

Article [EN]

How U.S. views China-Latin America ties? Evidence from media coverage of Peru's Chancay Port

¿Cómo perciben los Estados Unidos las relaciones entre China y América Latina? Evidencia de las representaciones mediática del Puerto de Chancay en Perú

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ABSTRACT

This study critically examines U.S. media representations of China's involvement in the Chancay Port project in Peru, a pivotal infrastructure initiative within China's Belt and Road Initiative. Through both quantitative and qualitative analysis of 24 selected articles from various U.S. media outlets, this research uncovers the complex storylines around China's growing presence in Latin America. The article employs Critical Discourse Analysis to identify key themes and frames that reflect the nuances and complexity of U.S.'s cognition of the burgeoning Sino-Latin American links. The findings reveal a multidimensional interplay of economic opportunities and strategic concerns within the U.S. narrative. While the Chancay Port is acknowledged for its potential to boost regional trade and economic development, there is a significant emphasis on the geopolitical implications of China's expanding influence. The study also underscores the U.S.'s historical view of Latin America as its sphere of influence, which is now contested by China's growing engagement in the region. This in-depth case study that examines a specific project through the U.S. lens within the broader U.S.-China-Latin America interaction will contribute to comprehending the dynamics of contemporary international relations and the potential for cooperation or competition in the Americas.

Palabras claves: China-Latin America, the United States, Peru, Chancay Port, Critical Discourse Analysis

RESUMEN

Este estudio analiza críticamente las representaciones mediáticas estadounidenses sobre China en el Puerto de Chancay en Perú, un proyecto clave en la Franja y la Ruta de China. Mediante un análisis cuantitativo y cualitativo de 24 artículos seleccionados, este trabajo revela las complejas narrativas de la presencia china en América Latina. Se aplica Análisis Crítico del Discurso para identificar los temas y marcos conceptuales que moldean la percepción estadounidense de las emergentes relaciones entre China y América Latina. Los resultados exponen una interacción multidimensional entre oportunidades económicas y estrategias geopolíticas. El estudio subraya la influencia histórica de Estados Unidos en la región y cómo China desafía esa hegemonía. Este caso específico, analizado desde la perspectiva mediática estadounidense, en las interacciones entre Estados Unidos, China y América Latina, contribuye a una mejor comprensión de las dinámicas internacionales actuales y del potencial para la cooperación o competencia en América Latina.

Keywords: China-América Latina, Estados Unidos, Perú, Puerto Chancay, Análisis Crítico del Discurso

Recibido: febrero 2025. **Aceptado:** junio 2025

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1. Introduction

In an era of shifting global dynamics, the strategic dance between China, Latin America, and the United States has taken center stage in international relations. China's expanding footprint in Latin America, marked by substantial investments and ambitious infrastructure projects, has not only reshaped regional economic landscapes but also drawn the watchful gaze of the United States. The U.S., as a major global power with significant historical ties to Latin America, has closely monitored the evolving relationship between China and Latin America. Understanding the U.S. perspective on China-Latin America ties is crucial for comprehending the dynamics of contemporary international relations and the potential for cooperation or competition in the region.

The existing literature examines the U.S. stance, perspectives and cognition of China-Latin America relations, drawing on recent academic research, think tank reports, and government statements. Studies have shown that while the U.S. remains a significant player in the region, China's growing economic ties have led to a more complex triangular relationship between the U.S., China, and Latin America (Giusto, 2017). Chinese increasing engagement in Latin America, particularly through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), has prompted a re-evaluation of U.S. policies and perspectives (Wise, 2023). The Wilson Center's Kissinger Institute, for example, has focused on understanding the cultural and historical foundations of Chinese strategy and its implications for U.S.-China relations. Similarly, the Institute for China-America Studies has emphasized the need for greater mutual understanding through objective, policy-oriented research. These institutions highlight the importance of informed engagement and balanced perspectives in addressing the evolving dynamics of the U.S.-China-Latin America relationship (Jiang, 2024).

U.S. government statements have often framed Chinese presence in Latin America as a potential threat to U.S. interests. For instance, former U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo warned Latin American countries about the risks associated with Chinese investments (Mendez & Alden, 2025). However, recent developments suggest a more nuanced approach, with the U.S. recognizing the need to engage constructively with China in the region. This shift reflects a growing awareness of the strategic importance of Latin America and the need for a balanced U.S. foreign policy (Lei, 2024).

Media coverage in the U.S. has played a significant role in shaping public perception of China-Latin America relations. Reports often highlight the potential economic benefits of China's investments but also emphasize the geopolitical challenges posed by Chinese growing influence. This dual narrative reflects the complexity of U.S. views on China's role in Latin America, oscillating between recognition of economic opportunities and concerns over strategic competition.

While there are numerous studies that provide general overviews and theoretical frameworks, there remains a relative scarcity of in-depth case studies that examine specific projects or initiatives within the broader China-Latin America interaction. Such case studies are crucial for understanding the nuances and complexity of U.S.'s cognition of these burgeoning links. In addition, the literature often overlooks the local contexts and specificities of individual Latin American countries. Understanding the diverse political, economic, and social contexts of Latin American countries is essential for a comprehensive analysis of the geopolitical triangular relationship of China-U.S.-Latin America.

At the heart of this geopolitical narrative lies the Chancay Port in Peru—a symbol of China's growing influence and a microcosm of the broader China-Latin America ties. The Chancay Port in Peru, inaugurated in November 2024 in the presence of Chinese and Peruvian presidents, exemplifies the involvement of Chinese state-owned enterprises in Latin America's infrastructure development. The first phase of the Chancay Port is projected to significantly enhance maritime logistics by reducing the shipping time from Peru to Shanghai by 12 days, down to 23 days. This improvement is expected to result in over 20% savings in logistics costs and generate approximately \$4.5 billion in annual revenue for Peru, while directly creating over 8,000 jobs (Agencia Andina, 2025). As a cornerstone of China-Peru Belt and Road cooperation, the Chancay Port symbolizes the new era of the Asia-Latin America maritime corridor and marks a new chapter in Chinese collaborative development with South America.

This study aims to explore how the United States perceives the relationship between China and Latin America through the lens of online media coverage of the Chancay Port in Peru. By employing critical discourse analysis, this research seeks to uncover the underlying attitudes, concerns, and strategic considerations that shape the U.S. view of China's engagement in Latin America. To achieve this objective, the study mainly addresses two research questions: 1. What themes and frames emerge in U.S. media narratives about the Chancay Port? 2. What does U.S. media coverage reveal about its strategic concerns and interests on China-Latin America ties?

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: Section 2 delves into the research background, situating it within broader regional and global dynamics. Section 3 outlines the analytical framework, detailing the research methods used in the study. Section 4 presents the findings, identifying key themes and frames in U.S. media coverage and discussing their implications for China-Latin America relations. Finally, Section 5 concludes the paper by summarizing the key findings, highlighting the study's contributions, and suggesting future research directions.

2. Research background

2.1 *The traditional influence of the United States in Latin America*

The United States has historically maintained a significant influence in Latin America, rooted in its long-standing geopolitical and economic interests in the region. This influence can be traced back to the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, which asserted U.S. dominance in the Western Hemisphere by discouraging European intervention (Gilderhus, 2006). While the doctrine was initially framed as a means to protect Latin American nations from European colonial ambitions, it effectively established the United States as the primary external power in the region.

Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, the United States expanded its economic presence in Latin America, driven by the need for new markets and raw materials. The construction of the Panama Canal further solidified U.S. strategic interests in the region, as it provided a crucial maritime route for trade and military movements. The U.S. economic influence was often accompanied by direct political and military interventions, particularly in countries such as Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Nicaragua (Abad & Maurer, 2021). These interventions were justified under the guise of maintaining regional stability and protecting U.S. economic interests, but they often led to long-term regional instability.

During the Cold War, the United States intensified its efforts to counter the spread of communism in Latin America. This period saw numerous U.S.-backed coups and support for authoritarian regimes, most notably in Chile with the overthrow of Salvador Allende in 1973 (Kornbluh, 2004). The U.S. policy of containment led to widespread human rights abuses and a significant erosion of democratic institutions in the region. The legacy of these interventions continues to shape Latin American perceptions of U.S. influence, often characterized by a mix of dependency and resistance (Hakim, 2011).

In recent decades, the traditional dominance of the United States in Latin America has been challenged by the emergence of new global actors, particularly China, Russia and India. For example, China's growing economic presence in Latin America has become a significant factor in the region's geopolitical landscape. Since the early 2000s, China has invested heavily in Latin American infrastructure, energy, and mining sectors, becoming one of the region's largest trading partners. This economic engagement has provided Latin American countries with alternative sources of investment and trade, reducing their dependence on the United States. China's approach, which emphasizes non-interference in domestic affairs, has resonated with many Latin American governments seeking to diversify their international partnerships (Jilberto & Hogenboom, 2010).

The emergence of new extra-regional actors in Latin America has thus introduced new dynamics to the region's geopolitical landscape. These emerging actors have provided Latin American countries with additional options for economic cooperation and political support, challenging the long-standing U.S. influence. As a result, the United States has faced increasing strategic anxiety, driven by concerns over the

potential loss of its traditional dominance and the need to adapt to a more multipolar global order (Walt, 2018).

2.2 Soft power and U.S. media influence

In the context of international relations, soft power refers to the ability of a state to shape the preferences of others through appeal and attraction rather than coercion or force (Nye, 1990). The United States has long been a prominent exponent of soft power, leveraging its cultural, educational, and media influence to shape global perceptions and maintain its hegemonic position.

Media plays a crucial role in the projection of soft power by disseminating cultural products, news, and ideological narratives that shape public opinion and international perceptions (Warren, 2014). The United States has long dominated global media through major networks such as CNN, Fox News, and the Associated Press, which have significant reach and influence worldwide. In Latin America, U.S. media has been particularly influential, shaping narratives around regional politics, economics, and social issues (Nye, 2008).

The dominance of U.S. media in Latin America can be traced back to the early 20th century when American companies began to establish a presence in the region through radio broadcasts and print media. During the Cold War, the United States used media as a tool to counter the spread of communism, promoting democratic values and free-market ideologies. Programs such as the Voice of America and the United States Information Agency (USIA) were instrumental in disseminating pro-U.S. narratives and countering Soviet propaganda (Hendershot, 2003).

In the post-Cold War era, the United States continued to leverage its media dominance to shape regional perceptions. The expansion of cable television and the internet provided new platforms for U.S. media to reach Latin American audience. Networks such as Spanish version of CNN and Univision became major sources of news and entertainment, often framing regional issues through a U.S.-centric lens. This media dominance has been reinforced by the global reach of American cultural products, including Hollywood films, music, and television shows, which further propagate U.S. values and lifestyles (Hendershot, 2003).

In recent years, the dominance of U.S. media in Latin America has faced new challenges. The rise of alternative media platforms and the increasing availability of digital content have diversified the media landscape, providing Latin American audience with a broader range of perspectives. Additionally, the growing influence of China and other emerging powers has introduced new narratives and sources of information that challenge traditional U.S. media hegemony. This shift has significant implications for U.S. soft power, as it introduces new narratives that may resonate with Latin American people.

2.3 The geopolitical context of Chancay Port

Before the construction of the Chancay Port, the Pacific coast of South America lacked adequate deep-sea port facilities. Thus, the Pacific coastal nations in South America, including Peru, have to reroute their large-scale foreign trade, particularly with Asia and China, through Central or North America (Global Times, 2024). By 2018, bilateral trade volume between China and Latin America had skyrocketed from \$12 billion in 1999 to \$306 billion (Zhang, 2019). This exponential growth has placed considerable strain on existing shipping routes, highlighting the urgent need for new port facilities to accommodate the increasing trade volume.

Chancay, a natural deep-water port situated 80 kilometers north of Lima, is capable of accommodating the world's largest container ships. In 2019, COSCO Shipping Ports Limited, a subsidiary of China COSCO Shipping Corporation, acquired 60% of the shares of Chancay Port Company from Peru's Volcan Mining Group for \$225 million, becoming the controlling shareholder and initiating the construction of the first phase of the Chancay Port (Thorne, 2024).

In 2021, Chilean president Pedro Castillo, upon taking office, expressed support for the development of the Chancay Port, granting COSCO Shipping exclusive rights to operate the port. However, it sparked

discontent among other port capital groups in South America, stepping in to pressure the Peruvian government. As a result, in March 2024, the Peruvian Port Authority announced that the exclusive rights granted to COSCO were an “administrative error” and initiated a lawsuit to cancel the authorization (Shepherd & Li, 2024). COSCO Shipping immediately challenged the decision, and the incident soon caused a significant controversy in the international media. To continue with the project, the incumbent President Dina Boluarte called on Congress to amend the National Port System Act to legally authorize the Port Authority to grant “exclusivity” to private companies (Wang, 2024). This legislative change effectively resolved the dispute and allowed the project to proceed as planned.

Since 2019, the Chinese-built Chancay Port has sparked widespread international public opinion and controversy. Critics fear that the construction of the port will destroy the livelihoods of local fishermen and the environment. For instance, one report states that “*Mega Puerto de Chancay se construirá pese a cuestionamiento de la población*” (Olas Peru, 2019). Others suggest that the port of Chancay will deprive the port of Callao of its status as the most important port in Peru. Some NGOs have misrepresented the demolitions involved in the port’s construction, including the Global Green Fund’s “*Inside the Battle to Protect Peru’s Coastline*”, which argues that the reclamation will destroy wetlands and the livelihoods of local residents (Woods, 2020). The Economist (2024) has posited that Chancay is a significant symbol of the geopolitical shifts occurring in Latin America. Concurrently, negative reports focusing on themes such as “control over Peru”, “intelligence gathering”, “military intentions”, and “debt trap” have proliferated.

As the Chancay Port neared completion, the Washington Post reported that the U.S. government had conveyed its apprehensions to the Peruvian government. The U.S. was concerned that China would augment its grip on Latin American resources, expand its influence in the region, which is in the U.S.’s immediate vicinity, and potentially deploy military forces there. In May 2024, Admiral Laura Richardson of the U.S. Southern Command warned, at a security conference at Florida International University, that the Chancay Port will facilitate China’s access to the region’s resources, which should be a matter of concern (MercoPress, 2024). According to Farnsworth, a former senior diplomat at the U.S. State Department and current head of the Washington office of the Council of the Americas, the Chancay Port truly does provide China with a significant new gateway to global markets for South America (Aquino & Jourdan, 2024). From this perspective, it is not merely a commercial issue but a strategic one.

For its part, the current Peruvian government has maintained an independent and objective stance regarding the so-called “strategic concerns” raised by the United States. Peruvian Foreign Minister González-Olaechea stated that if the U.S. is concerned about Chinese expanding presence in Peru, then the U.S. should increase its own investment in the country, which he described as “welcome to all”. He further remarked, “the United States is like a very important friend who spends very little time with us” (Singh, 2024). On the eve of President Boluarte’s visit to China, the Peruvian Prime Minister Adrianzen stated that the Peruvian government did not believe that several Peru-China cooperation projects, including the construction of the Chancay Port, would generate “resentment” from the United States (Agencia Andina, 2024).

3. Analytical framework

To answer the research questions, this study used several methods. First, programming and visualization tools, Python and Gephi, were employed to identify the keywords and co-occurrence network related to U.S. media narratives about the Chancay port. Then, I applied Critical Discourse Analysis to examine the U.S. stance on China-Latin America relations through the lens of media coverage. The detailed process is as follows.

Time	News title	Source
2022/Jun/3	<i>In Latin America, China steps in where US has stepped out</i>	The Christian Science Monitor
2023/Oct/3	<i>U.S. expresses concern to Peru over Chinese control of key infrastructure</i>	CE Noticias Financieras
2023/Oct/6	<i>Partial resumption of works in the tunnel sector leading to Chancay port</i>	CE Noticias Financieras
2024/Jan/18	<i>China extends its trade route in South America with the mega-port it is building in Peru</i>	CE Noticias Financieras
2024/Apr/5	<i>Chancay starts operations in November, what is its execution progress?</i>	CE Noticias Financieras
2024/Jul/7	<i>Port of Chancay Creates New Competition in Latin America</i>	The Maritime Executive
2024/Jul/22	<i>China Makes a Port Play in Peru; It won't be surprising if Middle Kingdom naval vessels begin docking at Chancay</i>	The Wall Street Journal
2024/Jul/27	<i>This is how the new highway from Chancay Port to Lima will economically benefit 3 districts of the capital city</i>	CE Noticias Financieras
2024/Sep/4	<i>The mega-project in South America with which the United States seeks to overtake China and revolutionize foreign trade</i>	CE Noticias Financieras
2024/Sep/23	<i>The Geopolitics of Port Security in the Americas</i>	Center for Strategic & International Studies
2024/Sep/29	<i>How would the Chancay mega-port be used in China's military strategy, according to The Telegraph?</i>	CE Noticias Financieras
2024/Sep/30	<i>China responds to international "nervousness" about its investments in Peru</i>	CE Noticias Financieras
2024/Oct/9	<i>Chancay mega-port: what factors could increase concerns about this project in Chile?</i>	CE Noticias Financieras
2024/Oct/11	<i>The 2 port terminals in Chile that could compete with the Chancay Megaport, according to experts</i>	CE Noticias Financieras
2024/Oct/18	<i>China's Dangerous Play in Peru</i>	Diálogo Américas
2024/Nov/1	<i>Peru's Chancay Port Stokes Trade Tension Between U.S. and China</i>	Nearshore Americas
2024/Nov/15	<i>China's president unveils a megaport in Peru, but locals say they're being left out</i>	The Associated Press
2024/Nov/14	<i>China opens huge port in Peru to extend its reach in Latin America</i>	The Washington Post
2024/Nov/17	<i>A mega-port to open the door: China's "String of Pearls" arrives in Latin America</i>	CE Noticias Financieras
2024/Dec/1	<i>China's \$1.3B Peru Gamble Redraws Global Trade</i>	Global Finance
2024/Dec/10	<i>Can Peru Stay Neutral in the U.S.-China Trade War?</i>	Americas Quarterly
2024/Dec/20	<i>Wakeup Call: The U.S. Risks Losing Latin America to China</i>	The Heritage Foundation
2025/Jan/9	<i>China sets its sights on South America with Peru Port</i>	Marketplace.org
2025/Jan/28	<i>Chinese Ports in Latin America and Their Illicit Operations</i>	Diálogo Américas

Table 1. Titles and sources of news articles

Source: Author's own elaboration.

The first step involved searching for articles using the keyword "Chancay Port" on Google News and the Factiva dataset, covering the period from June 2021, when COSCO Shipping began construction, to January 2025, when this article was drafted. Google News provided the most relevant articles, but these were limited to recent months. Factiva was instrumental in supplementing the search with news from earlier dates. Additionally, Factiva's ability to filter by specific regions and languages enabled to focus the study more effectively. The initial search yielded 223 articles. However, the majority of these were factual news pieces or articles on unrelated topics that only briefly mentioned "Chancay port" in one or two paragraphs. To ensure relevance, only articles originating from U.S. sources, whether from U.S. news outlets or U.S.-based think tanks, were selected. Short factual news pieces were excluded to focus on opinion and

commentary articles that provide deeper insights into U.S. perspectives. After being manually checked, a total of 24 pieces news articles were selected, spanning a timeframe from June 2022 to January 2025 (please see Table 1). These articles encompassed a substantial dataset, containing 27,499 words. The sources of these articles are diverse, including news agencies, think tanks, business and financial outlets, as well as port sector consultancies, providing a rich array of information and perspectives on the Chancay Port and its implications for Peru and U.S.-China-Latin America relations.

Next, I gave a visual presentation of the findings with the word cloud and co-word analysis using programming and visualization tools, Python and Gephi. The word cloud is a popular tool for visualizing the frequency of words in a text dataset. It provides a quick and intuitive way to identify the most frequently mentioned terms and concepts. Co-word analysis involves creating matrices that represent the co-occurrence of keywords within a text. This method can help identify thematic clusters and the relationships between different concepts (Wang et al., 2012). Following the quantitative analysis that outlines the prevailing trends and themes within the media coverage, a qualitative analysis is conducted on the selected textual data to delve deeper into the content.

Critical discourse analysis is a methodological approach that examines how language is used to construct and perpetuate power relations and ideologies within social contexts (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Van Dijk, 2001). By analyzing texts and language, CDA seeks to uncover the underlying power dynamics and ideological underpinnings that shape and reflect the narratives presented in these texts. This approach is particularly useful for understanding how media representations can influence public perceptions and policy decisions (Bhatia, 2006).

In the context of this study, CDA is employed to analyze media and political texts related to the Chancay Port in Peru. The principles of CDA involve a detailed examination of the linguistic features and discursive practices used in these texts. This includes identifying how certain words, phrases, and rhetorical strategies are employed to construct specific meanings and representations (Carvalho, 2008) of China-Latin America relations. CDA also considers the broader social and political contexts in which these media narratives are produced and consumed. By situating the analysis within the geopolitical context of U.S.-China-Latin America relations, this study aims to reveal how media texts reflect and reinforce U.S. strategic concerns and policy orientations towards China's growing influence in Latin America. The analysis will focus on how power dynamics are represented through language, highlighting the ways in which certain discourses are privileged over others and how these discourses contribute to the construction of a particular worldview (Van Dijk, 2010).

4. Findings

4.1 Keywords and narrative framework in the U.S. media coverage

The word cloud visualization (Figure 1) of the 150 most frequently used words help to understand the key themes and narratives present in the U.S. media coverage of the Chancay Port. The salient words provide a clear indication of the primary focus areas and concerns within this discourse. Apart from the frequently mentioned state actors such as China, United States and Peru, the prominence of words like "trade", "economy", "operation", "infrastructure," and "export" highlights the economic focus of the media coverage. The Chancay Port is viewed as a significant economic development that could potentially transform Peru's trade dynamics, making it a more attractive destination for international trade and investment. Words such as "geopolitical", "military", "security", and "strategy" suggest a strong geopolitical narrative in the coverage. The U.S. is likely concerned about the strategic implications of Chinese investments in Latin America, particularly in sectors like infrastructure. The port's development is seen through the lens of great power competition, with the U.S. wary of China's growing influence in its traditional sphere of influence.



Figure 1. The word cloud showcases the 150 most frequently utilized terms within the dataset
Source: Author's own elaboration.

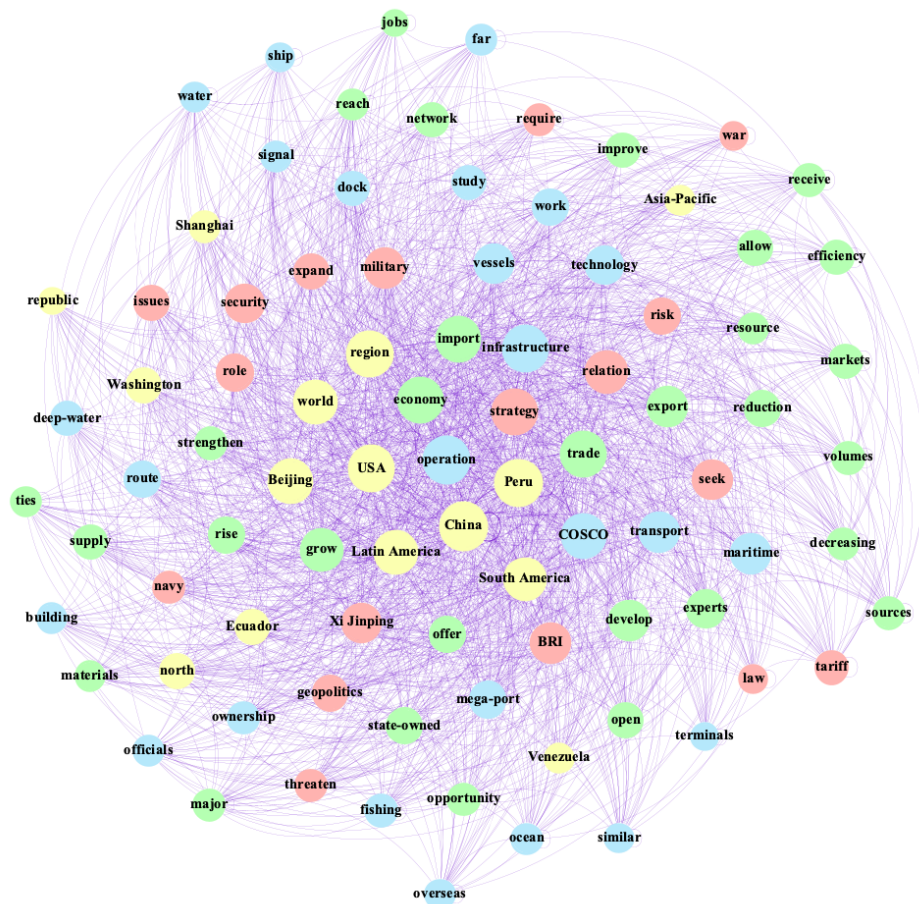


Figure 2. The co-occurrence network visualization. Node size indicates the frequency of occurrence or the centrality of the term within the network, and the color of nodes indicates different theme clusters
Source: Author's own elaboration.

The word co-occurrence network (Figure 2) provides a visual representation of how certain terms relate to each other within a specific context in the media coverage of Chancay port. The node size indicates the centrality of a term within the semantic network, suggesting how frequently or importantly it appears in

relation to other terms. The color of the nodes indicates different theme clusters, which help understanding the various aspects of the discussion around the mega-port.

The yellow cluster identifies the primary geopolitical and regional actors connected with the Port. “Peru” is central as it is the host country, making it a key actor in discussions about the port’s operation and development. The presence of “China” and “USA” indicates the significant roles these two nations play, due to their economic and strategic interests in the region. The inclusion of “Latin America” and “South America” suggests that Chancay port is viewed as an important hub for regional connectivity and economic integration. These terms highlight the port’s potential to serve as a gateway for trade and transport across these continents. “Asia-Pacific” points to the broader scope of China’s maritime strategy, connecting Latin America with Asia through sea routes.

The blue cluster focuses on the operational capabilities and infrastructure development associated with the Chancay port. The presence of terms like “operation”, “infrastructure”, and “transport” indicates a significant focus on the logistical and physical aspects of the port, including its management, maintenance, and the facilities it provides for cargo handling and storage. Words such as “technology”, “work”, “study” imply modern and advanced technologies utilized or planned for use at the port. This could involve automation, digital management systems, or other technological innovations that enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of port operations.

The green cluster highlights the economic and trade aspects of the port. Terms like “economy”, “import”, “export”, and “trade” suggest discussions about the port’s role in facilitating commercial activities and enhancing international trade connectivity. The inclusion of “grow”, “opportunity”, “jobs”, “market”, etc. points to the potential for economic expansion and the creation of new business prospects due to the port’s operations. This could involve increased investment, job creation, and the development of new industries that capitalize on the port’s logistical advantages.

Finally, the red cluster suggests a focus on the geopolitical and security implication of Chancay port. Words such as “threaten”, “risk”, “military” and “navy” suggest that there may be perceived threats by the U.S. media, such as the potential for the port to be used for military activities. “Geopolitics” and “expand” highlights the port’s significance in the context of international relations and power dynamics. The port could be a focal point for discussions about the balance of power in the region and the strategic interests at play.

The interconnectedness of all terms reveals the complexity of the issues at hand, from economic development and trade opportunities to geopolitical competition and strategic concerns. The narrative strategies employed by different actors, such as highlighted by the U.S. media, further complicate this web of interconnectedness. By focusing on certain aspects via selective report, these narratives can shape public opinion and policy decisions. These narratives can influence how the benefits and risks of the port are perceived and can lead to calls for action, whether it be increased scrutiny, renegotiation of terms, or even resistance to certain projects.

4.2 The U.S. geopolitical anxieties on Chinese port in Peru

The U.S. media portrayal of China’s involvement in the Chancay Port project is underpinned by a profound geopolitical anxiety. This anxiety is multifaceted, encompassing concerns over the dual-use potential of the port, China’s expanding influence in the Western Hemisphere, and the strategic implications for U.S. interests.

Economically, the U.S. is concerned about China’s growing leverage in Latin America. The Chancay Port is expected to transform Peru into a strategic commercial hub, facilitating commodity trade with not only Peru but also other South American countries. This is seen as part of China’s strategy to deepen economic ties with Latin America, challenging U.S. economic interests and potentially leading to a shift in trade dynamics that could undermine U.S. influence in the region.

Excerpt 1. *China's appetite for Latin American resources, and ability through the BRI to invest in developing countries, has led to accusations that the US has fallen behind in rolling out a similar initiative.* [Source: China's \$1.3 Billion Peru Gamble Redraws Global Trade 4/12/2024]

This excerpt (1) underscores the port's potential to reshape regional trade patterns by providing a more direct and efficient route for goods from South America to Asia, bypassing traditional trade routes through North America. The Chancay Port is viewed through the lens of great power competition, with the U.S. wary of China's growing presence in a region traditionally seen as within its sphere of influence (Paz, 2006). The port's development is interpreted not merely as an economic endeavor but also as a strategic move that could enhance China's geopolitical leverage. The U.S. is particularly concerned about the port's potential military use, fearing that it could serve as a foothold for Chinese naval vessels in the Americas, thereby extending China's strategic reach into the Western Hemisphere.

Excerpt 2. *Even as China led with economic objectives in mind, military interests were not far behind.* [Source: The Geopolitics of Port Security in the Americas 23/9/2024]

The U.S. media often casts doubt on the purely economic nature of China's involvement, as military interests are closely intertwined with economic objectives. This is evident in the skepticism expressed in the U.S. media about China's intentions. The opinion article of the Center for Strategic and International Studies underscores U.S. concerns about the port being used by Chinese military ships (see excerpt 2). This reflects a broader narrative of strategic competition and the perception that China's economic projects could serve dual purposes, including military ones.

Excerpt 3. *Outside direct military confrontation, China's ports within the hemisphere allow it to project power with a light footprint within the United States' own hemisphere.* [Source: The Geopolitics of Port Security in the Americas 23/9/2024]

Moreover, the U.S. is apprehensive of the broader Belt and Road Initiative and sees the Chancay Port as a piece of China's strategy to deepen its economic ties with Latin America. This is perceived as a significant step in China's broader geopolitical game, aiming to strengthen regional connectivity and economic integration, thereby increasing its influence over crucial resources and trade routes. The U.S. has long viewed Latin America as its own sphere of influence, a perspective that has shaped its foreign policy for nearly two centuries. However, the involvement of China in the region through projects like the Chancay Port challenges this traditional U.S. dominance and reshapes the geopolitical dynamics as shown in excerpt 3. This shift is particularly significant given that China is taking advantage of U.S. inattention to the evolving geopolitical and economic realities in its own hemisphere, carefully not to directly antagonize the United States, but to gradually expand into whatever spaces it can in the region.

4.3 Peru's choosing sides between U.S. and China?

Peru's economic interdependence with China has grown significantly, with China becoming a major trading partner and investor in the country. The Chancay Port project epitomizes this relationship, offering Peru an opportunity to enhance its trade connectivity with Asia and diversify its export markets. Some scholars and experts believe that this deepening economic relationship does not necessarily imply a diminishing of ties with the U.S. (Macciotta Pulisci & Biderbost, 2023). Peru continues to value its trade and investment relations with the U.S., recognizing the importance of maintaining a balanced approach to its international economic partnerships.

Others consider that Peru's strategy in managing its relations with the U.S. and China can be seen as an act of balancing (Macciotta Pulisci & Biderbost, 2023). By engaging with both powers, Peru aims to benefit from the opportunities each offers while mitigating risks. This balancing act involves fostering cooperation in areas of mutual interest, such as trade, investment, and infrastructure development, while also addressing concerns related to sovereignty, security, and regional stability.

Excerpt 4. *Over the coming years, the U.S.-China competition in Peru is set to intensify. The critical question is: Can Peru maintain neutrality, or will it be forced to pick a side?* [Source: Can Peru Stay Neutral in the U.S.-China Trade War? 10/12/2024]

This statement (Excerpt 4) reflects the U.S. perspective that Peru is in a precarious position, needing to carefully manage its relations with both China and the U.S. to avoid negative repercussions. It also highlights the U.S. view that while the port presents economic opportunities for Peru, it also introduces uncertainty and potential risks in an already tense global trade environment.

Excerpt 5. *And at a time when President-elect Donald Trump is looking to clamp down on trade with China, China has set its eyes on Peru, making Peru a strategic piece on the geopolitical chessboard.* [Source: China sets its sights on South America with Peru Port 9/1/2025]

The U.S. concern about China's intentions and the potential for the Chancay Port to serve as a strategic asset for China is indicative of a broader anxiety about the shifting balance of power in the Western Hemisphere. The U.S. media's metaphorical portrayal of the port as a "strategic piece on the geopolitical chessboard" underscores the perception that China's economic investments are part of a larger strategy to project its power and challenge U.S. dominance.

This zero-sum mindset is evident in the U.S. discourse that frames Chinese involvement in Latin America as a direct challenge to its own interests and power. The U.S. views China's growing influence in the region, exemplified by the Chancay Port project, as a direct threat to its geopolitical standing and its ability to shape the regional economic landscape. This perspective is rooted in a competitive approach to international relations, where the expansion of one country's influence is seen as an encroachment on another's domain.

The regional dynamics in Latin America also shape Peru's foreign policy. As China's influence in the region grows, other countries in the region are also reevaluating their relationships with both global powers. Peru is part of a broader trend where Latin American countries are seeking to assert their independence and pursue policies that reflect their regional and national interests. The idea of Peru choosing sides between the U.S. and China oversimplifies the complexity of international relations. Peru, like many other countries, is navigating a complex global landscape where it seeks to maximize its interests through engagement with multiple partners. The challenge lies in striking a balance that allows Peru to benefit from its relationships with both China and the U.S. without compromising its sovereignty or its strategic interests. This approach reflects a nuanced understanding of international relations where countries seek to avoid binary choices and instead pursue a path of balanced and independent diplomacy.

4.4 *The discourse and narrative strategies of U.S. media on Chancay Port*

The U.S. media often constructs narrative frameworks such as "geopolitical competition", "economic expansion", and "neo-colonialism", placing Sino-Latin American cooperation within the context of U.S.-China rivalry. News titles like "*In Latin America, China steps in where US has stepped out*" and "*Wakeup Call: The U.S. Risks Losing Latin America to China*" emphasize a narrative of power competition where China is seen as stepping into a void left by the U.S., potentially leading to a loss of influence and control for the U.S.

"A mega-port to open the door: China's 'String of Pearls' arrives in Latin America" borrowed a concept "String of Pearls" proposed by the Indian political community, describing speculations about China's intentions to exert influence in the Indian Ocean. This concept is often used to describe Chinese facilities and investments in ports and other strategic locations abroad, suggesting a network of Chinese influence that could potentially encircle and threaten regional stability and freedom of navigation. This metaphor serves as an illustration of the stigmatization commonly observed in U.S. media discourse when discussing China's economic endeavors, akin to terms like "debt trap" and "neo-colonialism." Consequently, the news title employs metaphorical language to imply that China is expanding its reach and influence, possibly at the

expense of the sovereignty of Latin American nations. This also conveys a sense of apprehension or even alarm regarding China's intentions and capabilities within Latin America.

Excerpt 6. *Washington can't compete with Beijing by continuing to lecture Latin American countries about "diversity, equity, and inclusion" ideologies that do nothing to feed or employ local residents. Nor will it suffice to simply harangue them about the dangers of doing business with China or try to force them to choose sides.* [Source: Wakeup Call: The U.S. Risks Losing Latin America to China 20/12/2024]

The excerpt 6 provides another example of metaphorical representation which is common in the U.S. media. The use of the terms "lecture" and "harangue" suggests that the U.S.'s approach to Latin American countries is didactic and condescending rather than collaborative or supportive. It implies that the U.S. is seen as talking down to Latin American nations rather than engaging in meaningful dialogue or offering practical solutions.

Excerpt 7. *Peru's constitution adheres strictly to the free market, the rule of law, civil and individual rights, and democratic principles. It may well be the most modern pro-market constitution in the Western Hemisphere. This is very different from China's principles, which are based on state capitalism, autocratic government, and limited respect for civil and individual rights.* [Can Peru stay neutral in the U.S.-China trade war? 10/12/2024]

Contrasting the Chancay port with other initiatives or normative contexts can be a strategy to highlight perceived differences in intentions or outcomes. As seen in the excerpt 7, U.S. media employed comparative narrative skills to contrast China's "state capitalism with no respect for human rights" with American values of "democracy" and "free market". This has juxtaposed the perceived lack of transparency and potential for economic coercion in Chinese-funded projects with the purported openness and fairness of U.S.-funded initiatives, suggesting that collaboration with U.S. is more beneficial for Latin American countries' economic and political autonomy, thereby reinforcing a negative interpretation of Sino-Latin American relations.

5. Conclusion

Based on the comprehensive analysis of the U.S. media coverage of the Chancay Port in Peru, it is evident that the U.S. perceives China's engagement in Latin America through a complex lens that encompasses economic, strategic, and geopolitical considerations. The Chancay Port serves as a focal point for understanding the broader dynamics of China-Latin America relations from the U.S. perspective.

The U.S. media discourse highlights the economic opportunities presented by the Chancay Port, emphasizing its potential to transform Peru into a central hub for South American goods and enhance trade connectivity with Asia. This economic narrative is juxtaposed with strategic concerns, particularly regarding China's growing influence in a region traditionally viewed by the U.S. as within its sphere of influence. The port's development is seen as a symbol of China's expanding geopolitical reach, which is perceived as a challenge to U.S. interests and dominance in the Western Hemisphere.

The U.S. is particularly attentive to the potential military use of the port and the broader Belt and Road Initiative, which is interpreted as a means for China to project power and secure strategic advantages. The U.S. media's portrayal of China's involvement in the port often reflects a zero-sum mindset, where China's gains are viewed as losses for the U.S. This perspective is rooted in a competitive approach to international relations, where the expansion of one country's influence is seen as encroaching on another's domain (Hartman & Whooley, 2016).

Moreover, the U.S. media's discourse underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of China's role in Latin America. While acknowledging the economic benefits and potential for increased trade and investment, there is also a wariness about the strategic and security implications of China's expanding

influence. This discourse influences U.S. policy considerations and shape's public opinion about the implications of China's growing presence in Latin America.

In conclusion, the U.S. media coverage of the Chancay Port reveals a multifaceted narrative that reflects both the opportunities and challenges presented by China's growing influence in Latin America. The U.S. is navigating a delicate balance between recognizing the economic benefits of China's investments and addressing the strategic and security concerns associated with China's expanding presence. This nuanced understanding is crucial for comprehending the dynamics of contemporary international relations and the potential for cooperation or competition in the region. As China continues to expand its footprint in Latin America, the U.S. will need to adapt its strategies to maintain its interests and influence in a region that is increasingly pivotal to global economic and geopolitical stability.

This study, while providing valuable insights into the U.S. media's portrayal of Chinese involvement in the Chancay Port, is not without limitations. One of the primary limitations is the reliance on textual data from U.S. media sources, which may not fully capture the breadth of public discourse. Additionally, the methodology focused on critical discourse analysis, which, while robust, does not account for the multimodal aspects of media communication, such as visual and auditory elements that can significantly influence public perception. Future research could benefit from incorporating multimodal discourse analysis to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how different modes of communication interact and contribute to the overall narrative.

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