



**Nuclear Proliferation  
International  
History Project**

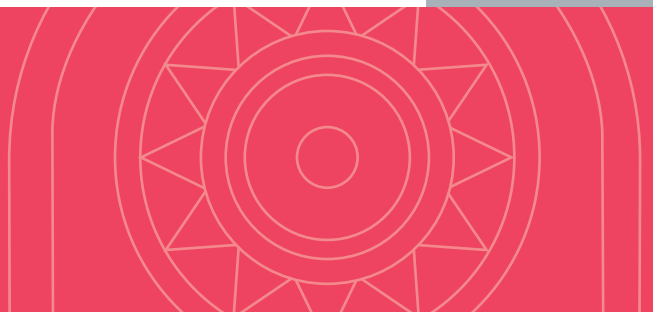


**Woodrow Wilson  
International  
Center  
for Scholars**

# **Nuclear Proliferation International History Project**

## **The African National Congress and Apartheid South Africa's Nuclear Weapons Program**

By Jo-Ansie van Wyk and Anna-Mart van Wyk  
NPIHP Working Paper #16  
November 2020





# THE NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION INTERNATIONAL HISTORY PROJECT WORKING PAPER SERIES

**Christian F. Ostermann and Leopoldo Nuti, Series Editors**

This paper is one of a series of Working Papers published by the Nuclear Proliferation International History Project. The Nuclear Proliferation International History Project (NPIHP) is a global network of individuals and institutions engaged in the study of international nuclear history through archival documents, oral history interviews and other empirical sources. Recognizing that today's toughest nuclear challenges have deep roots in the past, NPIHP seeks to transcend the East vs. West paradigm to work towards an integrated international history of nuclear weapon proliferation.

The continued proliferation of nuclear weapons is one of the most pressing security issues of our time, yet the empirically-based study of international nuclear history remains in its infancy. NPIHP's programs to address this central issue include:

- the annual Nuclear Boot Camp for M.A. and Ph.D. candidates to foster a new generation of experts on the international history of nuclear weapons;
- the NPIHP Fellowship Program for advanced Ph.D. students and post-doctoral researchers hosted by NPIHP partner institutions around the world;
- a coordinated, global research effort which combines archival mining and oral history interviews conducted by NPIHP partners;
- a massive translation and digitization project aimed at making documentary evidence on international nuclear history broadly accessible online;
- a series of conferences, workshops and seminars hosted by NPIHP partners around the world.

The *NPIHP Working Paper Series* is designed to provide a speedy publications outlet for historians associated with the project who have gained access to newly-available archives and sources and would like to share their results. As a non-partisan institute of scholarly study, the Woodrow Wilson Center takes no position on the historical interpretations and opinions offered by the authors.

Those interested in receiving copies of any of the Working Papers should contact:

Nuclear Proliferation International History Project  
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars  
One Woodrow Wilson Plaza  
1300 Pennsylvania Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20004

Telephone: (202) 691-4110

Fax: (202) 691-4001

Email: [npihp@wilsoncenter.org](mailto:npihp@wilsoncenter.org)

NPIHP Web Page: <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/npihp>

# THE NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION INTERNATIONAL HISTORY PROJECT

## WORKING PAPER SERIES

Christian F. Ostermann and Leopoldo Nuti  
Series Editors

1. **The Elephant in the Room**  
**The Soviet Union and India's Nuclear Program, 1967–89**  
Balazs Szalontai
2. **Between Aid and Restriction**  
**Changing Soviet Policies toward China's Nuclear Weapons Program 1954–60**  
Zhihua Shen and Yafeng Xia
3. **From the Peaceful Atom to the Peaceful Explosion**  
**Indo-French nuclear relations during the Cold War, 1950–1974**  
Jayita Sarkar
4. **Russia's Policy in the Run-Up to the First North Korea Nuclear Crisis, 1991–93**  
Sergey Radchenko
5. **The Persistent Legacy**  
**Germany's Place in the Nuclear Order**  
Andreas Lutsch
6. **The Imagined Arsenal**  
**India's Nuclear Decision-making, 1973–76**  
Yogesh Joshi
7. **Tlatelolco Tested**  
**The Falklands/Malvinas War and Latin America's Nuclear Weapon Free Zone**  
Ryan Alexander Musto
8. **Prelude to the Euromissile Crisis**  
**The Neutron Bomb Affair, the Netherlands, and the 'Defeat of the Strangeloves'**  
**1977–78**  
Ruud van Dijk
9. **"Diverting the Arms Race into the Permitted Channels"**  
**The Nixon Administration, the MIRV-Mistake, and the SALT Negotiations**  
Stephan Kienenger
10. **Bringing Seoul into the Non-Proliferation Regime**  
**The Effect of ROK-Canada Reactor Deals on Korea's Ratification of the NPT**  
Se Young Jang

11. **Waiting for the Bomb**  
**PN Haksar and India's Nuclear Policy in the 1960s**  
Yogesh Joshi
12. **Interpreting the Bomb**  
**Ownership and Deterrence in Ukraine's Nuclear Discourse**  
Polina Sinovets and Mariana Budjeryn
13. **"Is the Possibility of a Third World War Real?"**  
**Researching Nuclear Ukraine in the KGB Archive**  
Nate Jones
14. **Political Authority or Atomic Celebrity?**  
**The Influence of J. Robert Oppenheimer on American Nuclear Policy after the Second World War**  
Marco Borghi
15. **"Atoms for Police"**  
**The United States and the Dream of a Nuclear-Armed United Nations, 1945-62**  
Ryan A. Musto
16. **The African National Congress and Apartheid South Africa's Nuclear Weapons Program**  
Jo-Ansie van Wyk and Anna-Mart van Wyk

# The African National Congress and Apartheid South Africa's Nuclear Weapons Program

Jo-Ansie van Wyk and Anna-Mart van Wyk

**Abstract:** Established in 1912, the African National Congress (ANC) became synonymous with the anti-apartheid and liberation struggle in South Africa despite its banning between 1960 and 1990, a period coinciding with the Cold War and the nuclear arms race, when it went into exile and underground. Prior to its banning, internal discussions on nuclear energy and weapons took place. However, during its three decades in exile, the ANC became aware of the secret nuclear weapons program of the apartheid government, an issue that soon became one of the pillars of its global struggle to end apartheid and the apartheid nuclear weapons program. Using available archival sources, the Working Paper traces the development of the ANC's position on nuclear energy and nuclear weapons before discussing the organization's transnational anti-nuclear tactics, including its armed struggle and attack against South Africa's nuclear power plant, the Koeberg Nuclear Power Plant close to Cape Town, during its construction. This Working Paper contributes to scholarship on the nuclear position and anti-nuclear struggle of liberation movements which remains underdeveloped. It also shows the importance and extent of non-state transnational anti-apartheid and anti-nuclear activism and tactics of the liberation movement. Second, the ANC's transnational campaign increased global awareness of apartheid and sanctions busting, while also unmasking the secret nuclear ambitions and weapons program of the apartheid government, which contributed to the total isolation of the country. Another significant element of the ANC's anti-nuclear struggle was its campaigning at the UN that not only resulted in comprehensive UN sanctions and embargoes against South Africa, but also resulted in reforms within the UN to address and accommodate the anti-apartheid struggle. These factors contributed to the dismantling of the apartheid nuclear weapons program, the unbanning of liberation movements in South Africa, and the negotiation of the country's democratic dispensation. The ANC that won South Africa's first ever democratic elections in 1994 remains the country's ruling party. Under its leadership, South Africa maintains its position on nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

## Introduction

The National Party (NP) came to power in South Africa in 1948. Within the first decade of the NP's rule, apartheid was entrenched as a political, social, legal, and constitutional system. Although further consolidation of the apartheid state occurred over the following decades, it was already clear by the late 1950s that race had become a greater signifier than before. In the early years of the NP's rule, opposition to apartheid included, among other resistance efforts, the Defiance Campaign, which was conducted by South African liberation organizations. Government reactions to the Defiance Campaign included death sentences, incarceration, violence, terror, and further expansion of white privilege. Early in the NP's rule, many members of the African National Congress (ANC), which had been established in 1912 as a human rights and liberation organization, were imprisoned, sentenced to death, placed under house arrest, or subjected to various restrictions.

Despite international condemnation, the apartheid government did not give in to citizens' demands. As criticism from the international community turned into varying degrees of isolation, exclusion, and sanctions, the apartheid state's sense of insecurity grew – as did its military-industrial complex. Prior and subsequent to the introduction of an armed struggle against the apartheid state and the government ban on the ANC and other organizations, large numbers of ANC members went into exile across South Africa's borders. In addition to the so-called Angolan Border War, cross-border raids and attacks by the South African Defence Force (SADF) on the ANC's bases in neighboring states, as well as on bases further away in Africa and in Europe, became a regular occurrence by the 1970s. These developments coincided with the Cold War, and Southern Africa became a proxy theater for conflict between the socialist and capitalist blocs. Soviet and Cuban support for liberation movements in Southern Africa, as well as for the independence of Mozambique and Angola, became major security threats to the apartheid state. South Africa's sense of insecurity and isolation deepened amidst Cold War rivalries and international pressure to terminate apartheid. As a consequence of its deep sense of nationalism, regional, national, and international insecurities, as well as perceived security threats made against the country (known as the "Total Onslaught"), South Africa embarked on a secret nuclear

weapons program as part of its so-called “Total Strategy.”<sup>1</sup> It was only in March 1993 that the apartheid government admitted it had produced six-and-a-half nuclear devices.<sup>2</sup>

Banned by the NP government on 4 August 1960, the ANC took up an armed struggle in 1961 with the formation of its military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), and aimed to achieve a truly democratic South Africa. The ANC is one of the world’s oldest political organizations, and, since 1994, South Africa’s ruling party. The history of apartheid, the ANC, and the ANC’s international human rights struggle to terminate apartheid in South Africa are well-documented and therefore not detailed here.<sup>3</sup>

One of the key features of the Cold War was its state-centrism. However, some non-state actors, such as liberation movements, also participated in the Cold War, and some even became proxies for superpower rivalries. Liberation movements may differ in their demands, but many share similarities such as the centrality of norms and ideals, the use of non-state resources, and the objective of building national and international networks to highlight their plight. The international relations and transnational activities of non-state organizations and non-governmental organizations such as human rights groups and liberation movements have received considerable scholarly attention.<sup>4</sup> Most literature focuses on the ANC’s international network, armed struggle, and transnational campaigns, whereas much less, if any, research has been conducted on its anti-nuclear and nuclear disarmament struggle against apartheid South Africa. Hence, the main purpose of this Working Paper is to analyze the ANC’s international efforts to achieve the nuclear disarmament of apartheid South Africa. The ANC’s nuclear struggle cannot be divorced from its larger liberation struggle, but a pertinent focus on this aspect of the liberation struggle provides valuable insights into transnational activism, nuclear struggles, and South Africa’s past and future.

---

<sup>1</sup> Nic von Wielligh & Lydia von Wielligh-Steyn. *Die Bom: Suid-Afrika se kernwapenprogram* (Pretoria: Litera Publikasies, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> 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. 24 March 1993, *Hansard*, col 3465-3478.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, the seven-volume series of the South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa* (Pretoria: UNISA Publishers).

<sup>4</sup> Margaret Keck & Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).



This Working Paper will focus on the origins of the ANC's position on nuclear weapons before discussing the organization's transnational tactics: information politics, symbolic politics, leverage politics, and accountability politics. Besides these tactics, the ANC also expressed its anti-nuclear position in different ways, including international pressure and an armed struggle which included attacks on South African nuclear installations. Four distinct periods are defined here. The first period ended in 1960 when the ANC was banned. During this period, the organization's anti-nuclear position was expressed predominantly domestically. The second period, 1960 to 1990, took the liberation struggle underground and outside of South Africa. A third period is defined as the years since the ANC was legalized in 1990, with a fourth period identified as the era since 1994, when the ANC became South Africa's incumbent ruling party.

This Working Paper is based on several archival sources located in and outside South Africa accessed online. Archival research on South Africa's nuclear history is notoriously difficult.<sup>5</sup> Besides challenges to access government documents, archival research on the ANC is also very difficult due to the organization's banning and exile between 1962 and 1990. Hence, documentation is, if available at all, spread across the globe or in private collections. A note on sources following the conclusion describes some of the collections utilized during the research and writing of this Working Paper.

A complete nuclear history of the ANC has not been published. This Working Paper is a first attempt to contribute to this aspect of South Africa's nuclear history in the context of apartheid, its liberation struggle, the atomic era, and the Cold War.

## Origins of the ANC Position of Nuclear Weapons

Abdul Minty, one of the leading figures in the South African liberation movements' nuclear struggle, recalled how the Congress Movement (a conglomeration of anti-apartheid organizations in South Africa, including the ANC) in the 1950s,

arranged many peace and protest meetings in South Africa and some of us took part in those meetings where they said 'No more Hiroshima. No more Nagasaki', and we faced brutality and repression. Already, the anti-nuclear stance was

---

<sup>5</sup> David Fig, "In the Dark: Seeking information about South Africa's Nuclear Energy Programme," in Kate Allan (ed.), *Paper Wars: Access to Information in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2009), 56-87; Chandré Gould, "The Nuclear Weapons History Project," in Kate Allan (ed.), *Paper Wars: Access to Information in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2009), 88-121.

becoming part of our struggle for liberation...Now the democratic movement in South Africa has an extremely long tradition of opposing nuclear weapons. It has opposed nuclear proliferation by the big powers as well as by aspiring regional or middle powers long before there was any prospect of South Africa developing an Apartheid Bomb.<sup>6</sup>

Early nuclear consciousness is also evident in a 1958 report by the ANC:

Yet there are still some strange forces in this world which regard this great scientific progress as a means by which to promote their predatory interests. In the destructive nuclear weapons they see their chance to world domination. It is a matter of regret and great concern to all peace loving people of the world that the great powers - the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union - have not found an answer to the question of disarmament and prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons.<sup>7</sup>

Besides these references, developments elsewhere on the continent had an impact on the ANC's early position on nuclear issues. In 1958, Ghana became the first independent African state, followed by a wave of decolonization across the continent. Ghana's newfound independence endowed many African states, leaders, and liberation movements with greater confidence to assert African agency and Pan-African ambitions, interests, and norms on the international stage. But, whereas a large number of Anglophone states became independent beginning in 1958, France maintained its hold on its African colonies and conducted nuclear tests in the Sahara Desert. These tests became a catalyst for African states' positions on nuclear weapons. In April 1960, Kwame Nkrumah hosted the Positive Action Conference to discuss African responses to French nuclear tests in the Sahara. Following these tests in 1961, Nigeria cut its diplomatic ties with France. Ghana, under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah, also responded by freezing French assets in Ghana.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Abdul Minty, Keynote Address in Environmental Monitoring Group (EMG) & Western Cape ANC (African National Congress) Science & Technology Group, *The Nuclear Debate* (Proceedings Of The Conference On Nuclear Policy For A Democratic South Africa, Cape Town, 11-13 February 1994), p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> ANC, *The Annual Report Of The National Executive Committee Of The 46<sup>th</sup> Annual General Conference Of The ANC*. Durban, 13-14 December 1958, p 3, [http://www.historicalpapers.wits.ac.za/inventories/inv\\_pdf/A3299/A3299-G1-1-18-002-jpeg.pdf](http://www.historicalpapers.wits.ac.za/inventories/inv_pdf/A3299/A3299-G1-1-18-002-jpeg.pdf), accessed 21 May 2019.

<sup>8</sup> Oye Ogunbadejo, "Africa's Nuclear Capability," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 22, 1 (1984): 19-43.

The ANC aligned itself with the objectives of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which was established on 25 May 1963. The OAU set out to achieve decolonization, an end to apartheid in South Africa, and denuclearization across the African continent.<sup>9</sup> To achieve this objective, African states and liberation movements supported the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which was signed in 1968 and entered into force in 1970. The OAU's intention to denuclearize Africa drove its initial support for the NPT, and it was only later that the discriminatory nature of the Treaty was fully recognized.<sup>10</sup>

Realizing the asymmetrical nature of the conflict in South Africa and the world, Chief Albert Luthuli mused in his 1961 piece "If I were Prime Minister":

My South Africa would encourage the harnessing of science and technology to every day uses of man, and not for his destruction. It will seek to play a prominent part in bringing about the banning of nuclear warfare and in working for some degree of disarmament.<sup>11</sup>

At this early stage, the ANC also had a clear sense of the threat nuclear weapons posed to international peace and security. The ANC's position on nuclear weapons evolved alongside prevailing trends across the African continent. Exposed to these ideas, the ANC leadership began to express its position against nuclear weapons on the international stage during the 1960s.

## Transnational Tactics

### *Information Politics and International Public Opinion*

The 1970s saw the ANC adapt to global and regional Cold War realities. Under Prime Minister John Vorster, the apartheid government's nuclear ambitions developed in response to Cold War threat perceptions, the ANC's armed struggle, and the Border War, which broke out in 1975 on the border between Angola and South African-administered South West Africa. Given the apartheid state's closed nature, the government's ban on the ANC, limited press freedom, and South Africa's global isolation against the background of Cold War paranoia, information

---

<sup>9</sup> Organisation of African Unity (OAU), "Agenda item III: Summit conference of independent African states, 22-25 May 1963," in O. Adeniji, *The Treaty of Pelindaba on the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone* (Geneva: United Nations Institute for Disarmament, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> Ogunbadejo, "Africa's Nuclear Capability."

<sup>11</sup> Albert Luthuli, "If I Were Prime Minister," 2 December 1961, <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/if-i-were-prime-minister-article-albert-luthuli-2-december-1961>. Accessed 22 February 2020.

became a rare but very important commodity in the ANC's international relations. In an effort to convince the international community of the South African government's nuclear intentions, the ANC collected information on the country's nuclear development and its much-denied nuclear-related collaboration with Western countries, which continued despite UN arms embargoes against South Africa.

Sensing the South African government's heavy-handedness, the ANC instructed some of its members in exile in Britain to establish the Boycott South Africa Movement (BSAM). Established on 26 June 1959 and addressed by anti-colonial activist and Pan-Africanist Julius Nyerere at its opening, the BSAM changed its name to the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) in 1960, following the Sharpeville Massacre. The AAM became a transnational network of anti-apartheid organizations in Europe, the US, and Asia.<sup>12</sup> This enabled the ANC to project and communicate their demands for democracy, as well as information about the ills of apartheid and South Africa's suspected nuclear weapons program, to a global audience, including state and non-state actors. Thus, reminiscent of Robert Putnam's "two-level game theory" concerning the relationship between a state's foreign and domestic affairs, South Africa's domestic policies reverberated with consequences internationally, and vice versa.<sup>13</sup>

#### *Gathering and Disseminating Information on the Apartheid Bomb*

In July 1970, South African Prime Minister John Vorster announced that South African scientists had secretly developed a process to create highly enriched uranium (HEU) concentrate, as well as the extensive associated technology. A pilot plant would soon be built with the intention of building a large-scale commercial plant later. Vorster hailed this plant's potential to become a serious commercial contender with existing plants in the West and set out to acquire external partners for the project.<sup>14</sup> By 1975, the South African Atomic Energy Board (AEB) had not yet been able to secure a Western partner for the commercial plant's further development. As such, the AEB announced that the pilot uranium enrichment plant was fully operational and

---

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, the seven-volume series of the South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-level Games," *International Organization*, 42, 3 (1988): 427-460.

<sup>14</sup> South African Diplomatic Archives (Hereafter SADA), "Announcement by Prime Minister John Vorster," 20 July 1970, File: Kernkrag, 2/5/2/1, Vols. I, II.

that they intended to build a second, fully commercial enrichment plant.<sup>15</sup> These announcements do not appear to have fooled the ANC. In November 1975, the ANC published a special issue of its official organ *Sechaba* under the heading “The Nuclear Conspiracy: The FRG Collaborated to Strengthen Apartheid,” a reproduction of a publication released in September 1975. Without divulging how they were obtained, the ANC provided detailed accounts and copies of secret documents concerning nuclear collaboration between South Africa and the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany). The ANC also revealed that South Africa had an agreement to provide Iran with uranium oxide in exchange for financial participation in a proposed uranium enrichment plant, which would be constructed with West German assistance.<sup>16</sup> The ANC further accused the international community, most notably West Germany, France, the US, the UK, and Italy, of watching South Africa’s nuclear armament “with disquiet” while South Africa had proclaimed “its ability to manufacture nuclear weapons” as early as 1966.<sup>17</sup> The ANC stated its belief that “the regime, which has not hesitated to use the most ruthless terror against its own people, will not flinch, when driven to desperation, from unleashing a holocaust upon the continent of Africa and the world.”<sup>18</sup>

The subsequent edition of *Sechaba* carried a piece titled “International nuclear conspiracy with racist South Africa,” a study conducted and published by the UN Special Committee against Apartheid.<sup>19</sup> The study outlined, international nuclear cooperation with South Africa, uranium mining and enrichment, and an announcement about the construction of the Koeberg Nuclear Power Plant.

---

<sup>15</sup> Digital National Security Archive (Hereafter DNSA), CIA Office of Scientific Intelligence (Hereafter CIAOSI), Weekly Surveyor, “South African Uranium Enrichment Plant in Operation,” 21 April 1975, Item Number WM00178; DNSA, CIAOSI, Weekly Surveyor, “Some Aspects of South African Uranium Enrichment Process Revealed,” 5 May 1975, Item Number WM00179; Jeffrey Richelson, *Spying on the Bomb* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 244-5; David Albright, “South Africa and the Affordable Bomb,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 50, 4 (1994): 41; Malan, *My Life with the SA Defence Force*, 216.

<sup>16</sup> “Iran signed a \$700 million contract with South Africa, for the supply of yellowcake uranium,” <https://www.nti.org/learn/countries/iran/nuclear/>, accessed 14 May 2020.

<sup>17</sup> “Introduction,” *Sechaba* 9, 11/12 (1975): 12.

<sup>18</sup> “Introduction,” *Sechaba* 9, 11/12 (1975): 12.

<sup>19</sup> “International nuclear conspiracy with racist South Africa,” *Sechaba*, 10 (1976): 32-39.

These revelations about international nuclear collaboration with South Africa, despite the 1963 UN arms embargo, led the ANC to petition the UN on the basis that South Africa constituted a threat to international peace and security.

### *Lobbying the United Nations*

The UN became deeply engaged with the question of apartheid by establishing the Special Committee Against Apartheid through General Assembly Resolution 1761 in 1962, as well as through numerous resolutions aimed at sanctioning and isolating South Africa. The ANC unceasingly fed the UN information through various means. During the 1970s, the ANC also increased its international footprint. It was during this decade that the organization exposed the South African government's nuclear weapons program and drew attention to the states engaged in contravening UNSC sanctions and embargoes against any form of cooperation or exchange with South Africa. Its point person in this regard, beginning in 1977, was Johnstone Mfanafuthi (Johnny) Makatini.<sup>20</sup> Makatini was one of the first ANC cadres to receive military training outside South Africa. Upon his return, Makatini joined ANC National Executive Committee (NEC) member Robert Resha in Algeria, where the ANC had opened an office after Algeria became independent in 1963. In 1966, Makatini succeeded Resha as the ANC's chief representative in Algeria and extended his mission's work to cover France and other European states. Makatini was elected to the ANC NEC in 1974, and, in 1977, he was appointed as the ANC's Head of Mission to the UN. In 1983, he became the head of the ANC's Department of International Affairs.<sup>21</sup>

The ANC soon realized, however, that despite their exposés to the United Nations, several states continued to collaborate with South Africa. In the words of Renfrew Christie, who spied on the South African nuclear program for the ANC during the 1960s and 1970s, until one understood what the Western motivations were for continuously vetoing anti-apartheid motions at the UN, one would not understand apartheid:

---

<sup>20</sup> We use, for consistency's sake, the spelling Makatini, rather than Makhatini, which some sources use. The Presidency of South Africa, Johnstone Mfanafuthi Makatini (1932-1988), undated, <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/national-orders/recipient/johnstone-mfanafuthi-makatini-1932-1988>, accessed 18 May 2020.

<sup>21</sup> The Presidency of South Africa, Johnstone Mfanafuthi Makatini (1932-1988), undated, <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/national-orders/recipient/johnstone-mfanafuthi-makatini-1932-1988>, accessed 18 May 2020.

There was common ground in shared racist tendencies... the strongest incentive was something else entirely... cheap Cold War minerals. In 1948, what mattered most in the entire world was uranium supply. During the Cold War, the West was after the cheapest possible uranium they could get. Between 1952 and 1990, South Africa produced over 100,000 tons of pure uranium, drastically reducing the West's production costs for nuclear weapons.<sup>22</sup>

However, various senior ANC figures continued to lobby the UN. In an address to the UN General Assembly on 26 October 1976, Oliver Tambo paid particular attention to the Soweto riots earlier in that year and the resultant violent crackdown by apartheid security forces against protesting Black students. Tambo reiterated the ANC's call on the international community to terminate military collaboration with South Africa. He accused the international community of concluding "secret military pacts [with South Africa], including attempts to incorporate the South African regime into the NATO defence arrangement."<sup>23</sup> Tambo also referred to international collaboration with South Africa to "fulfil its ambition to produce the atomic bomb" and argued that South Africa constituted a threat to world peace and international security, already evident in its escalating cross-border raids in Southern Africa.<sup>24</sup>

A few months later, on 25 March 1977, Makatini addressed the UNSC. He described the South African situation as 'a major crisis':

And South Africa, sensing that apartheid is now truly threatened, has turned its energies to the creation of a powerful military machine with which it seeks to dominate the whole southern African region. South Africa has built a garrison

---

<sup>22</sup> Elliot Stam, "Spying on Apartheid's Bomb: Espionage, nuclear secrets, and the struggle for a democratic South Africa – Renfrew Christie," articles made available by Mayibuye Archives, 27 June 2016, <https://cdig.missouri.edu/spying-on-apartheids-bomb/>, accessed 13 May 2020; Olga Smirnova interview with Renfrew Christie, "Spying on South Africa's Nuclear Bomb," 8 February 2018, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w3csvg1>, accessed 13 May 2020.

<sup>23</sup> Oliver Tambo, "Address to the Plenary of the General Assembly," 26 October 1976, in Enuga Reddy (ed.), *Oliver Tambo, Apartheid and The International Community: Addresses to United Nations Committees and Conferences* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1991), 68-69.

<sup>24</sup> Tambo, "Address to the Plenary of the General Assembly."



state, a new laager<sup>25</sup> equipped with the most modern and deadly weapons, equipped indeed with a military nuclear capability.<sup>26</sup>

Suspecting sanctions-busting by major powers, Nigeria organized the World Conference for Action Against Apartheid in Lagos on 3 August 1977, where Tambo announced:

There is now shocking news that the racist regime is about to test its own atomic bomb, thanks to the extensive scientific, technological and financial support given by Western imperial powers to the racists' nuclear programme.<sup>27</sup>

Tambo went on to remind the audience that the ANC had published "conclusive evidence" of West Germany's "participation in this heinous crime."<sup>28</sup> Tambo's reference to nuclear tests is interesting. South Africa completed one nuclear explosive test shaft at the Vastrap test facility in the Kalahari Desert in 1976, and a second shaft in the next year in preparation for a cold test in August 1977 and, ultimately, a true HEU test in 1978.<sup>29</sup> However, on 30 July 1977, a Soviet satellite discovered Vastrap. A week later (6 August 1977), a satellite completed four more passes over Vastrap, concluding that South Africa was about to conduct a test.<sup>30</sup> Speaking on 3 August 1977, Tambo either knew about the discovery of Vastrap on 30 July 1977, or speculated about a possible nuclear test.<sup>31</sup> Less than a year later, speaking at the launch of the UN International Year against Apartheid on 21 March 1978, Tambo reminded the international community that "the

---

<sup>25</sup> A *laager* is a circle of wagons, used as a traditional encampment and defensive position by the Voortrekkers (frontiersmen). Combined with mentality, the term is used to describe the notion of self-isolation from external influences [Jean Du Preez and Thomas Maettig, "From Pariah to Nuclear Poster Boy: How Plausible Is a Reversal?" in *Forecasting Nuclear Proliferation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Volume 2: A Comparative Perspective*, ed. William C. Potter and Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 304].

<sup>26</sup> Johnny Makatini, "Statement at the 1 992<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the United Nations Security Council," 25 March 1977, in Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), *Diplomacy for Democracy. A collection of keynote speeches and contributions made towards the liberation struggle of South Africa by Mfanafuthi Johnstone (Jonny) Makatini, Special Representative of the African National Congress to the United Nations (1977 - 1987)*, (Pretoria: DIRCO, 2012): 5, 7.

<sup>27</sup> Tambo, "Address to the World Conference for Action against Apartheid."

<sup>28</sup> Tambo, "Address to the World Conference for Action against Apartheid," 80.

<sup>29</sup> David Albright with Andrea Stricker, *Revisiting South Africa's nuclear weapons programme: Its history, disarmament, and lessons for today* (Washington: Institute for Science and International Security, 2016), 74.

<sup>30</sup> Frank Pabian, "The South African denuclearization exemplar," *The Nonproliferation Review*, 21, 2 (2015): 37.

<sup>31</sup> It is probable that he was tipped off by the Soviet Union, an ally of the ANC, following information on the Vastrap site provided by Commodore Dieter Gerhardt, an officer in the South African Navy, who spied on the apartheid government for the Soviet Union for more than two decades.



world is confronted by the reality that the racist regime has the capacity to produce nuclear weapons and has acquired the means of their delivery.”<sup>32</sup>

By this point, a mandatory UN arms embargo had been imposed on South Africa (on 4 November 1977), but the ANC maintained that some states contravened these embargoes and sanctions and assisted the apartheid regime's military and nuclear weapons complex. Addressing the UNSC in 1980, Makatini raised the following question:

Who is responsible for the Pretoria regime's intransigence? It is the transnational corporations that continue to provide the lifeblood to this inhuman system; it is some Western countries – especially the United States (USA), France, the United Kingdom, Japan and Israel – which continue to pay lip-service to United Nations (UN) resolutions while bolstering the South African regime through economic, military and even nuclear collaboration. We can no longer stop at accusing the apartheid regime of threatening peace and international security. Those countries which support South Africa have become active accomplices in all the crimes committed by that regime against the South African people and against neighbouring states.<sup>33</sup>

The ANC was supported in its UN lobbying by Abdul Minty, a prominent activist in the information fight against the apartheid government. He left South Africa in June 1958 to further his studies in the UK. Many regarded him as the ANC's voice in London, where he served as the Honorary Secretary of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement between 1962 and 1995.<sup>34</sup> Minty looms large over the transnational anti-nuclear campaign against South Africa. He explained his relations with the ANC during an interview with UK academic Sue Onslow, stating that he did not have “any direct formal affiliation [with the ANC],” but noting that “I discussed issues with them, I accepted Oliver Tambo as my leader, if you wish, in South Africa but I didn't publicly espouse ANC policy only.”<sup>35</sup> When asked about the internal debates in the ANC on “whether emphasis

---

<sup>32</sup> Oliver Tambo, “Statement by the President of the ANC on the occasion of the Launching of the International Year against Apartheid, New York, 21 March 1987,” *Sechaba* 12 (1978): 28.

<sup>33</sup> Johnny Makatini, “Statement at the 2 227<sup>th</sup> meeting of the United Nations Security Council on 6 June 1980,” in DIRCO, *Diplomacy for Democracy*, 58-59.

<sup>34</sup> Lee Jones, *Societies Under Siege: Exploring How Economic Sanctions (Do Not) Work*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 58; SAHO, “Abdul Samad Minty” Available Online: <https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/abdul-samad-minty>, accessed 18 May 2020.

<sup>35</sup> Sue Onslow Interview with Abdul Minty, 12 February 2013, Commonwealth Oral History Project. [Transcribed text - Unpublished], [https://sas-space.sas.ac.uk/6531/1/abdul\\_minty\\_transcript.pdf](https://sas-space.sas.ac.uk/6531/1/abdul_minty_transcript.pdf), accessed 22 February 2020.

should be put on South Africa's acquisition of atomic capability, or whether it was felt this would not resonate within broader South African society," Minty responded:

No, no, this policy that we detailed was usefully behind it. I continued to do some research and what I found I then said, "Listen, these are the facts" and they supported it, so there was no disagreement.<sup>36</sup>

In 1969, Minty published *South Africa's Defence Strategy*, a 36 page booklet based on his studies published by the London-based Anti-Apartheid Movement, which drew international attention and was regarded as instrumental in motivating the United Kingdom to abrogate the Simonstown Naval Agreement and to cut military ties with South Africa more broadly.<sup>37</sup> Minty held many other roles and gave unprecedented evidence as an individual expert to the UNSC Arms Embargo Committee on four occasions between 1977 and 1994. He participated in many UN seminars and hearings on apartheid and South Africa's military and nuclear capability. During this period, Minty worked closely with the African Group, the Non-Aligned Movement, and other members of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) over South Africa's nuclear program and lobbied for sanctions against the regime. He was instrumental in South Africa's removal from the designated seat for Africa on the IAEA Board of Governors in 1977.<sup>38</sup>

In 1975, Minty declared that "a great deal of information about the [international] nuclear collaboration effort [with South Africa] was revealed, and so began in earnest our campaign to stop South Africa's nuclear weapons capability."<sup>39</sup> According to Minty, "we pleaded at the United Nations... The ANC published evidence" but the Western powers vetoed OAU members on the UNSC's resolutions to act against South Africa. Minty also stated that he met with the foreign minister of "almost every Western country" but that "without exception" they explained that

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Enuga Reddy, "Foreword," in *Anti-Apartheid Movement and the United Nations: Statements, Papers and Letters of Abdul S Minty, Honorary Secretary of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement and Director of the World Campaign against Military and Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa* (New Delhi: Sanchar Publishing House, 1994), xiii.

<sup>38</sup> South Africa History Online (forthwith SAHO), "Abdul Samad Minty," <https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/abdul-samad-minty>, accessed 18 May 2020.

<sup>39</sup> Abdul Minty, Keynote Address in Environmental Monitoring Group (EMG) & Western Cape ANC (African National Congress) Science & Technology Group, *The Nuclear Debate: Proceedings Of The Conference On Nuclear Policy For A Democratic South Africa*, Cape Town, 11-13 February 1994, 11.

cooperation with South Africa was for the peaceful use of nuclear energy and that they did not believe that South Africa had nuclear weapons.<sup>40</sup>

The UNGA also joined the campaign, requesting the Secretary-General to produce annual reports on South Africa's nuclear capability. Enuga Reddy, Principal Secretary of the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid since 1963 and Head of the UN Centre against Apartheid, who worked closely with Minty in the UN, recalled how Oliver Tambo, then Deputy President of the ANC, arranged a meeting with Reddy and Minty in London.<sup>41</sup> Realizing the Western powers' ability to veto any UN action against South Africa, the ANC decided to target international public opinion, especially in Western states known to support South Africa. This approach was presented to the UN Special Committee, and in 1966, the UNGA endorsed an international campaign against apartheid under the auspices of the UN, "involving governments and the public."<sup>42</sup> This resulted in unprecedented practice at the UN, where leaders of the anti-apartheid movement, who became "no longer petitioners before the [Special] Committee but honoured guests," were invited to all activities of the Committee. They enjoyed "full rights of participation" and election as officers.<sup>43</sup> Reddy explained that no UN Committee had ever developed such "intimate relations" with a non-governmental organization and credited Minty for fostering these relations.<sup>44</sup>

Since the introduction of the UNSC's first (voluntary) arms embargo against South Africa in 1963, the ANC, the AAM, and later the World Campaign Against Military and Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa (see next section) produced evidence in speeches, conference papers, and publications that Western states were contravening the UNSC arms embargo.<sup>45</sup>

### *The World Campaign against Military and Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa*

On 4 November 1977, the United Nations Security Council imposed a permanent and binding arms embargo against South Africa through Resolution 418. This mandatory embargo replaced the 1963 arms embargo. It differed from the 1963 arms embargo in the sense that

---

<sup>40</sup> Minty, "Keynote Address," 12.

<sup>41</sup> Reddy, "Foreword," ix.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

members of the United Nations were now under legal obligation to enforce it. The embargo was imposed under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, and declared that the “acquisition by South Africa of arms and related material constitute[d] a threat to the maintenance of peace and security.” It further noted that the UNSC was “gravely concerned that South Africa [was] at the threshold of producing nuclear weapons,” amongst other concerns, and decided “that all States shall refrain from any cooperation with South Africa in the manufacture and development of nuclear weapons.”<sup>46</sup>

Subsequent to the UNSC’s adoption of Resolution 418, Reddy and Minty began planning to form a separate entity to assist the UN in monitoring compliance with the arms embargo. Hence, on 28 March 1979, the World Campaign Against Military and Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa (henceforth, World Campaign) was established with the support of the AAM, and Minty became its director. The World Campaign’s patrons included several African heads of state, and sponsors included various leaders in the West. Headquartered in Oslo, the World Campaign received financial support from the governments of Sweden and Norway. The founding patrons included African Presidents Mwalimu Julius K Nyerere (Tanzania), Sir Seretse Khama (Botswana), Agostinho Neto (Angola), Kenneth Kaunda (Zambia), and Lt-General Olusegun Obasanjo (Nigeria). Sponsors included Olof Palme, Coretta Scott King, MP Joan Lestor, and MP David Steel.<sup>47</sup>

At the launch of the World Campaign, Oliver Tambo reiterated that, since the 1960s, the ANC had petitioned the international community to institute sanctions against South Africa. Moreover, they had insisted that the South African regime constituted a threat to international peace and security. Tambo mentioned that South Africa’s military and nuclear weapons capability was developed with Western assistance. Tambo also stated that these Western states’ policies towards South and Southern Africa had become similar threats to global peace and security.<sup>48</sup> As such, the aims and objectives of the World Campaign were to:

---

<sup>46</sup> Martha S. van Wyk (Anna-Mart van Wyk), *The 1977 Arms Embargo Against South Africa: Institution and Implementation to 1997* (University of Pretoria, D.Phil. Thesis, 2005) 89.

<sup>47</sup> Reddy, “Foreword,” vii.

<sup>48</sup> Oliver Tambo, “No arms for apartheid: Statement at the launch of the World Campaign against Military and Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa,” *Sechaba*, June 1979: 18.

- Promote the widest awareness by world public opinion of the grave and increasing threat to international peace and security created by the system of apartheid in South Africa.
- Campaign for an end to all forms of military, nuclear and security collaboration with the racist regime in South Africa.
- Work for the effective implementation of the United Nations arms embargo against South Africa and to ensure that it is reinforced to encompass all forms of assistance and cooperation to the racist regime in the maintenance and strengthening of its military and police establishment and in its nuclear program.
- Make representations to governments concerned on violations of the embargo and about any military, nuclear or security collaboration by them with South Africa.
- Cooperate with appropriate organs of the United Nations and the Organisation of African Unity on implementation of effective measures against military, nuclear and security collaboration with South Africa.
- Publicize all information concerning military and nuclear plans of the South African regime, its threat to and breaches of international peace and security, and actions by governments and organizations to end all collaboration with that regime.<sup>49</sup>

Reddy explained that since its formation, the World Campaign had become the Security Council Committee's main source of information on violations of the South African arms embargo.<sup>50</sup> In fact, in its publications, the World Campaign did not back down from naming and shaming collaborators such as Belgium, Canada, France, Iran, Israel, Japan, Switzerland, the Netherlands, West Germany, the US, and Britain.<sup>51</sup>

Following the 1979 Vela incident (also known as the "Double Flash Incident"), when a US Vela satellite detected a possible nuclear explosion close to South Africa's Prince Edward Island, and in the midst of reports and denials that it was a nuclear test, the ANC embarked on an extensive campaign in the IAEA to terminate South Africa's membership.<sup>52</sup> Despite its efforts to persuade IAEA members to institute punitive measures against South Africa and expel it from the organization, the IAEA merely refused to accept the South African delegation's credentials and replaced it with Egypt as Africa's representative on the Board of the IAEA. Minty later admitted

---

<sup>49</sup> Dan Smith, *South Africa's Nuclear Capability* (London: World Campaign against Military and Nuclear Cooperation with South Africa in cooperation with UN Centre against Apartheid, 1980), <http://psimg.jstor.org/fsi/img/pdf/t0/10.5555/al.sff.document.aamp2b0100013.pdf>, accessed 21 May 2019. A copy is also held at the Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford University, File: MMS AAM 1494.

<sup>50</sup> Reddy, "Foreword," xv.

<sup>51</sup> Smith, *South Africa's Nuclear Capability*.

<sup>52</sup> Minty, "Keynote Address," 13.

that the IAEA was “the only international agency where we didn’t succeed because Western governments were so committed to retaining South Africa as a member.”<sup>53</sup>

### *Accountability Politics*

Whereas the 1950s and 1960s could be described as the first phase of the ANC’s international engagement on nuclear issues, the 1970s could be described as a second phase during which the ANC’s liberation struggle also became an anti-nuclear struggle. One of the earliest references to South Africa’s nuclear ambitions is contained in Abdul Minty’s presentation to the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid on 20 May 1970, merely two months after the NPT, which South Africa refused to sign, entered into force. Besides warning the Committee of the possibility of a “racial holocaust” in Southern Africa due to the deterioration of human rights in the country and South Africa’s expansionist activities in the region, Minty also expressed concerns about South Africa’s expanding militarization and military cooperation with several states. He called attention to multiple loopholes in the existing UNSC arms embargo, including extensive nuclear cooperation between the West and South Africa, which the UNSC needed to address.<sup>54</sup>

Johnny Makatini addressed the UN annually. Besides detailing recent developments in South Africa and Southern Africa, Makatini, without exception, alerted UN members to the fact that, despite embargoes and sanctions, Western states continued to support and collaborate with the apartheid regime on nuclear issues.<sup>55</sup> In March 1977, Makatini stated:

If that crucial foreign support for apartheid were to be withdrawn, the present regime would have no option but to begin the dismantling of apartheid.<sup>56</sup>

Following the US-South African cooperation agreement in terms of the Atoms for Peace program, the ANC monitored at least 155 US nuclear technologists visiting South Africa between 1957 and 1977. During the same period, 90 South African nuclear scientists visited the US. Minty

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>54</sup> Abdul Minty, “Statement before the Special Committee against Apartheid, 20 May 1970,” in Enuga Reddy, *Anti-apartheid Movement and the United Nations. Statements, Papers and Letters of Abdul S Minty, Honorary Secretary of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement and Director of the World Campaign against Military and Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa* (New Delhi: Sanchar Publishing House, 1994): 10, 15.

<sup>55</sup> DIRCO, *Diplomacy for Democracy*.

<sup>56</sup> Makatini, “Statement at the 1 992<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the United Nations Security Council.”

also revealed that, during the 1970s, the ANC was aware of South African-German nuclear cooperation and exchange visits.<sup>57</sup>

### *Symbolic Politics: The Liberation Struggle as a Nuclear Struggle*

The ANC's ability to construct cognitive frames around itself, apartheid, human rights abuses, and South Africa's intention to develop nuclear weapons emerged as one of its most successful strategies. In fact, the ANC framed its own identity as "the sole, authentic and legitimate representative of the oppressed and struggling people of South Africa."<sup>58</sup> The organization's cognitive framing of the discovery of South Africa's nuclear test site at Vastrap in the Kalahari Desert is an illustrative example. Through so-called frame alignment, the ANC reiterated the grave importance and meaning of the discovery of the test facility. In this regard, the ANC also employed frame resonance, i.e. framing the discovery as a confirmation of its years of campaigning to convince the international community of South Africa's nuclear ambitions, hence rendering South Africa's nuclear denial untrue.<sup>59</sup>

As a closed and isolated society (the so-called *laager* mentality), the South African government suppressed information and public debates challenging the apartheid *status quo*. The ANC was able to mobilize and persuade the international community to frame, present, and challenge ideas and information about apartheid South Africa, and, pertinent to this contribution, its nuclear intentions. The ANC's intersubjective construction or framing of South Africa's nuclear weapons program despite the government's denials, as well as its ambition to frame South African nuclear development as a human rights issue related to the termination of apartheid, attracted some international goodwill towards the movement. Cold War tensions continued to play a role in the ANC's activism: anti-communist capitals such as Washington and London were at times not eager to entertain the ANC's ideas and norms. However, through consistent efforts, the ANC was able to influence policies and international action against South Africa.

---

<sup>57</sup> Minty, "Keynote Address," 11.

<sup>58</sup> Johnny Makatini, "Statement at the meeting of the Special Committee against Apartheid in observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Struggling People of South Africa (Soweto Day), 16 June 1982," in DIRCO, *Diplomacy for Democracy*, 87.

<sup>59</sup> Keck & Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders*.

Besides accusations against states collaborating with South Africa, Makatini also regularly referred to the fact that the apartheid regime constituted a “threat to peace and international security.”<sup>60</sup> Further, by linking apartheid South Africa’s nuclear weapons program to human rights and Cold War rivalries, the ANC created a constitutive effect vis-à-vis states supporting the movement financially, ideologically, and practically.

### *Accountability and Leverage Politics*

The ANC’s international campaign against South Africa’s development of nuclear weapons emerged from its campaigns to democratize the country and terminate apartheid. The apartheid government’s ban on the ANC and other liberation movements terminated dialogue between these actors. Moreover, high-ranking ANC officials and activists (or political entrepreneurs) held the view that transnational campaigns and other activities could enhance their demands and garner support from the international community, pressuring the apartheid government to give in to the ANC’s demands to terminate both apartheid and its nuclear weapons program. Hence, the ANC’s armed struggle and global campaign against apartheid became two of its strongest forms of leverage against the apartheid state. In following Keck and Sikkink, the ANC’s transnational campaigns are analyzed and defined as “sets of strategically linked activities in which members of a diffuse principled network... develop explicit, visible ties and mutually recognized roles in pursuit of a common goal.”<sup>61</sup>

The ANC was successful in establishing and maintaining close links with civil societies, states, multilateral organizations, and other liberation movements. The main objectives of the ANC’s transnational networks were to produce, exchange and use information on the apartheid state’s human rights abuses and, pertinent to this paper, its nuclear weapons program. In fact, Nelson Mandela and other ANC leaders often acknowledged the role of the international community.<sup>62</sup> In exile, the ANC continued its liberation struggle, which included various tactics such as violence, international relations, and international campaigns to isolate the apartheid state. Indeed, once bilateral and UN sanctions entered into force, South Africa became one of the world’s most isolated states.

---

<sup>60</sup> Makatini, “Statement at the 1992<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the United Nations Security Council,” 10.

<sup>61</sup> Keck & Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders*.

<sup>62</sup> Reddy, “Foreword,” vii.



## The ANC in Exile

### *The Armed Struggle*

When the ANC was banned in 1960, it realized that its non-violent action as a political strategy had consistently been met by force. The 1960s thus began as a decade wherein the ANC decided to embark on an armed struggle. By the time Chief Albert Luthuli was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1961, it was clear that South Africa's apartheid policies would increasingly subjugate the majority of the population. Popular uprisings and violent crackdowns increasingly became a cause for global and domestic concern. During his acceptance speech of the 1961 Nobel Peace Prize, Luthuli referred to the international context that reflected the domestic realities in South Africa:

In a strife-torn world, tottering on the brink of complete destruction by man-made nuclear weapons, a free and independent Africa is in the making, in answer to the injunction and challenge of history: 'Arise and shine for thy light is come'.<sup>63</sup>

The immorality of apartheid, asymmetrical state-society relations, appeals to humanity, calls for equality, and the conceptualization of their armed struggle as a "just war" became moral justifications for the ANC's sabotage of state infrastructure. Hence, the armed wing of the ANC, Umkhonto we Sizwe (meaning "Spear of the Nation", henceforth MK) was established on 16 December 1961, a date coinciding with an important date in Afrikaner nationalism: a bloody victory over the Zulus in 1838. The ANC justified its turn towards violence and armed struggle as follows:

The time comes in the life of any nation when there remains only two choices: submit or fight and [...] South Africa's rulers had left us with no alternative but to hit back by all means within our power in defence of our people, our future and our freedom.<sup>64</sup>

Early into the 1960s, it was clear that the ANC's "just war" approach resonated with leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo. During his very first court appearance during

---

<sup>63</sup> Albert Luthuli, "Nobel Lecture," 11 December 1961, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1960/lutuli/lecture/>, accessed 23 February 2020.

<sup>64</sup> Statement by Oliver Tambo on the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress on the 25th Anniversary of the formation of Umkhonto we Sizwe, 16 December 1986, <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/statement-oliver-tambo-national-executive-committee-african-national-congress-25th>.

the Rivonia Trial, Nelson Mandela's testimony appealed to a sense of justice by referring to nuclear weapons:

Your Worship, I would say that the whole life of any thinking African in this country drives him continuously to a conflict between his conscience on the one hand and the law on the other. This is not a conflict peculiar to this country. The conflict arises for men of conscience, for men who think and who feel deeply in every country. Recently in Britain, a peer of the realm, Earl Russell, probably the most respected philosopher of the Western world, was sentenced, convicted for precisely the type of activities for which I stand before you today, for following his conscience in defiance of the law, as a protest against a nuclear weapons policy being followed by his own government. For him, his duty to the public, his belief in the morality of the essential rightness of the cause for which he stood, rose superior to this high respect for the law. He could not do other than to oppose the law and to suffer the consequences for it. Nor can I. Nor can many Africans in this country. The law as it is applied, the law as it has been developed over a long period of history, and especially the law as it is written and designed by the Nationalist government, is a law which, in our view, is immoral, unjust, and intolerable. Our consciences dictate that we must protest against it, that we must oppose it, and that we must attempt to alter it.<sup>65</sup>

Oliver Tambo, President of the ANC from 1967-1991, also observed the following regarding nuclear weapons:

These fundamental questions of our time [can] not be left to those who have nuclear weapons and experts. To save themselves of destruction, the ordinary people who know nothing of trajectories of missiles and as emanating from or the techniques of splitting atoms have to take their destiny into their own hands.<sup>66</sup>

The 1960s thus became a watershed decade in the ANC's liberation struggle, which now also included a struggle against the ultimate weapon. African support for the ANC and other South African liberation movements, the Ghana-led opposition to nuclear tests, and the OAU Cairo Declaration (1964) on the denuclearization of Africa contributed to the ANC's redefinition of its liberation struggle and its position on nuclear weapons. It was, however, developments in

---

<sup>65</sup> Nelson Mandela, "First Court Statement," Pretoria, 1962, [http://www.mandela.gov.za/mandela\\_speeches/before/62\\_court.htm](http://www.mandela.gov.za/mandela_speeches/before/62_court.htm), accessed 22 February 2020.

<sup>66</sup> The date and occasion of the statement have not been provided when quoted by Nozipho Mxakato-Diseko, "Introductory comments for Session II: Wider impact and longer-term consequences," International Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, 4 and 5 February 2013, Oslo, Norway. [https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/ud/vedlegg/hum/hum\\_diseko\\_intro.pdf](https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/ud/vedlegg/hum/hum_diseko_intro.pdf), accessed 23 February 2020.

South Africa that provided further impetus. Among other serious developments, the 1960s saw the Sharpeville Massacre, the banning of the ANC, the formation of MK, the institution of the ANC's armed struggle, and the Rivonia Trials, which resulted in Nelson Mandela's 27-year incarceration as a political prisoner. Besides these developments, the decade also saw the inauguration of South Africa's first nuclear reactor and considerable nuclear developments in the country. On 18 March 1965, South Africa's first nuclear reactor went critical, and on 5 August 1965, Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd, widely regarded as the 'father' of apartheid, inaugurated the country's first nuclear reactor, the South African Fundamental Atomic Research Installation (SAFARI-1).<sup>67</sup> Besides being a founder-member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 1957, South Africa participated in the negotiations which opened the NPT for signature in 1968 but refused to sign the Treaty, which entered into force in March 1970. However, before the decade could pass, Abdul Minty published a paper, *South Africa's Defence Strategy*, in 1969, which drew international attention to South Africa's domestic, regional, and nuclear ambitions.<sup>68</sup>

On the eve of the 1970s, apartheid South Africa was well on its way to becoming a nuclear-armed state. As for the ANC, after being banned, it reinvented itself in order to continue the liberation struggle it set for itself in 1912. The organization also had a clear position on nuclear weapons and had established a major transnational network.

*Late 1970s and Early 1980s: "A New Level in the Armed Conflict"*<sup>69</sup>

The 1960s could be regarded as the ANC's coming-of-age as a banned organization engaged in an armed struggle: MK's establishment as the armed and intelligence wing of the ANC significantly improved the organization's ability to gather and disseminate information. Examples of covert operatives who fed the ANC's intelligence include Dieter Gerhardt and Renfrew Christie, who spied for the Soviet Union and the ANC, respectively. Furthermore, following the 1979 Vela incident, the ANC recounted information obtained from a "former Russian spy in the South

---

<sup>67</sup> Von Wielligh et al., *Die Bom*, 95-116.

<sup>68</sup> Reddy, *Anti-apartheid Movement and the United Nations*, xiii.

<sup>69</sup> This section draws on Jo-Ansie van Wyk, "Nuclear terrorism in Africa: The ANC's Operation Mac and the attack on the Koeberg Nuclear Power Station in South Africa," *Historia: Journal of the Historical Association of South Africa*, 60, 2 (2015): 51-67.

African Navy” (i.e. Gerhardt) that South Africa provided logistical support to Israel during the test.<sup>70</sup>

It took 15 years of active lobbying and several presentations by Abdul Minty to the UNSC and other initiatives, both at the UN and elsewhere, for the UNSC to institute the mandatory arms embargo. In the meantime, following the June 1976 Soweto Uprising, many young refugees had fled to the Front-Line states,<sup>71</sup> joined MK, and received training first by Cuban and Soviet instructors in Angola (especially since Angola’s independence), and thereafter by ANC and MK instructors. MK operatives also attended specialized courses in Algeria, Bulgaria, Cuba, the German Democratic Republic (GDR), Hungary, the Soviet Union, and the former Yugoslavia.<sup>72</sup> It was, however, the ANC’s relations with the Soviet Union, the ANC’s major arms supplier, that were by far the most productive.<sup>73</sup>

Following a 1978 visit by ANC leaders to communist leaders in Vietnam, the ANC released a Politico-Military Commission Report known as the Green Book.<sup>74</sup> The report signaled a new phase in the ANC’s approach to the white minority National Party (NP) government in South Africa. The objective of this new phase was to weaken “the enemy’s grip on his reins of political, economic, social and military power, by a combination of political and military action.”<sup>75</sup>

By 1980, South Africa’s regional policy of destabilizing pro-ANC states had resulted in major developments in the region and had been widely condemned. A study by the UN Secretary General released in 1980 concluded that the NP’s policy of apartheid posed the ‘greatest threat’

---

<sup>70</sup> David Albright, “The Legacy of the South African Nuclear Weapons Programme,” *The nuclear debate: Proceedings of the conference on nuclear policy for a democratic South Africa*, Cape Town, 11-13 February 1994, (Cape Town: EMG), 149.

<sup>71</sup> Ronald W. Walters, *South Africa and the Bomb: Responsibility and Deterrence* (Lexington, Mass: Lexington Books, 1987), 91–2; Richelson, *Spying on the Bomb*, 279; Jeremy Shearar, “Denuclearization in Africa: The South African Dimension,” *Disarmament* 16, no. 2 (1993): 171-186.

<sup>72</sup> Tsepo Motumi, “Umkhonto we Sizwe: Structure, Training and Force Levels (1984 to 1994),” *African Defence Review*, 18, (1994), <http://www.iss.co.za/pubs/asr/ADR18/Motumi.html>, accessed 25 March 2013.

<sup>73</sup> Irina Filatova and Apollon Davidson, *The Hidden Thread: Russia and South Africa in the Soviet era* (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2013), 298-339.

<sup>74</sup> ANC, “The ANC’s Second Submission to the TRC: Umkhonto we Sizwe Operations Report,” 12 May 1997, <https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/submit/anc2.htm>, accessed 18 May 2020; Kevin O’Brien, “A blunted spear: The failure of the African National Congress/South African Communist Party Revolutionary Strategy 1961-1990,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 14, no. 2 (2003): 44.

<sup>75</sup> ANC, “The ANC’s Second Submission to the TRC.”

to peace in Southern Africa.<sup>76</sup> The report concluded that “the greatest threat to peace in the region stems from a racist regime's denial of basic rights to the overwhelming majority of the population and its willingness to use strong repressive means, both internally and externally, to preserve its interests and privileges.”<sup>77</sup> The report also cited possible reasons for South Africa's nuclear weapons program, namely “as a deterrent or intimidatory instrument against neighbours; as an assertion of defiance and desperation (presumably a last resort device); and as a means of intimidating black South Africans and lessening the risk of internal unrest while boosting the morale of the beleaguered whites.” The report also suggested that South Africa, “rather than deploy[ing] or openly test[ing] nuclear weapons, might seek to follow and exploit a policy of ambiguity of latent proliferation.”<sup>78</sup>

Following the release of the Green Book, the ANC's deployment of its armed wing gained new momentum. It was decided that MK's operations in South Africa had to be resumed. These so-called “G5 Operations” were led by Sipiwe Nyanda from 1978 onwards. A related development was the 1979 establishment of the 19-member MK Special Operations Unit (SOU), which was also called the Solomon Mhlongo Unit.<sup>79</sup> Established by Tambo, the SOU Command included Joe Slovo, Montso Mokgabudi, and Aboobaker Ismail. With its own command structure, the SOU reported directly to the president of the ANC. Details of operations were classified and only the SOU Command had full knowledge of them. According to Ismail, the SOU intended to attack “strategic targets of an economic and military designed nature to have maximum impact.”<sup>80</sup> A new MK military headquarters was established in Lusaka, Zambia, and Slovo was appointed as MK's Chief of Staff. These developments led to changes in reporting, such as Special Operations Command reporting to military headquarters in Lusaka through Slovo and no longer directly to the president of the ANC. Moreover, the ANC established additional facilities in Angola, Mozambique and Tanzania.<sup>81</sup>

---

<sup>76</sup> United Nations (UN), “South Africa's nuclear-tipped ballistic missile capability: A report of the Secretary General,” A/45/571, (New York: United Nations, 1991).

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), *Amnesty Committee Decision AC/2001/003*, 16 January 2000, <http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/decisions/2001/ac21003.htm/>, accessed 25 March 2013.

<sup>80</sup> Aboobaker Ismail, “The ANC's Special Operations Unit,” *The Thinker*, 58, (2013): 33.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

With approximately 60 members, the purpose of the SOU was to execute high-impact attacks on economic and military targets in South Africa through small units consisting of two to six MK members. The establishment of the SOU resulted in an increase in sabotage incidents. It is estimated that 150 to 160 attacks took place between 1976 and 1982.<sup>82</sup> A clear spike in attacks occurred between 1979 and 1983, increasing from 12 in 1979 to 19 in 1980 and to 25 in 1981.<sup>83</sup> Targets included police stations, fuel storage facilities at the state-owned oil-from-coal company Sasol (1980 and 1983), electric power stations, railroads, the Voortrekkerhoogte Army Headquarters (1981), the Koeberg Nuclear Power Station (hereafter Koeberg) in December 1982, and the headquarters of the South African Air Force (SAAF) in 1983. Oliver Tambo, the exiled president of the ANC, stated that these attacks “combine[d] to demarcate a new level in the armed conflict between the fascist regime and the popular masses led by the ANC and its allies.”<sup>84</sup> For the ANC, these were “spectacular operations that would hit the economy hard.”<sup>85</sup> Moreover, these attacks were regarded as evidence of a “new level in the armed conflict” between the South African government and the ANC and its allies.<sup>86</sup>

In 1982, the MK SOU established the Dolphin Unit in Durban as an additional internal unit to operate in South Africa. The members of the Dolphin Unit included Mohammed Iqbal Shaik and Mohammed Abdulhai Ismail. Both were recruited and trained by Aboobaker Ismail, Dolphin Unit general commander, who had the freedom to identify targets and recruit members.<sup>87</sup>

In its second submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on 12 May 1997, the ANC addressed the operations of MK since its establishment in 1961. The submission stated that the ANC “had no choice but to resort to armed struggle” after it was banned by the government in 1960.<sup>88</sup> The ANC explained its chain of command, military training, and the various phases of

---

<sup>82</sup> ANC, *The ANC's Second Submission to the TRC*; Tom Lodge, “The African National Congress in South Africa, 1976-1983: Guerilla War and Armed Propaganda,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 3, 1 (1983/4): 153-154.

<sup>83</sup> James Barber and John Barratt, *South Africa's foreign policy: The search for status and security 1945-1988* (Johannesburg: Southern Book Publishers, 1990), 291.

<sup>84</sup> TRC, “Amnesty Committee Decision AC/2001/003”; Oliver Tambo, “Opening Speech at the first conference of the ANC Department of Information and Publicity,” Lusaka, Zambia, 5 July 1983, <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=4425&t=ES>, (Accessed 25 March 2013).

<sup>85</sup> ANC, “The ANC's Second Submission to the TRC.”

<sup>86</sup> Tambo, “Opening Speech at the first conference of the ANC Department of Information and Publicity.”

<sup>87</sup> TRC, “Amnesty Committee Decision AC/2001/003.”

<sup>88</sup> ANC, “The ANC's second submission to the TRC.”

its liberation struggle. The submission also explained how the ANC's approach had changed by 1979 to include increased guerrilla warfare, for example its so-called "People's War" when the SOU was established to operate in South Africa. This included a 1982 attack on the Koeberg nuclear power station, which had been under construction near Cape Town.<sup>89</sup> In this incident, MK received gifts from two unexpected sources: a PhD graduate and the South African national fencing champion.

### *The Bombing of the Koeberg Nuclear Power Plant*<sup>90</sup>

As international suspicion towards South Africa's nuclear weapons program increased, the construction of the Koeberg nuclear plant became a focus area for the liberation movement's actions against the South African government. It was suspected at the time that Koeberg may have been producing weapons-grade plutonium for the government's nuclear weapons program. Decades later, Abdul Minty admitted that the ANC "always believed that Koeberg and other civilian programmes [had] actually been the base and the cover for a nuclear weapons programme."<sup>91</sup> These sentiments were shared by Renfrew Leslie Christie, who would play a major role in planning the bombing of Koeberg.

Christie was conscripted into the South African Army in 1966 at the age of 17. During guard duty at an ammunition dump east of Johannesburg, he was alerted to the fact that the apartheid government was "playing with nuclear weapons."<sup>92</sup> Thereafter, he started 'hunting' for "Apartheid's nuclear bombs."<sup>93</sup> Christie went on to study history and politics, which allowed him to track the apartheid government's nuclear progress. He wrote his master's thesis on the Kunene River Hydroelectric schemes and his doctoral thesis at Oxford University on the electrification of South Africa.<sup>94</sup> Christie's interest in studying South Africa's electrical power

---

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> This section draws partly on Jo-Ansie van Wyk, "Nuclear terrorism in Africa: The ANC's Operation Mac and the attack on the Koeberg Nuclear Power Station in South Africa," *Historia: Journal of the Historical Association of South Africa*, 60, 2 (2015): 51-67.

<sup>91</sup> Minty, "Keynote address."

<sup>92</sup> No indication could be found in the numerous publications consulted, of what Christie saw that alerted him to the apartheid government's nuclear plans; Olga Smirnova interview with Renfrew Christie, 'Spying on South Africa's Nuclear Bomb'; SAHO, "Renfrew Leslie Christie," <https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/renfrew-leslie-christie>, accessed 13 May 2020.

<sup>93</sup> SAHO, "Renfrew Leslie Christie."

<sup>94</sup> Ibid; Stam, "Spying on Apartheid's Bomb."



systems was directly tied to his suspicion that the apartheid regime was using the electrical power systems to enrich uranium. As the uranium enrichment process needs large quantities of cheap electricity, Christie figured that monitoring the facilities capable of producing such power was the best way to keep an eye on the apartheid government's nuclear endeavors.<sup>95</sup> He was allowed to do research for his postgraduate studies at South Africa's power utility, Eskom, which proved to be a great windfall: his research gave him an excuse to look into Eskom's plans on uranium enrichment.<sup>96</sup> "By infiltrating Eskom's libraries and archives, Christie tracked the nuclear program's progress by monitoring how much electricity was being used for uranium enrichment. With this information, he then calculated when there would be enough uranium to make a bomb."<sup>97</sup> In the end, Christie's thesis found, "in so many words, [that] the apartheid government ha[d] all it need[ed] to make nuclear weapons."<sup>98</sup>

After completing his Ph.D., Christie returned to South Africa in 1979 and began spying on the apartheid regime's nuclear program for the ANC. On the basis of his calculations, which he proudly considers to be "very accurate,"<sup>99</sup> he informed the ANC step-by-step of the progress being made at Koeberg. Within three months of his arrival back in South Africa, Christie was outed by a double agent and arrested under the Terrorism Act. He was found guilty on multiple charges and sentenced to ten years in prison, of which he effectively served seven. He was arrested due to sensitive documents in his possession, which pertained to a study of locations where nuclear weapons of various sizes could be detonated in South Africa without damaging physical property. The study looked at seismic effects and where an explosion would affect different ethnic groups (i.e. by apartheid racial groups – White, Black African, Indian, etc.). According to Christie, the study could be read simply as a way to find a place in the country where the Apartheid regime could safely test bombs, but it could also be read as a potential strategy for ethnic cleansing.<sup>100</sup> It is unclear where he obtained the documents.

---

<sup>95</sup> Stam, "Spying on Apartheid's Bomb."

<sup>96</sup> SAHO, "Renfrew Leslie Christie."

<sup>97</sup> Stam, "Spying on Apartheid's Bomb."

<sup>98</sup> Olga Smirnova interview with Renfrew Christie.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid; Stam, "Spying on Apartheid's Bomb."

<sup>100</sup> Stam, "Spying on Apartheid's Bomb"; Danny McDonald, "A convicted South African Terrorist discusses the future of his country," *Vice*, 24 July 2013, [https://www.vice.com/en\\_ca/article/vdp4md/a-convicted-south-african-terrorist-talks-about-the-future-of-his-country](https://www.vice.com/en_ca/article/vdp4md/a-convicted-south-african-terrorist-talks-about-the-future-of-his-country), accessed 13 May 2020.



Christie further claims that he was involved in planning to bomb the Koeberg nuclear power station in 1982. After he was arrested, he wrote a carefully crafted confession, in which he attempted to make public the information he had gathered regarding South Africa's nuclear program. In the confession, Christie offered recommendations to the ANC on what to do about the apartheid nuclear weapons project.<sup>101</sup> He also "included as explicit instructions as he could on how to bomb the Koeberg nuclear power station."<sup>102</sup> According to Christie, the apartheid government claimed the new power station was for commercial electricity; however, his research had led him to the conclusion that it was merely a front to build atom bombs,<sup>103</sup> for which the plant would produce plutonium. In his confession, Christie explained in detail what he thought was the best point of attack: the facility's pipework, as the facility needed these to operate properly. Furthermore, the bombing had to be timed carefully in order to inflict the highest possible amount of financial damage but had to take place before the enriched uranium was in the power station so that it did not endanger the people of Cape Town.<sup>104</sup>

During Christie's trial, "in an effort to demonize [him] to the public, the judge read his full confession out loud."<sup>105</sup> This was exactly what Christie wanted, as it helped his recommendations to be printed and spread to the ANC, who used it two-and-a-half years later to blow up Koeberg.<sup>106</sup> The bombing fell on the shoulders of Rodney Wilkinson and his girlfriend, speech therapist Heather Gray, who acted as MK saboteurs.<sup>107</sup> Wilkinson, the South African national fencing champion by the early 1980s, dropped out of the University of Cape Town without completing his studies in Building Science and Politics. In an interview with a foreign reporter in 2015, Wilkinson stated that his sympathies lay with the ANC from the start, but Renfrew Christie's

---

<sup>101</sup> Olga Smirnova interview with Renfrew Christie.

<sup>102</sup> Stam, "Spying on Apartheid's Bomb."

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid; Olga Smirnova interview with Renfrew Christie; Stam, "Spying on Apartheid's Bomb."

<sup>106</sup> Southern African Liaison Office (SALO), "SALO Commemorates the anniversary of Dr. Renfrew Christie's 10 Year Prison Sentence, on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June," 6 June 2016, <https://www.salo.org.za/salo-commemorates-the-anniversary-of-dr-renfrew-christies-10-year-prison-sentence-on-the-6th-of-june/>, accessed 13 May 2020; SAHO, 'Renfrew Leslie Christie'.

<sup>107</sup> Olga Smirnova interview with Renfrew Christie; Stam, "Spying on Apartheid's Bomb."

arrest in 1979 inspired him to act.<sup>108</sup> Hence, despite his anti-nuclear sentiments, Wilkinson joined a commune close to where Koeberg was under construction. He soon found himself employed as a draftsman for one of the Koeberg contractors. By the time his girlfriend (Gray) convinced him to steal a set of Koeberg's building plans, he had already been working at the site for 18 months. Once Wilkinson stole the plans, the couple travelled to newly-independent Zimbabwe, where they met with the ANC's Mac Maharaj. Wilkinson and Gray explained the purpose of the meeting, namely to hand the Koeberg plans over to the ANC for possible use in an attack.<sup>109</sup> Suspicious of infiltration by the South African security establishment, the ANC put Wilkinson through a vetting process. In his later testimony to the TRC, Maharaj explained how the Koeberg operation developed:

It [i.e. the Special Operations Unit of Umkhonto weSizwe (MK) set up by ANC President, Oliver Tambo] functioned for a period without reporting to the revolutionary council or the political military council or the NEC. All that was said was that there is a special operations team set up. SASOL One<sup>110</sup>, would have taken place in that period. Koeberg was never discussed at any meeting but I was privy to the discussions on Koeberg and in the case of Koeberg I had been the person who provided the diagrams of Koeberg to [SOU Commander] Joe Slovo and I had warned him that Koeberg was due to become operational, I think in about a space of about six months and together we agreed that Comrade Slovo would solicit the advice of nuclear physicists in Britain and the Soviet Union and possibly I think the United States to give them the plans and consult them about the possibility of danger from radiation and when it was struck, again not because I was directly involved in the operation but in my tasks I was party to retrieving the members of the unit that carried out that attack and therefore became aware that we carried it out hurriedly because we wanted to strike it before it became operational to avoid radiation and affecting people working there as well as the surrounding areas.<sup>111</sup>

---

<sup>108</sup> Douglas Birch, "South African who attacked a nuclear plant is a hero to his government and fellow citizens," The Center for Public Integrity, 17 March 2015, <https://publicintegrity.org/national-security/south-african-who-attacked-a-nuclear-plant-is-a-hero-to-his-government-and-fellow-citizens/>, accessed 14 May 2020.

<sup>109</sup> Padraig O' Malley Interview with Aboobakar Ismail, 21 February 2003, *The O' Malley Archives*, <http://www.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv03445/04lv03833/05lv03891/06lv03900.htm>, accessed 15 March 2013.

<sup>110</sup> The Sasol One site was founded in September 1950. It produced petroleum through a unique process of coal liquefaction (<https://www.sasol.com>). It was a strategic national key point and a source of revenue for the apartheid government; hence it was targeted by the ANC in its sabotage campaigns.

<sup>111</sup> Sathyandranath Ragunanan (Mac) Maharaj, "On Resumption – Day 5 [Testimony to the TRC]," 6 November 1998, [https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/amntrans/1998/98110206\\_pre\\_98116pta.htm](https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/amntrans/1998/98110206_pre_98116pta.htm), accessed 22 February 2020.

Maharaj's statement echoed an earlier (1996) statement of the ANC to the TRC:

Before the attack on Koeberg was approved, the ANC went to the trouble of employing reliable nuclear experts in Europe to determine without any shadow of doubt that there would be no danger to civilians as a result of the explosions.<sup>112</sup>

During the vetting process, the stolen plans were authenticated by both Soviet and Western nuclear scientists.<sup>113</sup> Once the ANC had fully vetted the plans and Wilkinson's and Gray's credentials, Wilkinson agreed to carry out an attack on Koeberg (code-named Operation Mac, after Mac Maharaj). Maharaj had suggested that Wilkinson, rather than a trained MK soldier, take on the task "simply because the fencer had a better chance than anyone else of gaining access to Koeberg's most vulnerable points"<sup>114</sup> by virtue of his employment at the plant. In keeping with Christie's proposal, the ANC wanted to bomb Koeberg before it was loaded with enriched uranium, to avoid "a plume of high-level radiation." According to Wilkinson:

The purpose was to make a political statement and to cause as much damage as possible. We didn't want to hurt anybody, and I completely didn't want to get killed.<sup>115</sup>

Upon his return to South Africa in 1978, Wilkinson successfully applied for re-employment at Koeberg without any background check whatsoever.<sup>116</sup> He was very fortunate in this regard, as had a background check been done at the time, Wilkinson's anti-nuclear sentiments and his history of military desertion from the SADF would have quickly become known.<sup>117</sup>

The ANC assigned Ismail, the Dolphin Unit general commander, to lead Operation Mac, and he regularly met with Wilkinson in Swaziland to plan the attack on Koeberg.<sup>118</sup> Ismail explains,

---

<sup>112</sup> ANC, "Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission," August 1996, <https://omalley.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv02167/04lv02264/05lv02303/06lv02304/07lv02305/08lv02312.htm>, accessed 18 May 2020.

<sup>113</sup> David Beresford, *Truth is a strange fruit: A personal journey through the apartheid war* (Jacana Media: Auckland Park, 2010), 103.

<sup>114</sup> Birch, "South African who attacked a nuclear plant is a hero to his government and fellow citizens."

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> SAHO, "The freedom struggle in Cape Town," 2013, <http://www.sahistory.org.za/cape-town/conflict-among-civic-organisations?page=2>, accessed 25 March 2013.

<sup>117</sup> While serving as a corporal in the SADF during South Africa's invasion of Angola in mid-1970s, Wilkinson deserted with 12 fellow servicemen, wrecking an armoured truck and ending in hospital. Despite investigations, he was never prosecuted by the SADF (Beresford, *Truth is a strange fruit*, 106).

<sup>118</sup> Padraig O' Malley interview with Ismail.

My job in terms of dealing with that operation was to guide and direct Rodney in terms of what he should be able to take out, which was to get him to describe to me, read the plans and things and then have discussions with him and say OK, let's see what kind of access we could get, which is what we were able to do quite well. In fact Rodney and I worked up to a very close working relationship there. He was able to tell me what he was doing and I would say to him, now try to do this, do that, do that, etc., and I would guide him through the process. Being on the inside of the plant he was able to get the equipment in and then carry out the operation.<sup>119</sup>

In preparation for the attack, Wilkinson visited Swaziland once a month under the pretense of a “dirty weekend” outside the borders of conservative South Africa.<sup>120</sup> Three possible targets were identified; namely the two reactor heads (the heart of the plant), a section of the containment building, and a concentration of electric cables under the main control room.<sup>121</sup> The 110-ton steel reactor head was deliberately chosen, as it would be used to control the nuclear reaction and maximize the propaganda effect.<sup>122</sup>

Members of MK left various dead letter boxes containing four limpet mines for Wilkinson and Gray in the Karoo, an isolated part of South Africa, which they fetched and took to Cape Town. The date for the attack was set for a day very symbolic for both Black and White South Africans: 16 December (1982). For Whites it was the Day of the Covenant commemorating the Battle of Blood River in 1838, which saw the *Voortrekkers*<sup>123</sup> triumphing over Dingaan's Zulu *impis* (soldiers). Blacks commemorated 16 December as MK Day, the anniversary of Umkhonto we Sizwe's establishment in 1961.<sup>124</sup>

Despite meticulous planning, a series of unexpected events almost derailed the operation. Several security-related incidents at Koeberg during 1982 raised concerns. In May 1982, four men entered the facility's security zone and attempted to break into a safe. A second incident occurred in July 1982 when a fire broke out. Because Operation Mac was already

---

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Beresford, *Truth is a strange fruit*, 103.

<sup>121</sup> SAHO, “The freedom struggle in Cape Town.”

<sup>122</sup> David Beresford, “The swordsman and the bomb,” *Sunday Times*, 29 August 2010, 2.

<sup>123</sup> Groups of Dutch-speaking people who migrated by wagon from the Cape Colony into the interior from 1836 onwards, in order to live beyond the borders of British rule. The word *Voortrekker* means pioneer or pathfinder.

<sup>124</sup> Beresford, *Truth is a strange fruit*, 104.

underway, the ANC prematurely accepted responsibility for the fire. However, this was dismissed by the state-owned power facility. A third incident occurred in August 1982 when two men entered the security zone and were able to come within a few meters of the nuclear reactor before they were arrested.<sup>125</sup>

In response to these breaches, security at Koeberg was tightened. However, Wilkinson was able to make a laughingstock of the security protocols. He managed to smuggle the limpet mines through the perimeter of the security fence one by one in a hidden compartment of his Renault. He stored them in a desk drawer in his prefabricated office and then smuggled them, hidden in his overalls, through a security gate into the main building.<sup>126</sup> However, Wilkinson did not manage to install the mines to explode on the target date of 16 December 1982, but only finished planting them on 17 December, a Friday. The fuses were set with a 24-hour delay so that they would explode on 18 December, a Saturday, when the plant would be deserted.<sup>127</sup> Wilkinson had thus successfully penetrated Koeberg's security to plant four limpet mines on the two reactor heads at the power station, as well as at strategic points under the plant's control rooms.<sup>128</sup>

Ultimately, four explosions occurred, but not quite as planned. Because the springs on the firing mechanisms were brittle, the devices exploded over a period of several hours between 18 and 19 December instead of simultaneously.<sup>129</sup> By then, Wilkinson had fled the country into Swaziland via Johannesburg. From Swaziland he went to Mozambique, where he met Gray and Oliver Tambo, "the two men crying [sic] in each other's arms at their triumph."<sup>130</sup> Wilkinson and Gray then proceeded to Britain, where they lived in exile for more than a decade.

On 19 December 1982, the ANC accepted responsibility for the Koeberg attack. In a statement issued in Dar es Salaam, the ANC stated that the attack was meant as a "salute to all our fallen heroes and imprisoned comrades, including those buried in Maseru," referring to 42

---

<sup>125</sup> "Koeberg aanval sy werk: ANC," *Die Burger*, 20 December 1982, 1. As the ANC's activities in the Western Cape increased significantly in the early 1980s, it remains unclear whether any of these security breaches did in fact relate to ANC activities.

<sup>126</sup> David Beresford, "How we blew up Koeberg (... and escaped on a bicycle)," *Mail & Guardian*, 15 December 1995, <http://mg.co.za/article/1995-12-15-how-we-blew-up-koeberg-and-escaped-on-a-bicycle>, accessed 15 May 2013.

<sup>127</sup> SAHO, "The freedom struggle in Cape Town"; Beresford, "How we blew up Koeberg."

<sup>128</sup> Beresford, "How we blew up Koeberg."

<sup>129</sup> "Koeberg aanval sy werk: ANC," *Die Burger*, 20 December 1982, 1.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

ANC members killed in a raid on 8 December 1982 by the South African Defence Force (SADF).<sup>131</sup> Mac Maharaj later described the attack as a carefully planned propaganda operation designed to avoid casualties while “send[ing] a message to the apartheid regime that the ANC had the capacity to strike anywhere in the country.”<sup>132</sup> Indeed, the attack on Koeberg caused major damage (around 500 million Rand) and delayed construction for a year and a half.<sup>133</sup> It was a major propaganda victory for the ANC. In 1986, ANC President Oliver Tambo declared:

The catalogue of [MK’s] achievements is studded with the brilliant attacks on SASOL, the military headquarters at Voortrekkerhoogte, the nuclear power station at Koeberg, the bomb blast outside the headquarters in Pretoria of the racist South African Air Force, the attacks on enemy communications, and the limpet and land mine attacks inside the borders and deep within the country.<sup>134</sup>

Rodney and Heather Wilkinson, who married shortly after their escape to England, successfully applied for amnesty for the bombing of Koeberg in the late 1990s. According to the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act No. 34 of 1995, the TRC was to “provide for the investigation and the establishment of as complete a picture as possible of the nature, causes and extent of gross violations of human rights” committed in South Africa from 1 March 1960 onward. Furthermore, the Act made provisions for granting amnesty to a person who made a “full disclosure of all the relevant facts relating to acts associated with a political objective committed in the course of the conflicts” in the country.<sup>135</sup> The Wilkinsons disclosed that they were responsible for planting and detonating four limpet mines at Koeberg. According to the TRC report, they were members of MK, attached to the SOU, and were “ordered to damage” Koeberg, “a key source of power” for the NP government.<sup>136</sup> In their submission to the TRC, the ANC

---

<sup>131</sup> “Koeberg: SA’s ill-starred nuclear power plant,” *Independent Online*, 11 March 2006, <http://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/koeberg-sa-s-ill-starred-nuclear-power-plant-1.269096>, accessed 25 March 2013.

<sup>132</sup> Birch, “South African who attacked a nuclear plant is a hero to his government and fellow citizens.”

<sup>133</sup> McDonald, “A convicted South African terrorist discusses the future of his country.”

<sup>134</sup> Oliver Tambo, “Statement at the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress on the 25th Anniversary of the formation of Umkhonto We Sizwe,” 16 December 1986, <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/statement-oliver-tambo-national-executive-committee-african-national-congress-25th>, accessed 22 February 2020.

<sup>135</sup> Erik Doxtader and Philippe-Joseph Salazar, *Truth & Reconciliation in South Africa. The fundamental documents*, (Cape Town: David Philip, 2007), 13.

<sup>136</sup> TRC, “Amnesty Committee Decision AM3996/96,” 31 May 1999, <https://justice.gov.za/Trc/decisions/1999/ac990206.htm>, accessed 18 May 2020.

emphasized that Koeberg was not operational at the time of the bombing and that they went to the trouble of employing reliable nuclear experts in Europe to determine without any shadow of doubt that there would be no danger to civilians as a result of the explosions.<sup>137</sup> The TRC found that “the proposed attack was part of the overall strategy of attacking apartheid and its installations.”<sup>138</sup> Considering it a “successful act of sabotage,” which “was clearly politically motivated,” the TRC granted amnesty to the Wilkinsons on 31 May 1999.<sup>139</sup>

Besides the Koeberg attack, another incident listed in MK's submission to the TRC involves an arson attempt at the Pelindaba Nuclear Research Station in February 1983. Unfortunately, details on this attempt could not be found during the research for this paper.<sup>140</sup>

## Assessment and Conclusions

### *Transnational Activism and Tactics*

The ANC's tactics to persuade, socialize with, and pressure the international community included:

- Information politics (the ability to generate quick, credible and politically useful information and disseminate it to achieve the highest impact),
- Symbolic politics (the ability to use mutually constituted symbols, actions, ideas and objects),
- Leverage politics (the ability to persuade actors more powerful than itself to pressure or coerce),
- Accountability politics (the ability to hold powerful actors to account for their stated normative positions), and
- A combination thereof.<sup>141</sup>

The impact of these tactics was, as summed up by the ANC:

---

<sup>137</sup> ANC, “Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” 1996, <http://www.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv02167/04lv02264/05lv02303/06lv02304/07lv02305/08lv02312.htm>, accessed 25 March 2013.

<sup>138</sup> TRC, “Amnesty Committee Decision AM3996/96.”

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> ANC, “Further submissions and responses by the African National Congress to the questions raised by the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation, Appendix Four, MK List of Operations,” 12 May 1997, <https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/submit/anc2.htm>, accessed 22 February 2020.

<sup>141</sup> Keck & Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders*.



In condemning once again those countries that continue to collaborate with the apartheid regime in the economic, military and nuclear fields, we wish to recognise the limited but positive steps being taken by some who are now establishing direct contact and strengthening bilateral relations with the ANC. We are appreciative of the position taken towards the authorisation of ANC offices in Vienna, Bonn, Brussels and Paris – thus adding to the already existing ones in Rome, London and Stockholm, as well as helping further to strengthen the position of the ANC in the Netherlands, Ireland and all of the Scandinavian countries.<sup>142</sup>

By 1983, the first secret meetings between the apartheid government and the ANC occurred. In fact, at a 1983 conference in Amsterdam, Abdul Minty observed that perceptions in the West towards South Africa were changing.<sup>143</sup> Subsequent to the Vastrap and Vela incidents in 1977 and 1979, the international community was convinced that South Africa was developing nuclear weapons, although official denials continued. However, it took another decade before then-President FW de Klerk finally announced the existence and dismantling of South Africa's nuclear weapons program in the South African Parliament, in March 1993. The IAEA confirmed the complete verification of the country's nuclear disarmament by June 1993.

Abdul Minty admitted that he experienced tremendous opposition to his efforts to convince the international community that South Africa was developing nuclear weapons. He stated that, "despite having access to all the information," the exiled ANC "had very little opportunity" to engage major Western powers on the issue. For instance, Margaret Thatcher refused to meet with ANC leaders as long as their armed struggle continued. ANC President Oliver Tambo's first-ever official meeting with representatives of Western governments did not occur until 1987.<sup>144</sup>

The ANC operated in a domestic and international environment of asymmetry. Access to power and limited resources meant that the ANC had to use the "power of ideas." Therefore, it influenced international thought by framing or constructing the apartheid regime and its nuclear weapons program as a threat to human rights and global security. One of the organization's main

---

<sup>142</sup> Johnny Makatini, "Statement at the Plenary Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), 27 November 1981," in DIRCO, *Diplomacy for Democracy*, 61, 67.

<sup>143</sup> "Public hearing accuses South Africa of aggression," *Sechaba*, (February 1984): 12.

<sup>144</sup> Minty, "Keynote Address," 13.



tasks was to socialize states on the exact meaning and consequences of apartheid in order to maintain international pressure on the apartheid government.

Various reasons for South Africa's nuclear disarmament have been offered. Whether the role of the ANC and its transnational activist networks had any direct causal effect is not easy to determine. However, it is clear that the ANC and its transnational networks had, over several decades, applied consistent pressure against the apartheid regime. The World Campaign, for example, produced many detailed reports on nuclear- and military-related developments in South Africa and on Western collaboration with South Africa despite comprehensive UN embargoes against the country. In the ANC's efforts, some achievements are worth noting.

#### *Increased Global Awareness of Apartheid and Sanctions Busting*

The ANC framed their struggle for liberation as a nuclear struggle, and correspondingly framed nuclear and apartheid South Africa as a threat to international peace and security. In 1977, Johnny Makatini reiterated: "the role of the international community is actively to support this struggle and facilitate the elimination of the threat to peace and international security which the apartheid regime constitutes."<sup>145</sup> Besides accusations against states collaborating with South Africa, Makatini also regularly referred to the fact that the apartheid regime constituted a "threat to peace and international security" and argued that "it is for that reason that the ANC hails the resolution adopted by the GA at its 31st session (Resolution 31/6-I) , which declares the Pretoria regime illegitimate and reaffirms the legitimacy of the struggle by the people of South Africa, by all possible means, for the seizure of power. We request the Council to endorse this position."<sup>146</sup>

#### *Unmasking Nuclear South Africa*

By 1977, it was clear to the international community that South Africa, despite denials and ambiguous statements, had a military nuclear capability. In fact, in his address to the UNSC prior to the discovery of the Vastrap test site, Johnny Makatini stated that South Africa had "built a garrison state, a new laager equipped with the most modern and deadly weapons, equipped indeed with a military nuclear capability." Makatini added that, despite the UN arms embargo,

---

<sup>145</sup> Makatini, "Statement at the 1992<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the United Nations Security Council," 10.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

South Africa cooperated with Western states on military and nuclear matters. Makatini also accused Western states of supplying “genocidal weapons” to South Africa.<sup>147</sup>

### *The United Nations and the ANC*

The UN became a major target for the ANC to influence international public opinion in its struggle against apartheid and South African nuclearization. The ANC was so successful in this regard that it enjoyed a special status at the UN. In 1963, the UN established the Special Committee Against Apartheid. It became the first UN committee that Western powers refused to join.<sup>148</sup>

### *Total Global Isolation of South Africa*

A significant outcome of the ANC, the AAM and the World Campaign’s transnational activism and campaigning was its ability to elicit transnational financial, ideological, and political support from sympathetic governments and civil society actors. This enabled the organization to achieve the total global isolation of apartheid South Africa in the UN, OAU, the NAM, and the IAEA, and the UN’s 1977 mandatory arms embargo against South Africa. Prior to the 1977 embargo, apartheid South Africa’s isolation had already become more acute with the termination of international agreements with some of its close allies. A particular blow was Britain’s termination of the so-called Simonstown Agreement between South Africa and Britain in 1975.<sup>149</sup> The 1955 agreement, contained in four letters between the British defence minister and his South African counterpart, was important to South Africa as it granted Britain the use of South Africa’s Simonstown Naval Base in return for supply of naval equipment; a very useful quid pro quo in the face of increased global isolation.<sup>150</sup> AAM protest against joint UK and South African naval exercises in terms of the Simonstown Agreement in 1974 eventually resulted in the British

---

<sup>147</sup> Ibid 7, 8.

<sup>148</sup> Aubrey Nkomo, “Celebrating the Life of Johnny Makatini,” in *Diplomacy for Democracy: A collection of keynote speeches and contributions made towards the liberation struggle of South Africa by Mfanafuthi Johnstone (Jonny) Makatini, Special Representative of the African National Congress to the United Nations (1977 -1987)* (Pretoria: DIRCO, 2012), vii.

<sup>149</sup> Cabinet of Her Britannic Majesty’s Government, 1974, *The Simonstown Agreement. Memorandum by The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs*, 29 October. C (74) 119. Copy No 79, <http://filestore.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pdfs/small/cab-129-179-c-119.pdf>, accessed 8 October 2020.

<sup>150</sup> J Vitor Tossini, 2020, “The UK in South Africa - The Simonstown Agreement”, *UK Defence Journal*, 1 October, <https://ukdefencejournal.org.uk/the-uk-in-south-africa-the-simonstown-agreement/>, accessed 8 October 2020.

government's announcement in December 1974 that it would commence with negotiations with South Africa to terminate the agreement.<sup>151</sup>

The ANC's liberation and nuclear struggle shows the transnational circulation of ideas and concepts related to disarmament, the role of nuclear imaginaries, the connection between national and transnational histories, and interaction between governments, multilateral organizations, and non-state actors.

## A Note on Sources

Archival research on South Africa's nuclear history is notoriously difficult, as is research on the history of the ANC itself. The ANC has established an Archives Unit that has commenced with an online project to "facilitate research into the 100 year history of the African National Congress, the oldest liberation movement in the World."<sup>152</sup> According to the ANC, its website (<https://ancarchive.org/>) is the result of a digital archives project initiated in October 2011. Currently, the online archive contains items on, for example, several ANC leaders, campaigns, publications such as *Sechaba* and *Liberation: A Journal of Democratic Discussion*. By mid-2020, the digitization process has produced collections, albeit not complete, on the ANC's missions in, for example, Canada, Cuba, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway and Zambia.<sup>153</sup> A search using the term "nuclear" produced 116 documents, two videos, and eight images only available via online registration.

Collections consulted for this Working Paper are housed outside and inside South Africa. Collections outside South Africa include the [African Activist Archive at Michigan State University](#). The African Activist Archive collects and curates US-based activism in support of the "struggles of African peoples against colonialism, apartheid and social justice from the 1950s through the

---

<sup>151</sup> Enuga Reddy, 1979, "The Anti-Apartheid Movement - 1959-1979", Paper presented at the Anti-Apartheid Movement Conference on Southern Africa in the 1980s, 26 June, O' Malley Heart of Hope Collection, <https://omalley.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv03445/04lv04015/05lv04154/06lv04156.htm>, accessed 8 October 2020.

<sup>152</sup> African National Congress (ANC), undated, ANC Archives Finding Aids, <https://ancarchive.org/finding-aids/>, accessed 20 August 2020.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

1990s.”<sup>154</sup> The Archive contains the collection of the World Campaign against Military and Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa, and a collection of the papers of Enuga Reddy, the principal secretary of the UN Special Committee against Apartheid (1963-1965), chief of the Section for African Questions (1965-1976), the director of the UN Centre against Apartheid (1976-1983), and assistant secretary-general of the UN (1983-1985). Reddy was also the director of the UN Trust Fund for South Africa and the UN Educational and Training Programme for Southern Africa (1976-1983).

Reddy compiled two publications after the unbanning of the liberation movements and the release of political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela, in 1991 and 1994, which were consulted for this Working Paper:

- Enuga Reddy (ed.), *Oliver Tambo, Apartheid and The International Community: Addresses to United Nations Committees and Conferences* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1991)
- Enuga Reddy, *Anti-Apartheid Movement and The United Nations: Statements, Papers and Letters of Abdul S Minty, Honorary Secretary of The British Anti-Apartheid Movement and Director of the World Campaign Against Military and Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa* (New Delhi: Sanchar Publishing House, 1994).

Another archive consulted is [The Struggles for Freedom: Southern Africa](#) collection available on JSTOR, a US-based not-for-profit organization that originally emerged from the University of Michigan in 1994. It contains more than 27,000 items on the liberation struggle in South Africa, and, pertinent to this research, South Africa.

The Working Paper further benefitted from the online archival collection of the [British Anti-Apartheid Movement \(AAM\) \(1959-1994\)](#), kept at the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford. In 1979, the AAM launched the World Campaign Against Military and Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa, later led by Abdul Minty to uncover military and nuclear collaboration with South Africa and to strengthen the UN arms embargo against South Africa. The World Campaign became the AAM’s main international activity in the 1980s, through which

---

<sup>154</sup> Michigan State University, African Activist Archive Project, undated, <http://africanactivist.msu.edu/index.php>, accessed 16 July 2020.

it presented primary and official evidence to the UN about contraventions of its mandatory arms embargo.<sup>155</sup>

South African archival sources include some documents from the South African Diplomatic Archives, housed at the Department of International Relations and Cooperation. It also includes the online collection of *Sechaba* magazine, the ANC's official mouthpiece published from January 1967 until December 1990. *Sechaba* traced the ANC's liberation struggle vis-à-vis apartheid South Africa and outlines its policy positions and campaigns across the globe, and conditions under apartheid. The collection is hosted by the [University of KwaZulu-Natal](#).

The [O'Malley Heart of Hope collection](#) has been compiled and authored by Padraig O'Malley, Universities of Massachusetts (US) and the Western Cape (South Africa). Hosted by the Nelson Mandela Foundation, the O'Malley Heart of Hope collection contains documents and interviews with key figures in South Africa's liberation struggle, democratic transition and post-apartheid era conducted between 1985 and 2005.

The [South African History Online](#) archive was established in 1998 and currently operates as a not-for-profit organization in South Africa. It contains more than 50,000 documents, videos, and images on South African history. It also maintains, inter alia, a historical timeline and biographies of individuals involved in the liberation struggle in South Africa, as well as a large collection on the liberation struggle and the road to democracy in South Africa.<sup>156</sup>

Another civil society archival initiative consulted is the [South African History Archive \(SAHA\)](#). Established in 1988 by anti-apartheid activists as an "independent human rights archive," SAHA has described itself as "closely connected in its formative years" to the ANC, human rights organization United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).<sup>157</sup> SAHA maintains, amongst others, anti-apartheid collections and private papers of activists, the UDF, trade unions, and the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

---

<sup>155</sup> Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM), 2020, Arms Embargo, <https://www.aamarchives.org/campaigns/arms-embargo.html#click-here-for-arms-embargo-documents-pictures>, accessed 20 August 2020.

<sup>156</sup> South African History Online, undated, About the South African History Online (SAHO), <https://www.sahistory.org.za/about-us>, accessed 20 August 2020.

<sup>157</sup> South African History Archive (SAHA), All Collections, 2020, [http://www.saha.org.za/collections/all\\_collections.htm](http://www.saha.org.za/collections/all_collections.htm), accessed 20 August 2020.

The Johannesburg-based [University of the Witwatersrand's Historical Papers Research Archive](#) was also consulted. Established in 1966, the collection includes material on the ANC, as well as material related to the country's TRC. The archive consists of 3,400 collections from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), trade unions, political parties, women's organisations, church bodies, human rights activists and political trials.<sup>158</sup> Submissions to, evidence provided to, and the rulings of [the South African TRC](#), totaling seven volumes, have provided valuable insight. The TRC was established by the South Africa Government of National Unity in 1995. Its original mandate ended in 1998 but was extended to 2002.

The archives and collections accessed in the writing of this Working Paper contain a wide variety of primary and secondary sources such as official ANC documents, reports, statements, publications and speeches, and the private papers of leading ANC activists. However, various gaps exist. First, the ANC's position on and campaigns against nuclear energy and nuclear weapons was eclipsed by the activities of the World Campaign Against Military and Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa. Second, primary archival material on the ANC's relations with governments such as the Soviet Union and other sympathetic allies are not included here. In the third instance, the documents prepared by ANC agents and sympathizers provided to ANC leaders are missing or destroyed.

---

<sup>158</sup> University of the Witwatersrand, undated, Historical Papers Research Archive Collections Database, <http://www.historicalpapers.wits.ac.za/?collections/U/Collections&database=collections>, accessed 20 August 2020.

## Author Bios

**Jo-Ansie van Wyk** is Professor of International Politics in the Department of Political Sciences, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa. She has published extensively on apartheid South Africa's nuclear history and the country's nuclear diplomacy since the end of apartheid. She is a recipient of the Monash South Africa-Carnegie Nuclear History Fellowship (2011) and has been a consultant for the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE), the implementing agency of the Pelindaba Treaty (the African Nuclear- Weapon-Free Zone Treaty) (2020). She currently participates in the South African Institute of International Affairs' Atoms for Development Project funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

**Anna-Mart van Wyk** is a Professor in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa, where she teaches courses in international conflict, international relations, and arms control and disarmament. She holds a PhD in history and is a former public policy scholar of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. She specialises in South Africa's nuclear history and has published widely on the topic, utilising international archives. Current projects include being a partner in the Nuclear Proliferation International History Project (NPIHP), as well as collaborator in various other international projects.