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Policy Brief #1

Peru - Protests that have Left an Extremely Wealthy Country at a Loss: Is It Possible to Build a Bridge over the Divided?

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Executive Summary

Peru is currently immersed in one of its worst political crises, with a divided society in need of immediate and long-term solutions to long-standing discontent and inequalities. After the protests of January 2023, the Peruvian population is demanding radical changes derived from the loss of trust in the government and the worsening of the social crisis within the country, as job opportunities and access to health, housing, and food become increasingly precarious. Communities are raising their voice to demand immediate change. People are claiming radical solutions to bring sustainability and relief to the crisis, after the dismissal of President Pedro Castillo. With new president Dina Boluarte in power, Castillo's former vice-President, the Peruvian population keeps demanding drastic changes. Related protests have led to major human rights violations, as the government is not open to a peace dialogue allowing to reach agreements offering radical solutions to the Peruvian population. At the same time, it has been difficult to reach an agreement at the National Congress to hold presidential democratic elections in 2023.

Context

Political instability: The country is going through a political crisis that has been compounded by corruption, COVID 19, extreme poverty, and violation of human rights. Popular protest has emerged as a means to assert Peruvians' rights. In the last six years Peru has had six presidents, which for the most part, have been ousted or imprisoned, generating significant political instability.

Social crisis: The country has been affected by different social crises, mostly affecting indigenous communities and the population located in the highlands and other areas of the country in extreme poverty. This social crisis has generated mistrust among the population, discontent, and wider poverty, while leaving low-income families without access to health, housing, and education.

Uneven territorial distribution driving social inequality: Peru is characterised by an acute rural-urban divide, reflected on locals' deficient access to basic resources in coastal, highlands, and jungle regions. Whilst tourism has brought benefits, these are not evenly distributed and the presence of large multinationals has continued to stretch inequalities.

Recommendations

- **For local authorities and the government:** Communities are raising their voices to demand immediate change; The protests that have been evident since 2022 have been the consequence not only of the discontent within the population, but also of the corruption that the country has been experiencing. During the protests of January 2023 it has become clear that the Peruvian population is demanding radical changes, the population has lost trust in the government, the social crisis has worsened within the country, while job opportunities, access to health, housing, and food are becoming increasingly precarious. Priority must be given to the marginalised rural communities, to the young people in search of a life project, and to foster sources of employment for families who live on a daily wage in the provinces; Peru must protect their wellbeing, and focus on the vulnerable communities in different areas of the country. Government must protect citizens' human rights by generating new jobs, and strengthening access to education, food, health, and housing.
- **For the international community:** Different international organizations working in protests' zones have reported the recurrent use of excessive force. Population has been evidently affected. Yet, these have remained mostly inactive. Amid the crisis, people are claiming for radical solutions to bring sustainability and relief. Protests have led to major human rights violations, as well because the government is not open to a peace dialogue allowing to reach agreements offering radical solutions for the Peruvian population. At the same time it has been difficult within the Congress to reach a voting agreement to hold elections in 2023. To bring sustainable solutions, the international community and the local authorities/government must come together while letting Peru resolve its internal problems autonomously.

Further Information

References:

- [United nations: Peru, Human rights office of the high commissioner](#)
- [Peru: Afronta caos nacional - La Republica](#)
- [What is happening in Peru - The guardian](#)
- [Peru's political crisis: Jaw-dropping twists and turns - BBC News](#)

Key Implications

- Peru is experiencing one of its worst political crises in recent years; The current crisis, a foreseen one, unfolded after the confrontation between the Peruvian government and the Congress.
- Due to the current protests (January 2023) the country has been plunged into an economic crisis accompanied by rising costs of living.
- One of the reasons driving the continuity of protests is Boluarte's lack of popular acceptance as president. Demonstrations are accompanied by a call to bring forward elections to 2023.
- Peruvians keep protesting, leaving material losses in different areas of the country daily, while causing further social discontent.
- Cost of living has increased due to the protests, while the economic situation of low-income families has worsened, especially regarding the purchase of food and covering basic costs of living.
- Different South American leaders are coming together to bring solutions to the situation in Peru, while calling for increased attention to human rights violations and the use of force amid the protests, as children have been involved.