Editorial

Puno is one of the culturally richest and economically poorest regions of Peru. This Newsletter depicts its political-electoral landscape.

First, data shows that regional elections can be won with a very much reduced voting percentage. In fact, in 2006 they were won with less than 20% of votes, the lowest percentage obtained by a regional government.

This corresponds to the fragmentation of electoral population. In Puno, 10 different political organizations were elected to 13 Puno province municipalities. The 93 district municipalities were distributed among 20 organizations (that is, each one got on average four and a half districts).

This fragmentation shows how incapable political organizations are to aggregate and articulate their interests. This is even more serious in a region with such high poverty and inequality. In fact, representation fragmentation only benefits large economic interests.

Besides, there is a break in Peru between national political parties and regional or municipal organizations. National parties that got elected to Congress did not attract even half of the Puno ballots in the Regional and Municipal Elections. A few months after the Presidential Election, Partido Aprista Peruano did not get a single Puno province municipality and only 15 out of the 93 districts. Partido Nacionalista Peruano, whose candidate won the general elections first round, only got 2 of the 13 province municipalities and 3 of the 93 district municipalities. Unión por el Perú got 11 districts. Perú Posible just got 1 district. And Unidad Nacional - Partido Popular Cristiano, which were third in the national elections, got nothing in Puno.

The Peruvian political system is threatened by these representation divorces and breaks. It is urgent to reconcile national, regional and municipal politics. It is also necessary to approach politicians to Peruvian people's daily lives. As Héctor Aguilar Camín, a Mexican writer, said, it is necessary to realize that “the task of politicians is solving people's problems and not creating problems to people.”

The imagination and creativity of all Peruvians are required to face this challenge. The National Elections Board (Jurado Nacional de Elecciones) is helping us to think about the true problems and look for feasible solutions by promoting information. Thanks for that.

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The 2006 Regional and Municipal Elections (ERM 2006) results show a heterogeneous political outlook in Puno. A total of 21 political organizations hold province and district municipalities in the Region. This information is alarming since it shows the high political fragmentation level in the country. This means that political organizations reach power with very few endorsing ballots. Thus, although Avanza País – Partido de Integración Social was the political party that won the 2006 regional elections, it did not achieve similar results in any Puno Province and District Councils (SEE F1).

Political fragmentation and low ballot percentage obtained by elected authorities are two factors that generate a marked trend towards conflict generation. The monitoring of social conflicts by the Ombudsman confirms this trend. In its August 2009 report not only does it point at Puno as one of the regions with most conflicts, but it also reports a number of disputes between the Puno Regional Government, province authorities (Huancané, San Román) and districts (San Juan del Oro), which were elected with less than 30% of valid ballots in Puno.

This calculation is based upon 13 provinces and 93 districts. Desaguadero, Ollachea and San Gabán districts were excluded because their regional 2006 elections were annulled.
The proposal made by Hernán Fuentes, the Region’s president, to achieve Puno’s autonomy is contained in the Avanza País – Partido de Integración Social political party government plan, which establishes that one of the regional government outcomes is “political, administrative and economic autonomy”.

Death has been the most recurrent cause for authority vacancy in the Puno Region in the last two terms.

The Amantani district in the Puno province is one of the Peruvian districts where more revocations have occurred: on process per municipal government term since the law came into force.