

South Africa's Post-apartheid Nuclear Diplomacy: Practice and Principles

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Abstract

Almost three decades after South Africa dismantled its nuclear weapons programme and weapons, the question remains why the country has not reversed this decision. This contribution, using three illustrative case studies—the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), South Africa's inspection team in Iraq (prior to the United States (US)-led invasion in March 2003 and the nuclear fuel reserve of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)—argues that South Africa has conducted its nuclear diplomacy using niche diplomacy as a diplomatic practice. These practices have revealed certain normative principles of South Africa's post-apartheid nuclear diplomacy, which explain why the country has not reversed its decision. The contribution analyses South Africa's nuclear diplomacy in the early twenty-first century by focusing on selected post-2000 nuclear-related events and developments.

Keywords

South Africa, nuclear, diplomacy, niche diplomacy, principles, Iraq, IAEA, NPT

Introduction

In 1989, South African President FW de Klerk established a committee to oversee the dismantling and destruction of South Africa's nuclear devices and the termination of the country's nuclear weapons programme, a process that was verified by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 1993.

The post-1990 period has been most dynamic in terms of South Africa's international relations and diplomacy particularly with relevance to the country's

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nuclear diplomacy. More importantly, the ‘new’ South Africa, under the leadership of the liberation movement turned government, the African National Congress (ANC), admitted that a ‘primary goal’ of its foreign policy is to ‘reinforce and promote it as a responsible producer, possessor and trader of defence-related products and advanced technologies in the nuclear, biological, chemical and missile fields’ (DFA-1, 2003). The post-1994 government’s argument was that South Africa, in this way, ‘promotes the benefits which non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control hold for international peace and security, particularly to countries in Africa and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)’ (DFA-2, 2003). This was a departure from the country’s historic nuclear posture and diplomacy as well as a departure from the ANC’s historic anti-nuclear position, which raised international concerns about South Africa’s nuclear intentions, especially in the wake of the Cold War when illicit nuclear trade seemed to have increased, and the ANC’s historic relations with, for example, nuclear armed states of the former Soviet Union.

Against the aforesaid, the contribution aims to determine why South Africa did not reverse its decision to dismantle its nuclear weapons and programme given its position as referred to earlier. In order to answer this question, the contribution focuses on the principles and practice of South Africa’s nuclear diplomacy. Following a deductive approach, niche diplomacy, using constructivism, as a diplomatic practice is outlined. Three illustrative case studies of South Africa’s post-1994 nuclear diplomacy—the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Iraq crisis (*ca.* 2003) and the IAEA nuclear fuel reserve—are presented from which the country’s diplomatic practice and principles are deduced to assess the country’s nuclear diplomacy and its non-proliferation position. Given the legal 25-year moratorium on archival material, the contribution refers to open source material only.

Niche Diplomacy as Diplomatic Practice

Nuclear diplomacy is the social interaction among and between international actors—states, international organisations, individuals and transnational non-state organisations—on nuclear-related issues, actors and—material or non-material—interests to achieve objectives aligned with an actor’s construction of its self-interests or national interests, its particular identity and the nuclear-related norms it initiates, innovates, maintains and with which it is compliant or non-compliant. This definition is not limited to states as the traditional and only actors in the nuclear field. Increasingly, non-state actors such as private corporations participate in scientific research and development and trade in nuclear materials, goods, equipment and services (van Wyk, 2013, p. 54).

In the conduct of nuclear diplomacy, states focus on various aspects of controlling the use of nuclear energy, including, for example, arms control, non-proliferation and deterrence. As a diplomatic practice, nuclear diplomacy is no different from other modes of diplomacy, which includes telecommunications, including routine and crisis diplomacy; bilateral diplomacy, including

conventional and unconventional bilateral diplomacy; multilateral diplomacy, including international organisations; and summitry of heads of states and governments and mediation of conflict. However, nuclear diplomacy differs from these modes in that it has a specific focus area (nuclear energy). Actors involved in it are, by virtue of the NPT, divided into two categories, namely nuclear weapons states (NWSs) and non-nuclear weapons states (NNWSs), with an increasing number of developing states with a nuclear weapons capability.

Whereas nuclear diplomacy is a specific type of diplomacy, niche diplomacy is a specific diplomatic practice based on a state's diplomatic specialisation in a particular area and its concentration of resources in 'specific areas best able to generate return worth having rather than trying to cover the field' (Henrikson, 2005, p. 67). This indicates a state's ability to 'identify and fill niche spaces on a selective basis through policy ingenuity and execution' (Cooper, 1997, p. 5). Typically, states practising niche diplomacy focus on a specifically selected issue, organisation or activity akin to middle-power diplomatic behaviour, which have a strong normative foundation (Cooper, 1997, p. 6, 9).

As a practice, niche diplomacy focuses on consensus and coalition building, cooperation on an issue-specific basis and adopting the role of bridge-builder, mediator, facilitator or catalyst that requires 'entrepreneurial flair and technical competence' in planning, convening and hosting meetings, prioritising for future meetings on a particular issue and drawing up declarations and manifestos (Cooper, 1997, p. 9).

Here, niche diplomacy as a diplomatic practice is analysed using Cooper's (1997, 74) extended framework of middle-power behaviour, Du Plessis' (2006, p. 140) typology of diplomacy and Henrikson's (2005, pp. 1–24) three niche diplomatic strategies. Based on this, the dimensions—duration, form, level and intensity—of diplomacy are identified. Duration and status refer to the nature of diplomacy by being permanent (routine) or temporary (*ad hoc*), whereas form refers to the number of actors involved, namely, bilateral or multilateral. Level type and status refer to the status of diplomatic representatives, whereas strategy refers to a state's use of partnership, parallelism and/or confrontation. Finally, the intensity of a state's niche diplomacy ranges from accommodative to combative. This serves as an analytical framework to describe, classify and analyse niche diplomacy as a diplomatic practice underlying South Africa's principles, identity, interests and role in respect of its nuclear diplomacy. The remainder of this contribution applies this analytical framework to the three selected case studies illustrative of South Africa's post-1994 nuclear diplomacy.

South Africa is one of the few countries to have terminated its nuclear weapons programme (others being Brazil and Libya). It established numerous bi- and multilateral relations; acceded to the NPT in 1991; and joined or rejoined several nuclear-related organisations, including, for example, the IAEA, the Wassenaar Arrangement (WA) on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies, the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), the Zangger Committee (ZC), the Network of Regulators of Countries with Small Nuclear Programmes (NERS), the African Nuclear Regulators' Group and the Generation IV International Forum (GIF) (DFA, 2009).

South Africa and the NPT

Entered into force on 5 March 1970, the NPT rests on three major pillars or norms, namely, nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Initially a reluctant signatory of the NPT, South Africa acceded to the Treaty in 1991 and, since then, has been an unequivocal supporter—with some *caveats*—of the Treaty. It has actively participated in the Treaty's Review Conferences (RevCons) with its first attendance at these RevCons in 1995 when the country attended the Review and Extension Conference (REC).

Post-apartheid South Africa's first participation in an NPT conference, the REC, took place in 1995. Initially, South Africa preferred a limited extension of the NPT, cooperating with some NNWS. However, at the Preparatory Commission (PrepComs) prior to the 1995 REC, South Africa developed a new position, resulting in confrontation with some of the countries of the developing world and some NNWS. It cooperated with the NWS, most notably with the United States (US), in achieving the indefinite extension of the NPT.

South Africa's proposals on a mechanism for strengthening the review process were developed in consultation with other countries as explained by South African diplomat Pieter Goosen (1995, p. 3), indicating that the 'ideas in the original South African draft on the review mechanism were not of South Africa alone, as was the case with the draft on principles'. South Africa's Minister of Foreign Affairs Alfred Nzo addressed the REC, providing a legal analysis of the extension options to the Treaty's future. Nzo (1995) also stressed that the NPT should not be jeopardised but should be strengthened, reiterating that the NPT is the 'only international instrument on nuclear disarmament' that binds all five NWSs. Referring to the 'inequalities inherent' in the Treaty, Nzo (1995) stated that it should be dealt with in such a manner as not to threaten the security provided by the NPT. More importantly, he confirmed that South Africa 'in principle supports the view that the NPT should be extended indefinitely. The termination of the treaty is not an acceptable option'.

South Africa also proposed that a mechanism, a set of *Principles for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament* (hereafter Principles), should be adopted to address concerns in order to fully implement the NPT and should be renewed at every RevCon. Although he did not identify these Principles, Nzo (1995) referred to issues for consideration, including a re-commitment to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons; the strengthening of and full compliance with the IAEA safeguard agreements; access to nuclear material and technology for peaceful purposes; progress in the Cut-Off Convention negotiations; progress in the reduction of nuclear arsenals; progress in the negotiations for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); a commitment to the establishment of regional NWFZs; and enforcing binding security assurances for NNWS (Nzo, 1995).

South Africa also recommended that the Treaty review process should be improved by the establishment of a committee to study and report on the review process and the Treaty's implementation. These recommendations, Nzo (1995) proposed, should be considered by the PrepComs for the 2000 RevCon. South Africa's proposals served as the basis for the package of decisions presented by

the president of the conference, Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala, from Sri Lanka. According to Thomas Markram (2006, p. 24), the package of decisions 'provided a way for all State Parties to support the indefinite extension' and the means for achieving progress on nuclear disarmament. The final decisions adopted by the REC reflected South Africa's initial proposals. Two of the REC's three major decisions, Decision I (*Strengthening the Review Process of the Treaty*) and Decision II (*Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Disarmament*) were based on South Africa's proposals presented by Minister Nzo.

These instances of South Africa's niche diplomacy at the REC were the result of the country constructing its identity as a state with a unique nuclear identity which bestowed on it a certain normative power. It was able to play the role of a norm entrepreneur by facilitating the socialisation of certain non-proliferation norms by other states by identifying and filling specific niche areas (so-called policy ingenuity and execution) as described by Cooper (1997, p. 5), pertaining to the NPT. It deliberately focused on the 'elements of the NPT', according to Goosen (1995, p. 3), to 'identify the various issues which could be addressed'. South Africa's behaviour in this case was typical of a middle power whose behaviour, as explained by Keohane (in Cooper 1997, p. 8), was that of a state 'whose leaders consider that it cannot act alone effectively, but may be able to have a systemic impact in a small group or through international institutions'.

At the REC, South Africa's 'entrepreneurial flair and technical competence' (Cooper 1997, p. 6, 9) were evident in its decision to focus on the 'elements of the NPT' and to consult with other actors such as the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and other countries (Goosen 1995, pp. 1-3). This was recognised by the president of the REC when he referred to South Africa's 'very imaginative proposal of having a statement of principles and a strengthening of the review process' which 'led to the other two parallel decisions that were taken together with the decision on the extension' (Dhanapala 1995, p. 2).

The form of South Africa's nuclear diplomacy in the context of the 1995 NPT REC remained predominantly multilateral with, as its level and status, multilateral summitry, intergovernmental meetings and conferences. Here, the duration of its diplomacy was fairly routine and permanent with three sessions of the PrepCom of the NPT in the three years preceding RECs or RevCons. More important is South Africa's niche diplomatic strategies, namely, partnership (with NNWS and NWS alike), parallelism and confrontation (especially with NWS), whereas the intensity of its behaviour oscillated between accommodative (at the 1995 REC) and combative on NWS' inaction on disarmament.

South Africa's diplomatic practice, therefore, was based on consensus and coalition building, and cooperation with other states on two specific issues (the indefinite extension of the Treaty and a review of the Treaty). In this, South Africa adopted the roles typical of middle powers practicing niche diplomacy as identified by Cooper 1997, p. 9), namely, bridge-builder, mediator, facilitator and catalyst. The latter involved South Africa's planning; convening and hosting of consultations on the NPT; and drawing up an initial statement, which it amended after more consultations at the REC in New York. South Africa's nuclear diplomacy at its

first NPT conference produced significant diplomatic results for the country. It produced non-material rewards such as status and prestige. Moreover, it also signalled the country's compliance with the norms espoused in the NPT. It is against this background that South Africa prepared for the NPT's 2000 RevCon.

The next section focuses on South Africa's diplomatic practice in respect of the events prior to the US-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003.

Iraq 2003

Despite intense international diplomatic efforts, including South Africa's, to prevent a US-led invasion of Iraq outside the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the US and its coalition partners invaded Iraq in March 2003.

A month prior to the invasion and subsequent to various international diplomatic efforts, South African President Thabo Mbeki (2003) announced that Iraq had accepted a South African offer to dispatch a team—composed of experts from Pretoria's programme to destroy its nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction (WMD)—to visit Iraq to 'share' South Africa's 'experience relevant to the mission of the United Nations and Iraq to eradicate weapons of mass destruction under international supervision'. According to Mbeki, the team was able to address 'all matters that relate to nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction, missile systems, non-proliferation and disarmament, affecting all weapons of mass destruction' (DFA-2, 2003). Mbeki hoped that the South African 'intervention' would improve the cooperation between inspectors and Iraq to prevent war, while ensuring a WMD-free Iraq (DFA, 2001). Therefore, South Africa shared with Iraq the South African legislation pertaining to WMD, namely, the Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction Act of 1993 as well as notices and regulations published in terms of the act in the period between 1997 and 2002.

South Africa's approach to the visit was to focus on the policy decisions that were taken in South Africa to destroy its (that is, South Africa's) own WMD capabilities, and it emphasised the provision of 'fully transparent and proactive cooperation' (Pahad, 2003). The delegation also underlined the importance of taking the necessary steps to disarm as well as the importance of confidence building through compliance with UNSC Resolution 1441 (2002).

The Mbeki initiative illustrated middle-power behaviour in employing niche diplomacy, per Cooper's matrix. That is, South Africa was able to identify and fill a niche using its non-material power as a former NWS and its technical expertise. South Africa was able to engage with Iraq in a way that none of the superpowers managed to do.

In Iraq, South Africa's technical expertise and disarmament experience enabled it to focus on, amongst others, issues regarded as outstanding by United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the IAEA; the destruction of Iraq's VX nerve gas and anthrax stockpiles; WMD legislation; the disclosure of the location of Iraqi underground storage facilities; and Iraq's missile programme (Pahad, 2003). The South African team viewed the

Iraqi methodology as promising for the verification of the presence of chemical and biological elements, but remained concerned that Iraq would not be able to fully convince UNMOVIC and the UNSC on the merits of those tests alone. South Africa maintained that, for Iraq to convince the international community, it needed to provide additional evidence such as interviews with officials involved in the disposal process, to corroborate their findings (Pahad, 2003).

The South African delegation visited Iraq with some diplomatic clout and ‘with the full support’ of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan as well as a ‘tacit positive nod’ from the UK Prime Minister Tony Blair and the administration of US President George W Bush (Markram, 2004, p. 105). Not mandated to act as weapons inspectors, the delegation had access to Iraq Deputy President Tariq Aziz and individuals involved in the country’s weapons programme. The South African delegation also visited destroyed WMD sites. While they found that the Iraqis had been ‘negligent’ in their documentation of the destruction processes (Markram, 2004, p. 105), the experts suggested that interviews on the extent of the destruction could be conducted. Once the South African delegation left Iraq, it became known that the Iraqi government had commenced with the dismantling and destruction of its missiles, an issue in respect of which the South African delegation ‘had tried to persuade the Iraqis’ (Markram, 2004, p. 105). Thus, the South African delegation succeeded in at least one instance.

Once back in South Africa, the team reported to President Mbeki and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. The delegation concluded that ‘Iraq had undergone a considerable disarmament process and conceivably did not possess any weapons of mass destruction that posed a threat to international security’ (UN 2005, 106) and that Iraq continued to have some of the resources required to produce WMD, but argued that its general ability had been severely limited by international actions against the country.

South Africa was able to focus on a particular issue—disarming Iraq—by selecting a particular diplomatic approach, demonstrating what Cooper (1997, p. 6, 9) would point to as middle-power behaviour, with a strong normative foundation and ‘entrepreneurial flair and technical competence’. At the same time, South Africa promoted multilateralism in the UN as an instrument to achieve disarmament. Even in its bilateral interactions with Iraq prior to the invasion, South Africa informed the UN of its movements

South Africa, in order to acquire and maintain this particular diplomatic niche, required authority, influence, power, recognition, a secured position in a globally competitive arena through initiative (proposing open UNSC briefings and debates, and proposing the South African team’s visit to Iraq); advocacy (promoting the UN as the primary institution to achieve and maintain international peace and security); and positive branding, which it achieved through promoting itself as a disarmament success story, that is, the ‘South African example’ (UN, 2005, 328).

South Africa’s niche diplomacy in this instance was reflective of Cooper’s (1997, p. 6, 9) ‘entrepreneurial flair and technical competence’ through its bilateral cooperation on an issue-specific basis with the Iraqi government, and adopting the role of bridge-builder and mediator between Iraq and the international community. Here, the form of South Africa’s nuclear diplomacy was both bi- and multilateral

with, as its level and status, multilateral summitry, intergovernmental meetings and conferences. Moreover, the duration of its diplomacy in the context of this case has been temporary/ad hoc. More important is South Africa's diplomatic strategy, namely, partnership (with NAM, for example), parallelism (with, for example, the UN) and confrontation (especially with the US and P5), whereas the intensity of its behaviour oscillated between accommodative (of Iraq) and combative in respect of the US, the P5 and NWS.

The next section outlines South Africa's nuclear diplomacy in respect of the IAEA's nuclear fuel reserve.

IAEA Nuclear Fuel Reserve

In June 2009, IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei (2009a) proposed the establishment of a low-enriched uranium (LEU) reserve under IAEA auspices, in addition to a Russian proposal of an 'assurance of supply mechanism' (ElBaradei, 2009b, pp. 1–2). ElBaradei reassured IAEA members that the purpose of the LEU bank was to 'move from national to multinational control of the nuclear fuel cycle'; to 'provide assurance of supply over and above countries' existing rights'; that the proposed fuel bank 'does not limit countries' rights in any way'; and that 'no state would be required to give up any of its rights, including the right to develop its own fuel cycle'. Moreover, ElBaradei's proposal entailed a physical LEU bank at the disposal of the IAEA as a 'last-resort reserve for countries with nuclear power programmes which face a supply disruption for non-commercial reasons' and accessible to all states in order for states that 'they might not need their own enrichment or reprocessing capability' (ElBaradei, 2009b, p. 1).

At the time of Russia's initial proposal of a global nuclear fuel reserve in 2006, South Africa's IAEA governor, Abdul Minty (2006), reiterated that developing countries maintain that it is 'the basic and inalienable right of all states' to 'develop research, production and use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes' and that this right 'should be without any discrimination and in conformity with their respective legal obligations'. Minty (2006) pre-empted the outcome of the vote by some development countries on the establishment of the nuclear fuel reserve by stating their:

choices and decisions in the field of peaceful uses of nuclear technology and its fuel cycle policies must be respected. Just as for developed countries, developing countries also have a sovereign right to make their own decisions consistent with their national priorities and interest.

The ElBaradei initiative was perceived by developing states, including South Africa, as intending to prevent them from benefitting from nuclear energy and technology (Hibbs & Persbo, 2009, p. 22). However, ElBaradei's proposal was blocked by the Board on 18 June 2009 (Hibbs & Persbo, 2009, p. 22) but in November 2009, the IAEA authorised the IAEA director general to sign and implement an agreement, eventually signed on 29 March 2010, with the Russian Federation to establish an LEU reserve (IAEA, 2010). Twenty-eight IAEA

member states voted in favour of the establishment of the facility, whereas six members—South Africa, Tunisia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Brazil and Argentina—abstained from the vote, and Pakistan did not vote.

In response, South Africa reiterated its intention to secure its own fuel supply for ‘future national energy needs’ as various feasibility studies were already undertaken by the Nuclear Energy Corporation of South Africa (NECSA) with the cooperation of some ‘international players in fuel cycle services’ and that laboratories and facilities were under construction to ‘facilitate [the] re-establishment of fuel cycle operations in South Africa’ (Peters, 2009). The decision by the South African Government on nuclear fuel announced by Minister Peters (2009) signalled a major departure from IAEA policies as well as the use of parallelism as a diplomatic strategy with South Africa initiating nuclear fuel facilities parallel to the IAEA’s nuclear fuel reserve.

The International Uranium Enrichment Centre (IUEC), the first global nuclear fuel reserve, opened in December 2010 in Angarsk in Siberia, Russia.

The form of South Africa’s nuclear diplomacy was predominantly multilateral with, as its level and status, multilateral summitry, intergovernmental meetings and conferences, whereas the duration of its diplomacy in the context of this case has been routine. South Africa’s diplomatic strategies—partnership with NAM, for example, and confrontation especially with NWS—and the intensity of its behaviour oscillated between accommodative of NNWS and combative in respect of NWS. The country employed confrontation as a diplomatic strategy in the IAEA’s establishment of the nuclear fuel reserve and regarded NWS to be promoting their interests above those of other members of the IAEA despite the provision of Article IV of the NPT. South Africa was protecting its national interests, especially since it was conducting feasibility studies to recommence with its uranium enrichment programme.

Conclusion

South Africa’s diplomatic practice, as outlined, has illustrated its diplomatic strategies, the form, type and duration of its diplomacy. Following a deductive approach, this section distils the country’s diplomatic principles based on the above-mentioned practices. South Africa’s normative approach to nuclear energy, as a first identifiable principle of its nuclear diplomacy, is in line with Finnemore and Sikkink’s (1998, pp. 894–905) life cycle of norms. In this instance, South Africa has accepted/enacted (norm cascade) as well as internalised certain norms in the practice of its nuclear diplomacy. South Africa regards its nuclear diplomacy as a social practice. It has not only invested in the global socialisation of norms but—in line with Finnemore and Sikkink’s (1998, pp. 894–905) life cycle of norms—also acted as a norm entrepreneur in respect of the 1995 REC and the Iraq crisis).

South Africa is also bound by the principle of solidarity with NNWS. This is clear in its practices during the 1995 REC, its position on the nuclear fuel reserve and its involvement in the Iraq crisis. Practising niche diplomacy through consensus and coalition building; cooperation on an issue-specific basis (based on the

country's disarmament experience); and adopting the role of bridge-builder, mediator, facilitator or catalyst, South Africa has supported a rules-based international system. Its position on multilateralism and South–South solidarity was also evident following the fall of the Saddam government, in its participation in the NAM Troika (South Africa, Malaysia and Cuba) meeting on the reconstruction of Iraq in May 2003 to discuss the role of the NAM and the UN in the reconstruction of Iraq and the provision of humanitarian aid to Iraq. Also discussed were the latter's membership of the NAM and the status and staffing of diplomatic missions in Iraq (DFA-1, 2003).

Despite these laudable principles, there are limits to South Africa's niche diplomacy. The US-led 'coalition of the willing' invasion of Iraq in March 2003 was, for South Africa, a failure of its niche diplomacy and 'a blow to multilateralism'; demonstrating 'the urgency for the UN to assert its authority, and the need for UN reform' (*South African Press Association* 2003; Emeagwali and Gonzalez 2003, 17). Several possible explanations for South Africa's failure in this instance could be offered. South Africa may be *accused* of punching above its weight. It displayed a certain naivety when confronting the P5, and most notably the UK and the US. South Africa was evidently mistaken about the geopolitical ambitions of these states. However, Pretoria lacked experience in wider disarmament initiatives, which may have contributed to its failure. It could also be argued that Mbeki should have announced his initiative much earlier. Factors exogenous to South Africa may also have undermined its ability to succeed. The US invasion clearly indicated Washington's unilateralist agenda and its intention to undermine or sidestep the UN in order to pursue the US agenda. Irrespective of South Africa's initiative and report to Kofi Annan, the UN was compromised long before a peaceful solution could be achieved. Another possible exogenous factor explaining South Africa's failure may be linked to the nature of the Saddam regime, and its relations with, for example, the UN and the US.

Finally, the South African initiative may have been undermined by other competing agendas and motives. One unresolved matter relating to the UN programme in particular cast a long shadow over South Africa's diplomatic efforts. In April 2004, Kofi Annan established an Independent Inquiry Committee (IIC—the Volcker Committee), which included the former South African Constitutional Court Judge Richard Goldstone. By 27 October 2005, the IIC concluded that 2,253 firms from 52 countries made illegal payments amounting to US\$ 1.8 billion to the Saddam government, including South African firms linked to government decision-makers (IIC, 2005, 1–8). In answering the question why South Africa did not reverse its nuclear decision, this contribution concludes that, since 1994, South Africa conducted its nuclear diplomacy using niche diplomacy as a diplomatic practice. This has resulted in the country's normative innovation, independence and consensus-seeking practices and techniques as illustrated in the selected cases.

South Africa concentrated its resources (technical and practical disarmament experience) in this specific issue area to 'generate returns worth having' implying that it wanted to achieve non-material objectives with niche diplomacy which, in turn, would likely generate international prestige, status, material benefit, soft power and moral authority.

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