

# OUR VOICE

The Mexican government's recent measures to fight organized crime are of the utmost importance. Both the campaigns against drug trafficking and the extradition of outstanding drug kingpins and heads of very powerful gangs like the Juárez and Gulf cartels have made headline news all over the world, but mainly in Mexico and the United States. These measures have been termed "monumental" by the U.S. ambassador in Mexico, Antonio Garza, and "unprecedented" by the U.S. Attorney General. Many of the U.S. political media have been surprised by a policy as significant and transcendental as this.

Regardless of these actions' long-term effectiveness, it certainly is the case that they have involved a profound, grave decision on the part of the Felipe Calderón administration, a determination most Mexicans have supported and that will require a very cohesive society to withstand the repercussions inside the cartels, which may well respond very violently. Without a doubt, it is a decision that will very soon have an impact on our bilateral relations with the United States.

Nevertheless, we will have to wait for the long-term response of the whole U.S. establishment, particularly the executive and legislative branches. In that sense, it is important to emphasize an issue that has been the subject of discussion in this space in the past: the urgency of U.S. reciprocity toward Mexico, absent during almost the entire term of President George W. Bush. Without reciprocity *vis-à-vis* the transcendental measures the Mexican government has taken, Washington will be in serious difficulties in the future, not only in terms of talking about cooperation, but even in terms of demanding it.

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The real effectiveness and media impact of the strategy to fight organized crime will undoubtedly have an effect on the main U.S. political actors' perception of our country and bilateral relations. In our "Politics" section, journalist Jesús Esquivel analyzes this issue, centering on the positions Felipe Calderón will have to take on matters like migration and relations with the Democrats.

The Democratic Party victory in November's U.S. midterm elections—or rather, George W. Bush and the Republicans' thunderous defeat—is the topic of articles by four Mexican specialists in U.S. politics in our "United States Affairs" section. Silvia Núñez centers on current social policy's effect on the election outcome and recent trends in women's political participation. Paz Consuelo Márquez-Padilla analyzes the impact on Republicans' poor performance of so-called neo-conservative ideas and the religious right in the design of foreign and domestic policy respectively. Víctor Anaya focuses on explaining the reasons why an erroneous—not to say disastrous—foreign policy played an unprecedented role in determining the midterm elections' outcome. And, lastly, my own contribution seeks to offer elements for understanding the Grand Old Party's electoral fiasco, situating its causes in the three phantoms that have molded U.S. public opinion in recent times that the Republicans read wrong and dealt with incorrectly in their campaign: the shadow of the alleged electoral fraud in Florida in November 2000; 9/11 and the obsession with security and the fight against terrorism; and the—for many inexplicable—unnecessary protraction of the war in Iraq.

Bilateral relations with the United States are taking on enormous strategic importance in Mexico in the recently inaugurated Calderón administration's foreign policy, although the same cannot be said of the attention they have been given by our northern neighbor's politi-

cal actors. Amy Shannon reflects on the huge, surprising demonstrations by Latinos and other immigrants last year in the United States protesting the House passage of a restrictive, discriminatory immigration bill. Hernán Salas, for his part, looks at our northern border, which he conceives more than as a line separating the two countries, as a multicultural space with its own territory and identity: a line that separates, but also joins.

The new Calderón administration also faces enormous challenges on the domestic front. One is the consolidation of democratic governability, above all after the break in the political system caused by the last elections. Constitutional expert Miguel Carbonell describes the characteristics the urgently-needed new electoral reform should have; among them are giving the electoral monitoring body greater powers to oversee and, if necessary, sanction political parties. Another challenge will be to ensure economic stability in a context in which oil prices are likely to drop and the U.S. economy will probably decelerate. Economist Pablo Ruiz Nápoles reflects about the strategies Mexico's last administration and central bank used to safeguard the economy from the risk of exchange-rate and financial crises, pointing out that the remedy may be worse than the disease. Problems of democratic governance are not exclusive to Mexico, or even phenomena that develop exclusively in the sphere of national states. Internationalist Antonio Ortiz Mena describes how multilateral organizations like the United Nations, the Organization of American States or the World Trade Organization have had to face the false dilemma between democracy and effectiveness; he also proposes a series of strategies for Mexico's better performance in these organizations.

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Our "Art and Culture" section includes an exclusive interview with Federico Silva, one of the country's most versatile artists, committed to contemporary art and political culture in Mexico. Over 80, Silva recognizes that his will to live is tied directly to his work and that eternal search for meaning underlying all artistic expression. Susana Enríquez, a Mexican painter residing in Australia, whose art is fed by the language and movement of music, closes the section with an article describing her most recent project, "Themes and Variations."

San Luis Potosí abounds in attractions too plentiful for a single visit. For that reason, we once again go there in our section "The Splendor of Mexico." We start off with Real de Catorce, an old mining town, inexplicably fascinating to any traveler who wanders its streets, feeling the presence of those who can no longer be seen. In the same vein, we continue with Las Pozas de Xilitla, created by Edward James, a wealthy English aristocrat who found in Mexico the ideal place for breathing life into his surrealist delirium. Then we include a brief look at the innumerable examples of natural beauty to be found in the Potosí Huastec region. The visit ends with a tour of the Potosí Regional Museum in the state capital, one of whose main attractions is its detailed description of the different facets of Huastec culture.

Practically one year after his death, *Voices of Mexico* pays well deserved homage to the renowned, prize-winning writer Salvador Elizondo, one of the most important pens of twentieth-century Mexican literature, author of one of most controversial, acclaimed novels in the history of Mexican letters, *Farabeuf*. Three well-known scholars of his work, Dermot Curley, Alejandro Toledo and Juan Antonio Rosado, examine it from different angles, reflecting on his impact on Spanish-language letters, his personal motivations, his concern with writing's form and technique and his undoubted contribution to universal erotic literature. All this is accompanied by another view —the most intimate one— that of exceptional Mexican photographer Paulina Lavista, his life partner.

*José Luis Valdés-Ugalde*