

OUR VOICE

A year after the September 11 terrorist attacks, a reflection on their different implications and the state of the world as a result of those tragic events is obligatory. As we have already said in previous editorials, in a single stroke, the attacks caused the highest number of civilian casualties in the recent history of international terrorism. This fact alone gives us the idea that the ultimate objective of world terrorism (now presumably headed up by Al Qaeda) is to escalate the offensive and directly attack the crucial points of its declared Western enemies, among whom the United States is the central one. While this ill-fated act of terrorism does have precedents in colonial memory and the disorder inherited from the end of the Cold War, it is also true that it has significantly damaged the precarious post-Cold War world order.

In addition to pointing out that international, national, transborder, land and aviation security as well as other matters in which the most important actor (and victim) is international civil society have been the most acutely affected by the terrorist attacks, five other fronts have felt the impact: 1) the nature and integrity of the democratic political regimen, both worldwide and locally have been damaged; 2) the urgently needed economic arrangement that would allow an alternative distribution of wealth to compete with the unfortunate saga of globalization has been delayed even more; 3) significant indications about the psychological and emotional impact among parts of civil society —mainly Americans— who have been exposed to unprecedented risks and instability because of the role both the state and non-state actors are now playing have begun to come to light; 4) international consensuses have seriously deteriorated, mainly among the European Union allies, from the very moment the decision was made to attack Afghanistan; and, last, but not least, 5) it has become clear that Washington has re-initiated a “no policy” period vis-à-vis Latin America, which has already had significant implications in the economic and social life of the hemisphere.

In international relations theory, there is an analogy that links international and local society. In any case, today more than ever, it is becoming clear that the persistent trend of world events with an influence on the nature of international relations affects and will continue to profoundly affect the life of national societies. Just as much as global economic and financial trends or the pressures of international crime —to mention just a couple of these phenomena— today, terrorism intensely disturbs the life of nations. National societies have been harshly exposed to the economic, political and social factors from “the exterior,” understanding “the exterior” to mean mainly the United States. This means that the inevitable U.S. influence, today expressed in an increasingly unilateral, total fight against terrorism, involves broad sectors of the national. The fact is that the United States has not been calm since September 11; this means that the world surrounding it —that is, the entire reality and all the international actors who have been interconnected one way or another with U.S. interests— has been put at risk in an unprecedented fashion by virtue of the fact that it is a relationship completely lacking in minimal equilibria or counterweights that can give coherence (beyond the defense of its national security) and moderation to Washington’s decisions.

Today, the possibility of an attack on Irak and the escalation of a conflict of unknown consequences is a matter of major importance. Clearly, in Washington there is an intense discussion about the suitability of orienting the response to the September 11 attacks in this way. In this debate, the hard-line group of President George W. Bush’s national security cabinet seems to have the upper hand. Both the United Nations Security Council and the European Union countries, as real factors of power in the world concert, together with Washington, must be those who resolve a conflict (organized terrorism, whether it be on the part of private, nongovernmental groups or of nation states that promote it) that corresponds to the entire world community and cannot have a single country as its custodian.

If this balance in the decisions about a comprehensive fight against international terrorism is not achieved in the coming weeks, there will be a risk of dangerously erasing the consensuses necessary up until now for dealing with many other issues on the world agenda that unfortunately have been postponed.

Among them are the recurring economic crises in some Latin American countries; in part, they are explained by the assault on their societies and economies by the unjust effects of globalization that have so idly fostered the most recalcitrant interests of the world economic system, many of which are based in the West's most important financial capitals. Also among the many issues that require the immediate attention of Washington and its Western allies and that keep the world community on the brink of aggravated world insecurity already gravely challenged by international terrorism are the environmental crisis, widespread poverty and the dangers that the ever-increasing number of the world's migrants face every day.¹

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December 1 is the second anniversary of the Fox administration, the first non-Institutional Revolutionary Party government in more than 70 years. The new administration has walked a difficult path marked by a political situation unprecedented in Mexico's history: the different branches of government are divided, with an executive that has not been able to forge the necessary agreements with the political forces represented in Congress and the other parties in order to make headway in governing.

The July 2003 federal legislative elections will be crucial for defining the country's way forward, which is oscillating between a reactivation of the reforms needed to consolidate the democratic regimen and the lack of governability. It is in this context that we decided to interview the leaders of Mexico's three main political parties, Luis Felipe Bravo Mena of the National Action Party, Roberto Madrazo Pintado from the Institutional Revolutionary Party and Rosario Robles Berlanga of the Party of the Democratic Revolution, asking for their opinions about issues we consider key for the country's immediate development, both politically and electorally, and with regard to the economy and international relations.

The interviews are complemented by two excellent articles analyzing the last two years. UNAM scholar and, until recently promotor and participant in the discussions about the reform of the state in his role as director of the Institute for Historical Studies of the Mexican Revolution, Francisco Valdés-Ugalde describes the reasons why the regimen and the political forces have been unable to advance the reforms required for the consolidation of democracy. Political scientist Alejandro Hope Pinsón explains why, in his opinion, until now President Vicente Fox has not been able to keep all the campaign promises he made or preserve people's hope for change and, as a result, maintain the high popularity ratings he enjoyed early in his administration.

One of the things that remains to be done to achieve a full transition to democracy in Mexico is the clarification of what happened during the 1968 and 1971 student massacres and what has been called the "dirty war," when innumerable violations of human rights were committed during the government's fight against guerrilla movements in the 1970s and early 1980s. Without any intention of carrying out a witch hunt, the declassification of all the files in the hands of Mexican state and army, as well as the trial of those responsible and still living can no longer be postponed if we want to forever eliminate the practices of impunity that were characteristic of the authoritarian regime that has been left behind. Well-known political analyst Adolfo Sánchez Rebolledo and two participants in those events, former guerrilla Gustavo Hiraes and ex-student leader Roberto Escudero, write in our "Society" section about this undoubtedly correct initiative of the Fox administration and its importance for Mexico's incipient democracy.

Has the economic recession ended in the United States? Has recovery begun? In the "Economy" section, specialist Elaine Levine answers these two questions in her article, offering us an analysis from the Mexican perspective.

In "United States Affairs," we continue with the analysis of Hispanics' purchasing power and consumer habits in the United States, this time with an article by Brenda Méndez about the South, including useful data for Mexican investors and companies. In this section, we also include a detailed article by journalist and business editor Leopoldo Eggers about a rather *sui generis* phenomenon: the successful penetration of

¹ About these issues, see the recent analysis by José Luis Valdés-Ugalde and Diego Valadés, comp., *Globalidad y conflicto. Estados Unidos y la crisis de septiembre* (Mexico City: UNAM-CISAN-IIJ, 2002).

the U.S. market by fifteen Mexican companies that have become multinationals based on their understanding of the new rules that the North American Free Trade Agreement and globalization have brought into play. The “Canadian Issues” section deals with the study of the consequences of NAFTA in intraprovincial Canadian trade in an article in which Delia Montero also takes a detailed look at the implementation of policies and strategies linked to creating “intelligent borders” between the United States and Canada.

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The “Art and Culture” section brings us three Mexican artists: Susana Alfaro, Mariana Yampolsky and Maribel Portela. Susana, a disciple of painter Luis Nishizawa, with studies in music and painting, shows in her work the fruits of years dedicated to constructing ambiances based on the use of concepts common to both artistic endeavors: scale and tone. *Voices of Mexico* dedicates part of this section to a posthumous homage to the passionate lens of Mariana Yampolsky, born in the United States and naturalized Mexican, whose undeniable love for this country, particularly for the Mexico of the dispossessed, resulted in an archive of hundreds of images, invaluable both for their testimonial wealth and their aesthetic discoveries. Lastly, sculptor Maribel Portela presents us her mythological beings and gods, larger-than-life clay figures that form part of the world of the gatherers of dreams and objects.

In this issue, “The Splendor of Mexico” visits the state of Tlaxcala, whose cultural abundance covers centuries of our country’s history. We begin with Cacaxtla, the enigmatic pre-Hispanic site whose main attraction are its murals, restored and in excellent condition. The origin and meaning of these murals have been the object of many studies and interpretations such as the one presented here by researcher Pablo Escalante Gonzalbo, who reflects mainly about the allegory of what is known as the Mural of the Battle, and archeologist Andrés Santana, who comments on Element “C” or the “blue eyebrow” in the murals’ representations of mythological animals. The Franciscans’ presence was determinant for the Spaniards’ spiritual conquest of the Tlaxcaltec population. Milena Koprivitza writes about the close link between the first Franciscans and the indigenous people who submitted to their teachings and the mutual benefits that came from that integration. Lastly, we take a brief tour of the state’s main festivities, Tlaxcala’s carnival, that involves hundreds of splendid, ingenious masked and costumed participants in traditional dances.

The Museo Nacional del Títere (National Puppet Museum), unique in Latin America, takes us to a world of characters that exists thanks to the imagination and skill of artisans from the world over, and is a well-deserved homage to the Rosete Aranda family, which kept the puppet tradition alive for a century in the city of Huamantla, Tlaxcala.

The alliance of the Tlaxcaltec people 500 years ago with the Spanish conquistadors to defeat the powerful Mexica army has been interpreted by several generations of Mexicans as a betrayal of the pre-Hispanic world and a determining factor in sealing the fate of the indigenous peoples under Spanish domination. In our “History” section, Carolina Figueroa questions this position by interpreting the alliance as just another military strategy, common to the period, and describing the benefits it brought to the Tlaxcaltec people for several centuries.

In “Literature” we continue with Graciela Martínez-Zalce’s contributions about promising women in Mexican literature. In this issue, we include poet Cristina Rivera-Garza and short story writer Carolina Luna.

Lastly, we dedicate our “In Memoriam” section to outstanding Dutch-Mexican university professor and researcher, prestigious jurist and erudite law historian, Don Guillermo Floris Margadant, who recently died.

José Luis Valdés-Ugalde