

OUR VOICE

The military offensive against Iraq initiated by the coalition headed by the United States March 19 will surely have transcendental implications for the state of the world order. On the one hand, Washington's unilateral decision to act militarily outside the legitimacy the United Nations provides has considerably damaged the climate of negotiations on which, generally, international consensuses are based. It is to be expected that this situation will affect in a still indeterminate way the alliances of the West, the creation of unknown regional alliances, like the Arab front, and, in general, all those aspects upon which the world balance of forces depends, including the even more violent resurgence of the cellular organization of international terrorism, which will now include a generalized *jihad* that irresponsibly has been called by Hussein's regime.

The brutal bombing of Baghdad and other key cities like Basra and Nasiriyah is like in any act of war an act of theoretically unlimited bruising force. In that sense, it is a demonstration of total force without mediations and will, in our opinion, have the following implications:

- 1) It is a political act the purpose of which is to achieve a geopolitical repositioning of the United States globally. As can already be perceived, a new era of U.S. military technology and power will begin, which will certainly mark the beginning of a U.S. hegemonic paradigm for the twenty-first century. It is a unique hegemonic exercise and in the very wielding of the force that it explicitly shows is its contradiction: it is the paradoxical exercise of a hyper concentrated power that expresses both an important degree of decadence and isolation from those traditional allies that in another time might have been on Washington's side in a crisis like the current one. Just as was demonstrated in the short but torturous process in the UN Security Council, the United States was incapable of convincing important permanent and non-permanent members to accompany it in what is probably the largest wartime adventure—technologically speaking—of its entire history. Seemingly, Washington's partners, friends or allies, most of whom agree that the disarmament of Saddam Hussein was the ultimate objective, feared forming alliances that would legitimize acts of absolute power. This, in any case, brings to light a fact that it is not at all clear that many of the countries involved in this new international drama have understood: we are referring to the fact that Washington has proposed conquering and redrawing the borders of its neo-imperial domain; like at the time of the origins of the nation and in line with the ideas of historian F.J. Turner, in the history of the United States, borders will again be the physical and political space from which Washington launches its crusade of domination.
- 2) This brings with it an important risk that we could summarize in the contradiction between Republic and Neo-Empire. Generalized social mobilization, not only in countries of the Western world, but in many others of the Arab and Asian worlds, makes it clear that a very significant break is occurring inside the very plurality that characterizes the democratic system. The increasing gap between society's feelings and governmental decisions—which was certainly already very large even before with regard to issues of democracy, justice and the distribution of income—at this time presents itself as the beginning of a break in the democratic consensus that, one way or another, was achieved in democratic societies. In this sense, the growing protest against the war, both in Europe and the United States, has put the democratic system itself up against an unexpected limitation, and we consider that it will have serious implications for the future of the political structures and understandings in many countries and that it will undoubtedly have an increasing impact on the duration and nature of the conflict begun by the U.S.-led military offensive.
- 3) While it is correct to assume that the members of the Security Council agreed from the beginning on the common objective, the disarmament of Iraq, there was not only no agreement on the way to achieve it, but it was also understood to be a major risk to let Washington act alone, with the implications already described. Although the United States' unilateral decision certainly damaged international consensus—to what degree, we still do not know—it is noticeable that in contrast with Washington, no other central actor in the global theater (with the

probable exception of France), had clarity about its role and real power in the negotiations carried out in the last three months. We can say, in support of the scenario outlined above, that based on the theaters of war prepared by the United States and its allies, operating full tilt today to defeat the dictator, the importance of many of these actors (including Russia, China and Germany) in the outcome of the events, and therefore, in writing this history, decreased noticeably. This is even more the case for the weakened position of the non-permanent members of the Security Council that will today see their bilateral agendas clearly affected by the U.S. hegemonic display. In effect, the United States is becoming the great ringmaster of the international order, capable of changing and reorganizing it according to its own will thanks to its enormous and paradoxical concentration of economic and military power which, in the long run, will mean the maintenance to a great extent of its political control over the world. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen to what degree the mistrust that breaking the rules of the game of the international system, most importantly multilateralism, will be a definitive or temporary factor for the actors distancing themselves from the United Nations and for the gradual —although we consider it unviable— break with Washington.

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Precisely on the issue of the war and Mexico's foreign policy, its role in the Security Council and its position on the conflict, specialist Roberto Peña contributes an analysis of the Mexican government's reactions to U.S. pressure to vote in favor of the war. Peña affirms that Mexico's option for peace is not only morally correct, but is the only reasonable alternative in terms of pragmatic politics. This issue is of extreme importance now that Mexico has assumed the presidency of the Security Council.

Also in our "United States Affairs" section, we include the last article in the series about the Latino market in the United States. Salvador Ramírez sketches the panorama of Latino buying power in the Midwest, including that traditional magnet for Mexican emigration, Chicago.

Cognizant of the coming July 6 federal elections, we present our readers with an exclusive interview with one of the most important and politically prestigious actors of the Mexican transition to democracy, the president councilor of the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) General Council, José Woldenberg, who talks with us about issues particularly relevant to our country's future and political life, among them, Mexicans' voting abroad, a question of special interest to our U.S. readers.

In this pre-electoral context, our "Politics" section also includes two articles about political participation in Mexico. Political culture specialist Roberto Gutiérrez maintains that two trends can be seen in Mexico: hyper-activism by a few small, over-ideologized groups who do not hesitate to break the law for their own political benefit, and the apathy of most of the population. In both cases, Gutiérrez sees risks for the consolidation of democracy. Political philosopher Rubén García Clark offers us an analysis of the political parties' most important proposals for the coming elections. At the same time, he questions the usefulness of a system that allows the proliferation of parties that, while having the positive effect of expressing the country's real pluralism, also are often not very representative, or express only very specific interests.

Undoubtedly, an issue that has been up for debate nationwide since the beginning of the year is the lifting of tariffs under the agricultural chapter of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). An important part of Mexico's peasantry is seriously concerned and has even organized a protest movement demanding this chapter be reviewed. Our "Society" section includes two articles on this issue from experts on the Mexican countryside. José Luis Calva looks into the reasons for the abysmal agricultural technological and productivity differences among the United States, Canada and Mexico, and Blanca Rubio shows how the United States has imposed a neoliberal agricultural model on the rest of the world while simultaneously providing subsidies and protectionism to its own farmers and growers.

Specialist Isabel Studer also writes about NAFTA, offering a general balance sheet about its effects on our country. Studer finds more benefits than disadvantages and therefore maintains that renegotiating any of the treaty's chapters would be counterproductive for Mexico's national interests. Also in our "Economy" section, we have a contribution from María Cristina Rosas about Mexican foreign trade policy in which she main-

tains that Mexico should take advantage of its position as host of future international trade summits to try to exert influence in favor of its own trade policies and interests. According to Rosas, to this end, Mexico needs to design an industrial policy that jibes with its foreign trade policy.

To facilitate comparative analyses, in our “Canadian Issues” section, we offer an article by expert Edward Chambers about NAFTA’s effects in Canada 10 years after it came into effect. Chambers, while accepting that the treaty has brought benefits, also says that its results are nothing to write home about, and among its disadvantages is the undeniable fact that Canada’s dependence on the U.S. economy has grown.

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Chihuahua, Mexico’s largest state, is once again the subject of our “Art and Culture”, “History”, “The Splendor of Mexico”, “Museums” and “Ecology” sections.

Chihuahua’s art and culture are magnificently represented in the exquisite ceramics produced in the town of Mata Ortiz, a real feast for clay lovers. Enrique Servín, for his part, contributes a reflection about the Chihuahua desert, one of the largest in the Americas, in a dialogue with the magic and mystery of the images captured by Ignacio Guerrero’s lens.

Francisco Villa and Luis Terrazas, two of Chihuahua’s emblematic figures, fill the pages of our “History” section. From opposing sides, these two men played central roles in the history of the state. María Luisa Reyes Landa writes about Villa, a revolutionary general known for his successes on the battlefield, his interest in the poor, his love of women and his contradictory personality. Jaime Abundis describes the career of Luis Terrazas, who knew how to take advantage of the opportunities offered by power for accumulating an immense fortune in land, and who legend has it once said, “I am not from Chihuahua; Chihuahua is mine.”

“The Splendor of Mexico” continues this voyage with an article by Arturo Guevara about the state’s cave art, which reflects the cultural transformations that the indigenous tribes who inhabited these lands went through from pre-Hispanic until colonial times. The Copper Canyons, in some places deeper than the Grand Canyon, are traversed by explorer Carlos Rangel, who assures us that the majesty of their natural scenery can only be discovered completely when we enter into contact with the spirit and dignity of the men who inhabit its out-of-the-way corners. Lastly, we come to the city of the desert, Chihuahua. Carlos Lascano briefly tells us its history, linked to our development as a nation, illustrated by images of its past and present.

The cultures of Mexico’s North have been little studied by scholars and researchers, more bewitched by archaeological sites in the central and southern parts of the country. For that reason, our “Museums” section is dedicated to the Museum of the Cultures of the North, which displays the surprising constructions and main archaeological finds of the Paquimé and Casas Grandes sites.

Héctor Gadsden and a group of researchers look at one of the main economic and social problems that the state of Chihuahua repeatedly faces: drought. Using precision monitoring methods, scientists have developed different strategies for appropriately managing it.

In the “Literature” section, Bruce Novoa, writer and literary critic, continues his examination of the new Chicano literature. In this issue, he introduces us to Lorraine López, a writer whose refinement and masterful use of ellipsis weaves stories in which irony and a sense of humor enhance the drama of daily life, as shown by the story “To Control a Rabid Rodent,” included in this issue.

Our “In Memoriam” section pays homage to two colossuses of twentieth-century Mexican culture: Michoacán-born painter Alfredo Zalce, recognized by many as the last of Mexican muralists and Guatemala-born writer Augusto Monterroso, adopted by Mexico, the undisputed master of brevity in literature and possessor of a style recognized as one of the most innovative in the Latin American short story. Undoubtedly, two major losses for Mexican culture.

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