

NUCLEAR COOPERATION BETWEEN ARGENTINA AND BRAZIL

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I would like to give special thanks to María José Espona, Head of the Institute of Political and Social Studies, for inviting me to take part in a Round Table with such high level participants. Furthermore, I would like to thank Nicholas J. Wheeler, from the University of Aberystwyth, Matías Spektor, from the Getulio Vargas Foundation and Sonia Fernández Moreno, from the Nuclear Regulatory Authority, for allowing me to share these thoughts regarding such a highly important subject not only for Argentina and Brazil, but also for the international community as a whole.

Thank you very much, thus, for this opportunity to give this highly-qualified audience a strictly personal perspective on this subject matter.

The history of Argentina's nuclear industrial development becomes meaningful when we consider it from a long term perspective that takes due note of, but also looks beyond, the economic and political ups and downs affecting the country during its sixty years of existence.

The core ideas that were present at the beginning of this field of activity and have sustained support for it were that we cannot have a sophisticated and developed society without an internationally competitive economy and that, in order to achieve it, certain requirements must be met. An absolutely essential one amongst them is that without a knowledge-intensive economy it is impossible to maintain high salaries for the work force nor the level of government excellence required by an advanced democratic society. Consequently, investment in science and technology is vital if we wish to have a democracy with a highly superior quality of institutions and of living standards than those currently offered to our citizens.

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PARTICIPATION IN THE ROUND TABLE "CHALLENGES OF THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT. NUCLEAR COOPERATION BETWEEN ARGENTINA AND BRAZIL", WHICH WAS HELD AT THE CENTRO NAVAL (NAVY CENTER), BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA, ON DECEMBER 14TH, 2010. AVAILABLE AT: WWW.AEDOJAS.COM.AR.

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In order to achieve this knowledge-intensive economy, a strategy is required. A wide-spread idea in Argentina is that it is enough to create the necessary conditions for external investment in order to automatically become a developed society. This theory has no practical basis in any historical case. It is not just because favorable conditions exist for private investment, or because there is an availability of natural resources and a cheap and trained workforce, that a society reaches Scandinavian development levels. For an economy to reach the level of development of an advanced western democracy, it is necessary, among other conditions, to have a permanent incorporation of knowledge into production and social life, encouraging economic international competitiveness by exporting goods with a higher added value, which are the exports that sustain better salaries for the workforce in the long run. In Argentina, the development of the nuclear industry has significantly encouraged broader scientific and technological sophistication, paving the way for the creation of a high level sector that is at the forefront of international competitiveness.

Nuclear technology development has also contributed to Argentine presence in various highly advanced technology frameworks and regimes because, in order to sit at the table in powerful international agencies, one must have the necessary national capabilities to be recognized as an important player. Argentina, for instance, was invited in April 2010 by the President of the United States, Mr. Barack Obama, to participate in the Nuclear Security Summit. Why were we invited? Because we have an important nuclear sector! Without this nuclear sector, Argentina would not have been invited to the Summit, as it was the case for a hundred and fifty other countries which do not have relevancy in the nuclear field.

In this XXI century world we live in, those who have, participate and set the rules, and those who do not have, are informed afterwards of the decisions taken by them by means of the nice English euphemism “outreach”. When a country is the object of an “outreach”, it is immediately aware that it does not belong to a club that already exists, and that it will have to listen to arguments such as: *“A group of countries with similar interests has met, has made a decision, and invites you to accept the rules that have been drafted. If you do not accept them, we will be in the awkward position of placing you on a list of countries of concern.”*

In a recent article, we said: *“The gap between those who are at the forefront of scientific and technical knowledge and have the means to carry out national roles in these fields, and those who do not have them is widening at the accelerated pace of innovation and growth of budgetary allocations to put them into practice. These differences add a new dimension to the levels in which the real power of States breaks down. At the same time, countries that master advanced technologies band together to share their common interests in groups that enjoy a growing influence.”*

We find ourselves, thus, in a world in which the scientific and technical revolution is vital, because it directly influences the way in which the various functions of the State –and defense is of particular importance because it is responsible for the survival of society– design

*strategies and doctrines; allocate material means and train personnel both to take advantage of the opportunities offered by these new frontiers and to counteract the potential risks and threats that can arise in this multidimensional universe with players of different nature*².

Nuclear policy is, therefore, related to national power, because it is directly involved in the buildup of national capabilities that allow a nation to have a voice in international agencies where key decisions are made in the areas of science and state of the art technology, enterprise competitiveness, energy, defense and international security.

The Argentine nuclear sector demonstrates that when a sound policy is designed and maintained with regularity; scientists and technicians are trained, and institutions are provided with all the needed resources for research and development, internationally competitive results can be achieved. The nuclear sector, therefore, showcases Argentine scientific and technological capabilities, and is an important component of national pride, and, indirectly, of international “*soft power*”.

Many aspects involved in the nuclear industry also constitute important elements within the broader general strategy of the Argentine Republic related to international security, defense and non-proliferation. As far as foreign policy is concerned, we try to consider all different aspects and fields where it operates in an integral and coherent manner, so that each part harmoniously fits in a long term plan that, because of its nature, must reflect a consensus among major political parties.

This has been the case since democracy was restored in 1983, a period of time in which Argentina has not only maintained a coherence in foreign policy principles -with the reasonable variations and peculiarities of each government- but has also attempted to develop a policy of international cooperation and leadership where it was needed, directed to promote initiatives that were internally regarded as valuable and, because of that, have to be sustained over time. It is precisely this fact that has provided our foreign policy in this field its strength and internal political support.

The guidelines for this international security, defense, and nuclear non-proliferation policy –in general terms- have been:

- *To support the consolidation of democratic regimes and civil administration of defense and sensitive technologies.*
- *To develop a network of shared interests to support peace, understanding and integration.*
- *To implement confidence and security building measures towards integration.*
- *The complete ban of weapons of mass destruction in our region.*
- *An active participation in non-proliferation regimes, in order to ensure that engage-*

²Gustavo Ainchil and Alberto E. Dojas: “Una reflexión en torno de la noción de ‘territorio’” (“A reflection on the concept of “territory”), Revista de la Defensa, Número 5, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2010. Also available at: www.aedojas.com.ar

ments assumed by States are observed and fulfilled in good faith and, at the same time, to show the international community Argentina's transparent and responsible policy, creating in this manner mutual trust.

- A low level of conventional forces.

When we look back at the road traveled between 1983 and today, and compare it to the existing scenario at that time, we clearly see how much has been achieved in terms of peace, integration and security in our region. Therefore, our international security strategy and foreign policy can be considered successful in the long term.

There is a widespread belief in Argentine society that by promoting these policies, we have not only fulfilled our national interests but we have also played a role in making the world safer, which is a requirement for democracy to flourish and for the achievement of our own development. It has not been just formal adherence or mere political calculation the driving force of Argentina's political continuity in this regard. On the contrary, this policy is based on the shared belief that a world – and particularly our region- without weapons of mass destruction and with a low level of conventional forces is safer and creates better conditions for peace, cooperation, trust and integration with neighboring countries³.

Sonia Fernández Moreno has just exhaustively reported the history of the negotiations to establish the current cooperation between Argentina and Brazil in the nuclear field⁴. It has been a fundamental pillar in the process of integration in South America. The recent "*San Juan Declaration*" on Nuclear Cooperation⁵, between both countries will provide momentum to this basic understanding.

In spite of this history of unprecedented understanding, in the last few months a minority sector in Brazil has been discussing a new version of its traditional strategic policy, which states that military power is part of the State's international bargaining power. The country, say their advocates, has added to its desire to be a Permanent Member of the Security Council, a new "BRIC" status, together with Russia, India and China, but is the only one in this group that does not have nuclear weapons. Therefore, they have argued that it is "natural" for Brazil to become a nuclear power, just like it was the case for India some time ago. Obviously, this debate is followed with

³ Alberto E. Dojas: "*Estrategia argentina sobre armas de destrucción en masa y su no proliferación*", (Argentine strategy on weapons of mass destruction and its non proliferation), Buenos Aires, 1994. Available at: www.aedojas.com.ar.

⁴ See also: Sonia Fernández Moreno and Marco A. Saraiva Marzo: "*Nuclear Energy and the Role of IAEA Safeguards: A perspective from Brazil and Argentina*", *Journal of Nuclear Materials Management*, Volume 35, Issue 4, 2007.

⁵ "*Declaración Conjunta de los Presidentes de la República Argentina y de la República Federativa del Brasil sobre Cooperación Nuclear*", San Juan, República Argentina, 3 de Agosto de 2010. ("Joint Statement of the Presidents of the Argentine Republic and of the Federative Republic of Brazil on Nuclear Cooperation", San Juan, Argentine Republic, August 3rd 2010).

particular concern⁶ in Argentina, because, if these ideas are finally victorious, the whole security equation we have built since democracy was restored –based, as we explained, on the ban of weapons of mass destruction and a low level of conventional forces–, would be destroyed. In addition, we have already noticed some changes in the field of conventional forces in the Southern Cone.

Fortunately, the Brazilian government has publicly stated that these ideas do not reflect any official policy. Nevertheless, if such a policy is ever imposed, it would cause great instability in South America, not only due to the infringement of basic agreements and obligations on which all the security of our region lies, but it would also put the Argentine Republic in a security dilemma and in the need to respond not only to the violation of agreements, but also to the strategic imbalance, which many in the country would consider completely unacceptable. As a general rule, we cannot ask any country to accept strategic restrictions which are not applied to its neighbors, or to simply concede a secondary or subordinated role.

The consequences of such a strategic imbalance can be clearly seen in the controversy over the Malvinas Islands: British nuclear superiority is an essential element of her deterrence. A book recently published in Brazil⁷ explains that the fact that the mere fear of the presence of a British nuclear submarine had paralyzed the fleet of the Argentine Navy during the 1982 conflict, and had great importance in Brazilian strategy thinking and the national support for its nuclear propelled submarine project.

Thus, the prohibition of nuclear weapons in Latin America, including all nations with any presence in the region, together with an effective verification system of international commitments, is a vital part of our interest in maintaining peace, integration and peaceful solution of conflicts. Argentina has acted with transparency, maintaining a coherent policy supported by a consensus shared by the majority of her political parties. The nuclear agreements with Brazil constitute the cornerstone of our international security strategy. The growing integration of our nuclear sectors, so, is crucial not only for the scientific and technological advancement of our nuclear industries, but also for the mutual trust and integration of our countries, which is the *clef de voûte* of South America's stability, peace and development.



⁶ See, for example, the article by Federico Merke and Florencia Montal: “El programa nuclear de Brasil ante los nuevos incentivos de la sociedad internacional”, en “Más allá del TNP: las oportunidades y los riesgos del futuro inmediato de la tecnología nuclear”, Cuadernos de Actualidad en Defensa y Estrategia, Núm. 6, Buenos Aires, Ministerio de Defensa. (“The nuclear program of Brazil vis à vis the new incentives of the international society”, in “Beyond the NPT: the opportunities and risks of the immediate future of nuclear technology”, Cuadernos de Actualidad en Defensa y Estrategia, Núm. 6, Buenos Aires, Ministerio de Defensa).

⁷ Fernanda das Graças Correa: “O projeto do submarino nuclear brasileiro. Uma história de ciência, tecnologia e soberania”, Capax Dei, Rio de Janeiro, 2010.