

VERGARA, Alberto, 2015, *La danza hostil. Poderes subnacionales y Estado central en Bolivia y Perú (1952–2012)*, Lima, IEP. 388 pp.

In this revised version of his doctoral dissertation, Alberto Vergara confirms what all political scientists already know: he is an excellent academic. Not only because of the theoretical rigor of his work, but also because of the broad range of works in political science and general culture that he integrates into his analyses. For example, Bob Dylan or Leonard Cohen converse with Albert Hirschman; Tocqueville and Barrington Moore become part of the same discussion. This is not Vergara's first book but it is his most sophisticated and ambitious.

The central argument of *La danza hostil* is the following: over several decades, since the mid-20th century, the relations between the center and the periphery in Bolivia and Peru have been transformed in such a way as to produce a significant political cleavage in the former and a concentration of power (of the center) in the second. The whole study starts from an observation that is also a question: why didn't the same thing occur in southern Peru as in eastern Bolivia, with the emergence of the city of Santa Cruz as a leader in a major confrontation with the traditional political center based in La Paz? The question is all the more pertinent when we consider that several decades ago Santa Cruz had practically no political importance on the national level, while the south of Peru was the scene of numerous movements and challenges to central authority. Vergara develops a systematic comparison of the trajectories of these two countries from the point of view of the relationships between the center and those peripheries that have had important power (and lost it) or that were able to construct this counterweight over time.

In this study, Vergara bases his analysis on the concepts of center and periphery proposed in the 1970s and 1980s by Stein Rokkan principally for the study of Western Europe. Obviously, when one applies these concepts to an analysis of Latin America, it is important to differentiate them from the same concepts used in dependency theory – whose influence among Latin American and Latin Americanist scholars is well-known. In Vergara's book, these concepts are not used to analyze the system of relations between countries but rather within a country. Center and periphery are historical constructions based on the concentration and/or diffusion of political power, understood from a territorial perspective. These concepts are articulated in a relational manner through the notion of territorial cleavage (among others), which is the focus of Vergara's book. In the study, he distinguishes between peripheral-oligarchical elites and peripheral-anti-oligarchical elites, which varied in importance across time and were able to form regional alliances at different times. He also evaluates the process of formation of a peripheral-marginal elite which, in the case

of El Alto in Bolivia, was able to articulate an important counterbalance to the La Paz elite at different conjunctures.

The contributions of this book to political sociology are diverse. The development of a theoretical framework based on political geography stands out. Population and resources are two variables that play a key role in the "territoriality or the territorial structure of assets," whose strategic use by elites permits the construction of relatively greater power. From this perspective, the phenomena of migration and transformations of the model of development serve to change the opportunity structure for elites. Nevertheless, Vergara's analysis demonstrates the importance of political agendas, of the capacity of different elites to construct regionalist discourses and organization that allow for the production of effective political capital.

The book should also provide inspiration for those who study the comparative politics not only of the Andean countries but also of other countries of the global south that have experiences with state construction that are very different to those that served as a benchmark for most studies on the historical sociology of the state: the experiences of Europe or North America. The influence of the works of Joel Migdal are central to Vergara's thought. There are very few in-depth qualitative studies that compare two cases as a method for studying the state and its relations with society, and even less on countries in the global south. Vergara's conclusions reveal two opposite types of relationships between state and society, although both countries are cases of low state capacity. At the end of the period under study, in Bolivia, the state and society were "in symbiosis," in the sense that the social organizations that make up the MAS (Movimiento al Socialismo) are also those that determine the little-institutionalized policies and practices of the state; meanwhile, Peru maintains the "tradition" of a state captured temporarily by a group or a caudillo that does not have the capacity to institutionalize its power over the state nor to maintain its strength in society.

As noted by the author, this book is a work of historical sociology focused on the study of elites from a perspective that combines political economy and political geography, without neglecting the importance of the type of political regime as the institutional context that opens up or closes different opportunities. What is interesting about the comparison, as structured by Vergara, is that it is centered around three historical moments in the two countries: democratization (partial in the Peruvian case) in the years 1950 and 1960; the military dictatorships of the 1970s; and the era of the implementation of neoliberal reforms and the constitutional changes starting in the 1990s. It is in the last stage that the contrast between the two countries deepens, according to the author. This is a kind of

political science in which comparative trajectories rather than causal arguments are the central tool with which to understand political change.

The only criticism that can be made of *La danza hostil* concerns the use of various temporal references to designate the end of the period studied, without it being made totally clear up to what point the general argument should be applied. The title of the book claims that the analysis extends until 2012, but the chapters of analysis only cover up to 1995 for Peru and 2004 for Bolivia. In the conclusion, the author discusses the relevance of his results for a more recent period but does not do so in a systematic manner. Still, in the final analysis, the reader is more than satisfied with the manner in which the author's goal to synthesize and explain is achieved in the over 300 pages that make up this book. It is a very rich contribution to subnational politics, a field of study in which there is growing interest among Latin Americanist political scientists today.

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