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Steps Towards Integration in Latin America The Role of Ideas, Institutions and Policies in the MERCOSUR**

Starting point considerations

It is known that the unstable rise and fall of the MERCOSUR's goals has lately been placing its future viability at the centre of the debate. Nevertheless, it is worth remembering that those who stress its weaknesses and difficulties often fail to make a broad and comprehensive reading of the variables at stake. They tend to emphasize explanations of issues denoting *asymmetries*, which often are not solved properly within a framework of interdependence generated precisely in a process of integration. Differences, difficult or non conducive negotiations, or circumstantial issues which are pessimistically considered as *objective conditions* and often used to discourage its continuation, generally mar other fulfillments. Broadly speaking, a large number of those analyses or comments on the current situation of the MERCOSUR and its prospects show an almost exclusively commercialist bias, and do not tackle the full scope of the phenomenon to which we refer.

Regarding this subject, I agree with the concept that "integration processes involve complex society movements whose keys cannot be covered within a temporary and merely commercialist interpretation". Their diversity and scope makes them solely achievable by means of an interdisciplinary and long term approach. And probably one of the major deficits of the MERCOSUR, which is felt during the most critical moments, is the absence of a 'way of thinking about it' (Hirst et al., 2001).

If we consider the possibility of relaunching or re founding the MERCOSUR, this is an appropriate moment to work *in the field of "ideas"*. In order to make progress on this proposal, it is advisable not to be caught by "pessimistic" interpretations, nor by a naïve view. Therefore, it is worth making, at least in general terms, an evaluation of what the existence of the MERCOSUR has provided.

In 2001 the former Secretary of Commerce and International Economic Relations of Argentina, Martín Redrado, emphasized that there had been a fair amount of opinions advising, on several occasions, to retrace the steps and go back to a free trade area, or simply to defuse the integration process. When confronted with the dilemma of "advancing or retreating" in the process of integration, it is better to consider or to evaluate the issue under a structural perspective, avoiding the current ups and downs that may distort the analysis. First, we must not lose sight of the fact that in every process of integration it is common to witness periods of apparent stagnation. The European experience, which took eleven years to make up an imperfect customs association (while the MERCOSUR took four), thirty-six years to create a Common Market, and forty-two years to have a single currency (the Euro), and that between 1973 and 1985 stood a prolonged lethargy of "europessimism", is eloquent proof in this respect (Redrado, 2001: 200-201).

Therefore, if we analyze it in a comprehensive way, the MERCOSUR has meant the creation of a singular cooperation order, unprecedented up to this moment in South America, combined with a wide range of relevant issues. Among them, democratic consolidation (democracy being a condition to participate in the integration process) and the creation of a zone of peace are to be noticed¹, overcoming the conflict hypotheses which had largely guided the behaviors and relations among many of its members. Besides, it encouraged an increase of border bonds, so that these areas were then perceived as places of cooperation, contact and rapprochement instead of political and economic barriers. It generated a common economic space and

provided a significant level of political understanding between the member states engaging the national societies as well. Regarded as a unit, all of its members were made more visible than if they were individually considered.

Thus, taking into account those strengths and recognizing that the weaknesses of the MERCOSUR would reside in the ideational factor, it would be better to refer to the contributions of the International Relations “constructivist approaches”. They offer greater possibilities for creating bridges with other social disciplines, justifying explanations that are more complex.

We will first refer to the advantages of adopting a constructivist perspective aiming at the relaunching of the MERCOSUR. Then, we will devote ourselves to the analysis of several “axes ideas” around which it would be possible to develop that launching. Some of them have to do with a *redefinition of the autonomy* that will necessarily include the regional dimension, together with the necessity of *measuring the institutional deficit* of the MERCOSUR, which would need correction, as well as recognizing the necessity of emphasizing its *non-economic agenda*.

The importance of adopting a constructivist analytical framework

Neo-realism in general, and the “theory of games”, have shown little skill in explaining the various factors of weight in adopting decisions within the field of International Relations and Foreign Policy. The diversity of analyses related to the MERCOSUR has not been exempt from that shortsightedness. The analyses have been characterized almost exclusively by the incorporation of rationalist notions such as those related to power measuring and cost-benefit calculation, and at the same time, they have avoided the inclusion of cognitive elements.

Even the functionalist approaches, which supported various explanations about the creation of regional spaces and processes of integration, assigning a central place to the “spillover” effect², started from some assumptions. They related them almost mechanically, choosing a systemic dynamics and forgetting how processes are “built”.

Lately, the recognition of failures hindering the understanding of many international relations processes has led a part of the academic world to focus on the rediscovery of the importance that *ideas* and *beliefs* have in the design and support of policies. Obviously, there still is a great deal of studies and investigations that do not attach any importance to these factors. The renewal attempt that is beginning to be observed has to do with the changes and complexities that our postmodern world experiences today. This world moves away from exclusively positivist calculations and needs to be tackled with a greater mental openness. It also suggests the necessity of imagining and giving sense to the creation of possible scenarios and not being trapped in analyses of *what is bound to happen*, as if it was impossible to generate changes and progress.

Institutions, ideas, experts’ participation or “epistemic communities”³, and the impact that legitimate political decision-makers can exercise, seem to form the necessary “virtuous circle” in order to meet a correspondence between the field of ideas and that of politics.

Thus, a good orientation is offered by a wide range of new visions, especially from the *constructivist school*⁴, so that this can be turned into a fruitful field for the understanding of the various international events.

Those who want to hold on strictly to the “realist dogma” will say that a causal connection cannot be found between ideas and political consequences. We could reply by saying that neither is there a causal relation when explanations are based exclusively in factors such as military power and economic power. Obviously, nobody could doubt the incidence and weight of these, particularly if they go hand in hand, for example, in hegemony situations. But it is also true that in international politics there still is a large spectrum of possibilities to explain results that do not respond only to them. In that direction, a very rich field is opened up in order to investigate the impact these ideas – especially their strength and legitimacy– may have as shapers of behaviors and policies⁵.

Taking into account that the MERCOSUR has taken the process of European integration as a maximum reference, I will refer in the first place to certain contributions that have brought about evidence of the weight of “ideas”, both at the foundation stage of the European Economic Community and in the subsequent process that led to the formation of the current European Union.

Those who develop this view find the root of the community process, precisely, in the combination of perceptions and ideas about how the world works, about the validity of certain principles and values, and about the ways in which they believe it is possible to lay the new grounds for coordination and cooperation.

When that hard core offered by the first ideas is shared, it is later on strengthened with the creation of institutions. Ideas continue their development within its frame, following feedback dynamics. It is convenient to note here that such a process is not presented in an automatic way or out of habit. On the contrary, it needs to be strengthened through the legitimacy that the institutions themselves and the political decision-makers acquire in accordance with the effective development of policies⁶. As Noto (2001: 17-18) has suggested, “the relation between institutional development and progress in integration has occupied an important place in the regional processes. In the progressive evolution of the European process, a complex construction and reform of various institutions has taken place. They have fed back the integrationist tendencies”. Therefore, we could say that *the key to success* lies there.

In order to refer to what has taken place in Europe, though superficially, and pointing some examples out, it would be worth to remember how the “ideational” element weighed in the emergence of its first common policy, the so-called CAP (Common Agriculture Policy), as well as the commitment to free competition principles, which led to a subsequent legal order and to the formation of institutions inside the EC that observed its fulfillment and punished its violations. In the same line, and among other achievements, we find the renewed Environmental Policies. On the other hand, the lack of a common Security Policy could be the result –among other factors– of a deficit as regards ideas. Nowadays, it appears that Europeans are thinking seriously about a “European Security and Defense Identity” in order to move away from their traditional American dependence.

After a rapid revision of the European example, let us remember that in the case of Latin America the decades from the 50s to the 70s formed a stage rich in ideas (some of them generated within the ECLAC itself), from which various *autonomization* proposals emerged, exceeding the supposed “irreversible rule” which predicted that the small and medium states are the “object” and not “subjects” of international politics, and subjected to a “permanent peripheralism”. They have prepared the ground to think in terms of independent foreign policies, handling “margins of manoeuvre”, with the aim of acting abroad and achieving better positions as regards integration in the world.

The possibility of generating a new debate about autonomy, which is precisely one of the “axes ideas” we propose in this paper, requires to carry out an analysis of this central concept and its evolution.

A new concept of autonomy? Revisiting the old one and constructing a “new idea”

During the seventies and the beginning of the eighties, a sort of *doctrinaire school on Latin American autonomy* was formed. It was led mainly by the academic works of Helio Jaguaribe in Brazil, and of Juan Carlos Puig in Argentina, who had a lot of disciples and followers⁷. Within the historical context of the bipolar order (where the concept is set and takes on significance), in this foundational stage of the autonomist school in Latin America, the strongest bet of autonomy was mainly placed on the possibility of confrontation. Another characteristic to emphasize in that definition of autonomy is the presence of the idea of “aggregation of strengths” offered by the linkage and the coordination of positions with the “equals”. It was thought from the perspective of each of the states individually, and within it the regional dimension “added capacities”, so that such national interests would be better preserved.

Unfortunately, during the 90s, the theoretical production that assigned some importance to autonomy was limited or almost nil. For many people, it was almost an “antique” or a

“consumption” of capacities, which would rather serve a pragmatic insertion in the world. That excess of pragmatism was not conducive at all, as shown by the reality of our countries, since perhaps it put creativity to sleep and fostered the adoption of a pattern of behaviour that progressively estranged itself from its own definitions in accordance of the region’s interests⁸.

A generic definition, within the field of International Relations, regards it as “an objective of policies which might be achieved in a gradual and increasing measure becoming mixed, in variable doses, with situations of dependence, interdependence and external conditioning” (Tomassini, 1989: 302).

The validity assigned to “autonomy” as a category of analysis and its importance for the region is beginning to generate new thoughts, though still in a manner too incipient to constitute a “theoretical body”.

This new theoretical discussion took place with the advent of the year 2000, when certain Latin American governments once more recognize the importance of coordinating their policies and the adoption of common positions. It is necessary, therefore, for autonomy to be imbued with a new explanatory capacity.

An attempt to “re-conceptualize it”, recovering it but in a non-confrontational sense, started to be outlined in some presentations made by Russell and Tokatlian⁹. They consider it necessary to re-signify the concept of “autonomy” as a “condition”; that is, the ability to take decisions in an independent way, without following other states’ wishes, preferences or orders. They understand that its previous narrowness and national exclusiveness has now been modified. Conversely, it is boosted by democratization, cooperation and policy coordination processes developing in our region. That is why they would rather refer to “relational autonomy”, which would constitute the capacity and disposition of states to take independent decisions together with other partners, in order to manage processes produced within and beyond their frontiers. In their analysis, they start from an allegedly strong point: that an increase in the autonomy level of our countries cannot today be the result of domestic or sub-regional policies of isolation, self-sufficiency or opposition.

The possibility of thinking of this kind of “relational autonomy” for Latin America must not be evaluated –as was considered in the 70s– according to the capacity to confront or oppose the United States, because it does not rule out agreements with the hegemonic power. It entails coordinated work, negotiation in international systems and in the regional dimension, the first circle for its practice being the South American region itself. Autonomy involving the political, economic and military areas is procured by means of internationalization and regionalization strategies rather than nationalization ones, and at this historical moment, it is clearly facilitated by the democratization of the region and the experimentation of regional integration processes.

In a similar way, there are also other academic works that promote the development of a “concerted autonomy”¹⁰ as well as the attainment of a “new personality and autonomy” since cooperation and regional integration were deepened¹¹.

It is also possible to pick up concepts aiming in the same direction in a variety of forums and political speeches. In this respect, if one reviews the conceptual and programmatic content expressed in the “Brasilia Communiqué”¹², it is possible to find at least two axes that help in the construction of a new autonomy design, which it might be advantageous to think about for the region. First, a commitment to integration as a foreign policy objective, incorporated into the national identity of the countries of the area. Second, the possibility of facing the globalization challenges, deepening integration, and acting in a coordinated way and with solidarity in relation to the treatment of the great issues on the international economic and social agenda.

Sharing the same spirit, there is a reassertion of the integration objectives at the MERCOSUR Summit in Buenos Aires in July 2002, at the South American Summit of Guayaquil of July 27th of the same year, and in the document signed in 2003 by presidents Lula da Silva (Brazil) and Néstor Kirchner (Argentina), which came to be known as the “Buenos Aires Consensus”.

The so-called “autonomy for integration” has also appeared within official discourses, which according to the description of then Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs Lampreia¹³ responded to the new foreign policy design of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the president at that time. It was observed that the old conception of “autonomy” emphasized self-sufficiency and the

adoption of confrontational stances. On the contrary, an updated reformulation should not be isolationist, but a way of being articulated with the international environment. His words are eloquent in this sense: "The times of isolation and of self-sufficiency are over. National sovereignty has ceased to be an argument for behaviors that go against fundamental values". "Autonomy for integration means support for international regimes".

Let us bear in mind that declarations, speeches at summits, are statements of very important principles indeed, which are necessary though not sufficient. Still, they set up guidelines aiming at "constructing a body of theory". It is essential to be aware of this necessity, putting special emphasis on the responsibility-privilege that the so-called "epistemic communities" (of knowledge or academe) should have, in this case in relation to the working out of ideas.

The building of a new definition of autonomy requires that the regional dimension be incorporated as a part of its own essence, its way of thinking about it, and not as a mere "aggregation". In that sense, we understand that the regional dimension appears as a constitutive part of the new nature acquired by autonomy and not as a factor of "summing up capacities".

The advantages of a greater institutionalization

Men are necessary for changes, institutions to make changes live [...] There are no premature ideas, there are timely moments one should know how to wait for [...]

Men do not accept changes except out of necessity: they do not see necessity except in a crisis

Monnet¹⁴

The brilliance of Monnet's ideas is an appropriate prologue to draw attention to the institutional deficit that the MERCOSUR exhibits and of which we have frequently not been aware. From different angles, though predominantly from the economic and commercial standpoint, and mainly from the Argentine view, there has been an insistence on the necessity of an institutional adjustment, either because of the creation of new structures or the strengthening of existing ones.

As indicated by Redrado (2001: 231), on various occasions the necessity of eliminating "legal gaps" that are often fertile soil for controversies has been raised. The measures could be aimed at reforming the decision-making process, finding new formulas for the adoption of majorities instead of unanimity, establishing deadlines for the internalization of norms, or channeling controversies into the mechanisms foreseen for their resolution.

This includes a comprehensive revision of the institutional framework, sacrificing flexibility in order to gain legal security, which is vital for the partner-states, for individuals, and for the different environments of international negotiation. In Nofal's opinion¹⁵, *the modus operandi* of the negotiation should be changed, assuring a greater participation of the government authorities having political decision power in negotiations of a technical nature, and promoting a greater institutionalization of justice administration that will allow the MERCOSUR to exhibit greater predictability and legal security, which will strengthen the investment attraction of the region. According to her suggestions, the setting up of a permanent Court of Justice, independent from governments, should be evaluated¹⁶.

Considering a perspective that mainly centers on the topic of institutionalization from the legal and political aspect, it can be held that the MERCOSUR, according to the profile adopted until this moment, constitutes an intergovernmental entity. It is endowed with legal capacity but lacks supranational instances, it does not provide for any legal control of the acts announced by

the different organs, and it does not have in an explicit way a parliamentary control at the decision-making level. For Operti Badán¹⁷, this configuration indicates that the internalization of the MERCOSUR's regulations within member states legal order is made by holding it down to the procedures of the respective national law, clearly showing the absence of supranationality.

These speculations about what the MERCOSUR should have or would have to be given maintain a close relationship with the way in which it will be conceived and projected in the future.

Before deciding what to do at the institutional level, its joint strategic conception should be defined. According to this, if it is agreed that maintaining it as an "economic cooperation" process is enough (though it is very difficult for the economic sphere to be affected or entwined with other issues which are to be harmonized), the improvement of its administrative instances (circulation, information, technical assistance and connections with the internal administrative structure) and its application in the member states should be worked on. Further, if it is considered that the MERCOSUR must be deepened as an economic and political process, its organic structure will have to undergo a qualitative and deep reform in order to endow it with another sort of institutionalization¹⁸.

Starting from a revision of the positions held by the member countries relating to the subject of a greater institutionalization, some significant characteristics can be inferred. Although these views should not be taken as "official", but rather as the combination of statements in forums – on the part of politicians as well as staff– and in academic circles, there appears to exist a direct link between a greater political and economic weight, and a greater distance regarding the deepening of the MERCOSUR and the supranational commitments that each country is ready to assume. The request for instances "of a rather communitarian sort" has been frequent on the part of Uruguay and Paraguay. They understood that these would safeguard them from the dangers of unilateral policies that bigger members can adopt, and besides allow a better handling of interdependence within the bloc, and of their "member" status. In relation to Argentina, the general tendency has been directed at a greater institutionalization (perhaps excessively motivated by a "commercialist" reading of the process). For Brazil, in the opinion of Bernal Meza (2001: 65), "the problem does not lie in institutions but in what is cultural, since on the part of governments, businessmen and the elite there has been no transcendence of the MERCOSUR towards society as a whole"¹⁹.

Underlying this are the regulatory capabilities given to norms and institutions by the more economicist approaches, as well as by those that stress the weight of legal and political variables. Our purpose in this paper is to explore the possibility of revising the institutions in a "constitutive" dimension, understanding, in accordance with the constructivist vision, that institutions have a lot to say regarding the change or transformation of identities and interests, for the actors within them are gradually shaping practices and interactions that are added to the changes in perceptions and ways of action.

It is important to re-emphasize the intrinsic value of institutions. Besides their contribution to giving order to the "governance" of the process, they favour the socialization of ideas and of a social learning process that would later have effects on policies.

What has been said up to this moment, at least at the level of hypothesis, would indicate that there might be a "virtuous circle" formed by ideas + institutions + political decision-makers = policies, occurring together in a process of continuous feedback.

In the same direction, it is necessary to reinforce the "non economic agenda" of the MERCOSUR within the framework of its own logic. What do we mean by this? If we go through other subjects of negotiation, such as migrational and environmental issues or education topics, it is possible to notice the strong commercial direction that breaks through all of them. Focused on the necessity of ensuring a space of "free circulation of goods and services" for the future, the underlying logic is perhaps excessively utilitarian and based on economic factors.

Some final thoughts

In order for the MERCOSUR to be able to emerge and consolidate, its "ideational" strengthening is a necessary task. In this direction, it will be necessary for the "epistemic

community”, in this case the intelligentsia devoted to socio-political issues, to recover its capacity in order to establish and legitimate expanded definitions of *autonomy*.

It is necessary to reintroduce the debate on autonomy, especially taking into account that when considering some concepts such as “concerted autonomy”, “that which pertains to relations” and “that which pertains to participation”, there is a certain coincidence in giving centrality to the regional issue.

If a constructivist approach were adopted, it would aim for the construction of a new self-perception and a way of having an identity in relation to other regional spaces, for the management of common issues and for the insertion of the region in the interaction of “interdependence”. Additionally, a consensus around the definition of the MERCOSUR as a strategic alliance should be reached, having an identity and the capacity to “cope with” international interdependence. In order to take action in an increasingly complex and less permissive international scenario for individual actions, it is necessary that policies be coordinated and agreed on from within the region.

This implies revitalizing the MERCOSUR based on what exists, but above all, creating, “constructing” institutions so that they prop up its launching and facilitate its subsequent strengthening²⁰.

Institutions can in turn help to strengthen regional integration, reducing the possibilities that its actual “vulnerability” should be profited by other actors. If we recognize the “constitutive” rather than the “regulatory” value possessed by institutions, we will be on the road to fulfill the virtuous circle we have defined as ideas + institutions + political decision-makers = policies, acting together in a process of continuous feedback.

In the countries of the region, we are going through times of “change”, which adds to the perception of a deep crisis. It is precisely in relation to that diagnosis that I want to remember, once again, Monnet’s brilliant words when he said, “men do not accept changes except out of necessity. They do not see necessity except in a crisis”.

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Notes

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** The MERCOSUR (Common Market of the South) comprises Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. It was created with the adoption of the Treaty of Asunción signed on March 26, 1991. In 1996, Chile and Bolivia became members as “associated states”.

1 The democratic clause and the establishment of a Zone of Peace are within the Ushuaia Protocol (July 24th, 1998). Moreover, the latter reiterates what the Presidential Declaration of Las Leñas of June 27, 1992, expresses, in the sense that the full validity of democratic institutions is an indispensable condition for the MERCOSUR's existence and development.

2 A functional "spillover" from some areas to others was hoped for. Even though the first spillover would be seen among related technical and economic areas, it would expand later towards other fields such as those of politics and culture (see, for example Haas, Ernst 1961 "International Integration: The European and the Universal Process" in *International Organization*, XV, Autumn). In a similar sense, expressions such as "branching" appeared (see Mitrany, David 1966 *A Working Peace System*, Chicago: Quadrangle Books).

3 In this respect, see the liminal works of Haas, Peter 1990 *Saving the Mediterranean. The Politics of International Environmental Cooperation* (New York: Columbia University Press) and 1992 "Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination" in *International Organization*, Vol. 46/1: 1-35.

4 Since the incorporation of socio-cognitive factors that help to understand processes, there is an attempt, as from "constructivism", to overcome certain shortages shown by the neorealist and neo-liberal approaches. In addition, differences between rationalists and reflectivists seem to shorten within its bosom. In this respect, it can be pointed out that some contributions emphasize the production of international norms and the necessity of understanding not only the regulatory value of such norms, but their "constitutive" aspect (see Onuf, Nicholas 1989 *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations*, Columbia University of South Carolina Press). This is what matters for constructivists. It tries to indicate that norms form an inter-subjective consensus among actors, which in turn constitutes or reconstitutes their identities and interests. In Wendt's opinion, in addition to the liberal arguments regarding their contribution to developing cooperative behaviors in spite of global anarchy, institutions and regimes have a major participation in the change or transformation of identities and interests. There are relations among actors that are gradually shaping practices and interactions that are added to the changes gradually produced in perceptions and ways of action. What they do and what they are should be explored. Being a member of an organization gradually shapes actors and their interests, and this also modifies their behaviors (see Wendt, Alexander 1992 "Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of World Politics" in *International Organization*, Vol. 46/2: 391-425; 1995 "Constructing International Politics" in *International Security*, Vol. 20/1: 71-81. For other contributions, see Checkel, Jeffrey 1999 "International Institution and Socialization". Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association, (Washington DC) February.

5 The debate presented by Yee, Albert S. 1996 "The causal effects of ideas on policies" in *International Organization*, Vol.50/1: 68-108, is very interesting.

6 In this respect, see Parsons, Craig 2002) "Showing Ideas as Causes: The origins of the European Union" in *International Organization*, Vol. 56/1: 47-84.

7 Let us mention the following papers: Puig, Juan Carlos 1980 *International Doctrines and Latin American Autonomy* (Caracas: Instituto de Altos Estudios de América Latina of the Simón Bolívar University); Jaguaribe, Helio et al. 1969 *Dependence and Autonomy in Latin America* (Mexico: Siglo XXI); Jaguaribe, Helio 1982 "Central Hegemony and Peripheral Autonomy" in Hill, Eduardo and Tomassini, Luciano *Latin America and the New International Economic Order* (Buenos Aires: Belgrano). In relation with some issues linked to the design of Foreign Politics, I have dealt with the paper entitled "Foreign Policy, Regionalization and Autonomy: Revisiting Analysis Categories" presented at the International Seminar on Political Science (AUGM-UFRGS), Porto Alegre, October 3-5, 2001.

8 Gerhard Drekonja produced a significant reformulation and redefinition of his own ideas about "autonomy" with which his works on Foreign Policy of the end of the 70s and most of the 80s were identified –especially those referring to Colombia. He moves on to a definition and pragmatic interpretation of the foreign action courses that Latin American states may follow. Their international integration must be along the same side and in the same line as American policies. He emphasizes the depreciation suffered by autonomizing strategies, the loss of logic in the diversification of the bonds referring to "diagonal relations with Europe", and the impossibility of gaining access to the "middle class of the Third World nations" which had been the Latin American dream of the 70s and 80s. By virtue of this and of the redesign the world has experienced in the post-cold war era, he understands that "the discussion on peripheral autonomy belongs to the past" and that the future of Latin America cannot be conceived except alongside the United States (Drekonja, Gerhard 1993 "Peripheral Autonomy Redefined. Latin America in the

- Decade of the Nineties" in Gómez, Drekonja, Tokatlian and Carvajal Redefining Autonomy in Internacional Politics (Centro de Estudios Internacionales of the Universidad de los Andes) Serie Documentos Ocasionales, N° 31, July-September: 18-21. The Argentine case during the Menem administration can be exhibited as a paradigmatic example of uncritical alignment as regards the United States, framed by the dogmatic adoption of the "Washington Consensus" and a reading of "peripheral realism" that, applied to a country not strategically significant for the hegemonic power, who decided to "tie up" its policies to the hegemon with the perspective of some "future advantages" although not being able to provide the probable profits beforehand. See Escudé, Carlos 1992 *Peripheral Realism. Grounds for the New Argentine Foreign Policy* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Planeta), and Escudé, Carlos 1991 "Menem's Foreign Policy and its Implicit Theoretical Support" in *Latin America/International Letter*, Vol. 8, N° 27, January-March (some theoretical tendencies describe these kinds of visions as "utilitarian perspectives").
- 9 Preliminarily, these ideas were presented at the Workshop "The state of the Contemporary Debate in International Relations", Buenos Aires, Universidad Torcuato Di Tella, July 27-28, 2000. Later, they were published in Russell, Roberto and Tokatlian, Juan G. "From Antagonistic Autonomy to Relational Autonomy: A Theoretical Look from the Southern Cone" in *Postdata* (Buenos Aires) N° 7.
- 10 The proposal corresponds to work done by Venezuelan and Colombian academicians who introduce the idea of jointly processing agreement strategies, though not those on confrontation, even for treating issues related to the United States. See Bi-national Academic Group 1999 "Colombia-Venezuela. Analysis of the XXI Century Agenda" in *Political Analysis* (Bogota).
- 11 Vacchino, Juan M. 2001 "The South American Summit and the Development of an Utopia" in *SELA Chapters* (Caracas) N° 61: 50. He makes special mention of cooperation, not only in the commercial field but also in areas such as the development of reciprocal investments, infrastructure and scientific and technological capability.
- 12 It includes the results of the First Meeting of Presidents of South America, called by Fernando Henrique Cardoso, then president of Brazil, and held in Brasilia between August 31 and September 1 2000. The following were present: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Surinam, Uruguay and Venezuela.
- 13 See Lampreia, Luiz Felipe 1998 "A Política externa do Governo FHC: continuidade e renovação" in *Revista brasileira de Política Internacional* (Brasilia) N° 2: 11. With reference to the same idea, Ambassador Gelson Fonseca Junior differentiates "autonomy because of distance" from "autonomy because of participation" in Dupas, Gilberto and Vigevani, Tullo (comp.) 2000 *O Brasil e as novas dimensões da segurança internacional* (São Paulo: Alfa-Omega) 17-42.
- 14 These and other ideas can be found in Jean Monnet's thoughts in 1996 *Repères pour une méthode* (Paris: Fayard).
- 15 In this respect, see Nofal, María Beatriz 1997 "Great Unresolved Matters in MERCOSUR" in *Boletín Informativo Techint* N° 292, October-December, p. 78-79, and Nofal, María Beatriz 1998 "Institutional and Economic Obstacles for the Consolidation and Deepening of the MERCOSUR: Proposals" in *Boletín Informativo Techint* N° 294, April-June, p. 48.
- 16 While this paper was being presented (August 2004), it was announced the settlement of the MERCOSUR Court as an arbitration body.
- 17 Parts of these thoughts are within "Perspectives on the Institutionalization of the MERCOSUR", working paper presented at the MERCOSUR: Forum of the Future meeting, CARI, Buenos Aires, August 30, 1996. Also, Carlos Moneta explains the "institutional weakness" of the MERCOSUR, comparing it with other processes of regional integration. The most asymmetric comparison is the one referring to the European Union (see Chart 1, "Profile of Several Diagrams of Integration in the World. Indicators" in Moneta, Carlos 2002 "Integration, Politics and Markets in the Global Era: MERCOSUR and the ALCA" in Couffignal, Georges and Jozami, Aníbal (coords.) *Latin America. The Beginning of the New Millennium* (Buenos Aires: UNTREF) p. 105.
- 18 Some key concepts related to different institutionalization scenarios have been a subject of discussion at the Workshop "Institutional Challenges Facing the Current Situation of the MERCOSUR" sponsored by CARI, Buenos Aires, April 15, 1999.
- 19 Bernal Meza, Raúl 2001 "Institutionalization of the MERCOSUR" in Benecke, Dieter and Loschky, Alexander (eds.) *MERCOSUR: Political Challenge* (Buenos Aires: Konrad Adenauer/CIEDLA) p. 65.
- 20 The presidential campaign in Brazil, in 2002, allowed the visualization of explicit references related to the

MERCOSUR. "The MERCOSUR is treated as if it were a protocol of intentions and not a regional body", states Anthony Garotinho 2002 "O Brasil e a questao externa" in *International Letter*, Year X, Nº 114, August, p. 8. In turn, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, in "Presença soberana no Mundo", refers to "a reconstructed MERCOSUR" that "must demand progress in the field of the institutions that are going to preside over the integration policy", in *International Letter*, p. 9. A similar reference to the necessity of "institutionalization" was expressed by this candidate in the interview conducted by Marcelo Bonelli for the program "A Dos Voces", broadcast by TN, Argentina, on September 23, 2002. These proposals are expanded when he expresses himself in favor of "a Parliament of the MERCOSUR" democratically elected by direct vote, which would legitimate the decisions taken at the presidents' level. In this respect, see Gossman, Eleonora 2002 "A Destiny Staked in portuñol" in *Clarín* (Buenos Aires) September 29, p. 3. These policy guidelines also appear in "Interviews", *Foreign Politics*, Vol. II Nº 2, Sept.-Oct.-Nov. 2002: 7, when the candidate Lula insists on the establishment of common public policies and an institutional framework that will allow status and societies to be represented, as steps that will strengthen the MERCOSUR. On January 13, 2003, when the meeting held between the new Brazilian president Lula da Silva and the then Argentine president Eduardo Duhalde took place, the ideas previously mentioned won support. For his part, in Argentina, during the television program "De ahora en más" broadcasted on May 23, 2003 and conducted by Van der Koy and Bertone, president-elect Néstor Kirchner, some days before assuming the post, expressed his commitment not only towards the widening of the MERCOSUR, but also to contributing to endow it with institutions, assigning it a political profile. In his presidential message before Congress, on May 25, he stressed the priority the MERCOSUR would have for his government.