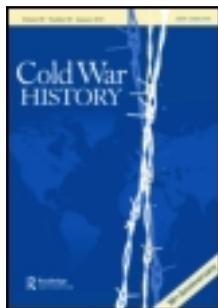


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Atoms, apartheid, and the agency: South Africa's relations with the IAEA, 1957–1995

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A founder member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), South Africa embarked on an ambitious nuclear weapons programme contrary to the IAEA Statute. Against the background of the Cold War, South Africa's threat perception included, amongst others, threats posed by the Soviet Union, which was a nuclear-armed state and a supporter of the banned South African liberation movements. Moreover, the South African government's apartheid policies resulted in the country's increased international isolation, which also affected its relations with the IAEA. A major global campaign to isolate the apartheid government in South Africa spilt over to the IAEA, resulting in several punitive actions against South Africa. Tracing the South African case through several phases, this article illustrates the intimate links between state identity, state ideology, nationalism, status, and threat perception. The South African case illustrates the need for sustained scholarship on all the dimensions of the Cold War.

Introduction

Since its inception in 1957, the IAEA has been the primary multilateral institution with a mandate to prevent nuclear proliferation, oversee the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and secure the safety of the nuclear material and facilities of the IAEA. South Africa became a founder member of the IAEA on 6 June 1957. Moreover, it also obtained a

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seat on the agency's Board of Directors (hereafter the board), which it lost in 1976, and eventually took up again in 1995.

South Africa's relations with the IAEA between 1957 and 1995 can be distinguished by six main and often overlapping phases. The first phase, initiation, covers the period prior and immediately after the establishment of the IAEA. During the second phase, the onset of the apartheid National Party (NP)-led government's nuclear ambitions became clear. The third phase was characterised by increased international condemnation and sanctions against South Africa as a result of its domestic policies, which resulted in the country's international isolation through, inter alia, United Nations (UN) sanctions, arms and trade embargoes, and cultural, educational, and sport boycotts.

During the fourth phase, due to South Africa's increased isolation, international mediation efforts to democratise South Africa and changes in, for example, the Soviet Union and southern Africa, contributed to President F.W. de Klerk's announcement of the termination of South Africa's nuclear weapons programme in 1989.

Integration, suspicion, and verification characterised the fifth phase. South Africa ratified the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1991 and signed a safeguard agreement with the IAEA. However, some IAEA member states remained suspicious of South Africa's nuclear intentions fearing a 'bomb in the basement' as negotiations for a new political order between the South African government and the South African liberation movements led by the African National Congress (ANC) oscillated between breakthroughs and break-ups. Consequently, IAEA members required the complete verification of South Africa's nuclear weapons programme.

Finally, normalisation, when the ANC won the first democratic elections in April 1994. Building on its global credentials as a proponent of nuclear disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, the ANC-led government normalised South Africa's international relations as the international community lifted its sanctions against South Africa and welcomed the country back into international organisations which had suspended apartheid South Africa.

Apartheid South Africa's civilian and military nuclear programme is relatively well-documented. Less so is its Cold War relations with the IAEA, a period during which South Africa produced at least six nuclear weapons, and which is the focus of this article.¹ An additional rationale for research on this aspect of the Cold War is to determine how and why South Africa, as a founder member of the IAEA, departed from the principles and objectives of the agency. For years South Africa denied the country's nuclear capabilities and weapons. Until the full extent of its nuclear weapons programme from 1969 to 1989 became evident, the relationship between South Africa and the agency deteriorated and changed. This was evident in a series of developments,

¹ Frederik (F.W.) de Klerk, 'Matters relating to nuclear non-proliferation treaty, violence, negotiation and the death penalty. Statement by the State President to a Joint Sitting of Parliament', *Hansard*, 24 March 1993, columns 3465–3478.

which this article traces against the background of the Cold War and the above-mentioned phases.

Establishment of the IAEA

The 'Atoms for Peace' address to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) by US President Dwight Eisenhower on 8 December 1953 paved the way for the establishment of the IAEA.² Eisenhower proposed the establishment of an atomic energy commission by stating that governments developing nuclear energy should begin and continue to make 'joint contributions' from their uranium stockpiles and fissionable materials to an international atomic energy agency, established under the aegis of the UN. Eisenhower also proposed that the agency should advance the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Eisenhower's address resulted in a series of developments, most notably the establishment of the IAEA. For South Africa it signalled its first multilateral involvement in nuclear diplomacy.

Typical of most Cold War relations, the USSR dismissed Eisenhower's proposal. By November 1954, the US presented more concrete proposals to the UNGA for the establishment of an atomic energy agency. In December 1954, the UK presented the US with a proposed draft of a statute for the agency to which the US responded with a revised draft of its own. At the beginning of 1955, the US, the UK, France, Canada, Australia, South Africa, Belgium, and later Portugal commenced negotiations in Washington on the statute of the new agency based on the US-UK draft. South Africa's involvement – as a member of the Eight-Nation Negotiating Group that also included Australia, Belgium (due to the uranium-rich Belgian Congo), Canada, and Portugal – stemmed from its status as a major uranium-producing country. The main purpose of the Eight-Nation Negotiating Group was to reach agreement on the text of a statute for the agency, establish the agency, and invite other states to join as members. When the Soviet Union finally joined the negotiations on 18 July 1955 – the 'first major thaw in the post-war relations between Moscow and Washington' – the proposed agency was already named the IAEA.³

From 8 to 20 August 1955 the UN convened the first major international conference on the peaceful uses of atomic energy in Switzerland. The so-called First Geneva Conference was attended by 1,500 delegates, including scientists and engineers. More importantly, the conference was the first ever inter-governmental gathering on the peaceful uses of atomic energy and paved the way for the formal establishment of the IAEA. However, South Africa was not part of the negotiating group (which consisted

² Dwight Eisenhower, 'Address by the President of the United States of America to the 470th Plenary Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly', New York, US, 8 December 1953, http://www.iaea.org/About/atomsforpeace_speech.html (accessed 11 May 2011).

³ David Fischer, *History of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The First Forty Years* (Vienna: International Atomic Energy Agency, 1997), 30–31.

of the US, USSR, UK, France, Canada, and Czechoslovakia) which met at the Geneva Conference to discuss technical issues with respect to safeguards. At the UNGA session in 1955 it was agreed that the Eight-Nation Negotiating Group would be expanded to 12 as per a proposal by the Soviet Union. The UNGA also took a decision that a revised version of the draft statute would be circulated to all UN members and specialised agencies, and that the UN would host a conference towards the end of 1956 to review and finally approve the statute.⁴

However, in March 1956, while the Twelve-Nation Negotiating Group met in Washington, UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld implemented the UNGA's call for an atomic agency and established the UN Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR). His decision ensured that the UN – rather than the IAEA – would play the major role in securing global nuclear safety. When the US distributed the draft statute to all UN members in April 1956, the question of China's representation (as a permanent member of the UNSC) was still unresolved. The matter was eventually resolved and on 20 September 1956, 82 states attended the conference on the statute of the IAEA at UN headquarters in New York. This was an ad hoc meeting of concerned states and not of the UN itself. By 23 October 1956, the conference approved the complete revised text of the statute. On 29 July 1957, the IAEA Statute entered into force with the ratification of the statute by 26 states.⁵

South Africa, as indicated in Section A of the Annex of the IAEA Statute, along with 18 other states, became a member of the First Preparatory Commission (PrepCom) on 26 October 1956 (the day that the statute opened for signature) and remained a member of the PrepCom until the formal establishment of the IAEA on 3 October 1957. These 18 states included the Twelve-Nation Negotiating Group and six other states elected by the statute conference. The PrepCom designated the members of the first board of the IAEA, including Canada, France, the USSR, the UK, and the US; five states from other regions leading in nuclear technology (Australia, Brazil, India, Japan, and South Africa); two producers of uranium (Czechoslovakia and Portugal); and a purveyor of technical assistance (Sweden).⁶ South Africa became a member of the IAEA on 6 June 1957. Reflecting on these negotiations, a South African diplomat and delegate at these meetings, Donald Sole, admitted that his primary concern in the drafting of the statute was to secure a seat for South Africa on the board.⁷ Sole, who was later elected as the third chairman of the board, acknowledged that at this early stage pressure was already mounting against South Africa about its internal policies (i.e. apartheid).

⁴ Ibid., 31–34.

⁵ Ibid., 47, 49.

⁶ Ibid., 64.

⁷ Donald Sole, 'Great Expectations. A Diplomat's Recollections of the Birth and Early Years of the IAEA', in *International Atomic Energy Agency: personal reflections. A Fortieth Anniversary Publication* (Vienna: IEAE, 1997), 21.

The first phase of South Africa's diplomatic relations with the IAEA demonstrated its use of partnership as a diplomatic strategy. During this phase, South Africa's diplomatic relations also focused on the institutionalisation of the norms of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, nuclear disarmament, and nuclear non-proliferation. This is further evidenced in South Africa's support for the institutionalisation of the IAEA as the main global organisation to promote and maintain nuclear safeguards for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. However, the next phase of South Africa's diplomatic relations with the IAEA turned out to be more confrontational as a result of international opposition to the country's domestic policies and the development of South Africa's nuclear weapons programme, and the 'nuclear devices' announced by de Klerk in 1993.

Ambition

During Africa's *uhuru* decade (the 1960s), i.e. the period of decolonisation on the continent, a large number of African colonies became sovereign states and members of international organisations such as the UN, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the Group of 77 (G-77), and the IAEA. Motivated by, *inter alia*, their national liberation victories, these African countries established the Organisation for African Unity (OAU) in 1963 with decolonisation and the termination of apartheid in South Africa as two of its major objectives. However, it should be noted that the campaign against apartheid South Africa preceded the establishment of the OAU. From the late 1940s, for example, India initiated an international campaign which was targeted at South Africa's domestic policies; especially the South African government's policies that affected South Africans of Indian origin. Furthermore, India's campaign against South Africa also focused on South Africa's involvement in southwest Africa, a situation India regarded as an occupation. With this, the global campaign against apartheid South Africa emerged as one of the defining features of the second half of the twentieth century. Southern Africa became one of the last proxy battlefields of the Cold War. South Africa's response to this resulted, *inter alia*, in its nuclear weaponisation as the country remained firmly anti-communist.

During the first years of IAEA membership, South Africa had complied with the IAEA Statute. This initial phase of partnership and cooperation lasted until 1964, after which South Africa's relationship with the IAEA gradually regressed into one of confrontation. South Africa embarked on a collision course with the aforesaid normative and legal framework. With the onset of the Cold War and the increase in the number of nuclear weapons states (NWS), the need to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons culminated in the signing of the NPT (1968) and its entry into force (1970). The NPT reiterated and expanded the IAEA's authority by requiring that all state parties accept and apply IAEA safeguards to 'all source or special fissionable material in all peaceful nuclear activities within

the territory of such State, under its jurisdiction, or carried out under its control anywhere.⁸

The next phase of South Africa's relations with the IAEA was characterised by the emergence of the country's nucleo-nationalist ambitions as illustrated by, amongst others, the establishment of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), the declaration of South Africa as a republic in 1961, the election of apartheid architect Hendrik Verwoerd as prime minister, and in 1965, the inauguration of the South African Fundamental Atomic Research Installation (SAFARI-1). Between 1969 and 1979, all research and development of South African peaceful nuclear explosive (PNE) devices were undertaken by the South African Atomic Energy Board (AEB), the predecessor of the AEC. As the South African government's apartheid policies became more stringent and the country ignored international concerns about the direction of its policies, the international community became increasingly concerned with the secrecy surrounding South Africa's nuclear intentions. Suspicions increased when South Africa refused to join some 134 countries that signed the NPT of 1970. By 1978, South Africa's position shifted from the development of a PNE device to a full-blown nuclear weapons device due to the country's threat perception i.e. increased involvement of the Soviet Union (a nuclear weapons state) and Cuba in the Angolan War.

In 1979, the responsibility of the country's nuclear weapons programme was transferred to the state-owned arms manufacturing company, ARMSCOR. The AEC remained responsible for the production and supply of HEU, theoretical studies, and development studies in nuclear weapons technology.⁹ As international suspicions about South Africa's nuclear intentions increased, the IAEA, also suspicious of these developments, requested South Africa to dismantle the programme if it existed. However, South Africa continued, in secret, to develop its nuclear weapons despite the IAEA's opposition and successive stringent sanctions by the UN Security Council.

Officially, South Africa's nuclear explosives programme was aimed at peaceful uses until about 1977 when its emphasis changed to a strategic deterrent capability.¹⁰ In 1977, South Africa agreed to dismantle what the US maintained was a nuclear test site under construction in the Kalahari Desert which had been detected by US and USSR satellites in August 1977. As an adjunct of this shift in April 1978, the prime minister John Vorster approved a three-phased nuclear deterrent strategy for South Africa:

⁸ International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), 'Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons', 1970, <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Infcircs/Others/infcirc140.pdf>, (accessed 10 August 2010).

⁹ Adolf von Baeckmann, Gary Dillon and Demetrius Perricos, 'Nuclear Verification in South Africa', *IAEA Bulletin*, 1: 42–48, 1995, 47.

¹⁰ Waldo Stumpf, 'Birth and Death of the South African Nuclear Weapons Programme' (paper presented at the '50 Years After Hiroshima' conference, organised by Unione Scienziati per Disarmo, Castiglioncello, Italy, 28 September to 2 October 1995), <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/rsa/nuke/stumpf.htm> (accessed 16 May 2011).

- Phase 1: Strategic uncertainty in which nuclear deterrent capability will not be acknowledged or denied.
- Phase 2: Should South Africa be threatened by Warsaw Pact countries through surrogate Cuban forces in Angola, covert acknowledgement to certain international powers, e.g. the US, would be contemplated.
- Phase 3: In case partial disclosure did not result in the removal of the threat, public acknowledgement or demonstration by an underground test of South Africa's capability would be considered.¹¹

South Africa ignored repeated calls by the IAEA to subject itself to IAEA safeguards and inspections. According to ambassador Ampie Roux, the South African delegate at the IAEA, some states were 'understandably reluctant to surrender, almost irrevocably, long-held sovereign rights without having precise details of all the implications'.¹² This view became South Africa's nuclear mantra until it finally ratified the NPT in 1991. South Africa's refusal to ratify the NPT meant that none of the country's nuclear research facilities or activities was covered by IAEA safeguards and inspections. In contrast, South Africa eagerly informed the agency of its nuclear development activities. In 1972, for example, ambassador Roux informed the IAEA General Conference (GC) that the construction of South Africa's small-scale enrichment plant was progressing and that South African advances in nuclear science had 'far exceeded expectations'.¹³ In 1975 Roux informed the IAEA that 'apart from developing its enrichment capability, South Africa was constantly intensifying its prospecting activities'; that the first phase of the country's pilot enrichment plant was successfully commissioned; and that feasibility studies for the construction of a 'full-scale commercial plant' were completed 'satisfactorily'.¹⁴

Isolation

The third phase of South Africa's relations with the IAEA was characterised by increased international condemnation and sanctions against South Africa as a result of its domestic policies which resulted in the country's international isolation through, inter alia, UN sanctions, arms and trade embargoes, and cultural, educational and sport boycotts. These punitive measures flowed over to the IAEA and were manifested

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ampie Roux, 'Statement by the Delegate of South Africa', in IAEA General Conference, *Records of the Fourteenth Regular Session (22–28 September 1970), One hundred and thirty-sixth Plenary Meeting*, 23 September 1970. GC(XIV)/OR.136.

¹³ Ampie Roux, 'Statement by the Delegate of South Africa', in IAEA General Conference, *Sixteenth Regular Session: 26 September – 3 October 1972. Record of the one hundred and fifty-second Plenary Meeting*, 27 September 1972. GC(XVI)/OR.152.

¹⁴ Ampie Roux, 'Statement by the Delegate of South Africa', IAEA General Conference, *Nineteenth Regular Session: 22–26 September 1975. Record of the one hundred and seventy-seventh Plenary Meeting*, 23 September 1975. GC(XIX)/OR. 177.

in the adoption of resolutions against South Africa, the rejection of the credentials of South African delegates, and the suspension of South Africa. South Africa served on the Board of Directors of the IAEA from 1957 until 1977 when South Africa's membership was suspended and it was replaced by Egypt as the African representative. It was only in 1995 that South Africa once again took up a position on the board.

African countries, with the support of the G-77, were South Africa's major opponents in the IAEA. The G-77's campaigns in the UN were replicated in the IAEA. A particularly contentious issue was South Africa's continued membership in the agency as details of South Africa's secret nuclear weapons programme surfaced and the apartheid regime's brutality increased. Supported by the G-77, African members of the IAEA launched a campaign to expel apartheid South Africa from the agency. This campaign highlighted the concerns of South African delegations to the IAEA. From the time of the agency's inception, South Africa had preferred a technical – rather than a political – role for the agency. In addition to South Africa's preferred conception of the role of the agency, the country also struggled with its own state identity. Geographically part of Africa, South Africa was ideologically aligned to the West in opposition to the Soviet bloc. But, as South Africa's allies in the West increasingly isolated the country for its non-compliance with international human rights standards and the provisions in the IAEA Statute, South Africa turned to Israel and, despite severe UN sanctions, maintained clandestine proliferation networks with France, Germany, the US, and the UK.

By the mid-1960s, international opposition initiated by Egypt, India, and the Soviet Union to South Africa's domestic apartheid policies increased. In response to these opposing initiatives, the South African government maintained that the IAEA should define and enact the relationship between technology and politics; that the IAEA should determine the degree to which a country's uranium production constituted a nation's level of nuclearity; and that South Africa should maintain a dual identity as both Western and African. From the 1970s, South Africa's nuclear capabilities became a standing item on the IAEA GC agenda. As South Africa's secret nuclear weapons programme became known, the country's relations with the IAEA deteriorated correspondingly. In 1976, South Africa lost its designation as a member for the African region on the board and, in 1977, Egypt became the country designated to represent Africa.

Rejection of credentials

In the wake of the Soweto uprising in 1976, international condemnation of the South African government escalated to new levels. One of the first significant attempts to impose sanctions on the South African government at the agency was the repeated rejection of the credentials of the South African delegation to the agency's annual GC. From 1976, although the South African delegation's credentials were accepted by the Credentials Committee of the IAEA GC, several countries, led by Nigeria, rejected South Africa's credentials due to the South African government's apartheid policies.

From 1976, Nigeria was supported in this endeavour by, amongst others, Algeria, Jamaica, Iraq, Poland, India, East Germany, Romania, Kuwait, Indonesia, Egypt, Sudan, India, the USSR, and Hungary. In supporting the South African delegation's credentials, the US, UK, West Germany, and Japan indicated that the Credentials Committee should only address the procedural requirements for the submission of credentials – an aspect with which South Africa complied.¹⁵

In 1979, delegates to the GC once again examined the credentials of the South African delegation. Suspending the examination of all other delegations' credentials, the General Committee, sitting as the Credentials Committee, limited itself to examining the South African delegation's credentials. In September 1979, the credentials of the South African delegation had been rejected by the GC and Egypt had replaced South Africa as a designated member on the board. Nevertheless, the African countries felt that this was not enough and that the apartheid regime of South Africa had to be expelled from membership of the agency. By 1980, a report by the UN Secretary General concluded that there was 'no reason to doubt the broadly accepted conclusion that South Africa is capable of constructing a first generation fission weapon of moderately sophisticated design'.¹⁶

Speaking on behalf of African and several non-aligned states, Nigeria proposed that the credentials of the delegates of the 'racist regime in Pretoria' not be accepted. A stalemate on the acceptance of the South African delegation's credentials resulted. Seven members of the IAEA, namely Nigeria, Qatar, the Soviet Union, India, Tunisia, Malaysia, and Czechoslovakia supported the Nigerian proposal to reject the South African delegation's credentials. In contrast, the US, UK, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Canada, and Japan opposed the proposal.¹⁷ In response to the Nigerian proposal, South Africa's representative, ambassador De Villiers stated that the GC decision was 'wholly illegal and without precedent in the annals of the Agency'. Moreover, he stated that the credentials of the South African delegation complied with the requirements set out by the IAEA. Describing the decision as 'blatantly unconstitutional', he observed that the IAEA was a 'technical organisation' which could not prevent any member from participating in its deliberations. Upon De Villiers's request, a roll-call vote was taken, resulting in 49 votes in favour of the proposal to reject the credentials, and 24 against the proposal, with nine abstentions.¹⁸

¹⁵ IAEA General Conference, *Twenty-second Regular Session: Examination of Delegates' Credentials. Report of the General Committee*, 22 September 1978, GC(XXI)/607; IAEA General Conference, *Twenty-first Regular Session. Agenda item 12. Examination of Delegates' Credentials. Report of the General Committee*, 30 September 1977, GC(XXI)/593; IAEA General Conference, *Twentieth Regular Session. Agenda item 11. Examination of Delegates' Credentials. Report of the General Committee*, 27 September 1976, GC(XX)/575.

¹⁶ United Nations (UN), *South Africa's Nuclear-Tipped Ballistic Missile Capability. A Report of the Secretary General*. A/45/571, 1991, 8.

¹⁷ IAEA GC, *Twenty-third Regular Session. Examination of Delegates' Credentials. Report of the General Committee*, 10 December 1979, GC(XXIII)/622.

¹⁸ IAEA GC, *Twenty-third Regular Session: 4–10 December 1979. Record of the Two hundred and eleventh Plenary Meeting*, Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi, December 5, 1979, GC(XXIII)/OR.211.

With the adoption of the Nigerian proposal, South Africa embarked on yet another road of isolation.

Suspension from the board

In terms of Article VI of the statute, the board is the principal decision-making body of the agency. Of its current 35 members, 13 are designated, including the 10 'most advanced in the technology of atomic energy including the production of source materials' and the most advanced members from each of the three geographical areas not represented among the 10.¹⁹ The remaining 22 board members are elected from eight area groups, namely North America, Latin America, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Africa, the Middle East and South Asia, South East Asia and the Pacific, and the Far East. Since its establishment in 1957, the number and proportion of African and Middle Eastern members of the IAEA has increased significantly. However, the statute initially allocated only one elective seat to Africa and the Middle East respectively. Membership of the board is based on two discriminatory requirements. It includes not only a geographical requirement, but also a high level of technical competency or, as Article VI stipulates, members should be among the 'most advanced in the technology of atomic energy including the production of source materials'.²⁰

Historically, South Africa's position on Article VI of the statute had been to expand its membership and to increase the number of African seats on the board.²¹ South Africa's proposal was accepted when, in 1961, the board and the GC approved the first amendment to the agency's statute by adding two more elective seats for the African region. A second amendment entered into force on 1 June 1973, resulting in the increase of board membership to 34, with developing states having a small majority.²² Developing countries used this majority to their advantage in September 1976 when the G-77 requested the board to review the designation of South Africa as a board member from Africa. Egypt's challenge of South Africa's membership proved beneficial to it when, in June 1977, the board decided by a vote of 19 to 13 with one abstention to uphold the nomination of Egypt as the African member state, being the 'most advanced in nuclear technology including the production of source materials' as per the requirement of Article VI of the statute.²³ The 1977 decision introduced a new phase of South Africa's diplomatic relations with the IAEA as the agency's members joined the international community in its condemnation of South Africa's domestic policies as well as the country's alleged nuclear weapons programme. One of the

¹⁹ IAEA, *Statute of the IAEA*, 1957, http://www.iaea.org/About/statute_text.html (accessed 10 August 2010).

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Sole, 'Great Expectations' 15-26.

²² Fischer, *History of the International Atomic Energy Agency*, 90.

²³ IAEA, *Statute of the IAEA*.

earliest actions against South Africa was the rejection of its delegation's credentials for the session of the GC in September 1979. The diplomatic relations between South Africa and the IAEA became tenser between 1977 and 1989.

The IAEA also made various attempts to persuade the South African government to terminate its nuclear weapons programme. Amongst others these included South Africa's suspension from the board in 1977, a position the country had held since 1957; the adoption of several resolutions against South Africa; and the institution of South Africa's nuclear weapons programme as a standing issue on the GC agenda. Moreover, the credentials of the South African delegation attending the GC in 1979 were refused and several calls were made by, amongst others, Nigeria and the G-77 to terminate South Africa's membership of the IAEA.²⁴

Calls for termination of all nuclear cooperation with South Africa

Once it became clear that the IAEA attempts to influence South Africa had failed, the confrontation between the IAEA and South Africa shifted to the main organs of the UN. When the UNGA urged South Africa in December 1982 to stop the development of its nuclear weapons capability, it also requested the IAEA to discontinue its assistance to South Africa on nuclear issues and to exclude South Africa from all of its technical working groups. As the political situation in South Africa deteriorated, the board and the GC considered the suspension of South Africa's privileges and rights of membership in the IAEA. Amidst all of these concerns, South Africa's first nuclear power station, the Koeberg nuclear power station, began to supply the national power grid on 4 April 1984.

Whereas the calls for South Africa's suspension mainly emanated from African member states such as Egypt and Nigeria, Western governments such as the US and the UK pressurised South Africa to ratify the NPT. They argued that South Africa's suspension would undermine the IAEA's efforts to engage South Africa on the termination of the country's nuclear weapons programme. Subsequent to South Africa's suspension from the board, the GC adopted various resolutions condemning South Africa's domestic policies and its nuclear weapons programme. In addition, several IAEA reports on the South African nuclear weapons programme served before the GC and various resolutions calling on South Africa to submit its nuclear facilities to IAEA safeguards were also adopted.²⁵ In 1982, the UNGA called on South Africa to terminate its nuclear weapons programme and place its activities facilities under IAEA safeguards. The UNGA also requested the IAEA to terminate assistance to South Africa and exclude the country from IAEA working groups.²⁶

²⁴ Munir Khan, 'Major Milestones in the Development of the IAEA', in *International Atomic Energy Agency: Personal Reflections. A Fortieth Anniversary Publication* (Vienna: IEAE, 1997), 307.

²⁵ These included resolutions of the GC, namely GC(XXVIII)/RES/423 (1985) and GC(XXX)/RES/789 (1986).

²⁶ Fischer, *History of the International Atomic Energy Agency*, 100.

At the GC in 1983, Nigeria introduced a resolution on behalf of the G-77 calling on IAEA members to terminate all nuclear cooperation with South Africa. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 69-2, with 16 abstentions. It called on South Africa to submit all its nuclear facilities and installations to an IAEA inspection and banned the transfer of dual-use materials to South Africa. Nigeria repeated this call in 1984 when the Nigerian chairperson of the UN's special committee against apartheid, Joseph Garba, relayed a message to the IAEA's Director General prior to the agency's 1984 GC. By the end of the 1984 GC, a resolution was passed calling on states to end all nuclear cooperation with South Africa. The US and UK voted against the resolution.

A return to the IAEA

Communication between the agency and South Africa during 1984 revealed that South Africa was considering the application of IAEA safeguards for the nuclear facility Valindaba. Following meetings between the IAEA and South Africa in May 1985, an IAEA delegation visited the country in August 1985 and met with the AEC to discuss drafts of a safeguards agreement with the South African government.²⁷ Despite these interactions, the South African government refused to accept the IAEA proposals. Consequently, the IAEA decided to take stricter action against the country. Despite the efforts of Western countries to influence South Africa to accede to the NPT, the board decided to suspend South Africa from the agency in June 1987 and recommended that the GC should proceed with South Africa's suspension from the agency.²⁸

The NPT and IAEA safeguards

In a resolution adopted by the GC in September 1984, the GC demanded that South Africa submit all its nuclear installations and facilities to inspection by the agency. The resolution further called on member states to terminate all nuclear cooperation with South Africa and all transfers of technology and material to South Africa.²⁹ The resolution also called on member states to 'reconsider their purchases of uranium from South Africa' and to 'stop all purchases of Namibian uranium'. Similar resolutions were adopted from 1985 onwards.³⁰ The 1985 resolution on South Africa's nuclear capabilities, for example, was worded more strongly by demanding that South

²⁷ IAEA, *South Africa's Nuclear Capabilities. Report by the Board of Governors and the Director General*. 23 September 1985, <http://www.iaea.org> (accessed 10 August 2010).

²⁸ Fischer, *History of the International Atomic Energy Agency*, 109–110.

²⁹ IAEA GC, *South Africa's Nuclear Capabilities*. Resolution Adopted During the 266th Plenary Meeting on 28 September 1984, GC(XXVIII)/RES/423.

³⁰ IAEA GC, *South Africa's Nuclear Capabilities*. Resolution Adopted During the 292nd Plenary Meeting on 3 October 1986, GC(XXX)/RES/468.

Africa 'immediately' submit to an agency inspection and terminate its 'illegal mining, utilization, exploitation and sale of Namibian uranium.'³¹

Apart from inspections, the IAEA was also keen to place the South African installations and facilities under the IAEA safeguards system. By 24 September 1984, the IAEA forwarded a revised draft safeguards agreement between the IAEA and South Africa. Resulting from this was South Africa's provision of design information to the IAEA in January 1985. Subsequent meetings followed on 14 and 15 February 1985. Both parties agreed that negotiations of the safeguards agreement and subsidiary arrangements would proceed in parallel so that technical issues relating to the safeguards approach and arrangements could be identified and clarified before the draft safeguards agreement was submitted to the board.³²

Whereas the calls for South Africa's suspension emanated from African members states, Western governments pressurised South Africa to ratify the NPT arguing that South Africa's suspension would undermine the IAEA's efforts to engage South Africa on the termination of the country's nuclear weapons programme.³³ Despite Western countries' efforts to influence South Africa to accede to the NPT, the board decided to suspend South Africa from the agency in June 1987 by a vote of 22 to 12, with one abstention, and recommended that the GC should proceed with South Africa's suspension.³⁴ However, State President P.W. Botha announced on 21 September 1987 that the South African government 'hopes that it will soon be able to sign the NPT and has decided to open discussions with others to this end.'³⁵ Consequently, the board decided to defer its decision to suspend South Africa's membership of the agency. Subsequent to President Botha's announcement, diplomatic efforts shifted to influencing the South African government to accede to the NPT.

Facing expulsion from the IAEA

The IAEA had repeatedly sought access to a uranium enrichment plant near Pretoria which it believed was producing nuclear weapons-grade material. South Africa had a small pilot uranium enrichment plant and was building a larger commercial plant. Neither was safeguarded. South Africa maintained that these plants had the ability to enrich uranium up to high levels, implying that they could probably produce nuclear explosives. Towards the end of the 1980s, the South African Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) prepared a top secret

³¹ IAEA GC, *South Africa's Nuclear Capabilities*, 1985, GC(XXIX)/RES/442.

³² IAEA, 1985 Summary record of the discussion on the item 'South Africa's Nuclear Capabilities' at meeting of the Board of Governors held in February, June and September 1985, in IAEA, *General Conference. Twenty-ninth Regular Session. South Africa's Nuclear Capabilities. Report by the Board of Governors and the Director General*. 23 September 1985.

³³ The IAEA can be regarded as the 'implementation agency' of the NPT.

³⁴ Fischer, *History of the International Atomic Energy Agency*, 109–110.

³⁵ UN, *South Africa's Nuclear-Tipped Ballistic Missile Capability*, 9.

document, 'A balanced approach to the NPT: Armscor/AEC concerns viewed from a DFA standpoint'.³⁶ The document outlined and criticised Armscor's position on the NPT. By August 1988, Armscor indicated that signing the NPT was 'incompatible' with South Africa's 'nuclear weapons programme', and that a 'strategy of uncertainty whereby a conflicting set of perceptions regarding SA's nuclear weapons is created' should be continued for as long as possible (three to six years).³⁷ Therefore, the 'greater the uncertainty created; the greater the deterrent effect of South Africa's presumed capability'. For the DFA, Armscor's proposed strategy in respect of the NPT 'neglects pressing social, political, and other technological concerns'. The DFA explained that the 'continued development of nuclear weapons' could only be justified on three arguments, namely the certainty of eventual use (which the DFA maintained was impractical in terms of the radioactive fall-out); the deterrence factor (which the DFA maintained resulted in increased global pressure on and isolation of South Africa); and national pride. In respect of the latter argument, the DFA argued that South Africa's national pride would be enhanced by South Africa 'becoming a respected member of the international community'.³⁸ The DFA argued that the ratification of the NPT would enable South Africa to obtain the necessary technology to develop its nuclear power resources in the face of rising demand for power in the country.

In July 1988, the South African government requested negotiations with Britain, the USSR, and the US.³⁹ Fearing expulsion from the IAEA, South Africa approached these NWS to acquire assurances that these countries would not support motions to suspend South Africa from the agency. In August 1988, Pik Botha admitted that South Africa was capable of producing nuclear weapons.⁴⁰ Botha, however, refused to admit whether his government had already produced nuclear weapons. He maintained that South Africa would not be rushed into signing the NPT.⁴¹ However, Botha later admitted that he had known of the existence of South Africa's nuclear weapons programme since his appointment as Minister of Mineral and Energy Affairs, and had accompanied P.W. Botha to one of the facilities where South Africa's six atomic bombs were kept.⁴² A major

³⁶ Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), *A Balanced Approach to the NPT: Armscor/AEC Concerns Viewed from a DFA Standpoint*, 1988. Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) Archive, Pretoria.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Stumpf, *Birth and Death of the South African Nuclear Weapons Programme*, <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/rsa/nuke/stumpf.htm>

⁴⁰ Reuters, 'Pretoria Says It Can Build A-arms', *New York Times* 14 August 1988, <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/08/14/world/pretoria-says-it-can-build-a-arms.html?scp=72&sq=SOUTH+AFRICA+NUCLEAR&st=nyt> (accessed 21 September 2011).

⁴¹ 'Superpowers Urge SA to Sign Nuke Treaty', *The Citizen*, 22 September 1988, 5.

⁴² Theresa Papenfus, *Pik Botha and His Times* (Pretoria: Litera Publications, 2010), 732.

implication of South Africa's ratification of the NPT was that it would have to negotiate an agreement with the IAEA to allow agency officials to visit all of South Africa's nuclear plants. Botha articulated some of Pretoria's concerns pertaining to the NPT. Botha maintained that his government required assurances on whether the NPT's provisions 'would be applied to us [South Africa] in a non-discriminatory manner if we [South Africa] are to consider joining it'⁴³ and that there would be no interference with South Africa's 'research and development programme in producing products for peaceful purposes'; a position and requirement dating back to the 1970s as indicated earlier.⁴⁴

The GC's 1988 and 1989 resolutions contained the most severe criticism against South Africa. The resolutions condemned South Africa for its persistent refusal to comply with successive resolutions of the UNGA and the GC, as well as its refusal to adhere to the principles and purposes of the UN Charter and the IAEA Statute.⁴⁵ Similar GC decisions to defer its decisions to suspend South Africa followed in 1989 (when de Klerk made the decision to secretly terminate South Africa's nuclear weapons programme and devices) and 1990 (when de Klerk unbanned various liberation organisation in South Africa and began constitutional negotiations in the country) as it became apparent that South Africa might be changing its nuclear weapons stance.⁴⁶

From August 1988, a series of talks between South African officials and the NPT depository countries (the US, Soviet Union, and the UK) took place. Led by Pik Botha, the South African delegation was mainly interested in 'clarifying the cost and benefits of adherence' as well as the responsibilities under the IAEA Safeguards Agreement.⁴⁷ These commercial – rather than security and military – concerns date back to 1968 when South Africa explained to the UNGA that it would not submit to IAEA safeguards because it was concerned about commercial espionage. This view was repeated in 1970 when the South African prime minister explained to parliament that South Africa was willing to accept IAEA safeguards on the condition that the safeguards 'did not allow commercial espionage or hinder South African civilian nuclear research'.⁴⁸ The next round of talks between the South African government and the depository country took place in Vienna in December 1989. This time the South African delegation, composed of pro- and anti-NPT delegates, expressed concern about the

⁴³ 'Pretoria Says It Can Build A-arms', *New York Times*.

⁴⁴ Papenfus, *Pik Botha and His Times*, 732.

⁴⁵ IAEA GC, South Africa's Nuclear Capabilities. Resolution Adopted During the 312th Plenary Meeting, on 23 September 1988, GC(XXXII)/RES/503; 1988; IAEA, IAEA GC, 1989, South Africa's Nuclear Capabilities. Resolution Adopted During the 322nd Plenary Meeting on 29 September 1989, GC(XXXIII)/RES/524, 1989.

⁴⁶ Fischer, *History of the International Atomic Energy Agency*, 110.

⁴⁷ UN, *South Africa's Nuclear-Tipped Ballistic Missile Capability*, 11.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

practicalities of acceding to the NPT. The talks concluded with the South African delegation indicating that domestic concerns about accession to the NPT should first be addressed before the country could accede. However, it took almost a year to address these domestic concerns.

Political change in South Africa

By September 1990, several months after de Klerk's release of political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela, and the unbanning of liberation organisations in February 1990, the GC adopted a resolution which 'deplores' South Africa's non-compliance with the resolutions, principles, and purpose of the UN and the IAEA.⁴⁹ The GC received South Africa's accession to the NPT on 10 July 1991 positively. However, it requested the IAEA director general to ensure that South Africa implement the safeguards agreement signed with the agency. The GC also requested the director general to verify the completeness of the inventory of all of South Africa's nuclear installations and material.⁵⁰

By September 1990, a written statement by Pik Botha was circulated at the 34th Regular Session of the GC. In the statement, Botha indicated that South Africa was 'prepared to accede to the Treaty' – but with a *caveat* – 'in the context of an equal commitment by the other states in the southern African region'.⁵¹ Moreover, Botha also indicated that his government intended to commence talks with the IAEA on concluding a safeguards agreement with the agency. South Africa's diplomatic efforts paid off. At its conclusion, the IAEA director general indicated that the agency was ready to commence with talks with South Africa 'without delay'.⁵²

Thus, South Africa's diplomatic relations with the IAEA between 1965 and 1990 were characterised by confrontation as the country deviated from IAEA norms. The agency pressured the South African government to reveal the extent of its nuclear weapons programme, whereas the South African government refused to yield on any of the IAEA's demands due to the government's threat perception and the country's increased isolation. South Africa also faced increasing UN sanctions and was severely criticised by, amongst others, the G-77. However, once South Africa 'returned' to the IAEA, it became a vocal campaigner for the right of developing countries to access nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The early years of South

⁴⁹ IAEA GC, South Africa's Nuclear Capabilities. Resolution Adopted During the 332nd Plenary Meeting on 21 September 1990, GC(XXXIV)/RES/545, 1990.

⁵⁰ IAEA GC, South Africa's Nuclear Capabilities. Resolution Adopted During the 341st Plenary Meeting on 20 September 1991, GC(XXXV)/RES/567, 1991.

⁵¹ Minister of Foreign Affairs, Statement in South Africa's Position on Accession to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, 17 September 1990, in IAEA, 34th Regular Session of the General Conference, Communication Received from South Africa. GC(XXXIV)/INF/290, http://www.iaea.org/About/Policy/GC/GC34/GC34InfDocuments/English/gc34inf-290_en.pdf (accessed 26 September 2011).

⁵² UN, *South Africa's Nuclear-Tipped Ballistic Missile Capability*, 11.

Africa's return to the IAEA took place against the background of the political transition in the country as the NP, the ANC, and other liberation organisations negotiated the country's future constitutional dispensation.

Safeguards agreements

In 1991, South Africa concluded two major international nuclear-related agreements, namely the ratification of the NPT (10 July 1991) and the conclusion of a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA (16 September 1991), which paved the way for the implementation of the IAEA's safeguards agreement in South Africa. These agreements were preceded by de Klerk's decision in August 1989 to terminate the programme, his appointment of a committee to oversee the process, and the removal of 'all of the HEU... from the weapons, [which was] melted down and returned from ARMSCOR to the AEC' by 6 September 1991.⁵³

Comprising 98 articles, the Safeguards Agreement entered into force on 16 September 1991. The implementation of the Safeguards Agreement including ad hoc inspections by a team of senior IAEA official specially appointed by the IAEA's director general of South Africa's facilities, which began in November 1991 subsequent to the IAEA's receipt of South Africa's Initial Report (submitted on 31 October 1991), as well as the report produced by the AEC, *Report on the Completeness of the Inventory of South Africa's Nuclear Installations and Nuclear Material as of 30 September 1991*.

The first years of South Africa's 'return' to the IAEA overlapped with the constitutional negotiations and the political transition in the country. From 1994, successive government statements to meetings of the IAEA reiterated the good technical cooperation between the country and the IAEA, a repetition of South Africa's historical stance on the technical – rather than political – role of the IAEA.

The verification process and the implementation of the Safeguards Agreement

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned reports, the IAEA maintained that the initial assistance provided by the South African government 'was not considered to be sufficient'.⁵⁴ Between November 1991 and September 1993 the IAEA carried out 22 inspection missions in South Africa. These missions included

⁵³ IAEA, *The Denuclearization of Africa. The Agency's Verification Activities in South Africa*, 9 September 1993, 7, http://www.iaea.org/About/Policy/GC/GC37/GC37Documents/English/gc37-1075_en.pdf (accessed 7 July 2011).

⁵⁴ Atomic Energy Corporation of South Africa (AEC), *Report on the Completeness of the Inventory of South Africa's Nuclear Installations and Nuclear Material*, in IAEA, 1992, *Thirty-sixth Regular Session [of the General Conference]. South Africa's Nuclear Capabilities*. 4 September 1992, <http://www.iaea.org> (accessed 7 July 2011).

more than 150 inspections at individual South African nuclear facilities and locations outside facilities to 'implement the [Safeguards] agreement and verify the completeness and assess the correctness of South Africa's Initial Report'.⁵⁵ The IAEA team found 'no evidence that the list of facilities and locations outside facilities' provided by South Africa in its Initial Report was 'incomplete'.⁵⁶ However, the IAEA inspection team reported that 'the uranium-235 balances they had calculated for both the pilot enrichment plant and the semi-commercial enrichment plant showed apparent discrepancies'.⁵⁷

Subsequently, the IAEA inspection team made additional visits to South Africa to examine these U-235 discrepancies. Based on historical records provided by the AEC, the IAEA team concluded that, at the time, South Africa's U-235 balance of the HEU, LEU and depleted uranium produced by the pilot enrichment plant 'is consistent with the uranium feed' and that the amounts of HEU 'which could have been produced by the pilot enrichment plant are consistent with the amounts declared in the initial report [by the South African government]'.⁵⁸ The 'apparent discrepancy' in the U-235 balance of the semi-commercial enrichment plant was not resolved at the time.⁵⁹ Against the background of the U-235 discrepancies, the US expressed concerns about the South African programme by stating that the US had concerns about South Africa's compliance with its obligations in terms of the NPT.

According to IAEA officials, the South African verification process was 'complex' and 'further complicated' by de Klerk's announcement on 24 March 1993 which meant that the IAEA was required to extend its assignment and include nuclear weapons experts in its teams verifying the destruction and dismantling of South Africa's nuclear weapons and its programme.⁶⁰ In addition, the IAEA alleged that de Klerk ordered the destruction and damage of 'classified documents' and 'sensitive' equipment.⁶¹ In response to these allegations, the South African government invited the IAEA inspection team to assess the status of South Africa's former nuclear weapons programme. These visits occurred from 22 April to 4 May; from 3 to 11 June; and from 9 to 13 August 1993. The team had to determine the 'adequacy' of the measures taken by the South African government to destroy sensitive components of its nuclear weapons and to recover

⁵⁵ IAEA, *Thirty-seventh Regular Session [of the General Conference]. Record of the Three hundred and fifty-third Plenary Meeting*, 27 September 1993, http://www.iaea.org/About/Policy/GC/GC37/GC37Records/English/gc37or-353_en.pdf (accessed 7 July 2011).

⁵⁶ IAEA, *The Denuclearization of Africa. The Agency's Verification Activities in South Africa*, 1993.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Von Baeckmann, Dillon and Perricos, *Nuclear Verification in South Africa*, 42–48.

⁶¹ IAEA, *The Denuclearization of Africa. The Agency's Verification Activities in South Africa*. Thirty-seventh Regular Session of the IAEA General Conference. 9 September 1993, http://www.iaea.org/About/Policy/GC/GC37/GC37Documents/English/gc37-1075_en.pdf (accessed 7 July 2011).

the nuclear material involved in terms of the Safeguards Agreement with South Africa.⁶²

When the IAEA inspection team visited South Africa, the dismantling and the destruction of weapons components and technical documentation (during what was designated as Operation Masada) of the country's nuclear weapons programme had been 'nearly completed'.⁶³ No records had been kept of the dismantling of the demonstration device or on 'any of the pre-production experimental devices or on the destruction of their components'.⁶⁴ In response, the IAEA inspection team recommended the 'complete destruction' of all remaining 'components, photographs and drawings' which could reveal any information of the nuclear material core and components.⁶⁵

The IAEA inspection team concluded that it had found 'substantial evidence' of the destruction of non-nuclear material components; that it had found 'no indication' that 'substantial amounts of depleted or natural uranium used in the nuclear weapons programme are unaccounted for'; and that South Africa's nuclear weapons programme had been terminated.⁶⁶ Unlike previous inspections, South African authorities provided 'extensive co-operation' with the agency in the implementation of safeguards; the IAEA inspection team 'encountered a highly cooperative attitude on behalf of the South African authorities' and in arranging access to all the facilities, concluded that no information about the existence of 'any undeclared facilities' could be determined and that the Vastrap test site in the Kalahari Desert was 'rendered useless'.⁶⁷ Despite the destruction of documentation during Operation Masada, the South African government was complimented for the 'transparency and openness shown' during the verification process.⁶⁸

The IAEA's verification process was 'made easier by the co-operation of the South African nuclear authorities, who provided the IAEA with access and data beyond those required by its NPT safeguards agreement'.⁶⁹ Moreover, the IAEA confirmed that the South African government provided the IAEA verification team with 'all the operating records of South Africa's previously unsafeguarded enrichment plant, and permitted the IAEA inspectors 'to go any place, any time'.⁷⁰ By September 1993, the IAEA concluded that the status of the Safeguards Agreement between South Africa and the IAEA was

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ IAEA, *South Africa's Position in the IAEA and the Board of Governors. Thirty-eighth Regular Session of the IAEA General Conference*. September 1994, <http://www.iaea.org> (accessed 7 July 2011).

⁶⁷ IAEA, *The Denuclearization of Africa*.

⁶⁸ Von Baeckmann, Dillon & Perricos, *Nuclear Verification in South Africa*, 42–48.

⁶⁹ Fischer, *History of the International Atomic Energy Agency*, 110.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

‘satisfactory’.⁷¹ In particular, the IAEA reported that:

- the HEU amounts presented to the IAEA were ‘consistent with amounts declared in the initial report’;
- there was nothing ‘to suggest that substantial amounts of depleted or natural uranium used in the nuclear weapons programme are unaccounted for’; and
- there was nothing ‘to suggest that there remain[ed] any sensitive components of the nuclear weapons programme which have not been either rendered useless or converted to commercial non-nuclear applications or peaceful nuclear usage’.⁷²

Apart from the Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA, South Africa concluded several other agreements with the agency. Of the bilateral agreements the Additional Protocol is one of the most important SA-IAEA agreements. The Additional Protocol is designed for states which have already signed a Safeguards Agreement to strengthen the IAEA’s ability to ‘detect undeclared nuclear material and activities in order to provide credible assurances of and confidence in the peaceful application of nuclear energy’.⁷³

Once the political transition in South Africa resulted in the inauguration of the GNU, South Africa’s membership in numerous international organisations including the IAEA was normalised. In summary, the post-1990 South African government cooperated with the IAEA during the agency’s verification process and the implementation of the Safeguards Agreement in South Africa. Employing cooperation as a diplomatic strategy paved the way for greater acceptance of South Africa’s intention to comply with nuclear non-proliferation norms.

However, with the political transition underway in South Africa, the GC invited South Africa in 1994 to ‘resume participation in all activities of the Agency’ as a result of ‘her dismantling her nuclear weapons programme’.⁷⁴ Moreover, the GC requested the board to ‘review the designation of South Africa to the Board’.⁷⁵ Once the IAEA concluded its verification process in South Africa and with Egypt’s concurrence, South Africa regained its seat on the board in 1995. It was only on 25 September 1995 that South Africa returned to the board as the representative of the African region after its suspension in 1977.

⁷¹ IAEA, *The Denuclearization of Africa*.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ South Africa (Embassy of the Republic of South Africa in Vienna). 2011. *Multilateral*, <http://www.dirco.gov.za/vienna/multilateralvienna.html> (accessed 16 May 2011).

⁷⁴ IAEA, *South Africa’s Position in the IAEA and the Board of Governors. Thirty-eighth Regular Session of the IAEA General Conference*. September 1994, <http://www.iaea.org>, (accessed 7 July 2011).

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Once reinstated as a board member in 1995, South Africa sought to improve the representation of developing countries on the board. South Africa's call for a 'stronger voice for developing countries' was in line with South Africa's stated foreign policy, as well as its self-proclaimed role as a bridge between developed and developing countries.⁷⁶

Conclusion

This article considered South Africa's nuclear diplomacy with the IAEA in respect of several major phases, which covered South Africa's relations with the agency since its establishment in 1957 until 1995. Initially the first phase (until 1964) was characterised by the country's initial norm entrepreneurship and norm compliance. The period subsequent to the inauguration of SAFARI-1 and the development of a nuclear deterrent strategy contributed to the increased isolation of South Africa. In the context of the Cold War, the NP government attempted to protect the integrity and national security of South Africa. In the IAEA, South Africa's eventual refusal to comply with non-proliferation norms entrenched in the IAEA Statute resulted in the country's suspension from the board in 1977, and the rejection of the South African delegation's credentials and Egypt's replacement of South Africa as the designated African country on the board in 1979. As South Africa's nuclear capabilities increased, the agency adopted a stricter approach towards the country. This resulted in a decision in 1987 to suspend South Africa from the agency. However, subsequent decisions by President Botha resulted in the IAEA deferring this decision. Nonetheless, the latter part of this first phase was characterised by confrontation as a diplomatic strategy.

President de Klerk cooperated with the IAEA to verify the complete dismantlement of the country's nuclear weapons programme. South Africa's compliance is evident in a series of agreements it signed with the IAEA. Despite its identity as a state that had dismantled its nuclear weapons programme, South Africa's diplomatic strategy towards the IAEA also involved confrontation on issues such as the expansion of the membership of the board, the establishment of a nuclear fuel reserve, and the right of developing countries to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Although the conversion of SAFARI-1 was eventually concluded, it took a number of years to complete.

As a founder member, South Africa's return to the board in 1995 represented a major development in its post-1990 nuclear diplomacy. The IAEA's verification of South Africa's terminated nuclear weapons programme and the country's membership on the board added weight to its nuclear diplomacy and paved the way for South Africa's ratification and the entry into force of the African Nuclear Weapons Free Zone Treaty (the Pelindaba Treaty).

⁷⁶ 'SA Pushes for More African Countries in IAEA', *BuaNews*, 22 September 2010, <http://www.buanews.gov.za/news/10/100922114251002> (accessed 16 May 2011).

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