

Press, Power & Politics

PERU • 2000

A Freedom Forum report on the Peruvian media.



PRESS, POWER & POLITICS

PERU

Written by Corinne Schmidt
Edited by Joan Mower

CORINNE SCHMIDT is coordinator of the Latin American Studies Program at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Md., where she is also a doctoral candidate. Previously, she was a journalist in Lima, Peru for The Washington Post and other publications. She also has served as a Foreign Service officer at the U.S. Embassies in Peru and Ecuador. She is a graduate of the College of William and Mary.

JOAN MOWER is director of Africa, Latin America programs at The Freedom Forum in Arlington, Va. She joined the media foundation in 1993. Previously, she worked as a journalist for the Associated Press, based in Washington, and for United Press International in George, South Carolina and Massachusetts. She was also a Foreign Service officer. A graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, she holds a master's degree from Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies.

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FOREWORD

In the year 2000, The Freedom Forum embarked on a project to examine political coverage in several international countries. The foundation organized global media forums on “Press, Power & Politics” in Peru, Ghana, Hong Kong and London.

In Lima, Peru, the forum featured a debate between presidential candidates and discussions among journalists on a range of issues: political coverage, fairness, media ownership and technology.

As part of our project, we asked Corinne Schmidt, a journalist and scholar, to write a monograph on Peru’s media. We’ve looked at the state of the media in Peru, the role the media has played in Peru’s history and coverage of the 2000 election.

The document was edited by Joan Mower, director of Africa and Latin America programs at The Freedom Forum in Arlington, Va. Suzanne Bilello, director of The Freedom Forum’s Latin American Center, was also involved in the project.

Chris Wells
Senior Vice President/International
The Freedom Forum

INTRODUCTION

As Peru's 2000 presidential elections threw the country into political turmoil, the media both covered and drove the tumultuous news events that ultimately strengthened democracy in the Andean nation.

The millennial year began with President Alberto K. Fujimori (dubbed one of the "Top Ten Enemies of the Press" by the Committee to Protect Journalists in 1999) favored to win reelection to a third term. Fujimori had stood up to terrorists and political opponents, stabilized the economy, and negotiated peace with Ecuador. But by December, in one of the year's most stunning political stories, the authoritarian leader was out of the office he'd held for a decade.

The 62-year-old president's grip on Peruvian politics began to weaken when he missed garnering a majority of votes in a nine-way presidential race on April 9, 2000. His closest opponent, Alejandro Toledo, boycotted the May runoff, which the Organization of American States called flawed. By September, Fujimori's government became a soap opera after a videotape — first transmitted by cable, then nationally broadcast — showed his longtime intelligence chief and top aide, Vladimiro Montesinos, bribing an opposition politician.

Montesinos quit a few days later. Fujimori deactivated the National Intelligence Service, known as SIN, and then stunned his country by calling for new elections, in which he said he would not run. The new election was set for April 8, 2001, but Fujimori could not cling to power even that long as his government continued to crumble.

On Nov. 13, he flew to an economic conference in Brunei, a visit planned for months. The bizarre end came a week later, on Nov. 20, 2000, when the president faxed Congress his resignation letter from a hotel in Japan, where he said he plans to remain for a long time. Congress then fired him.

Through it all, the media — primarily opposition newspapers and broadcast stations — were key players in this Peruvian reversal of fortune. Politics had dominated the news coverage all year. Hundreds of newspaper kiosks dotting Lima's hectic

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streets were papered with dozens of newspapers and magazines, clipped side-by-side on racks and offering a dazzling array of headlines and journalistic styles: some sober and restrained, some screaming and insulting, some morbid, some pornographic. With the cost of a daily paper beyond the reach of the poorest Peruvians, newspaper racks often attract passersby for whom the front-page spectacle is the only written source of news and opinion. The overall impression is one of a vibrant, contentious press and rowdy freedom of expression.

Yet Fujimori's regime subjected the media in Peru (a relatively poor country of around 25.5 million where the average per capita yearly income is about \$2,250) to sophisticated government manipulation and control. It has been difficult to pinpoint the nature and precise impact of these efforts, which started in the early 1990s when Fujimori solidified his control.

"Since 1992, many media, especially television and print journalists, have been pressured into self-censorship or exile by a broad government campaign of intimidation, abductions, death threats, libel suits, withholding advertising, police harassment, arbitrary detention, physical mistreatment, and imprisonment on charges of 'apology for terrorism,'" according to the 1999 "Freedom of the World" report published by Freedom House, a New York City-based monitoring group.

In a November 1999 report, Paris-based Reporters Sans Frontières named Peru one of the four Latin American countries (along with Cuba, Colombia and Mexico) that regularly violates press freedom. RSF singled out the country's secret service, or SIN, as the news media's worst enemy.

Peru's political climate for most of 2000 was the most polarized it had been in many years, and the media reflected that polarization. Pro-government journalists denied that government limited press freedom or misused the media to favor Fujimori's re-election, while opposition media complained loudly of abuse and denounced their journalist colleagues for selling out. The few media that sought to remain neutral found it difficult to do so.

"While news can be reported openly in Peru ... those who publish news that does not please certain

Fujimori's regime subjected the media in Peru to sophisticated government manipulation and control.

groups in the government can suffer very serious consequences,” said a report by the Inter American Press Association in October 2000.

Two dominant media trends preceded the nine-candidate, April 2000 presidential elections. First, freedom of expression did exist despite pressures and attacks aimed not so much at silencing the opposition media as at persuading them to soften their investigations into the sensitive underbelly of government activity. Second, while radio and the print media offered candidates opportunities to express their views, television largely abandoned the role of providing candidate information to the electorate. Peruvian broadcast television (but not cable television) failed to provide neutral news coverage and equal advertising access.

Weeks before the April 2000 election, Peru’s leading independent daily, *El Comercio*, broke a major investigative story that cast the Fujimori government in an unfavorable light. The story alleged that government supporters had forged one million signatures to gain places on the ballot for Fujimori and his slate of supporters. The story’s impact on the election is impossible to determine. Fujimori won 49.9 percent of the vote, just shy of the majority he needed to avoid a runoff with Alejandro Toledo, an economist whose campaign reached out to Peruvians of indigenous origin.

Coverage of the runoff between Fujimori and Toledo was marginally more evenhanded, with the government eager to burnish its democratic credentials in the face of international criticism of the election processes. Television coverage, while still favoring Fujimori, became less one-sided, with Toledo’s campaign receiving air time on broadcast television as well as on cable TV. Several well-known journalists left their jobs to work for Toledo. One of them, Gustavo Gorriti, one of Peru’s best-known investigative reporters who went into self-imposed exile in the early 1990s, temporarily returned from his Panama newspaper position to help Toledo.

Toledo asked that the May 28 runoff election be postponed, urged voters to spoil their ballots and ultimately boycotted the election, which Fujimori ostensibly won. Several international governments and the Organization of American States refused to

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endorse the election, and although the State Department acknowledged several irregularities, the U.S. government recognized Fujimori's victory.

Questions about his administration were far from resolved, however, and the mind-boggling events of the next five months turned Peruvian politics on its head — while underscoring the media's collective role as a watchdog and catalyst for change.

Two months after Fujimori's July inauguration, the Montesinos bribe videotape threw the country into an uproar. Other investigative stories in opposition newspapers alleged a connection between Montesinos and the diversion of Jordanian weapons to Colombian leftist guerrillas.

Fujimori's Sept. 17, 2000, announcement that he had deactivated the SIN and called for new general elections sparked another rash of news: With Fujimori leading the charge, Montesinos fled to Panama, where he failed to win asylum; he later returned to Peru, went into hiding, and his whereabouts remain unknown. The former spy chief currently faces charges of illicit enrichment, corruption and money laundering after overseas banks uncovered accounts totaling about \$58 million.

Subsequent changes in the media coverage were quickly apparent: A few of the pro-government "yellow" tabloids, thought to have been financed by the intelligence service, disappeared from the newsstands; pro-government newspapers retained their editorial stance but less vehemently; and one of the television channels, whose executive vice president appeared in the Montesinos video, gave opposition figures some air time.

The media have extensively covered Fujimori's flight to the Far East, his resignation and the interim government headed by Valentin Paniagua. As the year 2000 drew to a close, the media clearly had emerged as key forces in opening a new chapter in Peruvian political history following the flawed elections.

HISTORY AND SOCIETY

The travel-guide image of Peru — of ancient Inca ruins perched amid the soaring Andes — does scant justice to this land of unmatched diversity. If many Latin American countries merit the clichéd title of “a land of contrasts,” Peru, a country of deserts, jungle and mountains, goes far beyond mere contrast into the realm of stark ethnic, geographic and social contradiction.

Ethnically the fifth most populous Latin American country, with a land mass about the size of Alaska, Peru always has been a land of diverse and often warring peoples, and ethnic diversity remains its hallmark. About 45 percent of Peruvians are indigenous, 37 percent are of mixed ancestry, and 15 percent are descended from Europeans. A smaller percentage are descended from Africans and Asians.

The Tawantinsuyo, or Inca Empire, stretched from Argentina to Colombia at its height in the late 15th century and was the last and greatest of the pre-Columbian civilizations that left archaeological monuments scattered across the land. In the arid coastal desert, the Nazca people had etched their famed lines in the sand, while cultures like the Moche and Chimu had raised fabulous adobe pyramids centuries before the Incas began building their stone cities and fortresses in the Andean highlands. East of the Andes, hundreds of distinct ethnic groups still make their homes in the vast tropical forests of Peru’s Amazon lowlands.

Blessed with a genius for conquest, administration and agriculture, the Incas came closer than any previous civilization to uniting the people of what is now Peru. But in 1532 a small group of Spanish conquistadores arrived on the shores of northern Peru. Popular history suggests that this ragtag crew, armed with European technology such as horses, bullets and steel, quickly swept away the greatest civilization South America had ever known. In fact, Francisco Pizarro, the leader, enjoyed spectacular good luck. Prior to his arrival, the smallpox that Europeans brought to the Americas is thought to have decimated the Inca Empire, killing the emperor

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and setting off a brutal civil war between two of his sons. One of these sons, Atahualpa, was the novice ruler of a weakened and divided empire when he encountered Pizarro. Taking advantage of Inca complacency, the Spaniards kidnapped Atahualpa, ransomed him for a roomful of gold, and set the stage for centuries of distrust by garrotting him. Pizarro then marched to Cusco and, after an extended siege, captured the Inca capital. Some Inca leaders survived to set up a new seat of empire at Vilcabamba. Though they would challenge Spanish rule for the next 40 years, the Inca civilization had ended.

Spain made Peru the seat of its South American empire, and Lima became the center of colonial administration for a viceroyalty even larger than the Inca Empire. Millions of natives died from disease, violence and social turmoil as Spain transformed a stable indigenous civilization into a colony organized to secure rents for the conquerors and souls for the Catholic Church. The conquest did not go unopposed, however. The earliest forerunners of Peru's modern media and human rights organizations were the priests and chroniclers who wrote anguished reports to the Crown denouncing Spain's treatment of the native population.

Resistance to Spanish rule also took the shape of violent and brutally repressed uprisings. Traditional cultural forms, including languages such as the Incas' Quechua tongue, stubbornly persisted. These forms still coexist, sometimes uneasily, with the dominant Catholic Hispanic culture. Peru won its independence from Spain in 1821, but the legacy of the Conquest remains. Even today, an elite white minority enjoys Western standards of living and amenities like cable television and imported whiskey, while most Peruvians, impoverished and dark-skinned cholos, either indigenous or mestizo, live in harsh economic conditions. In Lima — with over 8 million people, nearly one-third of the country's population — as well as in other cities and peasant communities, poor Peruvians often practice a lively grass-roots democracy. Unfortunately, these practices do not extend to equal participation in the nation's economic and social life.

Political instability and caudillo rule marked 19th century Peru. Large-scale political efforts to overcome

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the wrenching divisions in Peruvian society only began in the 20th century. During the 1920s, the Communist Party and the populist American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) began to challenge the nation's tradition of oligarchical rule, intermittent dictatorship, and political and social exclusion. During the 1950s, a less radical populist party, Popular Action (AP), arose and embarked timidly on reform after Fernando Belaúnde won the presidency in 1963. By then, APRA had grown into a political powerhouse, but military opposition kept it from power during the 1960s; not until 1985 was an APRA candidate elected president. Meanwhile, grass-roots demands for change snowballed, particularly in the Andean highlands, where impoverished peasants began to illegally invade land held in large haciendas since the Conquest.

In 1968, the late General Juan Velasco seized power in a military coup, sending Belaúnde into exile. Velasco's contradictory leftist-leaning/pro-socialist record included the elimination of formal discrimination against the country's nonwhite majority, a sweeping land-reform program and unprecedented legal rights for labor and grass-roots groups. But critics accused his government of sabotaging the nation's economic modernization by expropriating foreign corporate holdings and breaking up large-scale haciendas into less efficient peasant smallholdings and cooperatives. Velasco also clamped down on the media. The regime first silenced its harshest critics, seizing the daily *Expreso*, handing it over to government supporters and stripping the editorial page editor, Manuel d'Ornellas, of his citizenship. Eventually, the government confiscated nearly all the media and deported a number of opposition journalists and publishers.

Velasco's successor, General Francisco Morales Bermúdez, came to power in 1975 in a bloodless coup and kept tight control of the media, but his government could not quell a series of massive grass-roots and union protests. By the late 1970s, the government-controlled media had fallen into discredit. Popular protests continued as Peruvians mocked news programs.

In 1980, Morales Bermúdez handed power back to Fernando Belaúnde, who had been re-elected

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that year in democratic elections. Belaúnde kept his campaign promise and returned the media to their legitimate owners on his first day in office.

Five years later, Alan García was elected president on the APRA party platform. Both presidents faced a looming economic crisis, which spiraled out of control by 1990. Between 1975 and 1991, Peru's gross domestic product grew by only 1.78 percent. Inflation was rampant, peaking at 7,650 percent in 1990, and formal employment plummeted.

Meanwhile, political violence spread during the 1980s. Terrorism and the armed forces' fight against it eventually took nearly 30,000 lives and drove 100,000 families from their homes. Many of the dead were peasants caught in the crossfire between government security forces and two insurgencies, the fanatical Maoist Shining Path and the smaller Marxist Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement. In the jungles of the Upper Huallaga Valley, a third deadly force appeared — drug traffickers who formed shifting alliances with terrorist and counter-terrorist forces and turned the region into the heartland of world coca production.

Disenchanted with Belaúnde and García and concerned about hyperinflation, terrorism and political corruption, Peruvians in 1990 elected to the presidency Alberto Fujimori, until then a virtually unknown political independent. The election was a stunning upset for Mario Vargas Llosa, the internationally acclaimed novelist and author initially favored to win the election and strongly supported by the country's elite.

After his surprise victory, Fujimori received congressional support for his economic shock treatment and sweeping reforms to halt hyperinflation and liberalize the Peruvian economy. But since Fujimori did not have a congressional majority of his own, gridlock occurred on several issues, mainly those dealing with antiterrorist legislation. With terrorist violence on the rise, Fujimori shut down Congress and the judiciary in April 1992, launching what came to be known as a "self-coup" backed by the military — a move that gave him the authoritarian power he claimed was necessary to fight more effectively against terrorist groups. While international pressure soon forced him to return to a constitutional system of government (a new constitu-

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tion, written by a newly elected constituent assembly dominated by his supporters, narrowly won a 1993 referendum), the current system still centralizes the most power in the executive branch.

Fujimori won broad popular support by taming both the insurgencies and hyperinflation. But since his re-election in 1995, he lost some of his previous backing due to his efforts to consolidate control over the country's judicial and electoral authorities, his decision to run for an unconstitutional third term and, particularly, Peru's recession. Still, with the regime's opposition fielding eight competing presidential candidacies in the 2000 elections, many Peruvians saw no viable alternative to another five years of Fujimorismo.

POLITICS AND ELECTIONS

For most of its history, Peruvian politics was an elite game, its players a few small oligarchical parties representing the country's wealthy white families. Suffrage was limited. Only a tiny minority, 2.5 percent of the population, voted in the 1919 elections. Peru would have to wait for the appearance in the 1920s of political parties like APRA and the Communists to witness the kind of mass politics that had characterized the United States since the Jacksonian reforms early in the 19th century or characterized Western Europe since the expansion of suffrage at the turn of the 20th century.

Though Peru's democratic progress suffered innumerable setbacks — political violence in the 1930s, dictatorship in the 1950s, the military coup in the 1960s and Fujimori's self-coup in 1992 — democratic suffrage slowly but steadily expanded over the course of the 20th century. Women gained the right to vote in 1955, 18-year-olds in 1978, and finally, with the enfranchisement of illiterates in 1980, the country achieved universal suffrage. Voting is mandatory and, despite the Shining Path's terror campaigns to keep people away from the polls during the 1980s, voter turnout tends to be high.

Political participation, other than voting, is harder to evaluate. From the 1930s on, mass parties like APRA, the Communist Party and later and to a lesser

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extent AP, sparked enormous enthusiasm and drew new population sectors into politics. During the 1970s, the close alliance between combative labor unions and radical left parties gave Peruvian politics a massive popular character that helped bring down the military dictatorship in 1980. In Peru's modern political parties, members not only voted, they turned out for meetings and assemblies to discuss party platforms and filled the country's plazas with banners and cheers for party candidates.

Yet these parties also tended to perpetuate some of the authoritarian characteristics of the country's caudillo past. "Every party begins and ends with its founding leader," said Juan Paredes Castro, political editor of the influential daily *El Comercio*. Men like APRA's Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre or AP's Fernando Belaúnde not only founded the country's political parties, they enjoyed lifetime tenure as unelected chiefs, dictating political and ideological positions and selecting candidates with the participation of a tiny inner circle of advisers. This closed nature of party politics made reform from below difficult and hobbled the parties' ability to adapt to the electorate's changing demands.

Despite these shortcomings, the traditional parties were strong enough to win the presidential and congressional elections held every five years, as well as the municipal elections held every three years, after the country's 1980 transition to democracy. But by 1990 Peru's political party system had collapsed. While traditional parties have come under fire in many countries around the world, in Peru they slid quickly from a position of dominance to one of near irrelevance today. "Peru is the only country where the political parties have been completely destroyed," says Enrique Zileri, director of the independent weekly *Caretas*.

Whether it was because parties like AP and APRA excluded even their own grass-roots members from active decision-making, or because people were simply fed up with the worsening spiral of violence and hyperinflation, Peru's voters effected a political earthquake when they elected Fujimori. He had no political party, consistently ran on an anti-party message and never built a party in the decade since he took office. In 1990, Fujimori won as the head of an

These electoral groups differ from the parties in their lack of strong platforms and permanent organizational structures or even names.

electoral movement called Cambio 90 (Change 90). For the 1995 general elections, he cobbled Cambio 90 together with a corps of technocrats dubbed Nueva Mayoría (New Majority) into a coalition called Cambio 90-Nueva Mayoría (C90-NM). For the 2000 general elections, Fujimori and his supporters ran under yet another moniker, Peru 2000, which included a third movement, the municipal- and local-oriented Vamos Vecino (Go Neighbors).

The Peruvian military more or less openly favored Fujimori and his allies, even helping them get their messages across to the broadest possible population. For instance, hillsides within restricted military properties bore the Fujimori election group's painted slogans. The leader ordered the propaganda removed from military property once it became a campaign issue, but some remained. Seven years ago the military provided Fujimori's campaigning congressional backers with helicopter transportation to remote areas, a favor not extended to the opposition.

Fujimori's anti-party politics have sparked a host of imitators. Traditional parties like APRA, AP, and the smaller, conservative Partido Popular Cristiano (PPC) continued to field slates, but shifting coalitions of candidates now dominate Peru's elections. While none has enjoyed the success of Fujimori's various groupings, they have easily outdone the political parties. An opposition group called Unión por el Perú (UPP, Unity for Peru) came in second in the 1995 presidential and congressional elections. Fujimori's closest competitors in 2000 all ran at the head of similar "movements." Lima Mayor Alberto Andrade, formerly a PPC member, is now running for president as leader of a group called Somos Perú (We Are Peru).

These electoral groups differ from the parties in their lack of strong platforms and permanent organizational structures or even names. Nor do they have clear ideological orientations, though most tend to share Fujimori's free-market policies. Most, like the parties, are dominated by caudillos whose charisma they hope will help them win office. Members of electoral groups like Peru 2000 don't choose their leaders; the leaders choose their members as well as the candidates for lower office, including Congress. With evident pride, Fujimori announced that he per-

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sonally had headed the 10-person team that chose Peru 2000's 120 congressional candidates.

"Peru is one of the few countries in the world without some sort of legislation governing its political parties," *El Comercio's* Juan Paredes Castro explained. "We need internal elections, assemblies, mechanisms of participation, but the parties have resisted that. So now we have the new caudillos, who are not really different from the old ones."

THE PRESS

Peru has a large but fluctuating population of daily newspapers and magazines. Most of the Peruvian press suffered financially during the late-1990s recession, which cut into both advertising and circulation. The major newspapers are in Lima, partially due to distribution problems and lower literacy rates in the rural areas. About 27 dailies include sensationalist tabloids and sports journals.

Wages tend to be low. "We are so concerned about our jobs in a situation of shrinking opportunities and low salaries," said Blanca Rosales, who formerly edited *La República* and was a moderator of Cable Canal de Noticias, a cable news channel. Many journalists, particularly columnists, have two jobs. And in the country's interior, it is not unusual to find journalists working in government press offices as well as for the media.

Among Lima's newspapers are the serious dailies like *El Comercio*, *Expreso*, *La República*, *Gestión* and *Liberación*; older sensationalist tabloids like *Ojo*, *Extra* and *El Popular*; the newer tabloids such as *El Chino*, *El Tío*, *El Chato*, *La Chuchi* and *Ajá*; and the all-sports papers like *Todo Sport* and *Gol*. Outside of Lima, readers in many cities can buy local newspapers or the national editions of Lima's major dailies.

El Comercio, run out of the same venerable building in downtown Lima since 1839, was founded by the Miró Quesada family. It strives for objectivity, editorial independence and a sober style.

Many dailies' owners do not divulge their circulations. The 1999 Editor and Publisher International Year Book put *El Comercio's* weekday circulation at 140,000. The independent Peruvian Media Research

CPI estimates *El Comercio's* readership, not sales, to be nearly 626,000 people in metropolitan Lima alone, making it Peru's most widely read daily.

Company, CPI, estimates *El Comercio's* readership, not sales, to be nearly 626,000 people in metropolitan Lima alone, making it Peru's most widely read daily. *El Comercio* also distributes successfully in the provinces.

According to CPI's December 1999 report, Peru's next most widely read newspaper is the sensationalist *Ojo*. Founded in 1974 as a conservative tabloid with a strongly anti-communist bent, *Ojo* has a readership of roughly 280,000. Faced with the competition from the tabloid press, *Ojo's* publishers also put out their own successful, more risqué daily, *Ajá*, which CPI places third with a readership of 238,000. *Ojo* also publishes a sports paper, *El Bocón*, read by 118,000 people.

In fourth place, the strongly opposition daily *La República* has an estimated 162,000 readers in metropolitan Lima, and its strong provincial distribution network allows the publication of regional editions. Founded in 1981 by the late leftist congressman Gustavo Mohme and several other investors (including Azi Wolfenson and Carlos Maraví, who now publish *El Chino*), *La República* pioneered a style which blended news, lengthy features and analysis, investigative reporting and provocative headlines in a tabloid format. *La República's* publishers have long received additional income from the sensationalist tabloid in their stable, *El Popular*, with a readership of 118,000. More recently, the paper began publishing an all-sports daily, *Libero*, which now outdoes *El Popular* with 128,000 readers.

The Wolfenson group's *El Chino*, which launched the tabloid "yellow" press phenomenon (known as the "chicha" press in Peru), is now in fifth place with 147,000 readers. The Wolfenson group publishers receive additional income from *Todo Sport*, with an estimated 117,000 readers, and in a joint venture publish another daily, *El Men*, with 40,000 readers.

Like *La República*, *Expreso* is a serious paper published as a tabloid. Founded in 1961 as a reformist publication that supported Fernando Belaúnde's AP but was not institutionally linked to it, *Expreso* became the Fujimori government's strongest supporter in the serious press. *Expreso* has slid from the strong market position it claimed dur-

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ing the 1980s; CPI now ranks it 11th in readership, with 78,000 readers. Nevertheless, publisher Eduardo Calmell del Solar disputes CPI's calculations and says *Expreso* outsells *La República*. The publishers of *Expreso* also publish the sensationalist tabloid *Extra*, with 57,000 readers.

In addition to the all-sports dailies, Lima has business dailies such as *Gestión*, with 35,000 readers, and *Síntesis*, with 14,000 readers. Another newspaper of interest is *Liberación*, run by the opposition journalist César Hildebrandt, who has ties to controversial, Israeli-born businessman Baruch Ivcher. *Liberación* has an estimated 56,000 readers.

The official daily *El Peruano* publishes news almost entirely favorable to the government and is the official gazette of laws and decrees.

In the provinces, some larger cities have locally influential newspapers. However, they must compete with the Lima-based papers, many of which are distributed nationally and some of which also publish regional editions in the provinces. The most important provincial papers include the *La Industria* group, which publishes papers of the same name in three northern cities and whose flagship paper in Trujillo is, at 104 years old, one of Peru's oldest dailies. Farther north, Piura is home to major local papers like *El Tiempo* and *Correo*, which also publishes regional editions in the central Andean city of Huancayo and the southern cities of Arequipa and Tacna.

THE CHICHA PRESS

Chicha is a traditional beverage in the Peruvian Andes, made from corn and usually fermented. But the word took on new meaning as huge numbers of Andean immigrants moved to Lima and transformed the old colonial capital into a gritty modern metropolis. The Andean immigrants have influenced Peruvian culture as they have influenced Lima, and one name for their new hybrid culture is chicha. Originally applied to a style of music that merges Andean and cumbia rhythms, chicha has come to refer to a popular, informal and irreverent style among Peru's lower classes — and most recently to a rash of sensational-

ist tabloids.

Owen Castillo, director of the most successful chicha daily, *El Chino*, welcomes the term. "This is an informal country, and everything informal is called chicha," he said. "The chicha press is called that because it's informal in its treatment of the news. But in reality it's a sensationalist press, just like the one in London."

Luis Peirano, dean of the Catholic University's Faculty of Communication Arts and Sciences, said that in Peru, as elsewhere, "The yellow press has always existed, and so has sensationalism." Indeed, during the 1980s a number of serious dailies launched sensationalist tabloids to boost their incomes. *La República* still publishes the yellow *El Popular*, while *Expreso* publishes *Extra*.

In 1995 Moisés Wolfenson, a young entrepreneur recently returned from studies in Britain, decided on a newer, even more sensational formula. With funding from his father, one of *La República's* founders, Wolfenson founded *El Chino* — so named, he said, as a show of support for President Fujimori, whose popular nickname is "El Chino" (The Chinese).

"I would love to own an *El Comercio* or a *New York Times*," said Wolfenson, the paper's managing director. "But it's impossible to start a serious new paper right now. This is the business."

Written in popular slang, with glaring and often morbid headlines and a single-copy price only one-third that of its serious competitors, *El Chino* and its imitators were an immediate success.

One reason they succeed is their obsessive and intrusive coverage of the private lives of Lima's lower-class cultural heroes: working-class showgirls who succeed as dancers in the best strip clubs or on television variety shows, soap opera actors and other television celebrities, and soccer players from the city's favorite teams.

Another key to success is price: While the serious dailies cost S/. 1.50 each (about 43 cents), the chicha dailies cost S/. 0.50 (less than 15 cents). Although chicha dailies do not cover political issues in depth, they typically have one page of political news and gossip and at least one front-page headline about a political figure.

Chicha has come to refer to a popular, informal and irreverent style among Peru's lower classes — and most recently to a rash of sensationalist tabloids.

“This is an informal country, and everything informal is called chicha. The chicha press is called that because it’s informal in its treatment of the news. But in reality it’s a sensationalist press, just like the one in London.”

— Owen Castillo, *El Chino*

Allegations persist that the Fujimori government subsidized the chicha press and gave directives to editors. These allegations, which editors deny, became an election-year media issue.

“The chicha papers are free to say what they please,” said Jorge Santistevan, Peru’s National Ombudsman, an independent position. “But this chicha press is used by the government against the serious press.”

In one case, a former editor of the daily tabloid *El Chato* said in November 1999 that the paper’s owner received \$1,739 from a government intelligence adviser for each anti-opposition headline. *La República* said it had evidence the same adviser was faxing headlines to the daily *El Tío*.

El Chino’s Castillo, who once worked at *La República*, an opposition newspaper, denies any contact with the government or the SIN, its intelligence service. “Our line is to support Fujimori’s re-election,” he said, “but it’s a coincidence that we have similar headlines” with the other pro-government chicha dailies. “*Liberación* and *La República* also have similar headlines. I have no contacts with the director of the other chicha dailies, and no contact with the SIN. These accusations are all part of the same dirty campaign war. We exaggerate, but so does *La República*, which sometimes has headlines any chicha daily could envy.” Wolfenson denied receiving government funds, although he supported Fujimori’s re-election, disdained the opposition and ran for Congress on Fujimori’s Peru 2000 slate.

“We disagree with the opposition,” he said, calling two presidential candidates in the April 2000 election, Alberto Andrade and Luis Castañeda, “clowns.” “There are over 20 papers in Lima alone, so it’s easy to see that some papers attack the opposition and others attack the government. I think there’s a balance in the written press.”

The U.S. State Department also has singled out the chicha press. The 1998 Human Rights Report said, “In front-page headlines, as well as in long features in inside pages, four different newspapers of the yellow press repeatedly attacked investigative journalists [from other newspapers], calling them traitors, Ecuadorean spies and terrorist sympathizers. The similar language and style used by the four tabloids

seemed to indicate that a single entity was orchestrating the entire campaign of calumny and intimidation.”

Sniping among journalists is not new, but Enrique Zileri, director of the independent magazine *Caretas*, said the types of attack in the yellow press are harsher and frequently inaccurate. For instance, the chicha press prints stories about people’s sexual orientations and personal lives rather than about political issues.

The chicha press also has its defenders. “The opposition complains about the chicha press’s attacks. But the chicha dailies have never accused a candidate of not being Peruvian, the way *Caretas* did with Fujimori two years ago,” said Patricio Ricketts, until recently a conservative columnist with the pro-government daily *Expreso*. Eduardo Calmell del Solar, *Expreso*’s publisher, said, “Everyone in Peru complains about Moisés Wolfenson. But he did discover a readership. It’s not fair to say that because he supports the government he depends on the government.”

MAGAZINES

Peru’s magazines include the more serious news weeklies such as *Caretas* and entertainment weeklies such as *Gente*, which features political content. Like the dailies, the magazines face economic hardship as circulation has fallen considerably in recent years.

Peru’s most widely read and influential magazine is still *Caretas*, published by the Zileri family. *Caretas*’ investigative reporting and opposition to the Fujimori government have been notable; it also provides sophisticated political analysis, although its anti-government slant is obvious. For a time during the early 1990s, *Caretas* faced competition as a newsmagazine from the weekly *SÍ*, which in its heyday investigated and broke the story that unearthed the bones of the 10 victims of a death-squad massacre at La Cantuta University. Nevertheless, *SÍ* has dropped drastically in readership, and CPI places it 12th among Peru’s magazines. Due to ownership and staff changes, *SÍ* also has moved from a stance critical of the government to one of open support.

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TELEVISION

Most Peruvians inhabit the other television universe: that of the so-called open signal, or broadcast television.

Peruvian television viewers inhabit two separate and unequal universes. In one universe, a small, cosmopolitan audience of about 300,000 cable-TV subscribers receive dozens of news and entertainment channels from around the world, as well as two Peruvian cable news channels. The two local cable news channels, while underfunded, provide a broad range of news and interviews with leading government and opposition political figures. Both channels are affiliated with newspapers: Canal N is owned by the *El Comercio* group, while Cable Canal de Noticias owners have ties to the *Expresso* newspaper.

Most Peruvians, however, inhabit the other television universe: that of the so-called open signal, or broadcast television. Peru has close to 246 TV stations, many of which are affiliated with a network, according to Elizabeth Fox's "Latin American Broadcasting," published in 1997 by University of Luton Press.

Lima has seven VHF channels. The three oldest — channels 4, 5 and 7 — offer national coverage, she wrote. "Today, Peruvian television in general is supportive of the Fujimori regime ... who, despite his non-democratic actions, enjoys a wide following."

In the past three years, three of the private stations have changed ownership, reflecting the economic turmoil in the Peruvian television industry. The stations also have been at the center of public debate because of the current popularity of the "talk shows" — reality shows in the Jerry Springer or Ricki Lake model in which guests often come to blows over highly personal revelations.

Of all the stations, ownership changes at Channel 2 (Frecuencia Latina) have provoked the greatest controversy because of its Israeli-born majority shareholder, Baruch Ivcher, who in 1997 was stripped of his Peruvian citizenship and lost control of the station after it broadcast investigative reports on Fujimori's intelligence service. Under Peruvian law, only Peruvian nationals can own TV stations. Ivcher, whose case attracted international attention, fled to Miami and began an aggressive campaign to have his rights restored. In November 2000, the

Fujimori government relented, returning Peruvian citizenship to Ivcher. A month later, Ivcher regained control of his station, which he said was in economic shambles with a debt of as much as \$30 million.

When Ivcher lost his citizenship, courts awarded the station to minority shareholders who turned it into an organ of overtly pro-government propaganda. Current Chairman Mendel Winter was considered close to the Fujimori government. Its 60-minute evening news show, “90 Segundos,” and its Sunday news and political program, “Contrapunto,” are both pro-government. Before losing control of Channel 2, Ivcher made “Contrapunto” the channel’s flagship for investigations into government wrongdoing. That change was curious because from 1990 until 1996, Channel 2 broadcast news was viewed as pro-government. After that, the station launched stories critical of Fujimori’s government. Observers suspected a rift between the government and Ivcher over unrelated matters.

In the early 1990s, the Mexican media giant Televisa bought the foundering Channel 4 (América Televisión), the station with the largest reach, from its Peruvian owners. Since only Peruvians can own TV stations, Peru’s Radio and Television Association, under the leadership of Genaro Delgado Parker (at the time one of Channel 5’s owners), sued to end Televisa’s control. The Supreme Court ruled for the plaintiffs, and Televisa sold the channel to the Crousillat family, although some sources say the Crousillats borrowed the purchase money from Televisa itself.

José Enrique Crousillat is Channel 4’s president, and son José Francisco Crousillat is executive vice president. Until September 2000, Channel 4 had a Sunday magazine show, “Hora 20,” which strongly slanted its political content in favor of the government and against opposition candidates (at former spy chief Vladimiro Montesinos’ direction, it was rumored). The station canceled the show shortly after the videotape aired that showed Montesinos bribing a congressman. José Francisco Crousillat appeared in that video, introducing Montesinos to the congressman and confirming widespread suspicion of his close links to Fujimori’s former intelligence chief.

In the past three years, three of the private stations have changed ownership, reflecting the economic turmoil in the Peruvian television industry.

Channel 8 (Canal N), owned by the *El Comercio* group, is politically independent and, given its customary live transmission of major political events, is arguably the most direct source of objective television news in Peru.

Channel 4's morning and evening shows remain pro-government, and its menu of scandalous talk shows has boosted its ratings. "Hora 20" was replaced with "Tiempo Nuevo," which returned Nicolás Lúcar to television. Lúcar, brother-in-law of José Francisco Crousillat, had resigned the previous year after the Crousillats approved the station's recording and broadcast of a first-ever "exclusive" interview with Montesinos, allegedly without Lúcar's acquiescence.

Channel 5 (Panamericana Televisión), one of the oldest television networks, was long part of the Delgado Parker family's media empire, which still includes Radio Panamericana and the influential Radio Programas del Perú network. Channel 5 offered extensive political coverage during the 1980s and early 1990s, when the second generation of Delgado Parkers — brothers Genaro, Héctor and Manuel — were a formidable political force in their own right. The family had a canny strategy for remaining in favor with the government in power: Each brother supported a different candidate at election times. After Héctor's death, however, family differences led some of the shareholders to sell out to Ernesto Schutz, an Arequipa paper and mining entrepreneur who now owns over 70 percent of the channel. Under Schutz's leadership, the channel has cut back on its once-considerable political programming, a move Schutz attributes to ratings. Channel 5's three daily news shows and its Sunday magazine show "Panorama" are considered mildly pro-government, although the channel promotes itself as "the only independent news source in broadcast television."

Channel 9 (Andina de Radiodifusión) belonged to the Vera family and after Fujimori's "self-coup" in 1992 briefly assumed an anti-government stance, thanks to links between the leading shareholder, Julio Vera Gutiérrez, and the dissident General Rodolfo Robles. Vera Gutiérrez now lives overseas, leaving his son, Julio Vera Abad, in charge of the station. Nevertheless, like many of Peru's TV stations, Channel 9 has fallen deeply into debt and shareholder conflict. Amid the conflicts, the media group of Mexican entrepreneur Angel González emerged as Channel 9's biggest creditor. The channel ended up in bankruptcy proceedings and a board of creditors

now runs it. González and the state tax agency, Superintendencia Nacional de Administración Tributaria, or SUNAT, hold the biggest debt and the most power. Channel 9 has a 40-minute nightly news show Monday through Friday. The anchor, Rubén Trujillo, liberally sprinkled his broadcasts with editorial commentaries which, over the years, were often quite anti-Fujimori. Channel 9 has no political programming.

Channel 11 (Austral) is something of an anomaly among Peruvian television broadcasters. Prominent Fujimori supporters such as Education Minister Domingo Palermo is a shareholder, as was the recently deceased owner of the now-defunct pro-government daily *El Sol*. The station has been leased to businessman Enrique Mendoza Núñez, owner of Channel 8 of Arequipa. Under Mendoza's leadership, the channel has engaged in a timid political glasnost. Its morning news show features Guido Lombardi, a veteran journalist who has managed to combine a reputation for independence with close ties to Alberto Bustamante, who served as Prime Minister and Justice Minister in Fujimori regimes. Lombardi has sought to turn the show into a more open forum for political debate, inviting opposition candidates and giving their activities ample coverage. Late in the 2000 electoral campaign, Lombardi's show and the daily news program were canceled, and "Beto A Saber," a new nightly talk show hosted by former reporter Beto Ortiz, became the only program with political content on Channel 11.

Lastly, Channel 13 (Global Televisión), like Channel 9, fell heavily into debt-buying programs from Angel González, the Mexican media mogul who is now the station's biggest creditor. The station is in bankruptcy proceedings, though shareholder Genaro Delgado Parker has holdings and is fighting to regain editorial and economic control. Nevertheless, one knowledgeable observer of Peruvian television noted that, since Peruvian law prohibits foreign ownership of broadcast media, "By appearing as the biggest creditor but not the owner, González gets the power without breaking the ownership law." Channel 13 — once home to a staunch Fujimori critic, journalist César Hildebrandt, and to an independent daily four-hour news program —

currently airs no news or political programming.

Peru also has two cable-TV services. Channel 8 (Canal N), owned by the *El Comercio* group, is politically independent and, given its customary live transmission of major political events, is arguably the most direct source of objective television news in Peru. The other, Channel 10 (CCN), is owned by the pro-government daily *Expreso*. Channel 10 invites a broad range of guests to its extensive political talk shows and provides an important alternative source of opinion to those fortunate Peruvians who can afford cable television.

RADIO

Radio is Peru's most pervasive medium, with more than 500 stations nationwide, 70 in Lima alone.

Radio Programas del Perú (RPP) and Cadena Peruana de Noticias (CPN) are among the most important radio news outlets. The oldest commercial station, Radio Miraflores, broadcasts on AM and FM to the greater Lima area. Started 65 years ago, the station has five hours of news each morning as well as CNN headlines and talk shows, including one concerning the news media. Owner Ricardo Palma was jailed for over a year in 1997-1998 for tax evasion, a charge he still denies.

Outside of Lima, radio plays a key role in informing people throughout the mountainous country. In addition, it is the only medium that broadcasts regularly in indigenous dialects. Many stations have talk shows dealing with political issues.

PERUVIAN MEDIA ONLINE

Several of Peru's most important newspapers and magazines publish sophisticated online editions. The Internet arrived in Peru in 1991, relatively early by Latin American standards, thanks to the efforts of a pioneering Internet cooperative, the Peruvian Scientific Network, or RCP. The nonprofit group began as a cooperative of nongovernmental research organizations and now has 5,800 subscribers. Its suc-

Outside of Lima, radio plays a key role in informing people throughout the mountainous country.

cess inspired several other Internet providers, and today Peruvian consumers can choose from a range of services. Despite tremendous growth, Peru still had only 48,000 users at the time the 1998 Internet Industry Almanac was published. But according to International Market Insight, this figure placed it fourth in South America for Internet usage, after Brazil, Argentina and Chile.

A surprising number and variety of Peruvian media operate Web sites. These include serious newspapers like *El Comercio* (www.elcomerciope.com), *La República* (www.larepublica.com.pe) and *Expreso* (www.expreso.com.pe); regional papers like *Correo* (www.correoperu.com.pe); magazines like *Caretas* (www.caretas.com.pe); and even chicha dailies like *El Chino* (www.edsport.com.pe/elchino/hoy) and some of the all-sports papers. These online publications provide most of the coverage of their print counterparts, though given the few Peruvians with Internet access and the high cost of local phone calls, they probably are most important as an information source for Peruvians living abroad and those interested in Peru overseas. Radio Programas del Perú (www.rpp.com.pe) offers live audio transmissions over the Internet to virtually any place in the world; CPN Radio also has a news-oriented Web site (www.cpn.com.pe).

Several Internet portals such as www.terra.com.pe, www.primerapagina.com and www.peru.com have sprouted in Peru recently, offering breaking news, analysis and links to other Peruvian media. These portals also have their own columnists on political, economic and foreign affairs.

The newest player on the Internet is HYPER-LINK (<http://www.imediaperu.com>), which calls itself a news agency and provides stories and information daily. The editor is Cecilia Valenzuela, an investigative reporter who formerly worked in television and print. Luis León Rupp, a businessman, subsidizes the site.

The Internet also has played a role in attacking Peru's independent media. A Web page bearing the name "www.aprodev.org.pe" was part of the smear campaign against journalists like César Hildebrandt, Cecilia Valenzuela, Angel Páez from *La República*

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and others.

In addition, several Fujimori opponents in exile, including Baruch Ivcher, have used the Internet to inform supporters of their activities.

THE BUSINESS OF MEDIA

“To have absolute independence [in the media], you need good business,” said Eduardo Carbajal, editor of *El Comercio*. “It’s hard to be independent without profits.” But profits have been in short supply for Peru’s media for two decades.

When President Belaúnde returned expropriated media to their owners in 1980, the enterprises “were in terrible shape economically,” according to Ricketts, the former *Expreso* columnist. Television stations were particularly affected, but the printed press, in a saturated market, also had weakened financially.

More recently, the economic slump of 1998-99 left the media in a true “economic crisis,” said Javier Sirvas, general manager of the Media and Advertising Supervisor, a private corporation that monitors advertising.

The print media also have to deal with the highly organized network of newspaper kiosks that nearly monopolize Peru’s newspaper and magazine sales. Papers pay the kiosks between 25 percent and 32 percent of their sales price.

“We have an oversupply of media,” Sirvas said. “The problem is that there isn’t enough advertising for all of them.” Recession just worsened the situation. Private corporations slashed advertising budgets, but state advertising helped fill some of the gap. In the provinces, government advertising is often the only income source for local media. “Private advertising is down 15 to 20 percent over the past two years, while state advertising has risen,” Sirvas said. “That has allowed the media to survive.”

Sirvas said it is hard to determine exactly how much the government spends on advertising because media typically negotiate discounted rates, especially for large clients. Today, however, the state is clearly the largest single source of advertising revenue in Peru.

According to Samuel Abad, Peru’s adjunct

“We have an oversupply of media. The problem is that there isn’t enough advertising for all of them.”

— Javier Sirvas
Media and Advertising
Supervisor

Ombudsman, government advertising has grown steadily as elections have drawn near. The state was Peru's sixth largest advertiser in 1996; by 1997 it was fourth, and it rose to second place in 1998 and to first in 1999. Thus, during a period when independent and opposition journalists have complained of increasing state pressure, the media have become relatively more dependent on the government for financial survival.

Moreover, state advertising grew in real terms, not just relative to the private sector. According to figures published by Transparencia, a nongovernment organization, the Peruvian government increased advertising by 52 percent during 1997-1999. The bulk of the change was in television advertising, which rose by 125 percent (\$26,106,972). Radio also enjoyed a significant increase, 351 percent (\$4,852,797). State advertising in daily newspapers increased by 26 percent (\$1.8 million).

The top 10 recipients of state advertising dollars are, in order: TV channels 4, 2, 5, 9 and the state-owned 7; the daily *El Comercio*; channels 13 and 11; the daily *Expreso*, and Radio Programas del Perú.

The extent to which these placements reflect political favoritism is difficult to judge, especially since the state can buy advertising without a public bidding process.

El Comercio's ranking in the top 10 is noteworthy given its independent editorial stance; nevertheless, it would be almost impossible for any government to ignore *El Comercio*, whose circulation outstrips any of the country's other dailies.

Pro-government media such as *Expreso* deny any quid pro quo based on the government's advertising largess, but Manuel Romero Caro, director of *Gestión*, claimed, "The backbone of Fujimori's reelection plan is controlling the media, and advertising is a central tool in that plan." Even without overt pressure, self-censorship might be at work in media hungry for government ads. Even reporters in the opposition press say they have occasionally been told to hold off on stories about government ministries or agencies that have offered to place advertising.

If advertising is the government's carrot, the

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intervention of the tax agency SUNAT is its stick. Huge media debts to SUNAT are not uncommon due to recent financial debility. Romero of *Gestión* said the Fujimori government used “taxes as a political tool.” Others disagree. Eduardo Calmell del Solar said the government has audited even his pro-government *Expreso* three times in three years “because we were behind in payments.” *El Chino*’s Moisés Wolfenson scoffs at the opposition complaints. “We’ve had SUNAT here many times, and we don’t get much advertising from the government,” he said.

(Calmell’s reputation took a nosedive in early 2001 when a judge in the post-Fujimori government issued a warrant for his arrest on charges of corruption. The judge made the order after viewing a videotape reportedly showing Calmell and another news executive with Montesinos counting some \$2 million in cash.)

Still, in this atmosphere, it is not surprising that when the opposition daily *Liberación* began to circulate, several printers refused to take the account because they said they feared problems with SUNAT. And journalist Blanca Rosales said she once called a former minister in the García government about a story on security policy. “Please, please forget about me, forget my name. I just set up a new business and I don’t want any problems with SUNAT,” he told her.

MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS

Newspaper publishers in Peru established the Peruvian Press Council to address complaints about journalistic ethics. The 28 member newspapers must accept the judgments of a Council of Ethics made up of nonjournalists such as attorneys. The Council also provides a place for representatives of different media to air their differences.

The Instituto Prensa y Sociedad (IPYS, Press and Society Institute), which receives funding primarily from international foundations, monitors conditions for Peruvian media and organizes training sessions for journalists. The Freedom Forum has a library for journalists at the IPYS headquarters.

Two older organizations, the National Association

of Journalists and the Colegio of Journalists, also monitor journalists' working conditions.

In August 1999, a group of journalists joined opposition Congresswoman Anel Townsend, a former journalist herself, to form Prensa Libre (Free Press), an association to promote freedom of expression. The Fujimori government investigated group members for allegedly using false documents in a story, but no one has been charged.

JOURNALISM EDUCATION

Practicing journalists do not give high marks to journalism education in Peru. Blanca Rosales said the journalism-school training is "very superficial and it gives students no education in the humanities."

"There are too many universities producing an absurd number of journalists," said Enrique Zileri. "I'm dubious about the usefulness of undergraduate journalism degrees in general, anywhere in the world, but here the schools of communication do worse because they mix up advertising and journalism. Journalism students have to study advertising and public relations when they really should see these topics as the enemies. And there's no effort to teach specialties. We desperately need trained business journalists, for example."

Luis Peirano, dean of Catholic University's Faculty of Communication Arts and Sciences, calls journalism education in his country "deplorable." "Most working journalists didn't study journalism," he added. "That's why so many of them still argue that journalism isn't something that can be taught in universities and make fun of journalism programs. Unfortunately, it's true that a lot of journalism programs are a rip-off."

"Journalism programs are too theoretical," complained Owen Castillo of *El Chino*. "The students need to learn to cover the news. ... There are too many schools of journalism and not enough media to hire them, so salaries stay low."

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— Owen Castillo, *El Chino*

MEDIA'S ROLE IN POLITICS

Historically, most of Peru's media have never played a neutral role in partisan politics. Even the non-partisan media often express passionate political views.

With political parties largely sidelined to irrelevance, Peru's media have taken on an increasingly important role in disseminating political information, shaping opinion and allowing candidates to reach the public. This is all the more true since the post-"self-coup" 1993 constitution, which replaced Peru's multi-district, bicameral Congress with a unicameral Congress representing a single national district. With about 34 percent of the population in Lima, the change consolidated the hegemony of Lima's media in national politics, according to Ramiro de Valdivia of the National Electoral Board, the state entity that oversees elections.

Historically, most of Peru's media have never played a neutral role in partisan politics. Even the nonpartisan media often express passionate political views. For instance, *El Comercio*, known for its efforts at objective and independent coverage, refused for decades to even print the name of APRA, then Peru's largest political party, after an APRA member assassinated a member of the newspaper's founding family, José Antonio Miró Quesada, in 1935.

"It's legitimate and even indispensable for the media to have opinions," said Patricio Ricketts, a conservative former columnist for the pro-government daily *Expreso*. "But the media here are overtly partisan. There's no sense of fair play. In Peru, having a paper has been seen as a means to power."

After the return to democracy in 1980, one of President Belaúnde's first measures was to return the media to their owners and guarantee complete press freedom. Popular support for freedom of expression runs very high. A 1999 poll by Propuesta Ciudadana, a nongovernmental agency working to strengthen civil society, showed that Peruvians rank it as either the most important or second most important characteristic of a democracy.

As a result, press freedom was unfettered in the 1980s. Even the Shining Path and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement, which did their violent best to destroy Peru's constitutional democracy, could freely circulate their newspapers — *El Diario* and *Cambio* — thus openly representing their views.

Ironically, even though the García government was slow to take legal action against the Shining Path's *El Diario*, a death squad allegedly linked to his government bombed the newspaper's offices.

Prior to Fujimori, the Belaúnde and García governments sought to influence media coverage in various ways. Friendly newspapers, magazines and TV stations often found themselves the media of choice for advertising by state banks, agencies and companies. All media, regardless of their stances toward the government, received certain kinds of support. Newspapers and magazines, for instance, received preferential exchange rates for paper imports; the government effectively subsidized their production by selling dollars to them at below the market or official rates. The media also received tax breaks.

During the 1980s, the sharpest challenges to freedom of expression occurred in the context of the counterinsurgency effort, which designated large swaths of country as Emergency Zones and placed them under military control. The military command sought to restrict, or at least control, journalists from the major Lima-based media and the foreign press who wanted to travel to the Emergency Zones. In the Emergency Zones themselves, in places like the highlands of Ayacucho and the cocaine-rich jungles of San Martín, restrictions could be far more sinister, sometimes taking the form of death threats against independent journalists from both government security forces and terrorists. One of the victims was *Tampa Tribune* columnist Todd Smith, whom Shining Path guerrillas murdered in November 1989 in the Huallaga Valley. Another was Barbara d'Achille, *El Comercio*'s famed environmental reporter.

Except where the counterinsurgency was concerned, the media showed few qualms about aggressively investigating the government, denouncing its excesses and publicizing the opposition's views. During the war against terrorism, critical reports about human rights abuses were common in newspapers like *La República* as well as on TV programs like Channel 4's "En Persona" show (then hosted by César Hildebrandt). The media investigated and denounced corruption and

Prior to Fujimori, the Belaúnde and García governments sought to influence media coverage in various ways. ... All media, regardless of their stances toward the government, received certain kinds of support.

drug trafficking, often forcing usually passive government agencies to open at least token investigations. Broadcasters like the Delgado Parker group's Panamericana Televisión and Radio Programas del Perú were notable for the ideological latitude of their interviewers and commentators, who ranged from staunch conservatives to Marxists.

A sharp test of media independence came in 1988, when García's government tried to expropriate the country's private banks. The measure met with almost uniform condemnation by the private television networks, which worried about further consolidation of advertising dollars in the government's hands. Broadcasters joined the constellation of forces that succeeded in defeating the measure.

The end of the García government signaled the end of broad government subsidies for the media, although Fujimori's government still supported the media with advertising revenue. The economic adjustments in 1988 and 1990 made benefits like subsidized import dollars and tax exemptions a thing of the past. The Fujimori government also increased the power of SUNAT, which aggressively began collecting taxes from all sectors of the economy, including the media. Peru is one of the few countries in the Western Hemisphere to charge a sales tax on circulation, said Zileri of *Caretas*. Most countries tax only advertising, he explained, but Peru slaps newspaper and magazine sales with an 18 percent sales tax.

In the wake of the 1992 coup, Fujimori also passed a sweeping decree which, among other things, banned "apologies for terrorism." Journalists from *El Diario* and *Cambio*, which supported the insurgencies, were arrested and imprisoned. Shortly after Fujimori's "self-coup" of April 5, 1992, *El Diario* Deputy Editor Janet Talavera was killed when security forces stormed a section of Lima's Canto Grande prison, which had come under the Shining Path's control.

Immediately after Fujimori's 1990 defeat of novelist Mario Vargas Llosa, the media climate was generally good. Investigative journalism, which had begun to flourish during the previous decade, became institutionalized as the major dailies and magazines set up permanent investigative units that often explored government abuses. In one case, *SÍ* magazine investi-

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gated the security forces' kidnapping and murder of nine university students and a professor from La Cantuta University. The government ultimately put on trial the death squad that was responsible.

This relatively sunny situation for independent journalism darkened suddenly after the 1992 "self-coup." The government censored all the media and shut down those, like Radio Antena Uno, which had provided a forum for members of the shuttered Congress. Its editorial offices occupied by military censors, the daily *La República* published blank pages rather than submit to the censorship. Government forces also arrested journalist Gustavo Gorriti — known for his investigative reports on Peru's de facto intelligence chief, Vladimiro Montesinos — and the staff of another defiant radio station, Radio Red. While many daily and weekly newspapers opposed the self-coup, Lima's six private TV channels either supported the Fujimori government or remained neutral. "Television stations buckled under and supported the government," Zileri said.

International condemnation and the sense that censorship might erode the government's popular support (Fujimori's approval ratings rose to 81 percent in the wake of the self-coup) soon led the government to lift all controls on freedom of expression. For the next few years, the Fujimori government did little more than its predecessors in the 1980s to influence press coverage. Jorge Santistevan, Peru's Ombudsman (an independently elected position), said the 1993 constitution copied the liberal language concerning press freedom from the 1979 constitution, which in turn had borrowed the language from the Interamerican Convention on Human Rights.

But underlying changes had already begun in Peru in the early 1990s. Most important were legal maneuverings to allow presidential reelection. The extent of government influence in a country like Peru, where state power is highly centralized, division of power limited and civil society weak, was one reason the Peru Constitution in 1979 forbade incumbents to run for office — as did most Latin American constitutions. After the 1992 coup, a pro-Fujimori constituent assembly wrote a new constitu-

Except where the counter-insurgency was concerned, the media showed few qualms about aggressively investigating the government, denouncing its excesses and publicizing the opposition's views.

tion allowing Fujimori to run for a second term. Later, Congress reinterpreted the constitution to allow Fujimori to run for a third term, permitting him to keep using the incumbent's machinery of power.

The government's maneuverings to allow Fujimori a third term helped to create the divisive media atmosphere leading up to the 2000 election. "The political climate is very polarized between those who really want Fujimori and those who hate Fujimori," said Moisés Wolfenson.

Connections between politics and the media only heightened the polarization. For instance, Gustavo Mohme, the late director of the daily *La República*, was an opposition candidate for congressional re-election. On the government's slate, one congressional candidate was Jorge Lazarte, director of a now-defunct pro-government daily who defended the government's record on press freedom during an October 1999 meeting of the Inter American Press Association. Several other journalists and media figures, including Wolfenson, also were congressional candidates.

This divisiveness has meant that pro-government and opposition media differ sharply in their evaluation of press freedom in Peru. Since the government drove out television owner Baruch Ivcher in 1997 and handed over Channel 2 to its supporters, the station has become a sharp critic of those who say press freedom is at risk. For example, when *El Comercio's* director, Alejandro Miró Quesada, reported to IAPA on what he called "the somber state of press freedom in Peru," Channel 2 editorialized that IAPA had been "diverted from its proper course, the defense of freedom of expression, in order to ... defend liars, protect impostors and applaud the blind and corrupt."

Since 1997, press freedom came under increasing pressure from a government determined to ensure re-election of the incumbent.

MEDIA UNDER THREAT IN THE FUJIMORI REGIME

The Fujimori government's decision to strip Ivcher of his nationality and of Frecuencia Latina

International condemnation and the sense that censorship might erode the government's popular support soon led the government to lift all controls on freedom of expression.

(Channel 2), of which he was majority shareholder, represented in some minds a turning point in media-government relations.

Sparking the government's campaign against the former Fujimori ally was Channel 2's series of investigative reports exposing abuses in the National Intelligence Service (SIN) and Vladimiro Montesinos' suspiciously high tax returns for several years. Since then, harassment and intimidation campaigns have targeted other media and a number of well-known investigative journalists.

"In 1998, the military intelligence services have been particularly active against opposition media, including printing defamatory articles against them in the sensationalist pro-government press," according to the Freedom House report.

"I've been followed, and I've seen transcripts of my own taped phone calls," said Rosana Cueva, an investigative reporter who worked at Channel 2 when Ivcher was in charge and now is CNN en Español's Peru correspondent. After one piece showed how presidential image-makers directly intervened in a competing station's (Channel 4's) coverage, Cueva received a phone call playing the entire story back to her. "They want you to know they're checking up on you. It's a form of intimidation," she said. Other investigative journalists report similar harassment such as phone calls which play back tapes of their original conversations. Journalists also report hearing from acquaintances that the SIN has blacklisted them.

José Arrieta, former head of Channel 2's investigative unit, received political asylum in the United States in 1998 after he received death threats. Arrieta, who has reported on government human rights violations, also was audited by the tax agency SUNAT and accused of providing false information to the government.

And in April 1997, Blanca Rosales, a former editor of *La República*, was abducted and held at gunpoint for 40 minutes, an assault she believes was part of the government's effort to silence the daily's investigative reporting.

As during the years of the counterinsurgency, independent journalism is riskier outside of Lima. "Maintaining the independence of the media in the

"The military intelligence services have been particularly active against opposition media, including printing defamatory articles against them in the sensationalist pro-government press."

— Freedom House, 1998

Investigative reporters and their media additionally have suffered attacks from an unusual quarter — Lima's thriving chicha, or sensationalist, press.

current circumstances has become an expensive luxury," said Hugo Coya, director of the daily *La Industria* in the northern city of Trujillo. Though *La Industria* is 105 years old, the newspaper "has never faced such a difficult situation, and I don't just mean in economic terms," Coya said.

Radio Marañón, a church-supported station located near the Ecuadorean border and one of Peru's biggest army bases, has suffered intense harassment, apparently due to its efforts to expose forced and illegal recruitment practices. According to Peru's National Ombudsman's office, Radio Marañón received threatening phone calls in early 1999, sometimes as many as eight calls in one hour. The calls included insults and death threats against the station's journalistic staff. Anonymous gunmen shot and seriously wounded radio announcer José Luis Linares at his home in March 1999. Although the police ruled it a burglary attempt, the Ombudsman's office said the theft accompanying the shooting was a clumsy effort to disguise its political motive. Later, the homes of several other Radio Marañón journalists were burglarized. "It cannot be possible that in three months everyone at the radio would just happen to suffer this kind of problem," said Roberto Pereira of the Ombudsman's office.

In December 1999, authorities shut down Radio Libertad, an opposition radio station based in Trujillo. The government said the station lacked the proper license, but Director General Carlos Burmester said the station has been operating and periodically renewing its license for almost 50 years.

These pressures take a special toll because provincial media play a crucial role as outlets for citizen expression outside Lima. "We have people coming to us every day who think the press is the only institution open to them when their rights are threatened," said Coya of *La Industria*.

Despite the pressure, investigative journalism continues in Peru, although self-censorship is an issue. "Self-censorship — keeping quiet so as not to discomfit the powerful — is becoming a cancer," Coya said.

Ángel Páez, head of *La República's* investigative unit, said these conditions lead to self-restraint. "I can't call or e-mail my contacts, and if I go out to

meet them I might be followed,” he said.

Journalists also have been the targets of various smear campaigns. Directors of pro-government and independent media received a series of “Intelligence Notes,” accusing well-known investigative journalists of ties to the Shining Path. Journalists believe the SIN distributed the reports.

Investigative reporters and their media additionally have suffered attacks from an unusual quarter — Lima’s thriving *chicha*, or sensationalist, press.

Angel Páez, the late Gustavo Mohme of *La República* and other journalists faced a smear campaign in the *chicha* dailies, which ran front-page headlines and photographs labeling them as spies and homosexuals, among other things. Páez collected 90 articles attacking him. The attacks were almost eerily similar in language, tone and content.

For Páez, the chilling effect of the threats and the smear campaigns are obvious. “Until 1995 there were several investigative units in the Peruvian press, and we were proud of our work,” he said. “But then it became increasingly obvious that we threatened the government’s plans of remaining in power. And our role became more and more important because there was neither an independent judiciary nor an independent Congress. So the pressure began, the investigative units began to disappear, and a new kind of investigative journalism appeared — the *chicha* press’s ‘investigation’ of opposition and independent figures, and even of other journalists — in order to discredit those who criticize the government.”

CONTROL OF INFORMATION

Peru’s Constitution guarantees access to information, but a lack of laws and customs often impedes journalists. Government also controls the media by selectively releasing information, reporters say.

“We would like for government officials to answer our questions,” said Juan Paredes Castro, political editor of *El Comercio*. “Sure there are official communiqués, but if you ask for any additional information you don’t get it. This situation existed under Belaúnde and García, but it has become more

Government also controls the media by selectively releasing information, reporters say.

evident today.”

Blanca Rosales agreed. “Information is much more centralized now,” she said.

According to Manuel Romero Caro, president of the Gestión Corporation, which owns the business daily *Gestión* and the radio network CPN, government retaliation for stories it dislikes can be swift. Romero Caro says he believes his radio network, one of two news radio stations, is not invited on presidential trips because of an interview the station did with Baruch Ivcher.

The lack of judicial independence also has hampered media freedom. “Peruvian journalists can no longer count on the courts to defend their rights,” said Reporters Sans Frontières in November 1999. “The independence of the judiciary has not been guaranteed since the introduction of the government-controlled system of ‘provisional judges’ in 1992.”

Today, nearly two-thirds of Peru’s judges are considered provisional, meaning that due to political considerations, they were promoted to higher judicial levels than they merit. Provisional judges tend to follow the government’s instructions in their votes since they know the government also can strip them of their positions.

The Fujimori government also decided to stop recognizing the Inter American Court of Human Rights, depriving Peruvians of their right to appeal to an international court, RSF said.

In some cases, victims of smear tactics in the yellow press have had little luck in seeking legal redress. However, *Caretas* magazine lost a lawsuit for calling Fujimori ally Montesinos “Rasputin.”

Additionally, in legal disputes between TV-station shareholders, the courts generally decide in favor of the pro-government side.

“Peruvian journalists can no longer count on the courts to defend their rights.”

— Reporters Sans Frontières, November 1999

COVERAGE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN 2000

Newspapers use a variety of strategies to cover elections and other political news. A pool of reporters covers the president, while another pool covers Congress. During the campaign, newspapers assigned reporters to cover the candidates on a daily

basis. But journalist Blanca Rosales said staff shortages often meant that individual journalists did not become experts on single subjects or candidates.

In general — and especially during presidential elections — *El Comercio*, as the country's top-selling newspaper, devotes the most resources to political coverage. It assigns an editor and a team of journalists to full-time political coverage. The newspaper also has an investigative team, which delves into political subjects.

Political columnists are other important sources of news and analysis, and political reporters make heavy use of polling data.

The newspapers' editorial and opinion pages focus often on political subjects. In Peru, the editorial pages closely resemble the tone and content of the news pages: *El Comercio*'s editorials take a firm but measured tone, critical of the government but eager to propose solutions to the country's political impasse; *La República* and *Expreso* run editorials which are as passionately anti- or pro-government as their front-page headlines.

Political coverage in general has dwindled on Peruvian television since the 1980s. The stations air fewer political programs, and the remaining magazine shows now devote most of their time to "infotainment." During the presidential election, Ricketts attributed the decline in political shows to a drop in ratings. "Part of the reason is ratings," said the former *Expreso* columnist. "Peruvians no longer believe in politics or politicians. There used to be interest in politics, but now people don't want to see or hear the politicians. Who wants to watch political programs? Nobody."

To a certain extent, Santiago Pedraglio of Transparencia, a Peruvian civic organization, agreed. "Television builds opinion, but it also reflects it," he said. In the 1980s, opposition parties and unions were strong, but their strength has declined. "Fujimori's control over the media is possible because the way has been paved for him," Pedraglio said.

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COVERAGE OF THE FIRST ROUND

Press coverage of the first round of elections was sharply divergent, with newspapers like *La República* and *Liberación* consistently criticizing the government's re-election campaign, while *Expreso* and the chicha press attacked the opposition candidates.

Despite its initially neutral approach, *El Comercio* became more partisan after publishing a spectacular investigative scoop that proved to be the most important story of the 2000 campaign.

In late February and early March, *El Comercio* and cable's Canal N, which the newspaper owns, ran a series of investigative reports detailing how one of what were then four groups in the government's electoral alliance allegedly forged an estimated one million signatures to win a place on the ballot. The investigation was the fruit of months of research to corroborate accusations by two witnesses who said they had been among the dozens of people hired to forge signatures. Two more participants in the forgery eventually came forward. The reports also alleged that high-level Fujimori allies and congressmen directed the fraud.

The country's media reacted predictably, with opposition media like *La República* and *Caretas* echoing *El Comercio's* findings while the chicha press, broadcast television, *Expreso* and the CCN cable news channel launched full-fledged attacks on the investigation. In addition to alleging that one of the witnesses was a drug addict and murderer, these media charged that *El Comercio's* investigative team was led by Communists determined to destabilize the government.

After a flurry of denials, the government launched two investigations into the report, one in Congress and one by a special prosecutor. Despite public demands that the investigators report their findings before the first round of elections on April 9, they did not do so until June and July — after the second round.

Surprisingly, both inquiries found the four whistleblowers culpable but laid little blame on the upper ranks of the governing electoral alliance. The special prosecutor for electoral matters charged the

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four, along with a government-party city councilman, of fraud. They face sentences of two to 10 years each. Peruvian legislation offers no protection to whistleblowers, although if a judge finds that they offered “sincere confessions,” their sentences could be suspended. In any case, the outcome of the official investigations could well have a further chilling effect on investigative journalism in Peru.

Shortly after breaking the election fraud story, both *El Comercio* and Canal N came under increased government pressure. The newspaper faced reopened judicial proceedings for allegedly misusing subsidies during the previous APRA government, while Canal N was fined roughly \$120,000 for inadvertently broadcasting polling data during a live elections forum sponsored by a government agency. (The fine was later reduced to \$80,000.)

However, as much as the Fujimori government put the heat on the printed press during his reelection bid, the broad reach of television remained much more important to him. “Fujimori governs through television,” said Alfredo Barnechea, a political analyst.

Added one government adviser: “Fujimori doesn’t give a damn about what the middle and upper classes think. His whole emphasis is on maintaining his base among the poor.”

With the notable exception of a new morning news show on Channel 11, before the first-round election, television heavily favored coverage of Fujimori, giving far less coverage to the opposition. Transparencia’s figures on TV coverage of the presidential candidates showed that Fujimori received 26.3 percent of total coverage on Peru’s private broadcast channels during Jan. 11-25, 2000. Alberto Andrade, the Lima mayor who at the time was running second, received 20.6 percent of the air time. Other candidates received 1 percent to 13 percent of the coverage. Transparencia noted that its figures did not take into account either the bias or content of the coverage.

But these figures are deceptive. Excluding Channel 11, which covered opposition candidates to a greater degree than other stations but had low ratings, Fujimori enjoyed 42 percent of candidate coverage on four stations. Andrade received 35 percent,

Before the first-round election, television heavily favored coverage of Fujimori, giving far less coverage to the opposition.

Government supporters said the broadcasters widely covered Fujimori because he was the incumbent, knew how to make news and traveled widely in the country. But some news reports claimed that television bowed to Fujimori's image-makers.

and the other candidates received 1 percent to 6 percent. A January survey by the independent pollster Apoyo showed Luis Castañeda would receive 14 percent of the votes, versus 16 percent for Andrade and 41 percent for Fujimori. Yet Castañeda, who unlike Fujimori and Andrade held no elected position, received only 6 percent of the coverage during the period studied.

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But some news reports claimed that television bowed to Fujimori's image-makers. For instance, opposition journalist César Hildebrandt, then working for Channel 13, made public a tape in which Channel 4's executive vice president José Francisco Crousillat received instructions from Fujimori adviser Daniel Borobio about how to handle that evening's headline news. Nicolás Lúcar, Crousillat's brother-in-law and former anchor of Channel 4's weekly news magazine "La Revista Dominical," resigned, alleging he did not know that a first-ever "exclusive" interview with Vladimiro Montesinos, the de facto intelligence chief, had been coordinated between reporter Alamo Pérez Luna, Crousillat and Montesinos, who directed his own questioning. (Lúcar returned to the station a few months after the incident)

Peruvian law does little or nothing to level the playing field between incumbents and the opposition. "The only thing the president can't do is proselytize while he's inaugurating public works," said Ombudsman Santistevan. "He can inaugurate public works, but he can't ask for votes while doing so. And if he uses official vehicles while actively soliciting votes, he has to pay for the gas."

Therefore, the president can invite friendly journalists along with him on a government-funded helicopter ride to inaugurate an irrigation project in a remote Andean province and receive plenty of positive free coverage as long as he doesn't mention the upcoming election.

The problem was aggravated by the private TV stations' decision to refuse campaign advertising from all candidates. True, Fujimori's 1990 election proved that extensive television advertising in Peru hardly

guarantees victory. In 1990, presidential front-runner Mario Vargas Llosa far outspent Fujimori and his other rivals with a sophisticated ad campaign.

“The influence of television isn’t definitive, but it is decisive in most cases,” says Daniel Zovatto, an experienced electoral observer from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, IDEA. “Television’s influence is even greater in a presidentially dominated system like Peru’s,” he said.

The decision to turn down political ads was remarkable, particularly since the country was in a recession and advertising income was so weak, Zovatto said. “This must be the only country in the world where the television stations have agreed not to sell campaign advertising,” he said.

Some analysts argued that the stations’ position was understandable given the history of campaign advertising in Peru. TV stations already were leery of accepting such ads because of past payment problems, said Javier Sirvas, general manager of the Media and Advertising Supervisor, a private corporation that monitors advertising. “In the past, the candidates went to the television stations and asked for advertising space, but they didn’t pay their debts if they didn’t win,” he explained. However, candidates in 2000 reported being turned down even when they offered to pay in advance.

While the stations were not running any campaign ads — even the incumbent’s — they remained attached to the cash cow of government advertising. “The channels say, ‘I don’t run any campaign ads,’ but they don’t say, ‘I don’t run any state advertising,’” said Transparencia’s Rafael Roncagliolo. Given Fujimori’s high recognition level among Peruvians after a decade in power and extensive state advertising, the absence of advertising from opposition candidates exacerbated any imbalance in air time. Besides, all state advertising ended with the slogan, “Peru, A Country With A Future,” in the exact typeface and layout of Fujimori’s Peru 2000 logo, and Fujimori often repeated the slogan during his campaign.

In many countries, the law gives candidates equal access to the airwaves, and some try to limit advertising spending in order to level the playing

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field. In Peru, such laws cover only state-owned media.

A team of international observers from The Carter Center in Atlanta and the U.S.-government-funded National Democratic Institute said in advance of the April 2000 election that media organizations should "make available broadcast time and print space at normal market rates and without discrimination among political parties." All broadcast television stations reacted by saying they would grant all candidates free air time a month before the election.

The stations did offer brief spots in which congressional candidates could address the public. But opposition candidates complained the air time was too little to overcome months of noncoverage. One opposition congressional candidate, Luis Iberico, a former journalist who worked for Baruch Ivcher, said the broadcasters simply vetoed his prepared statement.

Apart from the free spots, equal coverage remained elusive. Despite promises to the contrary, the broadcast TV channels amply favored Fujimori both during and immediately after the April 9 election. For instance, every broadcast channel ran Fujimori's final campaign rally live for almost two hours, while giving only brief coverage to the closing rallies of the other candidates. On the other hand, cable news channel Canal N gave extensive live coverage to the campaign rallies of Fujimori's main opponent Alejandro Toledo but did not cover Fujimori's own rallies so thoroughly.

This one-sidedness was especially notable given an exciting last-minute surge by Toledo, who began the campaign as a relative dark horse. Despite his campaign's newsworthiness in the days before April 9, Toledo received little attention from the broadcast channels.

Eduardo Stein, the Guatemalan diplomat who headed the OAS electoral observer mission, saw the television coverage as one of the gravest failings concerning the April first-round election. During a post-election interview with Caretas, he called for improved "access to the communications media, above all broadcast television."

The April 9 election proved explosive, further polarizing Peruvian society. Exit polls gave Toledo a 6-point lead over Fujimori. Yet when the official vote count began to come in, those results suddenly

flipped, placing Fujimori ahead and apparently close to winning the “50 percent plus one” needed for a first-round victory. The TV stations had to take back their initial announcements of a Toledo victory and proclaim Fujimori the winner instead.

Public reaction was fast and furious. A crowd of Toledo supporters which had gathered to celebrate his apparent victory in downtown Lima turned into a protest rally which quickly swelled with thousands of Peruvians convinced that fraud had occurred. When the demonstrators marched to the presidential palace, police tear-gassed them. They eventually dispersed, but over the ensuing days and weeks thousands continued to demonstrate in cities around the country. Their conviction that the Fujimori government was illegitimate turned Toledo into the standard-bearer of Peru’s biggest social movement in two decades.

Little of this intense political activity made it onto Peruvian television screens except where cable subscriptions allowed transmission of Canal N. Although an estimated 30,000 people spontaneously gathered for the election-night protest, most channels abruptly ended election coverage as soon as the results flipped. The state-owned channel began showing film clips of folk musicians, while other channels ran films and regularly scheduled programs.

The broadcast information blackout continued for days, as OAS mission chief Stein noted on April 14: “Despite the national tension, despite the country’s polarization between a group which favors the president and a group which favors the opposition, most of the television channels didn’t show anything. ... This audiovisual absence is equivalent to an informative wall which in my opinion is unworthy of the basic tenets of democracy.”

The vote-counting process dragged on for days, deepening public and international suspicion that the government was engaging in fraud and planned to declare Fujimori the winner in the first round. The OAS, the European Union and the United States all called on the government to permit a runoff election between Fujimori and Toledo. In the end, the National Office of Electoral Processes announced that Fujimori had fallen just shy of the 50 percent

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needed for a victory. The government scheduled a second-round election for May 28, within one month of the legally required publication of first-round results, defying requests for a delay from the OAS mission, the Toledo campaign and the international community.

COVERAGE OF THE SECOND ROUND

While insisting on the May 28 date, the government was eager to tout its democratic credentials, and the second-round campaign showed at least cosmetic improvements in the media's role. For instance, TV coverage still favored Fujimori but became far less one-sided. Toledo's campaign activities began to receive air time, though not as much as Fujimori's and often accompanied by negative editorializing. Toledo also managed to run campaign spots on both broadcast and cable television.

Channel 5 came closest to truly broadening its coverage, even running an interview in which novelist and former presidential candidate Mario Vargas Llosa bitterly criticized what he labeled the Fujimori dictatorship and its blackmail of the media.

Similarly, the role of the chicha press shifted during the second round. Leaving behind the vitriolic front-page attacks on Toledo that characterized them during the final weeks of the first-round campaign (and after having helped pulverize former favorites Andrade's and Castañeda's electoral options), the chicha dailies opted for a strategy of lavishly covering Fujimori's electoral promises and largely ignoring Toledo.

Anthropologist Carlos Iván Degregori, writing for a human rights group's newsletter, noted one example of the chicha press's coverage after the first round. In the city of Cusco, Fujimori lifted a seasonal fishing ban. The announcement "was so minor that *El Comercio*, *La República*, *Gestión* and even the unconditional *Expreso* did not include it in their coverage of the presidential visit to Cusco," Degregori wrote. But "*El Chino*, *El Tío*, *El Men*, *El Mañanero*, *El Chato* and *La Yuca* covered the country's kiosks with positive front pages about the lifting of the ban," rais-

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ing the promise of additional jobs from the action.

That day, front-page headlines in *El Chino* declared, “Chino Fuji lifts the fishing ban, creating thousands of jobs along the entire coast.” *El Tío* echoed, “Chino Fujimori lifted the ban. Fishermen to work.” *La Yuca* announced, “Fujimori ended the ban! The whole coast is celebrating.” *El Mañanero* crowed, “Fujimori’s jobs plan in full sail. Prez ended the ban.” *El Men* declared, “Prez Fujimori put jobs plan to work in Chimbote by lifting fishing ban.” Lastly, *El Chato* announced, “Fujimori lets the fishermen go to sea and lifts the ban.”

Although the vicious personal attacks on Toledo had subsided, the Orwellian sense of coordinated coverage remained.

Other press freedom problems persisted: On May 24 unidentified individuals allegedly tortured Fabián Salazar, a contributor to *La República* and head of public relations at Channel 2 during Ivcher’s tenure. The alleged torture took place, according to Salazar, immediately after he had supposedly obtained videos and documents showing that Vladimiro Montesinos had met with national electoral officials at the headquarters of the National Intelligence Service. During the alleged incident, Salazar claims, the individuals sawed open his arm and stole the supposed videos and documents. One medical doctor publicly declared that Salazar’s wrist wounds looked suspicious to him and that he could not confirm the alleged torture. The media raised suspicions that Salazar had staged the whole incident to gain notoriety.

These media problems during the second-round campaign were part of larger concerns that led Toledo to withdraw from the second round and call on his supporters to either boycott the election or spoil their ballots. However, the government proceeded with the election, stating that Toledo never officially withdrew. On May 28 Fujimori won his third five-year term as president. On July 28 he was inaugurated. A mere two months later Fujimori announced new elections, and by November he had been declared “permanently morally incapacitated” to rule.

Media problems during the second-round campaign were part of larger concerns that led Toledo to withdraw from the second round and call on his supporters to either boycott the election or spoil their ballots.

With Fujimori gone and new presidential elections set for April 2001, the shackles are off the opposition media.

CONCLUSION

In a best-case scenario, the roller-coaster events of Peru's 2000 presidential election — and the media's coverage of them — represented a turning point in which independent media helped solidify democracy in the Andean nation.

Despite challenges and threats, many media — newspapers, magazines and cable-TV channels — continued throughout the year to do their job: report events and investigate wrongdoing.

With Fujimori gone and new presidential elections set for April 2001, the shackles are off the opposition media. Journalists of all persuasions now have the unprecedented opportunity to cover a presidential election for the second time in two years.

In the end, press freedom survived. And some analysts believe it was Peru's independent media — with international support — that lifted the country into its new democratic era. "The success in Peru would not have been accomplished without the free press," said Gustavo Gorritti.

The Freedom Forum, based in Arlington, Va., is a nonpartisan, international foundation dedicated to free press, free speech and free spirit for all people. The foundation focuses on four main priorities: the Newseum, First Amendment issues, newsroom diversity and world press freedom.

The Freedom Forum funds two independent affiliates — the Newseum, the interactive museum of news in Arlington; and the First Amendment Center, with offices at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn., and in New York City and Arlington. Other operating offices are in Buenos Aires, Hong Kong, Johannesburg, London and Cocoa Beach, Fla.

The Freedom Forum was established in 1991 under the direction of Founder Allen H. Neuharth as successor to a foundation started in 1935 by newspaper publisher Frank E. Gannett. The Freedom Forum is not affiliated with Gannett Co., does not solicit or accept financial contributions, and does not accept unsolicited funding requests. Its work is supported by income from an endowment now worth about \$1 billion in diversified assets.

