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# Regionalization in Peru, its Failure and a New Horizon for its Implementation. The Geopolitical Model as a Base

Cesar Astudillo Salcedo

## Summary

*Regionalization in Peru and the attempts to implement it failed, to a large extent, due to political, economic and social factors; Therefore, it is relevant to analyze the risks and challenges associated with this important process for Peruvian society. At present, it is easy to show that social and economic exclusion has a direct relationship with the territorial dimension. In this sense, the hyper concentration of power will always be a crucial aspect in any authoritarian model.*

*The population perceives that we are leaving the nation in the hands of unqualified local managers. For example, it is inconceivable that Lima is made up of 43 districts, while cities with the same population such as Bogotá only have less than half. It can be said that the number of regions, as well as the number of districts, is due to the fact that a part of the political sector does not want to abandon its privileges in favor of an integration or a new conception of management, in institutionalized organizations that have the capacity to extend and deepen the market economy advocated by the Constitution, as well as building an efficient and democratic State.*

*In the following lines, proposals will be presented on how to take advantage of geopolitical decentralization as a starting point for development. Likewise, the importance of the merger of public institutions and its effect before installing a political regional government will be explained.*

**Keywords:** Regionalization, Decentralization, Geopolitics, Development, Risks, Challenges.

## Background

This article identifies the feasibility of implementing effective regionalization in Peru. However, it is necessary to analyze its historical evolution in the country and how the political interests of the parties and leaders denied this forced step for the development of the nation.

It should be noted that it was intended to form regions, but -to date- this process cannot be carried out, due to the lack of execution by regional governments. It should not be forgotten that the main purpose of the decentralization process is the

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political division within the country, as well as the enjoyment of autonomous powers at the political and economic levels of the regions.

In the Inca empire a regionalization was established for the first time through the creation of its "Suyos" (Collasuyo, Chinchaysuyo, Contisuyo and Antisuyo). In turn, these were subdivided into kingdoms and ayllus. The fundamental nucleus of the Inca was the ayllu, as it happens in current societies, whose base was made up of families (ayllus).

During the viceroyalty, Peru was divided into eight intendencies, such as: Lima, Cusco, Arequipa, Trujillo, Huancavelica, Huamanga, Tarma and Puno. According to historian Emilio Romero Padilla, in his work *Around regionalism and centralism*, published in 1969, it was decided to separate the intendancy of Puno from Peru to be considered in the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata. This decision is explained by the remoteness of Puno from Lima and the non-existent communication routes being one of the main causes that determined the separation of the Altiplano from Peru. Likewise, this event itself configured a kind of regionalism within the Punenans. Regionalism is therefore perceived as a collective resentment caused by abandonment.

On the other hand, the expressions of discontent of the locals reinforced their identity by using, for this, symbols, hymns, sigils and other emblems. In this way, Cusco adopted a flag; Loreto, a hymn and recently Puno, a wiphala.<sup>1</sup> After the independence of Peru, the names were changed to the political-administrative districts, however, they maintained their limits. Thus, the intendancies gave rise to the departments. At first there were eight and, in 1850, this figure increased to 11, with 64 provinces, plus two coastal provinces: El Callao and Piura, and 618 districts.

Later, in 1856, there were 14. In 1857, by an anti-coup coup of the inhabitants of Callao and by recognition of the Congress of that time (National Convention), it becomes a coastal province to a constitutional province (the only one in the entire Republic). It should also be noted that, in 1862, it was reduced to 13.

Attempts to reach a balance continued and, in 1874, four more departments were added to the existing ones, adding 18, in 1876. By 1904 there were 21, which lasted until 1942, when Tumbes was added; in 1944, Pasco and in 1980, Ucayali. Until 1985, Peru had 24 departments and the constitutional province of Callao.

Throughout history, there were several attempts to decentralize, for example, organizations similar to the regions were created, but all failed; Even the military junta, presided over by Luis M. Sánchez Cerro, in 1931, tried an unfortunate attempt. One of the reasons for these failures was that, since the dawn of the nation, there was a political caudillismo that prevented the powers of the departments from being integrated into a region.

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The legal regulations were based on the Law on the Bases of Decentralization, which entered into force in July 2002. The Organic Law of Regional Governments (Gore), which entered into force in November 2002, may also be mentioned. Both provided for the creation of regional governments, erecting themselves as the initial and fateful conception: one for each department and one in the constitutional province of Callao. In this sense, the term fateful refers to the formula that nobody wanted to change: a department equals a region.

### **From the Constitution of 1979 to the Creation of the Transitional Councils of Regional Administration (CTAR)**

During the Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces (1968-1980), the executive decentralized many decisions through the creation of the Departmental Development Agencies (ORDES), later called Departmental Development Corporations (CORDES), which were mainly responsible for the management of infrastructure works.

In the last years of the military government, a constituent assembly was convened to formulate and promulgate the Political Constitution of 1979. The Constitution provides for the decentralization of power, through the creation of autonomous regions; however, during the second presidential term of architect Fernando Belaunde Terry (1980-1985), such devices were never implemented. This is considered the first postponement to achieve the long-awaited decentralization.

Later, in the last years of the administration of Alan García Pérez (1985-1990), the Senate tried to approve the bases of the postponed regionalization, establishing 12 regions in January 1989, correcting the technicalities and adding the necessary documentation for its implementation, however, it obtained negative results in reality. It was evident that, due to the accelerated creation, the regional governments did not have the resources to execute an administration that was already complicated, which is why they had to request funds from the central government, which were delivered without schedules and without hierarchy for their spending, with the consequent failure of the process.

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### Regions created during the years 1989-1991

1. Grau Region
2. Northeastern Marañón Region
3. Amazonas Region
4. Victor Raul Haya de la Torre Region (La Libertad – San Martín)
5. Chavin Region
6. Andrés Avelino Cáceres Region
7. Ucayali Region
8. Lima Region
9. Los Libertadores-Wari Region
10. Inka Region
11. Arequipa Region
12. Jose Carlos Mariátegu Region

Source: O'Neill, K. (2005). Decentralization of the State: elections, parties and local power in the Andes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511610417

In 1990, when engineer Alberto Fujimori assumed the presidency, the country found itself with an almost bankrupt economy and a war against terrorism that did not distinguish light from victory. However, in the field of regionalization, the former president observed the process and ordered the retention of transfers of funds to the incipient regional governments, which were not yet constituted as such.

In December 1992, Fujimori ordered that the so-called regions be annulled and replaced by the Transitory Councils of Regional Administration (CTAR), which were created for each department, leaving behind any hint of macro regions. Promulgated in 1993, the new Constitution includes the premises for the creation of regions with autonomous governments, through the merger of departments, as specified in article 190.

The Framework Law on Decentralization, proposed in 1997 and promulgated in January 1998, confirmed the permanence of the CTARs, which would be, from that date, in charge of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers (PCM).<sup>2</sup> Subsequently, Alejandro Toledo Manrique, as president of the republic (2001–2006) includes, once again, the creation of the GORES; even the document "Plan Peru Descentralizado" is being conceived.

Similarly, during his term of office, the legal framework for the new regions was established and promulgated in the Law on the Bases of Decentralization (July 2002), as well as the Organic Law on Regional Governments (November 2002). In the same way, during the year in question, elections for regional governors were called. Subsequently, in October 2005, the government proposed a referendum for the creation of five macro regions, as established in Article 190 of the Political Constitution of Peru of 1993. These were formed as follows: Cusco-Apurimac Region,

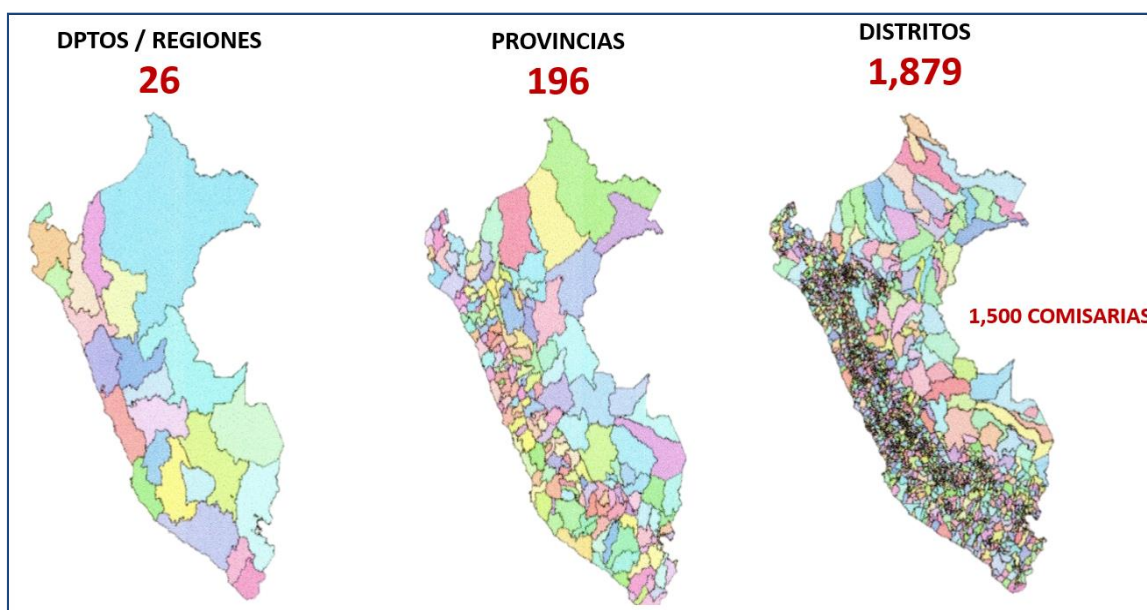
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Southern Andean Region (Arequipa, Puno and Tacna), Ica-Ayacacucho-Huancavelica Region, North-Central-Eastern Region (Ancash, Huánuco, Junín, Lima and Pasco) and Northern Region (Lambayeque, Piura and Tumbes).

Following the failure of the referendum (2006), in December 2007 the "Agreement of Intent" was signed at the Government Palace between the departments of San Martín and Amazonas in order to form a pilot region, which held its first National Assembly of Regional Governments (ANCR) in May 2008 and was attended by a delegation of regional councilors from the department of La Libertad. who brought the proposal to join the macro region. In the same vein, in October 2009, the first Assembly of the Amazonas-San Martín-La Libertad Regional Commonwealth was held, which was formalized through regional ordinances approved by the three regional governments between December 2009 and January 2010.

It should be noted that, during the second term of Alan García Pérez, at the beginning of 2009, a law was approved that modified the referendum schedule for the formation of regions, with an insurmountable tenor of the document in which it is postponed *ad infinitum*. Likewise, in July 2010, the regional governments of Amazonas, San Martín and La Libertad presented the legislative initiative of the Regional Commonwealth Law, registered in the Congress of the Republic as Bill No. 04216/2010-GR.



Source: Authors.

### Focusing on Problems and Solutions

Peru's economic growth does not reflect benefits for the majority of the population by not covering the basic needs of society, such as: water, electricity, housing and communication routes.

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It suffers from a dramatic lag in relation to investment and technology. The most relevant indicator is the gap that universities and institutes have with respect to scientific and technological research. In addition, most foreign investment does not create new companies, but buys existing businesses.

It is undeniable that what has been said has a dissonance with reality, since the Central Reserve Bank (BCR) and the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) expose a properly managed macroeconomy; however, the microeconomic reality, the one handled by housewives or the average worker, is adverse, due to corruption, scandals of the authorities, lack of management capacity, terrible redistribution of wealth in Peru, among others.

Therefore, it is vital to understand that addressing development problems requires improving efforts and being aware, as established by Michael Porter (2014), an expert in competitive strategy, of the following aspects: increase productivity, optimize education, optimize health systems, create bridges, tracks and trains, lower the level of social inequality, combat corruption and reduce informality.

### **Five Models of Regionalization**

The "megalament" and the "hyperanalysis"<sup>3</sup> must be put aside, in order to look for alternatives in the face of the continuous failures to implement a regionalization in our country, with geopolitical scopes and not based on political-partisan interests. Some proposals will then be reviewed:

#### **1. Geopolitical Regionalization Model**

During the military government of General Juan Velasco Alvarado – Phase I (1968-1975), General Edgardo Mercado Jarrin,<sup>4</sup> an experienced geopolitician, proposed a regionalization of the country based on geoeconomic, geohistorical and geostrategic criteria. General Mercado Jarrin proposed the formation of five nuclei of cohesion that he considered as the most developed areas due to the influence they exerted in the national territory.

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Source: Authors.

### 2. Transversal Regionalization Model

According to the previous studies of Dr. Javier Pulgar Vidal, nine administrative political regions were initially established; Subsequently, in 1987, a new model composed of five transverse regions was presented. The main requirement for adopting it was immediate implementation with penetration roads. This proposal found in the Andes mountain range its main bureaucratic obstacle; However, this impediment should have been the great incentive and stimulus to integrate the country.

The most outstanding aspect of the conception of the distinguished researcher Pulgar Vidal was that each macroregion would have the three natural regions of Peru (coast, mountains and jungle), with exits to ports in the Pacific and access to the Amazon, including mining or hydrocarbon areas for self-management aimed at development.

### 3. Geoeconomic Unit Model

This model maintains the departmental criterion as demarcation and was presented by the National Planning Institute (INP), where it can be seen that, of the 12 regions, half are located on the coast and have commercial ports. In this sense, one of them has a port on the Amazon River; another area has a port on Lake Titicaca, while four of them have access to the Amazon basin.

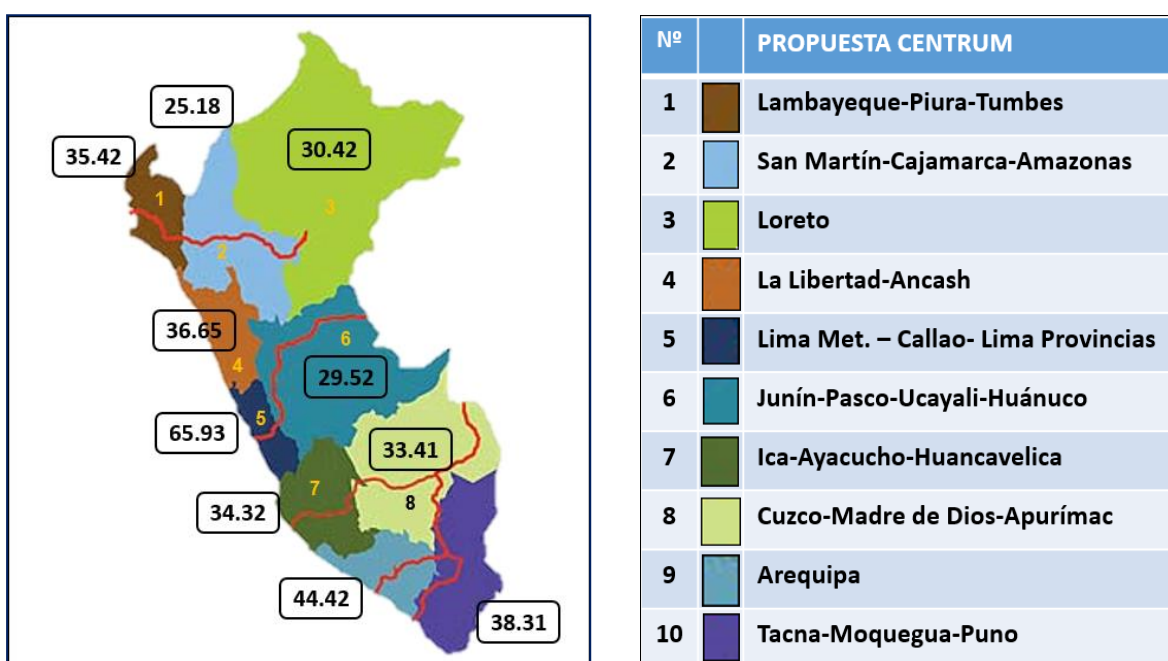
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### 4. Centrum Model

Faced with the failure of regionalization, Centrum, Business School of the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru (PUCP), in 2014, presented a model that considered going from 26 to only 10 regions. Likewise, it can be seen in the graph that there is no new geographical demarcation based on natural accidents such as rivers and mountain ranges, departments were simply merged.

The main objective was to consolidate true macro regions and achieve an integrated domestic market. It should be noted that the regions have resources, but there are no improvements in key issues, such as: infrastructure, education, health and capital development. human.



Source: PUCP

### 5. Macro Regions Model

This model was presented in 2016, in academic forums, in order to provide options for a new conception of regionalization based on road connectivity, which includes ten regions similar to the model provided by Centrum but differs from the latter in the composition of each macro region. The presentation of this model conceives the following:

**a) Macro Regions (MR).** Peru will be divided into MRs, which will be governed administratively, politically and financially with total autonomy. In addition, they will be administered by an Executive, Legislative (Regional House of Representatives) and Regional Judiciary.

**b) Requirements to constitute MR.** It will proceed, among others, to render, education, health, justice, public security (in charge of the Regional Police), road

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infrastructure, job opportunities, incentives to attract investment, capacity to generate own income, as well as absorb part of the public administration.

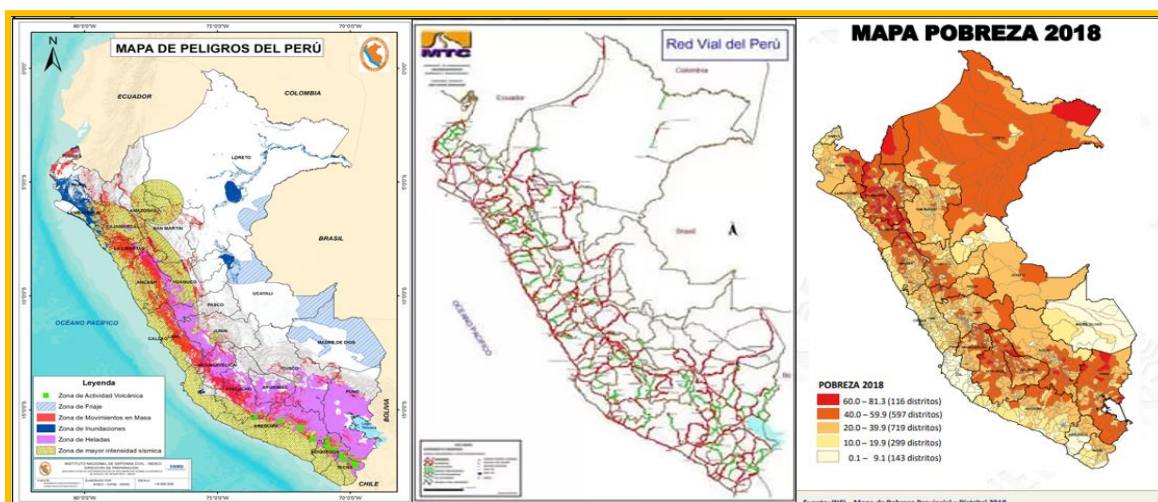
**c) They will generate their own income.** This will be achieved through the application of taxes, such as: income, sales, vehicles and income from the exploitation of the natural resources of the region.

**d) They shall have their own budget specifications.** That is, the income and expenses will be subject to their own management capacity, at the request of the regional executive and with the approval of the regional legislature.

**e) Autonomy in the appointment of its authorities.** At the executive, legislative, judicial, police level (outside the municipal level), as well as the election of three representatives to the Congress of the Republic.

Therefore, regionalization has or should be a technically well-elaborated process that explains to the populations the benefits that it would bring them. It is important to specify that in its formulation and evaluation, relevant aspects beyond the integration of departments are addressed. However, the designs of poverty maps, danger maps, crime maps, should always be in the conception of a region.

It is worth pointing out that the poverty map generally fits with the eternal map of endemic diseases (anemia, hemorrhagic dengue, malaria). Along these lines, it is imperative to evoke the different types of poverty.



Sources: INDECI, MTC, INEI

### Categories of Poverty

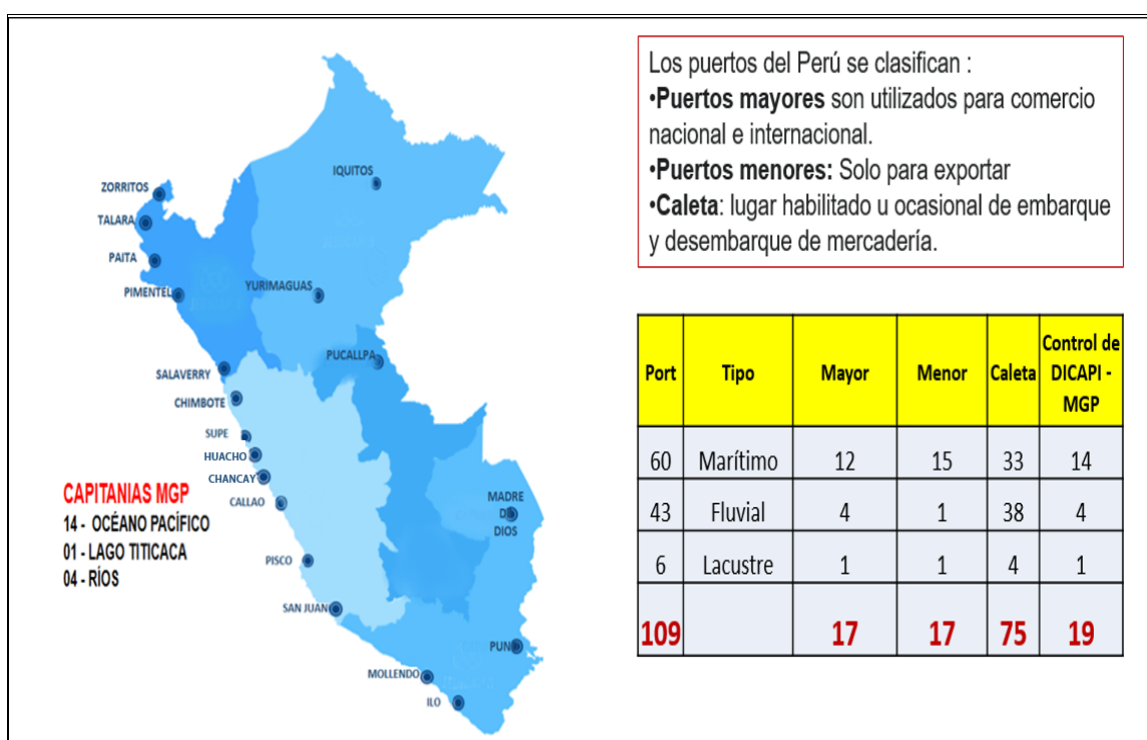
The concept of poverty (inevitably linked to its way of measurement) responds to a controversial characterization, which is why, when applying it, the conceptual framework on which it will be worked must be explained.

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The Inter-American Institute of Human Rights (IHR),<sup>5</sup> based on the analysis of several authors, prepared a table that presents four categories and 12 meanings of the concept of poverty: Poverty as a material concept (need, pattern of deprivation, limitation of resources); Poverty as an economic situation (standard of living, inequality, economic position); Poverty as social conditions (social class, dependency, lack of basic security, lack of ownership, exclusion); and Poverty as Moral Judgment.

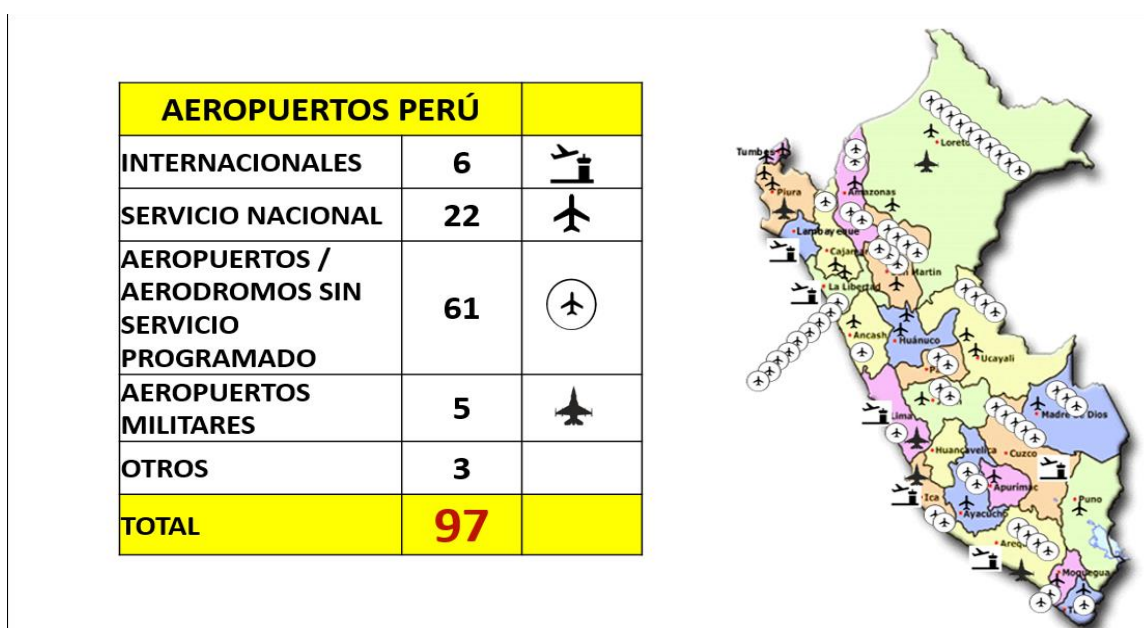
Another key economic factor for development in the regions is the presence of ports and airports. Who could doubt the relevance of the implementation, for example, of the Chancay Megaport? Although these services are concessioned, it is vital to regulate and promote them by the regional authority.



Source: Authors.

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Source: Authors.

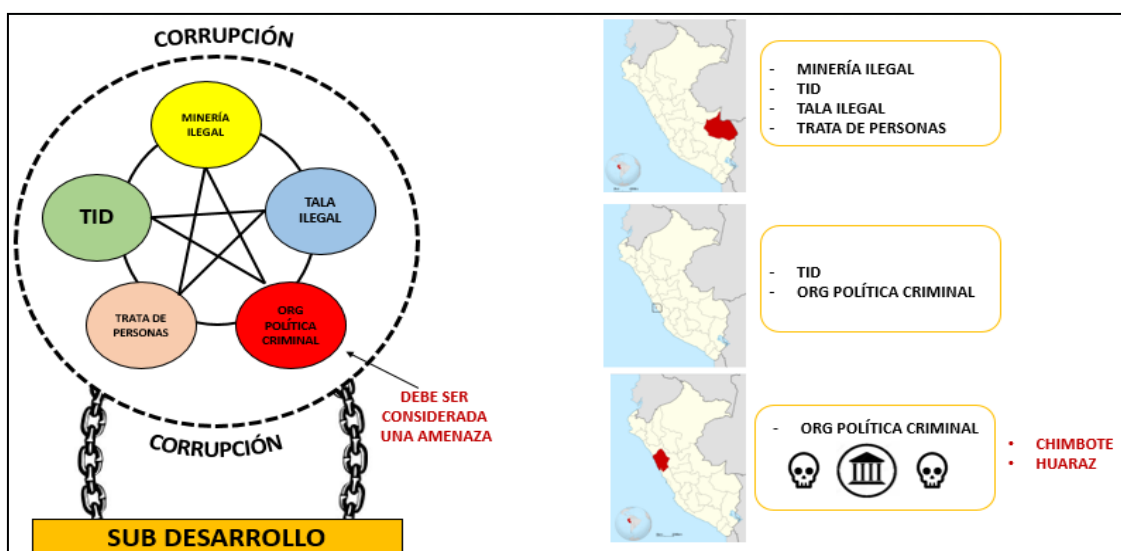
### Threats in the Region

It is imperative that two key concepts be taken into account when implementing the regions: perception and supremacy. The perception of reality reflects that in certain areas there are threats, an undeniable fact; however, the supremacy of reality indicates what should be prioritized, since threats are not static but can be moved from one point to another, as happened with the narco-runways destroyed in the Valley of the Apurímac, Ene and Mantaro rivers (VRAEM, 2015) that ended up appearing in Pichis-Palcazu (PIPA).

Another factor is corruption, which until now is inevitable in all efforts, therefore, it is more realistic to talk about the reduction of this evil than about its eradication.

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Source: Authors.

### How to Implement Regionalization?

Although there are many viable options, in the present work, we only want to present one of them: the geopolitical model. This does not exclude, as a test, that other forms of geographical distribution can be applied with the aim of achieving the desired decentralization.

At the national level, there are many organizations that operate with distribution schemes similar to regions such as the Army (military regions or Army divisions), the Navy (naval areas), the Air Force (air wings), the National Police (police macro regions) or the Ombudsman's Office that have regionalized their headquarters. However, each institution operates in isolation and without any interaction. The exception to this rule includes the Joint Command, which efficiently integrates the Armed Forces. AA. through operational commands (Dolorier, 2021, p. 6).



**Note:** The graph shows the influence of geopolitical regionalization

By selecting this geopolitical model of regionalization, after evaluation, the government of the day representing the State will formalize a single type of geographical regionalization for public institutions, starting with the Armed Forces.

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AA. and the National Police of Peru. This action will allow for unified commands, as well as an efficient system in the control and response of the military-police, with mutual air support and joint and integrated strategies. It must be considered that the operational commands are in operation and depend on the Joint Command of the Armed Forces (CCFFAA).

The second phase, previously established and rigorously enforced, will consist of adapting regionalization in health, education and housing institutions. The objective is not to administer them, but to delimit to each future regional government what will be its geographical area of management and support.

The third phase, possibly the most transcendental, will be the regionalization of the Judiciary and the Public Prosecutor's Office. Once the process works properly and the population perceives its benefits, the next step will be to call regional elections.

Finally, according to the specialist in public policies, Juan Sánchez Barba,<sup>6</sup> "decentralization and regionalization are instruments that measure the capacity of municipalities, departments, provinces and districts to carry out inclusion, management and development actions. This means that decentralization requires defined policies, as well as the approval of instruments for effective implementation."

### **Fiscal Decentralization**

For the process to work better, it will be vital to negotiate the increase in fiscal resources, as provided for in the Law on the Promotion of Regions. In the new regions formed, 50% of the General Sales Tax (IGV), the Selective Consumption Tax (ISC) and the Income Tax (IR) of natural persons collected in each region, will be directly administered by their respective regional governments.

According to political analyst Javier Azpur, it is transcendental to determine justice and focus on direct taxes so that those who have more resources contribute more to the treasury. Regional governments can gain more legitimacy and efficiency in this area because their proximity provides an opportunity to show concrete results. Another issue is tax efficiency, which must be achieved by increasing the number of taxpayers and reducing collection costs.

### **Regionalization and Territorial Development**

Regionalization will create a new territory where the social gap is reduced. In this sense, it must be carried out as a State policy, in accordance with point eight of the National Agreement corresponding to the year 2002, which proposes a relevant political, economic and administrative process to promote the sustained development of Peru.

One of the weaknesses in the decentralization processes is the lack of a project for the implementation of a new territorial order. On this point, Javier Azpur<sup>7</sup> affirms that

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it is imperative "to modify the centralist economic, political, and exclusionary pattern. In this perspective, considers that the political, legal and fiscal autonomy of the regional State must revolve around the creation of new sustainable and competitive economic spaces; the strengthening of the main local and regional social, political and institutional actors, as well as the consolidation of shared cultural references, assuming that diversity is a capital to be enhanced".

### **Some Weaknesses and Risks**

- a) There is a probability that a new type of centralism will arise in the new regional capital, however, the generating entity will be closer to the inhabitants to present fair claims and account for the projects that correspond in their respective localities.
- b) The loss of spaces of power during the process of regionalization and merger of departments can lead to strikes and stoppages.
- c) Exercise caution and avoid merger solely for reasons of ethnic similarity, since it would again be promoting concepts of splitting, which are dangerous to the nation.

On the subject it is propitious to quote the Peruvian economist Waldo Mendoza<sup>8</sup> when he states that "the association between economic growth and well-being is almost as powerful as the law of gravity." The author adds that, according to economist Lant Pritchett, all indicators of material well-being are related to changes in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita. There is no country in the world that has progressed without sustainable economic growth, and there is no nation that has stagnated without progress. It should be noted that the main engine of global economic growth is investment in physical and human capital, while economic growth is a source of public revenue that can be spent on education and the most vulnerable.

### **Conclusions**

The government must implement regionalization based on the geopolitical model and prioritize the merger of the most important institutions in the country such as, for example, the Armed Forces. AA. and the PNP. It will also have the obligation to call elections for regional governors, which will establish a regional congress and a regional security strategy.

Likewise, regardless of the model to be selected to achieve regionalization, it is imperative to connect the national territory through longitudinal and transversal railways to facilitate the population's economic and integration activities. Laws on this momentous issue were enacted long ago. On the other hand, there is still a need to emphasize that referendum processes to know if the population wants a region other than the one to which it belongs will fail, due to the particular interests of the authorities.

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### About the Author:

Major general in retirement, he works as a professor at the Center for Higher National Studies (CAEN), at the Army War College (ESGE) and is a collaborator of CEEEP, lecturer at the improvement schools of the Peruvian Army and specialist in National Reality and Geopolitics. He left the Peruvian Army on July 28, 2021, with 43 years of service to the nation; he served as head of the Joint Command of the Armed Forces (CCFFAA), General Commander of the Army, Inspector General of the Army, General Commander of the CE-VRAEM, General Commander of the 3rd Brigade of FFEE. Hero of democracy, veteran of Cenepa and Chavin de Huantar Command.

He is also a columnist for newspapers in Peru, publishing books such as: "The Armed Forces of Peru and its fight against COVID-19" in 2020; "Chavín de Huántar, El legado" in 2019; "An essay on security and defense in Peru - new threats, new roles" in 2017; "The VRAEM – Truths that hurt" in 2016; "Military Traditions and Issues" in 2013; and, "Design of organizations in times of change" in 2003.

### Endnotes:

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<sup>1</sup> Aymara Flag (indigenous group living mostly in the Andean highlands of Bolivia and Peru).

<sup>2</sup> Presidency of the Council of Ministers.

<sup>3</sup> Words coined by the subscriber since 2020, there is no reference.

<sup>4</sup> Luis Edgardo Mercado Jarrín (1919-2012), Peruvian soldier and politician, was Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of War and President of the Council of Ministers of Juan Velasco Alvarado. He developed an international policy characterized by the establishment of relations with almost all the countries of the socialist bloc, including Cuba and China, as well as the creation of the Andean Pact. After his retirement, he dedicated himself to giving talks and conferences on his specialty, Geopolitics. He chaired the Institute of Geopolitics and Strategy.

<sup>5</sup> Fernando A. Chinchilla, Óscar Parra Vera y Luis René Caceres, "Pobreza y Derechos Humanos: hacia la definición de parámetros conceptuales desde la doctrina y acciones del Sistema Interamericano", *Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos IIDH* (San José: 2010), 20-21, [www.corteidh.or.cr/tablas/r30504.pdf](http://www.corteidh.or.cr/tablas/r30504.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Juan Sánchez Barba, former head of the Cabinet of advisors of the Ministry of Women and Social Development (MIMDES) today Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations (MIMP).

<sup>7</sup> Javier Azpur, *Descentralización y regionalización en el Perú*, (Quito: Centro Andino de Acción Popular CAAP, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> Professor of the department of Economics of the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru (PUCP). Former Minister of Economy of Peru 2020-2021.