ABSTRACT
This article reflects on the trajectory of regional integration in Mercosur two decades after it was established. Loyal to the majority of the interpretations of its conception, economic gains derived from the consolidation of Mercosur and its external relations are highlighted, to pave the way for a consideration of other gains of a political and social nature, observing the accentuation of these during the second decade. In this context, reference is made to the treatment of human rights within Mercosur, particularly in Argentina, with an emphasis on the violence-memory-identity relationship. The conclusion offers various reflections on the importance of education to the fulfillment of HRs and to the construction of the culture of peace agreed upon by the United Nations in 1999.

Key Words: Mercosur, Economics, Human Rights, Violence, Memory.
RESUMEN
En el artículo se reflexiona sobre la trayectoria de la integración regional en Mercosur superadas dos décadas desde su gestación. Fiel a la mayoría de las interpretaciones sobre su concepción, se destacan logros económicos propios de la profundización y del relacionamiento externo del Mercosur, para luego ir virando hacia la consideración de otros logros de carácter político y social, observándose la acentuación de éstos en el tránsito de la segunda década. En tal contexto se hace referencia al tratamiento de los derechos humanos en el Mercosur y, preferentemente, sobre los mismos en Argentina con énfasis en la relación violencia-memoria-identidad. Se concluye con diversas reflexiones sobre la importancia de la educación para el cumplimiento de los DDHHs y para la construcción de una cultura de paz, conforme fuera consensuado por Naciones Unidas en 1999.

Palabras clave: Mercosur, Economía, Derechos Humanos, Violencia, Memoria.

RESUMO
No artigo reflete-se acerca da trajetória da integração regional no Mercosul superadas duas décadas desde sua gestação. Fiel a maioria das interpretações sobre sua concepção, são destacados logros econômicos próprios do aprofundamento e do relacionamento externo do Mercosul, para logo voltar-se para a consideração de outros logros de caráter político e social, observando-se a acentuação destes no trânsito da segunda década. Neste contexto, faz-se referência ao tratamento dos direitos humanos no Mercosul e, preferencialmente, na Argentina com ênfase na relação violência-memória-identidade. Conclui-se por meio de diversas reflexões pela importância da educação para o cumprimento dos DDHHs e para a construção de uma cultura de paz, conforme fora acordado pelas Nações Unidas em 1999.

Palavras-chave: Mercosul, Economia, Direitos Humanos, Violência, Memória.

RÉSUMÉ
Dans cet article, nous analyserons la trajectoire de l’intégration régionale dans le cadre du Mercosul 20 ans après sa création. Dans la lignée des interprétations relatives à sa mise en œuvre, nous mettrons d’abord en lumière les résultats économiques propres à l’approfondissement des relations extérieures au sein du Mercosul pour aborder ensuite ses répercussions politiques et sociales, qui se sont accentuées au cours de la deuxième

**Mots-clés**: Mercosul, Économie, Droits de l'homme, Violence, Mémoire.

**提要**

论文对南纬共市(巴西、阿根廷、智利、巴拉圭、乌拉圭)区域整合二十年来的成就做了思考，对经贸往来稍作总结之后，讨论政治和社会整合方面也做了思考。关于南纬共市人权问题，重点谈到阿根廷关于军政府期间的人权践踏遗留问题，关于暴力—记忆—认同议题进行了探讨。论文对人权教育的重要性做了阐述，旨在实施联合国1999年人权协议，通过教育手段，形成一个和平和谐的文化。

**关键词**：南纬共市，经济，人权，暴力，记忆。

“Hope is the second soul of the unhappy” […] “Error is related to truth as sleeping is to waking. I have observed that upon awakening from error, a man turns again to truth as with new vigour” (Johann W. Goethe).

*If there is beauty in the character,*  
*There will be harmony in the home.*  
*If there is harmony in the home,*  
*There will be order in the nation.*  
*If there is order in the nation,*  
*There will be peace in the world*  
*(Confucius; 551-479 BC).*

The Treaty of Asunción was signed on 26 March 1991, constituting a common market between the Argentine Republic, the Federal Republic of Brazil, the Republic of Paraguay and the Eastern Republic of Uruguay.

Among its recitals was mentioned:

the expansion of the [...] domestic markets through integration is a vital prerequisite for accelerating the processes of economic development with social justice" [...] “this objective must be achieved by making optimum use of available resources, preserving the environment, improving physical links, coordinating macroeconomic policies and ensuring that the different sectors of the economy supplement each other [...]”.

I- The Balance of Mercosur’s Trajectory

With 20 years having passed since Mercosur was constituted, various analysts have been obliged to consider the balance of the trajectory undergone by the integration process. The majority – loyal to the tradition of Mercosur’s conception – has focused their attention on commercial gains, and on these we must note that:

- Mercosur’s golden years from 1991-1998 have truly been left behind. This was the period to undergo the greatest macroeconomic convergence in terms of foreign exchange and in which inter-regional trade was most dynamic, with sustainable growth reaching a maximum of 25% in 1998 (measured in terms of exports). Today, this indicator has stabilized around the 15% mark;

- Continuing with a purely economic reading, other targets have been met such as greater market access to high-quality goods, by the successful introduction of higher-value goods added to the largest market, that of Brazil’s. This target was first considered in the Argentine-Brazilian Integration and Cooperation Programme (PICAB; 1986);

- A differentiated export profile has been achieved. The countries in the region mainly export commodities to the rest of the world, while they concentrate their flow of industrial products to the interior of Mercosur;

- With the aim of overcoming the so-called “structural asymmetries” provided by the relative dimensions of each country – territory, population, market size – the relative endowment of factors, income distribution and development levels, in an analogy with the EU structural funds, the Mercosur Structural Convergence Fund “FOCEM” (Dec. CMC no. 18/05) was established. Its aim is to benefit Mercosur’s smaller

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3 See: The Treaty of Asunción.
countries (and as of April 2011 counted 36 projects with an allocated US$1,000 million, essentially destined towards infrastructure improvements);

- Similarly, Dec. CMC no. 12/08 approved the Mercosur Productive Integration Programme (PIPM) in order to help strengthen the productive complementarity of Mercosur businesses, with a special emphasis on the integration of SMB productive chains;

- These features may also be added to those underway with the aim of consolidating Mercosur, that is to say: the formalization of the Local Currency Payment System (SML; Oct. 2008) between Argentina and Brazil and the approval of the Mercosur Customs Code (San Juan Summit, mid-2010).

- Other achievements must also be added, concerning Mercosur’s foreign relations and the increase in trade and investment flows, as demonstrated by the signing of various economic-trade agreements, such as:
  - Mercosur – Chile – Economic Complementation Agreement (ACE) no. 35;
  - Mercosur – Bolivia – ACE no. 36;
  - Mercosur – Mexico – ACE no. 54;
  - Mercosur – Andean Community – ACE no. 59;
  - Mercosur – India;
  - Mercosur – Cuba – ACE no. 62;
  - Mercosur – the State of Israel;
  - Mercosur – SACU (South African Customs Union);
  - Mercosur – Egypt (see: Bellina Yrigoyen, J. and Frontons, G.; 2012);

Along with others which are more recent:
  - Mercosur Complementation and Articulation – UNASUR – DEC. no. 24/12 – (XLIII CMC – Mendoza, 29/06/12) and;
  - The Incorporation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela into Mercosur (Mendoza, 29/06/2012).

Bouzas\(^5\) has suggested that in many ways Mercosur has proven to be a successful experience of regional integration according to developing countries’ standards.

\(^5\) Bouzas, Roberto (2002). “Mercosur: ¿Crisis económica o crisis de la integración?”. In BID/ INTAL - Foro de reflexión sobre el Mercosur, Octubre.
Its first contribution was to aid a wider process of consolidating an environment of peace and democracy in the region (with the observation of the Ushuaia Protocol on Democratic Commitment);

The second contribution was that of deepening the impact of trade liberalization with the establishment of narrower economic ties between the countries in the region, and especially Argentina and Brazil;

The third contribution helped member countries to assume a more active international role and visibility than those possible if each country were acting on an isolated basis.

Continuing with the analysis, Mariana Vázquez’s vision has been adhered to recently with the advances in consolidating a new paradigm of integration in Mercosur and which was born in 2003 with the development of a more inclusive integration model. Landmarks in this work in progress are:

- The creation of the Mercosur Parliament,
- The Structural Convergence Funds,
- The approval of the Mercosur Strategic Plan for Social Action (including subjects such as: the universalization of public healthcare and education; productive inclusion; guaranteed access to decent work and pension rights),
- The transformation of the Mercosur Educational Fund into a permanent fund, and
- The recognition of the importance of productive integration (with an emphasis on policies which promote productive chains with micro, small and medium-sized businesses).

Lincoln Bizzozero also describes a transition within Mercosur’s open regionalism – characteristic of the first decade upon its establishment and associated with the claims of the Washington Agreement – to a continental and strategic regionalism as a new driver of the process. There are four factors which account for Mercosur’s re-orientation:

- The regional crisis and, in particular, that of Argentina and Brazil, which has led to an overhaul of the situation,

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6 Vázquez, Mariana (2011). “El Mercosur avanzó en la consolidación de un nuevo paradigma de integración”. In BAE, Nota, Argentina, 05 jul.
• Government changes linked to the need for transformations due to social and political demands,
• The impulse provided by Brazil to South America’s position in regional politics,
• The role that Venezuela has begun to play in the region and its cooperation.

The 2000 South American Presidential Summit held in Brasilia – in commemoration of the 500-year anniversary of the discovery of Brazil – highlighted the following important aspects:

• The necessary articulation between the consolidation of regional processes and Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole, and
• The importance of South American identity in the intersection of differentiated processes and spaces.

The summit reaffirmed the three pillars of security and development in the region – peace, democracy and the consolidation of integration – and planted the beginnings of a sui generis South American space, taking regional cooperation as a pillar and as an objective: the construction of the South American region, with a strategic global insertion.

The Buenos Aires Act (October 2003) demonstrates the shift in the orientation for the development and regionalism model, with guidelines such as:

• The impulse towards civil society’s active participation in the regional process,
• Work as a central axis in combating poverty, improving society and improving income distribution,
• The reaffirmation of the strategic role played by the state,
• The importance of education to social inclusion,
• The conviction that Mercosur is not just a trading bloc, but also a space for catalyzing values, traditions and a shared future.

II- Treatment of Human Rights

An important feature of this new stage in Mercosur is the treatment of human rights. This is explicitly referred to by the Constitutive Protocol of the Mercosur Parliament, when, among its “competencies” it speaks of periodically elaborating and publishing information on the state of human rights in the member countries.
Following this line of thought, the “Asunción Protocol on the Commitment to the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Mercosur” was approved in mid-2006. It is supported by: a) the Puerto Iguazú Presidential Declaration of 8/7/2004 in which the presidents of Mercosur member states highlighted the high priority assigned to the protection, promotion and guarantee of human rights for all of those resident in Mercosur, b) Dec. CMC no. 40/04 establishing the Reunion of High-Level Authorities on Human Rights in Mercosur, and c) other principles such as the content of the Declaration and the Action Programme for the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, in the sense that democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually-reinforced concepts.8

Later, in the San Juan Summit of mid-2010, the Mercosur Council of Ministers approved the creation of the Mercosur Institute for Public Policies on Human Rights (IPPDH). The institute – to function outside Uruguay and in the Memory Space, formerly ESMA (Argentina) – was fruit of an agreement due to the human rights policies underway since the beginning of former Argentine president Nestor Kirchner’s government.9

This body – created by ten Mercosur member states and associated members – aims to articulate common policies for the treatment of matters related to human rights. It seeks to promptly overcome legal loopholes concerning the protection of children’s and teenager’s rights; solve the problems of human trafficking and migrant smuggling; guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities; and end discrimination against gays, lesbians and bisexuals.10

A strategic plan was developed for the 2010-2012 period, including four main lines of work. These guidelines include: a) the coordination of human rights public policies among member countries, b) the provision of technical assistance in the design and implementation of the guidelines; c) the realization of investigative works in order to produce technical information, and d) the development of training activities for government employees.

To achieve this objective of strengthening regional human rights policies, two thematic axes were defined relevant to the citizens’ agenda for the bloc, as follows:

a) citizen security policies and for controlling institutional violence, and

9 aen: 02/08/2010.
b) equality and social inclusion policies.

In order to fulfill these two axes, five priority lines of work were defined, establishing:

a) the promotion of greater coordination and articulation of human rights policies,
b) the development of the investigation,
c) the strengthening of public human rights institutions,
d) the facilitation of relations between the state and civil society, and
e) the strengthening of national and regional systems protecting human rights.

If the IPPDH really is an institution new to the bloc, its creation represents the culmination of a process which began in 1998 with the adoption of the Ushuaia Protocol on Democratic Commitment in Mercosur\(^\text{11}\).

This year (2012), Amnesty International (AI) stated that Latin America continues to be (and this is after many years under dictatorships) a region afflicted by human rights violations and highlighted that the resolution of many of the said cases faced “a lack of independence in the judiciary and an absence of political will”. While acknowledging that during 2011 advances were recorded in terms of events mitigating impunity, particularly in terms of abuses committed during former dictatorships in the region, it must be highlighted that these are “\textit{the exception}”\(^\text{12}\).

II.1- The Violence-Memory-Identity Relationship

At this point, it is worth referring to the testimony of a woman detained in Argentina in the context of state terrorism:

\small\textit{The pain of torture through electric prods to the genitals and beatings sooner or later subsides, but terror as a form of torture is different, because it makes you feel like they can do whatever they want with you. This terror method existed [...] it was a series of (sexual) violations}\(^\text{13}\).

\(^{12}\) Infolatam (2012)
\(^{13}\) Aucía, Analia; Barrera, Florencia; Berterame, Celina; Chiarotti, Susana; Paolini, Alejandra; Zurutuza, Cristina; Vassallo, Marta (2011). “Grietas en el Silencio. Una investigación sobre la violencia sexual en el marco del terrorismo de Estado”. In \textit{CLADEM / INSGENAR}, Rosario (Argentina), June.
In terms of identity and the importance of identity recovery by the children of the disappeared during the period of the military dictatorship, the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo (Argentina) have striven for the past thirty-five years to recover the identities of their children’s children and to generate tools guaranteeing the right to identity for all children.

Very recently, on 10 October 2012, the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo announced the recovery of the identity of granddaughter 107, born in detention in Cordoba on 11 October 1978, daughter of María de las Mercedes Moreno, who was one of the disappeared, illegally deprived of her freedom and subjected to torture. While detained, she also gave birth to a daughter who was removed and homed in Casa Cuna to be later adopted. The National Commission for the Right to Identity (Conadi) recently facilitated the inclusion of the family’s DNA samples into the National Genetic Data Bank\(^{14}\). Many of the “disappeared grandchildren” expressed their sense of returning to life when they were able to meet with their biological family.

### III- A Target for Society: The Importance of Education

For the PNUD, human development is conceived as:

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[...] a process by which individuals’ opportunities are expanded, with the most important of these being a long and healthy life, access to education and a decent quality of life; including other opportunities, political freedom, guaranteed human rights and self-respect\(^{15}\).
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Furthermore, the observation of various manifestations of violence in society leads us to emphasise the importance of constructing a culture of peace.

The first internationally agreed upon definition of a “culture of peace” was made in October 1999, when the General Assembly of the United Nations approved the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. It was conceived as a set of values, attitudes, traditions, behaviors and lifestyles based on: 1) respect for life and the peaceful solving of conflicts; 2) respect for and the promotion of human rights; 3) sustainable development and the protection of the environment; 4) equal opportunities for men and women; 5) the principles of justice, tolerance, solidarity, among others; and 6) the free circulation of information and knowledge.

\(^{14}\) *La Capital* (2012), Rosario, 10 oct.; p. 11.

The declaration further states that “education is one of the most fundamental of means for building a culture of peace” (Christ, Alejandro).

In recognizing the importance of education to the construction of a culture of peace, reflection on the document entitled “Educational Targets 2021” by the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI) (Mar del Plata, December 2010) is pertinent. Aiming for positive transformations in the quality and equality of educational systems among OEI member countries, among its principles is the desire for freedom linked to overcoming inequality, a good life, the defense of nature, the effective recognition of the rights of all persons and equal access to the material and cultural goods available. This is found as a mark of democratic, equal, open, cohesive and inclusive societies.

The same principle is referred to in the expression: “achieving a sustainable society involves the full universalization of human rights, and fundamental to this is education, and in particular, education in values”\textsuperscript{16}.

According to the line of thought which values the role of education in the construction of a more cohesive, peaceful and democratic society which consequently leads to compliance with HRs, we further highlight the work of the Mercosur Education Sector (SEM). Based on the outlining of Strategic Plans, the body has developed activities for constructing citizens’ awareness and regional identity in both levels of primary and secondary education, also serving matters involving the observation of human rights\textsuperscript{17}.

In this sense, the First Strategic Plan (1992-1994) considers aspects such as:
- the formation of citizens’ awareness favoring the process of integration, and
- the formation of Human Resources to contribute to economic development.

In the 2nd Stage (1996-2000), with the signing of the Mercosur Document 2000, the following were mentioned:
- reaffirming cultural identity,
- achieving productive transformation with equality,
- strengthening democracy within the framework of integration.


Highlights of the Third Strategic Plan (2001-2005) include:

\textsuperscript{16}OEI (2010). Metas Educativas 2021. La educación que queremos para la generación de los bicentenarios, Madrid, p. 111

\textsuperscript{17}See: Perrotta, D. y Vázquez, M. (2010). El Mercosur de las políticas públicas regionales. Las agendas en desarrollo social y educación, Montevideo: CEFIR.
education as a cultural space for the strengthening of awareness favorable to integration which values diversity and the importance of cultural and linguistic codes, and

integration which requires high-quality education for all in order to meet the educational needs of the most vulnerable sectors of society and overcome existing inequality.

Among its strategic objectives, the Fourth Strategic Plan (2006-2010) includes:

- the contribution to regional integration by agreeing on and executing educational policies which promote regional citizenship, a culture of peace and respect for democracy, human rights and the environment, and
- the promotion of high-quality education for all as a factor of social inclusion and human and productive development.

More recently, the Mercosur Educational Sector Plan 2011-2015 was developed due to the emergence of a new international and regional context and results suggesting strong inequality in education, with historically-excluded sectors of the population remaining vulnerable. The plan includes the programme known as “Targets 2021: the education we want for the Bicentennial Generation”. The programme also approaches the region’s main educational challenges, with the aim of improving quality and equality in education to help tackle poverty and inequality, making the commitment to invest more and more effectively in education over the next 10 years.

The vision of the SEM’s plan is termed as:

To constitute a regional space establishing and guaranteeing high-quality, equal education, characterized by reciprocal knowledge, inter-cultural, respect for diversity, cohesive cooperation, with shared values which contribute to improving and democratizing the region’s education systems and generating conditions favorable to peace, by means of sustainable social, economic and human development.

The plan’s strategic objectives coincide with those set out by the Fourth Strategic Plan (2006-2010), upon which specific objectives and related actions are based.

In sum, the actions which are highlighted are those related to human rights education, environmental education, early childhood education, education for young

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people and adults, professional and technological education, education on diversity and distance learning, which the SEM’s current plan pledges to consolidate.

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In Argentina and related to the violence-memory relationship, the Ministry of Education implemented an educational memory policy in 2003 as well as the Education and Memory Programme. The latter aims to consolidate an educational policy promoting the teaching of recent history (the last military dictatorship) by means of the development and availability of materials and teacher training initiatives nationally, featuring proposals for primary and secondary education. The initiatives are set out in the general framework of the National Education Law No. 26.206, which states in Article 3 that:

> Education is a national priority and is one of the government’s policies for building a fair society, reaffirming national sovereignty and identity, deepening the exercise of democratic citizenship, respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms and strengthening the country’s economic and social development.

The purpose is to: “encourage democratic reflections and sentiments in students and those on the defense of the rule of law and full implementation of human rights”\(^9\).

**IV- Final Reflections**

An analysis of the institutional structure of Mercosur demonstrates how it has been made more complex and enriched, proving that Mercosur has transcended its economic and commercial features to encompass social, cultural, educational, legal and security matters, among others.

As expressed in the “Mercosur Citizen’s Manual”, we believe that the human dimension is present in the construction of Mercosur, considering that the main objective of the process of integration is to “promote sustained development in the region and guarantee better living conditions for its populations”; or, as expressed in the recitals of the Treaty of Asunción, the fundamental condition is to “accelerate […] development with social justice”.\(^{20}\)

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In this sense, it adheres to the “Declaration of the Principles of the Social Mercosur” in stating:

*Based on the inseparable nature of economic policies and social policies, it is assumed that economic growth should not be an end in itself, but rather a basic tool serving equal opportunities and social justice, guaranteeing the sustainable integral development of equitable distribution*.21

Peace will be made possible through the insistence on education. By means of various documents and declarations, the United Nations has agreed that one of the most pertinent guidelines to be included in curricular content is that which feeds the formation of a culture of peace and democracy. [...] An education for peace should strive to teach the development of values, attitudes and the social, emotional and ethical skills needed to promote social coexistence in which everyone fully shares and participates, resulting in the recognition and implementation of human rights.[...]; a culture of peace may also be defined as respect for the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and the political independence of the member states. By this means, the importance of a culture of peace is not only emphasized, but also that which expressing a condition essential to it: democracy. An education for peace and democracy should recognize and feed equal rights and opportunities, mainly those of women, who have historically suffered exclusion and discrimination; it should respect the right to freedom of expression, as well as satisfy the need for developing and protecting the environment22.

To achieve this, importance must be placed on the implementation of pedagogies which redefine human beings as a unit of mind-body and spirit, for the fulfillment of HRs and in order to achieve sustainable human development.

Since Pedagogy 3000 – developed by N. Paymal – a special contribution has been made to the creation of a culture of peace; stating that:

*An education for peace means offering an environment of recognition, appreciation, cooperation and group work facilitating the transcendence of former schemes which have produced separation in the world, as well as discrimination, confrontation and a lack of tolerance. (...) The search for peace allows us to discover that in humanity and the planet everything grows and evolves to new levels of awareness; awareness of unity, of universality, of totality; the search for peace allows us to realize that unity means integrating diversity, and diversity is a great wealth which love ennobles and complements*.23

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21 See: Postulados fundamentales, p. 5.
23 See: Educación evolutiva / Pedagogía 3000.
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