

Reviews

Seguridad nacional en México.

¿Realidad o proyecto?

(National Security in Mexico. Reality or Project?)

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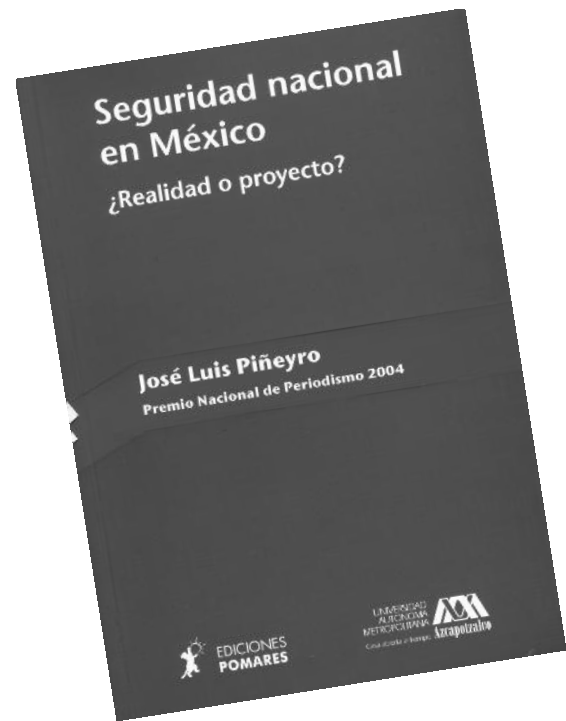
Barcelona, 2006, 207 pp.

José Luis Piñeyro's aim in this book is to contribute to the discussion about Mexico's national security taking into consideration the current domestic situation and the country's unavoidable link with the United States. He also deals with U.S. relations to other international actors like Brazil, Venezuela and Iraq, thus allowing the reader to compare.

The author has gathered more than 70 pieces of journalism published between 2003 and 2006, introducing them with a text that underlines the minimum theoretical and methodological bases needed for systematically understanding a comprehensive conception of national security.

Piñeyro anchors the concept of national security in history, in the socio-economic context and in the implementation of state policies, situating it beyond the traditional focus that circumscribes it to merely technical military and police considerations. With this focus, it takes on a multi-dimensional character thanks to which we can identify among the real threats factors like poverty, structural unemployment, inequality, the growing consumption of drugs, criminality, electoral abstentionism and even AIDS.

The Mexican case is the crosscutting theme of the book, which starts off with a critical reflection about the different factors whose influence on national security goes from risk to threat. Because of



their structural character, they can —and in some cases already do— go beyond state institutions' response capability.

Convinced of the consequences of increasing social deterioration for the consolidation of democracy in Mexico, the author reflects about the conditions needed for governability and the construction of a harmonious, inclusive model of development. From that perspective, public policies must be based on the government's satisfying social needs, but must also resort to participatory democracy as the way for society to influence the government.

At the center of this idea is the transformation of public policies into real state policies, constituted on the basis of clear objectives, operational strategies, the guarantee of transparency and accountability. Among their characteristics is long-term vision, the capability of adapting to new scenarios, the definition of a nation-

al project in light of socio-political consensus and the creation of a network of effective state institutions and alliances with other nations or regional blocs.

Following these premises, one of the book's themes is the vicissitudes still surrounding the debate in Mexico, fragmented over the unavoidable fiscal reform, considering that the use and distribution of these resources constitutes a valuable snapshot of any national government which, together with the imperative of strengthening the domestic market, are necessary for promoting sustainable development.

Openly critical of the neo-liberal model, the author examines the presidency of Vicente Fox, classifying it as an administration of "regressive change," characterized by its absolute complacency toward the economic elites in favor of macro-economic equilibrium, at the same time that it underestimated its impact in the political and macro-social arena.

The book contains a profusion of references to the model of offensive security that the United States has tried to impose on the world since 9/11, and warns that Mexico should make a priority of preventive mechanisms that allow it to safeguard its sovereignty.

When dealing with drug trafficking, terrorism, the border and migration, all issues that permeate the bilateral agenda, Piñeyro expresses his concern about the lack of political will and leadership that have made it impossible for Mexico to limit the intervention of the hegemonic power, and have opened up the way for collaborationism.

Nevertheless, it is appropriate to mention José Luis Piñeyro's capacity for visualizing alternatives for a Mexico faced with this maze of dilemmas. For example, in the case of drug trafficking, he recommends abandoning repression and rationally and in a balanced fashion calculating the respective benefits of spending to combat drug trafficking and investing in the fight against poverty, addiction prevention programs and addict rehabilitation.¹

The book includes the article "Héroes de la fuerza" (Heroes of Force), which won him the National Prize for Journalism in 2004. Without distinguishing between legal and undocumented Mexican migrants, it emphasizes their irrefutable contributions to the stability of the country in the macro-economic and political spheres. Combining data that reflects how

imposing the phenomenon of migration to the United States is, the author underlines that the only successful non-public policy of the Fox government has been the systematic expulsion-export of migrant labor.

Nevertheless, in this article as well as others, he ponders the advantages that this migration has for the United States, appealing to the need for reciprocity with Mexico and favoring a migratory accord that would cross over from amnesty to respect for human dignity.

Continuing with the analysis of Latin America in several articles, the author underlines the legalization of politics as a growing phenomenon of control at the service of the neoliberal model, whose intention is to channel and contain popular nationalism in the region.

José Luis Piñeyro appreciates the efforts to build broader spaces for political sovereignty in countries like Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela, which aim to define alternative paths for their relations with the United States. They have done this by implementing anti-poverty programs and reactivating micro- and medium-sized cooperatives and companies, thus seeking to solve problems derived from the concentration of income and wealth and therefore decrease social polarization.

By contrast, in the case of Mexico, the author criticizes the passiveness of the Fox administration, which never went any further than rhetoric *vis-à-vis* the United States. He considers that there is insufficient concrete evidence for us to trust in its willingness to promote economic and political stability in our country since, for example, the migratory accord has repeatedly been postponed at the same time that mechanisms for guarding our common border have been strengthened.

One outstanding attribute of José Luis Piñeyro's book is that it makes the many complications of building sovereignty and national security accessible to the general public. A second is that it puts at the center of his analysis the Mexican men and women who, despite successive blows to their quality of life and standard of living, have understood how to maintain their loyalty to their nation and their vocation for civility.

Recognizing that Mexico must face the fact that at the bottom of its many problems and internal conflicts lie corruption and mistrust, which in turn make it

impossible to come to a national agreement, the author underlines the national public interest as the cross-cutting theme of a new national security strategy, channeled by social participation and the formation of a collective consciousness, capable of taking root in a new formula of community cohesion.

Lastly, and considering that the author alludes to the possibility of alternation in power that would favor the left in the July 2006 presidential elections, we trust

that soon this magnificent book will be expanded to seek answers to the challenges of the future. **MM**

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NOTES

¹ The author notes that in 2004, 35,000 Mexican troops were involved in the fight against drug trafficking, p. 124.

