

BOOK REVIEW ESSAYS

## Takeoff and Turbulence in Modernizing Peru

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This essay reviews the following works:

**Peru: Elite Power and Political Capture.** By John Crabtree and Francisco Durand. London: Zed Books (distributed by University of Chicago Press), 2017. Pp. viii + 206. \$29.95 paperback. ISBN: 9781783609031.

**Peru in Theory.** Edited by Paulo Drinot. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. Pp. ix + 255. \$105.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9781137455253.

**Rethinking Community from Peru: The Political Philosophy of José María Arguedas.** By Irina Alexandra Feldman. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014. Pp. ix + 175. \$29.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780822963073.

**The Rarified Air of the Modern: Airplanes and Technological Modernity in the Andes.** By Willie Hiatt. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. vii + 215. \$49.54 hardcover. ISBN: 9780190248901.

**Andean Truths: Transitional Justice, Ethnicity, and Cultural Production in Post-Shining Path Peru.** By Anne Lambright. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015. Pp. vii + 212. \$120.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9781781382516.

**Now Peru Is Mine: The Life and Times of a Campesino Activist.** By Manuel Llamajha Mitma and Jaymie Patricia Heilman. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016. Pp. ix + 229. \$23.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780822362388.

**Peru: Staying the Course of Economic Success.** Edited by Alejandro Santos and Alejandro Werner. Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 2015. Pp. xv + 440. \$40.00 ISBN: 9781513599748.

Peru reached a milestone in 2016. For the first time in its history, the country enjoyed four consecutive democratic elections, and although the economy had experienced a slowdown in the previous year, as well as a minor bump in 2009 in the wake of the 2008 global crisis, the expansive wave that started in 2002 continues. Christine Lagarde, head of the International Monetary Fund, has praised Peru as “a very important Latin American economic success story” (Santos and Werner, v). And yet, public opinion polls consistently show that Peruvians display an extremely low level of support for their political institutions.<sup>1</sup> At the end of 2017, President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski narrowly survived an impeachment vote, and his subsequent pardon of former president Alberto Fujimori only fueled public cynicism, as it was widely seen as a payback for the votes that saved his presidency. In mid-March of 2018, he faced a second impeachment process emanating from corruption allegations. A couple of days before the congressional vote, President Kuczynski resigned as videos surfaced proving that, indeed, his lawyer and some of his ministers had

<sup>1</sup> Julio F. Carrión and Patricia Zárate, *Cultura política de la democracia en Perú y en las Américas, 2014: Gobernabilidad democrática a través de 10 años del Barómetro de las Américas* (Lima: Vanderbilt University; Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 2015). [https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/peru/AB2014\\_Peru\\_Country\\_Report\\_Final\\_W\\_042215.pdf](https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/peru/AB2014_Peru_Country_Report_Final_W_042215.pdf).

attempted to buy votes in Congress during the first impeachment process. Vice President Martín Vizcarra assumed the presidency, and Peru's democracy survived a serious political crisis. This essay explores the recent political trends that emerged as part of this economic growth, both those that the economy has failed to resolve and the new issues created. It begins with a presentation of the different metaphors employed or alluded to by the authors to explain Peruvian society and politics.

### In Search of a Metaphor

In his delightfully written book *The Rarified Air of the Modern: Airplanes and Technological Modernity in the Andes*, Willie Hiatt tells us about the hopes and enthusiasm that the arrival of airplanes caused in early twentieth-century Peru. In 1910, Jorge Chávez Dartnell, born to Peruvian parents in Paris, impressed European societies and brought unmeasurable pride to Peruvians for setting the world's altitude record and becoming the first to fly across the Alps. Regrettably, this feat ended in tragedy, as his plane crashed upon landing, and he died a few days later from his injuries. Peruvian children are taught in school that, as he approached the end of his life, Chávez murmured, "Arriba, siempre arriba, hasta alcanzar la gloria" (Higher, always higher, until we reach glory). Chávez soared high, in quest of reaching even higher altitudes, and then confronted an unexpected crash.

One cannot help but wonder if Jorge Chávez's life trajectory offers a succinct account of Peru's last century. Chronicling the history of Peru's airline industry, Hiatt describes how a series of tragic accidents and unsavory practices led to the demise of national companies, to the point that, today, there is no Peruvian-owned international airline (151). Those who follow Peru's news and are regularly saddened by reports of bus crashes killing dozens of people would realize, reading Hiatt's book, how little certain things have changed. He cites (152) Senator Arturo Huaco, who, in 1950, stated in his chamber that "Peruvians once again are asking themselves the following question: Why have so many national aviators die and so many planes crash?" Although Hiatt's work is primarily about the contribution of technology to "modern identity and history-making beyond the North Atlantic" (2), it illuminates the institutional weaknesses and failed national integration that afflict Peru. In the absence of a strong state that enforces regulations, and without durable institutions and a national project, the hopes of modernization raised by the introduction of aviation were dashed. As Hiatt correctly notes, "flight required engineers, flying schools, mechanics, machine shops, roads, railways, gasoline refineries, public support, and private largesse" (13–14). At best, Peru only had "precarious supporting networks" (14).

Soaring high and then crashing down. It is an image that can easily be used to describe some key moments of Peru's recent past: the initial excitement caused by the election of the charismatic and energetic President Fernando Belaúnde in 1963, followed by his eventual removal by the military in 1968 amid a national scandal; the early enthusiasm generated by this military regime which, bucking the regional trend, embraced populist and reformist policies, only to leave office almost in disgrace in 1980; the soaring hope associated with the return of civilian rule that year, and then the crashing end, when people cheered the authoritarian shutdown of Congress in 1992 by Fujimori. And then, of course, after hailing Fujimori as a virtual savior of the nation, Peruvians witnessed his shameful demise in 2000, when he faxed his resignation from Japan so that he could avoid the reach of Peruvian justice.<sup>2</sup> Even today, despite almost eighteen years of democratic rule (the longest in Peru's history) and record-high levels of economic growth, public opinion polls register deep disillusionment and discontent with political institutions.<sup>3</sup> This gap between modernization (or sustained economic growth) and political attitudes has been labeled by many as "the Peruvian paradox."<sup>4</sup>

In their book *Peru: Elite Power and Political Capture*, John Crabtree and Francisco Durand rely on another powerful image to organize their discussion about elite power and political capture—namely Julio Cotler's "triangle without a base." Cotler used this metaphor in one of the most important interpretations of Peruvian society, published in the mid-1960s, to offer an account of social relationships in rural Peru. According to Cotler, landlords and tenants established a "dyadic and asymmetrical" relationship that suggested "the

<sup>2</sup> Fujimori left the safety of Japan to travel to Chile in 2005, in the hopes of running for the presidency in 2006. He was detained and, after a lengthy extradition process, returned to Peru in 2007, where he was tried for human rights violations, homicide, abuse of power, and other crimes. He was convicted to serve a twenty-five-year prison term. See José Antonio Peláez Bardales, *El juicio del siglo: El caso Fujimori: Igualdad ante la ley* (Lima: Editorial Grijley, 2017). President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski pardoned him on December 24, 2017, citing medical and humanitarian reasons. On October 3, 2018, the Supreme Court annulled the pardon and he returned to prison.

<sup>3</sup> Julio F. Carrión and Patricia Zárate, *Cultura política de la democracia en Perú y en las Américas, 2016/17: Un estudio comparado sobre democracia y gobernabilidad* (Lima: Vanderbilt University; Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> Alfredo Torres, "La paradoja peruana," *El Comercio*, April 16, 2014.

existence of multiple disconnected radii which converge on one single vertex.”<sup>5</sup> Peasants established vertical links with their patrons but failed to develop horizontal ties among themselves, thus weakening their bargaining position. Crabtree and Durand examine the changes Peru has undergone in recent decades and note that a significant shift occurred in the balance of power among social classes, as elite groups have gained “formidable” power, due in part to “the inability of excluded social groups to forge a unity of purpose” (3). This inability rests on the fact that elites successfully built clientelistic networks “with lines of control emanating from above” (3). As a result, elites have captured the state and taken control of the process of decision-making, especially in the economic sphere. But this capture is also explained by the weakness of the state and its “inability to mediate properly between interests in society” (164). This elite dominance remains unchallenged, despite the return to democracy in 2000, because the parties of the Left have “conspicuously failed to mount a convincingly political challenge to the hegemony of the Washington Consensus” (173).

Even if one disagrees with their contention that elites have captured the state, one would find it difficult to deny that Peru has bucked the regional trend of electing left-wing candidates. The reasons for this are thoroughly explored by Crabtree and Durand, whose volume I will return to later. The oversized power of economic elites and the weakened condition of the political Left in a context of relatively healthy democracy, when most countries in the region embraced redistribute policies, point to what Nicolás Lynch has described as “Peruvian exceptionalism,” perhaps another dimension of the Peruvian paradox.<sup>6</sup>

From the other side of the ideological divide, an alternative metaphor has been advanced to make the case for the type of economic development embraced by Peru since the 1990s, an image that is referred to by Paulo Drinot in his edited collection *Peru in Theory*, as well as by Crabtree and Durand. Starting on October 28, 2007, then president Alan García published a series of articles in *El Comercio* using the dog-in-the-manger metaphor to criticize those who accused him of embracing export policies that foster extractivism. In the first article of the series, entitled “El síndrome del perro del hortelano” (The dog-in-the-manger syndrome), President García wrote that the reluctance to embrace private investment in natural resources was due to “the taboo of rejected ideologies, laziness, indolence, or the law of the dog in the manger that says, ‘if I don’t do it, then nobody can.’” In the same article, García offers his own reading of Peru’s history and finds that the old anticapitalist communist of the nineteenth century later becomes the protectionist of the twentieth century and is now the socioenvironmentalist of the twenty-first century. Relying on Alain Badiou’s notion of essential or primitive fear,<sup>7</sup> Drinot (172) argues, in his chapter “Foucault in the Land of the Incas: Sovereignty and Governmentality in Neoliberal Peru,” that García’s discourse is aimed at generating “primitive fear,” fear of the other, fear of the indigenous, and ultimately, fear of what the indigenous are supposed to represent for some Peruvians, “backwardness.” He further argues that “García’s capitalist revolution, ultimately, was an attempt to overcome indigeneity, to de-Indianize Peru: like the previous projects of rule of which this was only the latest iteration, it was much a cultural revolution as it was an economic one” (172). But this discourse seems to be waning in Peru. Matthias vom Hau and Valeria Biffi, in their chapter “Mann in the Andes: State Infrastructural Power and Nationalism in Peru,” show that García’s views were widely rejected by many sectors in society, including writers of both the Left and the Right. These negative reactions, they argue, illustrate the presence of an alternative discourse in Peru that they label “popular nationalism.” In their view, “the idea of Peru as a ‘popular nation’ has become the dominant framework of nationhood” (in Drinot, 192). Popular nationalism is a discourse that paints Peru as a nation “embracing the people as historical protagonists and celebrating the indigenous roots of national culture” (208).

Three metaphors, three ways of seeing Peru—all are trying to make sense of a nation that is in need of construction. The following section discusses the process of economic growth that Peru has undergone in recent years and examines how different actors are negotiating the terms of this historical process.

## Economic Growth: The Gains

Alejandro Santos and Alejandro Werner’s edited volume *Peru: Staying the Course of Economic Success* is a paean to the economic model Peru has followed for almost three decades and that President García so enthusiastically embraced. Any serious academic debate about Peru’s recent model of growth must

<sup>5</sup> Julio Cotler, “The Mechanics of Internal Domination and Social Change in Peru,” in *Masses in Latin America*, edited by Irving Louis Horowitz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 417.

<sup>6</sup> Nicolás Lynch, *El argumento democrático sobre América Latina: La excepcionalidad peruana en perspectiva comparada* (Lima: Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos-Fondo Editorial de la Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> In his analysis of the 2007 election in France, Badiou argues that there are two kinds of fears, one that is “essential” or “primitive,” which is the fear of dominant people who feel that their privileges are conditional or under threat by others; and a second that is a “derivative fear,” a fear of fear. Alain Badiou, *The Meaning of Sarkozy* (London: Verso, 2010).

start by acknowledging its important achievements, despite all its flaws. As Kevin Ross and Juan Alonso Peschiera summarize in their chapter “Explaining the Peruvian Growth Miracle,” growth on a per capita basis averaged about 4 percent a year between 1993 and 2013 in Peru versus 1.75 percent for the region as a whole (in Santos and Werner, 37). Moreover, Peru’s GDP per capita growth since the 1990s has outpaced both global and regional averages. Real GDP per capita in 2014 (in 2007 *nuevos soles*) was more than twice the amount it was in 1960 (38). This is an impressive accomplishment.

There are other economic indicators that also point to Peru’s solid economic performance in the last thirty years. Domestic investment, as a percentage of GDP, was 20.8 for the period 1993–1998 and grew to 26.6 for 2010–2014 (29). The annual average tax revenue, also as a percentage of GDP, grew from 12.6 for the period 1981–1990 to 16.4 for 2011–2014 (116). More dramatically perhaps, public debt declined from 51.1 percent of GDP in 1999 to 20.1 in 2014 (410). One result of the sustained economic growth has been a dramatic decline in poverty levels. As Ross and Peschiera describe: “The poverty rate declined by more than half from around 59 percent in 2004 to 24 percent in 2013 ... Similarly, the extreme poverty rate fell to under 5 percent in 2013 from 25 in 2002” (38). Income inequality also saw a reduction, with the Gini Index falling from 54 in 2002 to 45 in 2013 (38). A test of Peru’s economic health came in 2008–2009, as the nation confronted the global financial crisis. Peru, unlike many of its neighbors, confronted the turbulence in much better terms, thanks in part to a quick countercyclical policy response that included monetary easing and fiscal stimulus (26–27).

What accounts for this impressive economic record? Few would deny that the boom of commodity prices that the region enjoyed in the first decade of the new millennium was a significant factor, and the contributors to the Santos and Werner volume acknowledge this influence. But they also argue that the institutions of economic governance and tax policies adopted in the late 1990s put Peru in a privileged position. For instance, Peru’s Central Bank successfully created and implemented an inflation-targeting regime that reduced the level and volatility of inflation (Santos and Werner, 191). Perhaps the most important institutional reform that anchored Peru’s economic growth and its ability to lessen external shocks was the passing of the Law on Fiscal Prudence and Transparency in 1999, amended in 2003 as the Fiscal Responsibility and Transparency Law (Santos and Werner, 85–86). This legal instrument established a limit of 1 percent of GDP on the fiscal deficit of the nonfinancial public sector, but allowed for greater deficits (to a maximum of 2.5 percent of GDP) in cases of national emergencies or three consecutive quarters of declining economic activity. Moreover, the annual increase in the central government’s current expenditures could not exceed 4 percent in real terms (Santos and Werner, 87).

Clearly, the goal of this legal instrument was to prevent the political utilization of government spending during election years. This law also created the Fiscal Stabilization Fund as a countercyclical mechanism that would save money during boom years for use in periods of economic contraction. Finally, the law formalized a three-year fiscal framework that required specifying “the government’s mid-term vision for its fiscal policy, taking into account the projected macroeconomic context” (Santos and Werner, 86). Probably no other area of public policy in Peru shows a similar level of planning and codification as economic policy, and none enjoys the set of governance institutions that this one does.

## The Deficits and Pending Issues

However, the solid economic growth should not obscure some important deficits and worrisome developments for the quality of democracy. First, if one uses the United States as a comparative benchmark, “income per capita in Peru declined from almost 30 percent in the mid-1970s to 14 percent in the early 1990s, and it is currently at about 22 percent” (Santos and Werner, 32). Although poverty has declined significantly among mid-income countries in Latin America, with which Peru is usually placed, Peru’s poverty rate is lower than only Colombia’s and is higher than Brazil’s, Chile’s, Mexico’s, and Uruguay’s (Santos and Werner, 386). Second, the benefits of modernization have not been distributed equally, with gender inequalities and rural poverty remaining important challenges (Santos and Werner, 386). For instance, Jelke Boesten’s contribution in Drinot’s volume discusses the serious issues of inequality and violence that women routinely face in Peru. Other indicators also show the underprivileged position of women and indigenous populations. Among the group of six Latin American countries mentioned before, Peru’s maternal mortality rate is lower than only Colombia’s. Only 25 percent of Peru’s population lives in rural areas, but 49 percent of the poor are concentrated there (Santos and Werner, 386). Finally, while many of the authors in Santos and Werner’s volume celebrate Peru’s fiscal policies, public spending in Peru lags behind those countries of similar economic condition in the region. In 2012, expenditures in health and education in Peru were about 3 percent of its GDP, whereas they were between 4 and 6 percent of GDP in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Uruguay (Santos and Werner, 393).



How does one explain this gap between solid macroeconomic success and the unequal distributions of economic growth? To answer this question, Drinot's and Crabtree and Durand's volumes point to some worrisome developments in state-society relations in Peru. As previously mentioned, for Crabtree and Durand the main reason for the continuation of this economic policy lies in the capture of the state by Peruvian elites. How was this capture possible? According to the authors, it was the combination of domestic conditions and external dynamics that enabled corporate interests to gain in recent years. Domestically, business elites were able to organize themselves in a very effective fashion by creating a main business association while relying on the "revolving door" practice that allowed technocrats to switch between the high echelons of the state and corporate boards, and enjoying overwhelming media support for the economic model. Furthermore, the crisis of the 1980s that led to the emergence of the "massive informal sector" had "impeded the development of a strong civil society capable of challenging the new status quo" (Crabtree and Durand, 182). The growth of informality, market liberalization, and divisions due to ideological disputes led to "the virtual disappearance of a left-wing alternative [which] helped the continuation of economic policy" (183).

Internationally, the existence of a "super-cycle" or export bonanza that started in 2002, which resembled the period of extraordinary growth generated by the guano era of the mid-nineteenth century, fueled the continuation of the economic model and thus the political dominance of the elites that benefited from it. The oversized political power of the elites and a fragmented and weakened civil society bear a resemblance to the "triangle without a base" metaphor that Cotler used in the mid-1960s to describe rural Peru. But this situation is not very stable. Crabtree and Durand argue that despite the progress in integrating the country, reducing poverty levels, and improving the infrastructure of schools and hospitals, "Peru remains a highly unequal country" and "today, as in the past, it is those who originally peopled this ancient country who possess least and have the greatest unmet needs. Poverty is more acute in those parts of the country where indigenous people predominate" (184). It is not a surprise, they note, that it is there that "the most violent episodes of social and environmental confrontation occur and where informality and illicit activities flourish" (184).

A growing body of literature examines the growing protests against natural resource extraction in Peru.<sup>8</sup> Although it is true that most violent social conflict has occurred in mining areas where indigenous populations predominate, one should not conclude that indigenous Peru is plagued with protests against mining interests. This is the warning that comes from Cecilia Perla's illuminating chapter in Drinot's volume. Her analysis starts by disputing the notion that mining companies have established traditional patron-client relations with local communities. Instead, she argues that changes in technology and production techniques have rendered local communities irrelevant to mining operations. Local populations remain "willing clients," as Perla describes, but mining companies refuse to become "patrons" (in Drinot, 84). And yet, conflict is not the most usual outcome of the encounter between mining interests and indigenous local populations. It is true, Perla notes, that most recent conflicts are associated with mining (in 2010, 77 out of 170 conflicts were mining-related), but what is remarkable is that most of mining operations are not marred by conflict: "conflicts developed in 77 out of 433 large- and medium-scale mining units in exploration and operation" (87). Perla observes that the relative tranquility associated with mining in Latin America is remarkable considering that extractive activities have led to large-scale conflict, civil wars, and secessionist movements in other regions of the global south (88).

"The political capture" discussed by Crabtree and Durand has its origins with Fujimori, who reversed the democratic transition and installed an authoritarian regime in 1992. Alberto Vergara, in his chapter in Drinot's volume, wonders why this reversal was possible. His main answer is that, over the years, the central government successfully weakened provincial elites to create a situation "that permitted Fujimori to finally engulf the precarious periphery that otherwise would have resisted such an authoritarian and centralist project" (in Drinot, 20–21). For Vergara, the administrative centralization fostered by this regime, and the concomitant growth of state capacity, happened to the detriment of the political power and influence of local elites (34–35). Fujimori picked up where the military regime of Juan Velasco left off, Vergara suggests. After his self-coup of April 5, 1992, Vergara writes, "Fujimori radically reshaped the institutional distribution of power in the country. He built a highly centralistic authoritarian regime with the acquiescence and applause of the population. Fujimori took advantage of and exacerbated the fragmentation and weakness of the Peruvian periphery" (38), a process that Vergara equates with Tocqueville's account of the administrative centralization of the French state in *The Ancien Régime and the French Revolution*.

<sup>8</sup> Moisés Arce, *Resource Extraction and Protest in Peru* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014).

The process of state centralization described by Vergara, and the growth of “state infrastructural power” that vom Hau and Biffi (in Drinot, 191–216) note, frames the discussion about the strength of the Peruvian state in its proper perspective. There is unmistakable evidence that the state has grown in size, geographic reach, complexity, and level of modernization, fueled in great measure by recent economic growth. But Drinot contends that this state expansion has been driven primarily by the need to “discipline” the population—which he calls the politics of sovereignty—rather than by the need to improve the lives of its citizens as free subjects, which he labels governmentality, following Foucault (176). Perhaps this explains why key state institutions associated with the exercise of civil liberties and political representation exhibit such low levels of approval among the population. Public opinion polls show that Peruvians’ trust in the judiciary, and support for the political system at large, is among the lowest in Latin America. The most recent Latinobarómetro poll indicates that only 16 percent of Peruvians were “very satisfied” or “rather satisfied” with the way democracy is working in the country, the third lowest in the region.<sup>9</sup>

Drinot also calls our attention to a novel form of social stratification in Peru, based on consumption instead of occupation. In his account, Peru today is divided into three classes: those who have unlimited access to credit, those with some access to credit at relatively high interest rates, and those excluded from credit (174). Those without credit experience a kind of social death that virtually banishes them from society. In his felicitous formulation, “credit, in short, has become a marker of citizenship” (174). The association between monetary resources and citizenship is also registered in the chapter by María Balarin, who interviewed thirty-two young people from three shantytowns in Lima and found that, among them, there was “a view that what citizens need, more than entitlements, is money” (in Drinot, 134). What surprised her even more was to discover that many of these young people did not see themselves as poor, despite living in Huayacán, a settlement that most *limeños* would consider to be one of the poorest areas, because, in comparison to “people living further up the hills,” they “seemed able to participate in desirable forms of consumption, as seen in their use of MP3s, mobile phones, and fancy clothes, which clearly gave them a sense of well-being, or at least of being better than others” (137).

Omar Awapara and Eduardo Dargent center their attention on Peru’s political institutions, which they describe as “weak.” This weakness is primarily associated with the state’s “limited capacity to enforce its laws and be the legitimate guarantor of order” (in Drinot, 107). Their contribution to the literature is their contention that “hasty and miscalculated” reforms in Peru have been “built on the assumption that it is necessary to limit or curb an (inexistent) authority or divide a (weak) power” (112–113). This happens for two reasons: first, policy makers are unduly concerned with the content of the reforms without giving serious thought to existing state weaknesses. In other words, little attention is given to the lack of enforcement of existing laws before enacting new ones to fix preexisting problems. And second, reformers usually have “limited knowledge of the social and political context in which reforms will be implemented” (108). Moreover, they cite the long-standing tradition of policy makers (previously analyzed by Cynthia McClintock)<sup>10</sup> of resorting to the “politics of stealth.” That is, of designing policies in the close confines of the executive branch, bypassing the Congress, because only such a procedure can allegedly secure the passing of legislation in a timely manner (109). The electoral reforms passed after 2000, which have had significant consequences in other policy areas and in the very quality of Peru’s democracy, are a clear example of what Awapara and Dargent discuss. In the wake of the Fujimori regime, reformers sought to strengthen political parties by democratizing their internal operations. The problem was that these reforms happened in the context of other reforms aimed at decentralizing the state and fostering mechanisms of direct democracy. When the electoral law stated different requirements for national, regional, and local parties and/or movements, “it became easier to create them [regional and local parties] than to create national political parties” (112). The result was the significant weakening of an already feeble party system, undermining the very institutional strengthening that the reforms sought.

Another example of unintended consequences has been how the devolution of significant resources from the center to regional governments, combined with the absence of effective oversight (again, lack of rule of law) and a weakened civil society, led to mushrooming levels of corruption at the local level. Crabtree and Durand point out that eleven of the regional presidents (now called governors) elected in 2006 were either jailed or in hiding due to corruption accusations when the next round of election came about, in

<sup>9</sup> Corporación Latinobarómetro, *Informe 2017* (Buenos Aires, 2017), [http://intal-alianzalb.iadb.org/InformeLatinobarometro\\_2017.pdf](http://intal-alianzalb.iadb.org/InformeLatinobarometro_2017.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> Cynthia McClintock, “Velasco, Officers, and Citizens: The Politics of Stealth,” in *The Peruvian Experiment Reconsidered*, edited by Cynthia McClintock and Abraham F. Lowenthal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

2011 (Crabtree and Durand, 145). These works highlight one of the central challenges that Peru faces, at least from the perspective of the political scientist: the need to converge the written word in legal codes with the existing practices in society. The impressive economic gains that Peru has achieved in the past decade, which Santos and Werner thoroughly document, have not solved the severe institutional deficits that lead so many Peruvians to question the idea of democracy and participate in street protests.<sup>11</sup> More recently, corruption scandals have affected Peruvian politics in profound ways, leading to the arrest of former president Ollanta Humala and his wife, now lifted; the prosecution of former president Alejandro Toledo, who is currently residing in the United States fighting extradition to Peru; the house arrest of former president Pedro Pablo Kuczynski; and the provisional arrest of Keiko Fujimori, leader of the opposition. The most dramatic development in this regard is the shocking suicide of former president Alan García, who chose to end his life when the police arrived at his house on April 17, 2019, to arrest him on charges that he had received kickbacks from Odebrecht, a Brazilian construction conglomerate. Not surprisingly, 27.1 percent of Peruvians now cite corruption as the most important problem facing the nation, the highest percentage among all the countries in the 2016–2017 round of the AmericasBarometer, and a significant increase from the 10.1 percent registered in 2014.<sup>12</sup>

### Peasants or Indigenous People?

A final issue raised by some of the works reviewed here is how to refer to the population of Andean origin. Wondering why Peru, unlike Bolivia, did not exhibit an ethnic movement, famed anthropologist and member of Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission Carlos Iván Degregori concluded, rather provocatively, that it was because, in Peru, "to put it bluntly, nobody wanted to be an Indian."<sup>13</sup> He quickly asked why it is that "Indianness," long considered a "stigma" by Europeans, became a cultural resource that fostered independent political mobilization in Bolivia and Ecuador whereas it failed to become so in Peru. He offered a host of reasons: "Indian" became a synonym for "poor peasant"; the state adopted, during the Velasco military regime, a program of radical land reform and cultural pluralism that embraced Quechua while eliminating the term "indigenous" from its vocabulary, replacing it instead with that of "peasant"; and the Peruvian Marxist Left, strongly influential in the countryside, presented the indigenous an alternative, class-based, project. One can add an additional reason, following vom Hau and Biffi, that Peru has successfully integrated its precolonial past into the national imaginary: "Indigenous culture appears as a crucial source of Peruvianness and the Inca Empire is identified with the modern nation" (in Drinot, 192).

In *Now Peru Is Mine: The Life and Times of a Campesino Activist*, Manuel Llamojha, rural activist and former secretary-general of the Peasants Confederation of Peru, defines himself as a campesino, or peasant (Llamojha and Heilman, 11). As coauthor Jaymie Patricia Heilman points out, there is no contradiction between being "an indigenous" and being a "peasant," nor does the rejection of the label "indigenous" represent the internalized acceptance of cultural oppression. Peruvian peasants "take much pride in their Andean social, economic, and cultural practices and histories" (11). In fact, they reject a classification that was imposed on them by a state that construed them as "the other." Llamojha articulates this reasoning thus: "We used to write 'indigenous campesino community' because representatives of the high authorities came and said 'you are an indigenous community.' So we accepted that ... always writing 'indigenous campesino community.' But later, we wanted to suspend use of that word. 'Why should we write that' we asked" (12).

For some, abandoning the word "indigenous" and using "campesino" instead may hide some nefarious intentions. In her book *Andean Truths*, Anne Lambright notes disapprovingly that the final report of Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission "goes to great lengths to prove that the conflict [that Peru endured between 1980 and 2000] does not fall under the category of an *ethnic conflict* as delimited by internationally accepted definitions" (Lambright, 16). She points out how the report "avoids" ethnically inflected terms such as "indigenous," using instead "peasant," "humble," "poor," or "disenfranchised" (16). She further argues that the Truth Commission's report advances a "largely officialist discourse of truth" that "locates the atrocities

<sup>11</sup> In 2014, Peru was among the four countries showing the least support for democracy as a regime and trust in the judicial system, and 13 percent of those interviewed declared they had participated in a protest. See Julio F. Carrión and David Scott Palmer, "Peru: Overcoming the Authoritarian Legacy at Last?," in *Latin American Politics and Development*, edited by Harvey F. Kline, Christine J. Wade, and Howard J. Wiarda, 9th ed. (New York: Westview Press, 2017), 213. Support for democracy in Peru fell from 58.6 percent in 2014 to 52.7 percent in 2017. See Carrión and Zárate, *Cultura política de la democracia en Perú y en las Américas, 2016/17*, 6.

<sup>12</sup> Carrión and Zárate, *Cultura política de la democracia en Perú y en las Américas, 2016/17*, 68.

<sup>13</sup> Carlos Iván Degregori, "Ethnicity and Democratic Governability in Latin America: Reflections from Two Central Andean Countries," in *Fault Lines of Democracy in Post-Transition Latin America*, edited by Felipe Agüero and Jeffrey Stark (Miami: North-South Center Press, University of Miami, 1998), 206.

of the time within a juridical and therapeutic discourse that marginalizes indigenous and rural Andean experiences and eschews potential acts of reconciliation and national reconstruction based on Andean cultural values and social practices" (2). She then contends that the report, as well as three well-known novels published after 2000 by Alonso Cueto, Santiago Roncagliolo, and Iván Thays, "commit their own sort of violence ... and further a sustained project of symbolic violence that begins with the Conquest" (59). I find this line of reasoning unpersuasive because it assumes that rejecting the label "ethnic conflict" to describe the confrontation between Shining Path and the state implies the justification of oppressive dominant narratives.

But the debate as to whether "campesino" or "indigenous" is the most appropriate concept to understand historically marginalized communities in Peru is not new. Irina Alexandra Feldman's analysis, in her book *Rethinking Community from Peru*, of José María Arguedas, ethnographer, novelist, and a cultural icon in Peru, starts by recounting the story of a famous roundtable held in 1965 at the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos to discuss Arguedas's *Todas las sangres*, which congregated the author and some of the most important scholars at the time. As Feldman asserts, "the most acute point of divergence between the discussants was the identity of the persons who lived in the Peruvian sierra. For Arguedas, the majority of people living in the Peruvian sierra and represented in the novel were Indians. For the social scientists ... they were peasants, and presenting them as Indians implied a 'historical disbalance' (desnivel histórico) in the narration" (Feldman, 3). Feldman seeks to distill a political philosophy in Arguedas's novels and identifies "community," "political subjectivity," "sovereignty," "juridical norm," and "revolutionary change" as the key concepts. But her guiding thread is to contrast Arguedas's view with what she calls "the idea of necessary homogenization for successful execution of any nation-building project" (19), which, she contends, permeated Peruvian social science at the time. Arguedas instead advocated a view of society where diverse groups of people have different ways of seeing the world (19). It is not that Arguedas and the social scientists disagreed with the need to articulate a country that was historically divided, or with the idea to develop a project of nation building. The contention was whether such a project demanded a process of homogenization through which Indians become peasants. Unlike the social scientists, Arguedas wanted to stress that indigenous people had certain cultural resources that gave them a sense of belonging. Feldman thus identifies an emerging and unsolvable contradiction in Arguedas's thought: he embraces the idea of a unified nation-state, "but Arguedas simultaneously also recognized the existence of an alternative project of community represented by the indigenous ayllu" (4). With great perspicacity, Feldman contends that this contradiction, "the defense of distinct sovereignty of the ayllu and the nationalistic project," informed his fiction (4).

At the end, whether identified as peasants or indigenous people, what they want is for the state to deliver on its promises of equality and inclusion. They used existing law—and still appeal to it—to make their case against the authorities. Noting the gap between what is established in the books and the concrete reality, campesino/indigenous leaders push for the full enforcement of the rule of law. Whether they see themselves as peasants or indigenous, communities demand the rights afforded to them by the constitution. Llamojha, the leader of the Peasant Confederation, tells us: "I always walked around with the Peruvian political constitution. And I had the civil and penal codes. When I wrote documents, I always had to mention the key articles. I always had to write, 'This article says this; it protects the peasantry.' That's how I pestered the authorities" (Llamojha and Heilman, 53).

## Concluding Thoughts

Peru experienced a spurt of economic growth that fundamentally changed society in significant ways. Anyone who visits Peru these days would attest that the modernization that was only apparent in Lima a few years ago has now spread to all large cities and many of the medium-size towns. Peru, despite some unfortunate holdovers, has also become a more socially tolerant society,<sup>14</sup> and the middle class has on occasion taken to the streets to successfully pushback against egregious state abuses. The pace of growth has slowed down, and perhaps this will provide an opening for alternative views of development. For now, the official consensus on the existing economic policy holds strong. Today, the major sources of dissatisfaction emanate from what can generically be called state failures. Although poverty has decreased and the middle class has grown, by and large women and rural residents lag in relation to men and urban inhabitants. While there are clear signals that the official discourse has indeed become more inclusive, people of indigenous origin still face discrimination. The feebleness of political institutions and the rule of

<sup>14</sup> A poll conducted in 2014 reveals that Peru was among the top ten countries in the continent in degree of support for same-sex marriage. See Carrión and Zárate, *Cultura política de la democracia en Perú y en las Américas*, 2014, 226.



law continue to be central problems. More recently, a galloping crisis of citizen insecurity has increased the electoral appeal of a candidate who could have undermined the democratic gains of recent years. It may be that Peru is finally overcoming its authoritarian legacy, but some of these books clearly illustrate that not all is well with Peru's democracy: elites have an inordinate amount of political power; state institutions—other than those devised for managing the economy—are severely lacking; and the historical debt with the indigenous population is still in arrears. Political dissatisfaction is very high, and concerns with corruption have mushroomed.

In a significant way, Peru's situation resembles that of its neighbor Chile: impressive economic success but ambivalent attitudes toward the political system.<sup>15</sup> In Chile, political dissatisfaction has led to the rise of a new political Left that questions the existing economic model and advocates for a stronger role of the state in the economy and greater provision of social services. Beatriz Sánchez and her Frente Amplio coalition, representatives of this new Left, performed exceedingly well in the November 2017 presidential elections. In Peru, the Left also showed a remarkable renaissance in the 2016 presidential election, with Verónica Mendoza exceeding expectations. Both Chile and Peru face significant pressures to enact political reform to address their respective deficits of citizen trust. In Chile, the electoral momentum of the new Left and their congressional gains offer a degree of hope that the constitutional changes advocated by former president Michelle Bachelet will not be completely abandoned by the new Sebastián Piñera administration. For a moment, it seemed that the new administration of Martín Vizcarra would break the logjam blocking reform in Peru. In an audacious move, he outmaneuvered the *fujimorista* majority in congress to call for a referendum on political and judicial reform. Vizcarra's victory in the referendum increased his popularity rate to impressive levels,<sup>16</sup> and this came at the moment when the *fujimoristas* faced divisions in congress. Vizcarra appointed a high-level commission to offer ideas on political reform, and after the commission issued its report, Vizcarra introduced, in early April of 2019, twelve different bills dealing with various aspects of political reform. The outlook for institutional change is much less bright in Peru than in Chile, however, because the Left continues to be divided, parties are extremely weak, the congress is still controlled by the *fujimorista* Fuerza Popular, Vizcarra does not have a party behind him, and his popularity has dropped to the low forties in April 2019, undermining his bargaining position.

Peruvians are currently confronting the turbulence generated by the process of development, and it behooves state and civil society to make sure that corruption, illegal activities, unfettered exploitation, and discrimination do not undermine the latest attempt at building a democratic order. Peru's democracy must not follow the tragic trajectory of Jorge Chávez's pioneering flight.

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<sup>15</sup> I thank Fabrice Lehoucq for bringing this up to my attention. For an analysis of the drop in political legitimacy in Chile see Ignacio Arana Araya, "Chile 2016: ¿El nadir de la legitimidad democrática?," *Revista de Ciencia Política* 37 (2): 305–333.

<sup>16</sup> An Ipsos poll conducted in December of 2018 put his approval at 66 percent. <https://elcomercio.pe/politica/comercio-ipsos-cuadros-encuesta-diciembre-noticia-588279>.

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