

Amid deepening crisis of class rule, Peru saddled with eighth president in 10 years

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On the night of February 18, the Peruvian Congress, meeting in extraordinary session, voted to install a new president to replace José Jerí, the eighth Peruvian head of state in barely a decade. Jerí, a right-wing politician, has been ousted after just four months in office, the latest president to fall victim to charges of corruption and personal scandal. Only time will tell whether he joins four of his predecessors who are behind bars.

Neither Jerí nor his immediate predecessor, Dina Boluarte, won popular elections, but rather were imposed in what amount to parliamentary coups by the Congress. José María Balcázar is the latest to be installed by the Congress as interim president. His main task will be to oversee the presidential elections set for April 12 and serve as a caretaker president until a new one is inaugurated in July, if he lasts that long.

Balcázar, 83, has past ties to Peru Libre, the party of ousted and imprisoned president Pedro Castillo, a former teachers union official who was removed from office in December 2022 after attempting to block a trumped-up, US-backed congressional impeachment.

This has led to a vicious media propaganda campaign aimed at casting Balcázar, a conservative ex-judge, as a “communist.” Ominously, the Naval Union, representing retired Navy officers, issued a public statement warning that the government had been captured by “Marxist-Leninists.”

It has been suggested that the aim of the right-wing parties that control Congress was to install Balcázar as a political foil, allowing their candidates to disassociate themselves from a supposedly “left” government under conditions in which the approval ratings for both the executive and legislative branches of government have rarely risen beyond the low single digits.

For his part, Balcázar has done everything possible to dispel any illusions that there will be anything “left” about his presidency. His first official meetings were with the US ambassador, the head of Peru’s central bank and business leaders of the National Society of Industry.

Most consequentially, he chose the right-wing economist and former presidential candidate Hernando de Soto as his prime minister.

De Soto, a long-standing asset of US imperialism and the International Monetary Fund, is the founder of the right-wing think tank Instituto Libertad y Democracia (ILD), whose operations were funded by the National Endowment for Democracy, the US agency created to carry out overtly the kind of political influence interventions previously performed covertly by the CIA. In the 1990s he was a chief adviser to President Alberto Fujimori and is considered the author of the “Fujishock,” a drastic economic austerity package that plunged large sections of the Peruvian population into poverty

overnight by scrapping subsidies, currency and price controls along with most social spending. The package was imposed by dictatorial measures, with troops in the street.

At the last minute on Tuesday, however, Balcázar announced without explanation that his prime minister will be Jerí’s ex-minister of the economy, Denisse Miralles, a long-time technocrat in Peru’s financial institutions, and not De Soto.

For his part, De Soto claimed that his replacement came in response to disagreements over cabinet appointments and that Balcázar had failed to pass a “trial by fire” when he demanded that the interim president make changes. He also made statements that Balcázar had been “kidnapped” by business and political interests and issued warnings of the “Venezuelaization” of Peru. The new cabinet includes seven members who are holdovers from that of Jerí. Balcázar supporters have charged that De Soto attempted to change cabinet appointments after they had been agreed upon.

The “Chifagate” scandal and the US-China conflict

In a country where 70-85 percent of Congress is facing criminal charges and past presidents have been jailed over multi-million-dollar kickback schemes, many involving the Brazilian construction giant Odebrecht, the known offenses for which Jerí was ousted seem relatively minor. He is accused of violating protocol governing the scheduling of meetings outside the presidential palace. These meetings took place in a “chifa”—the name used in Peru for Chinese restaurants, giving rise to the scandal known as “Chifagate.” The meetings were with Zhihua Yang, a businessman and fixer with connections to Beijing. Trying to hide his identity with a hoodie that covered part of his face, Jerí did not realize he was being filmed and that videos of the illicit meeting would go viral on social media.

Congress also accused Jerí of holding nighttime meetings with young women at the presidential palace. At least five of them were hired by the legislature with monthly salaries between 6,000 and 11,000 soles (approximately US\$1,800 to US\$3,300).

That the issue precipitating Jerí’s fall centered on purportedly illicit Chinese influence is hardly a coincidence. Peru has become a focal point in the drive by US imperialism to roll back China’s economic influence and reassert Washington’s hegemony in Latin America under the so-called “Donroe Doctrine.”

Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) in Peru reportedly stands at US\$30 billion, far outstripping the US, which accounts for just

US\$6.7 billion. China, meanwhile accounts for 36 percent of Peruvian foreign trade, and the US just over 14 percent. Meanwhile, in Peru as in the rest of South America, China has far overtaken the US as the biggest trading partner.

In November 2025, President Boluarte and Chinese President Xi Jinping inaugurated the Chancay maritime mega-port. This project, financed by Chinese capital (Cosco Shipping, 60 percent) and Peruvian capital (Volcan, 40 percent), represents a logistical milestone in connecting South America directly with Asia and reducing shipping times, with Brazil set to develop both highway and rail connections from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Washington has not concealed its displeasure. The State Department's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs stated on social media that it was "concerned about latest reports that Peru could be powerless to oversee Chancay, one of its largest ports, which is under the jurisdiction of predatory Chinese owners," adding: "We support Peru's sovereign right to oversee critical infrastructure in its own territory. Let this be a cautionary tale for the region and the world: cheap Chinese money costs sovereignty."

In a direct challenge to the Chinese port facility that epitomizes Washington's attempt to offset Chinese economic influence with US military power, the Pentagon has approved \$1.5 billion in funding to upgrade and relocate Peru's largest naval base from the port city of Callao to a new site closer to the capital, Lima, just 50 miles north of Chancay. This comes amid the unprecedented use of US military force in the attack on Venezuela, which is aimed at reducing the oil-rich country to the status of a US semi-colony.

The corrupt and impotent Peruvian bourgeoisie, incapable of adopting any independent position, is torn between its economic interests tied to China and its dependence upon US imperialism in matters of "national security," i.e., counterrevolutionary repression.

Washington's pressure is aimed at seeing Peru join the Latin American countries that have elected far-right presidents committed to putting the full weight of the crisis onto the shoulders of the working class and lining up with US imperialism in its preparations for war with China: Milei in Argentina, Katz in Chile, Paz in Bolivia, Noboa in Ecuador, Bukele in El Salvador and Asfura in Honduras.

The latest poll by the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos (IEP) reflects the alienation of the broad masses of the Peruvian population from all of the existing capitalist parties in an election year with 36 presidential candidates. It puts Rafael López Aliaga, the far-right businessman and former Lima mayor in first place with 14.6 percent, while second place is given to Keiko Fujimori, the right-wing daughter of the former dictator, who rose from 8.1 to 10.3 percent in the last month. In third place with 5.3 percent is Alfonso López Chau, an economist and academician who describes himself as "center-left" and has, predictably, been denounced as a communist by his far-right opponents.

Peruvian ruling class fears movement from below

Underlying the unrelenting political crisis of the Peruvian capitalist ruling class and its virulent anti-communism is an overwhelming fear of a movement from below by the working class and oppressed masses in a country plagued by massive social inequality, with nearly 30 percent of the population living in poverty and the majority

laboring without basic benefits or protections in the so-called informal sector. The supposedly strong Peruvian economy, characterized by a boom in metal prices and record bank profits, has done nothing to ameliorate the conditions facing the vast majority of Peruvians.

Recent months have seen a series of strikes by transport workers over the carnage inflicted by politically connected extortionist mafias, with 20 drivers killed per week so far in 2026. Youth marching under the banner of Gen Z have clashed with riot police, and healthcare and construction workers have staged strikes and protests.

The fundamental challenge confronting this emerging movement of social struggle is the absence of a revolutionary leadership in the working class.

For decades, Stalinists of the Peruvian Communist Party undermined proletarian struggles through their dominance of the General Confederation of Workers of Peru (CGTP) and subordination of workers' struggles to bourgeois parties and governments. For their part, Pabloite revisionism and its main representative in South America, Nahuel Moreno—who died in 1987—bear responsibility for thousands of deaths and historic defeats by promoting petty-bourgeois guerrillism, Castroism and alliances with bourgeois nationalists as substitutes for the building of revolutionary parties in the Latin American working class. This paved the way to the US-backed military dictatorships that dominated the region over the course of two decades beginning in the 1960s.

In Peru, at the beginning of the 1980s two currents emerged: Izquierda Unida (IU) and Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path, SL). The former chose the electoral road, winning the mayoralty of Lima (1984–1986) with its leader Alfonso Barrantes providing a "left" face for bourgeois rule. The latter, a Maoist tendency, launched a guerrilla war that was met with murderous state repression, costing some 70,000 lives, most of them from Indigenous communities, over the course of two decades.

The bitter lessons of this history must be assimilated by a new generation as part of the struggle to forge a new revolutionary leadership in the working class based upon the perspective of international socialism and Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution. This means building sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) in Peru and throughout Latin America to unite the struggles of workers in these countries with those of workers in the US and internationally.



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