

# OUR VOICE

Two years after the invasion of Iraq, the horizons of the international order continue to be somber, and the preventive security defense policy imposed by Washington does not seem to have a successful future. Last July 7 the world was once again shaken by evidence that the terrorist threat has not abated. The London bombings demonstrate that the prolonged military action in Asia and the Middle East and the insistence on fighting the terrorist threat mainly militarily have only brought more death and destruction. The situation demands a comprehensive analysis of terrorism and the fight against it with the aim not of resolving it on the military front, but mainly in the sphere of policy and diplomacy, of development and international cooperation. Also, the gravity of the terror imposed by the bombings demands a true comprehension of the phenomenon on the part of the states involved, not from irreducible or fundamentalist positions, but by getting at the origin of the problems that have caused such profound polarization. For example, if there is no rapid, effective solution to the bloody differences between Israel, Palestine and a large part of the Arab world, there will be no way out, and bombs, occupying troops and blood-letting will continue to be international front-page news. The military might and aggressive, unilateral foreign policy imposed by the U.S. government—to which the governments of Tony Blair in Great Britain and José María Aznar in Spain added their support, albeit with only minimal backing from their citizenries—have constituted the main obstacle facing those who have come out for the discussion of peaceful, multilateral alternatives. Perhaps the first premise that should be examined is if we are really witnessing a total war, as President Bush says, or it is a grave international conflict that must certainly be attacked from a totally different strategic perspective. In that sense, this conflict should be dealt with from the standpoint of the action of rational state actors and that of non-state actors who, precisely because they are anonymous, threaten to strike at the most sensitive part of democratic countries, that is, social consensus.

The moment certainly seems propitious for resorting to the community of nations embodied in the United Nations, and for carefully and critically studying the proposals that Secretary-General Kofi Annan recently made with the aim of reforming the United Nations system. We believe that these reforms are the indispensable prerequisite for threats like terrorism being attacked from the point of view of the whole picture, a point of view in which the countries congregated in that great international institution can create the consensus needed for achieving peaceful solutions to the benefit of all.

\* \* \*

In a posthumously published contribution, the late Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, Mexico's ambassador to the UN Security Council during the difficult moments of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, looks in an unquestionably timely manner at the reforms the UN so urgently needs. An unconditional proponent of the United Nations' viability as the guiding body for relations among nations, Aguilar Zinser analyzes the weakness and strengths of Annan's proposals. Without underestimating U.S. resistance to the changes or the UN's problems of internal organization and credibility, he concludes that it must undertake the path of profound reforms and continue defending multilateralism and collective decision-making as mechanisms for guaranteeing international security and global development.

The other article in the "Politics" section is by Mauricio Merino, who analyzes the importance of the models used to theoretically interpret Mexico's political transition. Situated between those who think the transition was completed when the Institutional Revolutionary Party lost the presidency in 2000 after 70 years of political monopoly and those who say that the democratization of electoral processes is only the first step in building a truly democratic political regimen is the real situation which, according to Merino, does not fit into any ideal model. In this, the first part of a two-part article, the author points to at least three

important differences between an ideal transition to democracy and what has happened in Mexico in recent years.

Our “Society” section deals with an issue that will be important for a long time to come: the increasing scarcity of water in Mexico and the world. The struggle for control of this resource and the regions that enjoy an abundance of it, and to privatize its extraction and distribution make it a matter of national security. Two authors reflect on this issue: José Luis Piñeyro deplores the lack of awareness in government and private sectors about the gravity of the water crisis, which can be seen in the scant public investment in hydraulic infrastructure and the total disinterest in establishing alternative policies for managing it involving the population, as well as the government’s growing inclination to turning over water management to private business. For her part, Gabriela Angeles Serrano states that the analyses of this crisis in Mexico are based on inoperative, outmoded categories and therefore generate inappropriate indicators for evaluating it. As a result, there are no proposals that contribute to its real solution. Angeles proposes developing alternative concepts that would make it possible to carry out a more objective, and above all, effective analysis.

In the “Economy” section, we have included an interesting reflection about the impact of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on Mexico’s economy. Eleven years after it came into effect, Juan Carlos Moreno Brid and Pablo Ruiz Nápoles deal with the topic emphasizing long-term economic growth. After a detailed examination of exports and imports, the trade balance as a whole and economic growth indicators, they conclude that although NAFTA produced an export boom of manufactures and an inflow of much-needed foreign investment along with some technology transfers, its impact on the domestic economy has been low and has not really alleviated the fundamental constraints on Mexico’s long-term economic growth.

Two fundamental issues for the construction of a real North American Community are dealt with in our “North American Issues” section. Specialist Mónica Vereá describes the uncertainty surrounding migration in Mexico-U.S. relations, above all after 9/11. She centers the discussion on the details of the different immigration bills up before the U.S. Congress and how they have been influenced by U.S. national security policies. Congress has accepted the need for reforming the immigration system, as can be seen in the Kennedy-McCain bill, among others. What these reforms will look like, how they will affect bilateral relations with Mexico and the effects they will have on our fellow countrymen and women is still undecided. Leonardo Curzio, for his part, examines an unusual topic in Mexico-U.S. relations: the appropriateness of statements by the U.S. ambassador to Mexico about the Fox administration’s handling of economic and security policy and the fight against drug trafficking. Without denying that both issues are of public interest, Curzio writes that in international relations it is more important to build a relationship based on support and cooperation than on mere frankness in public statements.

\* \* \*

As on previous occasions, *Voices of Mexico* has dedicated an important part of this issue to the knowledge and art of a specific region of Mexico, in this case Chiapas in the country’s southeast. Mario Humberto Ruz says that to speak of Chiapas is to invoke Indian Mexico, that Mexico that despite the centuries and the offenses offers us a lesson in modernity in its traditions, which have gone through constant change in order to remain intact. Before going into the details of those rich traditions and that art, we offer our readers an article by Ruz in our “Society” section that leads us down the pathways of Indian Chiapas, from before the conquest until the twenty-first century.

The “Art and Culture” section takes us to the Chiapas Highlands. José Rubén Orantes studies textile production, an activity reserved solely for women. Embroidery and weaving cloth on waist looms has gone from being a family tradition that reflected a world view and social hierarchy to being an activity for the market. Orantes explains the difficulties producers encounter in marketing these pieces of clothing and the changes in their designs because of them. For his part, Jaime Page explains the details of healing rituals in San Juan Chamula and their relationship with the myths of creation among Chiapas’s Tzotzil Mayans. Elements of pre-Hispanic origin together with rites of the Catholic world merge in a ceremony

full of meanings hidden from outsiders. Lynne Lowe closes the section with an article about amber, a fossil resin millions of years old that was already widely valued in the pre-Hispanic world. The myths and beliefs about amber in Chiapas contribute to its continued use as an ornament and amulet in many places in the Highlands.

The Mayan heritage in Chiapas can be reconstructed based on its impressive archaeological sites. In “The Splendor of Mexico”, Daniel Juárez contributes an article about relations among the kingdoms of Yaxchilán, Bonampak and Palenque, which can be seen not only in their buildings and other constructions, but above all in the stelas and murals that tell us the story of their rulers. Becky Álvarez explains why ZooMAT is more than a zoo. The recreation center *par excellence* for residents of Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas’s state capital, the ZooMAT was conceived from the start as a means to bring the state’s innumerable native species to the population, at the same time that it became a first-rate center for scientific study and management and conservation of the animals.

In the “Museums” section, Rafael Alarcón writes about the Museum of Mayan Medicine, which is part of the Regional Center for the Development of Mayan Medicine founded 20 years ago by the Indigenous Doctors Organization of the State of Chiapas (OMIECH) to defend and keep alive indigenous medical practices. The award-winning museum’s different environments recreate the activities of indigenous doctors, and visitors can also access the museum’s pharmacy for products made with medicinal herbs.

The “Ecology” section takes us to the Lacandon Jungle, one of the bulwarks of flora and fauna diversity in Mexico. Ecologists Rodrigo Medellín and Osiris Castellanos describe the wonders of a world-class ecological preserve and the threats to its existence.

To close the theme of Chiapas, our “Literature” section pays homage to a Chiapas-born writer whose pen changed the way people conceived of the Indians in that part of Mexico. Rosario Castellanos, perhaps better known for the excellence of her poetry, wrote two novels and a book of short stories that reveal the intricacy of relations between Indians and mestizo and white society in the state. We reproduce one of those stories here, “El don rechazado” (The Gift Refused), accompanied by an essay by literary critic Gerardo Piña about the author.

\* \* \*

A constant scholar of politics, a free-thinker, an audacious intellectual, an unconditional defender of democracy, the inventor of new ways to do politics, the enemy of the arbitrariness that comes from power, a permanent insurgent: these are some of the descriptions of Adolfo Aguilar Zinser by the authors of several articles in *Voices of Mexico*’s well-deserved posthumous homage. His academic career, his different incursions into politics and his brilliant performance as Mexico’s ambassador to the UN Security Council during the discussions that preceded the invasion of Iraq turned Aguilar Zinser into a symbol of the honest politician known for his undoubtedly invaluable contribution to the construction of a more democratic and just way forward for our country. This makes his loss grievous for our consolidation as a democracy, for our future. The National Autonomous University of Mexico’s Center for Research on North America, where he had successfully begun a very important research project about the reform of the United Nations, will miss his irrevocable commitment to the university, and, above all, his caliber as a human being, as a fellow academic and a friend. We dedicate this issue to his memory.

*José Luis Valdés-Ugalde*