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Johnatan Fuentes - Pablo Stefanoni

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Political crisis in Peru: Impeachment of Pedro Castillo and new government

The Peruvian president tried to close the Congress, which wanted to remove him, in an almost inexplicable leap into the void. A few minutes later, he was arrested and replaced by the vice president. Today it is clearer that the political independence of the left and popular movements are vital to prepare a democratic solution and anti-neoliberal rupture in the face of the permanent political crisis.



Parliamentary coup against Pedro Castillo

Johnatan Fuentes

The electoral victory of Pedro Castillo and Peru Libre in the presidential elections of 2021 predicted the deepening of the Peruvian political crisis of more than five years ago, with the particularity of the cruelty of the dominant classes before a union leader of peasant origin that crudely crystallized the prevailing racism and McCarthyism of our society.

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A low-intensity populism

Unlike the recurrent national-popular experiences in Latin America, Castillo's project suffered from a defined strategy, solid popular bases and a large parliamentary majority to implement the changes proposed in the electoral campaign. In addition, coexistence with the Free Peru party was more a practical understanding than a commitment to building a party that finally formalized the separation a few months ago.

Faced with the coup siege of the extreme right, Castillo constantly chose to grant concessions to the ruling classes to the point of leaving buried the minimum measures of the program of changes with which he won the second round of elections. An issue that was evidenced with the change of ministerial cabinet where the neoliberal technocracy recovered the Ministry of Economy and some right-wing sectors crouched in the executive just 6 months into government.

Castillo defeated the first two motions of vacancy by establishing agreements with the right-wing blocs linked more to the regions and to certain provincial bourgeoisie such as the Alliance for Progress (APP) and a fraction of Popular Action (AP) and Podemos. In a certain way the division of the left, the disputes between Free Peru and New Peru, in the first 6 months of government contributed to this dynamic strengthening the regionalist and family environment close to Castillo who served as informal political leadership of the executive underpinning his rightward drift and capitulation.

The permanent coup siege

The Peruvian ultra-right led by Fujimorismo from day zero ignored the electoral victory of Castillo, who in various ways tried to prevent the presidential investiture by resorting to a pool of reactionary lawyers, as well as the mainstream media that set out to undermine the legitimacy of the new government that arrived with leftist flags.

The anti-government mobilizations they called only managed to bring together the old partyocracy of APRA and the PPC, and some fractions of the middle class and the Lima bourgeoisie that did not tolerate someone from the popular world as president of the republic. To a certain extent, the stalemate of forces in the streets and the congress between the bourgeois opposition and the ruling party enabled the policy of survival that led Castillo to maintain the neoliberal autopilot.

Faced with the impasse, another front of political dispute was opened more forcefully from the Judiciary and the Prosecutor's Office of the Nation that opened 6 fiscal folders in record time against the then president Pedro Castillo in order to achieve his overthrow after delegitimization before public opinion. The prosecutor in charge of the investigation that has alleged ties to drug trafficking has now become a reference in the fight against corruption according to the narrative of the big media aligned with the coup plotters. So far against former President Castillo they could only obtain testimonies from former senior officials and lobbyist businessmen without any evidence to prove the allegations made.

From the congress a request for suspension of the then president Castillo was prepared, since it required less vote than the motions of vacancy, but this way fails to prosper before which the third request for admission of the motion of presidential vacancy is approved that implied a second vote this seventh of December for its final approval.

A hasty exit

Faced with the unresolved political crisis, Castillo decided to close the coup congress without the necessary political correlation and without the overwhelming popular support that would allow him to materialize his exceptional measure. His isolation was to such an extent that all the ministers ended up resigning within a few hours or minutes, including sectors from the Castillista left such as Roberto Sánchez of Juntos por el Perú and Betssy Chávez of Voces del Pueblo.

The pronouncement of the Armed Forces against the closure of Congress clarified the current correlation of forces, as well as the hasty and absurd nature of the emergency measure that it tried to implement, beyond formal / constitutional issues prioritized in the analysis of the liberal left that called former President Castillo a coup plotter, even comparing him with Alberto Fujimori and some former ministers such as Pedro Francke and Mirtha Vásquez joined the media chorus of The reaction that lambasted the frustrated attempt to close Congress.

Defeated the hasty measure of Castillo, the congress was ready to approve the third motion of presidential vacancy counting on the votes in favor of some congressmen of Free Peru,

New Peru and the Teachers' and Popular Party. Once the parliamentary coup was consummated, police officers arrested the former president in the prefecture on charges of rebellion, evidencing once again the cruelty of the ruling classes of Peru with the union leader of peasant origin.

The continuing crisis

The presidential inauguration of Dina Boluarte, former vice president, is the product of the tacit agreement of the political forces of Congress in their maneuver to normalize the consummate parliamentary coup. Only months before the extreme right tried to disqualify the then vice president with absurd reasons, but in recent days the measure was retreated in order to enable the transfer of presidential command without popular irruptions.

Boluarte announced a government of national unity that actually means neoliberal continuism now perhaps at a level of greater link with technocracy and the traditional right. He did not fulfill his promise to resign if Castillo is cowed, as he pointed out in one of his last political interventions, nor did he mention anything about the constituent process or any progressive reform during his presidential inauguration. Even so, the extreme right will not lower its coup flags, it will only prepare for a context in better conditions for its seditious policy.

Today it is clearer that the political independence of the left and popular movements are vital to prepare a democratic solution and anti-neoliberal rupture in the face of the permanent political crisis. To this extent building a political reference for the popular majorities is the main task of the moment and of the new generations of revolutionary militancy.

International Point of View

Interview with Marisa Glave

From Pedro Castillo to Dina Boluarte or Peru's endless crisis

Paul Stefanoni

The Peruvian president tried to close the Congress, which wanted to remove him, in an almost inexplicable leap into the void. A few minutes later, he was arrested and replaced by the vice president.



The Peruvian political crisis has taken a turn. After assuming power on July 28, 2021 as an expression of the "deep Peru", despised by the Lima elites, Pedro Castillo never found a direction. He swapped one cabinet of ministers after another, lost allies, became politically erratic and ended up relying on shadowy circles of advisers and embroiled in mounting allegations of corruption of his entourage and family. But it was his decision to shut down Congress — which he accused of obstructionism in a speech with a trembling voice — that sealed his end. Two hours later, the Congress that until that moment did not have a majority to "vacate" him got it, and in a few minutes the president was arrested, apparently while trying to reach the Mexican embassy. How do you explain this acceleration of the crisis and the mistakes of the Peruvian president? In this interview, Marisa Glave offers some keys to reading. Between 2007 and 2013, Glave was councilor of the Metropolitan Municipality of Lima and between 2016 and 2019, congresswoman of the Republic. She is currently an associate researcher at the Center for Development Studies and Promotion (DESCO).

How do you explain Pedro Castillo's clumsiness of dissolving Congress without foreseeing that in a few minutes he would be completely alone, when Congress also did not have the votes to remove him?

Pedro Castillo's original sin was not only how he assembled his cabinets of ministers but how he gave rise to opaque palatial environments. After forming a broader cabinet, with figures from various progressive sectors, he ended up lying in an environment that the press has called "the chotanos" or "the chiclayanos", depending on their origin, who

concentrated decision-making powers around the president and were also his interlocutors in relation to what was happening in the country.

Recall one of the president's most painful CNN interviews, in which he said he didn't read newspapers or watch television. In this way, he has been receiving mediated information from those who spoke in his ear. This environment, very poorly trained, has been making decisions and making mistake after mistake.

For example, President Castillo appointed as foreign minister a person, Miguel Rodríguez Mackay, who had made statements against the president himself, whom he had branded a communist, who supported the pardon of Alberto Fujimori and even spoke of electoral fraud, an unfounded accusation of Fujimorism. Castillo also appointed Mariano González as interior minister, whom he ended up considering a mole of the coup within his government. There were levels of precariousness and naivety, and a kind of very strong arrogance among the people who have been making the decisions.

Recently, Castillo changed two important figures: the head of the National Intelligence Directorate (DINI) and the defense minister. In the DINI he placed former General Wilson Barrantes, and in Defense, Gustavo Bobbio, two people very opposed to each other. Today there are many rumors that are circulating in newsrooms and various spaces that these two officials would have assured Castillo that he had enough strength, between the Armed Forces and the Police, to advance in the closure of Congress, towards that absurd coup. Because it was a blow. The police decided de facto not to respond to the president's orders, and evidently the military as well. And then there is a group of political figures from the president's entourage, including the premier, Betssy Chávez [33 years old, fifth president of the Council of Ministers since Castillo took office], who I think oversized a possible popular support for the president's decision to close Congress and convene a Constituent Assembly.

I would say that these fantasies were accompanied by a real fear of Pedro Castillo before the progress of the investigations of the Prosecutor's Office and the emergence of new "effective collaborators" (of justice) with a set of testimonies that began to leak in the press. Perhaps the one that has hit him the most is that of the former head of the DINI, José Fernández Latorre, talking about possible payments to Castillo's relatives, as well as support for officials who are on the run at this time. And today [December 7], the former head of the cabinet of advisers of the Ministry of Housing, Salatiel Marrufo, has given very detailed details of the sum of nine million soles (more than two million dollars) that he would have received from a businesswoman to finance a set of shares of President

Castillo, and even money that would have arrived for him. I believe that these fears partly explain the decision to move forward in this authoritarian temptation, which has been seen on the other hand as a characteristic in part of their environment.



Marisa Glave

Everything ended up developing in a few hours and Peru has another ex-president imprisoned, it seems like an endless crisis in which all the presidents end up in jail, or even suicidal like Alan García ...

All this could be interpreted as the effectiveness of Peruvian justice, but the truth is that, in reality, these are signs of the precariousness of political representation and a set of blows to the very confidence of Peruvians. If we look at the IPSOS surveys, Peru is one of the countries in Latin America with the least confidence in democracy and the greatest distrust in the authorities. So, how to sustain democracy and institutions when more than 80% of Peruvians believe that the political class only looks at its own reproduction – and self-protection – rather than in the search for minimal transformations or basic guidelines of justice in the country?

Castillo arrived as a candidate from deep Peru and from the beginning it was seen that his government was traveling an erratic course, without a parliamentary majority, without ideas and, as you mentioned, with environments that ended up submerged in the logic of clientelism and corruption. How does this experience affect the Peruvian left?

I believe that the experience of this government, without programmatic clarity, without any basic reform that could give it some banner of social change, of social justice, will hit the left a lot, and even more so the sector of the authoritarian left, such as Free Peru and other organizations, which maintained their support for the government for longer. But

also to the democratic left, which has been hesitant and has not been able to say clearly that, beyond the presence of a coup right that existed since day one of Castillo and did not even recognize his triumph at the polls, it was necessary to clearly mark distance with a government with zero will to transform. In addition to the aforementioned obvious signs of corruption and lack of capacity to take minimal steps in health and education after the effects of the pandemic, one of the worst in Latin America.

But I will also say that while all this is going to take its toll on the left, we must not forget that Congress, in the hands of the opposition right that we saw acting during this time, has rejection levels close to 90%. We are facing a profound decomposition of political representation as a whole. Which is risky because of the possibility of supposed authoritarian solutions growing.

How much can this situation favor the extreme right, with figures such as the elected mayor of Lima Rafael López Aliaga?

I think the far right tends to oversize things. Castillo has vacated [self-impeached], and this has been provisionally capitalized by Congress. But I don't think the far right can make as much profit from this moment of crisis. Rather, my concern, I will say sincerely, is that projects such as that of Antauro Humala, which is an authoritarian expression but of a different sign from that of López Aliaga, self-proclaimed ethnonationalist, may grow in some spaces and territories of Peru. [Antauro Humala proposed, for example, to shoot corrupt ex-presidents, including his brother Ollanta "for traitor."]

What can be expected from Dina Boluarte, in light of her profile as vice president as unexpected as Castillo?

Mrs. Boluarte has given a message, at the time of assuming the Presidency, calling for national dialogue, the construction of a government of unity and broad base, asking for a political truce and committing herself to the fight against corruption. She herself has said that part of the problems are linked to the need for electoral reform that is still pending. However, I believe that the new president and those who think that this constitutional succession will generate some more stability are mistaken. It is difficult to think that the majority of Peruvians accept that this Congress and Dina Boluarte remain until 2026 as if nothing had happened. My impression is that there will be citizen mobilization in a very complicated context: there is a very strong drought that affects part of the country, which generates a lot of discomfort among peasants and farmers, who were already discussing the possibility of a strike ... and also the right in Parliament, sectors such as Fuerza Popular (fujimorista), Avanza País (with links to the Spanish party Vox) or National

Renewal (López Aliaga) have an express will to also seek the exit of Boluarte. Without its own parliamentary caucus, it would be naïve of it to think that it will have a calm management in relation to Congress. Boluarte would do well to promote a dialogue on possible political and electoral reforms that would lead to an advance of the elections. It is possible that he will not have a honeymoon with either Congress or with the citizens, so it is important to open the dialogue towards an electoral advance, which will not be in the next three months, but which must break through.

In short, as a culmination I would say that we are in transition towards our next crisis. I do not believe that we are solving the crisis, but moving towards another.

Johnatan Fuentes-Pablo Stefanoni

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