

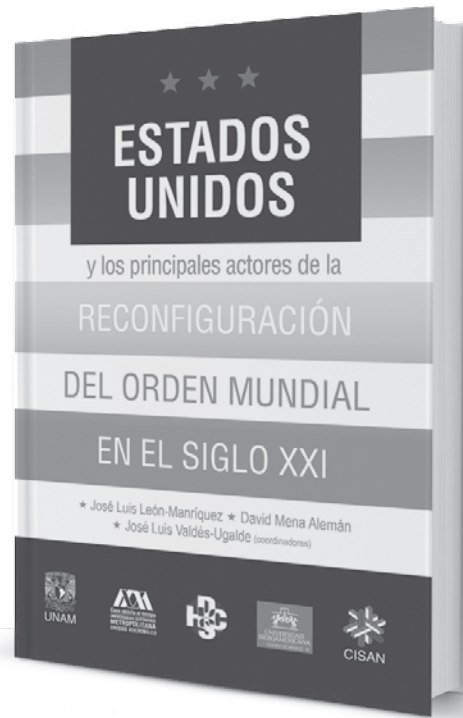
Estados Unidos y los principales actores de la reconfiguración del orden mundial en el siglo XXI

(The United States and the Main Actors in Reconfiguring the Twenty-first-Century World Order)

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This book is an indispensable reference for understanding the evolution of the United States during the second decade of the twenty-first century. It is the result of coordinated efforts by the National Autonomous University of México's Center for Research on North America, the Autonomous Metropolitan University's Xochimilco campus, and the Iberoamerican University.

It offers the reader an in-depth study from different perspectives about the preponderance of the United States worldwide and the implications of its relations with the rest of the international stakeholders. It also delves into its hegemonic capability for establishing a world order in different spheres after its ascent following World War II, as well as how, since the beginning of the current century, it has gradually been losing strength in the face of the reconfiguration of this order.

The first chapter, written by Luis Maira, looks at the debate between the position that the U.S. is in decline and another that points to its defense of its hegemonic power in the face of the onslaught of the deep economic crisis beginning in 2008. The article by José Luis Valdés-Ugalde complements this by showing how the United States faces the challenges of increasingly polarized domestic politics marked by dissension and how President Obama's administration has attempted to establish a political agenda based on cooperation and dialogue with an increasingly insular Republican Party concentrated on its most conservative, intolerant elements.

The U.S. political system is also the object of a comparative analysis by David Mena Alemán that questions the success

of exceptionalism cemented in what he dubs "a counter-majority democracy." This author's stance is that the system's main characteristic is its high maintenance cost and the low benefit for its citizens, particularly for minorities. Mena also underlines that U.S. democracy can be seen to be surrounded by agendas and interests of power groups whose priorities are often contrary to the public interest, thus generating high political and social costs.

A country's hegemony is measured by its influence on different aspects of the international sphere. Monetary issues are part of that equation, and Víctor M. Cuevas carries out a quantitative study to explain a panorama of the U.S. dollar's prospects as the dominant currency in the international exchange-rate market over the coming decades. Based on different equations, Cuevas compares this currency with others, mainly the euro, explaining that, despite the huge aspirations for internationalizing the euro, the results have been much lower than expected. He concludes that the U.S. dollar will continue to be a reference for financial and capital transactions.

Another chapter, by Laura Zamudio González, offers us a vivid portrait of the role the United States has played in the multilateral arena and its presence in the world's main international organizations. As this essay's title suggests, Wash-

ington's relations with the different international bodies is ambivalent and complex, in what the author characterizes as a highly institutionalized international system that aims to serve the interests of the hegemonic country. Finally, she evaluates both quantitatively and qualitatively the U.S. role not only in the UN System, but also with regard to the different inter-governmental organizations that exist in all fields of the international sphere.

The second part of the book deals with the United States' role *vis-à-vis* the emerging world. Articles like the one by Arturo Santa Cruz show us the path followed by relations between Washington and Beijing under the George W. Bush and Obama administrations. Santa Cruz offers an objective view of why China, despite its trade expansion and economic opening, is far from achieving a level of international leadership capable of unseating the United States. This is to a certain extent due to its human rights record as well as its issues of internal democracy and the environment. But more importantly, above all it is due to the fact that China has said that its expansion will be peaceful. The author suggests, then, that Washington's should cooperate with Beijing.

Another outstanding issue is what Juan José Ramírez calls "an uncomfortable strategic alliance" between the United States and the Democratic Party of Japan's administrations. Ramírez's essay deals with equality between strategic allies, the Japanese government's military sovereignty, and Washington's concessions to what has been dubbed the right to collective self-defense in the face of the domestic problems of a highly hierarchical and bureaucratized Japanese political structure.

The relationship between the European Union and the United States, traditionally based on cooperation in security matters, poses enormous challenges in the face of a bloc that is working more as a common front for defense, sometimes distanced from Washington's interests. As Armando Rodríguez Luna points out in his essay, trans-Atlantic relations between the United States and the EU oscillate freely increasingly between cooperation and political realism, with vague allusions to a strategic alliance to deal with the economic crisis, relations with Russia, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and, more recently, Syria. This author's argument is that the United States will continue to maintain a pragmatic presence in favor of its interests in the trans-Atlantic hemisphere, with NATO as the instrument that will continue to watch over these objectives.

The last chapter of the second part of the book deals with one of the essential issues for understanding the U.S.

role in cooperation and its influence over a large part of the world. For different reasons, relations with Russia have been characterized by constant confrontations, from the time that the Soviet Union existed through its fall in the 1990s. The chapter looks at the vicissitudes of that relationship, the behavior of each of the actors in different scenarios, such as the 2013-2014 crisis in the Ukraine, and their actions in the central and northern parts of the eurozone.

Lastly, the third part of the book analyzes relations between the United States and Latin America. According to José Luis León, currently, the relationship has been characterized by ambivalent interests, coercion, consensus, and neglect. A first approximation deals with the role of the United States in the region *vis-à-vis* China's activity, its growing presence in South America, and Washington's continued preponderance in both the region's economy and its politics. A brief review of the history of that relationship looks at the loss of U.S. presence *versus* China's thriving economy and its attempts to penetrate the region's markets.

The last three chapters are dedicated to understanding Washington's relations with its nearest neighbors, Mexico and Canada, with regard to three key issues on the regional agenda. In a first article, Leonardo Curzio looks at Mexico-U.S. bilateral relations seen from the perspective of different administrations on each side of the border: the agreements and differences that have characterized each of the stages of Mexico's governments, from Carlos Salinas de Gortari to the then-recently inaugurated Enrique Peña Nieto, and from the first President George Bush to the re-election of Barack Obama.

Curzio deals with fundamental issues on the bilateral agenda like security, migration, integration, and trade. His article segues easily into the following analysis by Federico Novelo, who introduces the reader to the possible future of NAFTA, making his central argument the negative and positive balance sheet of the 20 years since the agreement came into effect. Finally, Leticia Calderón Chelius examines one of the most prominent issues in the U.S.-Mexican relationship: migration, which she thinks is a kind of regulator of relations between the two countries, the result of a century of experiences that have impacted not only on the economy, but also society and culture. In the face of those impacts, she offers keys for understanding the overall picture. ■■■

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