

Dreams of *grandeza* seemed possible of fulfilment as economic and demographic growth became tied to an active nuclear development policy. Arguing that peaceful nuclear explosions might well be necessary for national development, especially in the crucial Amazon region, Brasilia rejected out of hand arguments that it eschew such options. Argentina could not be seen to be behind in this and pressed on with its programme as well with similar arguments for its validity.⁵

Both countries saw nuclear energy, and potentially nuclear weapons capabilities, as ways to force their way into key international forums from which they were currently excluded. The Brazilians in particular pointed to recent French and then Chinese experience as showing that nuclear weapons were important not only for national prestige but also in order to be invited to the club where real decisions in the world were being taken. Military and nationalist regimes in both countries were likely to take such arguments very seriously indeed. The place of nuclear research in wider national technological programmes of development was also emphasized. It was simply not possible, Brazilian officials argued, to be in the scientific game if one excluded nuclear power from one's legitimate spheres of activity.

In Argentina, a further reason for nuclear research and power, and even for nuclear weapons, surfaced in these years. This was the "great equalizer" argument. It suggested, in classic geopolitical terms, that with Brazil outstripping Argentina in population, size of armed forces, to some extent quality of military equipment, economic and industrial production, and many other fields of national power criteria; Argentina could not afford to give up its relative advantage in nuclear power. Indeed, given Brazil's conventional and overall national strength, the now weaker Argentina would be obliged to develop nuclear weapons in order to stand on equal terms with its now stronger neighbour.⁶ Such a development would be in the armed forces sphere but of course its impact would be political as much as military.

Not much noise was to be made on these points, given the stark opposition to nuclear proliferation shown at this time by the great powers. However, it was possible to carry on with early development of nuclear power without unduly ruffling feathers of important countries, and later on turn such research to weapons development if needed.

The 1973 war shocked the world in terms of many nations' dependency on energy sources from abroad and especially with regard to the supply of petroleum from the Middle East. Price rises

⁵ Jorge A. Aja Espil, "Argentina," in Jozef Goldblat, *Non-Proliferation: the Why and the Wherefore* (London, Taylor and Francis, 1985), pp. 74-7.

⁶ Two sets of figures will illustrate the trends. In 1955, Argentina had a military establishment of 131,500 soldiers compared to 133,500 Brazilians. Twenty years later, Argentina had 133,500 while Brazil had moved to an establishment of 254,500 personnel. In 1960, Argentina's GDP was \$32.7 billion while Brazil's was \$55 billion. In 1980, the figures for the two countries GDP were \$62.6 billion and \$229 billion respectively. These figures come from Wayne A. Selcher, "Brazilian-Argentine Relations in the 1980s: from Wary Rivalry to Friendly Competition" *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs*, XXVII(2) (Summer 1985), p. 28.