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Migration, Gender, and Politics

The 2006 Peruvian Elections Abroad

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Emigrant support for 2006 Peruvian presidential candidate Lourdes Flores (the choice of the conservative Unidad Nacional coalition) was enough to win her the first electoral round abroad, but this tendency was not reflected in Peru. Data gathered during a 2006 study in Spain highlight the importance of gender and ideological reasons for understanding the electoral behavior of Peruvian migrants. Peruvian emigrant communities have the potential to play a crucial role in Peruvian politics not only in electoral choices but also in the form of political “remittances” flowing through these increasingly influential transnational social spaces.

Keywords: Peruvian politics, Migration to Spain, Gender and ideology, Political remittances, Transnational social spaces

Voting in national elections from abroad is now possible for many citizens across the world and is a topic of debate in many Northern and Southern nations. This is related to the development of democratic regimes, the increase in international migration,

globalization, and technological advances (Calderón Chelius, 2003; IDEA/IFE, 2007). In the case of Peru, the 1979 Constitution not only allows but requires that all Peruvians vote, whether they are in Peru or outside it.¹ At the same time, the possibilities for migrants to participate in elections in their host societies are gradually opening up. To make it possible for foreign-born residents (even those originally from countries outside the European Union) to participate in local elections, some European countries no longer require that the voter be a citizen; this could soon be the case for Peruvians in Spain. Therefore current electoral processes are fertile ground for the study of the construction of “transnational citizenships” and their impact on both sending and receiving nations (see Fox, 2005).

This article focuses on the determining factors and impact of the emigrant vote. It analyzes the 2006 electoral participation of Peruvian emigrants residing in Spain and explores ongoing changes with regard to the political inclusion and representation of women in and outside Peru. We suggest that migration has contributed to the questioning and, to some extent, the abandonment of traditional gender models and that this has affected domestic policy, given the emergence of social and political transnational fields connecting Peruvians all over the world. This would explain presidential candidate Lourdes Flores’s success in the first electoral round of 2006 and the support she received from Peruvian migrants. Nevertheless, support for Flores must not be seen as entirely the result of changes in gender norms: it is also affected by external factors and conditions in the receiving nation such as the availability of candidate information and the influence of new social norms and values.

The concept of “transnational social spaces” provides a useful framework for an analysis of the emigrant vote, since it allows us to focus on the way experiences within and outside of Peru and ideas that are transmitted internationally affect not only migrants but also those who stay at home (Levitt and Glick-Schiller, 2004). One aspect of this process becomes evident when we look at the direct or indirect communication maintained among family members and compatriots who reside in different countries. Within this communication we can identify the existence of “political remittances”—changes in political identities, demands, and practices associated with migration (Goldring, 2004: 805).² Another aspect to highlight would be the ways in which migrants abroad can sometimes tip the balance in favour of a specific candidate, party or lobby.

These processes have not been sufficiently studied from the point of view of the increasingly important Peruvian emigrant community or from a gender perspective. Women's civic and political roles have been largely invisible in the context of Peruvian migration abroad, even within those migration flows that are highly feminized such as those toward the Southern Cone and Europe. Existing studies on transnational migrant politics tend to portray an image of very little participation or none at all by women. For instance, studies of Latino migrant populations in the United States suggest that men usually dominate political activities involving the country of origin, especially the more institutionalized ones, while women tend to participate less and focus more on conditions in the receiving nation (Goldring, 2001; Itzigsohn and Giourguli-Saucedo, 2005; Jones-Correa, 1998). However, the research we carried out in Spain did not reveal any significant gender differences in the attention that migrants gave to Peruvian politics. As argued in the article, this may be a reflection of the gender-based and political changes

that have taken place in Peru over the past few years as well as the transformative power of emigration.

This paper is based on the results obtained from a quantitative and qualitative study of the political behavior and attitudes of Peruvians in Spain. Most of the information presented here was gathered during the 2006 Peruvian presidential campaign. The study included a representative survey of the Peruvian electorate residing in Spain consisting of 415 questionnaires administered in four places: the electoral districts of Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, and Seville. We also compiled documents and personal opinions of Peruvian emigrants before, during, and after the election and checked messages and conversations registered in electronic forums and other Peruvian networks in Peru and abroad.

GENDER AND POLITICS IN PERU

One of the most noteworthy elements of contemporary Peruvian politics is the considerable increase in the visibility and presence of women even in the highest political circles. Female participation in the public sphere has been growing since the 1970s in connection with several factors, among them, according to Blondet (2004: 22) the modernization process that the country experienced, which “allowed women access to education, health and family planning services, employment, and the vote”; the 1980s crisis, which forced women to get paid jobs and make larger financial contributions to the family economy, thus breaking traditional gender roles; the development of the women’s social movement, especially after the crisis, which helped to create “a trend of public opinion in favor of equality between men and women”; and the role played by

international organizations in promoting debate and policies opposing discrimination and violence against women.

Peruvian women who could read and write received the right to vote in 1955, but only in 1979 was this right made universal and democratic, encompassing all Peruvian citizens older than 18. It was during Alan García's first term (1985–1990) that two women became government ministers for the first time in Peruvian history. Toward the end of Alberto Fujimori's administration (1990–2000), the percentage of women serving as ministers and congresswomen dramatically increased, mainly because of the 1997 Ley de Cuotas (Law of Quotas) (Del Águila, 2004). This law forced parties to include a minimum of 25 percent of women in their electoral lists, increasing to 30 percent in 2000.³ Even so, according to Blondet (2004), the Fujimori administration witnessed the emergence of a paradox. On the one hand, women took a more prominent position in formal politics and the state introduced more initiatives in favor of or targeting women;⁴ on the other, by achieving highly visible and demanding positions in an undemocratic context, women adopted politically authoritarian attitudes while remaining submissive toward their leader and other male colleagues, thus reducing their field of action (Vargas, 2000).

Not necessarily related to the above developments, there has also been an increase in the presence and protagonism of women in informal politics since the 1980s, especially in grassroots movements such as soup kitchens, the Vaso de Leche (Glass of Milk) initiative, and mothers' associations (Barrig, 1994). These movements involve women from the new urban settlements generated by Peru's internal migrations, those who have been most harmed by the nation's social and economic crisis. As they became

organized, they took to the streets, issued demands, and became intermediaries between the population of these new settlements and local authorities. However, during the 1990s these movements became partially institutionalized, opening the way for ambivalent interactions with the state. The pragmatism espoused by many of the leaders and group members, tied to the economic and political benefits that could be obtained, led to the establishment of a clientelist system between grassroots organizations and political parties (Blondet, 2004). Nevertheless, and despite the fact that this system continued after Fujimori, this seems to have contributed little to increasing the presence of women with grassroots experience in government, given that the quotas have benefited elite women most of all (Craske, 1999).⁵

The experiences of the past decade have made politicians realize that electoral appeals to women and marginalized ethnic groups can be beneficial. In fact, following on from Fujimori, his daughter Keiko, who now leads her own party, the Alianza por el Futuro (Alliance for the Future—AF), has continued with the huge task of providing assistance in poor neighborhoods that may have helped make her the most popular congressperson in the 2006 elections. Equally, during the 2001 elections and the early part of his administration (2001–2006), President Alejandro Toledo took advantage of his indigenous roots and appearance (often publicly criticized by certain sectors of the population but similar to those of the majority of Peruvian voters) to present himself as the new national savior (Berg and Tamagno, 2006).

THE 2006 ELECTIONS AND EMIGRANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE GENDER-AND-POLITICS DEBATE

THE 2006 ELECTIONS FROM A GENDERED PERSPECTIVE

In a political and socioeconomic context different from that of 2001, the 2006 elections introduced some novel elements. On the one hand, disappointment with previous administrations and the influence of political processes taking place in other countries in the region led to a campaign focused on sharper ideological stances and class and gender alignments. This can be seen in the two candidates who made it to the second round. While the Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (American Popular Revolutionary Alliance—APRA), led by Alan García, embodied a moderate stance involving gender proposals centered on moral values rather than individual rights and a watered-down neoliberal program made palatable by state intervention, Ollanta Humala's Unión por el Perú (Union for Peru—UPP) was centered on a plural and diverse subject, expressly defended indigenous and popular interests, and acknowledged the social role of women, although it failed to question the basis of the patriarchal system (Dador and Llanos, 2007).

On the other hand, for the first time Peru had three female presidential candidates, representing different versions of the female condition and feminist aspirations, especially in the area of women's sexual and reproductive rights. Their performance was also quite different depending on their ethnic and class alignments. Martha Chávez, standing for AF, Keiko's party, represented a continuation of paternalism and the construction of clientelistic relations with grassroots women from the social movements of the 1990s. Both she and Keiko, true heiresses of Fujimori, had a strong following among working-class women. Susana Villarán of the left-wing Concertación Descentralista (Decentralist Alliance—CD) had already served as minister for women's affairs during the transitional government, but her progressive, intellectual, and feminist

political stance had alienated her from the middle and lower classes. Finally, Lourdes Flores of Unidad Nacional (National Unity—UN) represented a right-wing alliance of liberals, conservatives, and Christian democrats. She almost made it to the second round and had a deep impact on urban middle- and upper-class women voters and the communities abroad.

The rest of this article focuses on Flores's success among emigrant voters and the impact that this had in Peru. Inside Peru, Flores was attacked not only for her class status and ideological stance but also because models of women different from the socially accepted ones are not yet generally accepted by the majority of people. Being independent, single, and childless, she was criticized by both conservatives (even some members of her own party) and the popular classes. On the one hand, there was speculation about her presumed "homosexuality"; on the other, there were doubts about her ability to understand and support working-class women because she did not know what it meant "to suffer in childbirth and raise children" (comments spread on the Internet). These suggestions had little effect, however, on the opinions of Peruvians residing in Spain, judging from our fieldwork there. Ignoring criticisms inside Peru and aware of the electoral potential of a moderate or selectively feminist discourse, Flores, who in 2001 had ventured only timid slogans and arguments centered on gender differences, expanded her discourse in 2006 and made specific promises to women's organizations. Appealing to the purported natural feminine honesty that she embodied, the propaganda distributed by her party (in Peru as well as in Spain) stressed that she had "given her word as a woman," reinforcing the idea that women's promises are more

credible than men's. These gender, class, and ethnic stances adopted during the 2006 electoral race affected not only Peruvian resident voters but also emigrants.

PERUVIANS ABROAD AND THE 2006 ELECTIONS

The Peruvian diaspora involves a number of nations and continents, the largest communities being found in Latin America, North America, Southern Europe, and Northeast Asia (Paerregaard, 2008). Although these migration flows have a long history, they intensified in the 1980s and diversified not only in destination but also in composition (sex, age, social and geographical provenience, etc.). While migrants initially headed for the United States, Venezuela, and Argentina, they eventually turned also to Spain, Italy, Japan, and, most recently, Chile. Although both men and women participate in migration, women have outweighed men in some destination countries like Spain, owing to the demands of their labor markets, mainly focused on the domestic and caretaking service sectors (Escrivá, 1999). With regard to its social composition, we can see the establishment of family and communal migration chains, which would explain the predominance of certain origins and social strata. For example, many Peruvian emigrants residing in Italy come from rural Andean areas, whereas those in Spain tend to come from urban and coastal areas (Tamagno and Escrivá, 2006).

These Peruvian emigrants undertake economic, social, religious, and political activities that incorporate, and address, elements of both origin and host societies (Escrivá, 2004). Among the latter, we want to highlight their participation in the Peruvian elections. Of the estimated nearly 2 million Peruvian emigrants, 457,000 were registered to vote in the 2006 elections; 63.5 percent of these actually voted.⁶ⁱ The vote distribution

included some 70,000 in the United States, 51,400 in Argentina, 48,000 in Spain, 35,6000 in Italy, 28,700 in Chile, and some 10,000 in Japan.⁷

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

In accordance with Peruvian law, emigrant votes are incorporated in the results for the district of Lima. Lima houses one-third of the Peruvian adult population, and the impact of some 200,000–300,000 votes is, in the end, negligible. And yet, during the 2001 and 2006 elections, the slim margin of difference between the candidates that ended up in second and third places after the first round meant that the votes of emigrant Peruvians could have played a crucial role. In 2006 Flores received 19.97 percent of the vote in the first round, some 60,000 votes less than Alan García, who moved on to the second round. This narrow margin was partially caused by emigrant votes, most of which supported Flores (see Table 1). If it had been up to emigrant voters, Flores would have won the first round by a wide margin and become the first woman president of Peru, as will be shown next in the analysis of the votes that came from Spain.

THE PERUVIAN ELECTORATE AND ELECTIONS IN SPAIN

Spain has become one of the main destinations for Peruvian emigrants, after the United States and Argentina, according to official data. During the past 10 years, the number of Peruvian nationals in Spain has increased tenfold, resulting in the country's third-largest Latin American community after Ecuadorians and Colombians. On December 31, 2008, the Peruvian community was estimated at 126,697 individuals, slightly over half of whom were women.⁸ These data do not include at least some 20,000

Peruvians with dual citizenship and, according to estimates,⁹ a smaller number of undocumented migrants that equally make up part of the Peruvian electorate in Spain.¹⁰ This electorate totaled over 80,000 individuals registered by February 2008.¹¹ Our survey indicated that at least 20 percent of those who voted in the 2006 elections also held Spanish citizenship.¹²

Many of those with Spanish citizenship are women, since the sex distribution of migrants has varied over time. Women made up about 70 percent of the Peruvian community during the early 1990s, but there has been a gradual increase of the male population until today, when there is almost a total balance between the sexes. This can be explained both by processes of family reunification led by the women and by the opening up of new jobs in sectors such as construction, transport, repairs, and other services attractive to male immigrants (Escrivá, 2004).

Peruvian immigrants in Spain tend to reside in the metropolitan areas of Madrid and Barcelona, and the majority of events promoting electoral participation and political campaigning in 2006 took place in these two cities. Following on from the conversations held with several political leaders, we learned that the three main Peruvian political parties had national and regional representatives in Spain. In addition to this, the APRA sent delegates from Peru to campaign throughout Europe, which partly reflects the fact that this is the only Peruvian party that has a long history of organization both at home and abroad (Tanaka, 2005; 1999). The APRA elite was exiled during much of the twentieth century and has maintained ties with similar parties such as the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party—PSOE), and many of its affiliates and sympathizers formed part of the migration flows to Spain in the 1990s. This

could largely explain its predominance among Peruvian emigrant associations in Spain such as the two new federations established in Madrid and Barcelona, and in the consultative councils organized since 2002 (Berg and Tamagno, 2006). In contrast, the representatives of the UN coalition led by Flores and, above all, of Humala's UPP, constituted themselves *ex professo* (for the occasion) during the electoral process, despite the fact that their sympathizers in Spain included people with extensive experience in Peruvian political parties of the right and left. In the case of Humala's, more than a few had actually left Peru as political refugees.

Nevertheless, the distribution of votes in Spain, at least in the first round, and data from our fieldwork show that ultimately the presence of certain APRA leaders and the party's organizational tradition had little influence on the process. There was an evident rejection of the two male candidates and a preference for the honest, modern, and fresh image presented by Flores. Additionally, Peruvian emigrants—especially women—identified with the candidate, whom they described in some Internet forums as “qualified and a fighter” and a “self-made woman.” These perceptions were supported by party representatives in Spain and some media outlets,¹³ which spread the idea that female leadership could bring about the desired change and emphasized the candidate's determination, governing abilities, and able performance.

GENDER, MIGRATION EXPERIENCE, AND ELECTORAL SUPPORT FOR FLORES

Lourdes Flores won most of the emigrant votes during the first electoral round, more than she garnered in Lima, her main stronghold. Her popularity among emigrants can be

explained by a diversity of factors, including her trustworthy, fighter image, the international support for her, and her perceived closeness to the interests of the Peruvian expatriate community. This, in turn, is the result of many processes tied to the migration experience. First, we have the leading role played by Peruvian women within the country and in the migratory flows, which has contributed to the questioning of traditional gender patterns, and the recent international examples of female politicians, particularly in the receiving nations. A 33-year-old Peruvian woman who had resided in Spain for five years said, “I voted for Lourdes because she was a woman and not because of her program. . . . There were other female candidates, but I definitely wasn’t going to vote for Martha Chávez . . . and Susana Villarán was way behind in the polls. So Lourdes had a better chance and represented change at the time; there were very few women politicians in Latin America!”

There was also a rejection of traditional Peruvian society and politics, which were largely in the hands of males and operated according to a clientelist system. While this had led some Peruvians to emigrate, they remained willing contributors to the desired change, using strategies learned from their political experiences in the receiving countries. A 29-year-old Peruvian male who had resided in Spain for five years stated, “I voted for Lourdes Flores because that meant a change in the political direction of the country, giving women opportunities. . . . In such a *machista* country that means breaking molds.”

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN EMIGRATION AND THE IMPACT IN PERU

Although, as we have argued, the social vindication of women and their role in Peruvian politics were on the rise before the time of massive emigration, in the case of

Spain the latter has contributed to the reinforcement of these processes, at least according to several of our interviewees. A 36-year-old Peruvian woman with 15 years of residence in Spain said, “I’ve always thought that we women are worth a lot, and migration has confirmed this opinion, given what can be seen here regarding women with a more prominent role.” The numerical as well as social and political protagonism that Peruvian women have acquired as a result of emigration and the way this has led to the questioning of traditional gender roles is made evident in the statements of spokeswomen for various working groups at the conclusion of a Barcelona meeting of some 60 women, some of them organization leaders, in March 2008:¹⁴

Speaking of experiences as women and migrants here, we should emphasize the fact that we have achieved economic and social independence.

Migration provided us with security and a more equal relationship with our partners, since being here also changed their way of thinking.

As workers, it took some time for society to realize we were educated women.

We have learned to walk alone, we have acquired mobility, and self-assurance.

We have grown as people; we have learned the value of things and tolerance.

As a consequence of migration, we have bettered ourselves.

We have acknowledged our personal growth.

As mothers, we have strengthened our bonds with our children and are in constant communication with them. We are closer to them than those who have not moved.

We have lost our fear.

Although there has been a long debate about the losses and gains experienced by women through migration (see Jolly and Reeves, 2005), this and previous studies (Escrivá, 1999)

show that, in the Peruvian case, migration has led to a new view of women's abilities and capacities— a view that is shared by both migrant women and men. For example, many Peruvian women residing in Spain participate in or even lead migrant and mixed organizations. These experiences of organizing themselves and of personal achievement through international migration would have effects similar to those experienced by Peruvian women participating in the grassroots movement in Peru.

This may, in turn, affect not only emigrant communities but also inside Peru, since the growing importance of economic remittances has led to the portrayal of these women—especially during the early years, when they were pioneers and outnumbered men—as familial and national “saviors” who have made a personal sacrifice (Escrivá, 1999). In fact, this idea thrives in spite of efforts to blame emigrant women for all their families' woes (a stance that, as we have seen, does not correspond to that of the emigrants themselves). In the longer term, the fact that these women have led the migratory projects, both at the individual and family levels, and served as pillars of the family economy through their incorporation into the labor market abroad has increased their ability to negotiate with other family and community members, giving them a substantial amount of power over issues that affect them (Escrivá, 2000). Examples include the implementation of more efficient laws and policies against gender-based violence, better distribution of domestic work among men and women, and more de facto equality and better opportunities in the fields of education, health, work, and politics. But these concerns are not exclusive to women. Our survey indicated that emigrants in general are concerned about the lack of attention paid to women's issues in Peru; 80 percent of our interviewees, regardless of sex, espoused this opinion.

The influence that these Peruvian residents in Spain wishing for some political changes may have on electoral results and public policy in Peru remains to be seen. Their preferences have yet to impact electoral results in a significant way, and political remittances are hard to quantify. There is, however, little doubt regarding the existence of these remittances and their increasingly rapid and global transmission. Our study showed that 60 percent of the individuals surveyed got in touch with family and friends in Peru during the presidential campaign and exchanged information and opinions regarding political options and candidates. Some had even addressed these subjects while in Peru visiting their families the year before.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE RECEIVING SOCIAL CONTEXT AND OTHER EXTERNAL FACTORS

The environment and social organization of the place of residence can reinforce female leadership by influencing migrants' view of gender roles in governmental structures. In Spain the number of women in government (in both elected and nonelected positions) has increased considerably during the past decade, and now includes congresswomen, ministers (more female than male), and vice presidents. This, combined with the increasing example of women presidents around the world, both in the Latin American region (Chile, Argentina) and in Europe (Germany), has molded Peruvian attitudes in general and especially those of migrants residing abroad. In the words of a Peruvian woman representative of a migrant association in Spain, "If this and other countries have women in some of the highest political posts, why shouldn't we? . . . Why should Peruvian women be less? . . . That is why I supported Lourdes and would do so again."

In order to explain the success of UN in Spain and, generally speaking, countries with Peruvian immigrants, we must also take into account political and ideological considerations other than gender issues. Besides increasing their sympathy for a female figure, the migration experiences of voters reinforced or transformed their attitudes toward UN's economic and social project. In some cases, Flores's emigrant supporters already belonged to UN's expected electorate—middle-class Limeños residing in Spain—but we also recorded ideological changes among emigrants from other regions and social classes, including among the numerous former APRA sympathizers, many of whom come from the departments on the northern coast and now reside in Barcelona. In our survey, almost half the voters said that they had completely changed or at least partially modified their political ideology since arriving in Spain. We were able to establish several reasons for this.

One was awareness of and support for the workings of the receiving society, which might be governed by conservative parties. UN got more than twice the votes in the region of Madrid, governed by a conservative party, than in Barcelona, which, like the Autonomous Community of Catalonia, is governed by the Socialist Party. The second was the migrants' upward social mobility, often attained through individual sacrifice and hard work. A woman interviewed outside the electoral college in Madrid said, "Back in my country I used to vote for the left, but not here in Spain; I have realized that the discourse of the left is not good for me; we should not give to the poor, as I thought in Peru, because the problem is bad distribution; we should give opportunities, prove that you want to get ahead and that you're worth it, that's how it is. I have had to work hard here."

Additional explanations for Flores's success among emigrants, even when facing other female candidates, were lack of information regarding alternative candidacies, disillusionment regarding previous political formulas, including dictatorial and semidictatorial regimes, and fear of repeating the mistakes of past left-wing Peruvian governments, which many associate with terrorism and social and economic disaster. Our fieldwork indicates that the major parties were perceived as incapable of offering successful democratic alternatives.¹⁵ A Peruvian man who had resided in Spain for 10 years said, "Martha Chávez: no way, I would never vote for what she represents, *fujimorismo*. . . . and I did not vote for Susana Villarán because I knew next to nothing about her. . . . Some time later I learned that Susana supported a gay rights movement march in Peru; if I had known I would have surely voted for her."

THE SEARCH FOR NEW POLITICAL AND GENDER PATTERNS

Following on from the above, there are other data showing a growing mistrust of the (mostly male) traditional political class among Peruvians in general and certain sectors of the population in particular. Of the Peruvians we interviewed in Spain, 94.5 percent said they believed that Peruvian politicians in general showed little or no concern about citizens' problems. Additionally, 35.1 percent of men and 54.8 percent of women thought that women could be better politicians than men. This would certainly lead many emigrant Peruvians, especially women, to see Flores as different from and better than her male counterparts or other female candidates who could be identified with old political traditions.

This favorable opinion regarding female political participation coincides with attitudes that have been taking root in Peru itself, as shown by the 1997 survey carried

out by the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos and the later opinion polls undertaken by Latinobarómetro.¹⁶ It is linked with the image of the female politician in some feminist discourses that argue that, in contrast to men, women stand for values such as kindness, collective interests, and pacifism. This was the source of the slogans used by Flores's campaign, which advertised her "word as a woman." In short, lack of confidence in politicians and the real or imagined ability of women to occupy governmental positions influenced the vote of the Peruvian female electorate as well as that of many male voters both in Peru and especially abroad.

CONCLUSIONS

This article attempts first to explain the success of the 2006 Peruvian presidential candidate Lourdes Flores, a member of the conservative UN, as a result of the gender and ideological transformations experienced by Peruvian men and women before and after migration abroad. Second, we have argued that the personal characteristics and experiences of migrants have an impact not only on their sociopolitical attitudes and behaviors but also in Peru through the exercise of the emigrant vote and other, less tangible forms of political remittances that circulate in the transnational spaces created by migration. In order to demonstrate this we have analyzed the context surrounding the 2006 Peruvian elections in both Peru and Spain, when a woman candidate almost reached the presidency (or at least the second electoral round), and the political preferences and practices of Peruvian emigrants in Spain. The latter make up about 15 percent of the total overseas Peruvian electorate, and their vote distribution is similar (although the APRA carries a different weight) to that in the two major receiving nations, the United States

and Argentina (see Table 1). A survey carried out in several Spanish cities and additional qualitative fieldwork indicate that many Peruvians, male and female, saw Flores as a politically honest and viable figure in opposition to male politicians and certain other women. At the same time, she was perceived as an example of personal improvement achieved through hard work, and this found an echo in the struggles and experiences of migrants—especially migrant women, many of whom had pioneered Peruvian migration flows abroad.

In spite of emigrant support, Flores's popularity was not widespread in Peru, as confirmed by the fact that the second electoral round involved two men, one of them with broad experience in traditional politics. However, the impact that emigrant political stances may have on the nation has yet to be studied in detail. On the one hand, and given the slim margin between candidates at the end of the first round during the past two elections, we must consider the possibility that the growing number of emigrants could play a vital role in future elections. Also, as is happening in other countries in the region, overseas voters will eventually be provided with one or more congressional seats. On the other hand, while the evidence for it is limited, the influence that emigrants could wield, more or less intentionally, over Peruvian society in the form of social and political remittances should not be underestimated. The transnational political space created by migration is not active only during elections but involves continuous formal and informal political and social activity in which Peruvian women, especially those residing abroad, are becoming increasingly visible and experienced.

Recent political, economic, and social events show that there is a growing interest in, and a clearer view of, the role that Peruvian emigrants currently play in the country

and may play in the future. Whether this will translate into stronger electoral and political influence remains to be seen. Above all, we shall see if these gender and political transformations based in the experiences of migrant men and women lead to a new way of conceptualizing politics in Peru, away from traditional patterns. Additionally, we have yet to examine to what extent this will contribute to increased gender equality in Peru not only in politics but in all social and economic areas. Although the presence of women in politics does not guarantee the development of projects and initiatives that differ from those promoted by men, we agree with Buvinic and Roza (2004) that it does place women's issues on the agenda and thus fosters equality and democracy.

TABLE 1

Votes in the First Round of the 2006 Presidential Elections,
Peru and Selected Foreign Countries

Candidate	<i>Percentage of Valid Votes</i>				
	Peru	Foreign Total	United States	Spain	Argentina
Humala (UPP)	31	12.6	9.9	12.1	16
García (APRA)	24.5	16.9	10.7	21.3	28.5
Flores (UN)	23.2	58.2	70.8	55.2	41.2
Abstentions	10.5	36.5	50	32.3	23.3
Blank and null votes	16	21	14.2	24.4	29.4

Source: ONPE (n.d.).

NOTES

1. All Peruvians older than 18 and younger than 70 who are registered in their corresponding districts (including consular ones) must vote or incur a fine.
2. This concept is derived from Levitt's "social remittances" (1998), which refer more widely to the collection of information, knowledge, and experiences transmitted by individuals who are immersed in social networks that transcend the physical spaces delimited by nation-states.
3. Compared with other countries in the region, Peru (whose congress had a mere 10 percent female component in 1997) has successfully implemented gender quotas. By 2007 the nation was among those with the most female ministers and congresswomen in the region, in the latter surpassed only by Argentina (38 percent) and Costa Rica (36 percent) (Llanos and Sample, 2008: 23).
4. For example, with the creation of the Ministerio de la Mujer (Women's Ministry) in 1995, the law against intrafamilial violence in 1996, the Equal Opportunities Plan in 2000–2005, and the (highly controversial) birth control and reproductive health campaigns.
5. The high cost of electoral campaigns and racial, class, and sexual prejudices continue to hinder grassroots women's access to higher positions (Acurio, 2007: 42–43). Women leaders who enter formal politics through their work in municipalities, districts of new villages, and working-class neighborhoods, such as a well-known female councilor in the Lima district of Comas, are the exception rather than the rule.
6. This percentage is quite high compared with those of other 2006 national elections with emigrant participants such as Mexico's (less than 1 percent of voters) and Colombia's (37.8 percent of those registered). This is partially explained by the fact that voting is compulsory in Peru. Nevertheless, the number of voters might have been higher were it not for the difficulties faced by undocumented residents and those who live far from urban centers to register in consulates and attend several electoral rounds every five years. These limitations would be less of an issue in Spain (*vis-à-vis*, for example, the United States) given the small number of undocumented migrants and the high urban concentration of Peruvians in Spain (see Table 1).
7. See the web page for the Oficina Nacional de Procesos Electorales (National Office of Electoral Processes—ONPE), <http://www.onpe.gob.pe/>.
8. These are registered foreigners or holders of valid residence cards, according to the Observatorio Permanente de la Inmigración (Permanent Immigration Observatory), <http://extranjeros.mtin.es/es/InformacionEstadistica/index.html>.
9. Data taken from the CLANDESTINO project, <http://www.eliamep.gr/en/category/migration/>.
10. The high rate of naturalized citizens is due to the fact that Spain and Peru have a dual-citizenship agreement dating back to 1959. In addition, Latin Americans can request Spanish citizenship after at least two years of continuous legal residence or after one year if married to a Spanish citizen. The comparatively lower number of undocumented Peruvians has to do with a continued policy of recruitment in places of origin and successive regularization processes taking place in Spain since the 1980s.
11. See ONPE, <http://www.onpe.gob.pe/>.
12. The percentage of naturalized individuals among the groups surveyed increases noticeably among those who have resided longer in Spain: only 4 percent for those

residing from 1 to 5 years, 43 percent for those with between 6 and 10 years of residence, and 84 percent for those who have spent 11 years or more in the country.

13. According to our survey, 52 percent of voters residing in Spain researched web sites or other material on Peru to learn about the candidates and their programs. Their sources included the Peruvian media as well as Latin American and Spanish newspapers that reported thoroughly on the electoral process.

14. These statements were selected and transcribed from the recording of this meeting in Barcelona. The whole commentaries from the spokeswomen lasted about an hour.

15. The tendency to vote conservative from abroad is echoed by the experience of other Latin American voters (e.g., Ecuadoreans and Colombians). Some see this as an indication of common sense and a type of political learning that rejects idealism and populism (Fernández, 2006).

16. A study by International IDEA points out that the generally positive perception of women in Peruvian politics has aided the implementation and fulfillment of electoral quotas. In comparison, the negative view of female politicians in the Dominican Republic can be partially blamed for the scarcity of women in that nation's executive and legislative branches of government (Llanos and Sample, 2008).

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