

OUR VOICE

The United States will probably have to pay attention to emerging issues that it does not consider a priority for expanding its agenda for the doctrine of preventive policy, the backbone of its foreign policy in the Bush administration's last period. Everything is prepared for the compact group headed up by Bush himself and reinforced with Condoleezza Rice as Secretary of State to once again take office. It is also a group that wants to consolidate the so-called hard U.S. power, which is why it maintains Donald Rumsfeld as Secretary of Defense since he has made a good team with Rice and Vice-President Cheney, a virtuous combination of renovating realists and neo-conservative hawks who casually aim to gather all the world's power for themselves.

In that context, what does it mean when other actors, like the South American countries who met at the Third South American Presidential Summit in Cuzco on December 8, mobilize, taking advantage of the transitional moment in the United States as well as Washington's apparent lack of interest in their plans and attempts at regional integration? Given the paralysis of the projects for Latin American cohesion, is it mere chance that two important Latin American actors like Mexico and Chile are both trying to field candidates for general secretary of the Organization of American States (OAS), or that Brazil has begun to seek a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council?

It is of note that at the Cuzco summit, the common values that make these countries sister nations and give them an identity of their own were remembered, as opposed to the image that has historically existed of a mythical character of the idea of Latin American unity. In the words of the general secretary of the Andean Community of Nations, Allan Wagner, "the South American community must be understood as part of a project of building an integrated Latin America. Thirty years ago, the notion of integration including all the countries of Latin America was fractured into several sub-regional groups....Today, these sub-regions and countries are once again articulating among themselves, which allows us to recover the vision of a great Latin American community." He added, "The South American Community of Nations will be the world's fifth power, with a trillion-dollar GDP, 361 million inhabitants and a territory of more than 17 million square kilometers." In effect, these are all very important reasons to think about new ways of how to channel integration efforts and attempts to preserve common interests. Despite good intentions, we must recognize that the 12 nations of the southern part of the hemisphere trade more with North American countries, especially the United States, than among themselves, that they export mainly raw materials, depend on the dollar and European and U.S. capital, and, lastly, lack the infrastructure necessary to achieve maximum efficiency in their trade relations, such as, for example, highway communications between the two South American coasts, something the United States has mastered.

Given the complex history of asymmetry that has dominated inter-American history and the dominant, interventionist role of the United States in Latin American life, it will be interesting to observe how these attempts—apparently counter to Washington's interests—bear fruit, avoiding being just one more regrettable chapter in the fervent voluntarism that has ruled relations among Latin American countries, or if they are blocked by the United States, which has declared that the creation of the South American Community of Nations is not a threat as long as its concrete results are trade liberalization without the creation of artificial barriers. That is to say, as long as this model of integration is functional as a link for successfully putting the Free Trade Area of the Americas into operation.

It is certainly the case that in the framework of the U.S.'s proven profound lack of interest in the fate of Latin America, it is necessary to take steps that tend to create parity in the relationship with the United States and the European Union when discussing the rules of integration or of diplomatic relations. In that sense, this could be an initiative oriented more toward reducing these countries' protectionism, at the

same time that we put a priority on trade relations with both blocs, as seems to be the position of Argentina, Chile and Colombia, or toward going against the current of Washington, as Venezuela has declared, or toward aspiring, as Brazil does, to consolidating its leadership and using the community to push through accords with regions as diverse and as important as China, India, Russia or the Arab world.

In consequence, the diversity of positions and the strategic incoherence clear from the beginning of this undeniably important regional initiative and that have also been included in the campaigns surprisingly waged by Chile and Mexico to head up the OAS are a matter for concern. What do our governments want when they try to head up institutional or regional efforts that in the framework of globalization are fundamentally dominated by Washington?

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The obstacles to integration that the nations of South America face are similar to those that North America has had to deal with. In our “North American Issues” section, specialist Isabel Studer analyzes the reasons why broad sectors of the U.S. political and economic elite oppose a European-Union-model future for the region and why they prefer a strictly economic and trade agreement. Stefanie Haeger closes the section with a reflection about the influence that private and national interests have on the negotiation and interpretation of international treaties, including, of course, the North American Free Trade Agreement.

The best proof that the regional trade agreement does not necessarily benefit Mexico is to be found in Bernardo Olmedo’s text in the “Economy” section, which studies the reasons why our country has been losing ground to new competitors like Brazil, the emerging economies of Eastern Europe and particularly China in the U.S. and Canadian markets. Quite contrary to expectations, one of the consequences of NAFTA has been the increase in illegal Mexican migration to the United States. In the second part of his analysis of the effects of regional trade integration on employment in Mexico, researcher Javier Aguilar takes on the issue of migration, which he sees as an escape valve to the country’s terrible unemployment and economic inefficiency.

Despite globalization, different kinds of nationalism continue to exist. In “Society,” social scientist Fernando Vizcaíno looks at the changes in Mexican nationalism influenced by three factors: globalization itself, multiculturalism and the transition to democracy in Mexico. The section concludes with the second part of an article by Ariadna Estévez about Mexico’s nongovernmental organizations that have gone from articulating their discourse around the question of democracy to structuring it around human rights, understood as including economic, cultural and social rights. In particular, she analyzes civic opposition to NAFTA.

Undoubtedly the recent U.S. elections, which consolidated the power of the country’s most conservative political groups, will have important effects on all these processes. In “United States Affairs,” political scientist Paz Consuelo Márquez-Padilla delves into what she calls the neo-conservative revolution in the United States, which brings with it the strengthening of the ideology of manifest destiny with its greater-than-ever doses of unilateralism, preventive security and Latin America as an exclusive area of interest. Political analyst Patricia de los Ríos also contributes an article about the elections, reviewing what the probable foreign, environmental, economic, social and trade policies of the second Bush administration will look like, based on the exercise of force and the waging of war. Both experts agree that the half of the electorate that did not vote for the Republicans will have to be capable of creating a movement to put a stop to this situation. It is often said that Latinos are a hard core Democratic vote, but as Manuel Chávez shows in his article, in November’s elections they voted very similarly to the population in general, perhaps in response to Republican efforts to capture swing voters and Democratic over-confidence. The section closes with an article by Mónica Vereá, who reviews migration in North America in the last ten years, showing that illegal migration from Mexico to the U.S. has intensified while migration of highly skilled professionals to the U.S. under the aegis of NAFTA has benefited Canada much more than Mexico.

Carlos Iván Mendoza contributes an interesting reflection to “Canadian Issues” about the external and internal consequences of the creation of an independent Quebec. One of the reasons Quebec has not separated from Canada is that nation’s multicultural outlook, which means that Quebec, as a province, can speak its language, enjoy its cultural traditions and even deploy its own diplomatic corps abroad.

In this issue, we have dedicated our “Politics” section to three articles dealing with different aspects of the consolidation of democracy in Mexico. Víctor Alarcón Olguín presents us with the need to ask how institutional reform in Mexico should be oriented focusing on discussing the centrality of the president to the political system and the mechanisms for achieving effective, democratic governability. Rubén García Clark reviews the stances taken about the presidential regimen by the country’s political actors, including the president himself, Congress, the judiciary, the parties and some of Mexico’s important political figures already vying as presidential hopefuls. Roberto Gutiérrez delves into the fundamental role of one of the main actors in the transition to democracy, the media. He warns about the danger for the political system of the media going from complete subordination to the authorities to a situation in which political actors, including the government, pay homage to the media, arguing for the need to regulate media coverage.

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In this issue, our “Art and Culture,” “The Splendor of Mexico,” “Museums” and “Ecology” sections are all dedicated to Mexico’s southern state of Guerrero. “Art and Culture” begins with an interview by Patricia Gómez-Maganda with painter Jesús Portillo Neri, a young artist who in a very short time has reached undoubted maturity and skill in his work. We continue with an article about Olinalá, a town nestled in the mountains of Guerrero, famous for its production of lacquered articles, a centuries-old craft tradition that most of the town’s inhabitants follow. Lastly, we look at part of the state’s pre-Hispanic history as painted by the ancient Tlacuilo in their codices. Gerardo Gutiérrez explains their function before the conquest and during the transition from the pre-Hispanic to the colonial world.

“The Splendor of Mexico” looks at pre-Hispanic, colonial and cosmopolitan Guerrero through its great archaeological wealth and two of its main cities. Taxco, a mining city *par excellence*, is warmly described by Miguel Ángel Reina in a journey through its steep, cobblestone streets and colonial architecture. Gerardo Gutiérrez introduces us to a little-known aspect of Guerrero: its vast archaeological wealth. Lastly, Manuel Zavala looks at cosmopolitan Guerrero in his article about the world famous port of Acapulco, classified as an earthly paradise during the twentieth century. And it is in Acapulco where one of the most interesting site museums of colonial Guerrero is located: the San Diego Fort Museum. Julieta Gil explains how the museum reveals the intense trade and cultural relationship that existed during the colonial period with Asia thanks to the trips of the Chinese Nao. Sergio Santana contributes an article to our “Ecology” section about the imposing Caverns of Cacahuamilpa, mixing legend and history.

In our “Literature” section, Eduardo Santa Cruz offers an interesting analysis about the perception that communities of Mexican origin in the United States have of themselves as reflected in Chicano literature, and the acceptance that it has won in literary circles both in the U.S. and our country. In this section, we include “Mirage,” a short story by Kathy Taylor that delves into the horrors that so many undocumented Mexicans face in their attempts to cross the border.

To conclude, our “In Memoriam” section pays homage to Víctor L. Urquidi in an article by his friend and colleague Roberto Blancarte. Urquidi was a dedicated Mexican intellectual, committed like almost no one else to national education, founder and director of many of Mexico’s most important educational institutions.

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