth, assuming that Peru is, in effect, a post-conflict society. However, I propose that since Fujimorismo—both in its historical aspect and in the political and truth narratives used today—is an actor in the internal armed conflict, the persistence of its political strength calls into question whether the current political scenario can be seen as post-conflict.

Thus, although the military dimension of the internal armed conflict has been partially settled, I argue that violence—no longer armed and no longer entirely political—takes the form of labour, economic, or environmental politics. Although the protests may seem circumstantial in that they emerge in the form of peasant, trade union or anti-mining struggles, the common and unorganised denominator is the criticism of an economic model that has failed to resolve the population’s fundamental problems. Therein lies the subtle anti-Fujimorismo component: criticism of the neoliberal model is seen by Fujimorismo as a criticism of its political ontology.

The social mobilisation explained above must be understood as a process that goes from rage to outrage. I would like to be particularly careful with the use of the concept of *social rage* in this reading; I do not use it in a sense where rage is associated with hate speech directed at policies that tend to narrow the ethnic, gender or citizenship gap (Berry 1999; Mills 1997). As explained in the previous lines, social rage operates fundamentally as a mechanism that seeks to tolerate intolerance, which is an integral part of what I define in this article as the artificial construction of socio-political enemies. Therefore, this analysis’s starting point conceives anger as a trigger for protest in the form of outrage by indignation.

Anger works as a political emotion that motivates and continues conflict (Holmes 2004; Lyman 1981). It is, therefore, a social rage against the political elites generated by reasons that are both material (corruption trials) and objectives (presidential pardon), as well as immaterial (perception of corruption) and subjective (the various traumatic memories). In this connection, the line of analysis I follow assumes that these protests’ genealogy

should be partially traced back to a structural injustice that was aggravated by deepening inequalities in access to essential services such as health, retirement and public education, the minimum pillars of a welfare state that was critically dismantled during Fujimorismo. In this sense, the memory of protest—when linked to the form adopted by the State to solve citizens’ problems—is strongly connected to the symbolic value of Fujimorismo as an expression of the memory of political and market authoritarianism. The interpretation I propose is that anti-Fujimorismo is a common thread that is (no longer) only activated in electoral contexts but operates as a “memory element” that serves as an explanation and is strongly associated with political crises, corruption scandals—including the 2017 presidential pardon—or Peru’s regulatory weaknesses in terms of the education mentioned above, social, environmental or health policy.

The stigmatisation of social dissent, the criminalisation of social protest, or the disdain against some leftist political groups use similar elements previously deployed throughout the Latin American region. The dominant elites, allied with the media, present the political Left as a threat to democracy. It is characterised as an extension of the alleged authoritarianism and corruption of the Venezuelan or Cuban regime or linked to guerrilla activities (Martínez & Goenaga, 2017). In this respect, the 2021 Peruvian presidential election showed how *terruqueo* polarised the electoral campaign, presenting Keiko Fujimori as the standard-bearer of democracy, economic stability and respect for private property and Pedro Castillo as the candidate. He represented the “communist threat” due to his allegedly “ideological links” not only with Nicolás Maduro but also, in what in any typical election campaign would be considered slanderous, with the Shining Path. *Perú Libre* (“Free Peru”) was thus presented during the election period as a party that, by moving away from the Fujimorista neoliberal model, would bring back the resurgence of the Shining Path by reproducing in Peru the Venezuelan economic and humanitarian crisis.

The candidate, Pedro Castillo of the *Perú Libre* party, defeated Keiko Fujimori of *Fuerza Popular* after obtaining 50.12% of the votes, fewer than 45,000 votes. However, when paying attention to geographical and social factors, it becomes clear that Castillo won in Peru’s most unequal and most impoverished regions; those in the mining industry dominate the economy. He also won in the indigenous and Andean regions, while Keiko Fujimori won in Lima and, to a lesser extent, in the agro-exporting regions of the Peruvian coast. It is also important to note that Castillo won almost 80% of the vote in regions where the internal armed conflict was particularly violent (Ayacucho, Huancavelica, Apurímac) and regions with still narco-terrorist activity. *Terruqueo* does not explain Peru’s socio-economic, political and ethnic fragmentation. However, it is another expression of how racism, social discrimination and administrative centralism, three main factors responsible for exacerbating the violence according to the *Informe Final*, become a political discourse that poses irreconcilable antagonisms between the rural and the urban, between the indigenous and the mestizo, and, in short, between at least two different projects of democracy and economic models.

This “electoral” *terruqueo* is not an exception but one of the forms and moments in which these campaigns of fear and stigmatisation appear. *Terruqueo* is a latent phenomenon that becomes more visible in times of crisis, mainly because these crises tend to be expressed in social mobilisations or citizens’ protests, or at times when, from within society, narratives emerge that challenge the heroic Fujimorista narrative. This contributes to delegitimising social, political, and environmental demands amongst the general population, creating enemies presented to the larger society as irrational and lacking any form of legitimacy.¹⁸ To a great extent, this explains the appearance of *terruqueo* in the pro-Keiko Fujimori media, the defence of the economic model supported by the corporations, and the success of these discourses in being replicated in popular sectors. These sectors fear that candidate Pedro Castillo, a rural teacher and trade union leader in the education sector, could represent both a new Hugo Chávez and the emergence of a new armed conflict. That is how *terruqueo* becomes more evident at times of high polarisation, such as elections when discourses emerge that link ethnicity with terrorism (*Indio terruco*), when places of origin are equated with levels of institutional education (the ignorant countryman), or professional training with ideology (communist teacher). In Peru, the presidential elections of 2011 onwards are the most massive and democratic form of social mobilisation and citizen protest.

Therefore, given that any campaign for anti-corruption, pro-human rights, pro-environment, or in favour of trade union mobilisation is presented as breaking that “contract”, thus, any form of dissent outside the framework proposed by the current Peruvian order is susceptible to being considered subversive, dangerous, and subject to being *terruqueado*. In this sense, attending a massive social mobilisation process in Peru is a civil act radically opposed to what Fujimori’s strategy normalised in the period 1992-2000: the total control of the political community, whether of the elites through the National Intelligence Service; or of the popular sectors, limiting their mobilisation capacity through a clientelist system (Meléndez & León, 2010, p. 459).

Has the mobilisation of the bicentennial generation been genuinely transformative? One could say that the exacerbation of racist and classist discourses manifested in the last presidential election demonstrates that the limits of political change lie in respect for the Constitution and the neoliberal model. However, I would like to stress that the mobilisations of November 2020 should not be categorised as “re-founding”, and the citizenry did not find itself behind a solid, homogenous and structured proposal to change the Constitution; and if it had been, it is not clear what kind of change was being sought. However, it is also true that public opinion and the politico-economic elites could witness broad sectors of the population, albeit loosely organised,

¹⁸ There are almost “picturesque” examples such as those in which Pedro Castillo was linked to an Indigenous-millennarist-Islamic movement, *Inkarri Islam*, which allegedly sympathised with *Hezbollah* and, at the same time, with MOVADef and Shining Path (Saldarriaga, 2021). However, the most common practice is to turn the anti-mining protest into an anti-development protest and, consequently, into a form of terrorist action (El Comercio, 2015).

demanding some change. Faced with such events, the alternatives are usually not many: one can either try to change or repress any attempt at change. It cannot be said that Pedro Castillo's victory was the result of the mobilisations of the bicentenary generation. However, there is reason to believe that the failure of the same technologies of fear and surveillance (*terruqueo*, media control and attempts to take over electoral institutions) historically used by Fujimorismo may begin to show that the election of Pedro Castillo created a tiny rupture with "Fujimorista democracy". This fracture has minimally allowed for the democratisation of the elections, making competitive a rural teacher of Andean origin who, not long ago, would have been prevented from taking office through a military *pronunciamento* or a market coup.

Recent studies on indignation and mobilisation generally propose that the "Arab Spring," especially the demonstrations that took place in Tunisia in 2011, signified a change in modern political culture that made visible the fact that mass protest, public and in the streets, could function as a mechanism of transformation of both the political system and the State (Cameron 2014; Rovira Sancho 2014; Tejerina, Perugorria, Benski, & Langman 2013). Making the protest visible has also been a widely used strategy of struggle over the last few years, especially in crisis contexts where some civil society organisations identify the political elite as responsible for the socio-economic collapse.

The November 2020 protests can be inserted into a combination of two elements: first, a regional paradigm shift, in which the Chilean *Estallido Social* of 2019 or the Colombian *Paro Nacional* of 2021 are also comprised; and second, the continuation of the protest-vote that Humala's election in 2011 represented (as well as the disappointment he was), but by other means: the occupation of the public space. In this sense, the common denominator of Colombians, Peruvians and Chileans is weariness towards a set of policies and repressive political structures inherited from dictatorial governments, which abuse the prerogative of the State of emergency to regulate protest and socio-political dissent and maintain the status quo of neoliberal totality (Pino-Ojeda 2011; 2020).

However, the Peruvian demonstrations differ from the previous examples in one fundamental respect. Unlike Chile or Spain, where movements of rage and social indignation were institutionalised in the form of political parties, the protests in Peru have not yet served to craft leaderships that can build new political, electoral and institutional power. I propose that this may be due to the crisis mentioned above of representation (no party has the legitimacy to represent or attract the mobilised sectors of civil society) and to the discredit (due to the terrain and the latent memory of economic chaos) that the parties of more progressive lines have.

However, they have one point in common: the use of public, urban space as a field of struggle. This is not particularly surprising, but it does mark a counterpoint to other forms of protest, especially the continuous cycles of agrarian protests, which do not achieve notoriety, massiveness, or manage to mobilise all public opinion. What may be evident in other national contexts in

Peru represents one more expression of State centralism and racism. In 1992, during the internal conflict, a group of students and a professor at the Enrique Guzmán y Valle National University were kidnapped, disappeared and killed by a paramilitary group. The case was known in the media as *La Cantuta*. It received and still receives a great deal of attention not only because of the brutality of the crime but also because it was one of the pillars on which Alberto Fujimori was sentenced, as will be noted later. However, this was neither the only nor the first case of forced disappearance in the internal armed conflict context. Considering this, I propose that criminal violence against a citizen in Peru is “only” illegitimate (it is always illegal) when that citizen, besides having political and civil rights, also exercises economic and social ones. In Peru, access to citizenship is mediated by access to goods and services, not just testimonial rights written into the Constitution. These economic and social rights typically exist in contexts where the State is present, to put it crudely: where the mass grave where the bodies of students “disappear” is near a road, where national newspapers have correspondents, where there are courts and prosecutors’ offices specialising in human rights.¹⁹

I cannot say where the indignation was born, but I would like to situate, following della Porta (2015), the emergence of these social movements in a context of crisis and austerity that justifies the politicisation of indignation. In this regard, I suggest that Peru had a successful political protest following the cycle of global protests of 2010-2012 (Southern Europe, Maghreb, Middle East) or the so-called “Left turn” in Latin America. In 2011, the presidential elections were decided between Keiko Fujimori and Ollanta Humala. The campaign was centred on the debate between continuity and change in the Fujimori government’s economic policy and was continued by the Toledo and García administrations. Humala, who won the elections, came to the government promising a “great transformation” that included the nationalisation of some strategic resources, greater State participation, expansion of social programmes, and multilateralism, especially “Latin Americanism,” in its international relations. However, his government was characterised by the formation of the *Alianza del Pacífico* (Pacific Alliance), which weakened the *Unión de Naciones Sudamericanas* (Union of South American Nations, UNASUR by its Spanish acronym), led by Brazil, Venezuela and Argentina. It was the only country in the region to allow a British Navy ship to use its ports on a supply route to the Malvinas;²⁰ it maintained the economic policy inherited from previous administrations. Finally, it continued with the policy of militarising domestic security.

¹⁹ For example, the memorials to Inti Sotelo and Bryan Pintado can be found in various places in the city. However, in the recent agrarian protests, this time extended to the La Libertad region in the north of the country, the press captured the moment when a policeman murdered a worker named Jorge Muñoz Jiménez. The worker's name became known on social networks, while most of the press media labelled him a "young worker," a "striker," or simply a "dead citizen."

²⁰ Some may call them “Falklands”

I maintain that this was the beginning of the disenchantment with the year 2000 “democratic promise”, then ratified electorally with the election of Pedro Castillo. The recent protests are a sum of both individual wills and social exhaustion. The mobilisations against Fujimori in the 1990s had a specific objective: to prevent a third Fujimori government. Once the objective had been achieved, logic indicated that the democratic promise “would do the rest.” Once again, the limited representation and political participation, encouraged by electoral commodification (remember that one of the conflicts between Vizcarra, Congress and other political leaders was the reform of party financing),²¹ literally prevented many civil society groups and organisations from participating in political-electoral life. The transitional government led by President Valentín Paniagua (2000-2001) and the government of Alejandro Toledo (2001-2006) followed the “post-conflict/authoritarianism democratisation manual”: they formed a truth commission, reformed the Constitution to prohibit immediate re-election, attempted police reform by placing the Ministry of the Interior under civilian control, reorganised the National Intelligence Service, among other reforms (Caistor & Villarán 2006, 86-89).

The period 2016-2021 has shown as never before that, with a high share of power, Fujimorismo as an ideology and practice represents a danger to Peru’s democratic stability. In addition, in its historical dimension, Fujimorismo also represents the emergence of poor-quality universities, cultural censorship, political-legislative obstructionism, the attack on university reform, the radicalisation of police repression, and the historical-symbolic legacy of being the founding movement of neoliberalism in Peru (Degregori & Sandoval, 2009; Laurie & Bonnett, 2002; Merino Acuña, 2015; Radcliffe & Westwood, 2005).

The November 2020 mobilisations had a new political identity: they were not (only) against Fujimori but (also) against Fujimorismo. This means that they combine memory and the need for reparations based on a process of *historical justice*. Fujimorismo is not only *Fuerza Popular* but mainly a political practice that deepens Peru’s structural problems, such as corruption and the use of state violence to settle social conflicts of any nature. It is not a conflict of memory; it

²¹ By this I mean that, although there is a diversity of political nomenclatures, they are born out of a similar political culture, in which “innovation” over neoliberalism is perceived as “too radical”. Successful management experiences are not abundant at the regional or national level, as evidenced by the short-lived nature of many regional movements, but above all by the fact that no party that has won a presidential election from 2001 onwards has been able to present a competitive candidate (or any candidate at all) for the presidency in the following election. What might seem to encourage diversity and competitiveness, in reality—as Pedro Castillo’s government is demonstrating—ends up mimicking an institutional structure that is inflexible in terms of the paragons of development, citizen participation and representation, and the organisation of a democratic state. It is true that institutional reforms and balances of power are being discussed in Peru (including a bicameral system, questions of confidence and congressional re-election), but these discussions are being led by *Fuerza Popular* and are not in line with some of the demands that emerged from the November 2020 marches, especially the more radical ones that *Perú Libre* and Pedro Castillo made their own: a new constitution.

is a conflict *reactivated* by a specific memory, but one that transcends towards the search for reparation of the social and political fabric.

In this sense, historical justice and memory are mediated by the State's responsibility to repair the damage caused, regardless of when or by whom the damage was committed (Neumann & Thompson 2015, 4). "Even in cases where injustices have vanished from public memory or where governments have long discouraged reference to the past, memories of injustice often continue to fester among victims and their families and resurface in the public realm" (Neumann & Thompson 2015, 6). The problem with this relationship between history, memory and justice is that the legal and the memorial is thought of in terms of specific harm, a specific perpetrator or a specific period, as is the case of the *Proceso de Reorganización Nacional* (National Reorganization Process) in Argentina, Nazi Germany or British colonialism in Kenya.

In contrast to these cases, where a relationship between State violence with a dictatorial face for a specific time can be identified, different administrations have exercised violence in Peru, both formally democratic and authoritarian. This makes it difficult to apportion blame and responsibility since there is "competition" for "innocence." This competition is determined by achieving, at least before a sector of society, to be identified as a hero or victim. Justice, therefore, must deal with the legal aspects of human rights violations and be politically exposed to a wide range of political parties, all of which have the capacity for electoral mobilisation. For this reason, the memories of the victims and the "innocence construction" is an uncomfortable phenomenon for Fujimorismo and other conservative sectors since memory is a necessary condition for the narrative of human rights, not in its normative-legal character, but for its ethical and historical one (Huyssen 2015, 33). Memory is an instrument to keep political, moral, social, economic or criminal responsibility for various crimes against society.

In January 2020, less than ten months before the political crisis that led to the social protests, the Peruvians elected a new congress. Although it was possible to reverse the strength of Fujimorismo, this did not mean a renewal of the elites. The problem is not a purely circumstantial aspect solved by a change of authorities but by designing new institutions that democratise and guarantee full citizenship access. This intersection between the economic and structural makes the demands for transformation vehement and the State response violent.

How to democratise a society that does not consider all its members equal? How to democratise a society where political positions in any democracy would be reasonable in Peru are seen as undemocratic? I suggest that the most recent social mobilisations against the political-parliamentary elites represent a continuity of memory with the marches against the Fujimori government. However, the mobilisations represent a break with a history that allows us to identify Fujimorismo as a historical subject and analyse it critically in its neo-colonial, extractive, corrupt, authoritarian and neoliberal character (Neyra 2018). That is why the demands, although not articulated around a political-

institutional platform, are not directly oriented towards Fujimorismo but the entire political and economic elite and structures born out of the 1993 Constitution.

Recalling the concept of agonistic and radical democracy referred to earlier, my interpretation of the November 2020 movement is that it recognises itself as legal and seeks to build new forms of legitimacy. In that sense, a popular mobilisation is a form of dissent that has proven to be effective in channelling political demands, at least in the urban context, and throughout 2020 it has realised that one of the ways to reform political-economic structures is through a new constitution. After the political crisis of November 2020, and with the reorganisation of Congress forces, a new bench was formed called “New Constitution”. Although it does not have a defined program and the congressional mandate ended in July 2021, it showed that the discussion about a new constitution began to resonate through marketing or political opportunism that was, indeed, included in the political proposal made by Pedro Castillo and *Perú Libre*.

So how can we understand that after a mobilisation capable of bringing down a government, Fujimorismo achieved a more than outstanding performance in the last elections? I would like to propose three preliminary and tentative explanations. First, Far-Right political movements (*Renovación Nacional* or *La Resistencia*) tend to appear as reactions to intolerable social scenarios because they threaten the values on which a supposed idea of nationhood is founded. In the Peruvian case: the free market as a paradigm of development, religion as a regulator of public morality, and the rigidity of the socio-economic pyramid. In other words, the strengthening of conservative-neoliberal political discourses may be a consequence of the mobilisations of November 2020, a sort of Haitian political fear. Second, the new Right-Wing alternatives are not politically solid enough, nor do they have the historical relevance that Fujimorismo has, which could explain why, despite being weakened electorally, this weakness is not so profound as to make it lose political-electoral competitiveness. In this sense, the construction of an ambiguous enemy “from below”, such as “corruption”, means that the entire political elite is permeated by this characterisation, which in a good way benefits Fujimorismo since *Fuerza Popular* becomes “one among many other” criminal organisations. Finally, it should not be underestimated that *terruqueo* continues to be a formidable tool for controlling the filtering of tolerable proposals from intolerable ones on a cultural-socio-political level. In that regard, the most progressive alternatives in the last election (Verónica Mendoza, Pedro Castillo and Yonhy Lescano) continue to embody many of the fears of the coastal and urban populations: Left/economic chaos and provincial/terrorist. Not to mention the programmatic and pragmatic limitations of *Peru Libre*’s technical teams and the problems of Pedro Castillo’s communications strategy.

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