

International Relations: A Special Issue

Jesús Velasco

In November 2002, during the annual American Studies Conference organized by the American Studies Association of Turkey, a recurrent theme at the lunch and dinner tables was American foreign policy in the Middle East. At that time, Turkish scholars were highly concerned about two main issues: the nature of terrorist organizations in the world, especially Al-Qaeda, and American foreign policy after the terrorist attacks on September 11. Specifically, they were also anxious about the violent rhetoric of the George W. Bush administration, about the possible American invasion of Iraq and the implications of invasion for Turkey and other countries in the region, political instability in the Middle East, and the expansion of terrorist activities in the world. In our conversations, I expressed to my Turkish colleagues that we in Mexico are also very concerned about the same kind of issues and that the Mexican people highly disapprove of the terrorist attacks on September 11, although Mexicans are against American foreign policy in the Middle East. I also added that Mexicans are worried about the growth of terrorism in the world and our governmental authorities are cooperating with the United States to increase the security along the border. In a nutshell, I expressed to them that in my view international terrorism and US foreign policy are global rather than regional concerns, and similar issues occupy people's minds all over the world.

As a result of our dialogue, my Turkish colleagues suggested to me to prepare a special issue for the *Journal of American Studies of Turkey*. The idea was to present the views of mainly—but not exclusively—Mexican scholars on a topic that would be of interest to American and Middle Eastern readers. I accepted their kind invitation, fully convinced that the views of people from different parts of the world could enrich our comprehension of these themes. I was certain at that time, as I am today, that it is important to have a transnational perspective on global topics that are meaningful for different regions of the world and thus to enlarge our horizons. By the same token, I thought that this was an excellent opportunity to establish a more permanent collaboration between Mexican and Turkish academic communities.

What you are going to read was written during late 2002 and the beginning of 2003. Those were very complicated times in the recent history of the world. The United Nations inspectors were searching for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The Bush administration was reaffirming its unilateral foreign policy position and increasing its violent rhetoric against Saddam Hussein's regime. In different European cities and parts of the United States, thousands of people spontaneously took to the streets to protest against American foreign policy, in particular against the imminent invasion of Iraq by US. The articles in this volume reflect, in one way or another, the main concerns of those days. Many things have happened since then. The United States invaded Iraq; Saddam Hussein is no longer Iraq's ruler; thousands of people have died in Iraq; terrorist acts are a daily fact of life in this country; Iraq has held elections; Israel and Palestine are willing to talk and negotiate a peace settlement; Bush is starting a more friendly dialogue with Europe though he has increased the dose of his violent rhetoric against Iran. However, the arguments presented in this special issue of *JAST* are still relevant for our comprehension of American foreign policy in the Middle East and the current political situation in the region; and, the overall aim of the articles within this volume is to offer a wide range of perspectives which meaningfully addresses the issues in question.