

Washington meddles in Peruvian election with runoff too close to call

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Peru's June 7 presidential runoff has produced a result too close to call. With returns from 98 percent of voting places counted as of Wednesday afternoon, Roberto Sánchez of Juntos por el Perú holds a razor-thin lead of 50.01 percent over Keiko Fujimori's 49.99 percent—a margin of fewer than 5,000 votes in an election in which more than 1.25 million people cast null or blank ballots.

The remaining uncounted ballots—from rural districts where Sánchez has performed stronger, and from Peruvians abroad where Fujimori leads—leave the outcome undecided. Electoral authorities have indicated it could take a full month before a winner is officially declared.

The South American country is about to inaugurate its ninth president in barely a decade. The two candidates—the far-rightist Keiko Fujimori and nominal “leftist” Sánchez—compete not over any fundamental change of course but over which faction of the ruling class will manage a system that has forfeited all legitimacy in the eyes of the working class and the oppressed poor.

The most revealing statistic from the first round was not who won the most votes, but the scale of popular rejection: three out of every ten voters—8.4 million people—cast blank or null ballots or abstained. That is more than the combined total of the top two finishers. In the runoff, over 1.25 million again rejected both options outright. Nine in ten Peruvians disapprove of Congress.

Whatever the final result, the outcome showed the enormous mass rejection of the entire political establishment—and the Trump administration's increasingly naked intervention to determine which faction of Peru's bourgeoisie gets to manage it.

Washington escalates interference after the vote

Before Sunday's vote, US Ambassador Bernie Navarro had already conducted himself as an agent of open imperialist interference. He announced he would personally lead a team of US “observers”—a declaration that Washington reserves the right to delegitimize any result it deems unfavorable. He fabricated a propaganda campaign alleging Cuban interference in the election, citing as his only evidence a single naturalized citizen from Cuba who was able to vote for the first time and work at a polling station.

After the vote, Navarro's interventions have grown even more brazen. On Tuesday, he announced publicly that the US Embassy is “monitoring the electoral process”—a statement that has no basis in Peruvian law. He then left no doubt about Washington's strategic priorities, declaring: “Meanwhile, China is more concerned about operating [the port in] Chancay without Peruvian oversight.”

The remark is a direct threat. It ties the outcome of a Peruvian election explicitly to US imperialism's confrontation with China over the Chancay

megaport—as if the right outcome at the polls were a precondition for Washington's willingness to accept the next Peruvian government as legitimate.

A rotten election from the start

The first round was marred by irregularities that cannot be dismissed as logistical failures. Voting tables in working class districts—including entire precincts of San Juan de Lurigancho, Lima's most populous district—never opened. Electoral materials went missing. Ballot boxes were filmed being transported on motorcycles or found abandoned at roadsides. These were not accidents. They were expressions of the ruling elite's contempt for democratic processes.

The forced resignation of the head of the National Office of Electoral Processes (ONPE), Piero Corvetto, and the heavily armed police raid on his home, exposed the right's readiness to deploy extralegal means if the result proves inconvenient. The fascist Rafael López Aliaga, who finished third, has already deployed Trump-style “fraud” allegations to lay the groundwork for post-electoral destabilization—a playbook the Peruvian bourgeoisie has now assimilated from its northern patron.

The corporate media in Peru has promoted these claims of fraud, combined with overwhelmingly negative coverage for Sánchez with the usual tropes of the far-right of having a “dark past” and prioritizing ties with “Cuba and Venezuela” (*El Comercio*), and being an “unfettered Communist” (*Expreso*).

The fact that Sánchez has repeatedly sought to reassure the financial elite and that a right-wing bicameral Congress will obstruct and if necessary, remove whoever sits in the presidential palace have not placated the media.

The candidates: two managers for capital

Keiko Fujimori, leader of Fuerza Popular and daughter of the late jailed dictator Alberto Fujimori, entered the runoff with 17.06 percent of the first-round vote—her fourth presidential attempt. The state prosecutor has requested a 30-year prison sentence against her in the “Los Cócteles” mega-corruption case, which involves illegal campaign financing of more than \$17 million. Her platform is built on law-and-order demagoguery—the death penalty, high-altitude prisons—deployed as a smokescreen over her documented ties to drug trafficking and illegal mining networks.

Her opponent, Sánchez Palomino, received 12.04 percent in the first round. He presents himself in a “left” guise, but his record gives the lie to

that disguise. As minister of foreign trade and tourism under Pedro Castillo, he served capital faithfully. Earlier, as a member of the Partido Humanista, he participated in Alan García's government, which in June 2009 ordered the massacre at Bagua—33 people killed when security forces violently expelled indigenous communities from the Amazon to clear the way for petroleum extraction. Today he faces multiple ongoing investigations for corruption, misuse of public funds and influence-peddling. He has already moved to reassure markets and Washington, promising macroeconomic stability and institutional continuity—code for loyalty to the banks and the IMF.

Neither candidate represents any alternative for the working class. Both are representatives of distinct bourgeois factions competing for political control, for distribution of rents and for how to calibrate economic ties with China against military alignment with Washington.

Peru as a battleground between Washington and Beijing

The electoral crisis is unfolding amid a ferocious inter-imperialist struggle over Peru's strategic position. Peru is the world's third-largest copper exporter—copper being the critical mineral for electric vehicle production and military technology. China is overwhelmingly its primary buyer: in 2023, Peruvian exports to China were double those to the United States.

The inauguration of the Chancay megaport in November 2025, built by Chinese state company COSCO, was the trigger for an intensified American offensive to reassert dominance in the region. Trump has directly threatened the port—as Navarro's post-election statement made unmistakably clear. The Pentagon has allocated \$1.5 billion to relocate Peru's naval base to the north of Chancay. Washington is pushing to designate Peru a "major non-NATO ally," integrating the Peruvian armed forces into joint exercises and shared equipment—all preparation for the coming conflict with China, as well as for a potential US-backed coup should the need arise.

Over 1,200 US troops have already been deployed on Peruvian territory, their presence rubber-stamped by a Congress that approved it overwhelmingly for the entirety of 2026. These are decisions that will determine whether Peruvian workers become cannon fodder for Washington's war drive against China. They were made behind closed doors, debated by no candidate and covered by virtually no corporate media outlet during the campaign.

The social catastrophe behind the political façade

The political crisis is inseparable from an accelerating social one. About 30 percent of the Peruvian population lives in poverty; the majority of the working class labors without benefits, pensions or basic protections in the so-called informal sector. Some 43 percent of workers are in a state of underemployment—either insufficient hours or insufficient income to meet basic needs. Youth unemployment stands at around 15.4 percent, roughly double the adult rate. These are the material conditions fueling mass abstention and rage.

The ruling class is not blind to what lies beneath. The mass uprising that erupted in defense of Pedro Castillo after his December 2022 removal—which left dozens dead at the hands of Dina Boluarte's security forces—was a warning tremor, not the earthquake itself. The ruling class knows it sits atop a volcano. Elections are one mechanism to channel and

contain pressure that could otherwise explode.

Social tensions have sharpened further. Gas prices have surged by as much as 75 percent as a consequence of the US-Israeli war against Iran. Rising fertilizer costs—a product of both that war and the NATO war against Russia in Ukraine—threaten to devastate Peruvian agriculture. The past twelve months have seen a growing wave of class struggle: more than a dozen 24-hour transport strikes in Lima and Callao, a militant strike by 60,000 EsSalud health workers and the emergence of Gen-Z students and youth confronting riot police in the streets.

The Peruvian bourgeoisie understands this economic pressure but has no answer for it. None of the candidates made any serious reference to the World Bank's own warnings about the inflationary and supply-chain consequences of expanding war—consequences already coursing through copper prices, fertilizers, plastics and food costs that hit Peruvian workers hardest.

The role of the pseudo-left and the union bureaucracy

The dominance of the far right, despite its deep unpopularity, cannot be understood without examining the role of the pseudo-left and the trade union bureaucracy. Organizations such as the Peruvian Socialist Workers Party (PST, a Morenoite tendency) have oscillated between endorsing bourgeois candidates and calling for a null vote while sowing illusions in the union apparatus. The Coordinadora Nacional Unitaria de Lucha (CNUL), controlled by the Stalinist-led CGTP bureaucracy, systematically refused to call general strikes or mobilize Lima's proletariat during the uprising against Boluarte, confining itself to isolated marches and road blockades, methodically dispersed by security forces and kept deliberately distant from the industrial working class.

The PST and most of the union bureaucracy endorsed a vote for Sánchez, again channeling genuine mass anger behind the thoroughly rotten bourgeois state. The orientation of all political tendencies that claim to be left is invariably nationalist, directed at the state and union bureaucracies, and rejects the political independence of the working class based on a revolutionary and internationalist program.

The perspective the working class requires

The results now emerging confirm what was already clear before the vote: there is no progressive way forward through this election. With Sánchez having campaigned explicitly on macroeconomic stability and institutional continuity—meaning loyalty to the banks and to Washington—a narrow victory for him would represent not a check on the right but a different mechanism for imposing the same austerity and subordination to imperialism, while the pseudo-left uses his presidency to demobilize the working class and suppress independent struggle.

What the political and social crisis demands is the construction of the political independence of the working class. That means building independent committees in workplaces, working class neighborhoods, universities, and peasant communities as part of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC). These organs of struggle would be subordinated neither to the bureaucratized unions nor to any pro-capitalist party but fight for the conscious unification of the class struggle with workers across the Americas and internationally, against their own bourgeoisies and against the imperialist war drive.

The crisis of the Peruvian bourgeois regime—the collapse of every

traditional party, the vertiginous succession of presidents, the consolidation of authoritarian power, Washington's open interference in national sovereignty and the deepening social catastrophe—points toward explosive class conflicts ahead. What is necessary is to build a political leadership of the working class independent of all parties of the bourgeois order: a Peruvian section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, armed with a socialist and internationalist program.



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