

we have also seen, such a debate was in many senses a largely internal military one in Pakistan, less influenced by public opinion.

Nuclear weapons are now popular in India.²³ And responding to the Indians' nuclear posture with one of one's own appears welcome by Pakistanis. Nationalism is alive and well. And even fanaticism is gaining ground. Thus that part of the picture is a much less favourable one in South Asia today than in South America ten to fifteen years ago. Nuclear weapons were never a really popular option in either Latin American country and little enthusiasm for them could be garnered at any stage of what passed for debates on their acquisition. For this reason, India and Pakistan are likely to remain relatively insulated from international opinion, and are therefore for the foreseeable future more likely to pay lip service to international norms than to willingly engage in proactive dialogue, unless considerable incentives are offered. Furthermore, unlike in the Brazilian-Argentine case, the widespread public support in both India and Pakistan for the nuclear option makes nuclear weapons programs relatively immune to changes in political leadership.

It would appear that the challenge in this context is to discover what sort of democracies and contexts for those democracies can act as breaks on nuclear weapons development. The Latin American strategic context was one of low threat perception on all sides. In South Asia it is certainly not that. But civil society in Latin America did act as such a break, at least in terms of producing civilian presidents uninterested in the prestige and national security arguments of their military chiefs where nuclear weapons were concerned. Is there a way for such elements of civil society to develop in South Asia? Is there a way of curbing popular support of a nationalist kind which tends to favour nuclear options? The answers would require a major study of how democratic forces in the two countries operate. But it can be said that the Latin American case shows that it is possible. In a context of two proud and prestige-oriented publics there developed an opposition or indifference to the nuclear option which allowed leaders to stand up to the nationalists and military on the issue.

Discussion of military influence on policy might raise some of the same points. Strategic issues matter much more in South Asia at this time than they did in Latin America in the years studied. As discussed, threats are real and cannot be taken lightly by those responsible for national defence. In this context, although it might seem at first glance that the India-Pakistan dynamic can be explained through a realist approach based largely on questions of international security, it would be imprudent to ignore the important – some would suggest dominant – influence of domestic social, religious and political pressures. Such pressures, and the changes they produced, were in large part responsible for the decision by Brazil and Argentina to withdraw from the nuclear brink. The pressures in India and Pakistan are different and, at least for the moment, are either focussed in favour of nuclear weapons or, where they are not, are subordinate to – or at least balanced by – larger security concerns. It is conceivable that the major subcontinental societies will evolve to the point

²³ An interesting study based on polling results is offered by Samina Ahmed, David Cortright and Amitabh Mattoo in "Public Opinion and Nuclear Options for South Asia", in *Asian Survey* XXXVIII(8) (August 1998), pp. 727-44.