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Venezuela: What Everyone Needs To KnowRG



Synopsis

Among the top ten oil exporters in the world and a founding member of OPEC, Venezuela currently supplies 11 percent of U.S. crude oil imports. But when the country elected the fiery populist politician Hugo Chavez in 1998, tensions rose with this key trading partner and relations have been strained ever since. In this concise, accessible addition to Oxfords What Everyone Needs to KnowRG series, Miguel Tinker Salas -- a native of Venezuela who has written extensively about the country -- takes a broadly chronological approach that focuses especially on oil and its effects on Venezuelas politics, economy, culture, and international relations. After an introductory section that discusses the legacy of Spanish colonialism, Tinker Salas explores the The Era of the Gusher, a period which began with the discovery of oil in the early twentieth century, encompassed the mid-century development and nationalization of the industry, and ended with a change of government in 1989 in response to widespread protests. The third section provides a detailed discussion of Hugo Chavez-his rise to power, his domestic political and economic policies, and his high-profile forays into international relations-as well as surveying the current landscape of Venezuela in the wake of Chavezs death in March 2013. Arranged in a question-and-answer format that allows readers to search topics of particular interest, the book covers questions such as, who is Simon Bolivar and why is he called the George Washington of Latin America? How did the discovery of oil change Venezuelas relationship to the U.S.? What forces were behind the coups of 1992? And how does Venezuela interact with China, Russia, and Iran? Informative, engaging, and written by a leading expert on the country, Venezuela: What Everyone Needs to KnowRG offers an authoritative guide to an increasingly important player on the world stage. What Everyone Needs to KnowRG is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press.

Book Information

File Size: 4164 KB

Print Length: 241 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 1 edition (April 2, 2015)

Publication Date: April 2, 2015

Sold by:Â Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00SNHHKDW

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #493,018 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #25

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Customer Reviews

Overall this is a good book, one of the best of a rather good series. The book really has three parts: Venezuela before oil (up to the early 1900s), Venezuela after oil and Venezuela and Hugo Chavez. The earlier history is succinct and extremely informative. The country after oil gets more complex, and I read it as a case study in how increasing reliance on an export commodity can be a mixed blessing. The politics of Hugo Chavez is the most complex part of the book, the most controversial and to be blunt, is a bit of a slog. I don't see the book as particularly for or against Chavez. From my close reading of the book, it seems as if some of the controversy about the man is because he is of mixed race, and has tried to bring people of color into the country's politics. Salas refers a number of times to how the nation's elite disdains people of color and has done so since before independence. I am not Venezuelan, so I'm trusting Salas on this--but it's a common enough pattern. That however does not excuse Chavez of incompetency, and it seems as if his administration was ham-handed about many things. The book deserves more readers, particularly American readers. Venezuela is close (look at a map!) and is possessed of immense oil resources--the book cites estimates of certified oil reserves of 296 billion barrels and recoverable reserves of 513 billion barrels, together with 5.5 trillion cubic meters of certified natural gas reserves. That's huge, and even with the current oil glut, that huge reserve so close to the US will certainly be of much interest to US leadership in the coming decades. That could mean intervention.

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