

PERU

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Political system Peru has a unique type of presidential system. The president of the republic represents the government at home and abroad. He or she directs the government's general public policy and is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces and the national police. He or she appoints and removes the president of the cabinet and the additional 16 ministers upon the recommendation and with the approval of the cabinet's president.

Parliamentary oversight mechanisms have been introduced into the Peruvian presidential system. For example, within 30 days of taking the oath of office, the cabinet must go to Congress to present and debate the government's public policy agenda and the main legislative measures required, proposing them as a vote of confidence. Whenever Congress calls upon the cabinet or any of its ministers to be questioned, they are obliged to attend. The cabinet as a whole and its individual members are accountable to parliament. A majority (50 per cent and 1 vote) of Congress is able to dismiss the whole cabinet or individual ministers from office.

The executive has the prerogatives typically found in a classic parliamentary system (e.g. legislative initiative). All executive laws sent to Congress must be approved by the Council of Ministers. Another crucial fact is that the president also takes the legislative initiative with certain matters. The president can issue "decrees of urgency" (*decretos de urgencia*) without the approval of parliament. This mandate allows only the executive to deal with economic and financial issues during circumstances deemed of national urgency; however, this does not include taxation matters. In addition, through powers explicitly delegated by the legislature, the president may issue "legislative decrees" (*decretos legislativos*) and on a much wider range of subjects. The legislation issued by the executive has the same legal status as a law passed by Congress itself. In addition, the president is able to partially or completely veto legislation and his or her signature is necessary to enact legislation into law.

The president can dissolve Congress under special circumstances explained later in this chapter; he or she negotiates and ratifies international treaties (in some cases, without congressional authorization), regulates tariffs (task exclusively delegated to the executive), ensures internal and external security, and conducts foreign policy, along with other responsibilities. The president can act in some areas without the approval of the parliament. To do this he or she only needs the signature of at least one minister.

Presidential elections are scheduled every five years and every Peruvian citizen above the age of 18 has the right – and the obligation – to vote for the candidate of their choice. The presidential candidates run on a list with two candidates for vice-president. The candidate obtaining over half of the votes is elected as president. If no candidate achieves the threshold set by law, a second round is held between the two most voted candidates. In the second round, the candidate who gets the most votes wins. No successful presidential candidate can run again at the next presidential election; this rule has been in place since 2000.

Congressional elections take place on the same day as presidential elections and the term for members of Congress is also five years. Only registered parties are allowed to nominate candidates. According to the constitution, candidates for the presidency must be Peruvian by birth, at least 35 years of age and must meet the conditions to vote.

The elections held in 2001 were won, in the second round, by Alejandro Toledo (Perú Posible). He received 46 per cent of the votes as opposed to 40 per cent of the votes received by former president Alan García (Partido Aprista Peruano). It is worth noting that during the first electoral round, a third candidate (Lourdes Flores, who represented Partido Popular Cristiano in an electoral coalition called Unidad Nacional) lost by less than 1 per cent of the caste votes. Alejandro Toledo was the first president in Peruvian history to complete his term without a majority in Congress. Perú Posible had only 45 members in Congress, out of a total of 120 seats. Yet, he managed to form a coalition with Frente Independiente Moralizador, a party with 11 seats, which secured him majorities in Congress.

The presidential elections held in 2006 were won in the second round by former president Alan García (Partido Aprista Peruano), who received 53 per cent of the votes that were counted and deemed valid. Ollanta Humala (Union por el Perú) received 47 per cent of the votes. His profile was that of a political outsider who was invited to participate by a party that had almost disappeared in the late 1990s (UPP) even though Humala had founded his own party shortly before the elections. Again, a third candidate, Lourdes Flores, who represented the Partido Popular Cristiano in an electoral coalition called Unidad Nacional, lost by a less than 1 per cent of the votes caste.

Although it ranked only second after the elections to Congress in 2006, President García's party today holds a simple majority in Congress with 36 out of the 120 seats. A relative majority of 45 seats was actually won by the alliance between Unión por el Perú and Humala's recently formed party (Partido Nacionalista Peruano). However, the alliance broke up shortly after the elections, splitting the opposition force in Congress. Today, 23 MPs belong to the Partido Nacionalista Peruano, eight to the Unión por el Perú and eight to Unión Popular Patriótica (see tables 1 and 2). Alan Garcia's PAP, which won 36 seats, has not been able to establish a stable majority in Congress, though they receive considerable support from different parties and independent members. Unidad Nacional originally won 17 seats, but since then it has lost four members.

The constitution was introduced in December 1993. Among others, it guarantees rights to:

- life, physical and psychological integrity (article 2.1);
- freedom from discrimination in any form (article 2.2);
- freedom of conscience and religion, as well as the right to remain discrete about them, and prohibits crimes of opinion (articles 2.3 and 2.18);
- freedom of information, opinion, expression (article 2.4);
- privacy (articles 2.5, 2.9 and 2.10);
- freedom of assembly (article 2.12) and association (article 2.13);
- political participation in any form and the right to vote (article 2.17);
- personal freedom and security (article 2.24);
- be considered innocent until proven guilty (article 2.24.e).

Constitution

The Peruvian constitution states that the enumeration of rights does not exclude any others guaranteed by the constitution or those of an analogous nature or based on the dignity of man, the principles of the sovereignty of the people, the democratic state of law, and the republican form of government (article 3).

Legal mechanisms are in place to ensure people's rights are preserved. It is worth noting that recent national polls reveal that 85 per cent of the population perceives that a "poor person" "never" or only "sometimes" is able to exercise his or her rights fully; while 95 per cent of those polled perceive that a "rich person" will "always" or "almost always" be able to fully exercise his or her rights. As this suggests, a majority of people in Peru do not feel that laws are applied equally

to everyone, thus contributing to an unequal society. In fact, an important number of citizens lack identity documents and cannot fully exercise these rights. Most of these are poor and indigenous people and women in rural areas.

As has been mentioned, political participation is a constitutional right (article 2.17). However, the constitution also states that not only political parties, but any kind of association or alliance contributes to the development and the expression of people's will. It also calls for the law to "orient and ensure the democratic functioning of parties, as well as their financial transparency and free access to state owned media" (article 35).

State of democracy Liberal democracy has developed and strengthened over the years since the end of the last authoritarian regime (2000). The government generally respects the human rights of its citizens. Rights such as property and freedom of expression are fully guaranteed and exercised. Nonetheless, as will be explained later, the structural weakness of political parties prevents the proper development of democracy. Most of the 21 parties that are registered are political movements or electoral parties; they have a weak organization and few internal activities.

It is important to point out that since the return to democracy, notable social conflicts have arisen. Governments have been unable to effectively answer the legitimate demands of multiple interest groups and the underrepresented groups end up closing roads, striking, blocking access to airports, etc. In several cases, riots have yielded human victims as was the case in the Amazon region. In such cases, the effect on governance is clearly negative, as it weakens the state's ability to govern effectively.

In early June of this year, according to official information, 24 policemen and 10 native citizens died in Bagua, a northeastern city in the Amazon. Even though the situation is now calmer, there are many other protests being held in different parts of the country at present. These constant revolts, on the rise in recent years, may be seen as a sign of dissatisfaction with the system; 93 months of sustained GDP growth have not produced significant changes in daily life for most Peruvians.

Separation of powers **Executive**

The executive branch is not divided. The head of state and the chief of government is the president of Peru (*Presidente de la República*). Even though there is a chief of cabinet (*Presidente del Consejo de Ministros*, not called a prime minister), he or she is appointed by the president and can be removed as many times as the president finds it appropriate and without having to provide any justification for it. The appointment of the rest of the ministers follows the same rules. A key factor in understanding how the executive branch relates to the legislative branch is the existence of the ministerial co-signature (*refrendo ministerial*). This means that every act of the president must be counter-signed by at least one minister. This also creates a scenario in which the president is not politically responsible for his or her acts.

Legislative branch

Since the new constitution of 1993, the legislative branch consists of the unicameral *Congreso de la República* with 120 members. Congress is the representative organ of the nation. Its main duties are to create laws and oversee the other branches of government. There are almost no limits to the subjects on which it can legislate. The most important oversight mechanisms are typical of parliamentary regimes (e.g. Great Britain):

- a vote of censure or a vote of no confidence (*censura*) in a minister or the chief of cabinet; in the latter case the whole cabinet must resign. If that happens twice the president can dissolve Congress and must call for immediate elections;
- question and answer sessions (*interpelación*) in which members of Congress send questions to the minister that he or she has to answer in a public session;

- a vote of confidence (*investidura*), by which Congress accepts the appointment of each and every minister, including the chief of cabinet;
- investigation and special oversight committees.

Nevertheless, there is a lack of effective oversight mechanisms between the president and the legislature, giving immense power to the former, often even more than in other American presidential systems. The main reason behind this may very well be the decades of dictatorial and military regimes and their residual effects.

Judiciary

The judiciary is divided into three bodies (same constitutional hierarchy, different competences):

- the judicial branch (*Poder Judicial*), which decides all civil and criminal cases;
- the constitutional court (*Tribunal Constitucional*), which is the supreme interpreter of the constitution. It is the only court able to question the constitutionality of laws and treaties, and it is the final court (after the judicial branch) for deciding on violations of constitutional rights (e.g. habeas corpus, mandamus, etc.);
- the electoral court (*Jurado Nacional de Elecciones*), which decides upon electoral matters such as political parties' registrations.

Every judge has their independence guaranteed by the constitution. Historically, judges in Peru have been weak overseers of political power. They have often been accused of being politically controlled by the executive branch. Nonetheless, that situation is slowly changing thanks to a more mature democracy and higher international standards.

In addition to those already mentioned, the main responsibilities of congress include:

National assembly

- investigating and studying any subject of public interest;
- accusing and deciding if those holding the most senior positions in some public offices have committed crimes in the exercising of their duties (and therefore, channelling the case through the judicial branch). Though this is similar to common law impeachment, it differs in that the outcome must be examined by a public prosecutor before the officer can be accused;
- approving budget legislation;
- authorizing the president to travel outside the country for any reason;
- providing amnesties for crimes.

Election to the parliament is made every five years through a list system. Each voter can single out two candidates on the ballot, which is called a preferential vote. The 25 constituencies correspond to the 25 former departments (now called "regions"). There are 25 districts. The members are elected by proportional representation, with the threshold being 4 per cent. The allocation of seats takes place according to the D'Hondt method.

The election takes place on the same day as the presidential election in a single electoral ballot. The lists of candidates must incorporate at least 30 per cent men or women. Only registered parties or electoral coalitions can present lists. Immediate and unlimited re-election is allowed, though usually, only a few members achieve this. The legislative branch of 120 members might be increased to 130 in 2011.

Table 1 | DISTRIBUTION OF PARLIAMENTARY SEATS IN CONGRESS ⁽¹⁾

Party/Alliance	2006	Status	Seats prior to latest election (2001)
Unión por el Perú	45	O	6
Partido Aprista Peruano	36	PP	28
Unidad Nacional ⁽²⁾ (electoral coalition made up of Partido Popular Cristiano, Partido Solidaridad Nacional and Renovación Nacional)	17	O	17
Alianza por el Futuro (a coalition of two parties, both calling themselves fujimoristas)	13	O	3
Frente de Centro ⁽³⁾ (electoral coalition made up of Partido Acción Popular, Partido Democrático Somos Perú and Coordinadora Nacional de Independientes)	5	O	(3) ⁽⁴⁾ (4) ⁽⁴⁾
Perú Posible	2	O	44
Restauración Nacional	2	O	NR

⁽¹⁾ After elections to Congress.

⁽²⁾ Unidad Nacional made the same electoral coalition in 2001.

⁽³⁾ Frente de Centro did not make an electoral coalition in 2001.

⁽⁴⁾ Number of seats for single parties.

Abbreviations: PP = party of the president | O = party is in opposition | NR = no representation.

Source: Oficina Nacional de Procesos Electorales (www.onpe.gob.pe [last accessed on 10/07/09]).

No clear alliances were made after the elections. Thus the opposition does not articulate a common view and is not able to behave coherently. As is clear, it is a highly fragmented system, with the number of parties holding seats in Congress being quite high (12). In addition, the alliance Unión por el Perú split up shortly after the election and some members of Congress left their parties after they were elected. Two of the three parties that formed the electoral coalition Unidad Nacional decided to break it up. In 2006, after the elections, there were five parliamentary groups; in 2009 there are eight. The rules of Congress allowed them to join in new parliamentary groups, so currently, seats are distributed as follows:

Table 2 | DISTRIBUTION OF SEATS IN 2009

Party/Parliamentary group	Seats
Partido Aprista Peruano (PAP)	36
Partido Nacionalista Peruano (PNP)	23
Alianza por el Futuro (Sí Cumple, Cambio 90)	13
Unidad Nacional (PPC)	13
Unión por el Perú (UPP)	8
Unidad Popular Patriótica	8
Alianza Parlamentaria (AP, PP, SP)	7
Alianza Nacional (SN, RN, RN)	6
Independents	6
Total	120

II. PARTIES AND THE PARTY SYSTEM

II.1 Party System

The Political Parties Law no. 28094 regulates parties. It was passed in November 2003. The law regulates parties and establishes the rules for registration. Registration of a new political party requires the signature of 1 per cent of the voters who participated in the previous election. Parties are required to have committees in one-third of the state's provinces and in two-thirds of all the departments. Each committee must have at least 50 members (around 3,200 members nationwide). The statutes of the organization, which must be presented in order to achieve registration, have to contain internal decision-making proceedings, disciplinary rules, details of the rights and duties of members, etc. Parties that do not get at least 5 per cent of all votes (four per cent in the last election) do not get any seats in Congress and their registration is cancelled. In order to participate again, parties must re-apply for registration.

Legal regulation

According to Law no. 28094 party financing is regulated as follows:

Party financing

- Forty per cent public funding should be distributed equally among parties, while the rest should be distributed according to the number of votes won by their members of Congress. These funds must be spent on the party's education and training programmes, not for political campaigns. The same law states that public funds are only paid out when the economy is doing well. However, parties have not yet received public funds of this kind hitherto.
- Private funding is limited to an annual maximum of US\$30,000.
- Funding from public offices, state-owned or co-owned companies, churches, other political parties and foreign government agencies, is prohibited, with the exception of that made for education and training.

- All parties are obliged to create a treasury department in charge of fund management. The treasurer is the only one allowed access to the party's bank accounts. The party's treasury department must present an annual financial report.

However, the law has not been applied strictly. Party financing is not as transparent as the law requires.

Relevant parties The *Jurado Nacional de Elecciones* has registered 21 parties; of these ten are relevant parties according to the criteria that they must have won parliamentary seats for two successive parliamentary periods or that they force other parties to react: 1. Partido Aprista Peruano (PAP or APRA); 2. Partido Popular Cristiano (PPC); 3. Acción Popular (AP); 4. Partido Nacionalista Peruano (PNP); 5. Solidaridad Nacional (SOL); 6. Cambio 90; 7. Sí Cumple; 8. Perú Posible (PP); 9. Renovación Nacional (RN); 10. Unión por el Perú (UPP).

The number of parties has varied throughout the last five years. Even though only ten parties had presidential candidates in the 2001 elections, that number doubled for the 2006 elections. It is important to note that the parties which did not receive considerable support from voters have disappeared. In 2006, there were up to 37 parties registered, but in 2009 there are 21. Nonetheless, these 21 parties are not all politically relevant: only 12 of them have seats in Congress.

This volatility may be explained by the fact that these parties are formed by a charismatic leader who creates an organization with few or no internal democratic procedures. As a result, the party has nobody who can take his place once its few members stop supporting the original leader.

Party families Just two of the Peruvian parties are linked to international party families. APRA is linked to the Socialists International (SI), PPC to the Centrist and Christian Democrat International (CDI). If we try to assign the parties to common typologies in party sociology they may be grouped as follows:

Table 3 | IDEOLOGICAL COMPOSITION OF THE PARTY SYSTEM

	Founding year	Present situation	Situation prior to present
Social democratic	Partido Aprista Peruano (APRA), 1930	PP	O
Christian Democrats	Partido Popular Cristiano (PPC), 1966	O	O
	Acción Popular (AP), 1956	O	O
	Solidaridad Nacional (SOL), 1998	O	O
	Unión por el Perú (UPP), 1994	O	O
	Cambio 90, 1989	O	O
	Sí Cumple, 1998	–	–
	Perú Posible (PP), 1994	O	PP
	Renovación Nacional (RN), 1992	O	GJ
Nationalist	Partido Nacionalista Peruano (PNP), 2005	O	NR

*Abbreviations: PP = party of the president | O = party is in opposition
GJ = party is junior partner in the government | NR = No representation.*

For most of its history, the Peruvian republic, which started in 1821, has been controlled by military and dictatorial regimes rather than civil and democratic governments. This has prevented the development of political parties. Only three of the 21 parties have been in existence for over 40 years. Most of the parties are a result of people responding to an individual party leader who wants to run for office. *Origins of parties*

For many decades, Peruvians have developed an anti-party discourse, promoted by non-democratic governments and even by democrats defending the idea that it is possible to exercise democracy without political parties. Polls have shown high mistrust of political parties, one of the highest in the region. This has changed significantly over time. Parties are important for democratic candidate selection, yet an outsider can still play an important role. In these cases, irrelevant yet registered parties can be vehicles for these individual candidates to pursue their ends. *General significance of parties*

The relations between parties and voters are mostly unstable. Because most governments in Peruvian history have been military and dictatorial regimes, parties are quite weak and social interests are not properly channelled. Most voters are not members of political parties. However, over the past five years the relationship has become slightly more stable, partially because of the succession of democratic governments since 2000 and the slow but growing awareness of the importance of the representative role played by the members of Congress and political parties. Besides, a constitutional reform will increase the number of members by ten in order to provide representation for the provinces of Lima, and to increase representation for other districts which are underrepresented. *Voter-party relations*

II.2 Individual Parties

Once a year parties have to send their updated membership rolls to the Registry of Political Organizations. Using this information, the Jurado Nacional de Elecciones has been publishing the membership statistics online since 2004. These numbers may be distorted by the fact that most parties formed electoral alliances, so these figures correspond to the alliance rather than the individual parties' numbers. *Party membership*

Table 4 | MEMBERSHIP FIGURES

Party/Alliance	2009
Partido Aprista Peruano (PAP or APRA)	251,644
Partido Popular Cristiano (PPC)	219,238
Acción Popular (AP)	157,561
Partido Nacionalista Peruano (PNP)	27,555
Solidaridad Nacional (SOL)	7,242
Cambio 90	10,731
Sí Cumple	8,961
Perú Posible (PP)	144,678
Unión por el Perú (UPP)	28,756

Continuation of Table 4

Party/Alliance	2009
Renovación Nacional (RN)	4,434
Somos Perú (SP)	60,478
Coordinadora Nacional de Independientes (CNI)	10,713
Nueva Mayoría (NM)	6,682

Source: Jurado Nacional de Elecciones, www.jne.gob.pe (last accessed on 29/06/09).

In addition, official data shows that the membership numbers for APRA, Perú Posible and Acción Popular decreased. For the PPC and the PNP, the numbers showed an increase. However, these changes reflect slight tendencies with little real significance. Parties are linked to geographical regions more than to social strata. In fact, the last elections show that APRA won in the northern regions, as UPP (PNP) did in central and southern regions, whereas Unidad Nacional won in Lima. For example, in La Libertad Alan García (APRA) received 53.5 per cent in the first round, Ollanta Humala (UPP-PNP) received 57.2 per cent in Cusco, and Lourdes Flores (Unidad Nacional-PPC) 34.2 per cent in Lima.

Party organization In order to be registered parties must record their constitution with the Jurado Nacional de Elecciones. Peru is divided into 25 regions; each region is subdivided into provinces, which are composed of districts. Aside from the region of Lima, regional political or local groups have more representation in local elections.

Most political parties are weakly organized, even though as mentioned above, they have to have branches in the provinces. The party organization reflects the administrative organization of the country. Most of them are active only in preparation for elections. Only a few consistently have meetings to deliberate on issues of national interest, training courses, internal elections, etc.

Societal entrenchment Peru has never had a strong and cohesive party system in which parties with deep roots in society negotiate, engage in sustained alliances, make temporary agreements and assure compliance with them. While levels of association and collective action in general are high in Peru, partisan identification is low and parties are highly unpopular even by Latin American standards (Morón 2006). However, one of the legislative parties, Restauración Nacional, with only two members in Congress, is closely related to an important evangelical church. For the others, there is no relevant relationship between parties and civil society organizations.

Internal decision-making APRA and PPC have political commission meetings every week. Most decisions take place at these levels, even though the party president and leaders have an important influence. Most parties are very hierarchical and decisions are taken by the leader.

The Political Parties Act and the party statutes provide the internal democracy rules. The highest organ of the political party may decide on the mode of election for candidates in any of the following ways:

- by elections, with a universal, free, voluntary, equal, direct and secret ballot of the members and unaffiliated citizens;
- by elections, with a universal, free, equal, voluntary, direct and secret ballot of members;
- by elections, as provided by party statute.

Up to one-fifth of the total number of candidates may be appointed directly by the national party. The number of women or men cannot be fewer than 30 per cent of the total candidates.

As explained before, most of the parties are hierarchical, in part because they do not have an organization. The organized parties have their own decision-making structures including a national congress for dealing with particular issues.

Most Peruvian party names can be described as catchphrases because of the decline in the ideological content of their programmes. This is not the case with the Partido Popular Cristiano, which is an ideological party and a member of the Centrist Democrat International. Neither is it true of the Partido Nacionalista Peruano (PNP), which subscribes to more of a nationalist ideology.

Stability of party ideology/ programmes

One of the requirements for registering a political party is that the party has to present its ideas, principles and objectives, and the vision it has for the country. In addition, the law requires political parties to deliver their manifesto for government (*Plan de Gobierno*) when submitting their lists. Policy programmes for government are very general and are usually too long for the voters to read. Although they are used in interviews, the main users of the plans are the press and the parties' opponents. According to the level of party organization, policy programmes are prepared by a special committee or by different technical teams. All parties used to have an official responsible for their manifesto for government, yet some have ceased to do this in recent years.

During electoral campaigns, TV advertising, interviews with the media, billboards and meetings are the main means of communication with voters. Between election periods, communication is reduced and almost the only way voters communicate with politicians is through interviews in the media. Members of Congress, however, frequently travel to their districts.

Communication

Due to a lack of internal democracy within political parties, the main and almost only way in which politicians hear about their voters are from the elections. Recently, politicians have tried new approaches such as web 2.0 (blogs, video logs, Twitter, Facebook and other social networks available on the internet). During electoral campaigns, the main parties and candidates hire advertising agencies and image consultants.

Nevertheless, in some areas of the country there is no internet access, electricity or telephone communication, which presents a major obstacle for people's access to information and proactive participation in the democratic process. Other problems concerning effective communication have to do with the lack of the multicultural policies which are very necessary in a multi-ethnic society such as Peru.

When it comes to internal communication there is a lack of resources, which is not related to economic issues, but rather to the lack of internal democracy in political parties and an unconsolidated party system. Political leaders seldom directly communicate with members of their parties. Indeed, in some cases, as soon as a candidate is elected he or she ceases to have any contact with party members. In some extreme cases, leaders within the same party do not even establish a means of cooperating with each other, hence the rapid rate of party dissolution and the emergence of new leaders who repeat the cycle.

About 65 per cent of the MPs are members of a party. Congressional rules allow the formation of parliamentary groups for members of the same party, members of different parties and even for independents or others who have resigned from their original party or parliamentary groups. All the parliamentary groups have the same rights and prerogatives. There is therefore no incentive to stay in a particular political party or parliamentary group. The degree of and MP's independence from the party depends on how strong and organized the party is and if members of parliament need the party organization to be re-elected in the future. If the party is organized between elections, the political committee will meet every week with the parliamentary group to debate important issues

Relationship between party and parliamentary groups

on the parliamentary agenda. This situation is specifically true of the Partido Aprista Peruano (APRA) and, in some cases, Unidad Nacional (PPC). Some other MPs will be close to their parties but will still act independently in their decisions. Others, although registered as members of political parties, are very independent of them because parties are only important during elections.

Nevertheless, it is important to take into consideration the lack of unity and discipline in the course of action taken by each of the MPs in the same party. With the exceptions of MPs who belong to Partido Aprista Peruano (APRA), PPC, Fujimoristas, and members of the PN, it is not unusual for members of the same party to vote differently from each other on some key issues, with the exception of the members of the Partido Aprista. Even though under some circumstances most parties are able to reach an internal consensus, frequently the party cannot control its members' final decision.

III. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

In 2006 (the year of the national elections), only 52 per cent of Peruvians said there could be no democracy without parties, whereas only 54 per cent thought a national assembly was mandatory in order to maintain a democratic system. On the other hand, 23 per cent thought that a democracy could work without a national assembly and without political parties. Then again, the United Nations Programme for Development reported that 90 per cent of Peruvians blame politicians for the malfunctioning of democracy and that 35 per cent have no idea what democracy means. The same poll, prepared months before the national elections held in 2006, revealed that 36 per cent were not familiar with national political organizations (Pease 2008).

One can conclude from these figures that Peruvians do not feel represented by political parties. On the contrary, a majority of national parties operate almost exclusively in Lima or in other big cities and have major difficulties establishing themselves nationwide (Tanaka 2004). On the other hand, volatile political movements are unable to build proper relationships with voters and are a long way from proposing political programmes and alternatives that could distinguish them from the rest.

In part, all this is because a "sudden collapse of the party system occurred [during the 1980s], opening the way for political outsiders. The parties were unable to handle their internal conflicts, which resulted in schisms. As a result, traditional parties were discredited in the eyes of the voters" (Tanaka 2006).

Though heterogenic because of their strength and internal organization, political parties in Peru could be qualified as:

- parties with a party tradition, i.e. those that have somehow managed to survive for a considerable period of time (30 years or more) and try to offer distinctive political programmes. We can place Partido Aprista Peruano (APRA), Partido Popular Cristiano (PPC) and Acción Popular (AP) in this category;
- parties without a party tradition, i.e. those that have emerged since Fujimori's dictatorship during the 1990s and continue to emerge to this day. They might be characterized by their diffuse political profiles and are built upon a personalized leader. We can place, Perú Posible (PP), Partido Nacionalista Peruano (PNP), Unión por el Perú (UPP), among others, in this category.

Peru has never had a strong and cohesive party system in which parties with deep roots in society negotiate, engage in sustained alliances, make temporary agreements and assure compliance with them. While levels of association and collective action in general are high in Peru, partisan identification is low and parties are highly unpopular even by Latin American standards (Morón 2006). A recent study has concluded that "it's hard to say that the party system is currently consolidated and institutionalized. On the contrary, its main characteristics are high levels of party renovations (because of their short life) and instability" (Tanaka 2004).

There are no solid relationships with civil society organizations and only poor means of communication with the voters. Besides, the life of a considerable number of parties is no longer than one or two elections. In addition, in the presidential election held in 2006, 85 per cent of all participating parties were new. Also, roughly two thirds of the parties that had participated in the previous elections had ceased to exist at all or did not participate in the elections of 2001 and 2006. The presidential election which took place in 2001 had similar results: three quarters were new parties and again three quarters of the parties that had participated in the two previous elections had ceased to exist at all or did not participate.

Furthermore, one would have to go back to the 1980s to find the last time parties clearly set out political ideas that distinguished them from one another. In the present situation, no strong debates are held and the ideological content of parties' programmes decline. Authoritarian leaders, for almost the entire twentieth century, constantly demonized "traditional" parties and the way in which they dealt with state matters, arguing they did not have the capability to lead efficient governments. This, in addition to the inability of political parties to find new means of representation, led to their disintegration and being regarded with distrust.

In order to remove the obstacles to the institutionalisation of party democracy, parties must increase trust, representation, efficiency and cohesion. To do this, they need to improve their intermediary and representative functions, provide effective solutions to problems, attract political elites and professionalize themselves.

The state must provide funds to solve problems of financing, facilitating the presence of parties outside the capital. Some legislative action might help to strengthen political parties. First, an electoral reform that eliminated the preferential vote might increase party unity and give more responsibility to the parties in terms of candidate selection. Second, a reform in Congress regulations should be considered which should state that parliamentary groups can be formed only with members of political parties or electoral coalitions that run together for elections. Members that resign would not be able to form new parliamentary groups. This should improve the relationship between parties and parliamentary groups.

It is necessary for the Jurado Nacional de Elecciones to be rigorous in checking the requirements to form new parties. Many of them do not have proper organisation or activities, but are only voting machines that can be put at the service of any outsider.

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