Peru

Definition: Peru from Collins English Dictionary

1 a republic in W South America, on the Pacific: the centre of the great Inca Empire when conquered by the Spanish in 1532; gained independence in 1824 by defeating Spanish forces with armies led by San Martín and Bolívar; consists of a coastal desert, rising to the Andes; an important exporter of minerals and a major fishing nation. Official languages: Spanish, Quechua, and Aymara. Official religion: Roman Catholic. Currency: nuevo sol. Capital: Lima. Pop: 29 849 303 (2013 est). Area: 1 285 215 sq km (496 222 sq miles)

Summary Article: Peru

From The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide

Country in South America, on the Pacific, bounded north by Ecuador and Colombia, east by Brazil and Bolivia, and south by Chile.

Government Peru is a multiparty democracy, with a presidential executive. The 1993 constitution provides for a president, as head of state and head of government, elected by universal suffrage for a five-year term, renewable once (but not consecutively), and a single-chamber legislature, the 130-member national congress (Congreso), similarly elected by proportional representation from a single national list of candidates for the same length of term. The president appoints a council of ministers, or cabinet, and a prime minister, and has the power to veto legislation. Voting is compulsory for citizens aged 18 to 70 years old.

History The Chimu culture flourished from about 1200 and was gradually superseded by the Inca empire, building on 800 years of Andean civilization and covering a large part of South America. Civil war had weakened the Incas when the conquistador Pizarro arrived from Spain 1531 and began raiding, looting, and enslaving the people. He executed the last of the Inca emperors, Atahualpa, 1533. Before Pizarro’s assassination 1541, Spanish rule was firmly established.

Independence A native revolt by Túpac Amarú 1780 failed, and during the successful rebellions by the European settlers in other Spanish possessions in South America 1810–22, Peru remained the Spanish government’s headquarters; it was the last to achieve independence 1824. It attempted union with Bolivia 1836–39. It fought a naval war against Spain 1864–66, and in the Pacific War against Chile 1879–83 over the nitrate fields of the Atacama Desert, Peru was defeated and lost three provinces (one, Tacna, was returned 1929). Other boundary disputes were settled by arbitration 1902 with Bolivia, 1927 with Colombia, and 1942 with Ecuador. Peru declared war on Germany and Japan February 1945.

Dictatorships Peru was ruled by right-wing dictatorships from the mid 1920s until 1945, when free elections returned. Although Peru’s oldest political organization, (the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA)), was the largest party in Congress, it was constantly thwarted by smaller conservative groups, anxious to protect their business interests and who allied themselves with the military. APRA was founded in the 1920s to fight imperialism throughout South America, but Peru was the only country where it became established.

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Military rule In 1948 a group of army officers led by General Manuel Odría ousted the elected government, temporarily banned APRA, and installed a military junta. Odría became president 1950 and remained in power until 1956. In 1963 military rule ended, and Fernando Belaúnde Terry, the joint candidate of the Popular Action (AP) and Christian Democrats (PDC) parties, won the presidency, while APRA took the largest share of the chamber of deputies seats.

After economic problems and industrial unrest, Belaúnde was deposed in a bloodless coup 1968, and the army returned to power led by General Velasco Alvarado, forming a Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces. Velasco introduced land reform, with private estates being turned into cooperative farms, but he failed to return any land to Indian peasant communities, and the Maoist guerrillas of Sendero Luminoso (‘Shining Path’) became increasingly active in the Indian region of southern Peru.

Economic and social crisis Another bloodless coup, 1975, brought in General Morales Bermúdez. A new constitution was adopted 1979. Elections were held for the presidency and both chambers of Congress 1980 and Belaúnde was re-elected. Belaúnde embarked on a programme of agrarian and industrial reform.

However, in the 1980s, Peru faced a worsening economy, with rising inflation and external debt, and mounting political violence. Sendero Luminoso became more active, along with another rural insurgency group, the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA). Also, illicit coca drug cultivation spread in the eastern Andes.

Hyperinflation under García In 1985, in the midst of this economic and social crisis, the young Social Democrat, Alan García Pérez, leader of the APRA, was elected president in what was Peru’s first exchange of power between democratically elected leaders in 40 years. The APRA also won a majority in parliament.

President García stood out against the USA by declaring his support for the Sandinista government in Nicaragua and criticizing US policy in Latin America. He cleansed the army and police of some of its old guard, persuading 1,400 to retire by 1986. He also introduced price and exchange controls and considered nationalizing banks and insurance companies, but relented in the face of opposition.

However, the economic situation worsened, with the level of foreign debt and inflation rising sharply. In 1989 the International Development Bank suspended credit to Peru because it was six months behind in debt payments and the annual inflation rate exceeded 7,000% in 2000. There were frequent changes to the currency and during the García presidency 1985–90 Peru’s GDP fell by 20%.

Fujimori in power Concerned about the increasing terrorist threat from Sendero Luminoso, the dire economic situation, and government corruption, voters turned in the April 1990 presidential election to a little known mathematician-turned-politician, Alberto Fujimori, the son of Japanese immigrants and leader of a new right-of-centre party, Change 90. He defeated the novelist Mario Vargas Llosa, candidate of the centre-right Democratic Front coalition, in a run-off race.

President Fujimori instituted a drastic economic adjustment and privatization programme in an attempt to halt Peru’s inflation and to pay foreign debt. These measures brought down inflation to 139% in 1991, but generated opposition. In August 1990 there was a failed attempt to assassinate Fujimori. In April 1992, fearing a military coup, Fujimori allied himself with the army, suspended the constitution, and sacked half of the country’s top judges, declaring them to be corrupt. He justified these actions as needed for a crackdown against rebel leaders and drug traffickers, but they brought international
criticism (including a suspension of US humanitarian aid) and a challenge from his deputy, Maximo San Roman, who branded him a dictator. Fujimori said he would return to democratic rule within a year.

Rebel leader arrested Fujimori's crackdown on terrorism in the countryside had success in 1992, when the Sendero Luminoso leader, Abimael Guzman Reynoso, and other high-ranking members were arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment. In July 1994 Fujimori issued an ultimatum to the guerrillas to surrender within four months under a so-called 'repentance law'. By the late 1990s the crackdown had greatly reduced the amount of guerrilla activity, but there were large-scale atrocities by security forces and government paramilitary groups, and human-rights violations: an estimated 69,000 people died in the conflict between left-wing insurgents and Fujimori's government.

Constitutional reform In November 1992 the governing coalition won most seats in elections to a new unicameral congress, and in January 1993 the constitution was restored. A new constitution, allowing President Fujimori to seek re-election, was approved by referendum and adopted in December 1993.

Re-election of Fujimori In April 1995, with the economy improving, Fujimori was re-elected, easily defeating his main challenger, former United Nations secretary general Javier Pérez de Cuéllar. The controversial granting of an amnesty to those previously convicted of human-rights abuses, June 1995, was seen by some as an attempt by the president to win favour with the military. In March 1996 Dante Cordova resigned as prime minister in opposition to the rapid pace of free-market reforms being introduced by President Fujimori.

Hostage crisis In December 1996 Marxist MRTA guerrillas besieged the Japanese embassy in Lima and took hostage around 500 diplomats, politicians, and business leaders. They demanded the release from prison of a similar number of their supporters, including their leader Victor Polay, and for President Fujimori to reverse his free-market economic policies. Over the ensuing weeks, several groups of hostages were released, leaving 72 still captive by January 1997, but Fujimori refused to bow to the rebels' demands and in April 1997 the siege was dramatically ended and all the 15 hostage takers were killed by specially trained government forces. Although one hostage died in the rescue, the decisive actions enhanced Fujimori's reputation.

In October 1998 Peru signed a deal with Ecuador to end a 157-year long frontier dispute.

Disputed presidential elections 2000 In early 2000, despite the 1993 constitution limiting presidents to two terms, President Fujimori sought an unprecedented and constitutionally unsound third term in office, on the basis that the two-term limit had been imposed after he was already well through his first term. In May 2000, he was re-elected for a third term amid claims from the opposition candidate, his supporters, and from election monitors from the Organization of American States (OAS), that the counting system had been fraudulent. The US State Department branded the victory invalid, saying democracy was under serious threat.

Fujimori pledged democratic and economic reforms and appointed an opposition leader, Federico Salas, as his new prime minister. However, soon Fujimori was engulfed by a bribery scandal involving Vladimiro Montesinos, chief of the national intelligence service, who was shown in a video broadcast on television bribing a member of congress to change sides. Montesinos fled the country to escape an arrest warrant and, faced with calls for him to resign, in September 2000 Fujimori agreed to hold new presidential elections in April 2001, in which he would not stand.
In October 2000 the vice-president resigned in opposition to Fujimori’s plan to tie the election to an amnesty for human-rights abuses. In order to prevent a coup, Fujimori dismissed the armed forces chief and three top generals. However, Congress voted to oust Fujimori on grounds on ‘moral incapacity’ and its president, Valentin Paniagua, became acting president in November 2000, while Fujimori fled to Japan.

Paniagua moved quickly, appointing Pérez de Cuéllar as prime minister, purging the military of generals linked to Montesinos, and establishing, in January 2001, a Truth Council to investigate the disappearance of 4,000 people during the 1980s and 1990s ‘dirty war’ between security forces and leftist guerrillas.

In June 2001 Vladimiro Montesinos was arrested in Venezuela and extradited to Peru to face trial on charges of arms- and drug-dealing, embezzlement, directing death squads, and money-laundering. Efforts to extradite Fujimori were frustrated by his claims to have Japanese (as well as Peruvian) citizenship. But he was eventually arrested in 2005 during a visit to Chile and was extradited in 2007 to Peru, where he was sentenced to 6 years' imprisonment for bribery and abuse of power and, in 2009, to 25 years’ imprisonment for his role while president in authorizing a ‘death squad’ that killed 25 people.

**Toledo wins the presidency** The June 2001 presidential elections brought to power the Peru Possible party candidate, Alejandro Toledo, an economist of Andean-Indian descent, who narrowly defeated, in a fair contest, ex-president, Alan García Pérez, who had recently returned to Peru from exile. After the turmoil of the Fujimori years, Toledo provided stability which enabled Peru to rebuild its democracy, with Congress becoming more assertive. He launched a drive against government and judicial corruption and continued with economic liberalization. However, the economy remained depressed, leading to protests and strikes, most seriously in May 2003, which forced Toledo to impose temporarily a state of emergency. Sendero Luminoso also became more active and, in March 2002, was responsible for a car-bombing near the US embassy in Lima, which claimed nine lives.

In August 2003 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission reported to Congress on the violence of the period 1980–2000. It reported that over 69,000 people were killed in the violence and 43,000 orphaned, and blamed Sendero Luminoso as the main perpetrator of human-rights violations (assassinations, kidnapping, and torture), followed by the armed forces and then the MRTA. It recommended that human-rights violators be tried and those that suffered, chiefly rural Peruvians of Indian descent, receive compensation.

**2006 elections brings García back to power** The June 2006 presidential election was won, in a run-off, by the populist former president Alan García Pérez, leader of the Peruvian Aprista Party (PAP), the successor to APRA. He captured 53% of the vote to 47% for the nationalist, and former military commander, Ollant Humala, of the left-wing Union for Peru, which finished ahead of PAP in the congressional elections.

García had pledged in his presidential campaign to fight poverty, but also said he had learned from his past errors and would pursue a more orthodox economic policy and build international partnerships. He appointed a former banker, Louis Carranza, as his finance minister, cut the salaries of many state workers and agreed to stand by a free-trade agreement with the USA which had been negotiated by Toledo. Peru developed closer commercial ties with energy-rich Brazil. President García also instituted a populist drive against organized crime and drug trafficking. However, by 2009 coca growing, cocaine

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production, and drug trafficking contributed 17% of the country’s GDP and in 2013 the UN was to report that Peru had become the world’s main grower of coca leaves, covering 64,000 hectares of land.

The government's tough economic programme sparked violent protests in July 2007, but although Peru became one of the world's fastest growing economies, with annual GDP growth averaging 7% in 2007–11, based on foreign investment in the country's mineral wealth, corruption scandals involving cabinet members led to falling popularity for President García.

**State of emergency imposed** In mid-2009 a political crisis over oil and gas exploration in the Peruvian Amazon led to the imposition of a state of emergency and the replacement of the prime minister. This followed campaigns by environmentalists, human rights activists, and Native Americans against giving foreign energy companies the rights to drill for oil and gas in the Peruvian Amazon rainforest which escalated into two months of civil disobedience. President García responded, in June 2009, by declaring a state of emergency and sending in the military. Two days of bloody clashes followed, claiming the lives of 34 indigenous people and 22 soldiers. In the aftermath, Yehude Simon, who came from the centre-left Peruvian Humanist Party, resigned as prime minister and the congress repealed the decrees that had allowed the exploration.

**Humala wins power** Ollanta Humala won the June 2011 presidential election by defeating Keiko Fujimori, the right-wing daughter of the jailed former president, by a margin of 51% to 49%. Humala, who during his army career had fought in the jungle against Sendero Luminoso guerrillas in the 1990s and had led an abortive military rebellion against Alberto Fujimori in October 2000, had presented himself as a left-wing populist in the mould of Venezuela's Hugo Chávez when contesting the presidency in 2006. He had since moved towards the centre, campaigning as a social-democrat who pledged to continue his predecessor's free-market economic policies and encourage foreign investment, but would distribute a greater share of the country's wealth to the poor.

Humala selected a centrist cabinet, with Miguel Castilla, a pro-market economist from the García administration, as finance minister. To coordinate social programmes, he created a ministry of development and social inclusion, and in September 2011, introduced a new profits tax on mining and oil and gas projects.

However, like his predecessor, President Humala faced social unrest from indigenous farmers who opposed mining projects which threatened their water supplies. Protests against the Conga mine project in the northern department of Cajamarca led, in December 2011, to the imposition of a state of emergency there in 2012 and troops being sent in. In addition, Humala appointed as prime minister Oscar Valdés, a former lieutenant colonel who had been his defence minister, raising concerns about a 'militarization' of his government.

**A succession of prime ministers** President Humala made frequent changes to his government. In July 2012, he dismissed Prime Minister Valdés following the death of five Conga protesters, replacing him with Juan Jiménez Mayor, the former justice minister and human rights lawyer. Jiménez was replaced in October 2013 by César Villanueva, who had been president of the northern region of San Martín. He was replaced in February 2014 by René Cornejo Diaz, the housing minister, who resigned in July 2014 after a political scandal and was replaced by Ana Jara, the labour minister.

In April 2015 Jara resigned as prime minister after the opposition-dominated Congress censured her and tabled a no-confidence motion over allegations that Peru’s intelligence agency had spied on leading
politicians and business people. Pedro Cateriano, formerly the defence minister, took over as prime minister, but opinion polls showed President Humala's public support had fallen to 25%.

Kuczynski is narrowly elected president Constitutional term limits prevented Humala from standing for re-election. Instead, the candidate of the ruling centre-right Peruvians for Change (PPK) party was the 77-year-old former businessman Pedro Pablo Kuczynski who had been prime minister in 2005–06. In the April 2016 first round of the presidential election, Kuczynski finished second, with 21% of the vote, well behind Keiko Fujimori of the right-wing Popular Force (Fuerza Popular: FP) party, who won 40%.

Fujimori was a polarizing figure and in the second round, in June 2016, she narrowly lost to Kuczynski by 40,000 votes. However, her FP secured a landslide victory in the concurrent national congress elections, winning 71 of the 130 seats, while PPK won only 18 seats.

An experienced economist, who had worked for the World Bank in the 1960s and had twice been Peru's finance minister, Kuczynski took over as president in July 2016. He appointed as prime minister Fernando Zavala, a business executive who had been economy and finance minister in 2005–06.

During 2016–17 the FP-controlled congress blocked key elements of President Kuczynski's programme, including his attempts to reform the country's inefficient judiciary. Then on 13 December 2017, during an investigation across Latin America into the activities of the Brazilian construction firm Odebrecht, evidence emerged that suggested Odebrecht had paid US$5 million in 'advisory fees' to a firm owned by Kuczynski when he was Peru's finance minister 2004–05. FP deputies in congress seized on this and, on 15 December 2017, started impeachment proceedings against President Kuczynski, with charges that he was morally unfit for office for allegedly lying about not receiving such payments.

On 21 December 2017 the impeachment proceedings came to an end when they narrowly failed to receive the two-thirds majority required. This was caused by the abstention of ten FP deputies, including the former president Fujimori's son Kenji. Three days later, on 24 December 2017, President Kuczynski pardoned (on health grounds) and released the 79-year-old Fujimori, who had served less than half his 25-year prison sentence.

Kuczynski's controversial pardoning and release of Fujimori provoked two days of popular protests in Lima and resignations from the PPK. Its timing raised suspicions that it may have formed part of a secret deal to secure FP support to end impeachment proceedings.

However, in February 2018 a Lima court ruled that Fujimori should stand trial on new charges that were not covered by the pardon. These related to Fujimori's alleged role in the killing of six farmers by death squads in 1992.

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