

Reviews

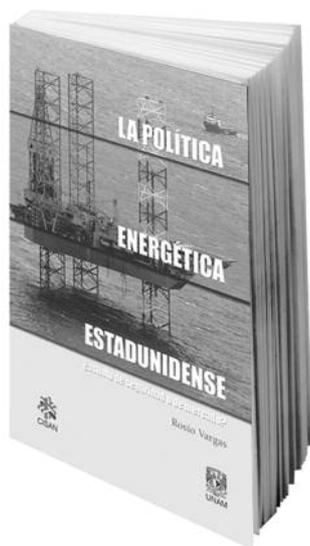
La política energética estadounidense: ¿asunto de seguridad o de mercado?

(U.S. Energy Policy, A Matter of Security or the Market?)

Rosío Vargas Suárez

CISAN-UNAM

Mexico City, 2005, 217 pp.



Seldom is a book as timely as this. Oriented to the complex U.S. reality, the coherence and appropriate weight given to the apparently unrelated issues of world energy and the situation of the United States in particular allows the reader to completely understand the problems posed. Examples of these problems are the unfair competition with Mexico in oil sales, in the view of a U.S. oil producer, or the even more imposing U.S. energy crisis in the context of the world's large consortia.

In *U.S. Energy Policy, A Matter of Security or the Market?*, Dr. Rosío Vargas writes that the United States practices market protectionism to favor its domestic consumers. However, the Gulf War and the invasion of Iraq are presented as international oil policy issues that reveal aspects of national energy security. In the United States, few seemed to notice the dual game of security and the market (terms that change positions according to the political context), while for

many external observers the central theme of this book is very important for understanding what is currently behind world events.

The book states that both criteria (the market and security) coexist in a game that is more about strategy than energy policy, characterized by the hybrid nature of their objectives in specific contexts, such as in that of a less monolithic, more “pragmatic” unilateral government, in which the internal government actors and interest groups have coexisted with multinational interests imbedded in the power elites, in a historic-economic process that can be divided into three stages: 1959-1972, 1973-1985 and 1986-2001, united by a barely perceptible thread and described by the author in the first chapter in a minute analysis of the results, scope and limits of U.S. energy plans. As Dr. Vargas writes, “The challenge of energy policy makers, then, was to find a balance between the market and the action needed to ensure economic well-being” (p. 63).

When he/she finishes reading this useful work divided into four chapters, the reader has the impression that studying U.S. energy policy implies explaining the geopolitics of the world's energy. In the chapter “La política energética estadounidense desde Richard Nixon hasta George Bush” (U.S. Energy Policy from Richard Nixon to George Bush), the author provides a theoretical and conceptual basis to how we should analyze energy policy, what we should understand by state intervention, regulation, scarcity, abundance, costs and benefits, integration and energy vulnerability and dependence.

In my opinion, the chapter “El sector energético de Estados Unidos: un panorama general” (General

Panorama of the U.S. Energy Sector) should be called “El sector energético desde Estados Unidos” (The Energy Sector from the United States) because it relates the geo-technical nature of world energy resources, their location and the data that shows production, consumption and distribution from 1949 to 1998, all backed up by tables and graphs that demonstrate what has happened and where the energy sector is going. It also points out the proven existence of different fuels like coal and natural gas, at the same time that it underlines the importance of understanding the dimensions of the energy problem with regard to nuclear energy, electricity and, above all, oil, which occupies the main place given its geo-strategic importance for North America.

The author also argues with academic rigor one of her main —and perhaps the most important— hypotheses, backed up by other writers: geologically

speaking, the U.S. oil decline is inevitable and will have repercussions the world over. She broadens out what is implied in her statement in the chapter on “La seguridad energética estadounidense” (U.S. Energy Security), in which, in a corollary to this research into the crisis facing the world, she maintains that “the depletion of its oil reserves after long exploitation is what is making the issue of security important for the United States” (p. 174). We are reaching the technical limits of exploitation of this precious energy resource, and we must seek alternatives.

This indispensable book is a good starting point for understanding the arduous task we are facing that, one way or another, concerns us all. ■■

Alfredo Álvarez Padilla

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La seguridad nacional en México: debate actual

(National Security in Mexico: The Current Debate)

José Luis Piñeyro, comp.

UAM-Azcapotzalco

Mexico City, 2004, 500 pp.

With an integrated perspective and free of the prejudice that national security should deal exclusively with military or intelligence matters, *La seguridad nacional en México: debate actual* (National Security in Mexico: The Current Debate) allows the non-specialist to familiarize him- or herself with the topic. Using accessible language, the authors of this collective work explain their theoretical-methodological position, which acts as a crosscutting conduit for explaining the social, economic and political historical moment the country is going through at the same time that they provoke academic discussion and invite the reader to reflect.

These essays are the result of rigorous research and have the social sensitivity fitting for experts in

