

Portico

Barack Obama's arrival at the White House has undoubtedly awakened hopes. It seems to have opened up the possibility that significant changes may occur both domestically and in U.S. foreign policy. In this sense, his intention of closing the military base at Guantánamo is a first step toward improving the United States' international image, hard hit by the radicalization of its characteristic exceptionalism during the presidency of George W. Bush.

In this issue, we present our readers with different contributions analyzing some of the problems Obama has inherited from his Republican predecessor and that he must deal with in order to resolve issues involving the limitations of the institutions of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA): immigration, a topic always of concern to us, particularly now given the prevailing economic uncertainty; the role investment should play in technological and scientific innovation; and human rights.

The articles by Greg Anderson, Camelia Tigau, and Samuel Schmidt are undoubtedly pro-active. Anderson suggests that in addition to calculating how many widgets cross the borders—a perspective that always dominates analyses of economic relations among the three countries—what is essential for fostering greater integration is rethinking how the transformation of NAFTA's institutions will impact the way we think about the integration process, since the principles, rules, and norms are interpreted differently in each country. Given that these principles are regulatory, evaluative, prescriptive, and constituent, and that therefore they affect our behavior and subjectivity, they require collective interpretation, which we might be able to call "a community of intelligibility," with the aim of integrating the three countries more.

Broadening the sphere of analysis beyond the three countries of North America, Ariadna Estévez's article explores up to what point George W. Bush's human rights foreign policy has been profoundly split between some of the values and principles of traditional U.S. exceptionalism and political practice. For that reason, President Obama himself has said that he needs to reestablish his country's moral authority on the world stage, remaining faithful to the letter to the nation's founding documents, which guarantee the rights his predecessor betrayed.

Camelia Tigau and Samuel Schmidt remind us how important it is to take into account the role of regions in the relations among the three countries. On the one hand, Tigau emphasizes the importance of the regional perspective used in certain current initiatives concerning the actors involved in scientific and technological inno-

vation, above all in Mexico, where there are no coordinated public policies or bodies that could give technological innovation a certain coherence, continuity, and solidity. It would seem that, at least in our country, hybrid agents are the only ones that can do what is needed to foster regional and inter-regional research, given that they facilitate communication among different kinds of actors. Schmidt, for his part, argues that criminalizing the work of Mexican immigrants is an impediment to a possible agreement on migration, and that, more than a solution to the problem, it simply worsens migrants' situation. Since the problem is systemic, Schmidt suggests several measures around the issue of migration that embrace its various dimensions: recognizing undocumented migrants as economic refugees and not treating them as criminals; dismantling the militarization of immigration control; and putting quality of life on the agenda, among others.

We also have a piece by Monica Gambrill that sheds light on the origins of the current international financial crisis, in which she also reflects on some remedies. Víctor Batta Fonseca's article develops pertinent theoretical points about what has come to be known as "civil society" in the modern political tradition. He then proceeds to define the social justice movement as an anti-systemic movement with notable specificities that make it very atypical.

In this issue's "Special Contribution" section, we reproduce the royal patents bestowed by Queen Elizabeth I on Sir Humphrey Gilbert and Sir Walter Raleigh, which gave rise to the long process of colonization of North America by the English beginning in the early seventeenth century.

In this issue's interview, we dialogue with Marta Lamas about the influence of U.S. feminism both in Mexico and Latin America. Throughout, she deals with issues whose currency and importance are far from exhausted: feminism and migration; the decriminalization of abortion; neoliberalism and feminist politics; some recently passed laws and their impact on changing gender relations, etc.

As always, we close this issue with a "Chronology" of the region's main national, bi-national, and tri-national events to offer a useful tool for reflection and academic research.

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