

OUR VOICE

These are times to test President Barack Obama. Several features of his administration suggest a change in the way the U.S. will be implementing its foreign policy. It has been said that a mere change of style in foreign policy is shallow, not a profound transformation; others suggest that Obama's proposed change is only a product of rhetoric and campaign slogans. However, style and narrative matter, and these can be two significant components that contribute to the long-awaited renovation of U.S. international policy. Thus, to what extent can the new style yield the hoped-for outcomes, namely, a real change in the U.S. image abroad, restored international legitimacy, enhanced soft power, reinforced respect for U.S. hard-power resources and, more importantly, a sustainable strategy that allows smart power to put down roots in the American path for the twenty-first century?

So, what is the so-called change of style comprised of? First, it is a change in the mechanisms and paths of action, from unilateral decisions to multilateral channels. It is a move from ideology-based strategies to pragmatic and principle-led decisions. It means a nuance in the use of hard-power resources and a revival of soft-power tools. It can be understood as a pragmatic use of diplomacy and persuasion instead of preemptive action. Notwithstanding the dimension of becoming multilateral—in itself a deep and historical transformation—it may never include an absolute dismissal of manifest destiny, or a unilateral decision to reject Washington's leadership potential. Neither does it mean either a radical modification of top priorities or the subordination of U.S. interests to others'. To be honest, it also means the acknowledgement that the U.S. is not the almighty power that can convince (with carrots or sticks) and intervene without self-defeating consequences. The distribution of power, influence, public global goods, responsibility and interdependence in the twenty-first century reveals a multi-polar (or even non-polar, in Richard N. Haass's terms) international order, where uncontested U.S. hegemony is unsustainable. Thus, success depends, among other things, on the response of the United States' counterparts, allies, partners, critics and adversaries. The rising crisis and development of international and transnational problems will test the strategy's effectiveness.

Six months after inauguration day, Iran, North Korea, the Middle East and even Latin America are sharply challenging Obama's new diplomacy. On Iran, Republican neoconservatives and even Democrats are demanding a tougher stance on the electoral process favoring opposition leader Mir Husein Musavi and against the repressive regime. On North Korea's nuclear threat, the UN Security Council is taking the lead by reaching consensus (China and Russia included) on the political and financial sanctions to be imposed, but any escalation of threats could exert pressure toward taking much more aggressive measures. Taking sides in Iran and favoring preemptive measures in North Korea may reverse the strategy of showing the different face that Washington wants to popularize in the world and thus confirm Osama Bin Laden's recent statement suggesting that Obama is continuing G.W. Bush's policies. Even the coup d'état in Honduras is being used by Venezuela to overtly challenge Obama's decision to distance his administration from the interventionist image. So, how much will Obama be able to stretch diplomacy?

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Beyond Obama's foreign policy challenges, the great expectations he has awakened have led him to take a position on the big global issues. That is why his administration has focused on prioritizing certain problems to be resolved in the medium and long terms: climate change, the environment and renewable energy; international security and human rights; and the financial crisis and reactivating the economy. We have dedicated this issue to these global issues and their impact on Mexico.

There is no doubt that climate change has been one of the banners of the new U.S. presidency. Obama has understood the need to clean up his country's bad reputation in this area, and he has done it by proposing a radical turn in policy. As Edit Antal describes in her article for our "North American Issues" section, he is now attempting to lead global efforts to fight greenhouse gas emissions. Antal also comments on the new administration's environmental plan committed to gradually replacing dirty energy sources for so-called clean technologies. In this same section, Ángel de la Vega examines how Obama's proposed ecological transition is simultaneously a strategy to reactivate the economy and create jobs by developing sustainable technologies. He also analyzes the way in which dirty or non-renewable fossil fuels can contribute to deepening the economic recession in North America. Lastly, internationalist Andrés Ávila offers us a panorama of the existing international climate change regime, pointing out some of the reasons for the Kyoto Protocol's inefficiencies. Among them, he points to the U.S. refusal to sign even though it is the world's largest emitter and the position of some nations categorized as "developing countries" (among them, China, India, Brazil and Mexico), who use the argument of "historical responsibility" to refuse to significantly reduce their own emissions. A post-Kyoto regime then, is urgently needed.

Once again, we dedicate our "Economy" section to the analysis of the impacts of the very profound, complex world economic crisis, which has severely affected Mexico. First, Elizabeth Gutiérrez offers an article about the crisis's regional, local and sectoral effects in the North American Free Trade Agreement area; she concentrates on the analysis of the very negative results for the auto industry in both the region and Mexico specifically, where the drop in production has been almost 40 percent. Ciro Murayama describes the no less worrying panorama of employment. The crisis has devastated employment worldwide, and this is certainly the case in our country, in addition to the fact that the Mexican economy's traditional structural problems—definitely not something that has come from abroad—make implementing policies to reduce and fight growing unemployment more difficult.

In this issue, we look at other global issues from a local perspective. In our "Society" section, Ana Luisa Izquierdo introduces the topic of migration across Mexico's southern border. She clearly underlines the paradox that while our authorities demand fair treatment for Mexican immigrants in the United States, very often they violate and minimize the human rights of Central American migrants who cross the border into our country pursuing the same dream. The relationship between migration and human rights is one of the main concerns of civic movements in the first years of the twenty-first century, as Ariadna Estévez states in her article. She looks at several scenarios in which individual civil rights are violated during migration, among them, the rights to individual security and freedom, the right to decent working conditions, freedom from discrimination, racism and xenophobia, and even the right to life itself.

Two timely issues are examined in our "Politics" section. One is my reflections on the recent coup d'état in Honduras, which includes a look at the frailty of some Latin American democracies that still leads to these kinds of events, sometimes caused—like on this occasion—by democratically elected leaders' being tempted to try to perpetuate themselves in power, and at the main reactions to the event itself, among them, those of the Organization of American States and Washington. The second article, motivated by Mexico's federal mid-term congressional elections, written by María Macarita Elizondo, is about the important issue of education for democracy and electoral training in Mexico. Perhaps the more programs like the one this Federal Electoral Institute General Council member describes are implemented in our countries, the less likely it is that there will be events like those in Honduras.

For the fourth time in history and the second time this decade, Mexico has been elected a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. The importance of participating in this multilateral body is beyond debate. Not only is it possible to contribute pro-actively there to the resolution of the world's main conflicts, but it can also be used to promote our country's agenda in accordance with national priorities. So, we have designed a special section in this issue, "Mexico and the UN Security Council," in which different specialists examine Mexico's performance in the Security Council (SC) *vis-à-vis* its main debates and the five most influential nations represented there, the five permanent members. We begin with an article by Cristina Rosas, who looks critically at the global security issues Mexico has decided to get in-

volved with in its SC activity. Rosas maintains that while not all of them are relevant for our national interests, one is important for us to take a lead on: trafficking in small arms and light weapons, something that affects us severely because of its links to organized crime and drug trafficking. My contribution deals with the United States' probable new role in the SC in light of the new ways forward opened up by the Obama presidency and the recent appointment of Susan E. Rice as the U.S. ambassador. This makes it possible to envision a move from Bush-era unilateralism to multilateral strategies, or, more precisely, from ideology-driven decisions to pragmatic international policies, a change that could benefit Mexico and reinforce its position in the SC as a nation close to the United States. This will also naturally depend, however, on our country deciding to be more pro-active in some of the SC's main priorities, like peacekeeping missions. Valeria Marina Valle's contribution refers to Great Britain and France's joint positions on UN and SC reform. It also analyzes the similarities and differences with Mexico's positions on this issue. Ana Teresa Gutiérrez del Cid looks at Russia's most important positions in the SC in the face of recent important international conflicts. Also, she reflects on some of the agreements the Russian Federation and Mexico have had on the Security Council, like their joint coordination of the fight against international drug trafficking. Finally, the last permanent member of the Security Council, China, is the object of José Luis León's analysis, which defines Chinese diplomacy as "the art of transforming prudence into policy." León argues that some Chinese positions in the SC demonstrate its preference for multilateralism, although without renouncing its right to veto, which it has exercised on several occasions. Although perhaps following the precepts of Confucian thought by emphasizing harmony in its policy in the SC, China also uses power when needed.

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This issue's "Art and Culture" section includes an article about the art of the colonial missions in northern Mexico, one of the least studied, most isolated parts of our country, written by the curator of the biggest exhibition in history on this topic, currently showing at Mexico City's Old College of San Ildefonso. It is followed by an homage to Rolando Arjona, Yucatán-born muralist and painter, who at over 90 continues to give his native land reasons to make it proud. This section closes with an article about one of the phenomena most characteristic of Yucatán's nineteenth century: the emergence of a regionalist discourse expressed through literary journalism, one of whose most visible promoters was writer and jurist Justo Sierra O'Reilly.

After covering the states of Campeche, Quintana Roo and Yucatán in several past issues, "The Splendor of Mexico" section offers readers a historical vision of the whole peninsula so they can get a glimpse of its common past. Although the aim was very ambitious, we hope that this brief review of the peninsula's Mesoamerican past, colonial history and incorporation into an independent Mexico will help our readers understand the ties that bind its inhabitants together. We are adding a short text about the living Mayan language, reminding us that it is still commonly spoken in the entire peninsula and that its defense is one of the tasks of the heirs to the ancient Mayan culture. Lastly, we present a brief article about the underground world of Yucatán: for the ancient Mayas, it represented the underworld Xibalbá, and for us, a close look at the peninsula's natural riches. The "Museums" section brings us a glimpse of the Museum of the Mayan People of Dzibilchaltún, which in a small space reviews the peninsula's Mayan history.

Our "In Memoriam" section is dedicated to the memory of one of the most respected and admired intellectuals at our national university, professor and writer Alejandro Rossi. Octavio Paz himself said that Rossi was not only one of most cultured and intelligent people he had ever known, but also one of the most generous. In his honor, we publish a short article by writer Juan Villoro, who, in addition to pointing to Rossi's human qualities, offers us a panorama of his brief but transcendental body of work.

José Luis Valdés-Ugalde