

called parallel nuclear programme centred at an institute in São Paulo. The enrichment plant, to be run by the Brazilian Navy, is not to be covered by international safeguards and can therefore be used for the manufacture of uranium for weapon purposes.

In announcing this technological breakthrough, Brazil reiterated its commitment to using nuclear energy exclusively for peaceful purposes, a commitment which was subsequently included in the new Brazilian Constitution. However, of the three reactors now possessed or being built by Brazil, one barely functions owing to constant breakdowns, and the construction of the other two is almost at a standstill. In addition, the planned Brazilian nuclear-powered submarine cannot be built before the turn of the century. In this situation, it is questionable what peaceful purposes can be served by the production of enriched uranium, which is expected to start soon, if there are no civil power reactors or submarine reactors to use it. The prospects for exporting substantial quantities of enriched uranium to other countries are not bright either, considering the competition among the established suppliers on a saturated world market.

Argentina operates an unsafeguarded uranium-enrichment plant (using the traditional gaseous diffusion technology) configured to produce 20-percent-enriched fuel, even though all the reactors in the country run on natural or slightly enriched uranium. Argentina does not appear to be able as yet to produce weapon-grade uranium, but, as regards the technique for separating plutonium from spent reactor fuel, it is more advanced than Brazil; a reprocessing plant, designed to separate 15 kilograms of plutonium a year is under construction. It is noteworthy, however, that in recent years the role of the Argentine military in directing nuclear affairs has been reduced.

The danger of nuclear weapon proliferation in Latin America has been dampened by an improvement of

political relations between Brazil and Argentina. A regional policy centred on economic cooperation, in particular in the nuclear field, seems to be replacing the rivalry between the two countries based on nationalistic military considerations.

#### *Others*

In addition to the threshold countries, there are four parties to the NPT—Iran, Iraq, Libya and Taiwan—whose commitments to the Treaty have been questioned even though their nuclear activities are internationally safeguarded. The first three countries are at a very early stage of nuclear development and lack the industrial infrastructure needed to support a significant indigenous nuclear programme. Moreover, some Iranian and Iraqi nuclear facilities under construction were severely damaged during the Gulf War. By contrast, Taiwan, which has a well-developed civil nuclear energy programme, has been obliged, under pressure from the United States, to abandon nuclear activities of dubious intent.

### CONCLUSION

The nuclear non-proliferation regime has proved to be fairly robust. There is a good chance that the next NPT Review Conference in 1990 will reaffirm the validity of, and the support for, the NPT, and that the 1995 Conference, which is to decide the Treaty's future, will extend the duration of the NPT for another lengthy period.

Non-proliferation has become a norm of international behaviour which cannot be easily defied. However, the ultimate solution to the problem of nuclear proliferation would be possible only in a world in which the possession of nuclear weapons is recognized as both unnecessary and unacceptable. This goal is still remote. To bring it nearer, the process of nuclear arms reduction and elimination should continue without interruption.