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The Shale Revolution, U.S. Energy Imperialism, and Mexico's Dependence

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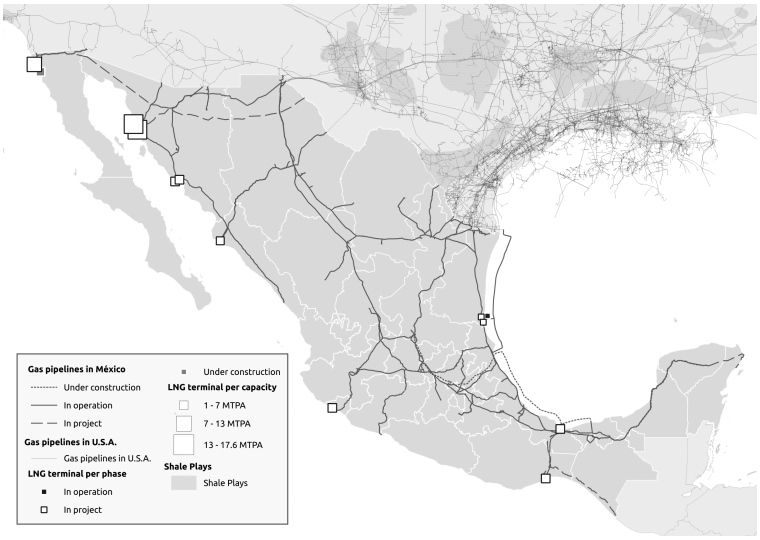

U.S. imperialism has historically hinged on its control of global fossil fuel, leveraging it as a core mechanism of geopolitical power and global dominance. In the early twentieth century, the United States emerged as the world's preeminent oil producer, embedding its imperial power in the structures of fossil fuel-based capitalism. Corporate oil giants such as the global cartel of the Seven Sisters (Standard Oil of New Jersey [Exxon], Gulf Oil, Texaco, BP, Shell, Mobil, and Chevron) were monopoly formations instrumented by imperial force, enabling U.S. industrial ascendancy and global influence. As U.S. fossil fuel production reached "peak oil" and domestic oil reserves declined since the mid-twentieth century, the United States shifted from extraction-based supremacy to an imperial mode of governance centred on controlling global fossil fuel-based energy flows. This strategic transition, which was accelerated by the oil shocks of the 1970s, marked a deepening reliance on coercive mechanisms: military interventions, regime changes, and economic manipulation in oil-rich regions, particularly across the Middle East and the Global South.

In the early twentieth century, the United States emerged as the world's preeminent oil producer, embedding its imperial power in the structures of fossil fuel-based capitalism.

Starting in the twenty-first century, the global dynamics of fossil energy imperialism shifted as the fracking-led "Shale Revolution" revitalised U.S. imperial ambitions, especially in the natural gas sector. Through a surge of technology-intensive extraction, the United States rapidly repositioned itself as a leading producer and global exporter, reasserting a degree of energy self-sufficiency centred on natural gas. More crucially, this resurgence fortified Washington's fossil fuel-based geopolitical power. By engineering new regional dependencies and reshaping energy alliances to suit its strategic

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ambitions, the United States weaponised its command over natural gas to deepen its grip on the global fossil energy system and reinforce its imperial reach. This trend is only further intensified with Donald Trump's ascension to the presidency for a second term.

Nowhere is this fossil-fuelled imperial reordering more starkly evident than in the U.S. energy domination over Mexico, a nation once symbolically and politically defined by its postrevolutionary pursuit of energy sovereignty. That legacy has been steadily dismantled as Mexico has become structurally integrated into the U.S. fossil energy regime, serving both as a major importer of U.S. natural gas and as a strategic conduit for U.S. energy exports, particularly to Asian markets via its Pacific coast. This reconfiguration signals a broader imperial strategy that fuses technological innovation with geopolitical subordination, reasserting U.S. supremacy while eroding the energy autonomy of its neighbours.

Hence, there has been a clear transformation of U.S. fossil energy imperialism, with the Shale Revolution as a key inflection point. This resurgence of extractive power has reshaped not only domestic energy landscapes, but also the global architecture of fossil-based monopoly accumulation. Central to our analysis is Mexico's shifting position within this new imperial formation, transitioning from a symbol of energy nationalism in the twentieth century to becoming a subordinated node in the broader U.S.-dominated fossil energy network. It is necessary to interrogate the entanglement of technological advancement, monopoly expansion, and geopolitical imperial domination in the ongoing—though increasingly weakened—evolution of U.S. imperial power.

The Shale Revolution and U.S. Imperialism

From the late twentieth century to the early twenty-first century, U.S. oil production underwent a prolonged decline, a trend extensively analysed in literature under the concept of "peak oil." Although the decline in oil production had been predicted since the 1950s by geophysicist Marion King Hubbert, this contraction became more evident in the '70s through two oil shocks. These shocks highlighted the deep global energy crisis, the sustained growth of a trade deficit in the U.S. oil balance, and the transformation of the country (formerly the world's largest oil producer) into a net importer of crude oil.[1] In this context, the United States implemented an imperial strategy of dominance over major oil-producing regions, employing vertical, coercive, and military mechanisms. This policy was clearly reflected in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, motivated by the need to secure control over global oil production and ensure access to these resources.[2]

By the second decade of the twenty-first century, U.S. fossil fuel-driven imperialism underwent a strategic transformation, propelled by the aggressive expansion of fracking. Initially promoted during the 1970s oil shocks and energy crises, fracking was generously subsidised by the federal government through tax breaks and research funding. Yet, the method languished in technical obscurity until the 1990s, when Texas oilman and geologist George P. Mitchell unlocked its commercial potential by merging hydraulic fracturing with horizontal drilling. This technological convergence enabled the exploitation of shale formations like the Barnett Shale, catalysing a new phase in the industrialisation of fossil energy extraction. What followed was not

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[1] ↩ John Bellamy Foster, "Peak Oil and Energy Imperialism," Monthly Review 60, no. 3 (July–August 2008): 12.

[2] ↩ Michael T. Klare, Blood and Oil (London: Penguin Books, 2004).

simply an energy breakthrough, but the deepening of an extractive paradigm—one that externalised environmental costs, marginalised local voices, and doubled down on fossil fuel dependency at a time of mounting ecological crisis.[3]

This technological shift, arriving in tandem with a spike in oil and gas prices after the 2008 financial crisis, catalysed a dramatic transformation in U.S. energy production. The growth of fracking was not only tolerated, but actively encouraged by Barack Obama's administration, which offered regulatory leniency and political endorsement under the rhetoric of a "clean energy transition" and economic recovery. Far from signalling a departure from fossil fuel dependence, this moment marked a deepened commitment to extractive practices cloaked in greenwashed narratives.[4]

The result was a rapid escalation in domestic oil and gas extraction, with fracking at its core. What began as a targeted industrial strategy quickly morphed into a nationwide rush to exploit shale formations, from the Bakken in North Dakota and Montana to the Marcellus Shale in the eastern United States. In just a few years, the United States reversed its role in global energy markets—from one of the world's largest energy importers to a dominant producer, particularly in natural gas.

This is how the so-called Shale Revolution began. This "revolution" would become a lifeline for U.S. imperialism in economically countering the 2008 crisis. The echoes of peak oil ceased to resonate, the narratives of green capitalism were revealed as mere mirages, and fossil extraction once again became the focal point of the global geopolitical map as the engine of accumulation and monopoly concentration. The heads of major U.S. energy oligopolies began to smile again. In 2000, fracking accounted for only 2 percent of natural gas production in the United States; by 2023, this figure had risen to 78 percent, with trends pointing to even further growth.[5] Ben Bernanke, then chairman of the Federal Reserve until his retirement in 2014, stated that the discovery of shale oil was "one of…if not the most beneficial development" for the U.S. economy after the Great Recession of 2008.[6]

The imperial logic of fossil energy control is most sharply revealed through the lens of natural gas, rather than oil. In the latter case, although the United States became a leading oil producer after 2010 due to the rise of fracking, the resulting oil's high production costs—$73 per barrel, compared to $3 in countries like Saudi Arabia—prevent it from controlling the global oil market.[7] As a result, U.S. oil profits depend heavily on international prices and OPEC's production decisions, revealing a lack of true oil hegemony despite its output dominance.

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However, in the case of natural gas, the leading role of U.S. imperial power becomes strikingly clear, as its dominance has been rapidly consolidated through the strategic expansion of shale extraction—an endeavour that transcends energy production to restructure global dependencies and deepen geopolitical influence. Between 2010 and 2022, as shown in Chart 1, U.S. natural gas production surged from 652 billion to 1.1 trillion cubic meters, a dramatic expansion made possible almost entirely by hydraulic fracturing in shale formations. This unprecedented boom has not only reshaped the

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[3] ↩ Zhongmin Wang and Alan Krupnick, "A Retrospective Review of Shale Gas Development in the U.S.: What Led to the Boom?," Economics of Energy and Environmental Policy 4, no. 1 (2015): 5–18.

[4] ↩ Jude Clemente, "President Obama's Support For America's Shale Oil And Natural Gas," Forbes, December 31, 2019.

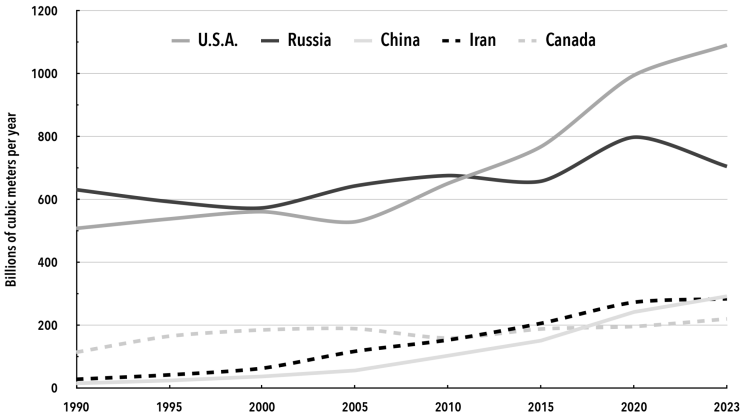
[5] ↩ U.S. Energy Information Administration (U.S. EIA), "How Much Shale Gas Is Produced in the U.S.?," September 19, 2024, eia.gov.

[6] ↩ Ava Vered Zieff, "The US Shale Revolution: The Threat to Saudi Arabia and the Future of the US-Saudi 'Special Relationship,'" senior thesis, Fordham University, 2022.

[7] ↩ U.S. crude oil production rose from 347 million metric tons in 2010 to 820 million in 2022, making the country the world's largest oil producer. That year, 64 percent of the oil extracted in the United States came from fracking. Enerdata, "Producción de crudo," n.d., datos.enerdata.net.

U.S. energy profile, but has also realigned global power dynamics centred on fossil fuels. While oil flows through a more interconnected global market, natural gas is governed by fragmented, regionally confined infrastructures. This division has generated distinct geopolitical tensions where control over supply chains and pricing becomes a tool of strategic dominance, rather than mere market competition. In this context, the United States appears to be positioning itself to shape a global natural gas market, aiming to set international prices and consolidate its influence over global natural gas flows.

Chart 1. Top 5 Natural Gas Producers



Source: Enerdata, "Producción de gas natural," n.d., datos.energdata.net.

The United States, with its vast shale reserves and cost-effective extraction technologies, holds a critical advantage: it can produce natural gas at relatively low cost, positioning itself as a central player in the reorganization of global energy flows. In stark contrast to U.S. shale oil—which faces stiff cost-based competition from other oil-producing nations—U.S. natural gas is not only abundant, but also economically advantageous, enhancing both its domestic leverage and export potential. This asymmetry allows the United States to exert disproportionate influence over pricing structures and supply routes, consolidating its role as an imperial manager of natural gas markets. In doing so, it further embeds fossil energy within the machinery of geopolitical strategy, turning technological breakthroughs into instruments of structural dominance.[8]

The use of fracking is proven to be ecologically destructive. It is predatory.[9] It demands immense amounts of water, placing undue strain on already scarce resources in arid regions. Additionally, the process contaminates groundwater, as chemicals used in fracturing leak into underground aquifers, posing a significant risk to water quality. Furthermore, fracking is a major contributor to climate catastrophe, releasing substantial amounts of methane, a potent greenhouse gas. Indigenous communities, such as the Beaver Lake Cree Nation in Alberta and the Tsleil-Waututh Nation in British Columbia, have long resisted the ecological devastation caused by fracking. Similarly, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe's battle against the Dakota Access Pipeline in North Dakota remains a prominent example of Indigenous resistance to environmentally destructive practices.[10] However, despite collective condemnations and scientific evidence of its devastating environmental effects, natural gas from fracking is still marketed as "clean energy" due to the lobbying efforts of the American Petroleum Institute. This has helped reduce regulatory oversight and allowed major oil companies to rebrand themselves as "energy companies" to improve their image, with BP changing its name to "Beyond Petroleum" in 2000 and later to simply BP, and French company Total rebranding as TotalEnergies in 2021.[11]

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8 ↩ For more information on gas prices, see U.S. EIA, "U.S. Henry Hub Natural Gas Prices in 2023 Were the Lowest Since Mid-2020," January 4, 2021.

9 ↩ John Bellamy Foster, "The Fossil Fuels War," Monthly Review 65, no. 4 (September 2013): 29.

10 ↩ Nick Estes and Jaskiran Dhillon, eds., Standing with Standing Rock (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019).

11 ↩ Chris McGreal, "How a Powerful US Lobby Group Helps Big Oil to Block Climate Action," Guardian, July 19, 2021.

The shale industry in the United States, which in the 1990s and early 2000s was made up of independent operators, has undergone significant consolidation and monopolistic control as major oil and gas corporations have aggressively entered the sector. To secure control over abundant shale resources, industry giants like ExxonMobil and Chevron have sought to strengthen their positions and expand their presence in shale exploitation. This shift has triggered a wave of high-profile mergers and acquisitions, marking a new era in shale monopoly production. Since July 2023, these energy giants have collectively announced $194 billion in shale-related deals in the United States, reflecting their long-term commitment to securing key reserves.[12] The historic Seven Sisters—the early twentieth-century giant, multinational oil companies—have been consolidated into a smaller group now known as the "supermajors": ExxonMobil, Chevron, BP, and Shell. These companies not only dominate shale oil production but also share control of shale gas with firms like EQT, among others.

But perhaps the most significant aspect of the monopoly concentration process in this sector is reflected in the spiral of financialization that has engulfed it. The major U.S. gas and oil companies—ExxonMobil, Chevron, and ConocoPhillips, among others—have between 60 percent and 80 percent of their ownership in the hands of financial capital, such as investment banks and asset management funds. Highly concentrated firms like Vanguard, BlackRock, and State Street play a key role, being the largest shareholders of energy corporations. This demonstrates that control over the ownership of these corporations has undergone a shift, and the main beneficiaries of the Western oil industry are not only the oil companies, but also large financial groups that control both the markets and the production and transportation of fossil energy. As Adam Hanieh explains,

> *The strong presence of these and other financial conglomerates indicates that when we consider who profits from the Western oil industry, it is not enough to focus simply on oil companies themselves. While the supermajors drive much of the physical extraction of crude oil in North America, the dynamics of oil production are ultimately tied to the imperatives of large financial groups that act simultaneously in both financial markets and the day-to-day real world of energy production. Through their deep involvement in the ownership of supermajors and the wider North American and European oil industry, these financial investors are leading beneficiaries of the carbon economy.*[13]

In the realm of global energy trade, the process of U.S. imperial repositioning within the fossil-based energy industry triggered by the Shale Revolution has been significant not only because the United States became self-sufficient in the global natural gas market, but also because it positioned the country as the world's leading exporter of natural gas. In 2023, the United States consumed around 80–83 billion cubic feet of natural gas per day, while producing 100.5 billion per day.[14] This placed the country in a surplus productions position with exports rising from 0.2 billion cubic feet per day in 1990 to 19 billion per day in 2022, as shown in Chart 2. In 2022, 11 billion cubic feet per day of U.S. natural gas exports were liquefied natural gas, primarily transported by sea, while 9 billion cubic feet per day were sent via pipelines.[15] As a result, the United States not only emerged as the world's largest producer of natural gas, but also as the leading exporter of this energy resource on the international stage (see Chart 3).

The transformation of the United States into a major exporter of natural gas was driven by large infrastructure investments that enabled it to enter the international shale gas market. Notable among these is the construction of large

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12 ↩ Carole Nakhle, "U.S. Shale Oil and Gas: From Independence to Dominance," GISReports, August 30, 2024, gisreportsonline.com.

13 ↩ Adam Hanieh, Crude Capitalism (London: Verso, 2024), 206.

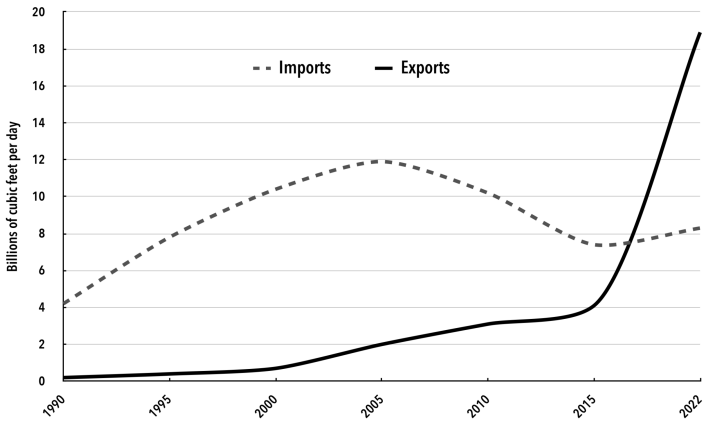
14 ↩ U.S. EIA, "Natural Gas Explained," June 30, 2023.

15 ↩ U.S. EIA, "The U.S. Exported a Record Volume of Natural Gas in 2023," April 15, 2024.

liquefaction terminals on the Atlantic coast aimed at supplying liquefied gas to Europe. Prominent examples include the construction of the Sabine Pass (in 2016) and Cameron liquefied natural gas terminals in Louisiana (in 2019), with capacities to export 4.5 billion and 2.2 billion cubic feet per day, respectively. Also noteworthy is the Corpus Christi terminal, built in the Gulf of Mexico and inaugurated in 2019, with an export capacity of 1.8 billion cubic feet per day. These liquefaction plants are operated and overseen by major energy corporations such as Cheniere Energy, Sempra, Total, and Exxon. These corporations are heavily backed by financial giants such as BlackRock and Vanguard, underscoring the central role of financial capital in driving the resurgence of U.S. energy imperialism.

The emergence of the United States as a dominant global exporter of natural gas cannot be fully understood without acknowledging the strategic exploitation of the war in Ukraine and the ensuing disruption of Russian gas supplies to Europe.

Chart 2. U.S. Natural Gas Exports and Imports, 1990–2022 (in billions of cubic feet per day)



Source: Data from U.S. Energy Information Administration, "Natural Gas Explained," June 30, 2023, eia.gov.

The emergence of the United States as a dominant global exporter of natural gas cannot be fully understood without acknowledging the strategic exploitation of the war in Ukraine and the ensuing disruption of Russian gas supplies to Europe. While the interruption of Russian natural gas has wreaked havoc on the working class in European countries—particularly through soaring inflation—Europe, rather than resisting this crisis, aligned with U.S. interests by rapidly increasing imports of U.S. gas. Within just one year of the conflict's onset, European imports of U.S. liquefied natural gas skyrocketed from 2.2 billion cubic feet per day at the close of 2021 to 6.3 billion cubic feet per day by 2024. This shift is not merely a supply change but a stark realignment, with the United States increasing its share of European liquefied natural gas imports from 22 percent to 45 percent, further consolidating its energy dominance at the expense of European economic stability.[16] In fact, Europe's subordination to U.S. natural gas exports is only intended to be deepened by Trump, who has conditioned tariff negotiations on an increase in European purchases of U.S. natural gas.[17]

The supply of gas to Europe—along with U.S. strategic allies like Japan and South Korea—has facilitated the creation of a specialised gas-exporting network, with its epicentre in the numerous liquefaction plants constructed over the last decade along the southern Atlantic coast of the United States. From 2013 to the present, twenty-three natural gas liquefaction ports have been approved in the United States. Except for one in Oregon, the rest are concentrated on the east coast, particularly in Texas, Louisiana, and Florida. This highlights the expansion of U.S. energy imperialism, which shapes a spatial strategy prioritising export-focused infrastructure, ensuring greater control over the natural gas global energy market and reinforcing its dominance at the expense of other nations' sovereignty and economic interests. This was made clear by the words of Department of Energy spokesperson Ben Dietderich, who stated that "the Trump

16 ↩ U.S. EIA, "The United States Remained the World's Largest Liquefied Natural Gas Exporter in 2024," March 27, 2025.

17 ↩ Under the new tariffs and trade arrangements, the European Union would be expected to commit to acquiring $750 billion in U.S. energy by 2028. White House, "The United States and European Union Reach Massive Trade Deal," July 28, 2025, whitehouse.gov.

administration is actively promoting U.S. LNG [liquefied natural gas] globally, reaffirming that the U.S. is once again open for business and remains the world's most reliable energy supplier." As he also mentioned, "the importance of re-establishing regulatory certainty for LNG exports, a priority from Day 1 of the administration, cannot be overstated."[18]

Mexico: The Energy Lebensraum of the United States

Although Europe has played a significant role as a consumer of U.S. natural gas, it is Mexico that stands as the central and strategic actor in the energy transformation driven by the Shale Revolution. Today, Mexico's imports of petroleum products and natural gas from the United States far exceed those of any other country in the world. Mexico plays a crucial role in expanding the U.S. energy market, facilitating its regional consolidation and reinforcing U.S. influence within global energy geopolitics. In the context of fracking-fuelled U.S. fossil energy imperialism, Mexico serves as a vital space—or a Lebensraum—much like Poland was for fascist Germany: a territory of unquestionable dominance and accumulation, securing U.S. imperial power.

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This panorama contrasts sharply with the history of Mexico's energy sector, the control and management of which have undergone profound transformations over recent decades. In the 1930s, President Lázaro Cárdenas led the expropriation and nationalisation of oil, establishing by decree a state monopoly on the extraction, exploitation, and distribution of hydrocarbons under the administration of Petróleos Mexicanos (PEMEX). This move marked a milestone in the country's energy sovereignty, consolidating PEMEX as the backbone of the national economy. However, beginning in the 1980s, Mexico witnessed an aggressive wave of neoliberal policies that promoted the privatisation and progressive dismantling of the energy sector. Under this economic model, state control was gradually eroded, weakening PEMEX and paving the way for greater private and foreign capital involvement. This process culminated in the 2013 energy reform, which not only represented the definitive loss of the state monopoly over the industry, but also fully aligned Mexico's energy sector with U.S. strategic interests, further deepening its economic subordination.[19] This aggressive imperial onslaught against Mexico's energy sector continues to this day, under the imperial pressure conditions set in motion through the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement currently under renegotiation.[20]

In the case of oil, Mexico's growing energy dependence on the United States is clearly reflected in the continuous rise of refined oil imports and the steady erosion of the country's domestic oil industry. In the context of the Shale Revolution positioning the United States as the world's top oil producer and as the leading exporter of refined oil, Mexico has become the largest market for the United States, importing $30 billion worth of refined oil in 2023—accounting for 28 percent of the $107 billion the United States exported that year. By 2023, 60.9 percent of refined energy products consumed by the country were sourced from the United States, revealing a deep fragmentation of Mexico's energy infrastructure.[21] This pattern highlights a troubling shift in energy dynamics, with Mexico increasingly locked into a subordinate role that weakens its economic autonomy and energy independence.[22]

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18 ↩ Carlos Anchondo, "Trump Bid to Spur LNG Projects Hits Harsh Economic Realities," E&E News (Politico), April 7, 2025, eenews.net.

19 ↩ John Saxe-Fernández, La compraventa de México (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma México, 2016).

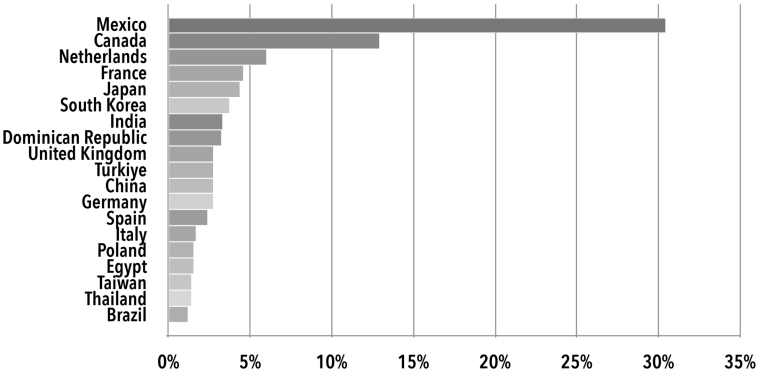
20 ↩ "Energy Dispute Continues as USMCA Review Approaches," Mexico Business News, October 24, 2025.

21 ↩ Octavio Amador, "Combustible importado bajó de 72% a 60% del consumo en el sexenio," El Economista, September 26, 2024.

22 ↩ Data from The Observatory of Economic Complexity, "Refined Petroleum in the United States," July 2025, oec.world.

While the case of oil serves to depict Mexican subordination to U.S. fossil energy imperial control, this relation becomes even more evident when examining the trade of natural gas. Since 2008, Mexico's imports of this resource have grown steadily, increasing from approximately 1 billion cubic feet per day annually to 6.4 billion cubic feet per day in 2024.[23] This surge has turned Mexico into a key destination for U.S. natural gas, absorbing nearly 31 percent of its total exports. The expansion of crossborder pipeline infrastructure has facilitated this growing flow, further cementing Mexico's dependence and reinforcing the U.S. energy monopoly domination in the region (see Chart 3). In fact, Mexico imports 70 percent of the natural gas it consumes, 96 percent of which is supplied by the United States, revealing the country's complete dependency and subordination, as well as the profound erosion of its energy sovereignty under the grip of U.S. imperial power.

Chart 3. Percentage of U.S. Natural Gas Exports by Destination Country, 2023



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, "U.S. Natural Gas Exports and Re-Exports by Country."

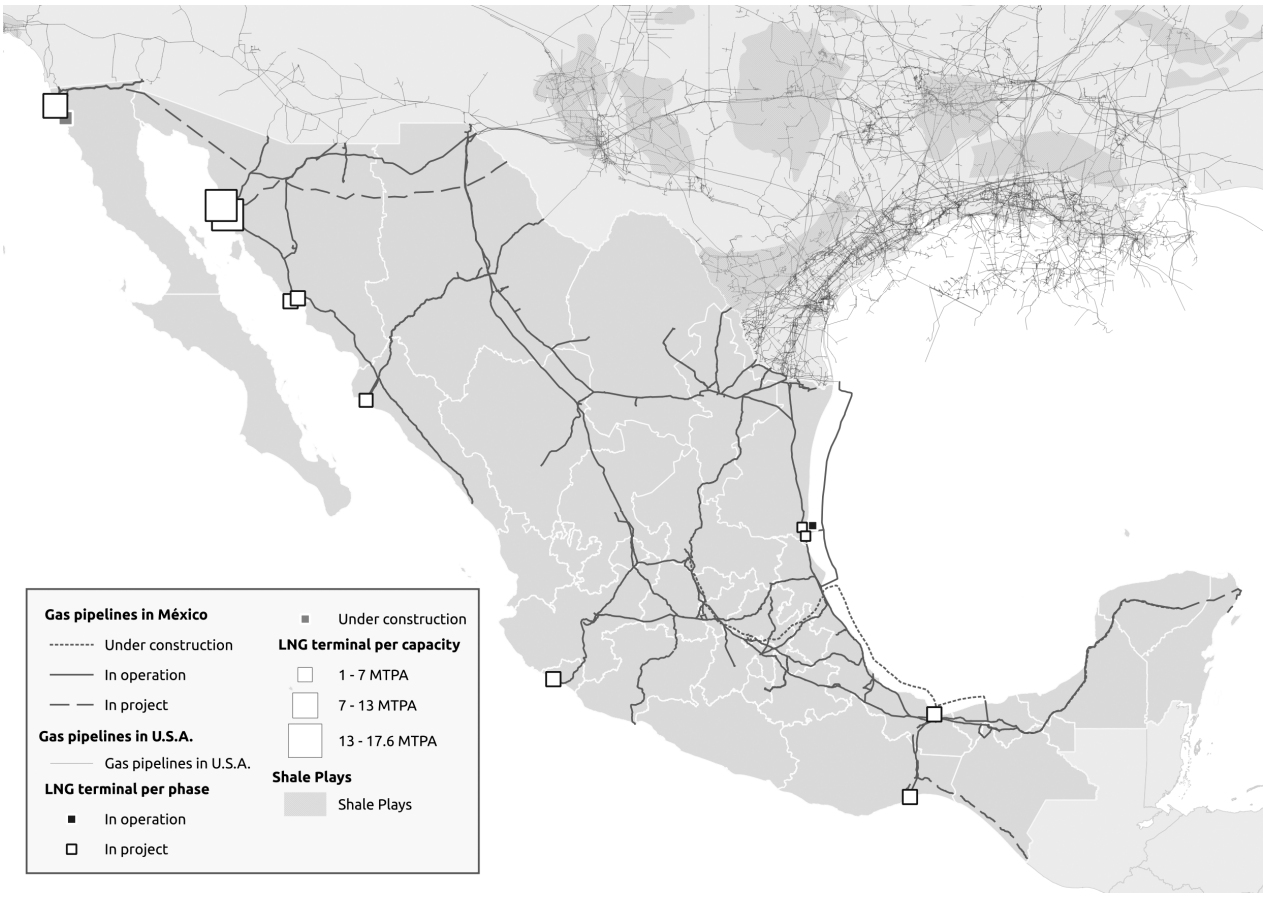
The transformation of Mexico into a natural gas import enclave was fuelled by the 2013 energy reform, which flung open the doors to private and foreign investment in the energy sector. It was also driven by the implementation of several large-scale projects in the midstream sector, particularly pipelines that linked Mexico to natural gas production from the U.S. Southeast (see Map 1). These pipelines were all constructed during the second decade of the twenty-first century. Notable pipelines include the Texas-Tuxpan, Los Ramones, El Encino-La Laguna, and Trans-Pecos pipelines, which have significantly increased the capacity for importing and distributing natural gas within the country.

Monopoly capital controls the country's essential pipeline infrastructure. The two most powerful companies in Mexico's natural gas transportation sector are the U.S.-based IEnova-Sempra Energy and the Canadian company TC Energy—formerly TransCanada, which was directly involved in the corporate exploitation of Indigenous lands and resources in the cases of the Dakota Access and Keystone pipelines. Both are major players in North America's energy infrastructure and are predominantly backed by financial giants like BlackRock and Vanguard. Despite the growing influence of these foreign entities, Mexican company CFEnergía, a subsidiary of the state-owned Comisión Federal de Electricidad, has also played a secondary role in managing certain pipelines. Additionally, other domestic companies, such as Carso Infraestructura y Construcción, owned by billionaire oligarch Carlos Slim, are involved, further entrenching the dominance of elite business interests over the country's energy resources. This structure highlights the continued concentration of power within a few multinational and wealthy domestic entities, perpetuating a system of monopoly energy control that undermines Mexico's energy sovereignty.

It is important to emphasise that the growing importation of natural gas from the United States is not primarily aimed at generating energy for domestic economic development. The expansion of major pipelines in Mexico and the rising

[23] ↩ Data from U.S. EIA, "U.S. Natural Gas Exports and Re-Exports by Country, 2023."

Map 1. Natural Gas Pipelines and Liquefaction Plants in Mexico



Source: Luis Fernando Pérez Macías, Geocomunes, geocommunes.org. "LNG" refers to liquefied natural gas. "MTPA" refers to millions of tonnes per year.

imports of U.S. natural gas are closely tied to Mexico's transformation into an export-oriented maquiladora enclave.[24] Essentially, energy demand is concentrated among large, transnational corporations that have set up maquiladora manufacturing operations in Mexico to superexploit a workforce that is drastically cheaper than that in the United States.[25] In this way, the construction of pipelines becomes a key pillar for the economic integration between Mexico and the United States, consolidating an industrial model based on energy dependence and the subordination of national production to the interests of transnational capital.[26]

In Mexico, the industrial sector relies primarily on two energy sources: natural gas, which accounts for 34 percent of energy consumption in this sector, and electricity, which makes up 39 percent of the total.[27] However, it is crucial to

[24] ↩ Javier H. Estrada, Víctor Rodríguez, and Víctor Hugo Ventura, El gas natural en México (Mexico: Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe, 2022), 87.

[25] ↩ Maquiladoras are manufacturing plants operated by multinational corporations constituting a vast productive sector that employs nearly three million workers in Mexico. These plants specialise in the most labour-intensive stages of the production chain, with their output primarily destined for export to the United States and accounting for almost 60 percent of Mexico's total exports. This manufacturing industry is energy-intensive and therefore relies on natural gas as its main energy source to keep operating costs low and ensure a stable supply, highlighting the extent of Mexico's productive subordination to the United States. Mateo Crossa, "Unequal Value Transfer from Mexico to the United States," Jus Semper, March 2024.

[26] ↩ James M. Cypher and Mateo Crossa, The Political Economy of Transnational Power and Production (London: Routledge, 2023).

[27] ↩ Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Technología, Energía verde y eficiencia para el sector industrial, comercial y residencial (Mexico: CONACYT, 2022), 2.

highlight that the country's electricity generation is strongly linked to natural gas, as 59 percent of the electricity produced in Mexico comes from this source.[28] Furthermore, 57 percent of the electricity generated in the country is consumed by the industrial sector, reinforcing the connection between export-oriented manufacturing expansion and dependence on imported gas.[29]

This model reveals that Mexico's transformation into an export-oriented maquiladora platform, characterised by low wages and the superexploitation of labour power, is not an isolated process. Rather, it goes hand in hand with the growing subordination of the country to U.S. energy tutelage. The domestic productive structure is not only designed to meet the needs of multinational corporations in terms of cheap labour, but it has also been reconfigured to ensure the mass consumption of natural gas from the United States. Thus, the subjugation of the Mexican economy to the interests of U.S. monopoly-imperial fossil-based energy control is reflected not only in labour conditions, but also in a profound structural dependency in energy.

This trend is further reinforced by the new mega-infrastructure projects recently promoted in Mexico, such as the Trans-Isthmus Corridor and the Maya Train. These are large-scale projects aimed at attracting foreign investment to the southern and southeastern regions of Mexico, with the goal of transforming these areas into duty-free and tax-exempt zones. These regions will be supplied with natural gas from the so-called Puerta al Sureste Pipeline, which is currently under construction by TC Energy and CFEnergía. The pipeline aims to connect southeastern Mexico to Tuxpan, thereby supplying this region with natural gas from Texas.[30]

Mexico has not only become the largest importer of U.S. natural gas, but also plays a pivotal role in the broader U.S. imperial energy strategy, serving as a platform for liquefied natural gas exports to Asia—especially to economic allies like Japan and South Korea. To achieve this, the northwestern coasts of Mexico, especially in the state of Sonora, have become a strategic area for the construction of natural gas liquefaction plants. Rather than incurring the high transportation costs of shipping liquefied natural gas from Texas through the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean via the Panama Canal (a route that adds 5,000 nautical miles), gas entrepreneurs in Houston can opt for a more cost-effective and efficient alternative: transporting the gas 700 miles to Sonora, where it is liquefied through cooling and compression processes before being shipped to Asia. This arrangement further entrenches Mexico's role as a subordinate player in the U.S.-led natural gas imperial pulse, serving not only to meet its own energy needs but also to facilitate U.S. energy exports to natural gas global markets.

The recently announced Sonora Plan is touted as a model of ecological sustainability—though in reality, it primarily serves to further the U.S. geopolitical and geo-economic energy-imperial agenda.

In this context, the recently announced Sonora Plan is touted as a model of ecological sustainability—though in reality, it primarily serves to further the U.S. geopolitical and geo-economic energy-imperial agenda. A key component of this project is the construction of liquefied natural gas export terminals in Guaymas and Puerto Libertad. In the case of Guaymas, the pipelines reaching the area are controlled by TC Energy. As mentioned, BlackRock is one of the major shareholders in this company. Meanwhile, LNG Alliance, based in Houston, will be responsible for the construction and operation of the Guaymas plant, a project valued at $2.1 billion. LNG Alliance is also one of the leading liquefied natural gas producers in the United States. Meanwhile, the natural gas liquefaction station project in Puerto Libertad,

[28] ↩ CFEnergia, "Gas Natural," n.d., cfenergia.com.

[29] ↩ Consejo Nacional de Humanidades, Ciencias y Tecnologías, "Consumo de energía eléctrica (GWh) por sector y entidad federativa," 2022, energia.conacyt.mx.

[30] ↩ Geocomunes, Reestructuración energética en México: Subordinación territorial en el Noroeste y Sureste de México, 2024, geocommunes.org.

called "Saguaro Energía," which includes the construction of both a liquefaction plant and the Sierra Madre pipeline, will be managed by the U.S. company Mexico Pacific Limited. Despite its name, Mexico Pacific has no Mexican ownership. These two projects showcase the U.S. pursuit of becoming a global energy-exporting power while simultaneously revealing Mexico's subordinate position in that process.[31]

Trump and the Echoes of Fossil Fuel-based Imperialism

Trump's victory in the 2024 U.S. presidential elections occurred against the backdrop of an intensifying global struggle over the control of natural resources, technological rents, and labour. Today's world is shaped by a fierce competition for dominance in the emerging electro-informatic productive transformation—driven by digitalisation, electrification, and artificial intelligence—with China asserting itself as a technological vanguard on the global stage. This sharpening rivalry has dictated the direction of U.S. economic policy over the past decade. It is precisely within this broader context of global contestation that Trump's resurgence and the nationalist slogan "Make America Great Again" must be understood: as a political project aimed at fortifying U.S. supremacy.[32] Only through this lens can one grasp the unified front presented by the major U.S. multinational corporations spanning technology, finance, military, and energy sectors, all rallying behind a renewed imperial strategy to reassert U.S. monopoly power. This concerted effort unfolds even as the decline of U.S imperial power becomes increasingly evident, particularly in contrast to China's rapid ascent as a central force in shaping the global economic order.

The "American ruling class," actions and motivations are marked by antidemocratic tendencies, authoritarian impulses, self-serving interests, and a historically imperial outlook.

This constitutes the makeup of what Paul M. Sweezy would have identified as the "American ruling class," whose actions and motivations are marked by antidemocratic tendencies, authoritarian impulses, self-serving interests, and a historically imperial outlook.[33] Their sense of entitlement to global dominance is further reinforced by what they perceive as a strategic necessity: to lead and control the unfolding electro-informational technological revolution. This drive for dominance plays out against the backdrop of intensifying global competition, particularly in response to China's relentless technological and geopolitical ascent, which is eroding U.S. economic hegemony at an accelerating pace.[34]

In the broader context of global rivalry and the restructuring of production systems, the scramble for control over energy resources emerges as a defining feature, highlighting the strategic role energy plays in shaping and sustaining monopoly dominance over both economic and technological transformations. This is not merely incidental; history shows a direct correlation between shifts in energy regimes and the reconfiguration of global power. Each industrial revolution has been catalysed by a new energy foundation: the first Industrial Revolution was propelled by coal, which not only fuelled the rise of mechanised industry but also underpinned the expansion of the British Empire. The second Industrial Revolution, centred on oil, found its nucleus in the United States and enabled the consolidation of monopoly capitalism alongside the development of the internal combustion engine and the automotive industry.[35] These transitions were not just technological—they represented fundamental reorganisations of geopolitical power, labour systems, and capitalist accumulation.

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31 ↩ Geocomunes, Reestructuración energética en México.

32 ↩ Cheng Enfu and Li Jing, "Changes in U.S. Grand Strategy in the Indo-Pacific and China's Countermeasures," Monthly Review 76, no. 3 (July–August 2024): 24–48.

33 ↩ Paul M. Sweezy, "The American Ruling Class," in The Present as History (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1953), 123–24.

34 ↩ John Bellamy Foster, "The U.S. Ruling Class and the Trump Regime," Jus Semper, June 2025.

35 ↩ Harry Braverman, Labor and Monopoly Capital (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998).

At this juncture, the precise contours of the ongoing transformation in production and energy systems under capitalism remain uncertain. Nevertheless, what is increasingly evident is that the shift toward an electro-informatic paradigm—driven by the rapid integration of digital technologies, artificial intelligence, and electrification—will significantly intensify global demand for electricity. This transformation is far from being a purely technical shift; it is actively reshaping the very foundations of capital accumulation while intensifying global geopolitical and economic rivalries. These dynamics become even more acute within the broader context of escalating environmental catastrophe.

In this context, it is revealing that Elon Musk—an archetype of the techno-authoritarian arrogance that characterises Silicon Valley elites—has sounded alarm bells over a looming global energy crisis. His warnings of an impending "electricity drought" betray deep anxieties that the explosive energy demands of AI systems and electric vehicle networks could soon overwhelm the ageing power grid infrastructure.[36] Though framed in the rhetoric of innovation and futurism, these pronouncements function less as neutral forecasts and more as ideological tools, preparing the ground for elite efforts to tighten their control over energy systems and natural resources. Under the familiar banners of progress and inevitability, they seek to entrench new forms of monopoly and imperial domination.

Within this evolving landscape, control over energy resources emerges as a strategic linchpin in the global race to define the terms of capitalist metamorphosis. The directive under the Trump administration to escalate U.S. efforts toward expanding its dominance in the global fossil fuel-based energy market is far from accidental; it is embedded in a broader imperial logic. This push for, in Trump's words, "energy dominance" underscores how access to and control over energy flows remain central to securing geopolitical leverage, technological supremacy, and continued capital accumulation.[37] As global capitalism restructures around electrification and digitalisation, the struggle for energy hegemony is not just about supply—it is about shaping who gets to dictate the future of the global market.

In this context, the imperial logic reasserts itself by reverting to a deeply entrenched, fossil-fuelled lineage—one in which renewable energy alternatives and frameworks like the Green New Deal are categorically excluded. At the heart of U.S. imperial strategy lies a refusal to consider any meaningful deceleration of production or transition toward sustainable energy sources. Such a shift would be perceived as a strategic vulnerability, especially amid intensifying global competition—most notably with China, which is rapidly positioning itself as a leader in the global energy transition. China has not only increased its production of clean energy, but has also developed key components for electrical grids and secured critical minerals essential for emerging energy technologies.[38]

As scholars such as Elmar Altvater, Adam Hanieh, and John Bellamy Foster have shown—drawing on Marx's labour theory of value—fossil fuels have historically served as the lifeblood of monopoly capital. Their high energy density, scalability, and compatibility with large-scale industrial systems have made them indispensable to capital's relentless drive for accumulation. To abandon this model would not simply mean an ecological pivot; it would entail a structural slowdown in profit cycles, a delay in capital turnover, and, potentially, a strategic retreat in the zero-sum logic of global competition. In short, for imperial capital, clinging to fossil fuels is not just about energy—it is about preserving geopolitical dominance and the very architecture of monopoly power, regardless of the ecological collapse that this spells for all life on the planet.

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36 ↩ Lena, "Elon Musk Issues a Warning From the U.S. to the Whole World: Never Seen Before," E-Notícies, February 22, 2025, e-noticies.cat.

37 ↩ Upon taking office, Trump declared that the United States was entering an era of "energy dominance." See: White House, "President Donald J. Trump Establishes the National Energy Dominance Council," February 14, 2025.

38 ↩ Bonnie Chan, "How China Is Helping Power the World's Green Transition," World Economic Forum, January 17, 2025.

Trump's rhetoric reflects not merely the voice of a single political figure, but the collective will of the U.S. fossil fuel oligarchy—oil and gas magnates, financial conglomerates, and military-industrial powerhouses whose operations and profits are fundamentally tethered to the continued exploitation of fossil energy. His revival of the infamous slogan "Drill, Baby, Drill" is far from a nostalgic campaign gimmick. Instead, it signals the return of an aggressive extractivist agenda rooted in the interests of the entrenched American dominant class.

The torrent of executive orders unleashed on the first day of Trump's second term, alongside provocative gestures such as proposing to rename the Gulf of Mexico the "Gulf of America," calling for the annexation of Canada as the fifty-first state, and reviving the proposal to purchase Greenland—rich in untapped Arctic oil and gas reserves—are not simply the theatrical impulses of a neofascist narrative. Rather, they express the crystallisation of an emboldened imperial drive and the strategic ambition of fossil energy monopoly capital to assert control over the future of global energy extraction and distribution.

The core blocs of U.S. capital, spanning finance, industry, the military apparatus, advanced technology, and the fossil fuel sector, are increasingly converging around a high-stakes bet: the energy sector as the primary engine for extraordinary accumulation in the coming decades. This convergence is no accident. It reflects a calculated strategy to turn energy control into a pillar of continued capitalist expansion and geopolitical dominance —something that is evident today in the U.S. military presence in the Caribbean, which exposes Washington's voracious drive to secure control over the region's energy resources, particularly in Venezuela, which holds the world's largest oil reserves and is subjected to Washington's constant pressure aimed at destabilising the Bolivarian government through economic blockades and aggressive military intervention, as evidenced by the U.S. military operation on January 3 that resulted in the abduction of President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores.

Trump's administration thus reflects a bold and increasingly desperate effort to resurrect energy imperialism as a central pillar of U.S. power precisely at a time when the broader architecture of U.S. imperial dominance is visibly eroding. This is not merely about domestic policy or nationalist bravado—it is a globally oriented project aimed at seeking U.S. control over energy flows and resources. The push to control Arctic resources, the aggressive posture toward oil-rich regions, and the increasing militarisation of energy supply chains are not isolated or secondary manoeuvres—they are central pillars in a broader strategic design aimed at securing U.S. dominance in the global energy order. In this context, Trump has weaponised tariff threats as a tool to coerce key allies into aligning with the energy agenda of U.S. imperialism. Mexico, various European countries, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan (among other Asian countries) have been pressured to increase their purchases of U.S. natural gas, not out of free market choice, but through economic blackmail that reinforces dependency and consolidates Washington's grip over strategic energy flows.[39] To this end, the administration seeks to expand natural gas extraction in Alaska and transform the state, along with Mexico, into a strategic export hub for supplying Asian markets. In alignment with this agenda, on January 20, 2025, the president signed an executive order designed to dismantle many of former President Joe Biden's climate-focused restrictions on oil and gas development in Alaska. The order prioritises the permitting and approval processes for the Alaska LNG Project, which involves a large-scale initiative to extract natural gas from Alaska's North Slope, transport it via an 800-mile pipeline, and export it as liquefied natural gas from a terminal on the southern coast. The project aims to position the state as a key energy exporter, raising significant environmental and climate concerns.[40]

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[39] ↩ Fitch Ratings, "Mexico's Reliance on U.S. Natural Gas to Grow Amid Rising Trade Tensions," February 20, 2025; Gabriel Gavin, "EU Will Use Trump Tariff Freeze to Push New Fossil Fuel Deal," Politico, April 14, 2025; "Asian Countries Look to Buy More US Energy to Offset Trade Imbalance," Reuters, April 20, 2025.

[40] ↩ Earthjustice, "Day One Agenda from the Trump Administration Prioritizes Extractive Industries Above All Else in Alaska," press release, January 20, 2025, earthjustice.org.

In the case of Mexico, the energy control pursued by the United States has turned the country into the largest importer of U.S. natural gas, transforming it into a strategic export platform for U.S. gas bound for Asia. Beyond this, growing evidence suggests that the Mexican state is now actively promoting fracking within its own borders despite strong public resistance and well-substantiated concerns over the environmental and social consequences of this controversial extraction method.[41] Expanding natural gas production through fracking in Mexico would represent a deepening alignment with the U.S. imperial agenda rooted in fossil energy, while simultaneously moving further away from the development of non-fossil alternatives. This undoubtedly would mark a tightening of Mexico's energy dependency and a significant setback for the pursuit of sovereign, sustainable energy strategies.

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[41] ↩ Arturo Rojas, "Destinaría gobierno 12,364 millones para proyectos que implican fracking," El Economista, November 29, 2024.

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