

OUR VOICE

The current international situation is dominated by trends that were thought to have faded with the end of the Cold War. The United States has gone from playing a protectionist role mainly on economic issues to reinforcing its isolationist policy since the 9/11 attacks. This has been bolstered through mechanisms that strengthen the so-called National State of Security. One of these mechanisms has been the implementation of “preventive war,” actually quite an old foreign policy instrument in the U.S. diplomatic tradition.

In that sense, and in the context of the imposition in international relations of hegemonic national security criteria —today beginning to be called “securitization”— the following elements have been involved: a) the notion of cooperative security; b) prevention as a long-term concept and policy instrument; c) the return to a predominantly hegemonic international climate instead of a balance of powers which dominated in the bipolar era —this is the origin of the question of whether hegemony is the same as world stability; d) the real —and legitimate?— room for manoeuvre that the democratic system has for implementing preventive wars; e) the impact that these wars have on democratic governability, on the integrity of democratic institutions, on the interests and rights of civil society, which seems to be reacting in a new way to the doubtful consensus underlying this state of war; and, lastly, f) the meaning that all this has and will have (mainly because of the invasion of Iraq) with regard to the current organization of the United Nations and the future of multilateralism.

The state of national security implemented by the United States is an important return to policies that dominated the Cold War: it emphasizes the principle of the defense of security over and above other, certainly more dynamic issues of international relations. In effect, it is possible to see that these policies are frankly reemerging and the question is, how much will they affect individual freedoms and bilateral and multilateral relations among nations?

We must determine whether “securitized” democracy is institutionalizing uncertainty, contrary to its purpose, and therefore, through real and potential military intervention, changing the free market economy and the process of integration so arduously established by Washington for more than a decade. In this sense, it is pertinent to ask to what degree the sovereignty of countries and international trade and, of course, migratory flows from South to North, have been affected.

We can observe a tendency to unify the codes that international relations are based on. What is more, a repositioning of the “reason of state” is visible, and not of the rule of law, through the progress of a new process of “territorialization” implemented by the United States. Given this dichotomy between uniformity and diversity, there is a need to achieve a distinctive dimensioning of every security problem in different countries in the framework of international and inter-American relations. It is also necessary to identify the common issues regarding sustainability as a central factor of inter-American security.

Given Washington’s impulse to consolidate an “integral security” policy that would aim to dominate the specter of security defense strategies in Latin America, it is necessary to elucidate the matter of identity in the framework of the problem of security: this identity would presuppose accepting the idea that there is a cohesive body of actors in the Americas and a consistent group of common problems. Or perhaps we have, rather, a dominant concept of security, which has not found itself yet (at the expense of security itself, democracy and economic development).

This new narrative of world power is also a confrontation of paradigms that has an impact on the limits of certain fundamental accords still to be achieved in Latin America. In any case, what is noteworthy is that there are no rules for playing the game or even for picking the game you want to play. That is perhaps the most critical challenge that we would have to discuss in the new framework of international relations prevalent today: Can we, in the framework of our efforts to achieve accords and common objectives, define these rules and strengthen the link between domestic institutions (that need to be modernized) and already

existing ones in the regional and international sphere? Only if this is the case will the doctrine of preventive security (and the perverse and critical association that begins to appear in the world between terrorism and democracy) not represent a dead weight (that can be added to other delays in our economic and social development) or an impediment for the advancement of economic and democratic processes in the hemisphere.

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It is precisely from the broad sphere of national security that famed Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington warns about a new threat for U.S. stability in his polemical article "The Hispanic Challenge." In it he catalogues Hispanics, and Mexicans in particular, as the force that could affect and eventually dilute American identity, and therefore, as a danger for U.S. cultural and political institutions. In our "Mexico-U.S. Relations" section, Leonardo Curzio and I fully answer what without exaggeration we can call Huntington's xenophobic, not to mention racist, position. Hispanics and minorities in general, will undoubtedly be key in the next presidential election, in which not only very important domestic issues are at stake like social security and migration, but two different conceptions of foreign policy also face off, giving this electoral process a supra-national dimension. Together with my co-author, María Fernanda Valencia, we deal with this issue in "United States Affairs." In both sections, we also include other contributions about the matters that will undoubtedly have an influence in November's balloting, and therefore, in bilateral Mexico-U.S. relations. Rodolfo Hernández writes about the need to make health policy, medical attention and hospital care jibe on both sides of the border as the only way to reduce the region's high disease rates. Ignacio Perrotini contributes an article about another issue of undeniable interest for the elections: the U.S. fiscal deficit, generated during the Bush administration that may have unpredictable implications for world economic stability. Also in "United States Affairs," Miguel García Reyes offers the second part of his work on energy and geopolitics in the region, concentrating on Washington's strategies to achieve pan-American energy integration. The strategic importance of water, particularly for human consumption, is increasingly clear. In "Canadian Issues" we present an article by Delia Montero about water in Quebec, one of the world's most important reserves.

Mexico will also hold elections this year in 14 different states. For this reason, in "Politics" we present an article by Gustavo Emmerich, looking at the different parties' and candidates' prospects, based on a diligent analysis of the political context of each state involved. On the national scene, in this issue we begin a series of articles about the internal currents in each of the three main political parties as they prepare for the 2006 presidential elections. The first is about the Party of the Democratic Revolution, whose future is certainly dark given the recent unfortunate corruption scandals involving several of its most outstanding members, and which can only be saved, as analyst Esperanza Palma tells us, if it finally starts down the path of institutionalization and restructuring and decides to stop depending on the patrimonialist, populist traditions of some of its leaders. We conclude this section with a contribution by Mexican ambassador Rosario Green, who alerts us about how economic deterioration, the corruption of the governing classes and the retreat of social development have reduced public trust in the democracies of Latin America, most of them incipient.

According to economist Gerardo Bracho, the impact of China on the international economy is irreversible; we will have to live with it from now on. The Mexican answer has been rather weak, which is why now is the time to question the forms of trade diversification that have been followed and that have not significantly contributed to our participation in international markets, in order to seek out structural solutions in their stead. This is why we also include in the "Economy" section a contribution from Fernando Butler about the thorny matter of Mexico's fiscal system; almost everyone agrees that its reform, of one kind or another, can no longer be postponed, which is why the only alternative is to wait for the recently launched National Fiscal Convention to begin to bear fruit and build consensus. Anything else would be disastrous for the country. The reduction of Mexican exports, the U.S. recession and the lack of political accords which translate into paralysis of the government are three factors that have had an impact on the unprecedented increase in unemployment in Mexico during the first three years of the Fox administration.

In our “Society” section, Francisco Javier Aguilar García writes on this topic, finding the causes of this trend in recent governments’ —not only Vicente Fox’s— adherence to orthodox neoliberal economic formulas, in weakening workers’ organization and the enormous drop in union clout.

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For our “Art and Culture” and “The Splendor of Mexico” sections, in this issue, we went to Michoacán, a state both rich and diverse in culture and art. We began our journey with a visit to the island of Cuitzeo, in an article by artist América Gabrielle about the impressive statue of Morelos, the interior of which is covered with a pictorial treasure from the brush of one of the great —although not widely renowned— geniuses of Mexican muralism, Ramón Alva de la Canal. We also present the work of three of the state’s most important contemporary painters: Jesús Escalera, Luis Palomares and Gerónimo Mateo, who, in addition to their canvases, reveal their intentions and motivations in interviews with critic and art dealer Ariel Ruíz Magaña. We continue with a look at Michoacán’s fairs by expert Zulema Carrillo, who offers both practical and cultural knowledge of the topic. Chronicler Francisco Javier Tavera delights with a brisk walk through the streets, churches and buildings of traditional Morelia, while the delicate prose of historian Jaime Abundis brings us the architectural beauty of the seventeenth-century lake-district monasteries, describing the weight that three of the most important (those in the towns of Yuriria, Cuitzeo and Copándaro) had in the spiritual conquest of New Spain. From there, we go to the unequalled beauty and magic of Pátzcuaro Lake. Native-born writers Alberto de Lachica and Miguel Monje reveal its most intimate secrets, showing us the hidden marvels of the towns and villages of its coast.

Our travels through this state of great artists continues in “Museums.” This section offers an article by Juan Manuel Pérez Morelos about the Alfredo Zalce Contemporary Art Museum, named after the painter considered by many to be the greatest Michoacán artist of all time. Our expedition concludes in the “Ecology” section with an interesting contribution from Josefina Cendejas about deforestation in Michoacán. Both an alert and a proposal, the author sees the direct involvement of local communities in the conceptualization of the problems and finding solutions as the only way out of the dilemmas of deforestation.

Our “Literature” section is dedicated to an homage to the work of Juan García Ponce, one of Mexico’s most renowned and emblematic, but also polemical, twentieth-century men of letters. More than a writer, he is a painter of erotic novels and short stories, understanding Eros as the relationship between bodies and spirits in their many possible combination of threesomes, foursomes, sixsomes....García Ponce’s narrative cannot be circumscribed. Describing complex situations and exploring psychological motivations, it is literature of the emotions, whose intention is to make the reader feel more than think. This contrasts with García Ponce, the essayist, concerned with the eternal issues of philosophy like life, death and love, and at the same time reflecting constantly on the writers who have had an influence on him, from Thomas Mann and Robert Musil to Pierre Klossowsky, Jorge Luis Borges or Georges Bataille.

For all these reasons, we have invited five authors who, in addition to being recognized men and women of letters, writers or critics, were also very close to García Ponce at some time in his life. Hernán Lara Zavala, Graciela Martínez-Zalce, Adolfo Castañón, Juan Bruce-Novoa and Huberto Batis have each given us a piece of his/her perception of García Ponce’s enormous transcendence.

Late last year, Michoacán-born Luis Gutiérrez y Gutiérrez, historian and well known academic, also passed away. Founder of the Michoacán College, today one of the country’s best known research institutions, and the main proponent of the micro-history movement in Mexico, the author of a vast opus, he is the subject of our “In Memoriam” section, with an article by his disciple and colleague Porfirio Miranda. Don Luis will always be remembered by those dedicated to or involved in the noble art of history in Mexico.

José Luis Valdés-Ugalde