

Peru's President Boluarte visits China amid domestic crises and global tensions

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Peruvian President Dina Boluarte led a high-ranking delegation to the People's Republic of China for a seven-day visit from June 23-30. Accompanied by nine ministers, Boluarte held talks with Xi Jinping and other Chinese state officials, as well as with companies that have major investments in Peru.

Since 2014, China has displaced the US as Peru's main trading partner. The South American country is highly dependent on the global demand for commodities, mainly minerals. Currently, Peruvian exports to China are three times higher than those to the US.

Boluarte's trip takes place amid a longstanding political and institutional crisis in Peru. Two days after she left the country, human rights NGOs officially requested the International Criminal Court to investigate the massacre of 49 civilians during the December 2022 and January 2023 protests that occurred following the overthrow and imprisonment of former President Pedro Castillo.

The NGOs had to appeal to international courts because domestically, Boluarte and former Prime Minister Alberto Otárola, who resigned in March, have received protection from prosecution from the ultra-right faction in Congress and the security forces. Boluarte has clearly entered into a criminal pact of mutual coexistence with the far right, giving it free rein to assault and restructure the branches of government in exchange for blocking investigations and lawsuits against her administration and allowing it to remain in power.

The far-right faction is made up of individuals from different parties (Fuerza Popular, Renovación Popular, Avanza País, Alianza por el Progreso) that constitute a minority of Congress. However, their power and influence come from their role as the direct

representatives of big capital in Peru, the army, foreign investors and the US Embassy. They guarantee the control and use of the legislative power in favor of these forces and at the expense of the working class and rural poor.

Boluarte not only depends on these scoundrels in the legislature to keep her from being impeached and going to jail, like her predecessor, but the far right also dictates her agenda. Lacking a party and a caucus—or, for that matter, the skills necessary to govern a country—Boluarte defers to Congress, which largely defines her economic policy, not the Ministry of Economy itself.

The masses of Peruvian working people are overwhelmingly hostile to the criminal character of the Boluarte administration and the dirty machinations of Congress. Neither has any popular legitimacy. Boluarte has a 5 percent approval rating—the lowest for any President since 1980—while Congress has 8 percent approval. When former President Martin Vizcarra constitutionally dissolved the Congress in 2019, facing another crisis with a similarly reactionary legislature, there was significant popular support and mass marches celebrating his decision, and congresspeople were physically attacked in the streets.

Castillo attempted to capitalize on the enormous political vacuum created by the distrust in all capitalist institutions. A one-time rural teacher and union leader, Castillo came to power thanks to the overwhelming support at the ballot box of the impoverished highland regions, to which he appealed, with promises to improve living standards. However, it soon became clear that his promises were false and that he was, in reality, the pawn and Trojan Horse of the former governor of the Junín region, Vladimir Cerron, the leader of his party and a local strongman convicted of

corruption, with ambitions to control the national state.

However, none of this stopped the country's main pseudo-left figures from praising the arrival of a "man of the people" at the highest level of government. This was the case with figures such as former presidential candidate Verónica Mendoza, current congresswoman Sigrid Bazán and Castillo's former Minister of Economy, Pedro Francke, who after resigning stated that he joined Castillo's government because he thought it would be like that of Evo Morales in Bolivia—that is, the continuation of capitalist rule and the oppression of the working class under a pseudo-left figure who would placate the masses by appealing to indigenous identity. Pseudo-left layers in the US and Europe similarly sought to foment illusions in a Castillo presidency.

Castillo has remained imprisoned for more than a year, charged with unconstitutionally attempting to dissolve the Congress in December 2022. He has not been formally prosecuted.

One of the main points of the talks in China was undoubtedly the completion of the Chancay Megaport. A project whose construction was started in 2011 by the Chinese consortium COSCO Shipping, it has cost US\$3.6 billion and, once completed, would be the largest port in South America and "one of the main routes for trade between South America and Asia," according to a representative. It would reduce maritime freight transport by between 10 and 15 days between the regions.

In April, COSCO sent a letter to the Ministry of Economy seeking an "amicable solution" to a lawsuit filed by the National Port Authority challenging the granting of exclusive control over the operation of port services to COSCO. In her meeting with Xi, Boluarte surely assured him and Chinese business interests that they have nothing to fear from this lawsuit and that the Peruvian state will rule in their favor. Xi himself will travel to inaugurate the port in November, during the APEC summit to be held in Lima.

The Chancay Megaport will restructure the maritime routes in the region at the expense of US imperialism, which has seen its zone of influence increasingly overtaken by China in recent decades. Currently, exports and imports to Asia from the South American Pacific coast have to pass through the ports of Manzanillo and Long Beach, in Mexico and California,

respectively. Once Chancay is operational, countries in the region will be able to export to China from Peru without any stopover.

This is alarming for Washington, since Argentina, Bolivia and Chile are part of the so-called Lithium Triangle, which holds 80 percent of the world's reserves of this metal. Lithium is crucial for the production of electric vehicles and modern weapons.

That is why in July of 2023 the commander of the US military's Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) Gen. Laura Richardson told *Newsweek* that China's influence in the region has already entered a "red zone." *Newsweek* cited the Chancay Megaport as the "center of Washington's concern" over this issue.

Richardson already made clear the true interests of US imperialism when she told the NATO-linked think tank Atlantic Council that Latin America is important for its "rich resources and rare earth elements."

The Southern Command conducted the "Southern Seas 2024" war game last April. According to its website, "The [nuclear-powered aircraft carrier] George Washington, the Porter, and the John Lenthall are scheduled to conduct pass-by exercises and operations at sea with maritime forces of partner nations in South America during the 'Southern Seas 2024' deployment. Engagements with Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Uruguay are planned, with port visits scheduled for Brazil, Chile and Peru."

The working class must be warned. As was raised at the WSWS May Day Rally this year, neither Latin America nor any part of the world will be spared from the rapacity of imperialism in its quest to oppress the peoples of the world and steal their natural resources. The building of Socialist Equality Parties, sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International, is the primary task today throughout the Americas.



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