

OUR VOICE

George W. Bush's reelection was not a big surprise for many. Even though broad sectors of world public opinion preferred John Kerry, the president imposed himself thanks to a strategy that captured historically abstentionist voters and represented an important segment of the conservative population. In the last stages of the campaign, Bush's strategist Karl Rove bet on appealing to evangelical Christians with an *ad hoc* message that countered some of the more moderate positions among the U.S. public, and the results in Ohio, among other places, showed it. Among these sectors of the public are those who are against abortion, gay marriage and uncontrolled and even regulated immigration.

The state of bilateral and trilateral relations in North America cannot be analyzed beyond the margins of the current political situation in the United States. Two major issues should be emphasized here. Mexico has not been capable of doing effective lobbying in Washington or negotiating at home to convince the central political actors (particularly legislators) that its cause should be taken into account. This means that it has been impossible to effectively negotiate the basis for a platform that would lead to substantive accords, particularly with reference to the undocumented Mexican population in the U.S., which increases daily.

Bush's reelection creates even more difficulties for Mexico, even if we could believe that he is interested in resolving the immigration issue responsibly. We tend to think, rather, that his recent restrictive position on immigration is the result both of his lack of interest in anything beyond a temporary arrangement about guest workers and of the pressure from very broad sectors of society and the political class who for many reasons think it inappropriate to execute a comprehensive migratory reform and legalize Mexican immigrants. These immigrants fulfill their obligations like the rest of the citizenry (like paying taxes) but lack the most basic rights that those other citizens have. This is an increasingly dangerous bilateral problem that is not getting enough attention. In addition, the most serious problem, given the existence of legal and political vacuums, is that the issues pending like this one are being politicized in the discourse of the two governments and societies in large part due to the fact that there are neither norms nor institutions that frame more professionally and clearly cooperatively the relations between the two countries.

Unfortunately, one of the consequences of the current situation is that, on the one hand, the United States has conferred upon itself the right to demand explanations and cooperation from Mexico in matters of its national security even if this means the sacrifice of Mexico's own security interests and defense priorities, and, on the other hand, Mexico reacts and also demands of Washington favorable commitments for our priorities. Relations with our northern neighbor have come to a standstill around some fundamental issues in a way we had not seen for some time. The feeling that nothing has moved forward nor will it move forward is more prevalent than ever and the Waco and Crawford, Texas meetings for the signing of the Alliance for Security and Prosperity in North America last March 23 did not constitute a substantial advance either for relations with the United States or for the consolidation of Mexico's trade and political relations with its two most important partners.

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In this issue's "United States Affairs" section, precisely, I contribute a deeper analysis both of the reasons U.S. voters reelected George Walker Bush to the presidency and of the consequences this second term could have for the world in general and for Mexico and Latin America in particular in light of the transformation of U.S. foreign policy, foreshadowed by the reshuffling of the cabinet and the inclusion in decision-making posts of some of the best known representatives of U.S. neo-conservatism. It is to be expected that for Mexico, Bush's second term will very probably mean continued stymied negotiations on any broad migratory accord, one of the most important issues on the bilateral agenda from the Mexican point of view. In an article in the "Mexico-U.S. Relations," experienced and prominent Mexican diplomat Andrés Rozental offers us a panoramic analysis of relations between the two countries and how they were effected by 9/11, and describes how, since then, security issues have marked bilateral negotiations. All this

has undoubtedly negatively affected negotiations on all other issues, among them, the one most important for Mexico, migration. However, Rozental visualizes in the dynamic of globalization (for example, the integration of Europe, the blocs that have formed in Asia and the emergence of China as a new economic power) undeniable areas for opportunities for Mexico, the United States and Canada to rethink the need to strengthen not only their existing trade agreement, but also to analyze the relevance of going even further toward regional integration, particularly if they do not want to lose competitive advantages *vis-à-vis* other regions.

Of course, this kind of integration presupposes changes and influences in non-economic fields. In “North American Issues,” Pedro Félix Turrubiarres offers us a brief panorama of the historic cultural interdependence between Mexico and the United States, emphasizing above all the cultural changes that the North American Free Trade Agreement has brought with it. Along these same lines, in “Mexico and the World,” journalist John Burstein establishes a thought-provoking parallel between Mexico and Turkey, based not only on their similarities as peripheral countries bordering on two capitalist metropolises (the United States and the European Union), but also the peculiarity that the two nations are, in his opinion, a clear example of how ethnic struggles (that of the Kurds and Mexican indigenous peoples) have contributed to redefining the future of the broad regionalizing projects they are both part of.

The cultural changes that come with globalization and regionalization also relate to today’s borders. Canadian specialist Graciela Martínez-Zalce contributes an interesting article to “Canadian Issues” about the ideological borders between the United States and Canada in an original analysis of two films by well-known directors Michael Moore and Trey Parker.

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Mexican politics is starting to heat up in preparation for the 2006 federal elections. Proof of this is one of the main hopefuls’, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, being stripped of executive immunity as mayor of Mexico City and possibly being barred from running; also, the recent debate about the viability of Mexicans’ voting abroad and the torturous relations between different branches of government during practically the entire Fox administration, particularly between the executive and Congress. We have included articles about the last two topics in this issue’s “Politics” section. Patricio Ballados and Rodrigo Cervantes contribute an analysis of the logistic and legal obstacles that would still have to be overcome in order for Mexicans living in the United States to vote in the 2006 presidential elections. Their main concern is that there is a danger that voting abroad would not be covered by the same levels of trust and certainty that has been achieved in Mexico, and that this kind of scenario could not only stain the 2006 results, but would undoubtedly be an unfortunate step backward for Mexico’s transition to democracy. For his part, political analyst Carlos Casillas describes how in recent years it has not been possible to consolidate a political culture (particularly among the president and his cabinet, state governors and political parties) that accepts that in a democracy there is always the possibility that no consensus is reached and that therefore it is necessary to build institutional mechanisms so that this does not cause administrative and legislative paralysis, a political culture that promotes persuasion and reason over imposition. Undeniably, one of the main indicators of maturity in a democracy is the degree of inclusion and egalitarian treatment that society enjoys, which is inversely proportional to discriminatory attitudes and practices. In his article for our “Society” section, political philosopher Jesús Rodríguez Zepeda reflects about the importance of affirmative action in a society as unequal and historically discriminatory as our own. He therefore celebrates the constitutional reform that establishes state responsibility for implementing compensatory programs for the indigenous population, as well as recent legislation that includes affirmative action for other groups like the alternatively abled and the aged.

One of the reforms that has been constantly postponed by the administrative and legislative paralysis that has plagued the country in recent years is the energy reform, which implies restructuring the state oil and natural gas company, Pemex. In their contribution to the “Economy” section, Víctor Rodríguez and Rosío Vargas alert us to the grave consequences of the current administration’s energy policies, including concessions to foreign private companies for pumping oil and bad management of Pemex’s assets, particularly a fiscal policy that siphons off money into government coffers instead of investing in the company to modernize it. We close the section with an article by economist Enrique Pino, who not only contributes very interesting data about four of the so-called emerging economies (Chile, Mexico, South Korea and

Chinese Taipei), but a very evocative analysis of why the Asian nations have achieved better sustained performance than the Latin Americans. Among the reasons he offers are the greater willingness of Asian governments to intervene in their economies and to be less orthodox than the two Latin American countries in implementing neoliberal economic policies, *à la* the International Monetary Fund.

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This issue's "Art and Culture" section is dedicated to photography. Three young women, Leonor Solís, Ingrid Hernández and Sofía Felguérez, each with a different profession, living in different parts of Mexico, use classic black and white photography, testimonial digital photography and manipulated digital photography to demonstrate this art's infinite range of creative possibilities. Each shares the reasons behind her images. We complete the section with a delectable article by Zaidee Stavely about *danzón*. This sensual popular dance, with its very precise rules and steps, is kept alive in the capital thanks to the fact that on weekends, local inhabitants of all ages gather in public plazas to practice it.

Our "Splendor of Mexico", "Museums" and "Ecology" sections are once again dedicated to exploring corners of Mexico's capital. We start with three neighborhoods, whose histories date back centuries and that developed different styles of architecture and functions. Salvador Padilla writes about stately Tlalpan, a place of pre-Hispanic settlements that still boasts superb examples of old colonial country houses, with narrow, cobbled streets and a plaza that reminds us of times gone by when it was still far away from the capital. Édgar Tavares contributes two articles about the more modern but stately Roma and Hipódromo Condesa Neighborhoods. Their histories, written in the twentieth century, are magnificent examples of the value that used to be placed on space for recreation and the application of different architectural styles that even today, despite city traffic, invite the visitor to be surprised on walks through their streets and parks.

A singular museum dedicated to poetry and its most important resource, metaphor, is located in the Roma Neighborhood. The creators of the Museo Ramón López Velarde (Ramón López Velarde Museum) conceived it as metaphorical, and, with imagination and skill, they have managed to spark surprise, bafflement, but above all interest in knowing more about the work and passions of one of Mexico's most important poets.

"Ecology" deals with a topic vital to the capital, the environmental recovery of our Chapultepec Forest, perhaps the city's most traditional family recreation spot.

Gerardo Piña contributes an interesting article to our "Literature" section about Christopher Domínguez Michael, writer and critic, the worthy recipient of one of Mexico's most prestigious literary prizes, the Xavier Villaurrutia Award 2004, for his biography of Friar Servando Teresa de Mier. Piña also contributes interesting data about Domínguez Michael's literary history, to which we add a translation of brief fragments of the prize-winning book.

Two outstanding members of the university community recently passed away, leaving behind them undeniably important legacies for Mexican universities and society. Horacio Labastida was a Renaissance man, who knew something about practically all topics and was able to tie together the most seemingly unrelated aspects of reality to explain it with great lucidity. An extraordinary academic and cultural official, a consummate bibliophile, a zealous historian and journalist committed to the interpretation of truth, Labastida was without a doubt one of those figures who have become indispensable for Mexico's cultural life. Don Enrique González Casanova made no less of a mark. A writer of delicate prose, he was widely recognized for his dedication to teaching and his existential commitment to the fate of the National University, to where he expressed his academic vocation. He trained several generations, fostered multiple cultural activities and was the soul of some of the most transcendental groups of intellectuals in twentieth-century Mexico. *Voices of Mexico* pays homage to both men, dedicating our "In Memoriam" section to them.

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