Peru’s presidential election 2011

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“We who defend Peru need to reaffirm our commitment to democracy. That never again, never again may we experience the shutting down of one branch of state power to take over the government and perpetuate ourselves in power. We don’t need, we don’t need dictators here; we need a democratic government. We don’t need authoritarianism; we need moral authority. We don’t need to confront the people against each other with people’s own arms. What we need is to come into dialogue with the people in order to solve their problems.”

Ollanta Humala Tasso, speech at the closure of the election campaign, Lima, Plaza Dos de Mayo, 5 April 2011.

On April 10 this year, Peruvian voters placed the country in what for many was a nightmare scenario – the country’s next president would be either a leftist military commander or the daughter of a corrupt authoritarian. What Nobel Prize winner Mario Vargas Llosa had called ‘an impossible choice between AIDS and lethal cancer’, was actually happening. The two months that followed leading to the second round of presidential elections on June 5 turned out to be the most nerve breaking electoral campaign in recent Peruvian history. The victory of Ollanta Humala and Gana Perú with 51.5% of votes over Keiko Fujimori with 48.5% is a narrow one, but the results give nonetheless a clear and legitimate mandate to the newly elected president. However, the challenges ahead are many.

According to some observers, the impossible scenario came into being by the absence of cooperation between the four presidential candidates on the right side of Peruvian politics, which included

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1 “Los que defendemos el Perú necesitamos reafirmar nuestro compromiso con la democracia. Que nunca más, que nunca más repitamos el cierre de un poder del estado para apropiarse del gobierno y perennizarse en el gobierno. No necesitamos, no necesitamos acá dictadores, necesitamos un gobierno democrata. No necesitamos autoritarismo, necesitamos autoridad moral. No necesitamos enfrentar al pueblo con el pueblo con las armas del pueblo. Necesitamos dialogar con el pueblo para resolver los problemas del pueblo.” Ollanta Humala Tasso, discurso de Cierre de Campaña en Lima, Plaza Dos de Mayo, 5 abril 2011.

former president Alejandro Toledo; Pedro Pablo Kuczynski (PKK), former finance minister in Toledo’s government; Luis Castañeda, former Mayor of Lima; and Keiko Fujimori, daughter of former President Alberto Fujimori. There was little ideological difference between these candidates, and their campaign efforts went to emphasize their ability to carry out their promises and to question everybody else’s ability to do the same. On the left side, there was only one main candidate, Ollanta Humala. While the normal mudslinging was present from the start of the campaign in December 2010, this time there was no “all against Humala” front until March this year (unlike the elections in 2006), as right-wing candidates had dismissed Humala’s political future. The recognition of Humala as a serious contender in this year’s elections started first in March, when opinion polls began to show that support for Toledo’s Peru Posible had stopped, while support for Humala and Keiko (but also PPK) was on the increase. It turned out to be too late; the right wing’s uncoordinated efforts to shed doubts and spread fear about Humala’s candidacy did not bring the desired results. Humala and Keiko were now to compete in the presidential run-off.

Who is Ollanta Humala?

Ollanta Humala’s public life started in 2000, when he led a military uprising against the Fujimori regime on October 29, while being a commander in Moquegua, in southern Peru. The events in Locumba, as they are commonly referred to, can be seen in the context of the regime’s fall as the only attempt from military hold, to bring the Fujimori regime to an end. The months before and after the start of the third Fujimori regime on July 28 2000 saw ample protests and demonstrations across the country, and the regime finally fell on November 18 2000. Today Locumba is seen as the foundational moment of the nationalist project (“el proyecto nacionalista”). Humala served as military attaché at the Peruvian embassies in Paris and Seoul for two years before retiring from the army in 2004. Upon his return to Peru he founded the Peruvian Nationalist Party (Partido Nacionalista Peruano - PNP) in October 2005. PNP’s ideological base was overall leftist, and the rhetoric reminded that of Venezuela’s Hugo Chávez. This changed quickly, when Humala joined forces with UPP (Unión por el Perú), a registered political party, and became presidential candidate in the 2006 general elections, obtaining 30% of popular support in the first round. His competitor at the second round was former president Alan García from APRA, the oldest and most established political party in Peru. Humala lost the election with 43% of the votes, and his political alliance became the largest party in Congress, with no less than 45 delegates.

Humala’s nationalist project was the target of fierce criticism at the 2006 elections, and his provocative rhetoric and all too often reference to ‘nationalization’ of strategic activities and talk of ‘expropriation’ spread fear among the investment and private sector. Humala’s brother Antauro had led a military rebellion against president Toledo in January 2005, and Ollanta’s broadcast statement in support of the rebellion is something that his political opponents are not willing to forget, in spite

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1 [http://www.partidonacionalistaperuano.net/el-partido/la-gesta-democratica-de-locumba.html](http://www.partidonacionalistaperuano.net/el-partido/la-gesta-democratica-de-locumba.html)
2 However, the presence of ‘leftist’ ideologies within the military is nothing new in Peru, particularly in the army. The most notable example is army general Juan Velasco Alvarado, who introduced the most far reaching reform process in contemporary Peruvian history during the 7 years he was in power (1968-1975), including the agrarian reform.
3 General Velasco’s agrarian reform implied the expropriation of large landholdings to be distributed among peasants and laborers. Although compensation was provided, in political terms this meant the dismantling of the Peruvian landed oligarchy. This experience is still remembered with anger by the wealthiest families in the country.
the fact that he publicly pulled it back a few days later. Hugo Chávez’s outspoken support for Humala in the 2006 elections did more harm than good, and he was blamed of serving Chávez’s agenda. The 2006 elections provided valuable lessons which Humala and his team wisely followed in the present round.

The 2011 presidential candidate Ollanta Humala was not the same as five years ago. The two clearest signs of change were his rhetoric and his stand on Hugo Chávez. His political discourse was toned down and focused instead on explaining what PNP and Gana Perú – Humala’s electoral list – meant by nationalization. Concerning Venezuela, he publicly asked for no intervention of any kind in Peruvian electoral politics. Throughout the campaign, Humala emphasized that the Venezuelan model was not suitable for the Peruvian context, and that Peru would find its own way. These two changes were however, only expressions of a more general move to a center-left position in the political spectrum. Radical left positions do not find fertile ground in Peru for several reasons. The violence of the armed conflict, led by the communist Maoist group Shining Path, is still much present in the memory of many Peruvians. The expropriations that took place during the military dictatorship of general Velasco in the 1970’s likewise. Furthermore, the Peruvian left’s initial ambiguity concerning armed struggle cost them political support and representation since the 1980s, and their ideological differences stood in the way of any attempt for electoral collaboration. Moving towards the center, and leaving behind radical discourse, Humala entered this year’s elections with the image of a more reflective political leader, one who was both willing and able to enter into dialogue with other political forces.

Ollanta’s political project

Keiko Fujimori’s favorite attack against Humala in the second round was his apparent indecision concerning his political stand, which is why – according to Keiko – he had four work plans or “planes de gobierno”. Repeatedly asking “Which one of these should we believe?”, she implied that there were great differences between the documents presenting Humala’s project and that voters were confused. This is partly true. Indeed, since December 2010 several documents have been presented by Humala identifying his political project and plan of action. However, there is consistency between them and their development can be seen as part of the electoral process and the needs of the campaign. The main document is “LA GRAN TRANSFORMACIÓN - PLAN DE GOBIERNO 2011-2016, Diciembre 2010,” presented to the Peruvian Electoral Board in 2010. Here Humala and Gana Perú present not only their proposals for a new government, but also their justification - why these proposals are needed. The document offers a reflective interpretation of Peruvian society and its main challenges today, showing a surprisingly good understanding of historical processes and Peruvian political economy in general. Based on a critique of neoliberal policies implemented in Peru since the 1990s, this document ultimately proposes a project of nation-state building that puts the interest of Peru as a nation first. The presence of a clear political project distinguishes this document from the work plans of other Peruvian candidates, which mostly limited themselves to a list of activities to be fulfilled during their mandate.

6 In response to this position, the right-wing media insisted on asking Humala to call Hugo Chávez ‘dictator’ as the only valid proof of distance with the Venezuelan regime. See for example, “Ollanta Humala sigue sin deslindar con el régimen chavista”, Entrevista con OH por Diana Seminario Marón, El Comercio, 18.04.2011.

7 Available at the National Authority for Electoral Processes’ (ONPE), PNP’s website and Ollantapresidente.org.pe
The cornerstone of Humala’s “gran transformación”, *the big change*, is the development of a national market economy, “Economía Nacional de Mercado” - a market economy that is nationally oriented. In other words, a market economy geared towards the internal market and the establishment of national priorities at the basis for its participation in a world economy and export-oriented activities. This requires the identification of strategic industries or activities in order to ensure the appropriate participation of the state. The energy sector, gas and oil, and mining are considered strategic activities, along with fisheries, shipping and harbor administration, for example. The term “nationalization” in this context refers not to expropriation, but to increased government participation in these activities. According to the document, changes in the National Constitution are necessary because the Constitution of 1993 establishes an economic regime that limits the participation of the state to a regulatory function in the national economy, not as an economic actor able to invest and take part in economic development. Humala’s opponents turned the blind eye to this clarification, focusing instead on a potential hidden agenda to change re-election rules in the Constitution.

Facing critique for not being fully committed to democracy, and in an effort to make his proposals more explicit, Humala publicly signed a document called “Compromiso con el pueblo Peruano” on March 28 this year. There he commits to democratic rule of law, respect for private property and international agreements, and the defense of a free press and freedom of expression. For his opponents as well as political observers, this “Compromiso” lacked any credibility and value as it was taken at the candidate’s own initiative. If Humala was really committed to democracy, they argued, he ought to sign the “Acuerdo Nacional” (AN), a formal agreement signed by political parties and major national institutions in July 2002. After several rounds explaining that the “Compromiso” was well in tune with the principle embedded in the Acuerdo Nacional, Humala signed it on May 10, emphasizing that the AN originated in the democratic rupture that the country experienced in the 1990s, and that his signature expressed his commitment to democracy and rejection to authoritarianism and the abuse of power. Two weeks later, Keiko Fujimori did the same.

While “Compromiso con el Perú” came before the first round of elections, the signing of the Acuerdo Nacional took place in the context of the second round, as part of Humala’s effort to reach out to those sectors of society that doubted his democratic credentials and needed further reassurance. Gana Perú made clear that having the support of 1/3 of Peruvian voters gave them a clear mandate for change, but not without the participation of other political forces. In the new national congress, Gana Perú became the largest party, with 35% of seats, but far from securing a majority without support from other groups. The first weeks after the election, Humala sought the endorsement of a number of public figures, officially presenting them at a public ceremony. Among them were academics, artists, and leaders of civil society organisations and the private sector, willing to publicly support Humala’s project. While the significance of this act was mostly symbolic, support from other

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8 [http://www.ollantapresidente.pe/compromiso-de-ollanta-humala-con-el-pueblo-peruano](http://www.ollantapresidente.pe/compromiso-de-ollanta-humala-con-el-pueblo-peruano)
9 Establishing consensus on national public policies, the AN aims to set the ground for sustainable development and democratic governance in Peru. The AN functions today as a national forum for dialogue between political and social actors, public and private, and has become a respected institution in the Peruvian public debate. [http://www.acuerdonacional.pe/](http://www.acuerdonacional.pe/)
public figures had more strategic and political meaning, such as the inclusion of several members of Toledo’s election team into Humala’s technical team of political and economic advisors. Gana Perú informed about the need to invite those who shared similar ideals to develop a common front based on “concertación”, that is, dialogue, collaboration and compromise. This is how the banner of “growth with social inclusion” came into being, and it was presented on May 13, in the document “Lineamientos Centrales de Política Económica y Social para un Gobierno de Concertación Nacional”, also referred to as “Hoja de Ruta” (road map). Prepared with the added inputs of new members to the technical team, the road map can be seen as a first step towards the formation of a government based on national dialogue – “concertación”.

Public support versus public shame

In an electoral process as polarised as this has been, the role of the public expressions of support and/or disgust cannot be underestimated. Starting from the technical teams, their composition conveyed a clear message to the public. In the case of Humala, one would find progressive social economists from Universidad Católica, historians from San Marcos University, and well-known academics who enjoyed respect as social and political analysts – although left-oriented people, but far from being left radicals. Public, open support was not immediate, however. The first categorical expression of support/disgust came in the editorial of the weekly Caretas, five days after the first elections round, making an appeal to Peruvian voters:

“… we must remember and insist that a motherland [Patria] is more than the administration of its economy and the welfare of its enterprises, no matter how vital and important these may be for development. A country is history, dignity, culture, identity, and above all, future.”

From then on, either collectively or individually, expressions of support from public figures came out to endorse Humala’s project, or to reject Keiko’s candidacy. Perhaps the most notable one was Mario Vargas Llosa, who had initially warned against Humala. His public support for Humala’s project was based on the recognition that although voting for Humala implied risks, the alternative was unbearable: opting for a return to corruption and dictatorship. He eloquently expressed what many Peruvians where thinking at the time: not blind support, but a critical and demanding form of public trust.

Expressions of critically-based support to Humala and/or rejection to Keiko came from all sectors of civil society, from labor unions, trade federations, art collectives, even a collective of Peruvian and international political scientists came with declaration expressing their concern about the implications for democracy if Keiko was to be elected president. Outside Lima, departmental

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14 For taking this stand, Vargas Llosa has been the target of open critique from Fuerza 2011’s supporters and the right-wing media, including the editors of El Comercio, where he used to published a column. [http://www.larepublica.pe/30-05-2011/politologos-se-pronuncian-en-contra-de-keiko-fujimori](http://www.larepublica.pe/30-05-2011/politologos-se-pronuncian-en-contra-de-keiko-fujimori)
and provincial associations and trade unions did the same, although these acts did not receive national TV and radio publicity.\footnote{These types of events were reported only by a few national media, such as La República, Diario La Primera, or through Gana Perú’s website.}

It is a fact, also noted by international observers, that Peruvian media was mostly biased towards one candidate, Keiko Fujimori. News coverage emphasized rumors or accusations against Humala, and it was easy to observe a campaign of fear about Peru’s future if Keiko was not elected. While all private television channels, radio and newspapers interviewed representatives from both parties, the interview methods applied were very different depending whether he/she belong to Gana Perú or Fuerza 2011, and in several occasions Gana Perú’s representatives, even Humala himself, openly complained about how the interview was being conducted. Perhaps most damaging for the Peruvian press in general, was the position taken by the owners and editors of El Comercio group, who fired several journalists and political editors considered not to be following the editorial line in support of Keiko. This created a lively debate on the conditions for free press and freedom of expression in Peru, which had been suppressed and misused during the Fujimori regime in the 1990s. The paradox was that in the 1990s, El Comercio (the oldest newspaper in Peru) was a main actor in the opposition to the Fujimori regime.

It is difficult to establish the possible impact of public support or rejection. In a country where formal education is highly valued, the opinion of regional and local intellectuals might have influenced voters at the local level. The awareness among local voters of what national intellectuals may or may not think dilutes the farther one moves from Lima and other major cities in Peru, where printed media such as newspapers have less presence. Internet based social networks have been actively used both by the public and the candidates, and debates on Facebook have been fierce, denoting how critical this situation was experienced by many in Peru.

**Who voted for Keiko Fujimori?**

With the exception of Hernando de Soto and in spite of being favoured by the media, no public expressions of support from outside the Fujimorista core came in support of Keiko’s program. Although a very charismatic leader, Keiko did not manage to attract the public support of organised sectors of society. In a way, in this election it was easier to “come out of the closet” as a humalista than a fujimorista, mainly because of the legacy of the Fujimori regime.

Alberto Fujimori, Keiko’ father, was sentenced to 25 years in prison for two cases of human rights violations. He has also been convicted for corruption and misuse of public funds. The same applies to several of the military and police leadership serving during his regime, and some of his closest advisors, the best know being Montesinos. Keiko was 19 years old when she became Peru’s first lady, after a divorce between Fujimori and his ex-wife, Susana Higushi. Her role as first lady is the one that connects her to her father’s authoritarian and corrupt regime; Keiko, of course, disagrees. After the regime’s fall, she went to the United States to study and returned to Peru in 2005, being elected as congress representative. She has led the fujimorista group since 2005.

Keiko’s political message was the continuation of the current economic model, started by her father. She proposes social programs in order to fight poverty and secure that economic growth reaches all
Peruvians. Although her initial team of advisors included some new people, these were later replaced by several of her father’s former advisors and supporters. Some of these include the most reactionary voices of the Fujimorista front, and their reappearance was highly questioned. In an attempt to take distance from her father’s regime, Keiko apologized on a televised interview for her father’s “wrongs and mistakes” in the 1990s, but continue to explain the need for extraordinary measures under extraordinary circumstances.

Although Fuerza 2011 lost the presidential election, the fact that 48 percent of Peruvian voters opted for Keiko is very significant. Besides Lima, Keiko won only in northern Peru, APPRA’s home ground. APRA leaders such as president Alan García himself openly warned against Humala, while others publicly endorsed Keiko (for example, Mercedes Aráoz). Support for Keiko was also high in large cities, indicating an urban-rural divide. Middle-class people in Lima, with private businesses naturally feared for their incomes if investment and economic growth comes to a halt. Their support for Keiko was arguably not out of conviction, but to avoid an undesirable outcome. The question of who voted for Keiko, when few openly say they did, will surely be the basis of political and academic analysis in the future.

Prospects for a government of national “concertación”

Two weeks after Peru elected a centre-left president, there are good indications regarding the country’s future governability and the managing style of the elected president. Immediately after the results were announced on public TV on Sunday evening, representatives from the right wing parties came out demanding the need to announce the names of the future finance minister and the president of Peru’s Central Bank, in order to “give confidence and reassurance” to the investment sector that economic policies would remain untouched. When the financial market in Lima experienced a dramatic fall on June 6, some even suggested that Humala should appoint Pedro Pablo Kuczynski or Mercedes Aráoz as finance minister to stop negative reactions in the market. Humala and his team called for calm, indicating that the Peruvian economy had a solid base, that such reactions are common, and that Peru has a government perfectly capable of managing this kind of situations. The market recovered within a few days, and in the meantime, Gana Perú announced the government transfer team, led by the Second Vice-President elected, Marisol Espinoza. With regards to the finance minister, Gana Perú declared that an announcement on the future cabinet’s composition would be made once it was ready, refusing to take hasty decisions on such important matters.

Much like before the election, Ollanta Humala and his team have been meeting representatives from civil society organisations, trade unions, the private sector and more. He has also embarked on a trip to meet the presidents of other Latin American nations. Building the ground for widespread public trust seems to be a top priority for Gana Perú before July 28, when they take over government. Former president Toledo announced last week that Perú Posible will support Gana Perú in Congress, thus forming a majority to implement what Peruvians voted for: economic growth with social
inclusion. In more specific terms, this involves what newspaper La República called “non-negotiable measures”:\(^{17}\):

1. Higher taxes over mining revenues
2. Natural gas from “Lote 88” destined to national consumption
3. Anti-corruption policies
4. New social programs (Pensión 65, Cuna Más, Beca 18) and expansión of Juntos
5. Increasing the minimum wage to 750 soles.
6. Strengthening the Ministry of Environment in order to better address socio-environmental conflicts.
7. Increase the participation of the state in economic activities
8. Respect for democratic rule of law

During the electoral campaign Humala and Gana Perú flagged these eight issues as the most important part of their political program. While the attack against Fuerza 2011 was based on the issue of corruption, the issue that had greatest appeal was social inclusion, either as social programs or better redistribution of mining incomes. The stability and growth that the Peruvian economy experiences today form, in my view, a very firm ground upon which to build a more inclusionary model. In other words, Peru is ready for change.

Results from First Round of Presidential and Congressional elections in Peru, April 10 2011

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<th>Political group and candidate</th>
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