

Renata Escobar

Ph.D. Dissertation Evaluation

Political and Economic Integration in the Western Hemisphere

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Renata Escobar submitted a doctoral dissertation entitled *Political and Economic Integration in the Western Hemisphere*. The work is written in English. I must say that, in all my years at Charles University, I have never seen a doctoral dissertation with so many grammatical and spelling errors. Ms. Escobar's mastery of written English is insufficient for academic writing. In addition, it is very difficult for the reader to grasp what she is trying to convey in her work.

In the preface, Ms. Escobar states that she plans to compare the European Union with NAFTA and Mercosur using metaphor analysis. I must admit that I am highly skeptical about the whole concept of metaphor analysis and I wonder whether it is appropriate to pursue an advanced degree based on metaphor analysis at the Institute of International Studies. However, that is not for me to decide. In the section entitled "Paper Objectives", Ms. Escobar claims that the paper focuses on integration (both political and economic) in the Western Hemisphere as well as the motives of the individual actors. She then goes on to explain expectations in a cultural context. She makes the claim that the United States determined the form of government (mainly military) in individual Latin American countries for most of the twentieth century. Ms. Escobar's narrative continues by claiming that, in the 1990s, the United States started using the doctrine of free trade to its advantage. Allegedly, debts stemming from the 1970s oil crisis brought about a return to elected civilian

government in Latin American countries. I could go on and on, but I won't. My honest impression is that Ms. Escobar makes claims without any evidence to back them up. The first footnote appears on page 16, but the text begins on page 10. I wonder why.

The next section bears the title "Methodology." Ms. Escobar claims that she wishes to use the international political economy approach as defined by Robert Gilpin. Why then does she refer to Professor Petr Drulák's *Teorie mezinárodních vztahů*? This is a simple example of how not to do research. Though I personally have every confidence that Professor Drulák is correct in his depiction of Gilpin's theories, no researcher (especially on the postgraduate level) should merely assume that textbook interpretations are accurate. I frankly don't see any need for Ms. Escobar's rehashing of liberalism, mercantilism, and Marxism. Several paragraphs later, the reader learns that politics allegedly make the difference. Again she refers to the theory of someone, but cites somebody else in the footnote. After defining integration, Ms. Escobar discusses the definitions of discourse and metaphor analysis. Terms such as "container", "equilibrium", "motion", and "corporation" are explained on the basis of Petr Drulák's work. Insofar as the Western Hemisphere is concerned, however, the terms "body", "disease", "performance", "work of art", "catastrophe" (sic.), "violence", "society", "technology", "nature", "everyday life", "family", "sport", and "death" are supposedly appropriate. This continues throughout the section.

When discussing sources in the ensuing section, "Bibliography", Ms. Escobar discusses many sources containing diverse opinions. May I ask why she cites some of the authors in an earlier section and then repeats the content here? This approach is, to say the least, unorthodox.

The first main section begins with a description of the world's main trading regions. I find it unnecessary to name all the regions as the dissertation is supposed to deal with the Western Hemisphere. Chapter 1 discusses free trade in North America. Ms. Escobar begins with the United States. The account is partly historical and then turns into "sources of metaphors." Then, she discusses Mexico using the same structure. Subsequently, the text of NAFTA and a number of political speeches are subjected to "discourse analysis." Ms. Escobar takes bits and pieces of text from the documents in question and assigns them labels (grid, flow, motion, etc.). Allegedly, this pseudo-scholarly approach proves that the United States entered NAFTA to secure American hegemony, whereas Mexico entered NAFTA for economic reasons. Chapter 2 deals with free trade in Latin America. An historical account from NAFTA to Mercosur is given and then a lesson on metaphors is provided as is evidence of "discourse analysis." In my opinion, the metaphors are both confusing and misleading. I still fail to understand how this contributes to the scholarly debate on political and economic integration in the Western Hemisphere.

The second section simply begins with Chapter 3, which reads like an abbreviated history of U.S.-Latin American relations. Why is this necessary? Finally, Chapter 4 deals with bilateral free trade agreements in the same manner as Chapters 1 and 2. The main conclusion here seems to paint the United States as wanting to be dominant at all costs.

The overall conclusion to the work is an explanation of all the metaphors and how they allegedly apply to the motives of different countries in their pursuit of integration. I once again repeat my question: What has Ms. Escobar demonstrated in this treatise on the basis of evidence?

It is very difficult to state my thoughts on this dissertation in a polite manner, but I will make a sincere attempt. Once again, I do not think that this sort of work should be conducted at our institute. My colleagues and I always attempt to produce sound and valid studies. I question both the soundness and validity of Ms. Escobar's approach to the issue of political and economic integration in the Western Hemisphere. I readily admit that I am aware of the fact that Ms. Escobar did not attend the mandatory seminars for research students at our institute. I am also under the impression that she made minimal effort to consult Doc. Calda during the various stages of her work. Ms. Escobar opted for a "Lone Ranger" approach and this unsatisfactory work is the unfortunate result. I cannot, in good conscience, claim that this dissertation meets the requirements for a doctoral degree. I think that Ms. Escobar should be given the opportunity to withdraw the dissertation and rewrite it. Ms. Escobar should consult with Doc. Calda and other faculty members at the Institute of International Studies. As I have expressed my negative view, I respectfully request that the appropriate university officials solicit another opinion on this dissertation.

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