The role of interpresidential diplomacy in regional integration processes: The case of Argentinian-Brazilian nuclear rapprochement

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Abstract

Most of the South American integration processes have failed. However, not all cases have had the same outcome; indeed, there have been some truly successful exceptions with respect to what has taken place commonly within the region. One such exception is the outcome of the process of bilateral cooperation between Argentina and Brazil during the 1980s and 1990s in the area of the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The objective of this paper is to examine the key role played by presidents Raúl Alfonsín and José Sarney in the process of bilateral cooperation. The strong interpresidentialist structure (understood as an indigenous kind of intergovermentalism and characterized as having a strong presidential initiative) played a fundamental role with respect to the initiation of the building the reciprocal confidence between two countries that, while not enemies were rivals. This allowed for the launch of the rapprochement process in an extremely sensitivity area. Within the above context and considering the need to build confidence with respect to use, the atom constitutes one essential incentive: the condition for the demand for integration during a time when the state is yielding its capacity for making decisions and management in the nuclear sector.

Keywords
Presidential diplomacy – Regional Integration – Nuclear Rapprochement – Interpresidentialism – Argentina/Brazil
Introduction

Today’s World scenario of regional integration besides Europe, is not very promising, except maybe for the ASEAN. Latin America is not a stranger to this reality, as the Mercosur is living an insignificant present, while the CAN is nothing else but “initials”. On the other side UNASUR is not getting, and is not going, any farther than that.

However, there are some special cases. One of them is the process of bilateral cooperation between Argentina and Brazil in the peaceful use of nuclear energy area. Rarely known, it is inedited in South America because of its deepness and because it has one of the few supranational organizations in the region –ABACC- (Milanese, 2004A; 2004B; 2007). Within this framework, the scope if this paper is to analyze the key role played by presidents as the main agent of this process. It will concentrate on the cases of the Raúl Alfonsín and Jose Sarney governments during the 1980’s, implying that we will concentrate on the analysis of the construction not the consolidation of the process.

In this context, we will make reference, to the strong interpresidentialist structure of the process, that played a fundamental role regarding the initiation of the construction of reciprocal confidence between the two governments (and countries) that, while not enemies were rivals. This allowed the launch of the rapprochement process in an extremely sensitivity area and contributed to a more compressive integration process.

Interpresidentialism as theoretical framework

Following Andres Malamud (2003, 2005), the interpresidentialism can be understood as an extreme kind of intergovernmentalism, which can be distinguished, mainly, by the active and regular participation of the presidents in diplomatic affairs (interpresidential diplomacy). Or according to the author could be describing as the:

[...] outcome of combining an international strategy, presidential diplomacy, with a domestic institutional structure, presidential democracy. It consists of resorting to direct negotiations between national presidents who, making use of their institutional and political capabilities, intervene on regional affairs every time a crucial decision has to be made or a critical conflict needs to be solved (Malamud and Schmitter, 2007: 16).

In fact, the interpresidentialism is an “autochthonous South-American product” originated in the continent’s tradition of the moving towards potentially dominant presidentialism (see more in Shugart and Mainwaring, 1997: 49). The key features of this process are a large degree of flexibility and a modest level of institutionalization. Yet, the presidents do not act like merely individual actors placed in realm of institutional emptiness. Rather, they lean across a specific institutional format. This way, the
interpresidialism appears the opposite to the supranationality\(^1\) since the presidential hyperactivity and the politicization of the processes drown the possibility of construction of any technical organism of supranational nature, leaving it outside the minimum independent margin of action. Hence, because of their institutional capacities and the traditional role of the presidential structure, in practical terms, the presidents themselves constitute the main normative source and dispute-settlers. Therefore, each demand, be that significant or trivial, coming from national actors or foreign governments, is directly derived to the president (see Fig. 1).

Fig.1 Traditional Sequence of Latin-American Interpresidialism

Based on Malamud, 2003

In fact, the presidents were perceived by the political actors as the most competent problem solvers because of their legitimacy, offered by both institutional and informal attributes. In this way, if the presidents were the main agents, the summit presidential meetings were the most important scenarios, playing an important role, even if they did not guarantee success, since the presence of the heads of state in negotiations legitimates the negotiation processes (Deustua, 2004).

Introducing the case. The first steps towards the process of integration.

We can say that there are two equally balanced competitors wishing to reach the same objective: the leadership in South America. This is the feature that characterized, until the 1980’s, the relations between Argentina and Brazil. Not enmity, but, undoubtedly, the rivalry was the reason behind the "nuclear race" that was by no mean a warlike one, but rather a race, in which neither side wanted to see the other surpassing the opponent.

At the same time, despite of the well-known initial lack of interest of both political and nuclear authorities (see more in Orstein 1998: 129 for the examples of the Brazilian

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\(^1\) Basically, supranationality implies the secession of sovereignty on the part of a nation-state, which voluntarily confers it to "[...] a new and more ample center with institutions that have the competence affecting, to greater or smaller degree, the preexisting States" (Morata, 1998: 89).
rejectionism), the antagonism did not prevent a steady growth of informal relations between the representatives (mainly scientists) of the nuclear organisms of both countries. Hence, although the convenience of the collaboration with Brazil always seemed obvious for Argentina, the mutual rapprochement was almost exclusively of academic nature (for example, between the National Commission of Atomic Energy - CNEA- and various groups of researchers, mainly from Brazilian universities). The contacts were vast, yet barely institutionalized.

Eventually, in both countries some circles within the military governments became concerned with the state of affairs in the issue of our discussion. As a consequence, the initial rapprochement between the rivals started to materialize and both parties agreed it was necessary to initiate a dialogue that would lead them to an effective institutionalized cooperation. One of the evidences of this change of attitude is the following statement by the General Juan Enrique Guglialmeli”2 (1976) in his "Argentina, Brazil and the atomic bomb":

> From the world and hemispheric perspectives as well as taking into account the common concerns, it seems to be a true anachronism to let the chauvinist sectors to promote rivalries of the past against the interests of others. I urge to put behind the contradictions between both countries for our own benefit and for the genuine objectives of the interested nations.

It is in May of 1980 that the proposed agreement was materialized. Back then, the Brazilian President Joao Baptist of Figueredo officially visited the Republic of Argentina and the nuclear issue became one of the protagonists of the agenda. In the Joint Declaration, the two heads of states expressed "their satisfaction of signing documents in the area of nuclear cooperation" and expressed their intent to “ratify emphatically that the nuclear programs of both countries persecute exclusively peaceful aims and by no way towards the development of nuclear arms” (Carasales 1997: 63).

It is important to mention that both countries had plants and other non-submissive facilities but neither safeguards nor any other type of international control. This could generate suspicions with respect to the production of nuclear weapons within either of the countries3 (Redick, 1996). Hence, following Hirst and Rico (1992: 36), the cooperation in the nuclear area was due fundamentally to the identification of mutual interest that allowed the beginning of the process of the formation of reciprocal confidence. Besides, that was an answer (although a weak one) to the growing international pressure4 towards the nonproliferation (Carasales 19965; Redick, 1996), since the refusal to sign the Treaty

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2 Even though only having one vote without too much decision power (Massot, 1995: 221).
4 Despite of the fact that later on it was possible to figure out the exclusively peaceful objectives, at this moment the US non-proliferation authorities had been quite skeptical with respect to the Argentinean-Brazilian true motivation in the area of the development of nuclear energy.
of Non-Proliferation (TNP) had placed both Argentina and Brazil in a complicated and uncomfortable situation making the development of the national programs more difficult.

However, although the expectations after the signing of the agreements were high, the following-up did not bring the awaited results after all. That is because:

[...] whereas at the highest level the political decision had been made to cooperate instead of competing, later on, at the lower levels concerned with the implementation of the agreements, the impact of the decades of distrusts and lack of mutual confidence together with practical difficulties of application had prevented the further progress in the way that was initially thought in 1980 (Carasales, 1997).

Democracy and cooperation: at the height of the interpresidential diplomacy in the nuclear sector.

Although the first steps were taken under military presidencies the integration process, whether in general terms or specifically in the nuclear field, begun in the middle 1980s, when democratic regimes were established in the region.

In 1983, the return of democracy marked a new stage of the Argentinean institutional development. The energetic president-elect Raúl Alfonsin had the firm intention to place the relations of Argentina with the neighbors at a new level. However, the efforts of the government that proclaimed democracy its supreme political value could hardly be welcomed by the dictatorships of Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Chile (Carasales 1997: 73).

Once elected, the Brazilian president Tancredo Neves da Fortuna (1984) visited Argentina aiming at the establishing of close relations with its Argentinean pair. But just a short time before assuming the presidency, Neves passed away and his place was taken by Jose Sarney (vice-president-elect). Along with Alfonsin, the latter would participate in a little known process of rapprochement that was characterized by the strong political and personal impact (Malamud 2002: 51).

Already from that moment on, the democracies of the Southern Cone started to demonstrate a very particular way in which presidents participated in the processes of integration. This process began formally in 1985 precisely because of the close relations between Alfonsin and Sarney that contributed into the proper mode of how the presidents ruled. Within this framework, the nuclear issue was not the only that appeared on the negotiation table. Even more, the nuclear theme seemed to be rather of lesser importance compared to a number of other issues of “greater economical importance”. Yet, as the economic profile decelerated as a result of asynchrionic cycles in both countries, the "atom" was gaining momentum becoming one of the main topics. Moreover, the political impact of the nuclear rapprochement can be considered a counterbalance to the difficulties presented in the economic area (Bocco, 1989: 26).

The rapprochement in the nuclear matters had been part of [the] vast process. This was unusual inasmuch as the nature of the subject normally
requires that an effective cooperation between two traditionally rival countries has been established at the final stage of the period of rapprochement after an acceptable level of confidence and security has been already reached.

Beyond the significant advance in the nuclear agenda, the fact that such a delicate matter as the nuclear one had emerged in the beginning and not in the end of the process of the ample rapprochement has always puzzled national and international observers (Carasales 1997: 74).

As already mentioned, the first agreements in the sphere of economic cooperation took place simultaneously with the de-facto initial rapprochement in the nuclear sector promoted by the military governments. Although this development corresponds to the wide-ranging political line of the time, the civil governments had different kind of motivations. Namely, whereas the military governments looked at these agreements as the way to diminish the international pressure or, perhaps, as an attempt to deal with the increasing external vulnerability, the governments of Alfonsín and Sarney perceived that taking into account the magnitude of the internal conflict related to the democratic transition, it was crucial to diminish the tension in the external front first.

This way, the agreements reached in the nuclear sector were perceived by the civilian authorities as an instrument to restrict the power of the military in the domestic affairs (mainly, in the Brazilian case, since in Brazil the Armed Forces historically played a fundamental role in the development of the nuclear energy and had a great deal of autonomy in this issue). Hence, the process discussed in this section had two dimensions: national and international. As for the former, it was the issue of the civilian control of the military. As for the latter, the task was to reduce the degree of mutual suspicion (Llenderrozas 2001: 333).

Presidential encounters and construction of reciprocal confidence.

Alfonsín and Sarney met for the first time on 30 November 1985 in Foz de Iguazú, in Brazil, where they elaborated the Joint Declaration on Nuclear Policy that marked the departure point of a series of political agreements in the nuclear sphere. Moreover, the Declaration of Iguazú represents not only the opening of a group of agreements, but also the closure of one stage and the beginning of another. The meeting in Brazil was a crucial turning point that symbolizes not simply the continuity but rather the challenge to the agreements made in 1980, initiating a new period in the relations ("nuclear" as well as political in general terms) between both countries, giving a new and strong impulse to the scientific cooperation and the joint efforts (see more in Ornstein 1998: 136).

Within the main guidelines found in the above agreement, it is possible to outline the following fundamental elements:

- The reiteration of the commitment to develop the nuclear energy for exclusively peaceful use.
• Both parties agreed that the major objective of their efforts is the cooperation in all the fields of the peaceful use of the nuclear energy and they agreed to assist each other in any other aspects if such assistance would be considered necessary.

• The parties called upon the other Latin American countries with the same objectives as Argentina and Brazil to join the cooperative efforts of the latter.

Also, like in the case of the 1980s, one of the main objectives of the cooperation was to attempt to reduce the dependency from the imported fuel and raw material since both countries faced the increasing difficulties in obtaining these sources of energy (Llenderrozas 2001: 266).

In the declaration, the presidents did not limit themselves to making purely political statements. They established a workgroup coordinated by the ministries of foreign affairs (a political axis) and integrated by the representatives of respective commissions and nuclear companies (i.e. concerned with the technical aspects of the nuclear cooperation). This is how the first regional institution within the sector was established with a structure that matched a classic intergovernmental model.

Yet, the Declaration of Iguazu was not the only step taken in order to advance the cooperation in the nuclear sector. In the subsequent years, a rollover of presidential encounters could not do more to demonstrate the importance that the sector had been given within the complex efforts towards the integration. Although the number of meetings is one of the more interesting features of the process; another phenomenon should not be left unmentioned either. This is the frequency with which the visits had been taking place, obviously much greater that would be expected by one considering purely diplomatic objectives.

Let us look in more detail at the series of the presidential meetings.


Through this declaration, the governments stated their will to overpass the cooperation process obstacles. This was an effort to demonstrate transparency (for which it was decided to intensify the mutual visits and give incentives to stimulate the participation of the private sector in industrial projects, moreover to attempt to coordinate the government positions in international forums) with the scope of defending common interest in order to maintain the region as a free nuclear weapons area.

In addition, on July 30, 1986, was signed, in Buenos Aires, the Protocolo No. 11, regarding the immediate information and reciprocal assistance in case of nuclear accident and radiological emergencies. This was a reaction to the accident occurred at Chernobyl. Some months later, on December 10, 1986, were signed, in Brazilia, the Protocolo Nº 17 that defined specific areas of cooperation.

Without being too abounding as far as its content concerned, the Declaration of Viedma represented a fundamental landmark of the cooperation in the sector. This is because the declaration was followed by the visit of President Sarney to the uranium enrichment plant in Pilcaniyeu, the one that was not under the system of safeguards maintained by the International Agency for the Atomic Energy (IAEA).  

On this matter, the President Sarney had the following to say:

[...] this is the first time ever in the world that a head of the State, invited by another head of the State, visits a uranium enrichment facility, which is by its very own nature a secret installation. This gesture demonstrates the level of relations between Brazil and Argentina and a vision to construct a future with President Alfonsín” (Statements by José Sarney a Clarín 18/7/87).

In addition to the symbolic visit of Sarney, a group of Brazilian experts was invited to inspect the Pilcaniyeu facilities that would represent a transcendental act in the process of integration between both countries. Referring to this visit, Marco Marzo remembers that:

For a moment, the Brazilian delegation was skeptical about the visit. Our president visited the plant a week before, and, therefore, we thought that our trip would be just a protocol one (...) To our surprise, a great amount of questions we had made were answered by the Argentineans. We visited all the facilities (...) This technology is very secret. This step was very important for the construction of confidence, not only between both countries, but also between the professionals involved in the nuclear business (Marzo 1996).

Marzo further noted that:

Then I thought, well; this is going to be a protocol visit. We will make many questions and people would say “yada, yada” and never really respond the questions. But, to my surprise, we went to the enrichment plant and all our questions were answered.


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5 Belongs to the United Nations.
6 Quoted in Campbell, Rozemberg and Svarzman 1999, p. 101.
7 Former Director of the Division of Safeguards of Brazil.
The signing of the declaration corresponded to the President Alfonsín’s visit to the ARAMAR test center, during which the inauguration of an enrichment plant took place. At that time, this plant was also excluded from the system of safeguards maintained by IAEA. This was a gesture of vital importance, since this center belongs to the Brazilian Navy, and, thus, the visit was important not only as a contribution to the process of integration, but also as a sign of the success of a democratic transition in both countries.

We can also highlight some advances regarding nuclear safety and fast reactors safeguards (mainly concerning the mutual provision of components), without forgetting the expressed satisfaction because of the joint action responding the Goiana accident.

d. Declaration of Ezeiza, 29 November 1988 (the last declaration at this stage)

By the end of 1988 Sarney returned to Argentina to visit the CNEA (Radiochemical Process laboratory) used to product fuel to feed the Atucha I plant and the heavy water reactor of Embalse. In this opportunity was made the last Declaration about nuclear politics of Alfonsín and Sarney governments that tried to launch the joint production of fast reactors.

This series of presidential visits (and 24 protocols signed) represented a high point of the process of rapprochement between Argentina and Brazil. This is because the reciprocal visits to the facilities determined an alteration in the knowledge about the capacities of each other. In addition, the decision to distribute and to publicize the content of the declarations at IAEA meetings was a certain indication of attempts to increase the transparency with respect to the development of the nuclear energy by Argentina and Brazil in the eyes of the rest of the world (Bocco 1989: 28, 29). Hence, the continuous intensification of the Argentinean-Brazilian relations in the nuclear field led by the presidents allowed both sides to augment the knowledge about the other’s capacities and mutual possibilities as well as contributed to the process of the formation and strengthening of reciprocal confidence.

To the end of this stage of integration, the balance was positive. In spite of the modest progress from a technical point of view, the intensive and sincere efforts to place the relations between old competitors in a new prospective resulted in sound accomplishments in the political arena.

As previously mentioned, from the very beginning the intense and repeated contacts between the Heads of State of both countries had become an important feature of the process of cooperation in the nuclear area as well as of the process of bilateral integration in general.

The visits by the Chiefs of State – something that is worth of particularly pointing out here - were not simply a kind of usual protocol acts in the development of relations between two neighbors. They had the aim to demonstrate, at the highest level, that the initiated process of rapprochement was impelled and guaranteed by the proper governors of both countries, who had been paying their personal and direct attention to the process and who examined with a special interest everything that
could be done in the nearest future [to achieve the objectives of the cooperation], and to give a particular endorsement them if that was necessary.

It is obvious that the visits had high political meaning anyway, but they also led to the dealing with the technical issues when the Presidents and their assistants touched upon the matters of extremely sensitive character such as the activities of the plants of uranium enrichment (Carasales 1997: 85).

From my point of view, if somebody would say to me in the middle of the '70 that in 1984 or 1985 there will be cooperation between Argentina and Brazil, I would think this person is “crazy”. This is because I had my personal observations: as Director of the Division of Safeguards in Brazil I had never had a contact with my Argentinian counterpart. Occasionally, at some symposium we saw each other, but had never surpassed the formalities. In other words, I was not informed about the nuclear development in Argentina and they were not informed about the one of Brazil (Marzo, 1996).

Adding to the above observations, the little changes in the negotiating team of each country (mainly at the technical level) made possible that the process became not only more meaningful but also more rapid. In this sense, the exchange visits by technicians and scientists to the plants and nuclear test centers of each country were particularly helpful (Bocco 1989: 30).

In the axis of cooperation, the interpresidential diplomacy was put into action, mainly, because the subject was an extremely delicate one (pertaining to the realm of "high politics"), particularly, in the period of the transitions to democracy during the decade of the 1980’s. In order to be successful, any initiative had to have a strong endorsement by the executives and by the presidents. Thus, technical institutions like the work group remained in a distant background as opposed to the central character acquired by the heads of governments who executed their roles at a much more accelerated rate, leaving the former at the margin and with no capacity of action. This is because the presidents were perceived the most reliable intermediaries (Malamud 2003: 219) capable of carrying out any kind of negotiations in addition to their visual positioning as the undisputed nation’s leaders (a strong tradition in both countries), i.e. as a figure, or an individual, whose authority is higher than that of any institution.

On the other hand, whereas it is certain that the mutual declarations reflected the achievements, they also the pointed out the unsolved issues, in particular, with respect to the issue of reciprocal control. This appeared to be the most difficult topic. In both cases, the resistance to the constitution of these kinds of control measures was high, specially, in
the case of Brazil,\textsuperscript{8} where no consensus existed neither between the military nor between the governments and Itamaratí’s functionaries.

Although the process initiated by the Declaration of Iguazú allowed both sides to make clear the panorama of existing distrusts, as noted by Bocco (1989:46), the subject of the mutual safeguards was rapidly transforming into one of the main questions remaining pending to the bilateral cooperation. To make the situation even more complicated, the end of the mandates of Alfonsín and Sarney left many doubts with respect to the continuity of the cooperation in the sector.

1989 appeared as critical year. Their more likely successors (according to the public opinion polls of that time), Carlos Menem, in the Argentinean case, and Fernando Collor de Melo, in the case of Brazil (although with a smaller certainty comparing to Argentina since there would be Luiz Ignacio da Silva to dispute Collor’s presidency in the second electoral run), seemed to choose hard line, during the electoral campaigns, in the issue of nuclear cooperation.

Historically the peronismo was favorable to the nuclear development\textsuperscript{9} (in this way the policies of the sector seemed to be guarantied). But the exacerbated nationalism of Menem discourse, once elected it changed dramatically to neoliberal positions, generating doubts about the cooperation on this field.

Yet, soon, the doubts disappeared. Once Menem assumed the presidency he cleared any fears about the matter with the following speech:

\begin{quote}
We feel proud of the process initiated with the Iguazú Declaration of 1985, this allowed us to consolidate the mutual confidence, exchange experiences, share technologies and generate new researches. Together we defend the inalienable right to arrive to the next century under own shared scientific and technological bases to obtain economic and social benefits for our people.\textsuperscript{10}
\end{quote}

On the other hand, Collor de Melo, that assumed the charge on March 17, 1990, also intended from the beginning to maintain a conciliating position on the matter. One of his first actions was to close the suspicious center of Cachimbo (a facility to realize peaceful nuclear explosions) even though the opposition of the Brazilian army.

Following the inauguration of the Brazilian Head of State on July 6, 1990 he traveled to Buenos Aires where both Brazilian and Argentinean presidents issued an

\textsuperscript{8} “I can remember that in 1988, when we started to discuss the regime of mutual inspections, the position of Brazil was the one favorable towards the broadening of the technical cooperation and academic exchange. I know that Argentineans pressed for the joint system of inspections.” (Levite, 1997).

\textsuperscript{9} Esto contrastaba con la tradicional postura del radicalismo, que sin ser opositor (Alfonsín fomentó cooperación en la política nuclear pero disminuyó sensiblemente el presupuesto de la CNEA si se lo compara con todas las administraciones previas) contaba con una visión “menos positiva”.

\textsuperscript{10} Quoted in Carasales, 1997: 90
official communiqué that contained symbolic but very important for the “nuclear integration” paragraphs, in particular, the following ones:

[...] the necessity to continue and to deepen the cooperation and the joint efforts... the coincidence of points of view on nuclear policy... the commitment of Argentina and Brazil to use the nuclear energy for exclusively pacific aims and to develop it for the advance and the well-being of the people [...]

Praising in addition

[...] the tasks of the Brazilian-Argentinean Permanent Committee on Nuclear Policy... for its work facilitates the attempts to deepen and to extend the fields of cooperation and collaboration in this matter between two countries [...] (Carasales 1997: 92)

The process continued in the way similar to the previous period, i.e. where the presidents were the major protagonists impelling permanently the forward movement and being practically the only guarantee of the continuity of the process. Moreover, the close relations initiated in the interpresidential diplomacy should be regarded the fundamental stones in the background of the success of the rapprochement between both countries. Put it in a different way, the guarantees originated in the commitment of the presidents allowed both nations to achieve the reciprocal confidence that would allow the future cession of sovereignty for the construction of supranational institutions in the area of extreme sensitivity. Hence, even though not always unambiguous, until this moment the rapprochement between Argentina and Brazil had a clear interpresidentialist structure.
The end of the period and a change of strategy

A new significant step (that represented a new kind of movement) occurred a few months later, on November 28 of 1990, again in the city of Foz de Iguazú, the place where a declaration on Argentinean-Brazilian Common Nuclear Policy was made public. Similarly to the declaration sounded in 1985, the one of 1990 also marked the beginning of a new stage in the integration process indicating the highest point of the efforts. As the first of the interpresidential encounters showed the way for cooperation and integration, this one would place them on new basis that would mean the definitive insertion in the prevailing structure.

Considering that the Permanent Committee has elaborated the mechanisms of control over the nuclear activities of both countries, which establish, among others, common criteria of classification of materials and nuclear power plants and the determination of its relevance, and permits the reciprocal inspections to all the nuclear power plants; it was decided
1. To approve the Common System of Accounting and Control (SCCC), decided by the Permanent Committee that will be applied to all the nuclear activities in both countries.\textsuperscript{11}

However, the content of the Declaration was not limited to the above agreements. The document also demonstrated a significant advance towards the implementation of the idea to conclude a common agreement with IAEA safeguards in order to put into full effect the Treaty for Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America (Tlatelolco).

Finally, the implementation of all decisions made in Foz de Iguazú took off with unusual speed. This is especially true if one would take into account the complexity of the subject and, consequently, a great deal of resistance at the internal front. Altogether, the meeting helped to increase the level of significant and balanced development, where each country could benefit from the experience of the other, within the exceptionally favorable political settings (see Palacios 1999).

As an Argentinean official has noted with respect to the above observations:

\begin{quote}
We compete in the world for a small but a very substantial for us part of the market of experimental reactors. We have problems caused by the pressure of other countries in which one talks about our businesses with Algeria and Albania. By signing this treaty we hope to achieve the sufficient confidence within the international community with respect to our good intentions.
\end{quote}

To which a Brazilian official added:

\begin{quote}
We hope that these agreements will open the doors that until today were closed for us…The greatest concern of Brazil is the removal of the restrictions that the United States has imposed on supercomputers and other high-tech equipment because of the fear that this technology could be use in the nuclear projects without safeguards or would be transferred to another countries with illicit nuclear programs. The prohibition on the sale of computers apparently has been eliminated in December, yet there still remain many limitations with regard to the commerce with the United States.\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

However, despite of the maintenance of the cooperation in the nuclear sector, this policy was undergoing some changes. As shown by the precedent quotes, the nuclear issue that historically had been exclusively associated with the issue of technological

\textsuperscript{11} Declaration about Common Argentinean-Brazilian Nuclear Policy, Foz de Iguazú 28 November 1990.
\textsuperscript{12} Quoted in Goldman, 1991.
autonomy changed focusing in the international markets. With every year, the isolation had been increasing resulting in the higher costs for both sides. It is precisely for this reason that the new axis of the cooperation was centered in the control of materials and facilities in order to achieve a higher degree of confidence of the nuclear powers and a more benevolent position of the latter towards Argentina and Brazil.\(^{13}\)

Within this context, the SCCC\(^{14}\) establishment along the signing of the agreements with IAEA represented a fundamental step in the consolidation of the integrating effort that would lead to a definitive jump towards a higher degree of institutionalization of the process. This represented the end of the interpresidential phase to go to a more open supranational phase, which nowadays stills working successfully (Milanese).

**Concluding Remarks.**

The nuclear rapprochement process between Argentina and Brazil placed a fundamental roll by deepening the so called Southern Cone integration. This due to its capacity to transform itself into the axis of the mutual confidence building process, between both countries, that to that date see each other as antagonists. Even today, looking an each day more irrelevant Mercosur, the outcome still has a positive balance.

The frequent and intense encounters between both chief of states gives an idea of the relevance that the approachment process had for the integration as a whole. Even when it could pass as unnoticed with respect to initiatives as the Integration and Cooperation Argentinean Brazilian program PICAB, its dynamism allowed the integration process continuity while the strong crisis weaken it on the economical and commercial dimension. Thus the nuclear rapprochement became the foundation of the political agreements in a context of economical disagreements.

If this process worked in an extremely sensitive area was because of the essential roll played by the presidents. Both chiefs of state were reliable and strong intermediaries capable of overcoming even the most solid resistance of important groups of pressure with great influence in the public and institutional life like the Armed Forces. The later was of an exceptional significance if one considers that the process took place during the period of the democratic transition.

Concluding, despite the modest results, from a technical point of view, the process undoubtedly implied the accomplishment of a sustained and sincere effort to put the relations between old competitors in a new dimension. Maybe, almost thirty years after its beginning its importance is not appreciated enough, however it represented the breaking point on the kind of relation between the states of the Southern Cone of the continent.

\(^{13}\) Whereas it is true that the degree of mutual suspicion between nuclear powers had been reducing sensitively during the 1980s, in this case it was still necessary to send a different type of signals (Carasales 1999: 58)

\(^{14}\) The CSSS is delivered by the ABACC (Agencia Brasileño-Argentina de Contabilidad y Control de Materiales Nucleares) It is exactly in the case of ABACC that one can observe the only existing bureaucratic supranational agency of any scope with respect to the integration between Argentina and Brazil
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