

# THE ARGENTINE-BRAZILIAN NUCLEAR RAPPROCHEMENT

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In the nuclear field, Argentina and Brazil are the most advanced countries not only of South America but of the whole of Latin America. This fact, combined with the overall influence of the two nations in this region, explains why their nuclear policies are of such importance to the international community. Their nuclear rivalry was not an isolated episode, but rather must be understood as the modern technological manifestation of a long historical competition and emulation that characterized their bilateral relations for almost two centuries. Their current nuclear rapprochement—in their formation of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (in Spanish, ABACC) in 1990 and their recent full accession to the Treaty of Tlatelolco in 1994—marks a significant turning point in this relationship. An examination of the route to its formation from 1985 to the present is therefore im-

portant to analysts elsewhere in the world attempting to develop workable techniques for settling bilateral nuclear rivalries. While the Argentine-Brazilian “model” is not likely to be directly applicable elsewhere, the *process* of its negotiation teaches some valuable lessons regarding the settlement of contentious bilateral nuclear and technical disputes.

This article examines the troubled Argentine-Brazilian nuclear relationship from an historical perspective. It begins with a brief overview of its root causes in the struggle for influence on the South American continent, traces the reasons for its turning point around 1980, and follows it through to its recent rapprochement.

The reasons the two countries moved radically away from the competitive nuclear policies that they had followed for several decades are not simple. A combination of elements played a part in the birth and the development of the whole process,

among which must be included: favorable national political circumstances, economic difficulties, similarity of positions regarding the global nonproliferation regime, the advent of civilian governments, positive presidential leadership, the active role of the foreign ministries, as well as forceful international pressure.

The Argentine-Brazilian nuclear rapprochement began around 1980, but it did not gain adequate momentum until around 1985, when this process developed in earnest. From 1985 to 1995, two stages can be distinguished. The first period, lasting from 1985 to 1988, was characterized by a purely bilateral approach. The second phase developed between 1989 and the present, and had a double objective: 1) to give a legally-binding character to the pledges already undertaken by both countries; and 2) to take these obligations to the international field, making the two nations part of the

regional and global nonproliferation regimes.

This study examines each phase and the specific means employed for breaking the nuclear deadlock. It focuses on the diplomatic front, rather than on technical issues related to the nuclear programs of the two sides, which have been covered by other authors. The article concludes with some observations on the significance of this rapprochement and what aspects of the eventual settlement might be relevant to bilateral nuclear rivalries in other parts of the world.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Argentine-Brazilian relations have always been complex, beginning as early as the sixteenth century, when their territories were part of the Spanish and Portuguese colonial empires. In the period of colonial rule, these two European powers expanded their own rivalry through territorial conquests in South America. The conquistadors fought to acquire new lands, leading to clashes, particularly in the regions of the Plata River and present-day Paraguay.

Even after Argentina and Brazil gained their independence in the early 1800s, their rivalry continued to reflect their colonial past. Competition for the leadership of South America, with elements of antagonism, rivalry, and mistrust, was always present.<sup>2</sup> In 1825, the two nations went to war when the Brazilian Empire tried to get a foothold in the Plata River. This was the last direct armed conflict between Argentina and Brazil. The resulting peace treaty in 1828 established Uruguay as a new buffer state.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the rivalry persisted, with different characteristics and

connotations as the political and economic circumstances changed. Finally, in the late 1940s, Argentine President General Juan D. Perón initiated an effort to restructure relations with Brazil, but the endeavor did not make much progress.

By this point, it was only natural that one way the traditional rivalry would express itself was in nuclear technology and development. Argentina entered the race first in the 1950s, and Brazil followed immediately, trying hard to catch up. Essentially, the reasons for the nuclear rivalry derived not so much from the national security concerns but from the need to keep up with a competitor. At the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), both countries vied for the right to occupy the seat on the Board of Governors assigned to the country most advanced in nuclear technology in each region (under Article VI.A.1 of the IAEA Statute). Unable to decide which country was the most advanced, the Agency determined, by a gentlemen's agreement, that Argentina and Brazil would rotate representation in the Board of Governors.<sup>4</sup>

Around 1960, another Argentine president, Arturo Frondizi (1958-62), made a new overture to ease tensions with Brazil, whose heads of state, Juscelino Kubitschek (1955-60) and Janio Quadros (1960-61), shared a similar ideology. At the beginning, the new approach was fairly successful. Its aim was to establish reciprocal consultations and coordination of the foreign policies of both countries. Unfortunately, the exercise did not last. Frondizi and Quadros were politically weak and were in the end overthrown.<sup>5</sup> But the failure of these initial embryonic efforts did not result in a return to

the former antagonism and competition. While there were no new important efforts at the official level, in the nongovernmental field new links were established and developed.

In the 1970s, however, a new element of discord appeared: a dispute regarding the administration of a shared natural resource, the waters of the great Paraná River, which has its source in Brazil and flows into Argentina. Until that problem was satisfactorily resolved, it was impossible to even contemplate a serious attempt to place Argentine-Brazilian relations on a new basis.<sup>6</sup> Agreement on the water issue was reached in 1979, but attempts by Argentina's military rulers and Brazil's military-influenced government to move beyond this issue bore only limited fruit.

At a meeting on May 17, 1980, during the visit of Brazilian President General Joao Figueredo to Buenos Aires, he and Argentine President General Videla signed an "Agreement on Cooperation for the Development and Application of the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy." While the agreement was similar to arrangements concluded between other nations on this same issue,<sup>7</sup> it was significant because it demonstrated that the nuclear competition of nearly three decades was being restrained. Policy-makers in both nations realized that nuclear development was a field in which it was proper and promising to cooperate.

But this process faltered as the attention of both governments was concentrated on internal political and economic problems and on the coming transfer of power to civilian hands. In addition, the 1982 South Atlantic War diverted concern from bilateral relations.<sup>8</sup>

## THE BEGINNING OF THE NUCLEAR RAPPROCHEMENT (1985-89)

The political climate to undertake the building of a new and vastly improved relationship between Argentina and Brazil became propitious when civilians assumed the leadership of the two nations: Presidents Raúl Alfonsín of Argentina (December 1983) and José Sarney of Brazil (March 1985). It must be emphasized that nuclear affairs were not envisaged as isolated from the broader context of Argentine-Brazilian relations in general. On the contrary, the political leadership of both countries began to view the nuclear issue as one important part of the whole process.

The two civilian presidents met in Foz de Iguazú in late November 1985 and initiated a process of economic integration and close political cooperation. Economic coordination accelerated with the signing on July 29, 1986, of an "Act for Argentine-Brazilian Integration," with additional protocols on nearly 30 different issues. The act established a so-called "Program for Integration and Economic Cooperation," defined a set of principles to guide the effort (among them the progressive harmonization of economic policies), and created an executive committee. The members of this committee included the ministers of foreign affairs and economy of both countries, who were given the task of supervising the performance of the program and of proposing new actions.

Two years later, a comprehensive bilateral Treaty on Integration, Cooperation, and Development was concluded on November 29, 1988. This was considered a significant

milestone because of the sweeping character of the treaty and the fact that it was ratified by the Argentine Congress with the support of all political parties. This support suggested that the rapprochement with Brazil enjoyed wide approval, unthinkable 10 years earlier.<sup>9</sup>

Another bilateral process that dealt specifically with nuclear issues was going on simultaneously. It was an integral but distinct part of the whole new Argentine-Brazilian relationship.

At the November 1985 Foz de Iguazú presidential meeting mentioned above, a "Joint Declaration on Nuclear Policy" was issued that stressed the exclusively peaceful purposes of the nuclear programs of both countries and the intent to cooperate very closely in this area. The declaration also established "a joint working group under the responsibility of the Argentine and Brazilian Foreign Ministries, with the participation of the respective nuclear commissions and enterprises to study and propose concrete measures to implement the declared bilateral nuclear policy. The group became a permanent committee in 1988. The fact that the working group was put under the authority of the ministries of foreign affairs, the governmental departments most convinced of the need to advance rapidly and forcefully toward the proclaimed goals, has been a significant factor contributing to the success of the bilateral nuclear non-proliferation effort.

These broad bilateral agreements were supplemented by several technical protocols. Protocol No. 11 on "Immediate Information and Reciprocal Assistance in Case of Nuclear Accident and Radiological Emergencies" was signed prior to the sign-

ing of similar IAEA conventions. Protocol No. 17 on "Nuclear Cooperation," signed in December 1986, defined several areas for mutual cooperation and development, including high density fuels for research reactors, detectors, electronics, and nuclear instrumentation. Three years later in an annex to Protocol No. 17, the foreign ministers of both countries concluded an agreement "to promote complementary industrial activities in the nuclear sector."

These bilateral agreements have to be seen in the context of the broader process of economic integration being pursued during that period.

In the years following 1985, substantial progress on nuclear cooperation proceeded on the commercial and technical level, with the establishment of closer trade links between nuclear enterprises, and on the official level as a result of the work of the permanent committee (the former joint working group) and of increasingly frequent head of state visits.

Presidents Alfonsín and Sarney met four times between December 1986 and November 1988. Accompanied by political and technical advisors, they visited sensitive unsafeguarded nuclear installations. Following each visit, a specific declaration on common nuclear policy was signed.

Usually presidential visits tend to be seen as just social gestures, expressing a political good will between two nations. In this case, the high-level visits to sensitive nuclear establishments, like the Argentine enrichment plant at Pilcaniyeu and the Brazilian enrichment plant at Iperó, acted as confidence-building measures. Well before announcing publicly the success of the uranium

enrichment process, the government of each country communicated the accomplishment to the other; this also served as a source of confidence-building.

The end of the terms of Presidents Alfonsín (1989) and Sarney (1990) concluded what could be considered the first phase of the new Argentine-Brazilian nuclear relationship.

This phase was mainly, if not exclusively, of a bilateral character, concerned only with putting nuclear relations between the two nations on a new basis. The purpose was to inspire mutual confidence and trust and not, at that stage, to address international worries and uncertainties. Moreover, mutual confidence was established by a combination of visits, exchanges of technicians and students, commercial relations, complementary activities of nuclear industries, and similar actions, but not—it must be stressed—by a system of mutual nuclear controls and safeguards.

Until 1989, the words “inspection,” “control,” and “safeguarding” were not incorporated in any of the documents signed by Argentina and Brazil. However, “trustworthiness” and “confidence” were mentioned repeatedly.

Foreign observers were inclined to view Argentine-Brazilian nuclear cooperation as a means of distracting international suspicions from the ultimately non-peaceful intentions of the nuclear programs of both countries.<sup>10</sup> Instead, the actual goal for Argentina and Brazil was to protect their *individual* security and promote *reciprocal* trust. International security might follow as a natural and desirable corollary, but it was not the determining factor, nor was it ever publicly stated as one of the elements that influenced the rap-

prochement.<sup>11</sup>

However, analysis of the bilateral experience soon showed that international concerns had not been dispelled. By 1990, it was clear to both Argentine and Brazilian policy-makers that, notwithstanding the value of the bilateral effort, the international community would not be satisfied without some form of concrete verification system integrated into the global nonproliferation regime. It seemed necessary to take the process beyond a purely bilateral non-binding arrangement and to consider the possibility of concluding legally-binding agreements for mutual inspection and control, and of accepting international verification of the entire nuclear programs of both countries.

This new phase of the process was carried out by the new heads-of-state of Argentina and Brazil, Presidents Carlos Menem and Fernando Collor.

### THE NEW NUCLEAR RELATIONSHIP (1990-95)

Presidents Alfonsín and Sarney were so personally connected with the evolving nuclear relationship that when both leaders finished their terms almost simultaneously, many observers asked whether the process would continue upon their retirements. Fortunately, the new heads-of-state not only kept the effort going but intensified it, soon showing that the new vision had solid roots and was not based on the political will of a few individuals.

President Carlos Menem, who took office in July 1989, made his first visit of state to Brazil in August. He declared his firm support for nuclear cooperation in the discussions that he held with then-

President Sarney. The new Brazilian President Fernando Collor de Mello had the same sentiments and expressed them when he visited Menem in July 1990.

On November 28, 1990, the two heads of state met again in the town of Foz de Iguazú and issued another significant “Joint Declaration on Nuclear Policy.” They decided to take the following actions: a) to establish a Common System of Accounting and Control (SCCC) which would apply to all nuclear activities of both countries, and to create a bilateral unit, the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC), to control its application; b) to start negotiations with the IAEA with a view to reaching a joint safeguards agreement on the basis of the SCCC; and c) after signing the safeguards agreement, to adopt the measures necessary for the full entry into force of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America (Treaty of Tlatelolco), including actions aimed at *updating and improving* its text.<sup>12</sup>

During a meeting of all Latin American states plus Spain and Portugal held in Guadalajara, Mexico, on July 18, 1991, Argentina and Brazil concluded a bilateral treaty incorporating all the nuclear commitments already made, and adopting important additional measures. The treaty, called the “Agreement for the Exclusively Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy” (also known as the Guadalajara Treaty), was later ratified by the parliaments of both countries.<sup>13</sup>

Article 1 of the treaty pledges both parties “to use the nuclear material and facilities under their jurisdiction or control exclusively for peaceful purposes.” The testing,

manufacture, acquisition, possession, and deployment of nuclear weapons are expressly prohibited. In addition, peaceful nuclear explosions—in which Argentina and Brazil were always strongly interested and which, according to their interpretation, were permitted under the Tlatelolco Treaty—are renounced. The treaty states “that at present no technical distinction can be made between nuclear explosive devices for peaceful purposes and those for military purposes.” Finally, the treaty formally establishes the SCCC and ABACC, the bilateral monitoring agency provided for in the Foz de Iguazú Joint Declaration of six months before.

While the Guadalajara Treaty was being negotiated, Argentina and Brazil initiated discussions first between themselves and later with the IAEA in order to reach a full-scope safeguards agreement. The matter was complex and difficult, because full-scope IAEA safeguards previously had been opposed by Argentina and Brazil, and because four parties were involved: both nations, the IAEA, and ABACC. An additional complicating factor was the unspoken understanding that the resulting agreement with the IAEA would incorporate obligations virtually identical to those mandated by the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT); Argentina and Brazil strongly opposed the NPT. Despite these difficulties, the Quadripartite Agreement was concluded, approved by the Board of Governors of the IAEA, and signed in Vienna on December 13, 1991, in the presence of Presidents Menem and Collor. Only six months had lapsed since the signing of the Guadalajara Treaty. The Quadripartite Agreement has also been ratified by the parliaments of

both countries.<sup>14</sup>

A third step envisaged in Foz de Iguazú was the full accession of both nations to the Treaty of Tlatelolco. While the treaty had been signed and ratified by the majority of the Latin American states, its effectiveness was incomplete. Approximately half of the territory and population of the region remained outside of the treaty because four important countries were not parties: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Cuba. Brazil and Chile previously had signed and ratified the treaty, but without waiving the conditions required for the treaty to enter into force for their territories. Argentina had signed but not ratified, and Cuba had taken no action on the treaty.

Argentina and Brazil were joined by Chile in discussing and proposing a series of amendments designed to *update* and *improve*—to use the words of the Foz de Iguazú Joint Declaration—the text of Tlatelolco, but not to alter its substantive clauses. The suggested changes dealt mainly with the control procedures, which were viewed as too intrusive and detrimental to the preservation of commercial and technical secrets. Moreover, the three nations objected to the treaty’s procedures for special inspections, an element of the agreement that had never been implemented. It was believed that the organization charged with ensuring compliance with the Tlatelolco Treaty—the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America (OPANAL)—lacked the technical means and personnel to carry out such inspections and that the IAEA was far more qualified to perform in this field.

The changes favored by the three countries were negotiated with Mexico, Tlatelolco’s depository gov-

ernment. Mexico held consultations with the other parties, and an amendment conference took place in Mexico City on August 26, 1992. The modifications proposed by Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico were unanimously approved, and the three nations pledged to undertake the activities required to permit the treaty to enter into force.

Argentina ratified the Tlatelolco Treaty and its amendments on January 18, 1994. Chile ratified the amendments also on January 18, 1990, and Brazil followed on May 30. The three countries also waived the requirements of Article 28 of the treaty,<sup>15</sup> and so the treaty is now in force for them. For the treaty to become fully operative among states of concern, it only needs the ratification of Cuba, which recently signed the treaty.<sup>16</sup> The complete implementation of the Treaty of Tlatelolco will be another beneficial consequence of the Argentine-Brazilian nuclear rapprochement.

The development of the relationship between Argentina and Brazil in the nuclear field, begun somewhat tentatively in 1980, was rejuvenated in the mid-1980s with the election of civilian presidents, and has moved beyond the expectations of its most optimistic supporters. Declarations of good intentions have been converted into formal treaties that embody obligations designed to provide reassurance about the exclusively peaceful nature of the nuclear activities of the two countries. The closeness of the relationship is demonstrated by the frequent use of one representative who speaks for both states in disarmament and nuclear fora, such as the Geneva Conference on Disarmament and the First Committee of the U.N. General Assembly. Moreover, in some

technical meetings of the IAEA, one individual has represented the two countries.

### THE PRESENT SITUATION

On November 2-3, 1994, President-elect of Brazil Fernando Cardoso, who assumed power in January 1995, made his first visit to Argentina. In a press conference, he mentioned some areas where his views corresponded with those of Menem; he included "the nonproliferation of weapons-of-mass-destruction."<sup>17</sup> Statements of this kind bode well for the future.

The latest development is the ratification of the NPT by Argentina. Taking into account the 25 years of energetic opposition, passage in Congress was surprisingly rapid and easy. Argentina approved the NPT on December 23, 1994, with only token resistance by the Radical Party, and the instrument of accession was deposited in Washington on February 10, 1995. It seems that the nationalistic sentiments of the past have been put aside definitively, and that there is strong support for the international nonproliferation regime.

The situation is different in Brazil. In Brazil arguments similar to those made in Argentina against the successive nonproliferation agreements have been made in a much more forceful way. In contrast to Argentina, there was an active Brazilian lobby that opposed the four-party IAEA safeguards agreement and the Tlatelolco Treaty. Brazil took a much longer time to approve the agreements than Argentina did. There is no doubt that Brazilian authorities continue to have the same commitment to nonproliferation policy, but the broad support that such a policy enjoys in Argentina

does not seem to be as strong in Brazil. In general, during the development of this extraordinary process, Argentina was often the leader and Brazil the follower, even while sharing the same objectives.

At present, Brazil is not considering ratification of the NPT.<sup>18</sup> Brazil believes that the nonproliferation agreements already accepted are more than enough to prove its credentials and that further agreements are totally unnecessary. The obligations that Argentina and Brazil already have are in fact greater than the ones embodied in the NPT. Curiously, Argentina has reached the opposite conclusion. Argentina thought that if it had already accepted the commitments, why not accede to the NPT?

Except for Brazil's attitude regarding the NPT, it seems that there is not much more to be done in the nuclear political and legal fields. There is a general appreciation in both countries that for now the principal objective should be to consolidate the bilateral arrangements and the IAEA safeguards agreement. The two nations will continue coordination of their nuclear policies and will become more integrated into the international nonproliferation regime.

At the same time, as perhaps it should be expected, there are areas where nuclear cooperation may not be as successful as was hoped. For example, despite the conclusion of relevant protocols and the creation of the Committee of Argentine and Brazilian Businessmen in the Nuclear Area (CEABAN), integration and cooperation of the two private nuclear industries have not proceeded as expected. The nuclear programs of both countries are in stagnation, and private nuclear in-

dustries are reluctant to embark upon new ventures. Argentina has no plans to develop a nuclear-propelled submarine, and Brazil is pursuing the endeavor at a very slow pace.

An eloquent symbol of the present situation is the decision of the Argentine government to dismantle the powerful National Atomic Energy Commission (CNEA), the body responsible for the nation's spectacular nuclear development. The power-generating plants are to be transferred to private hands, and a much reduced institution will remain to conduct research and produce medical and agricultural products. The move has met with some strong resistance but is well received in other circles, where the Commission has always been considered a white elephant.

A realistic appraisal of the present state of nuclear affairs in the two nations reveals that: 1) extraordinary accomplishments already have been achieved and have been generally welcomed; 2) there is no danger that the process will be reversed or undermined; 3) the time has come to consolidate the bilateral arrangements; 4) the nuclear control agency ABACC is performing in a satisfactory manner; 5) new substantial agreements are not to be expected; and 6) some policy divergence is possible, as in the case of the NPT, although there are reasons to predict that in the long run Brazil will also join that treaty. This is an optimistic, but I think realistic, assessment of the state of the present Argentine-Brazilian relationship.

### CONCLUSION AND LESSONS

What general points might be drawn from this history for applica-

tion to other regions? To begin with, we must examine the reasons for the dramatic changes in policy in Argentina and Brazil.

It must be remembered that the states' progress in nuclear affairs was not an isolated phenomenon but part of a broader process that encompassed a whole range of foreign policy issues. In nuclear affairs, in fact, the two rivals shared several features. Both nations had devoted significant resources to developing a considerable nuclear industry and autonomous control over the full nuclear fuel cycle. Both had developed uranium enrichment capability, the ultimate symbol of nuclear independence. But neither Argentina nor Brazil had ever started a nuclear weapon program. The reasons may have been related to their location, far from the main conflict regions of the world, as well as their lack of immediate military disputes. Since the civilian nuclear development of the two countries had advanced to a roughly similar level, the time was ripe to try to make progress in a coordinated and cooperative way, rather than in a competitive one.

In addition, the general international nuclear policies of Argentina and Brazil were broadly the same. Both refused to join the NPT. They resented what they perceived as a discriminatory and unfair treaty that legitimized nuclear weapons in the hands of a few and imposed on the others a rigorous international control system tailored by the nuclear weapons states, themselves exempted from any restrictions. Neither was a party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, not because they objected to its purpose and main obligations, but because they considered some of its control clauses inadequate and even prejudicial to their interests. As

the most developed nuclear countries of the region, they were the primary aim of its control system. Both were opposed to full-scope safeguards by the IAEA, however, as required by the NPT. Nevertheless, they had been willing to accept international safeguards on nuclear facilities built or developed with foreign assistance. Common positions and points of view were a sound basis on which to build cooperation and mutual trust.

In the economic realm, the allocation of resources to nuclear activities became increasingly difficult as their economies deteriorated. Moreover, the somewhat generous financial support that the nuclear industry had received became the object of frequent questioning and criticism, but often new expenses were justified by the need to "keep up" with a neighbor.

The advent of civilian governments in both countries could not have been more propitious. Decisions in the nuclear area, always delicate, certainly were easier to make when the influence of military thinking was less prominent. In the case of Argentina, the Radical Party in power had a negative attitude towards nuclear development. In its view, nuclear power presented many risks and was not really necessary in Argentina. Also, it believed that the CNEA had been given privileged treatment by the preceding governments, to the detriment of other more deserving national priorities. Consequently, under the Radical government, the resources allotted to the CNEA were substantially diminished and the nuclear program was considerably slowed, and, in some areas, stopped.<sup>19</sup> Given these circumstances, cessation of the competition with Brazil was

certainly beneficial.

In tandem with civilian leadership, the decreased role of the military in the two nations also helped. Specifically, in Argentina, the military failed to effectively administer the country, and the defeat in the South Atlantic War of 1982 reduced its prestige to an all-time low. In both countries, the civilian governments had more authority over the military. Thus, they were able to take actions related to national security that would normally have been resisted or criticized by the armed forces. This does not mean that the militaries were interested in developing a nuclear weapon program; however, on matters of national security, their views rarely coincided with those of the civilians.<sup>20</sup> It must be recognized that assurances that a potential rival would not develop a nuclear weapon were of tremendous importance for the national security of both countries.

Presidential leadership was a critical factor, along with the active participation of key advisers and decisionmakers, in breaking with long-standing policies and starting on a new road. The heads of state were ultimately responsible for the many decisions, but the activities and determination of the foreign ministries were fundamental to the success of the whole enterprise. The activist role of the foreign ministries can be explained, at least in part, by their increasing awareness of the international costs, both political and technical, of an absolutely independent nuclear program and the rejection of any form of outside control. In that context, the creation of even a bilateral situation of mutual nuclear trust would nevertheless provide additional benefit from the global point of view.

The new presidents of Argentina and Brazil, Menem and Collor, were not only receptive to the new ideas but were active in putting them into practice. In particular, the contribution of Menem must be emphasized, because he introduced a substantial change in Argentina's foreign policy. After a century of coolness, if not confrontation, in relations with the United States, the Argentine government decided to align itself closely with the United States.

Because strengthening of the international nuclear nonproliferation regime is one of the pillars of American foreign policy, it is not surprising that Menem easily approved and promoted policies that he knew would be received with utmost satisfaction by the United States. This does not mean that the intensification of the Argentine-Brazilian rapprochement, which developed since 1989, was due entirely to American pressure. However, it would be wrong to ignore the fact that some difficult steps were easier to take with the knowledge that they would be welcomed in Washington.

Undoubtedly, international pressure had something to do with the changes in the nuclear policies of Argentina and Brazil, but it was not a deciding factor. Both countries had to face export restrictions from the United States as a consequence of its 1980 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act, but were able to surmount the difficulties, at some cost, by finding other suppliers or by developing the restricted elements locally.<sup>21</sup> The possibility of using these alternative sources diminished with the decrease in funds available for nuclear projects and with the strengthening of the Nuclear Suppliers Group Guidelines. This factor suggests that the difficulty of

obtaining foreign technology might have had some weight in the decisionmaking process, but there is no evidence that it was a major ingredient.

### A Model for Other Regions?

Policy-makers and experts have raised the question of whether the success of the Argentine-Brazilian exercise could serve as a model for other regions. While the idea is tempting, it should be explored with caution, since there are tremendous difficulties in fully transferring a successful process from one region to another.

North and South Korea (or Japan), India and Pakistan, the Middle East, and even Russia and Ukraine have been mentioned as areas in which the South American experience could be valuable. However, important differences must be mentioned. While Argentina and Brazil were competitors and rivals for the leadership of South America, they were not *enemies*. The only war between them took place in the mid-1820s, more than a century-and-a-half ago. Since that time, their relations have alternated between cooperation and competition, but not a single shot has ever been fired. A bitter border dispute was solved by arbitration, not war. In 1985 the moment came when it was decided to put an end once and for all to the rivalry and mistrust that had pervaded bilateral relations for too long, especially by focusing on social and economic relations. That effort was comprehensive, encompassing a whole range of issues. The nuclear field was one highly sensitive part of a broad spectrum of cooperative actions, but it was not an isolated area worked upon singularly. More-

over, the aim was not simply an increase in mutual security.

One conclusion, therefore, with implications for other regions is that an attempt to foster mutual confidence-building measures based exclusively on the nuclear field will prove rather difficult. To expect reciprocal nuclear confidence when all, or almost all, other factors point to conflict and enmity seems highly improbable. At the same time, it is reasonable to hope that a gradual improvement in the security situation, resulting from modest progress in nuclear cooperation, could generate a better climate for cooperation in other areas.

In this sense, the Argentine-Brazilian experience does contribute a useful precedent. It demonstrates that a rapprochement between rivals in the sensitive nuclear area is possible. The nature of the bilateral agreements, including the ABACC machinery, and their relationship to the IAEA system deserve special attention.

There are also lessons that can be derived from the process involved. First and foremost, to be successful, an exercise of this kind must be based on a sincere purpose of reaching agreements that will end a nuclear race and establish a climate of mutual confidence. No moves in this field can have the slightest chance of success if they are taken with the ulterior motive of cheating the other party or gulling it into a false sense of security. As a first step, a country should open itself to the other party, on the understanding that this policy will be reciprocated. Each nation's nuclear activities, installations, and programs should be made transparent to the other. Information should flow fully and freely from one coun-



try to the other, and political authorities and technical officials should be given the opportunity to visit (but not inspect) the nuclear facilities of the other. Such exchanges of qualified technicians, information, and students, should create and foster confidence in the truthfulness of the information reciprocally provided. Also, any weapons activity must be completely ended to the satisfaction of the other nation. If these actions encounter difficulties or if a country is reluctant to open particular installations, it is probable that the exercise will not succeed.

Of course, the climate of mutual trust thus attained is temporary; it will not last if additional measures do not follow to give it a permanent character. A country must be sure that the other is not carrying out dangerous activities and does not plan to do so in the future. Visits and exchanges of information are not enough. A system of control and verification becomes necessary. But while such controls are essential, they can also become a major stumbling block. It is always difficult to accept foreign inspections, and the reluctance is much greater if the inspectors come only from one other country, the former rival. For Argentina to accept inspections by Brazil or *vice versa* was too much. Experience shows that an international inspection team, or at least one composed of two countries, is much more acceptable. If the countries concerned wish to keep the whole matter under their own authority, they could—as Argentina and Brazil did—establish a two-nation body like ABACC, to monitor the compliance of a solemnly undertaken engagement to use nuclear energy exclusively for peaceful purposes. A two-

nation organization, with its own staff of inspectors, properly managed and performing its tasks efficiently and independently, should be enough to guarantee each party that the other is not diverting nuclear material to forbidden purposes or undertaking any form of warlike activities.

In the end, the main beneficiaries of such a bilateral process are the two countries directly concerned. Other neighbors and the international community at large might obtain a measure of reassurance. But because they have no way of verifying that the situation is exactly as it has been described by the agency or the interested states, some uncertainties will remain. The inspections and controls of the two-nation body could be superficial or unsatisfactory or, even worse, form a cover for collusion between the two parties against a third country.

Therefore, the history of the Argentine-Brazilian operation reveals that, while full confidence can be created between two countries, it cannot be established in the international community without monitoring and controls being carried out by an international body independent from the two parties. Argentina and Brazil, whatever their original intentions, felt compelled to have recourse not only to ABACC but to a multilateral agency, the IAEA. The four-party safeguards agreement took care of the particular aspects of the bilateral arrangements and ABACC, but the commitments included in it were the full-scope safeguards prevailing all over the world.

Each region has its own problems, difficulties, and even favorable elements. The road taken by Argentina and Brazil created a satisfactory state of affairs in South America, to the

benefit of both nations, their neighbors, and the international community. Their experience may provide important lessons for other areas of the world.

<sup>1</sup> The author collaborated with Professors John Redick, from the University of Virginia, and Paulo Wrobel, from the Pontificia Universidade of Rio de Janeiro, in a joint project to study the Argentine-Brazilian nuclear arrangements, financed with a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. Part of the present paper is derived from this common endeavor, and the author is very grateful for their help. Because he is a member of the Argentine Foreign Service, the author had the chance to hold lengthy talks with colleagues and friends who participated in the negotiation of the different bilateral documents. For that reason, this article is based more on the personal experiences and perceptions of the author than on published materials.

<sup>2</sup> Isidoro Ruiz Moreno, *Historia de las relaciones exteriores argentinas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Perrot, 1961), pp. 23-91.

<sup>3</sup> This period of Argentine-Brazilian history is well-documented in Carlos Alberto Silva, *La política internacional de la Nación Argentina*. (Buenos Aires: Ministerio del Interior, 1946), pp. 94-104.

<sup>4</sup> P. Szasz, *The Law and Practice of the IAEA* (Vienna: IAEA Legal Series Number 7), pp. 144-145.

<sup>5</sup> Juan Archibaldo Lanus, *De Chapultepec al Beagle-política exterior Argentina 1945-1980* (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1983), pp. 285-296.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 302-312.

<sup>7</sup> Argentina has signed approximately 20 agreements on nuclear cooperation, including agreements with Peru, Cuba, Canada, Italy, France, Romania, Colombia, and other countries.

<sup>8</sup> Wayne A. Selcher, "Brazilian-Argentine Relations in the 1980s: From Wary Rivalry to Friendly Competition," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 27 (Summer 1985), p. 46.

<sup>9</sup> The bilateral process was expanded to a sub-regional effort with the signing of a treaty on March 26, 1991, to establish a common market among Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay by December 31, 1994. To the surprise of many, the target date was achieved. At the present time, negotiations continue on associating Chile to the Common Market or MERCOSUR, as it is called.

<sup>10</sup> This view prevailed among the non-Latin American participants in a seminar organized by the Nuclear Control Institute of Washington D.C., held in Montevideo, Uruguay, on October 11-13, 1989. It was attended mainly by Argentine, Brazilian, and American experts and constituted an adequate survey of the principal issues raised in relation to what the author now calls "the first

phase” of the Argentine-Brazilian nuclear relationship. The papers of the seminar were published in 1992. See Paul Leventhal and Sharon Tanzer, eds., *Averting a Latin American Nuclear Arms Race: New Prospects and Challenges for Argentine-Brazilian Nuclear Cooperation* (New York: Macmillan, 1992.)

<sup>11</sup> Julio Carasales, “Goals for the Argentine-Brazilian Nuclear Cooperation,” in Leventhal and Tanzer, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-62.

<sup>12</sup> The text of the Joint Declaration is reproduced in *Disarmament-A Periodic Review by the United Nations*, Vol. XIV, No. 1 (New York: United Nations, 1991), pp. 225-226. On July 3, 1990, the parties agreed to change the official name of the Treaty of Tlatelolco to include both Latin American “and the Caribbean.” See “Status del Tratado, sus protocolos a dicionales y sus enmiendas,” OPANAL document S/Inf. 546 Rev. 3, April 20, 1995, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> The main articles of the Guadalajara Treaty are reproduced in the *Newsbrief 15* (Programme for Promoting Nuclear Non-Proliferation, Autumn 1991), pp. 15-16.

<sup>14</sup> The safeguards agreement is analyzed in John Redick, “Argentina and Brazil’s New Arrangement for Mutual Inspections and IAEA Safeguards,” (Washington, D.C.: Nuclear Control Institute, February 1992).

<sup>15</sup> Article 28 of the Tlatelolco Treaty requires the fulfillment of *all* the following conditions for the treaty to enter into force: a) ratification by all Latin American states; b) ratification of Protocol I by all countries with possessions in Latin America; c) ratification of Protocol II by all nuclear weapon powers; and d) conclusion of safeguards agreements with the IAEA. Paragraph 2 of Article 28 allows for the waiving of those requirements by any state when ratifying the treaty. All Tlatelolco parties did so initially, except Brazil and Chile.

<sup>16</sup> Cuba signed the treaty on March 25, 1995, as reported in OPANAL document, *loc. cit.* Cuba’s promise to do so was originally mentioned in a personal letter dated August 17, 1994, addressed by Fidel Castro to Itamar Franco, President of Brazil. See *La Nación* (Buenos Aires), August 30, 1994.

<sup>17</sup> *Clarín* (Buenos Aires), November 4, 1994.

<sup>18</sup> Statement made by an official of the Brazilian Foreign Ministry, Antonio Guerreiro, in a seminar “Issues for Latin American and the Caribbean at the 1995 NPT Conference,” sponsored by the Programme for Promoting Nuclear Non-proliferation (PPNN), held in Caracas, Venezuela, on May 3-6, 1994.

<sup>19</sup> Since its first issue in 1986, the bimonthly magazine *Argentina Nuclear* has discussed repeatedly the deteriorating situation of the Argentine nuclear industry and the financial difficulties that affected the National Atomic Energy Commission. It attributed these difficulties mainly to the policies followed by the Ministry of Economy. This state of affairs is also described in an article by Luis Fernando Calviño, “La Argentina y el régimen internacional de la no proliferación,” included in Roberto Russell and

Rubén Perin, eds., *Argentina en el mundo 1973-1987* (Buenos Aires: Grupo Editor Latinoamericano, 1988), pp. 236-237.

<sup>20</sup> Contrary to what is generally believed abroad, in Argentina, the role of the military in nuclear development has always been very minor. Western comments such as “There has been significant military involvement in nuclear programs in both Argentina and Brazil” or “President Raúl Alfonsín has had some success in curtailing the role of the military in nuclear research and development,” do not have any basis at all in relation to Argentina. (See Barbara Black and Warren Donnelly, *Argentina, Brazil, and Nuclear Proliferation*, CRS Issue Brief (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, October 4, 1991.) The armed forces never had nuclear programs or participated in nuclear research and development. The only reason usually given to substantiate such repeated assertions is that, for many years, the heads of the Argentine National Atomic Energy Commission were retired navy officers. But the Commission was never under the authority of the navy. It was always subject directly to the control of the executive and its personnel were overwhelmingly civilian, as were the Commission’s board of directors. However, it is recognized that the situation in Brazil was different; the armed forces had their so-called “parallel programs,” but the importance and seriousness of these activities tend to be exaggerated.

<sup>21</sup> Leonard Spector, “The Silence Spread,” *Foreign Policy* 58 (Spring 1985), pp. 53-78.