

Two right-wing candidates to contest second round in Peru's presidential vote

Armando Cruz, Cesar Uco
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Keiko Fujimori, daughter of jailed former president Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000), won the largest vote in the April 10 first round of Peru's presidential elections with 39.81 percent of the ballots cast. Her party, Fuerza Popular (FP), also won slightly more than half of the seats in Congress.

Second place went to Pedro Pablo Kuczynski (PPK) of Peruanos por el Cambio. Kuczynski, a right-wing millionaire who holds dual Peruvian-US citizenship, won 20.99 percent of the vote. Coming in third was Verónica Mendoza of the pseudo-left Frente Amplio with 18.84 percent.

Null and blank votes totaled 20.25 percent.

The election has been marked by the demise of the old dominant parties of the Peruvian bourgeoisie. The candidate of an alliance between APRA and Partido Popular Cristiano (PPC), Alan Garcia (twice president in 1985-1990 and 2006-2011), was reduced to 5.85 percent of the vote; Alfredo Barnechea of Accion Popular (with its founding leader Fernando Belaunde holding office twice, in the 1960s and the 1980s) got 6.97 percent. The worst performing party though was Peru Posible of former president Alejandro Toledo (2001-2006), reduced to a mere 1.31 percent of the ballots cast.

The emerging markets boom—touted by the IMF and World Bank as a bright spot for world capitalism in the wake of the 2008 financial meltdown—has come to an end, throwing Peru and much of Latin America into a period of recession. This has resulted in plummeting approval ratings and, in several cases, charges of corruption and bids to oust presidents in Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, Bolivia and Chile.

This phenomenon has also had its effect upon Peruvian politicians. President Ollanta Humala's wife, Nadine Heredia, is under investigation for money

laundering and corruption and is suspected of having links to the massive Petrobras scandal in Brazil. Humala's Peruvian Nationalist Party was forced to withdraw its candidate for fear that overwhelming disapproval ratings for the president would result in a vote of less than 5 percent, causing it to forfeit its status as a registered political party.

Alejandro Toledo of Peru Posible and APRA's Alan Garcia are both under scrutiny over corruption charges. The father of the front-runner, former president Alberto Fujimori, is serving a 25-year sentence for his role in the massacres of Barrios Altos and La Cantuta in the early 1990s.

Hostility to Fujimori's candidacy and her father's record of bloody repression found expression on the eve of the elections in a protest by tens of thousands in the capital of Lima.

For its part, the Peruvian business class celebrated the first round election results by bidding up shares on the Lima Stock Exchange (BVL). Reuters Christian Laub, president of the BVL, declared: "No doubt the news of the election and that the two options are pro-market have driven the stock market." The economic daily *Gestión* reported that businessmen breathed a "sigh of relief" that two pro-free-market candidates were slated for the second round.

The BVL General Index rebounded 8.61 percent, its biggest daily percentage gain since November 4, 2008. Most notable, the large mining company Volcan recorded a 46.21 percent rise in its share value the Monday after the elections.

The vote for Keiko Fujimori, a thoroughly right-wing figure, stemmed in some measure from the populist and minimal social programs for the poor established by her father during the 1990s, even as he dutifully imposed neoliberal reforms dictated by the IMF and waged a

bloody counterinsurgency war against Sendero Luminoso, the Maoist guerrilla group.

The failure of APRA and what passed for the Peruvian left in the 1980s, dominated by the Stalinist Peruvian Communist Party, allowed Fujimori to engage in populist gestures that won him a degree of support among the most impoverished layers of Peruvian society, which Keiko Fujimori has been able to continue exploiting in the absence of a political party that truly represents the working class and fights for its interests.

Veronika Mendoza and her Frente Amplio (Broad Front) represent no such party. Mendoza, who has dual Peruvian-French citizenship and was educated at the Sorbonne, began working on support committees for Humala's Peruvian Nationalist Party in the mid-2000s. In 2009, she was the party youth group's press secretary and became spokesperson for its women's commission the following year.

Mendoza was elected to Congress in 2011 as part of the Gana Peru alliance that placed Humala in the presidency. Fears within Peruvian ruling circles and in Washington that Humala's campaign rhetoric about "social inclusion" would translate into an incursion on the profit interests of Peruvian and transnational capital were quickly relieved by the newly elected president himself, who subordinated his policies to the banks and the big mining corporations.

After Humala was elected in 2011, Mendoza played a prominent role representing the Gana Peru alliance in Congress.

She broke with Gana Peru following the government's 2012 crackdown against anti-mining protests directed at the expansion of a copper mine in Espinar province by the Swiss corporation Xstrata, in which Humala declared a state of emergency, suspending constitutional rights and sending police shock troops who shot to death two protesters.

Shortly thereafter, she joined a parliamentary faction dominated by the right-wing Acción Popular party.

While in 2011, Ollanta Humala, a former military officer, won the entire south of Peru, with margins of 80 percent in some departments, as well as the working class and poor districts of the capital Lima, Mendoza won just 45 to 53 percent of the vote in the southern region but lost Arequipa, the second largest city in the country, to PPK.

In Lima, which accounts for one third of the votes, Keiko Fujimori got 40.59 percent and PPK 29.76 percent, with Mendoza left with just 12.04 percent.

Frente Amplio won in districts with mining projects involving substantial foreign investments. Among these are the Tía María and Las Bambas projects (Apurímac and Arequipa) worth billions of dollars. It also won in Moquegua and Tacna, where the Southern Corporation of Grupo Mexicano operates.

Mendoza, whose Frente Amplio won 20 of the 130 parliamentary seats, told *El Comercio* that "the Peruvian people have given us the mandate to establish ourselves in opposition in Parliament."

While no doubt the party's vote reflected anger at economic conditions among layers of the working class and poor, Frente Amplio is a political party that reflects the interests of privileged layers of the middle class and, in the end, will follow the same path of betrayal as Mendoza's former political mentor, Humala.

Underscoring Mendoza and Frente Amplio's submission to the status quo was a visit by US Ambassador Brian A. Nichols to the FA's headquarters. The daily *Diario Uno*, a newspaper of the Peruvian pseudo-left, reported that Mendoza "explained" her major proposals to Nichols during his visit and expressed her "concern" for the effects of the US-led Trans Pacific Partnership, arguing that its ratification should be postponed for the next Congress and be matter of a "national debate."



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