

Juan Carlos Luna and Humberto Ballesteros, *The Current Situation of Mexican Twinning Agreements*

The objective of this article is to illustrate the dynamics of twin cities as fundamental building blocks of development and local management that optimize the use of resources. Twinning agreements are about a new way of taking action on local territory, but in a globalized context. According to Luna and Ballesteros, the United Nations General Assembly defines such agreements as global inter-municipal cooperation mechanisms that naturally complement cooperation with States and intergovernmental organizations. As such, twinning agreements are essential to development and local administration, where municipalities are at the nucleus. In their study on the regions of the world with which Mexico tends to establish twinning agreements, the authors identify the most dynamic federal entities in this context. They then go on to analyze the factors that give rise to such agreements. Finally, they discuss the participation of the Mexican Foreign Affairs Ministry in federal diplomacy and underline the need to draw up a joint agenda that encourages the active participation of state and municipal governments, with a view to strengthening the federal system and fully exploiting the opportunities afforded by municipal globalization.

Guillermo Ordorica Robles, *Et in terra pax: Change and Continuity at the Holy See*

This article discusses the highlights and controversies of the papacy of John Paul II, and the challenges Pope Benedict XVI may face. Ac-

According to Guillermo Ordorica, in view of the popularity of his predecessor, it is likely that Ratzinger will want to leave his own hallmark on his papacy. We can expect actions that allow him to capitalize on the political activism of John Paul II, manage the international presence of the Vatican and turn the spotlight onto the internal affairs of the Catholic Church. In Ordorica's view, the election of Ratzinger suggests that, for the time being, this is a formula that will facilitate a relatively smooth transition from the papacy of John Paul II. The author then gives an overview of the world's reaction to the election of the German cardinal. As regards the new Petrine agenda, he believes that, in the arena of international relations, the Vatican will continue to try to inspire world politics and influence global transformation processes, based on the teachings of natural law. Ordorica thinks that the new Pope will follow the foreign policy lines of his predecessor *vis-à-vis* the strengthening of the UN and encouraging a fresh perspective of law and international relations. He then goes on to analyze the possibility of the Vatican establishing diplomatic ties with countries like China and Russia. Finally, the author comments on Mexico's relationship with the Vatican and how it would be advisable for this to be in keeping with the interests of comprehensive State and foreign policies.

Ana Teresa Gutiérrez del Cid, *Russia: A Country Reborn*

In this essay, Ana Teresa Gutiérrez analyzes the growth of the Russian economy in the years since the disintegration of the USSR and the end of the cold war. According to the author, President Vladimir Putin aims to consolidate his mandate by turning Russia into a world power again, via a strategy that includes, among other aspects, the development of the technology sector, the broadening of market re-

forms, the elimination of bureaucracy and the establishment of a centralized State. Gutiérrez del Cid then goes on to give a brief chronological rundown of the evolution of Russia's foreign policy, from the country's emergence as an independent nation to date. Economic stability having been achieved through the introduction of appropriate infrastructure, priority was given to national interests, while seeking to establish a multi-polar model in international relations. In the author's view, the Russia of today aspires to be an influential player in the creation of a new world order.

Zidane Zeraoui, Mexico and the Maghreb: A Reunion?

In this article, the author takes a look at the direction Mexico's foreign policy has taken with regard to the Arab World, particularly the Maghreb. Based on the 2001-2006 National Development Plan, Zidane Zeraoui underlines what little weight the Middle East and Africa bear within our foreign trade structure. According to the author, our foreign trade policy is currently focused on national borders, North America, Europe and the Asia-Pacific region, which explains why the Middle East is not deemed a strategic area as far as national priorities are concerned. In light of the above, the author makes an in-depth analysis of Mexico's relations with Algeria and Morocco, two countries of the Maghreb that hold great potential for us. He concludes that the Maghreb is an attractive area for Mexico in terms of foreign trade and that, if this potential were recognized, relations with the region could be strengthened, with a view to achieving objectives that go beyond mere diplomatic formalities.

Stephan Sberro, *Europe Locked in an Existential Debate, Over and Beyond the Constitution*

The impact of France and Holland's rejection of the European Constitution is analyzed in-depth in this article. In the first instance, this "no" vote raises serious debate on the future of the Constitution and the European Union's conceptual and geographic boundaries, a debate that, in the author's opinion, is centered on the final objective of integration. In order to illustrate his point, Stephan Sberro points out that the institutional challenge posed by the expansion of the European Union has not been met, i.e. how to make a system devised for six nations function for 25 and achieve a balance between small, medium and large States. This situation, he says, has been exacerbated by other crises, such as the US invasion of Iraq. Furthermore, the successful adoption of the Constitution obscured underlying problems in the European Union. In this context, the author explains why ratification was impossible, the role played by the United Kingdom and the impact of disputes surrounding the budget and the Common Agricultural Policy. The author concludes that, as a process, the ratification of the European Constitution —although interrupted— had its merits, such as allowing the mass participation of civil society. Its rejection by France and Holland unveiled a crisis that has sparked off an existential dilemma for the European Union, yet this selfsame crisis constitutes an important step forward in the building of the Europe of the future.

Tomás Olvera, *Family Remittances: The Stream that Became a River*

In this text, Tomás Olvera takes a closer look at how family remittances have become one of Mexico's three main sources of foreign-cur-

rency revenue over recent years. According to the author, these remittances exceed income from international tourism and foreign direct investment. In 2004, a total of 16.6 billion pesos were sent home by Mexicans living abroad and this figure is expected to increase by the end of 2005. This data, he says, positions Mexico as the country with the greatest inflow of family remittances worldwide, surpassing even India. The author analyzes the factors that have contributed to this trend and the impact of remittances on both a micro and macroeconomic scale.