

## Daughter Of Narco-Hunting Ex-Prez On The Verge Of Leading Peru

J.P. Carroll

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The second largest cocaine-producing country in the world is holding its presidential election Sunday and just might elect the daughter of a former president jailed for ordering death squads.

Keiko Fujimori is the daughter of former Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori, who lead Peru from 1990 to 2000. President Fujimori's presidency sharply divides Peruvian public opinion, because despite reviving the country's economy and defeating a Marxist terrorist group, he fled Peru in disgrace.

Alberto Fujimori fled to Japan — where he could reside since his parents were Japanese citizens — with millions of dollars and stayed there until 2005, when he wanted to make a comeback in Peruvian politics. Fujimori was detained in Chile while trying to get to Peru, and subsequently sent to his home country in 2007 to face trial for human rights abuses. Fujimori was later found guilty of these human rights abuses and abuse of power, and remains in prison to this day.

Keiko, became the first lady of Peru from 1994 to 2000, accompanying her father to official events after her parents split up. She completed her undergraduate studies at Boston University, graduating with a business degree, followed with a MBA at Columbia University. She was later elected to Peru's unicameral Congress in 2006, getting the most votes for a member of Congress in Peruvian electoral history.

Keiko ran for president of Peru in 2011, but her father's legacy cast too long a shadow over her candidacy and she lost. If Keiko were to win the presidency Sunday, the first gentleman of Peru would be an American — her husband Mark Villanueva from New Jersey. The potential first couple of Peru met at Columbia University.

The presidential election is expected to be a nail-biter despite Keiko's political party, Popular Force, which has 73 out of 130 seats in the Peruvian Congress. Keiko is running neck-and-neck with former Prime Minister Pedro Pablo Kuczynski — with 50.3 percent of the vote to Kuczynski's 49.7, according to the polling firm Gfk's Thursday report.

Kuczynski was a U.S. citizen until November 2015, when he renounced his citizenship to avoid controversy over a potential conflict of interest when running for office. The former prime minister called Miami's Coconut Grove neighborhood home for many years, obtaining U.S. citizenship in 1999.

The ex-American is capitalizing on the controversy surrounding Keiko's father's presidency, supporting mass demonstrations against the potential first woman president as many fear a return to dictatorial-style rule. Experts contacted by The Daily Caller News Foundation admitted that anything could happen Sunday.

"It could go either way. I think it will be a very close election," Ian Vásquez, director of the libertarian-leaning Cato Institute's Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity and a Peruvian-American, told TheDCNF. He added when it comes to U.S.-Peruvian relations, they "are going to be fine either way."

"The quality of governance under Kuczynski is likely to be, likely to have more confidence in the institution and quality of governance under a Kuczynski presidency," according to Vásquez. When it comes to Fujimori, Vásquez believes that, "the danger of her being elected is that too much political power would be concentrated in her hands because she would already have a majority in congress. I think it's generally better to have a divided government in democracies in order to ensure checks and balances, and that's especially so in countries with weak institutions." Kuczynski is also on the Advisory Board of The Cato Institute's Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity.

Peter Schechter, the director of the Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center of the non-partisan Atlantic Council, also told TheDCNF the election would be very close. "I saw a poll in the last two days, there is a 0.7% difference. It's too close to call."

When it comes to the economic policies of the two candidates, according to Schechter, both are, "Very open market, free trade oriented." Schechter is a longtime international consultant advising clients on reputational risk in politics and communications, with a focus in Latin American affairs.

Ultimately what differentiates the two candidates in Schechter's opinion is the "concern people have with Fujimori's last name [the legacy it carries], and the uncertainty people feel regarding whether she will be respectful of human rights issues and administrative justice issues." Schechter explained that it's quite possible that Fujimori's promises of being tough on crime may seem too tough in light of her father's bloody legacy. Fujimori has said on the campaign trail, "There's been no leader to face the [crime] problem head-on — well, here I am."

Schechter said when it comes to the war on drugs, Fujimori, "has been much more verbal about the need to crack down on organized crime, and that includes drug dealing and drug trafficking. And that's why people have tended to vote for her and voted for her in the first round, they want someone to deal with this issue."

Vásquez, on the other hand, believes "Both candidates have promised to pursue the drug war."

Keiko's campaign was rocked by a joint Univision News and America TV report that showed the secretary general of Keiko's political party was investigated by the DEA. Peruvian Congressman Joaquin Ramirez Gamarra is accused of laundering \$15 million on Fujimori's behalf during the 2011 presidential election, according to a DEA informant who spoke with Univision News and America TV.

Schechter does not believe Keiko will release her father from prison if elected, despite her stating multiple times over the years she believes her father was wrongfully imprisoned. “A lot of people say she’s going to release her dad, but I doubt that. She’s a pretty intelligent woman and she’s been pretty successful in her own right. She’s created a political party that is now the majority party in Congress.