

OUR VOICE

The word “cyclical” seems to describe and at the same time contain what is repeated in the trajectory of human beings, their individual or collective actions, and also the tangible phenomena that their different civilizations have attempted to explain in order to understand the universe. From time immemorial, then, our rituals for closing out one year and beginning another continue to be essentially the same, since, regardless of their form, in essence, we use them to look over our achievements and failures, wish each other good fortune, and, above all, utilize them as an act of aspiring to recover a sense of order amidst the chaos surrounding us.

Thus we begin the first *Voices of Mexico* of 2012, the first months of which will see increased importance of federal electoral campaigns in both Mexico and the United States, since every 12 years, the two processes coincide. In this context, our being neighbors takes on particular significance given the interdependence of our relationship, asymmetrical as it is in favor of the strongest actor.

With the critical problems Mexico is facing in terms of violence, insecurity, and corruption, issues around which many of Mexican citizens’ demands center, it is a fact that conservative U.S. forces are taking advantage to double up their battle against the Democratic administration, politicizing sensitive topics on the bilateral agenda. Undocumented migration, border controls, and transnational organized crime have been amalgamated in the eye of the U.S. public thanks to the anxiety among large sectors of it who are suffering the effects of the global economic crisis. As a result, and in accordance with the CISAN’s mission, our regular readers will see a parade of articles in coming issues of *Voices of Mexico* about the electoral vicissitudes both countries are facing, always putting first and foremost the need for objective, plural reflection.

In this issue, we emphasize one of the core questions characterizing Mexico’s as yet unfinished electoral norms: the ominous influence of the mass media. As Giovanni Sartori said in his *Homo Videns*, politics in my country has been shorn of all content and the political parties have been weakened. Roberto Gutiérrez’s article reports that half of Mexican citizens trust the mass media, while only one-fourth trust political parties. This alerts us to the *de facto* power of the media and their owners, given the submission of political actors. While we must recognize that censorship was historically a characteristic of the period of the state party, it was followed in the era of transition to democracy by advances in access to the media for diverse political forces and the quest for formulas for equity. However, even today, the monopolistic concentration of power in the media makes it necessary to regulate them to favor strengthening democracy.

Also in the “Politics” section, we are apprised of the importance of ensuring that the millions of Mexicans living abroad with voting rights have full access to suffrage. Absentee voting was only instituted six years ago, with scant participation, which is why this year attempts

are being made to modernize the procedures. This does not satisfy Patricio Ballados, however, who writes in his contribution that the existing model is not inclusive. It should be pointed out that Mexico has benefited from the work of its citizens abroad, mainly through the remittances they send home; in the public debate this argument contrasts with the point that every ballot cast abroad costs the country 150 times what a vote costs the public in Mexico.

The enormous majority of Mexicans living abroad have left to improve their living conditions. Elaine Levine's analysis makes this clear, at the same time that she points out that even though the huge majority of undocumented emigrants to the United States are poor, insecurity has forced many middle and upper-class families to leave the country. The impacts of the fact that the migratory flow from Mexico to the United States constitutes the world's largest migratory corridor are multidimensional, touching even on public health in both countries. Camelia Tigau enriches our perspectives by reviewing the loss of skilled talent that Mexico experiences. Under the protection of criteria stipulated in the North American Free Trade Agreement to favor the mobility of businesspeople, investors, and experts in general, Canada and the United States have benefited from the arrival of Mexican professionals, and the global economic crisis does not seem to have stemmed this trend.

In this issue we present Pablo Cabañas's reflections about the risks drug trafficking and the power of the cartels pose for the electoral process, and Armando Rodríguez evaluates what the public thinks about the fight against this scourge. In contrast, we publish a contribution by the Auditor General of Mexico, Juan M. Portal, who describes the country's advances in promoting transparency, accountability, and the fight against corruption through auditing.

Mexico is at a crossroads that implies the need for more actions based on conscientious analyses of prospects and forging a vigorous will and civic vocation to come to agreements to favor a generous nation that for years has warned that indifference, profligacy, and ambition were beginning to wreak havoc, a situation we would eventually have to face.

The future is here, and it is putting us to the test. How can we recover confidence? How can we foster a culture of commitment among the new generations to encourage them to put down roots in the country?

Evading problems seems to be a characteristic of many young people—but we will deal with that at another time. Even though in this issue you will find contributions about tequila and pulque, their approach is limited to reflecting about both beverages as part of our people's historical-cultural heritage.

Silvia Núñez García
CISAN Director