

Picking Up the Pieces

Corruption and Democracy in Peru

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Abbreviations



APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation
APRA	Alianza Peruana Revolucionaria Americana
CERIAJUS	Special Commission for the Integral Reform of the Justice System
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CLADEM	Centro LatinoAmericano de Desarrollo de la Mujer (Latin American Centre for Women's Development)
CLAE	(business group) (chapter 2)
COPRI	Comisión de Promoción de la Inversión Privada (Commission for the Promotion of Private Investment)
DEA	Drug Enforcement Agency
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias Colombiana
FIM	Frente Independiente Moralizador
FREDEMO	Frente Democrático
IDEELE	Instituto de Defensa Legal
IPAF	Instituto Peruano de Arqueología Forense
MRTA	Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OAS	Organisation of American States
PAP	Partido Aprista Peruano
PPC	Partido Popular Cristiano
PRONAA	Programa Nacional de Asistencia Alimentaria (National Food Aid Programme)
PSUC	
SIN	Servicio Nacional de Inteligencia (National Intelligence Service)
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Introduction



The 2006 general elections in Peru aroused great expectations. For the first time since the early 1980s, the country was free of violence. The 16.5 million voters could choose freely between a wide range of candidates for both president and congress. The traditional parties appeared to have recovered from their eclipse during the 1990s. Incumbent president Alejandro Toledo respected the rules and timetable for the vote. New political groups, born of the experience of the struggle against all the illegitimate chicanery of the Fujimori regime, offered fresh choices to the electorate.

In the event, however, the elections showed how fragile the modern, democratic image of Peru is. As had happened in 1989–90, a complete outsider upset all the calculations of the political classes in Lima, the Peruvian capital. Whereas sixteen years earlier this figure had been a Japanese agronomist, Alberto Fujimori, taking on the establishment in the name of hard work and honesty, this time it was Ollanta Humala, a retired army colonel who had led a rebellion against Fujimori in 2000, who emerged as the political unknown offering to give a voice to all those who felt left out of Peru's political life.

In the end, the voters chose instead to elect Alan García, the head of APRA (*Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana*), the party with the deepest roots in the country. But Humala's UPP (*Unión por el Perú*) won most seats in the national

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congress, thus establishing a powerful base for him for the future. García meanwhile has to prove to Peruvians that he can offer them something different from the chaotic misrule of his first period in office, 1985–90, when the country was torn apart by internal violence, economic incompetence and political posturing that ignored the population's real needs.

Civilian regimes have been in power in this Andean country for more than a quarter of a century now (following 12 years of military rule). During this time, the elected governments have managed only to widen the gap between the political class and many sectors of civil society. The complaint most commonly heard in Peru today is that politicians look after only themselves: they make extravagant promises during their election campaigns, but once they are elected they ignore the most basic needs of the voters and their families.

The fragility of Peruvian democracy can be seen in many ways. Since 1950, there have been almost 20 years of military government, and for long periods outside that there have been states of emergency in which the military enjoyed extra powers and many individual liberties were curtailed. Of the civilian presidents, only Fernando Belaúnde Terry and Alan García in the 1980s and Francisco Toledo (2001–2006) have served full terms in office. At the same time, between 1980 and 1995, Peruvians had to face one of the world's most determined and bloodthirsty attempts to take over the state by insurgents (the *Sendero Luminoso* or Shining Path guerrilla group). In their distorted way, the Shining Path were trying to take advantage of the distance between the Andean highland peoples of Aymara or Quechua descent and the Peruvian state, with which they often came into contact only in a negative way: to be press-ganged into the armed forces, forced to pay taxes, or made to pay bribes for all kinds of permits for their everyday lives.

To illustrate this neglect of a significant part of the popula-

tion, it was only with the 1979 Constitution, which marked the end of military rule, that the right to vote was extended to all adult Peruvians. Prior to that, those considered 'illiterate' (mainly those of indigenous descent living in rural areas) were excluded from the political process. These Peruvians make up most of the half of Peru's 27 million inhabitants who live beneath the United Nations' poverty threshold, on incomes of less than US\$2 per day. They stand most in need of the state's protection and encouragement. Instead, however, they are still widely viewed as second-class citizens. As recently as 2002, a group of lawyers in the southern city of Arequipa argued vociferously with us that Peru could make no progress until the vote was taken back by 'people with an education' – meaning themselves and the other 'white' elites living mainly in the coastal cities.

But these elites have seen their hold on power weakened over the past two decades. In 1985, Alan García led APRA to power for the first time since its creation in 1924. Although far from revolutionary by this time, it did bring new players into power, with a different approach to both national and international issues. This brought a determined reaction from the traditional sectors of society, but the next elections, in 1990, brought even more of an outsider to the presidency: the controversial figure of Alberto Fujimori.

Once in office, Fujimori and his unofficial intelligence service head, Vladimiro Montesinos, deliberately set out to further undermine democratic rule. They not only changed the national Constitution, but used every means from legislation to massive bribery to concentrate more power directly into their own hands. At the same time, Fujimori's ideas on 'modernising Peru' meant the wholesale acceptance of the neo-liberal privatisation programme, with the same negative effects that have been seen throughout Latin America: the destruction of full-time 'structured' employment