

In addition, relations with the United States could not really be normalized until such time as some progress was made on the dispute with the United Kingdom. The reestablishment of diplomatic relations with London aided much in making this now possible. But other issues still rankled with the United States. One of these was the danger of nuclear proliferation in Latin America and the other was dangerous missile technology spreading to the region, especially in the case of the *Condor II* surface to surface missile. Menem could see the advantages, some would say the vital need, to move to placate the United States on both these issues. Pressure from Washington on each was fierce and rarely let up. And Argentine economic weakness, as well as its political isolation, placed the United States in an exceptionally favourable position to finally influence events on these matters after decades of a virtual impossibility to do so.

A context then existed for Argentina to accept the abandonment of not only nuclear weapons research but also of missile research potentially connected to it. The "great equalizer" argument simply lost all significant weight in the context of a rivalry which was being abandoned by Argentina as impossible to win. If one was going to abandon the competition with Brazil across the board in a context of regional cooperation replacing rivalry, then a great equalizer was no longer relevant. And this meant that Brazilian nationalists and military thinking would have to adjust as well. If Argentina was going to reduce its defence spending, as well as cut its nuclear and missile programmes in this context of the actual abandonment of the rivalry, the impact on Brazil was obvious. It would be possible to be magnanimous without fear and take the Argentines under one's wing, as well as question many of the military measures previously being taken because of the Argentine "threat."

It must also be said that at this time, and with the steady work of Itamaraty, the foreign ministry; the Brazilians were extremely subtle and intelligent in handling the period of deep crisis in Argentina. Brasilia insisted that Buenos Aires be treated in every sense as an equal each time there was an event of importance. At no time was there the slightest indication that Brazil was either looking down on the Argentines or treating them as a has-been. And the nuclear issue, far from being the main cross for both to bear, soon became a sort of showcase area where progress could be shown as both possible and profitable. In the context of the thorn it had been in the relationship before, this change was important indeed.¹¹

The year 1990 was to be key. Both sides showed increasing willingness, indeed keenness, to expand the areas of cooperation in nuclear matters. In November an accord allowing for bilateral inspections included as well a major integration of most parts of the two programmes. Given that both countries were now considered to have the means to rapidly move to arms production, this accord was crucial. The next year an accord was signed with the IAEA whereby the bilateral agreement was integrated into the system of international guarantees. And in the next years both

¹¹ Rut Diamint, "Argentina y los Procesos de verificación de las medidas de fomento de la confianza," in Francisco Rojas Aravena (ed), *Medidas de confianza mutua: verificación* (Santiago, FLACSO, 1996), pp. 197-232, especially pp. 204-12.