

discredited part of the body politic. Instead, the armed forces left government as part of a "pact" with civilian political parties. The forces kept their prestige intact and gave way gracefully with timings for surrendering power that they themselves decided upon. Nonetheless, as of 1985 there were to be civilian governments in both Brasilia and Buenos Aires for the first time since the mid-1960s.<sup>9</sup>

This was to have enormous consequences for the bilateral relationship as well as for the two countries' nuclear programmes. It is important to realize, however, that even before these events there were some signs of change in Brazilian-Argentine relations and especially in the nuclear field. A point easily forgotten in the midst of discussions of the rivalry between the two countries is that throughout their independent history, they were quite able to forget their differences when greater priorities of a shared kind showed themselves. At various stages their foreign policies had aimed at shared objectives and this had been especially true in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This may have particular resonance in terms of long-term progress in the India-Pakistan context. Those societies also over history have done things successfully together and not allowed their antagonism to halt entirely processes which might benefit both. But these occasions have been rare indeed since independence.

It is also true that elements of the military governments of each country were concerned about the dangers of the rivalry, and especially the nuclear side of it, as they moved closer to nuclear weapons capability. Prudence became more visible in the bilateral relationship as the two sides became aware of just how close they were to becoming nuclear powers. Each showed increasing sensitivity to the concerns of the other. Diplomatic activity as well as carefully phrased public statements demonstrated this effect. Doubtless this was a result of the arrival of democratic governments in both capitals and the new context of those civilian regimes finding their feet and troubled by potential dangers, as well as the more personal anxiety on the part of both Alfonsín and Sarney to keep the lid on potentially destabilizing nuclear matters. Those concerns carried the day despite military reluctance in both capitals.

Argentina was certainly keen to keep its perceived head-start over Brazil in nuclear matters, and Brazil equally wanted to enhance its prestige and move forward in the nuclear game, but neither was willing to take major risks on nuclear matters which might actually have a serious negative impact on the bilateral relationship. In this context the accord on the development of a joint hydro-electric complex at Itaipú appears to have been decisive. Mutual suspicions had held up the plan for many years but in 1979, following key Argentine concessions, a deal was made. Energy sources other than nuclear were to be much more available in the key northern regions of Argentina and the equally vital southern ones of Brazil.

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<sup>9</sup> This issue is given a good overview in Alain Rouquié, "The Military in Latin American Politics," in Leslie Bethell (ed), *Latin America: Politics and Society since 1930* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.145-216, especially pp. 195 and 204-5.